Structural Analysis of Isaiah 61 with a Special Focus on Verses 1-3

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ABSTRACT

*An analysis of the structure of Isa 61 underlines the priestly charac-
ter of its content. There are weighty reasons to depart from the Mas-
oretic division of the text in Isa 61:1. The Masoretes placed a* rebia
above עֲנָוִים *suggesting that we have here a major division. I suggest
that a new metrical verse starts in Isa 61:1 with the expression* לְבַשֵּׂר.
*In verses 1-3 the prophet, or the person to whom the prophets refers,
is anointed seven times by YHWH: every time the colon opens with* לְ
*followed by an infinitive construct. My division of the cola however
results in more bicola than tricola as suggested by the Masoretic
accents. In Hebrew poetry the bicolon is far more usual than the tri-
colon. So, when possible, a division in bicola must be preferred
above tricola. I give my reasons to divide v. 3c not as a bicolon, but
as a tricolon. Consequently I notice several stylistic features at the
end of the first part of the hymn. My division suggests that the whole
hymn consists of fifty cola, a number that corresponds with the num-
ber of the Jubilee. My aim is to show that the structure of the poem
undergirds its priestly message and character.*

A   INTRODUCTION

In this article I provide a structural analysis of Isa 61 with a particular focus on vv. 1-3. An analysis of the colometrical structure of Isa 61 underlines the priestly character of its content. This must be seen as an indication that the speaker of Isa 61:1-3 also has a priestly character besides his other traits. Together with a colometrical analysis I point to other literary devices and stylistic features that are used. The main intent of this article is to draw attention to the priestly traits of the speaker of Isa 61:1-3 and by means of a colometrical analysis, to emphasise the priestly character of Isa 61 in general.

Isaiah 60-62 forms the centre of the third part of the book of Isaiah (Isa 56-66). The theme of this unit is the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of Zion as the people of God. In Isa 61 the focus is not on the city itself, but on its inhabitants. They will be restored to their former condition and will even exceed it. Just as the glory of the restored Zion will surpass its former state, their future condition will surpass their former condition before the exile. Isa 61 starts with a proclamation of a speaker who uses the suffix נִי or יִ- (me) to describe himself. He plays a prominent role in the restoration of Zion. A role that is underlined by the fact the passage in which his role is described, is found in the

middle part of the unit that itself forms the heart of centre of the final part of the book of Isaiah.

What is the role of the speaker who says that YHWH anointed him with his spirit? Scholars have indentified the role described here with a number of offices, the most common one being that of a prophet.[1] The speaker certainly has a prophetic role, but his task is broader. The portrait of the speaker has several reminiscences to the servant of YHWH in Isa 40-55. In Isa 42:1 YHWH states that he has given his spirit upon his servant. In the book of Isaiah this is stated earlier in Isa 11:1 of the future ideal Davidic king. Both the servant in Isa 42:1 and the speaker in Isa 61:1-3 have royal features. Royal features can be seen when the speaker states that he will defend the cause of the poor and oppressed. This is a typical royal task (see Ps 72). The relationship between the servant of YHWH in Isa 42:1-7 and the speaker of Isa 61:1-3 is also underlined by the root פקח (to open). This root occurs both in Isa 61:1c and 42:7.

Just like Isa 49:1 and 50:4, the speaker of Isa 61:1-3 is introduced in the first person as the servant of YHWH. A relationship between speaker and the servant of YHWH can also be detected in Isa 61:2. In Isa 49:8 YHWH says to his servant that he has heard him "in the time of favor" (בְּעֵת רָצוֹן). This expression has a parallel expression in the "year of favor" (שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן) in Isa 61:2. In Isa 49:9 we read that the servant of YHWH will say to the prisoners (לַאֲסוּרִים) to come out of the darkness, while in Isa 61:1 the speaker states that he will proclaim the opening of the prison to the prisoners (לָאֲסוּרִים). In Isa 61:3c the final result of the proclamation by him who is anointed by YHWH is that YHWH is glorified (לְהִתְפָּאֵר). In Isa 49:3 the servant of YHWH states that YHWH said to him that "he will be glorified in him" (אֲשֶׁר־בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר).

In 61:4-5 he who is anointed by YHWH is no longer speaking, but what is described there, is closely connected to his proclamation. While in Isa 49:8 part of the task of the servant of YHWH is "to raise the land, to apportion the desolate heritages" (שְׁמֵמוֹת לְהָקִים אֶרֶץ לְהַנְחִיל נְחָלוֹת), YHWH's anointed in 61:4 refers to the result of the proclamation: the inhabitants, the inhabitants of Zion "will raise the former desolations" (שְׁמְמוֹת רִאשֹׁנִים יְקוֹמֵמוּ), "the desolations of many generations" (שֹׁמְמוֹת דּוֹר וָדוֹר).

