The Glory of Hardening: Kavod and Judgment in the Theophany of Isaiah 6

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of the manifestation of YHWH's glory (כבד) as a leitmotif which accompanies the theme of hardening in the book of Isaiah. Through a narrative-critical lens, this paper examines the literary and theological significance of the combination of the visible presence of YHWH's glory and the commission of obduracy to the people in Isaiah 6. It then explores the recurrence of these combined themes throughout the book of Isaiah.

Table of Contents

Preface: Discussion Points 2
1. Translation: Isaiah 6 3
2. Textual Analysis 4
    2.1. Context 4
    2.2. Outline 6
    2.3. Genre 6
3. The Prophet and YHWH 8
    3.1. The Theophany (vv. 1-7) 8
    3.2. Isaiah's Commission (vv. 8-13) 10
    3.3. Summary 14
4. Significance in the Context of Isaiah 15
    4.1. Acknowledging YHWH's Glory 15
5. Conclusion 23
Bibliography 25

Preface: Discussion Points

1. Visible presence of YHWH's glory in the book of Isaiah
    a. Use as a leitmotif
    b. Significance to Isaiah's commission
2. Isaiah's commission of obduracy
    a. Use as a leitmotif
    b. Significance to theophany of YHWH
3. Theological implications of theophany and obduracy in Isaiah
    a. Setting
    b. Eschatology

1. Translation: Isaiah 6

1 In the year king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne[1] high and lifted up,
and the hem of his robe[2] filled the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above him;[3] having six
wings each. Two covered their face and two covered their feet, and with two they
flew. 3 And this one called to that one and said, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts,
and the earth is full of his glory!" 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook from
the voice of the one who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said,
"Woe is me! For I am cut off! For I am a man with unclean lips, for I dwell in the midst
of a people with unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the king, YHWH of hosts." 6 And
one from the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a coal taken with tongs from
upon the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said, "Behold! This has touched your
lips and taken away your guilt and covered your sin."

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Who will I send, and who will go
for us?" and I said, "Here I am, send me!" 9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people:
surely hear, but do not understand, surely see, but do not know. 10 Make the heart of
this people grow fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes blind, lest they see with their
eyes, and hear with their ears, and their hearts understand and turn and be healed." 11
And I said, "How long, O'Lord?" And he said, "Until cities lie wasted, uninhabited,
and houses without a person, and the land is a desolate waste, 12 and YHWH causes
the people to be far away, and the forsaken are many in the midst of the land. 13 And

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[1] 1QIsa[a] attests "his throne" (כסאו). This is most likely an interpretive editorial decision for theological clarity; that this throne is specifically YHWH's alone to sit upon. This decision necessitates that the MT attests the more original reading, and is therefore preferred.

[2] LXX renders "hem of his robes" (ושׁוליו עמדים) as "his glory" (της δοξης αυτου). Likewise, Tar. J: "the brightness of his glory" (ומזיו יקריה). This is most likely an attempt to de-anthropomorphize YHWH or prevent the prophet from seeing any part of YHWH or his clothing. The MT is preferred since it does not reflect these editorial changes and thus attests the more original reading.

[3] LXX has the seraphim "around him" (κυκλω αυτου) not "above him" (ממעל לו) as the MT, likely to avoid any theological ambiguity about the status of YHWH as the "highest" authority in the text. These are clearly latter editorial changes and therefore the MT is preferred as maintaining the more original reading.

still, with a tenth returning, it will be burned; as a terebinth or an oak, which[4] having been felled has its stump remain; a holy seed is its stump.[5]

2. Textual Analysis

The theophany of Isaiah 6 combines a vision of the heavenly realm with the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah. This paper seeks to explore this unique moment in the Hebrew Bible for its literary and theological significance to the manifestation of YHWH in the rest of the book of Isaiah.

2.1. Context

Isaiah 6 begins with a vision where the prophet Isaiah, "saw the Lord" (v. 1). The vision account makes use of one of the classic dating formulae in the HB that can indicate a new literary section, "In the year…" (בִּשְׁנַת).[6] "In the year that King Uzziah died…" (v. 1) is the backdrop for the historical setting of the vision,[7] and given that the vision account does not continue the content or literary style of chapter 5, Isa. 6:1 should be viewed as the start of a new literary section. The vision of Isaiah 6 ends abruptly at the end of verse 13. Given another common indication of a new literary section, "And it happened…" (וַיְהִי)[8] in the next verse (Isa. 7:1), and the lack of literary unity with the content of chapter 7, the end of the literary section must be Isa. 6:13.

The beginning of the book of Isaiah indicates that Isaiah's tenure as prophet stretched across, "the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Isa. 1:1). Since the book of Isaiah does not indicate how long Isaiah was active before the death of Uzziah, there is no way to confirm that Isaiah 6 was his inaugural vision

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[4] BHS suggests that (אשׁר) could be missing a ה, and therefore read: "Asherah"(אשׁרה). This would cause the text to take on a cultic tone regarding the destruction of an Asherah-pole. The editor's suggestion has no textual support from any known manuscript, and is therefore most likely attempting to smooth over a difficult passage.

[5] LXX does not attest the phrase, "a holy seed is its stump." While the shorter version is generally preferred as the more original, in this case, the LXX reading seems to be a deliberate attempt to avoid a difficult passage. Therefore, though it is the longer version, the more difficult reading found in the MT should be preferred.

[6] Cf. Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 43.

[7] Habel, "Call Narratives," 310; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 104.

[8] Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §3.5.1c, 86.

of YHWH.[9] Still, the overall book certainly presents Isaiah 6 as the inaugural vision for the prophet. It is the only vision in the book where Isaiah directly interacts with YHWH and is given a commission that will inform his tenure as prophet in the book of Isaiah.

