PhD Project Overview

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This project will explore the literary function and theological significance of viewing the manifest YHWH, what it means in the immediate context, the wider context of the book in which it is found, and in the wider prophetic tradition. In other words, why do the texts of Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1:25-3:15; 11:1-25; 43:1-12, Micah 1, Habakkuk 3 and Zechariah 9; 14, which share several thematic characteristics, all use theophany as a literary device? To my knowledge, no monograph currently pursues this question. Given that the prevailing process of transmitting oracular material in the prophetic tradition is completed through verbal interaction between YHWH and the prophet, this departure from standard protocol is worthy of exploration.

This project will use a synchronic method, or more specifically, literary criticism, to explore the aforementioned texts. The proposed texts are not always considered historical narratives, but they are in their own way 'narrative.' This means that they tell a story, drawing the reader into a world, whether historically evident or not, through the use of vivid imagery and literary techniques which advance the plotline of the text.[1] This method takes the view that the text, even one such as the Hebrew Bible that is constructed from many different sources and traditions, is in its current form compiled as a completed work.[2] I therefore intend to analyse and assess the text as a narrative which employs literary techniques and specific language, to determine the way these techniques develop the rhetorical aims.[3]

Since this project is centrally focused on imagery and motif surrounding the manifest YHWH, the dissertation lends itself to a method of analysis that approaches the text as literature. The project will work primarily from the final form of the MT, consulting other versions when significant textual variants arise.

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[1] Cf. Dutcher-Walls, *Jezebel,* 1–2; Bodner, *After the Invasion*, 5–6.
[2] Mitchell, "Rhetorical and New Literary Criticism," 626.
[3] Exum and Clines, *New Literary Criticism,* 15–16.

Paper Summary

This paper explores the literary and theological implications of YHWH's manifest glory (כבד) and Isaiah's commission of obduracy in Isaiah 6 to the rest of the book of Isaiah. It focuses on Isaiah 35, 40, 60 and 66, texts where the leitmotifs of YHWH's glory and obduracy are prevalent. Isaiah 6 sees YHWH manifest in the temple in Jerusalem with classic OT theophanic images like fire, smoke, and quaking. This ultimately identifies him as none other than Israel's God, authenticating his right to pronounce judgment against his people and subsequently legitimates Isaiah's vocation as a prophet of judgment. Isaiah is commissioned as a prophet of obduracy; to harden the people and to ensure judgment will take place.

The outworking of the visual manifestation of YHWH's glory (כבד) in Isaiah 6 and in Isaiah 35, 40, 60, and 66 now brings eschatological hope through the reversal of obduracy. YHWH is no longer manifest in the temple as portrayed in Isaiah 6, but rather is now seen over the nations and in Zion. The depiction of the people's religious health in Isaiah 6 is congruent with spiritual blindness, despite the presence of YHWH's glory filling the earth from his locale enthroned in Israel. The 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.

The joint leitmotifs of YHWH's glory and obduracy expose a universal theology in which Zion becomes the place where YHWH's presence is manifest, and his blessing is transferred to all the earth. 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 in the rest of the book is then the rhetorical explanation of the ideal national and global receptivity to YHWH.