Isa 61 makes clear that with the new exodus and the restoration of Zion that follows, the entire nation is elevated to a priestly status just as was the case after the first exodus (Ex 19:6). It seems even more prominent now. Isa 61 draws back on the institution of the Jubilee that is described in the Pentateuch, namely in Lev 25. The new exodus is seen as a Jubilee. The Jubilee is a typical priestly institution. He who is anointed by YHWH proclaims that the year of the favor of YHWH (שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהֹוָה) has arrived. This year is the Jubilee (יוֹבֵל) that

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[1] For a brief survey see John S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran* (VTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 199.

starts with the Day of Atonement (יוֹם הַכִּפֻּרִים), the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 25:9) when a priest (perhaps the high priest) sounded the trumpet. So it seems reasonable to conclude that the speaker in Isa 61:1-3 is a priest. Perhaps he can be seen as the high priest.

The word used for the liberty that is brought about when the year of favor arrives, is the word דְּרוֹר. In the Hebrew Bible there are a total of seven occurrences of this word, four times in Jer 34, once in Lev 25, once in Isa 61 and once in Ezek 46.[2] Not only in Lev 25 and Isa 61 but also in Ezek 46 the use of this word is connected with the Jubilee. It goes without saying that Lev 25 and Ezek 46 are texts with a priestly character. The same is true, although less explicitly for Jer 34. It seems to be no coincidence that Jeremiah, a prophet from a priestly family uses the word דְּרוֹר in connection with the law stating that a Hebrew slave regains his liberty in the seventh year after six years of slavery (Jer 34:8f.; compare Exod 21:2; Deut 15:12). As far as we can judge from the seven occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, דְּרוֹר seems to be a word with priestly overtones.

With my stylistic and especially the colometrical analysis of Isa 61 in this article, further indications will be presented for the priestly character of this chapter and the fact that the restoration of Zion is seen as Jubilee, besides the mentioning of the word דְּרוֹר.

B   COLOMETRICAL ANALYSIS

In my analysis of the colometrical structure of Isa 61 I am especially though not exclusively indebted to the insights of Jan P. Fokkelman and Michael P. O'Connor with regards to Hebrew poetry.[3] According to Fokkelman, a metrical verse in Hebrew poetry consists of two and – in some cases – three cola. When I use Fokkelman's term "metrical verse," I do not suggest that we actually have to do with meter in Hebrew poetry. I prefer to speak of colometry in order to distinguish ancient Near Eastern from Greco-Roman poetry. I use the term metrical verse distinctively eith regards to a biblical verse. More than once a biblical verse consists of more than one metrical verse. Dividing metrical verses colometrically we usually find within a colon two to four main stresses. Five stresses are the maximum that is never exceeded. Sometimes we have a colon with just one stress. Two to three metrical verses form a strophe and two to three strophes form a stanza.[4] In shorter poetic texts the stanza is the largest literary

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[2]   Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1; Jer 34:8, 15, 17 (2x), Ezek 46:17.

[3]   Jan P. Fokkelman, *Dichtkunst in de Bijbel* (Zoetermeer: Meinema 2000). See also Jan P. Fokkelman, *85 Psalms and Job 4-14* (vol. 2 of *Major Poems in the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis*; Assen: Van Gorcum 2000), Michael P. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980).

[4]   Fokkelman, *Dichtkunst*, 53.

unit.[5] Sometimes it is possible to make a further division within a poetic text, and the text as a whole can be divided into several parts. Two or more stanzas together form a part.

This is the pattern that we usually observe, but there are exceptions. In a few cases a metrical verse consists just of one colon, a monocolon. Sometimes a strophe consists of just a single metrical verse, but there are also strophes consisting of four metrical verses. According to Fokkelman, in Hebrew poetry a colon usually consists of seven to nine syllables, although there are many variations many exceptions. In the Psalms the lowest number is five and the highest is twelve. The number eight occurs most often.[6] By counting syllables Fokkelman does not suggest a form of meter in Hebrew poetry, but draws attention to the significance of the average number of syllables per colon across a complete poem. I agree with O'Connor that the number of words in a colon is usually two to four.7 It is rare for a colon to contain more than four words. The highest number is six.

Especially in prophetic texts we must apply the rules of Hebrew poetry less strictly, although they can still serve as a guide. This is what I want to do with Isa 61, making it clear that a structural analysis that gives due weight to Hebrew prosody, is helpful to obtain a clearer insight in the content of this chapter, which can be considered as a kind of prophetic hymn.

In presenting my structural analysis, I provide the number of stresses, words and syllables of a colon, followed by a translation. Counting the stresses, I only count words connected with a *maqqef* as having just one main stress, but one may argue that words that have the status of a *nomen regens*, have only a secondary stress, not a main one. As Fokkelman suggests with regards to the counting of syllables words with a *furtive patach* (like רוּחַ) are counted as one syllable. A *shewa mobile* is treated as contributing to a whole syllable, but a consonant with *chatef* vocal is counted as a whole syllable only when it occurs at the beginning of a word.