We must then address why the "inaugural" vision of Isaiah occurs in ch. 6 as opposed to ch. 1. This notorious issue has been approached from countless angles by an equal number of interpreters, far too many to name here. Rhetorically, Isaiah 6 is well placed between chapters 5 and 7. Chapter 5 speaks parabolically about Israel as a garden tended by YHWH, which despite being cared for in every way, has grown wild and unruly. The parable encompasses well the contents of chapters 1-4. The contents of chapter 5 are the metaphorical summary of the prolonged charge against Israel and their misdeeds in chapters 1-4, and explain the exilic fallout from their transgressions. Chapters 1-5 together then act as an overview of the circumstances which brought Israel into exile, and introduce the intimate details of that process. The commission of the prophet in Isaiah 6 is justified through the contents of the previous 5 chapters.

Having exposed the transgressions of the people of Israel and Judah, YHWH's judgment spoken through Isaiah is the logical conclusion to the disobedience of the people. Chapter 7 is an outworking of YHWH's judgment in the narrative. King Ahaz refuses to hear the word of the prophet when YHWH offers to give the king a sign (v. 10), thus giving an example of, "hearing but not understanding" (cf. Isaiah 6:8-13). Chapters 8-12 expand on the idea of rulership, both positively and negatively. Israel's rulers and the king of Assyria are proud and arrogant (9:15-16; 10:12), but YHWH has promised a coming ruler who will govern according to YHWH's will (9:6-7; 11:1-5).

Isaiah chapter 6 then fits well inside both its immediate context of chapters 5 and 7, as well as in the wider context of chapters 1-12. YHWH has seen Israel rebel (ch. 1-5), announces his plan to judge their actions (ch. 6), identifies leadership flaws,

[9] Cf. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 55.

and promises that after the outworking of his pronounced judgment, a new righteous ruler will arise (ch. 7-12).

2.2. Outline

Isaiah 6 has two main sections of content: the theophany which includes the vision of YHWH and the heavenly realm (vv. 1-7), and Isaiah's commission which encompasses the verbal interaction between Isaiah and YHWH (vv. 8-13). In the first section (vv. 1-7), Isaiah reports seeing the Lord (אדני) on a high and lofty throne with the hem of his robe filling the temple (v. 1). Isaiah describes the seraphim who serve YHWH (v. 2), and their praise of YHWH (v. 3). The voice of the seraph who praises YHWH causes tremors in YHWH's cosmic abode, and the house is filled with smoke (v. 4). Isaiah is overwhelmed by the experience and laments at seeing YHWH with unclean lips (v. 5). One of the seraphim then approaches Isaiah with a coal from the altar (v. 6). Isaiah's guilt is removed, and his sin is covered when the seraph touches the coal to Isaiah's mouth (v. 7).

The second section begins with Isaiah hearing the voice of YHWH asking who will be sent on his behalf, and Isaiah volunteers for the task (v. 8). YHWH then tells Isaiah to give a message to "this people" telling them to hear but not understand, see but not perceive (v. 9), make their hearts fat, ears heavy, and eyes blind, so they will not hear, see, or understand, and thus be healed (v. 10). Isaiah asks how long he must speak this message, and YHWH responds by telling him to continue until the cities and the land are in ruins, and the cities and houses are empty (v. 11). Then Isaiah is told to continue speaking until YHWH sends the people far away, and the land is forsaken (v. 12). YHWH's final declaration promises that a returning remnant will be burned again like a hewn tree, but what remains after will be "a holy seed" (v. 13).

2.3. Genre

Isaiah 6:1 contains a formula that introduces the chapter as a vision report, "I saw…" (אראה).[10] Isaiah explicitly sees YHWH and his attendants, but the prophet's location

[10] Nogalski, *Interpreting Prophetic Literature*, 21.

during the vision experience and how the vision is inaugurated are not as apparent. Isaiah's vision shifts from viewing YHWH's court to hearing the voice of YHWH, "And I heard the voice of the Lord" (ואֶשְׁמַע אֶת-קוֹל אֲדֹנָי) (v. 8). This seeing and hearing leads to the prophet's commission, giving the vision finite purpose. This has led Habel to classify Isaiah 6 as a call narrative, following his formula for establishing call narratives in the Old Testament.[11]

The sceptical exegete, beyond rebutting the notion that these unique instances in the Hebrew Bible can be boiled down to a simplistic formula, might appeal to caution regarding Isaiah 6 as a "call narrative." This in no small part revolves around the fact that Isaiah is commissioned to administer a message that will cause the people to turn from any receptivity to YHWH. He is an anti-type, and as such must be evaluated through the purpose of his commission.

It is safe to posit that Isaiah volunteers to go on behalf of YHWH for a yet undisclosed mission, and the circumstances surrounding his encounter with YHWH are contained within a vision report. Once Isaiah has volunteered for the mission, YHWH addresses him directly with the details of his purpose (vv. 9-10), and answers Isaiah's question pertaining to the duration of the task (vv. 11-13). The material of the preceding chapters, particularly the parable of chapter 5, illuminates the purpose of this vision and the task Isaiah is given. Israel has disobeyed its God, and YHWH is therefore sending a messenger to pronounce his judgment over them.

Since Isaiah has seen YHWH (vv. 1, 5), has been purified from sin (vv. 6-7), has had his offer of service accepted to the point of being given a task directly from YHWH (vv. 8-9), and is afforded insight into "how long" his task will be (vv. 11-13), the vision of Isaiah 6 serves to legitimate his role as messenger of judgment.[12] Isaiah 6 then should be seen as a dramatic word-vision where, "the traditions and the literary form

[11] His outline of Isaiah 6 is as follows: "the divine confrontation" (vv. 1-2), "the introductory word" (vv. 3-7), "the commission" (vv. 8-10), "the objection" (v. 11a), "the reassurance" (vv. 11-13). Habel, "Call Narratives," 310–12; Cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 134–35, who objects to Habel's findings due to the similarities of Isaiah 6 with Micaiah ben Imlah's vision (1 Kgs. 22:19-21).