In numbering the metrical verses and strophes I continue numbering until the end of the part and then begin again from number one. Firstly I give a colometrical division of vv. 1-3 based on the Masoretic accents, followed by my preferred colometrical division of these verses. After that follows the argumentation for the given structural analysis. Then I indicate alternatives in structure of the division and also give short comments. The same happens to vv. 4-11, combining the argumentation, alternatives and other comments under one head.

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[5]   Just as Fokkelman I use the term "strophe," however others prefer to use "stanza" for this literary unit.

[6]   Fokkelman, *Dichtkunst*, 36, 39, 64.

[7]   Where O'Connor has the expression "unit," I speak about a "word," because I include the attached suffixes and prepositions in the counted words.

C   DIVISION IN PARTS OF THE CHAPTER

Only since the twentieth century have translations been produced in which the colometrical structure of the poetical texts of the Hebrew Bible is made visible. I have compared the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the New International Version (NIV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the English Standard Version (ESV).

NASB   1-3; 4-9, 10-11[8]
NRSV   1-4, 5-7, 8-11
NIV   1-3, 4-6, 7, 8-9, 10-11
ESV   1-4, 5-7, 8-9, 10-11

We see that the NASB and NRSV make three subdivisions within Isa 61, the ESV four and the NIV five. There are reasons for defending every division. One translation will regard vv. 4-9 (NASB) or alternatively vv. 5-9 as one main part, making subdivisions on a lower level. Another translation (NIV, ESV) makes main divisions within vv. 4-9 or alternatively vv. 5-9 regarding vv. 4(5)-9 consisting of two main literary units. A main difference is whether we regard v. 3 or v. 4 as the end of the first part. On more than one occasion such difficult decisions arise. The first and last verses of a literary unit often have a transitional character both in prose and poetry.

In v. 4 we hear about the activities of the inhabitants of Zion whose deliverance was promised in the former verses. In vv. 5-7 a distinction is made between the fate of strangers and the fate of the inhabitants of Zion. In these verses the second person plural is used for the inhabitants of Zion, and in vv. 3-4 the third person plural. Nevertheless I prefer to make a main division at the end of v. 3. There the description concerning the activity of him who is anointed by YHWH comes to an end. Besides that, as we shall see below, there are stylistic indications that the stanza ends here. I suggest the following division:

(i)   1-3   The mission of him who is anointed with the Spirit of the Lord;

(ii)   4-7   What the inhabitants of Zion will do and what they will be;

(iii)   8-9   What the Lord will do for the inhabitants of Zion;

(iv)   10-11   The joy and gladness of the inhabitants of Zion;

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[8]   We find this division also in the Dutch version called the Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling (NBV), a coproduction of Catholic and Protestant scholars.

1 Division and Colometrical Structure of Part I vv. 1-3 Based on the Masoretic Accents

When we follow the accents of the Masoretes, we get the following structure for vv. 1-3.

Strophe 1/v. 1/metrical v. 1

רֵוּחַ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִֹה עָלָי	4/4/8	The Spirit of the Lord YHWH is upon me,
יַעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי	4/4/8	because YHWH has anointed me.
לְבַשֵּׂר עֲנָוִים	2/2/6	to bring good news to the poor

Strophe 2/v. 2/ metrical vv. 2-3

שְׁלָחַנִי לַחֲבֹשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב	3/4/11	he has send me, to bind up the broken hearted;
לִקְרֹא לִשְׁבוּיִם דְּרוֹר	3/3/7	to proclaim to the captives liberty,
וְלַאֲסוּרִים פְּקַח־קֹוחַ׃	2/3/7	and to those who are bound, opening of the (dark) prison;
לִקְרֹא שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָה	4/4/9	to proclaim the year of the favor of YHWH,
וְיוֹם נָקָם לֵאלֹהֵינוּ	3/3/7	and the day of vengeance of our God;
לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים׃	2/3/7	to comfort all who mourn;

Strophe 3/ v.3/ metrical vv. 4-6

לָשׂוּם ׀ לַאֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן	3/3/7	to provide for those who mourn in Zion –
לָתֵת לָהֶם פְּאֵר תַּחַת אֵפֶר	5/5/10	to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
שֶׁמֶן שָׂשׂוֹן תַּחַת אֵבֶל	4/4/8	the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
מַעֲטֵה תְהִלָּה תַּחַת רוּחַ כֵּהָה	5/5/11	the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
וְקֹרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק	4/4/10	and that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
מַטַּע יְהוָה לְהִתְפָּאֵר׃	3/3/8	the planting of YHWH, to be glorified.

2   Proposed Division and Colometrical Structure of Part 1 vv. 1-3

Part 1

Stanza 1 v. 1a

Strophe 1/metrical verse 1

רֽוּחַ אֲדֹנָ֥י יְהוִ֖ה עָלָ֑י	4/4/8	The Spirit of the Lord YHWH is upon me,
יַ֡עַן מָשַׁח֩ יְהֹוָ֨ה אֹתִ֜י	4/4/8	because YHWH has anointed me.

Stanza 2 v. 1b-3b

Strophe 2/metrical v. 2

לְבַשֵּׂ֣ר עֲנָוִים֮ שְׁלָחַנִי֒	3/3/10	To bring good news to the poor he has send me,
לַחֲבֹ֖שׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵ֑ב	2/3/7	to bind up the broken hearted;

Strophe 3/metrical vv.3-4

לִקְרֹ֤א לִשְׁבוּיִם֙ דְּר֔וֹר	3/3/7	to proclaim to the captives liberty,
וְלַאֲסוּרִ֖ים פְּקַח־קֽוֹחַ׃	2/3/7	and to those who are bound, opening of the (dark) prison;
לִקְרֹ֤א שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן֙ לַֽיהוָ֔ה	4/4/9	to proclaim the year of the favor of YHWH,
וְי֥וֹם נָקָ֖ם לֵאלֹהֵ֑ינוּ	3/3/8	and the day of vengeance of our God;

Strophe 4/metrical vv. 5-6

לְנַחֵ֖ם כָּל־אֲבֵלִֽים׃	2/3/7	to comfort all who mourn;
לָשׂ֣וּם׀ לַאֲבֵלֵ֣י צִיּ֗וֹן	3/3/7	to provide for those who mourn in Zion –
לָתֵת֩ לָהֶ֨ם פְּאֵ֜ר תַּ֣חַת אֵ֗פֶר	5/5/10	to give them ˙a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
שֶׁ֤מֶן שָׂשׂוֹן֙ תַּ֣חַת אֵ֔בֶל	4/4/8	the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
מַעֲטֵ֣ה תְהִלָּ֔ה תַּ֖חַת ר֣וּחַ כֵּהָ֑ה	5/5/10	the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;

Stanza 3 v. 3c

Strophe 5/metrical v. 7

וְקֹרָ֤א לָהֶם֙ אֵילֵ֣י הַצֶּ֔דֶק	4/4/10	and that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
מַטַּ֥ע יְהוָ֖ה	2/2/4	the planting of YHWH,
לְהִתְפָּאֵֽר׃	1/1/4	to be glorified.

3   Arguments for the Given Structural Division

In the division I have presented, I disagree on one major point with the accents of the Masoretes. The Masoretes placed a *rebia* above עֲנָוִים. The *rebia* has a stronger disjunctive force than the *géreš* above אֹתִי. They saw the words לְבַשֵּׂר עֲנָוִים as the final part of the first sentence or in colometrical terms as the final part of the second colon of the first metrical verse. In the "Ralphs" edition of the LXX we find another view. There we find v. 1a translated as follows: Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπʼ ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με.

In this view a new sentence or metrical verse starts with לְבַשֵּׂר. Because the translation was not originally punctuated, we cannot be completely sure what the view of the original translators was. In the Vulgate the first part of v. 1a is translated: "Spiritus Domini super me eo quod unxerit Dominus me ad adnuntiandum mansuetis misit me ut mederer contritis corde." We can be sure that the Vulgate followed the view of the punctuated version of the LXX, because the preposition לְ followed by an infinitive construct is translated as "ad" in the first case, and as "ut" in the following cases. So the words "ad adnuntiandum mansuetis" belong to the following sentence or metrical verse.

The famous King James Version (KJV), which was until a few decades ago the most popular English Bible translation, has the following translation: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek." The translators strictly followed the disjunctive accents placed by the Masoretes. The same is true of the NASB, the NIV and the ESV. The translation given by the NRSV is in line with the LXX and Vulgate.9

There are several arguments that undergird my structural analysis. In the first place I point to the fact that in several other places in the Hebrew Bible, we find the grammatical construction where the preposition לְ with an infinitive is followed by a qatal form.10 In my structural analysis, each metrical verse of the second stanza of the first part of the prophetic hymn begins with the preposition לְ with an infinitive, followed by a dative in the first two cola; by a dative and an accusative in the second two cola (with an ellipsis); by an accusative in the third two cola (with an ellipsis); by a dative in the fourth two cola; and by an accusative in the last three cola (with an ellipsis). So we have seven or eight anaphoras within the second stanza of the first part of the prophetic hymn: seven times לְ is followed by an infinite construct and one time by a noun as dative.11 When we follow the Masoretes, the first one would be an exception, not being an anaphora.

In the analysis I prefer and the analysis according to the Masoetic accents, in the first stanza the number of words of a colon never exceeds five and the number of syllables never surpasses eleven. In the whole hymn we have only one example of a colon with thirteen syllables and nowhere in the latter part of the hymn, the number of words exceeds the norm of four. That accords with the preference that a colon consists between two to four words.

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9   The same is true of the NBV and the Willebrord-translation, a Dutch translation produced by Roman-Catholic scholars. The first complete edition was published in 1975.

10   Gen 39:14; 42:9; 47:4; Num 23:11; 24:10; 1 Sam 16:2, 5; Isa 45:18; Hos 12:8; Hab 1:12; Ps 31:14.

11   We find fifteen occurrences of the preposition לְ in the first part the hymn: in the metrical vv. 2-5 three times in each, in v. 6 one and in v. 7 two.