[12] Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 92; Cf. Wildburger *Isaiah 1-12*, 277.

of vision-report work together to legitimate the claim of Isaiah to a prophetic office and to give a documentary explanation for his message of evil."[13]

3. The Prophet and YHWH

We have identified Isaiah 6 as a vision of YHWH where the prophet is commissioned to pronounce judgment over Israel for their disobedience evidenced in chapters 1-5. This section will now approach the content of Isa. 6 to understand glory in the theophany as it relates to Isaiah's commission of hardening.

3.1. The Theophany (vv. 1-7)

It should come as no surprise that spatial awareness plays a critical role in this theophanic vision, highlighting the concerns of the text in a visualised dimension. The viewpoint of the narrative remains Isaiah's throughout the vision,[14] as he describes what he sees, hears, and says all from a first-person point of view.[15] Isaiah sees the transcendence of YHWH, enthroned on high (v. 1). It seems prudent to understand YHWH's locale as it is represented in temple theology, also prevalent in Isaiah 66:1, "Thus says YHWH, 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.'" The temple is the place where heaven and earth meet,[16] and the mirror images of YHWH enthroned in both Isaiah 6 and 66 use that theological notion in the theophanic imagery of the passages.

The Hebrew bible often borrows images from other religions in the ANE, especially when referencing YHWH.[17] In the Ugaritic tradition, Athtar's ability to rule is dictated by his stature when seated on the throne of Saphon:

> "Then Athtar the Brilliant went up into the uttermost parts
> of Saphon;

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[13] Long, "Visions among the Prophets," 361; Cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 136, who concludes the genre as a commission account inside of a vision report; Also Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12*, 41, who believes the genre is a blend of four different genres: a vision report, a call, and a commission.

[14] Magonet, "The Structure of Isaiah 6," 92–93; See Landy "I and Eye in Isaiah," For a discussion on the importance of sight and the first-person account in Isaiah.

[15] Though fantastical in nature, "The experience is not depicted as an ecstatic trance." Habel, "Call Narratives," 310.

[16] Meyers, *ABD 6*: 359.

[17] See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*.

[But] his feet did not reach the footstool;

his head did not come up to its top.

Then Athtar the Brilliant said:

'I shall not rule in the uttermost parts of Saphon!'" (KTU 1.6 i 56-62). [18]

It is not clear that the author is making this comparison to Athtar in either Isaiah 6:1 or 66:1, but the similarities are still noteworthy. The image of God that Isaiah describes is one where YHWH is present and ruling over both heaven and earth. It is apt then, that during the year of the death of the earthly king, Isaiah has a vision of the heavenly king (v. 5), both alive and in control of his realm.[19]

The seraphim speak amongst themselves saying, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts, and the earth is full of his glory!" (v. 3). This speech seems to happen irrespective of the presence of Isaiah, since he has yet to be acknowledged by the seraphim or YHWH, suggesting continual praise occurs in the heavenly realm regardless of interlopers. The seraphim's repetition of YHWH's holy (קדשׁ) status three times (v. 3), sets YHWH apart from all others by default.[20]

The temple structure shakes according to the voice (קול) of the seraphim speaking YHWH's praise, and smoke fills the house (בית) (v. 4). Smoke (עשׁן), tremors (נוע),[21] and fire (אשׁ/שׂרפ) are classic theophanic images in both the ANE and the Hebrew Bible.[22] The speaker is one of the "fiery ones" (שׂרפים), thus adding to the theophanic language through acknowledging fire as part of YHWH's entourage (cf. Gen. 15:17; Ex.3:1-14; 13:21; 14:24; 19:16-25; Num 11:13; Deut. 9:10; Psa. 18:8; 29:7; 104:4). When combined with the mention of YHWH's glory (כבוד) filling the earth (v. 3), and the temple structure implied through the terms "house" (בית) and the

[18] All KTU citations from: Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*.

[19] Childs, *Isaiah*, 55.

[20] The triple holy is a superlative, conveying that YHWH is the holiest of that which is holy. cf. Gehman, "Ruler of the Universe," 269-281.

[21] The seraphim's speech causes the tremors in the house, not YHWH as per the norm of theophanic events.

[22] Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 169.

"foundations" of its "thresholds" (אמות הספים) (v. 4), these two verses (vv. 3-4) become the subsection that contains the most imagery associated with the presence of YHWH in the chapter.

All of these sensory aspects in the vision of Isaiah strongly denote the presence of YHWH, while continuing to disclose very little about YHWH himself.[23] Thus we see the literary significance of the description of YHWH's surroundings aiding our understanding of this theophanic encounter. The spatial aspects highlight YHWH's manifestation as wholly consuming. He is both high aloft the throne, and low filling the temple. His glory as reported through the seraphim emanates out from the temple to inhabit the breadth of the earth. While YHWH's appearance is substituted in the text by the descriptions of his dwelling, the imagery used by the author is the same as that which customarily identifies YHWH's presence in the OT (cf. Ex. 19:16-25).[24]

3.2. Isaiah's Commission (vv. 8-13)

When Isaiah's commission is revealed, his role is focused through word repetition. The repeated verbs: hear (שׁמע) and see (ראה), coupled with the sensory organs: eyes (עיניו), ears (אזניו), hearts (לבב), combine to highlight Isaiah's mission of obduracy (vv. 9-10). He is told to speak to the people, telling them to continue hearing but not understanding (שׁמעו שׁמוע ואל-תבנו) and to continue seeing but not perceiving (תדעו-וראו ראו ואל) (v. 9). YHWH then commands Isaiah to dull the people's heart (לב-העם השׁמן), make their ears heavy (ואזניו הכשׁד), and blind their eyes (ועיניו השׁע), so that they would not see with their eyes (פן-יראה בעיניו), hear with their ears (ובאזניו ישׁמע), or understand with their hearts (ולבבו יבין) (v. 10). The repetition of language in YHWH's judgment undoubtedly highlights the author's purpose and exposes his concerns with the lack of attention to YHWH's will.[25]

The structure of v. 10 reinforces YHWH's concerns:

A dull heart

[23] Cf. Landy, "Strategies of Concentration," 61–62.
[24] See fn. 22.
[25] Goldingay, "The Theology of Isaiah," 185.

B heavy ears
C blind eyes
C not see with their eyes
B not hear with their ears
A not understand with their hearts

The mirror-image structuring of the content places sight at the core of the verse, which is somewhat ironic in a theophanic vision.[26] The result of this repetition and structure exposes the difficult task placed before Isaiah. "The prophet is a non-prophet, whose mission is not to communicate; the experience, so intensely realised, is correspondingly obfuscated and mystified."[27]

It may be of benefit to assess another biblical instance of obduracy found in the book of Exodus when YHWH hardens the Pharaoh.[28] Isaiah's commission to be a prophet of obduracy may then be understood if interpreted through YHWH's hardening of Pharaoh in Exodus 7:1-5, and through the context of Isaiah 1-5 which lead to this theophany. In Exodus, YHWH tells Moses he will harden (קשׁה) Pharaoh in order to work signs and wonders in Egypt, so that through his great judgment (גדלים בשׁפטים) the Egyptians would know that, "I am YHWH" (7:3-4). Though a different verb is used here in Ex. 7:15, the same verb (כבד) which is used in Isa. 6 to refer to the hardening of the people, is also used in other places regarding Pharaoh's hardening (cf. Ex. 7:14; 8:15,32; 9:7,34; 10:1; 1 Sam 6:6). The three different verbs used to describe hardening in the MT: קשׁה/כבד/חזק, all seem to carry the same connotation and thus should be understood synonymously when referring to the act of obduracy.[29] Hardening becomes a leitmotif in Exodus, giving structural form to the event of Exodus. The structure of the leitmotif of the hardening of Pharaoh concludes with YHWH hardening the hearts (מחזק את-לב) of the Egyptians, to be glorified (ואכבדה) over them (Ex. 14:17). This final act of hardening against the Egyptians in Exodus

[26] Cf. Landy, "Vision and Voice in Isaiah," 22, "Seeing is correlated with a failure of insight."
[27] Landy, "Strategies of Concentration," 60.
[28] Cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 102, who acknowledges the parallel of the hardening in Exodus, but thinks it does little to help us understand the call to harden in Isaiah 6.
[29] Hesse, *TDOT 4*: 301–8; Cf. Westermann, *TLOT 2*: 590–602; van der Woude, *TLOT 1*: 403–6; van der Woude, *TLOT 3*: 1175–76; Dohmen and Stenmans, *TDOT 7*: 13–21; Zipor, *TDOT 13*: 189–95.

causes the Egyptians, their chariots, and their horsemen to be consumed by the sea as they pursue the Israelites (14:26).

YHWH spares Pharaoh and his people (9:15) to display his strength to the Egyptians and to cause his name to be praised in all the earth (9:16). YHWH's hardening of Pharaoh guarantees the judgment that will befall Egypt, and the subsequent acknowledgment of YHWH's supremacy.[30] In a wider view of the Exodus narrative, the author explicitly confirms Pharaoh's ignorance of Joseph (לֹא-יָדַע אֶת-יוֹסֵף) (Ex. 1:8), the Hebrew man who saved Egypt from famine through YHWH's intervention (Gen. 41).[31] This lack of knowledge is what sets the stage for the enslavement of Israel (vv. 10-11) and is the catalyst for divine judgment.[32]

Isaiah's commission to harden his people may find meaning in a similar light. The obduracy of the Exodus is centered around a foreign regime for the purpose of liberating YHWH's chosen people. Is it possible to compare the obduracy of a foreign nation to that of YHWH's chosen people? This leads into the wider context of Isaiah 1-5. As noted earlier, YHWH has witnessed the misdeeds of the people:[33] "Their speech and their deeds are against YHWH, rebelling against the presence of his glory" (3:8). Further, YHWH declares his people do not know him (יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע) (Isa. 1:3), and are estranged (נָזְרוּ) from him (v. 4). This concept of sin and estrangement is prevalent across the first five chapters of Isaiah (Isa. 1:15-16, 19-23, 29-31; 2:11, 17-19; 3:5-12, 15-16; 5:7-12, 18-24). Indeed, Isaiah 1:7-10 compares daughter-Zion to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, with YHWH directly addressing the inhabitants of Zion as if they were inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

That YHWH considers the people of his holy dwelling place as no different than those of the cities he destroyed for their corrupt ways (Gen. 19) is astonishing. In essence, the rhetoric of the passage suggests that the people of Zion/Jerusalem are in

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[30] Cf. Ford, "Whose Explanation?," 185; Grossman, "Ten Plagues Narrative," 588–610.
[31] Ford, "Whose Explanation?," 13.
[32] See: Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile,* ch. 2: "Old Promise, New King," where the literary structure of Ex. 1 develops the rationale for the Exodus event, contrasting Pharaoh against the Israelites and YHWH.
[33] Cf. Webb, *On Eagles' Wings*, 61; Darr, *Family of God*, 60.