In my proposed division, there are more bicola and less tricola than in the view of the Masoretes. I am convinced that a division with bicola is preferable to that with tricola, because tricola are much less used in Hebrew poetry then bicola.

The division makes clear that the first stanza introduces the speaker (v. 1a). In the second stanza his work is characterized (vv. 1b-3b). When the passage is read and performed orally, the use of לְ at the beginning of most cola of the second stanza indicates the difference between the first and second stanza.In Hebrew, both in poetry and prose, stylistic devices are used to mark the end of a literary unit.12 This can be a whole narrative, a scène, a stanza, a strophe and so on. The ellipsis used in the last cola of the second strophe is an indication for the reader or listener13 that the strophe comes to its end. The end of the second stanza is marked by the fact that the last metrical verse is a tricola. Besides that, for the first time the preposition לְ is followed not by a noun but by a personal suffix referring to them who benefit from the work of him who is anointed by the spirit of YHWH.

The third stanza (v. 3c) forms the conclusion based on both the character of the person who speaks and the way that he glorifies YHWH.14 The metrical verse that opens the last stanza does not begin with the preposition לְ followed by infinitive construct, as has been the case with all the metrical verses in the second stanza. This last stanza opens with a *weqatal* form[15], indicating not only that a new literary (sub)unit starts, but also that the end of the first part of the prophetic hymn is to be expected. In the following verses we also find four *weqatal* forms at the beginning of a line, namely וְרָעוּ (v. 4), וְעָמְדוּ and וְחִדְּשׁוּ, וּבָנוּ (v. 5).[16] However, besides the fact that a stilistic feature indicates the end of a stanza, I point out that וְקֹרָא is directly followed by לָהֶם which connects it closely with the foregoing expression לָתֵת לָהֶם. Also v. 3b is thematically connected closer to what goes before than to what follows. This was surely the opinion of the Masoretes as indicated by their accents.

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12   Aharon Mirsky, "Stylistic Device for Conclusion in Hebrew," *Semitics* 5 (1977): 5-23.

13   Written text used to be recited orally. For quite a lot of people in ancient Near Eastern societies this was the only way in which they came in contact with the text.

14   We can understand the phrase לְהִתְפָּאֵר in two ways. The first possibility is: that YHWH may be glorified, namely by the inhabitants of Zion. The second is: that YHWH may display his glory. Personally, I prefer the last view.

15   וְקֹרָא is a the *weqatal* form of the *pu'al* of קרא.

16   That is the reason that both Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (AB 19b; New York: Doubleday, 1964), 210, 226, and Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja* (vol. IIIa; POT; Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1989), 204, start a new stanza here. Beuken points to the fact that וְקֹרָא is the first of five *weqatal* forms that opens a colon. I think that they do not pay enough attention to other stylistic features that point in a different direction.

I have divided the last metrical verse of the first part of the prophetic hymn into a tricolon, although a bicolon is possible. I am aware that seen purely from the metrical perspective, one should prefer a bicolon with the last colon reading מַטַּע יְהֹוָה לְהִתְפָּאֵר, – this colon has three stresses and consists of four words and eight syllables. In that case regarding both the number of words and syllables, the whole hymn conforms strictly to the rules of Hebrew poetry as formulated by Fokkelman. However, considering the content of the expression לְהִתְפָּאֵר, it should not only be connected with מַטַּע יְהֹוָה, but also with אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק, and finally with the whole preceding part of the hymn.

In the metrical division, I propose that both the second and third stanza of the first part end with a tricolon, just like the last stanza of the third part. The fact that the last colon of the last metrical verse of the first unit consists of only one phrase, emphasizes the content of the phrase. There are four words in the first colon, two in the second and just one phrase in the last. In Hebrew tricola it is not unusual to have (approximately) the same number of stresses, words and syllables as in bicola. Simon P. Stocks uses in this connection the term para-tricolon in the occurrence of six stresses that can be divided over three cola having two stresses each.[17]

I can also point to the fact that all the former occurrences of the preposi-tion לְ followed by an infinitive construct, were fund just at the beginning of a colon. Now for the first time in the prophetic hymn, the preposition לְ is fol-lowed by an infinitive construct without an object.[18] The *weqatal* form at the

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[17] Simon P. Stocks, *The Form Function of the Tricolon in the Psalms of Ascents: Introducing a New Paradigm for Hebrew Poetic Line-Form* (Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 27.

[18] Both in Ezek 28:16a and 31:12a and c are examples of a colon just consisting of one word. In these cases it is not an infinitive construct but a *wajjiqtol* form.

Ezekiel 28:16a:

בְּרֹב רְכֻלָּתְךָ	2/2/7	In the abundance of your trade
מָלוּ תוֹכְךָ חָמָס	3/3/7	you were filled with violence in your midst,
וַתֶּחֱטָא	1/1/3	and you sinned;

Ez 31:12a:

וַיִּכְרְתֻהוּ זָרִים	2/2/7	Foreigners have cut it down,
עָרִיצֵי גוֹיִם	2/2/5	the most ruthless of nations,
וַיִּטְּשֻׁהוּ	1/1/5	and left it.