YHWH's eyes foreigners opposed to his will and worthy of annihilation, even to the point of calling them his adversaries (צרי) and enemies (אויבי) (Isa. 1:24). So too, as Pharaoh and the Egyptians failed to acknowledge YHWH, to the point of being referred to as YHWH's enemy (אויב) (Ex. 15:6), now his own people have done the same and will be hardened accordingly to make certain YHWH's judgment will take place.[34]

This works well with the apparent play on words in Isa. 6:10, which also contextualizes Isaiah's vision experience (vv. 1-7) with his commission. Isaiah reports hearing the seraphim declare the whole earth full of YHWH's glory (כבוד) (v. 3). The verbal form of the term describing YHWH's glory means, "to make heavy" (כבד).[35] I believe it is no coincidence that the verbal form is used to describe Isaiah's task to make the peoples heart "heavy" (כבד). This link to YHWH's presence on earth may be at the core of the judgment. The people have failed to acknowledge the earth they dwell on is full of YHWH's glory (cf. Isa. 3:8; 6:3), so YHWH will judge their ignorance accordingly.[36]

Naturally, Isaiah asks how long he must perform the task of a non-prophet (v. 11).[37] YHWH's answer is also relayed through the literary technique of the repetition of a theme of emptiness. The desertion of the land is emphasized: cities will be waste (אם-שׁאו ערים) and without occupants (מאין יושׁב), the houses will not contain people (ובתים מאין אדם), and the land will be desolate and waste (והאדמה תשׁאה שׁממה) (v. 11). YHWH will remove the people far away (ורחק יהוה את-האדם), and many places in the midst of the land will be forsaken (ורבה העזובה בקרב הארץ) (v. 12). This

[34] Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 83; Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 23–24.
[35] Weinfeld, *TDOT 7*: 22–37; Collins, *NIDOTTE*: 577–87; Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 181. The appearance of YHWH's glory is not an abstract quality, but indicates a substantival manifestation.
[36] Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 52; Aitken, "Hearing and Seeing," 25.
[37] Landy, "Strategies in Isaiah 6," 74,"'How long, my Lord' obviously contrasts with 'Here I am, send me.'"

emptiness stands in contrast to the fullness of the YHWH's theophany.[38] The hem of YHWH's robe fills the temple (וְשׁוּלָיו מְלֵאִים אֶת-הַהֵיכָל) (v. 1), the whole earth is full of his glory (מְלֹא שׁ֥ל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ) (v. 3), and the 'house' is filled with smoke (יִמָּלֵא עָשָׁן וְהַבַּיִת) (v. 4). This contrast of desolation and fullness is further evidence of the use of spatial awareness. The breadth of desolation mirrors the breadth of the emanation of YHWH's glory, and emphasizes the wayward focus of the people.

3.3. Summary

YHWH's manifestation in Isaiah 6 serves several purposes. On a practical level, his overwhelming presence in the temple (v. 1) and his glory throughout the earth (v. 3) are the precedent for his judgment against the people. Isaiah has seen for himself the realized manifestation of YHWH' glory, and thus confirms YHWH's presence on earth. YHWH has not turned a blind eye to his people's sin, but rather confirms to Isaiah through the theophanic event that he has been present to witness the people's shortcomings. YHWH's testimony becomes all the evidence required for his judgment of hardening to be implemented. Since Isaiah is YHWH's representative to the people, he must be able to confirm YHWH's presence as absolute to the people in order to justify the judgment, and thus it also serves to legitimate his prophetic vocation.

It is only logical that YHWH's theophany is portrayed in accordance with other OT theophanic images like fire, smoke, the temple, and quaking. These images are further evidence that it is indeed YHWH who is declaring this judgment. In the context of YHWH's appearance to judge the people's sins, there could be no better entourage for YHWH than the one accompanying him to the giving of the Decalogue at Sinai (Ex. 19-20). Just as YHWH arrived to declare the Law to the people then, so now he is manifest in the same manner to condemn their shortcomings.

[38] See Snijders, *TDOT 8*: 297–307, For discussion on YHWH's glory filling spaces; cf. *BDB*, 570, The term used to describe YHWH's glory "filling" the earth connotates "abundance" in a variety of instances in the HB, such as full winepresses or jars of water, populating the land and sea, etc.

4. Significance in the Context of Isaiah

The different descriptions of the theophany of YHWH in the book of Isaiah consistently draw on the themes and imagery of the theophany in Isaiah 6. These applications are found in circumstances of judgment. Judgment in these instances brings with it the acknowledgement of YHWH and his authority, and salvation for his people from Isaiah's commission of hardening. In this section, we will discuss how viewing YHWH's glory is developed throughout the rest of the book of Isaiah as a leitmotif, specifically in terms of the reversal of Isaiah's commission in ch. 6. Quinn-Miscall notes the frequent use of imagery as a leitmotif in the book of Isaiah which, "hold the disparate parts and themes of the vision together."[39] This section will focus on Isaiah 35, 40, 60, 66, where the recurrence of the visual presence of YHWH's glory (כבד) is confirmed in the text, and coupled with the leitmotif of obduracy.

4.1. Acknowledging YHWH's Glory

Isa. 35 continues the description of the theme of the day of YHWH from 34:8.[40] The day of YHWH is both in this context, and more generally across the Hebrew bible as an eschatological arrival of YHWH on earth to both judge and renew earth and its inhabitants according to his will.[41] In Isaiah 35, during the day of YHWH, the glory of YHWH will be seen by the nations (v. 2). Once this has happened the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unplugged (v. 5). "If disobedient Israel had earlier been characterized as having eyes, but not able to see, as having ears, but not able to hear, when God comes to save his people, then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be opened."[42] The glory which fills the earth (Isa. 6:3) is now not only acknowledged through the seraphim and the prophet, but indeed through all of creation, making clear that spiritual renewal is intrinsically tied to the coming of the glory of YHWH.[43] The promised calamity of Isaiah 6:11-13 is

[39] Quinn-Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, 42.
[40] Childs, *Isaiah*, 257.
[41] See: Hiers, *ABD 2*: 82–83.
[42] Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 441.
[43] Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf*, 165.

reversed to such a degree that YHWH's presence on Zion, the eschatological dwelling place of YHWH,[44] is now acknowledged even by those who were deaf and blind.[45]

The appearance of YHWH's glory is not only associated with the reversal of divine hardening, but also directly connected to YHWH's relationship with the earth. In 35:2, a parallel sentence structure introduces an intriguing theology. The glory (כבוד) of Lebanon and the splendour (הדר) of Carmel and Sharon are given to the desert and the wilderness (v. 2a). The desert and wilderness see YHWH's glory (כבוד), and the splendour (הדר) of God (v. 2b). This verse then offers restoration to the wilderness through the glory (כבוד) and splendor (הדר) of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon, which is equated to the glory (כבוד) and majesty (הדר) of YHWH.

Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon are all references to regional and fertile mountains or mountain ranges in the ANE,[46] and are mentioned in Isa. 33:9 in the context of shame, withering, and becoming a desert-like region. Two of these regions mentioned are associated with the presence of other ANE deities. Lebanon, (the mountain of cedars) is said to be the home of the gods (specifically the storm-god Mēr =Adad)[47] in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Tablet 5:6),[48] while Carmel is the location where YHWH and Baal battle for the control of the rains (1 Kgs. 18).[49] Conversely, Lebanon is also the place where Solomon gathers the cedars to build the temple of YHWH (1 Kgs. 5:6-14).

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[44] See: Mare, *ABD 6*: 1096–97; cf. Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf*, 20–21, who draws the link of the cosmic mountain (Zion/the mountain of YHWH) with the eschatological victory and reign of the warrior god-king in ANE tradition where the mountain is intrinsically linked to the ability to rule and a sign of the safety of the realm.

[45] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 540–41; Quinn-Miscall, *Isaiah*, 87.

[46] Smith, *ABD 4*: 269–70.

[47] See: Dossin, "Inscriptions de Fondation Provenant de Mari," 156–57; It should also be noted here that Adad/Hadad and Baal were either the same weather god or two separate traditions that eventually merged into referencing the same deity. Either way, the end result is that the Mountain of Cedars/Lebanon was the abode of a storm-god. Herrmann, *DDD*: 132–39.

[48] All citations of The Epic of Gilgamesh taken from: George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*; cf. Mulder, *TDOT 7*:447–57, Lebanon is specifically mentioned in the Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

[49] This mountain is also historically linked to the worship of an uncertain ANE god. See: Mulder, *TDOT 7*:325–36.

I believe the theology of the passage requires all of these things for contextual clarity. Whether they have been observed as cultic locales associated with deities opposed to YHWH or as a fertile region providing materials to construct YHWH a temple, their judgment is analogous to the fertile becoming a barren desert or those with eyes and ears becoming deaf and blind. It is not the presence of other deities or YHWH's cultic abode, "The House of the Forest of Lebanon" (1 Kgs 10:21), that restores the land and heals the people, but the presence of YHWH. Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon are restored by the coming of YHWH, transforming from the deserted and wilderness state of their judgment into fertile regions once more (35:6-7). This revival is for the purpose of the salvation of YHWH's people, a highway named the Way of Holiness (ודרך הקדשׁ) on which YHWH's ransomed will return to Zion (vv. 9-10) in a new-Exodus type event.[50]

While the return to Zion is the goal of the passage, the restoration of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon which now claim the presence of YHWH like Zion, also rejoice with joy (ותגל אף גילת) and singing (ורנן) (v. 2). The verb sing (רנן) is the same word used elsewhere in Isaiah for praising YHWH's visible return to Zion (52:8) and by creation for the redemption of his people (42:10-11; 44:23; 49:13; 51:11; 54:1). That Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon are able to rejoice in the theophanic presence of YHWH and the restoration associated with it, infers a theological renewal where YHWH's presence and unmediated access is universal, and just as accessible here as it is in Zion. Further, if places of foreign cultic worship which were decimated by YHWH, are now visited by his glory and have become a highway that will return exiles to Zion, then the certainty of YHWH's ability and will to bring salvation to his people is absolute, that they might also sing (רנן) with joy for their return to Zion (35:10).

YHWH's glory (כבוד) becomes a universal symbol of restoration and renewal for the entire earth, where the presence of his glory not only leads his chosen people on a new-Exodus but restores the desert and wilderness as well. All of the earth is

[50] Cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 453.

now able to call YHWH's glory their own, having been redeemed by YHWH's presence throughout it. The glory (כבוד) of Lebanon is the glory (כבוד) of YHWH and the splendour (הדר) of Carmel and Sharon is the splendour (הדר) of God. By combining the restoration of all the earth and the blind and deaf, Isaiah 35 reimagines the theophany of Isaiah 6 for the universal acknowledgement of YWHH's deliverance.

Isaiah 40 is the beginning of Deutero-Isaiah, a new section of the book of Isaiah with an overarching motif declaring the end of YHWH's judgment. Like ch. 35, it invokes an eschatological tone for the coming of YHWH (v. 8), emphasizing that judgment has ceased (v. 2).[51] This text focuses on the preparations for YHWH's arrival (vv. 3-4) and highlights YHWH as the source of strength for those weary from the judgment that has come to an end (vv. 28-31). In Isa. 40:1-5, Israel is pardoned for its iniquity (נרצה עונה) (v. 2), since YHWH's hand has given her punishment for her sins twice over (בכל חטאתיה) (v. 3). This forgiveness is coupled with the revelation of YHWH's glory (כבוד יהוה) seen by all flesh (וראו כל בשׂר) (v. 5).[52]

Once again this expands the theophanic imagery of Isaiah 6:3 where only the seraphim conceive of the breadth of YHWH's glory. Now, all flesh acknowledges YHWH's glory.[53] Furthermore, it is in the context of seeing the glory of YHWH that the prophet is depicted as having his iniquity (עון) and sin (חטא) forgiven (6:5-7), and the same lexical roots are applied to the iniquity and sin of Israel in 40:2-3, thus drawing a further parallel to the setting of forgiveness in the presence of YHWH's glory (כבד). The voice crying out in wilderness in v. 3 recalls the cry of the seraphim in Isa. 6, implying that those who were blind to YHWH and his purpose are now echoing the praise of YHWH spread across the earth.[54] This also suggests that the presence of YHWH in Isaiah 40 brings with it the reversal of Isaiah's prophetic commissioning of hardening the people.