Ezekiel 31:12c:

מִצִּלּוֹ כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ	3/4/9	and all the peoples of the earth have gone away from its shadow
וַיִּטְּשֻׁהוּ	1/1/5	and left it.

I realize that one can make a stronger case for a colon consisting of just one word or phrase, when there is a finite verbal form (with a personal suffix) rather than an infin-itive, but still these cases show that a colon may consist just of one word or phrase. The NRSV and ESV print in Ezek 28:12b the words מָלוּ תוֹכְךָ חָמָס וַתֶּחֱטָא as one

beginning of the metrical verse gives a sign that the end of the forst part of the prophetic hymn is reached.[19] Furthermore I point to the fact that when the division presented here is followed, both the first and second parts have sixteen cola, as we shall see later.

4   A Number of Other Observations

In the second to eighth colon of the second stanza we find an ellipsis. Only the first colon has the *qatal* form שְׁלָחַנִי. In the metrical division I have given לָתֵת on the same structural level as לְבַשֵּׂר, לִקְרֹא and לְנַחֵם. The structure can be represented as follows

> *Strophe 2*
> 2 infinitives construct 1 metrical verse
>
> *Strophe 3*
> 2 infinitives construct 2 metrical verses
>
> *Strophe 4*
> 3 infinitives construct 2 metrical verses

It can also be argued that the colon beginning with לָתֵת לָהֶם (ninth colon of the second stanza) is not directly related to the first colon of the second stanza with the *qatal* form שְׁלָחַנִי, but that this colon is subordinated to the foregoing colon. In this case this colon is an elaboration and explanation of the foregoing colon with the words לָשׂוּם | לַאֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן. In this view there is a stricter correspondence between the second and fourth strophe each having two infinitives construct on the same structural level, one in the first and one in the second colon of the first metrical verse, while in the third strophe both metrical verses begin with the infinitive construct of the same verb, namely קרא. That means that the structure can be represented as:

> *Strophe 2*
> 2 infinitives construct 1 metrical verse
>
> *Strophe 3*
> 2 infinitives construct 2 metrical verses
>
> *Strophe 4*
> 2 infinitives construct 1 metrical verse

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colon. The NASB, NIV and also the Dutch version called the Herziene Statenvertaling (HSV), published in 2011, see it, just as I do, as one colon. The NASB, NRSV, NIV and ESV do not print Ez 31:10b-14 as poetry, but the HSV does. Especially in Ezekiel it is not always simple to distinguish between poetry and prose. But when one interprets Ez 31:2b-9 as poetry like the NASB, NRSV, NIV and ESV, it is a little bit inconsistent to interpret Ezek 31:10b-14 as prose.

[19]   See note 11.

1 infinitive construct 1 metrical verse

The greater symmetry can be used in an argument that prefers the last view. For the sake of completeness I draw attention to some other literary devices. In the colon פְּאֵר תַּחַת אֵפֶר (v. 3b) an anagram appears exchanging the letters פ and א. Furthermore alliteration occurs in the expressions פְּקַח־קֹוחַ (v. 1c) and שֶׁמֶן שָׂשׂוֹן (v. 3b). The last metrical verse of the second stanza and the first and only metrical verse of the last stanza are connected by the second phrase in each first colon which happens to be לָהֶם.

5 Division and Metrical Structure of vv. 4-11

Part 2 vv. 4-7

Stanza 1 vv. 4-5
Strophe 1/metrical vv. 1-2

וּבָנוּ חָרְבוֹת עוֹלָם	3/3/7	And they shall build up the ancient ruins;
שֹׁמְמוֹת רִאשֹׁנִים יְקוֹמֵמוּ	3/3/10	the former devastations they shall raise up
וְחִדְּשׁוּ עָרֵי חֹרֶב	3/3/8	and they shall repair the ruined cities,
שֹׁמְמוֹת דּוֹר וָדוֹר׃	3/3/6	the devastations of many generations.

Strophe 2/metrical vv. 3-4

וְעָמְדוּ זָרִים	2/2/6	And stand shall strangers
וְרָעוּ צֹאנְכֶם	2/2/6	and tend your flocks;
וּבְנֵי נֵכָר	2/2/4	and sons of foreigners *are*
אִכָּרֵיכֶם וְכֹרְמֵיכֶם׃	2/2/9	your plowmen and vinedressers;

Stanza 2 vv. 6-7
Strophe 3/metrical vv. 5-6

וְאַתֶּם כֹּהֲנֵי יְהוָה תִּקָּרֵאוּ	4/4/11	but priests of YHWH you shall be called;
מְשָׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יֵאָמֵר לָכֶם	4/4/13	ministers of our God they shall say of you;
חֵיל גּוֹיִם תֹּאכֵלוּ	3/3/6	the wealth of the nations you shall eat,
וּבִכְבוֹדָם תִּתְיַמָּרוּ׃	2/2/8	and in their glory you shall boast.