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[51] Cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 301.

[52] Lund, *Way Metaphors*, 76. Kābôd imagery is key to the passage; Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf*, 171. The imagery here is identical to 35:1-10.

[53] Oswalt, *Isaiah: 40-66*, 52; Childs, *Isaiah*, 299.

[54] Ibid, 51.

The theme of spatial awareness associated with the presence of YHWH in Isaiah 6 recurs here in Isaiah 40 with new theological dimensions. The valleys are lifted up (נשׂא) while the mountains and hills are made low (שׁפל) (v. 4). The cosmic reshuffling of creation suggests that the theology of the passage is equally dimension altering. Zion is ordered to go up to a high mountain (על הר-גבה) and exult (הרימי) its voice in proclaiming: "Behold, your God!" (הנה אלהיכם) (v. 9). This proclamation is made in the context of the proverbial red-carpet of the wilderness (מדבר) preparing a way for YHWH, and the desert (ערבה) being straightened as a highway for God (v. 3). The mention of wilderness (מדבר) and desert (ערבה) is most certainly an image of a reimagined Exodus, and either a spiritual or a literal return from exile.[55] Where YHWH's presence was associated with the commission of obduracy and spiritual separation in Isaiah 6, now YHWH's presence heralds the coming (יבוא) of YHWH to shepherd and lead his people to safety (vv. 10-12).[56]

The reordered creation has no effect on the exulted position of YHWH who is seated above the circle of the earth (הישׁב על-חוג הארץ) (v. 22). YHWH is seen through lifted eyes (שׂאו-מרום עיניכם וראו) (v. 26) and is called the everlasting God and the creator of the ends of the earth (אלהי עולם יהוה בורא קצות הארץ) (v. 28). Like his status in Isaiah 6, YHWH remains the highest point in the scene, pictured not only as one who controls all below him (cf. Isa. 6), but as their creator as well. Those who wait on YHWH to renew their strength are lifted up (יעלו) on wings like eagles (v. 29) (cf. Ex. 19:4). This echo of YHWH's protection and inclusion from the Exodus evokes an intimacy between YHWH and his chosen people. Like the prophet who is invited into the presence of YHWH in Isaiah 6, now any faithful person is invited to experience the exulted YHWH. The difficult theological position of the prophet's commission of obduracy was related in terms of spatial awareness, and now here in Isaiah 40 it is

[55] Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 74.

[56] Cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 89, YHWH coming with a "mighty arm" may be a linguistic link to YHWH's rescue of his people from Egypt.

only fitting that reunion with YHWH and the end of punishment, and coincidentally obduracy, be relayed in similar terms.

Isaiah 60 details the eschatological hope for the people and land of Israel. In Isa. 60, YHWH's glory (כבוד) has risen over and is seen resting on Zion (vv. 1-2).[57] Foreigners will build up their walls (v. 10) and YHWH will make the place of his feet, his sanctuary (מקדשׁ), glorious (כבד) (v. 13).[58] In Isaiah 6, the place of YHWH's feet is the temple, but now in Isa. 60, it is the city of YHWH (v. 14). This city will be called, "Zion, Holy One of Israel" (ציון קדושׁ ישׂראל) (v. 14). The theological implication of YHWH not dwelling in the temple specifically but rather a sanctified city is profound. It is no less than the abandonment of the cultic locale established since the construction of the temple, inferring a new theological era has arrived where YHWH's interaction will not come through the temple priests, but through his direct interaction and unmediated presence in and with Zion and her inhabitants.

Classically, the personified Zion, "is an image of the unity between place and people within which divine favor and civilization create a setting of stability and home."[59] This dual use of the image to represent either a people, place, or both, is the result of different books of the Hebrew Bible applying the image for their own rhetorical aims. Low's exploration of the personified Zion in the latter chapters of Isaiah convincingly argues that the Zion of the Isaiah tradition refers to a physical place, and not the people.[60] In fact, the "people" of the city are not mentioned until the final two verses of the chapter (vv. 21-22).

Reminiscent of the access to YHWH experienced by the prophet in the temple in Isaiah 6, the entire city seems to become the place where heaven meets earth. That YHWH "glorifies" the city Zion and not the people directly, "affirms YHWH's sovereignty," in order to demonstrate that the inhabitants are not superior to the

[57] The addressee of Isaiah 60 is "you" (2 fem. sing.) until identified as the city of Zion in v. 14.
[58] Cf. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 866.
[59] Follis, *ABD 6*: 1103.
[60] Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah*.

surrounding nations.[61] This is made explicit through the first twenty verses as all the blessings from the nations are directed to the city of Zion and not its inhabitants.

Making his sanctuary glorious is obviously for YHWH's own sake, but it also ultimately benefits Zion and its inhabitants. The glory (תפארה)[62] of YHWH will be Zion's everlasting source of light (vv. 19-20) and is seemingly unmediated.[63] It is important to note that while the people are ultimately the beneficiaries of YHWH's favour upon Zion, they are clearly identified as only beneficiaries as YHWH still directly addresses Zion and refers to the inhabitants in the third-person. This crucial method of blessing by association would be a stark reminder that the city's inhabitants must behave according to the standard of the glorified city.[64]

The theme of spatial awareness reoccurs here as well, with the breadth of YHWH illuminating the city (vv. 19-20). This implies that the people who were once unaware of this presence now have no need of any other source of light. The reapplication of YHWH's revealed glory from Isa. 6 is now evident in YHWH's consecrated rulership of Zion and reunion with his people.[65] YHWH's presence brought obduracy and the promise of destruction in Isaiah 6, but now it is the presence of YHWH that causes Israel to function as the reimagined centre of the earth. YHWH's glory (כבוד) is the city's light (אור) (v. 1), and this light (אור) is what brings the nations to Israel and Jerusalem to bless them (v. 3). The land that housed a people who could not see or hear YHWH has become the cultic centre of sacrificial offering to YHWH for all the nations (v. 7). The eschatological tone of the text is exemplified through the repeated use of the term "forever" (עולם). YHWH is their everlasting light (לאור עולם) (vv. 19-20), the people are given a promise that they will all be righteous (ועמך כלם צדיקים) and possess the land forever (לעולם יירשו ארץ), all in order for YHWH to be glorified (להתפאר) (v. 21). Possessing the land forever is a stark contrast