Strophe 4/metrical vv. 7-8

תַּחַת בָּשְׁתְּכֶם מִשְׁנֶה	3/3/7	Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
וּכְלִמָּה יָרֹנּוּ חֶלְקָם	3/3/8	instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
לָכֵן בְּאַרְצָם מִשְׁנֶה יִירָשׁוּ	4/4/10	therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
שִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה לָהֶם׃	4/4/8	everlasting joy there shall be for them.

Part 3 vv. 8-9

Stanza 1 vv. 8-9
Strophe 1/metrical vv. 1-2

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָֹה	3/3/5	For I YHWH
אֹהֵב מִשְׁפָּט	2/2/4	love justice;
שֹׂנֵא גָזֵל בְּעוֹלָה	3/3/7	I hate robbery and wrong;
וְנָתַתִּי פְעֻלָּתָם בֶּאֱמֶת	3/3/10	I will give them their recompense faithfully,
וּבְרִית עוֹלָם אֶכְרוֹת לָהֶם:	4/4/8	and an everlasting covenant I will make with them.

Strophe 2/metrical vv. 3-4

וְנוֹדַע בַּגּוֹיִם זַרְעָם	3/3/8	And known among the nations shall be their offspring,
וְצֶאֱצָאֵיהֶם בְּתוֹךְ הָעַמִּים	3/3/10	and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
כָּל־רֹאֵיהֶם יַכִּירוּם	2/3/7	all who see them shall acknowledge them,
כִּי הֵם זֶרַע בֵּרַךְ יְהוָֹה:	5/5/8	that they are an offspring YHWH has blessed.

Part 4 vv. 10-11

Stanza 1 vv. 10-11
Strophe 1/metrical vv. 1-3

שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בַּיהוָֹה	3/3/6	I will greatly rejoice in YHWH;
תָּגֵל נַפְשִׁי בֵּאלֹהַי	3/3/7	my soul shall exult in my God,
כִּי הִלְבִּישַׁנִי בִּגְדֵי־יֶשַׁע	3/4/9	for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
מְעִיל צְדָקָה יְעָטָנִי	3/3/9	with the robe of righteousness he has covered me,
כֶּחָתָן יְכַהֵן פְּאֵר	3/3/8	as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
וְכַכַּלָּה תַּעְדֶּה כֵלֶיהָ:	3/3/9	and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Strophe 2/metrical vv. 4-5

כִּי כָאָרֶץ תּוֹצִיא צִמְחָהּ	4/4/8	For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
וּכְגַנָּה זֵרוּעֶיהָ תַצְמִיחַ	3/3/9	and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
כֵּן אֲדֹנָי יְהוִֹה	3/3/7	so the Lord YHWH
יַצְמִיחַ צְדָקָה וּתְהִלָּה	3/3/8	will cause righteousness and praise
נֶגֶד כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם:	2/3/6	to sprout up before all the nations.

6   Comment

I begin by giving the total number of syllables, words, stresses, cola and metrical verses of each part and stanza:

Part 1	Syllables	Words	Stresses	Cola	Metrical verses
Stanza 1	16	8	8	2	1
Stanza 2	92	39	36	11	5
Stanza 3	18	7	7	3/2	1
Total	126	54	51	16/15	7
Part 2					
Stanza 1	56	20	20	8/6	4/3
Stanza 2	71	27	27	8	4
Total	127	47	47	16/14	8/7
Part 3					
Stanza 1	67	29	28	9	4
Part 4					
Stanza 1	86	35	33	11	5
Whole unit	**408**	**175**	**170**	**50/49/47**	**24/23**

In my division presented above, the third and fourth parts each consist of only one stanza. They may be combined, but I divided them because their content differs. The second strophe of the second part may be regarded as one metrical verse. A newly formed single metrical verse may also be combined with the following metrical verse to form a new strophe consisting of three metrical verses. When the division is made in this manner, the last strophe of part 2 consists of three metrical verses. We then have to assume that the second part has three and not four strophes and consists of but one stanza.

I favor my division, because only one finite verbal form appears in each colon of the hymn. That is not the case when וְעָמְדוּ זָרִים וְרָעוּ צֹאנְכֶם appears as one colon. Then the stanza consists of fourteen cola and that is unusually high in this hymn. I admit that this last argument possesses not such a great weight as the first, nevertheless I would mention it.

It is also possible to see v. 8a as consisting of two cola, namely אֹהֵב מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה אֲנִי כִּי, and שֹׂנֵא גָזֵל בְּעוֹלָה. In that way, the force of the expression כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה receives less stress. That is the reason why I prefer my division, and I see v. 8a as a tricolon. When this division is followed, a close resemblance appears between the cola כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה (v. 8a) at the beginning of the first strophe of the first stanza of part 3, and כֵּן אֲדֹנָי יְהֹוָה (v 11b) at the beginning of the last strophe of the only stanza of part 4. The same is true, although to a lesser extent, with regard to the colon שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ בַּיהוָה (v. 10a) at the beginning of the first strophe of the only stanza of part 4. According to this division there is a colon consisting of three words and having three main stresses on transitory places in the poem.

I now make a few closing remarks about stylistic features. The expression אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה occurs both in the first (v.1a) and the last metrical verse (v. 11b) of Isa 61. This forms an inclusion. In v. 3b there is an epiphor at the end of each colon of the metrical verse. Three times the second part of the colon opens with the word תַּחַת. Here is also a trait that is very characteristic for the whole great second part of the book of Isaiah (Isa 40-66), namely the employment of triads.[20]

Furthermore there is a wordplay in the expression פְּאֵר תַּחַת אֵפֶר (v. 3b), the root פאר re-appearing in the following metrical verse at the end of the first part of Isa 61 in the expression לְהִתְפָּאֵר (v. 3c). The word פְּאֵר repeats in v. 10. One can also notice a wordplay between the words אֲבֵלִי (v. 3b) and אֵילֵי (v. 3c). The last strophe of the second part and the first strophe of the third part of the hymn in Isa 61, both end with the phrase לָהֶם (v. 7b and v. 8b). The expression שׂוֹשׂ אָשִׂישׂ (v. 10a) is a literary device of alliteration. There are also several chiastic structures, namely in vv. 4 and 5.

In the context of the book of Isaiah in its final form, Isa 61 can be seen as a reversal of the judgment announced in Isa 2:6-4:1. The day of judgment that is announced seven times in this unit (Isa 2:11, 12, 17, 20; 3:7, 18; 4:1), is reversed by the announcement of the year of the favor of YHWH in Isa 61:2. The year of the favor of YHWH corresponds with the day of blessing announced in Isa 4:2.[21] In Isa 3:24 there are five phrases beginning with the word תַחַת. The condition of the wealthy women of Zion is changed. Prosperity makes room for conditions of disgrace, probably referring to the exile. Isa 61:3 uses three times the same word, namely תַחַת in order to describe a condition that changes from disgrace to grace and favor.

D   CONCLUSION

What is the theological relevance of these exegetical data? In the first place I indicated that the literary beauty of a text draws attention to the content of its message. But there is more to be said than that. The person anointed by YHWH is a prophetic figure with both priestly and kingly characteristics. In whatever the hymn is structured, the preposition לְ with an infinitive followed by a dative and/or an accusative occurs seven times. Within the book Isaiah a textual relationship with Isa 11: 2 can be proposed. Isa 11:2 refers to ideal Davidic king in the future who will possess the sevenfold spirit of YHWH.[22] Besides the spirit

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[20]   Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 26.

[21]   With the exception of the reference in Isa 2:12 we have in all cases the expression בַּיֹּום הַהוּא.

[22]   Elisabeth R. Achtemeier, *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56-66: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1982), 89; John N.

itself, six gifts of the spirit are mentioned in that verse. If one accepts that the first part of Isa 61 consists of seven metrical verses the relationship is even stronger. The blessings announced in Isa 61:1-3 are blessings that a righteous king desires to give his subjects.

The number seven especially is a priestly number. Thus this number can also be seen as a hint to the priestly character of the person who is anointed by YHWH. The inhabitants of the restored Zion are especially characterized as priests (Isa 61:6). One of the reasons must be that the person who pronounces blessings to them has a priestly character.

Besides the use of the number seven, the above analysis suggests that there is a further numerical hint to the priestly character of the person who is anointed by YHWH. The prophetic hymn consists of fifty cola. That is precisely the number which corresponds with the Jubilee. When the whole hymn conforms exactly to the strict rules of Hebrew poetry, and does not exceed the number of two words and five syllables per colon, the number of cola is forty nine. That is still a remarkable number as it is a multiple of seven, which is a number that has a priestly character. When the poem is divided in fifty cola as I suggest, the average number of syllables per colon comes closer to the preferred number eight than is the case with other divisions.

It is possible to disagree with the presented division in fifty cola, but it cannot be denied that the prophetic hymns count one hundred and seventy five words. That is seven times twenty five. Seven is not the only a priestly number. The same can be said of the number twenty five. The symbolic significance of the number seven is evident also in texts that do not have a priestly character, but twenty five, also multiplied by other numbers with symbolic value occurs only in priestly texts within the Hebrew Bible.

This is especially the case in the book of the prophet and priest Ezekiel.[23] Not only the number of cola, but also the number of words underlines the priestly character of this prophetic hymn: the person whom YHWH anointed with his spirit has besides his other functions also a priestly one.[24]

Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 563.

[23] Ezek 8:16; 11:1; 40:1, 13, 15, 21, 25, 29, 30, 33, 36; 42:2, 3, 7, 8; 45:1, 2, 3, 5, 6; 48:8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21. See Pieter de Vries, *De heerlijkheid van YHWH in het Oude Testament en in het bijzonder in het boek Ezechiël* (Heerenveen: Groen Publishers, 2010), 313.

[24] See note 5.

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