[61] Ibid, 149.
[62] See: *BDB*, 802, this term is used to denote the glory of the heavenly temple in Isaiah 60:7; 63:15.
[63] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 867.
[64] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 218; Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66*, 280.
[65] Ibid, 211; cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 496.

to the status of those who were promised judgment through their removal from the land in Isaiah 6 (vv. 11-13). The everlasting presence of YHWH and the permanent possession of the land for the people of Israel not only reverses and restores the people from judgment, but promises their renewed status and behaviour will be as everlasting as YHWH's presence among them.

In Isaiah 66, YHWH declares that heaven is his throne (השמים כסאי) and the earth is his footstool (והארץ הדם רגלי) (v. 1), in an almost certain reference to the vision of Isaiah 6.[66] However, YHWH distances himself from the image of his reign as connected to the temple, asking, "what is this house (בית) that you would build for me? What is my place of rest?" (v. 1). After rejecting traditional offerings made in the temple (v. 3), a sound comes from the temple (קול מהיכל) (v. 6).[67] However, this sound is YHWH (קול יהוה) arriving to rebuke in fire (v. 15) and to judge in fire (v. 16). This combination of temple locale and the judgment of YHWH is reminiscent of Isaiah 6, but its application is significantly different. Here YHWH's enemies (v. 6) are those who are found in the temple.[68] They offer sacrifices which YHWH considers to be as an offering of pig's blood (v. 3), a practice forbidden by YHWH as the pig is designated as an unclean animal (Lev. 11:7). They are people whom YHWH called (קראתי) and spoke to (דברתי) but who did not listen (ולא שמעו) (v. 4), reminiscent of those afflicted by the commission of obduracy in Isaiah 6. YHWH's rejection of the temple in favour of Zion (v. 8) and Jerusalem (v. 10) is comparable to the desire of YHWH to dwell in the city with his people in Isaiah 60 and may therefore have the same theological thrust.

After this judgment, people come to see YHWH's glory (וראו כבודי) (v. 18), and YHWH says his glory will be declared among the nations (והגידו את-כבודי בגוים) in a seemingly everlasting state (v. 19).[69] The nations return the people of Israel to Zion as

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[66] *Ibid*, 295.
[67] Childs, *Isaiah*, 541.
[68] *Ibid*, 540.
[69] Ortlund, *Theophany and Chaoskampf*, 185.

an offering to YHWH (v. 20),[70] and some of those gathered from the nations become priests to YHWH (v. 21). The image of YHWH seated on high in Isaiah 6 brought hardening to the people, but now the same depiction of YHWH brings the hope of a renewed Israel.[71] The imagery mirrors the dimensional focus of Isaiah 6, with YHWH once again high aloft a throne, his feet resting on the earth, and his glory emanating out across the earth, but now YHWH's temple is the city of Zion. The people becoming offerings to YHWH (66:20) also parallels Isaiah's lips cleansed with a coal from the altar (6:5-7) to serve YHWH's purposes, as evidenced by YHWH making some of them priests in service to him in Zion (66:21). Now too, the returned remnant is described as a cultic offering for YHWH's will. If YHWH was set to renew heaven and earth (65:16-17), then the image of his enthronement hearkening back to Isa. 6:1 brings with it a renewal of the purpose of this image.[72] Just as the restoration of heaven and earth will remain (עמדים) before YHWH, so will this status of the restored Israel and her generations remain (יעמד) (v. 22). Zion is the place where all flesh will come to worship YHWH (v. 23), confirming that YHWH has indeed restored Zion to such an extent that the city has become his eschatological temple.

5. Conclusion

The frequent reference to the visual confirmation of the glory of YHWH in the book of Isaiah indicates how integral the vision of chapter 6 is to the rest of the book of Isaiah. YHWH's theophany becomes a leitmotif in Isaiah, exposing theological and eschatological hope.

The theophany of Isaiah 6 observed through the lens of the rest of the book of Isaiah begins to unravel the mystery of Isaiah's commission as a non-prophet. The depiction of the people's religious health is congruent with spiritual blindness, despite the presence of YHWH's glory filling the earth from his locale enthroned in Israel. The

[70] Cf. Tiemeyer, "Death or Conversion," The nations will be destroyed if they do not comply with Yahwistic worship.
[71] Chan, "Isaiah 65-66," 462; cf. Schuele, "Who Is the True Israel?," 176, "This new world occurs only in one place, namely around God's holy mountain (Zion)."
[72] Childs, *Isaiah*, 537.

restoration of Israel as depicted by the book of Isaiah thus hinges on the people's return to acknowledging the presence of YHWH. This will ensure that they will dwell in the land with their holy God, graciously reigning from the cultic locale on Zion where heaven meets earth, making Zion an eschatological temple-city.

Earlier we argued that the commission of hardening in Isaiah 6 might be best understood through the lens of Pharaoh's hardening in the Exodus. Just as YHWH's intent for hardening Pharaoh was to make his name known through all the earth (Ex. 7:3-4), now in the book of Isaiah the reversal of Isaiah's commission hinges upon the acknowledgment of YHWH's glory being known throughout the earth (Isa. 35:2; 40:1-5; 60:2; 66:18-19). The visual recognition of glory in Isaiah 6, and indeed the rest of the book is then the rhetorical explanation of the ideal national and global receptivity to YHWH.

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