

A Re-interpretation of Zion in Isaiah 62:1–5 Focusing on the Personification of Queen Zion

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a contextual, literary and theological interpretation of the theme of Zion in Isa 62:1–5 that focuses on the rhetorical and intertextual implications of Queen Zion. The method explicates the logical interrelationship and theological meaning of three enigmatic motifs in this passage—crown, renaming and marriage—within the literary and canonical context of the book of Isaiah. The study uses the mirror text theory adopted by Willem A. M. Beuken in Isaianic interpretation to consider the appearance of Queen Zion with these three conspicuous motifs. It is argued that Queen Zion retrospectively reflects the female Zion in Isa 1:7 (a daughter Zion) and 49:14–21 (an abandoned wife and childless mother) and prospectively foreshadows her in Isa 66:7–14 (a glorious mother). Furthermore, this study demonstrates that Isa 62:1–5 functions as a mirror text in the book of Isaiah and demonstrates how we conceive the reading of Isaiah as a unified whole.

KEYWORDS: Isaiah, Zion, Queen Zion, personification

A INTRODUCTION

Several scholars have explored the exegetical conundrum of how to interlink logically the three enigmatic motifs of the crown, renaming and marriage in Isa 62:2–5 within its historical and social context. For instance, Joseph Blenkinsopp argues, “somewhat different interpretations emerge when we focus on the linking of the themes of renaming, crowning, and espousals or marriage [in 62:1–5...] This complex image is not in all respects internally self-consistent.”¹ To address this issue, David T. Andersen clarifies the logical interconnectedness of the three motifs by postulating that the ancient Israelite wedding ceremony was

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¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 236–237.

behind Isa 62:1–5 and effectively demonstrated that Zion was personified as a glorious royal queen.² Nonetheless, several others have examined specifically the symbolic implications of the crown in 62:3 common in ancient Near Eastern literature, arguing that it metaphorically highlights Zion's splendid glory as a capital city.³ Following the main tenets of historical criticism, these studies have revealed the significance of 62:1–5 by illuminating ancient Israel's socio-cultural context and the symbolic implication of the particular ornament behind this text. Nevertheless, no study has deeply explored the literary and theological implications of Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 in relation to these three conspicuous motifs within its immediate context and the book of Isaiah. Thus, this study conducts a contextual, literary, and theological interpretation of the theme of Zion in 62:1–5 by focusing on the rhetorical and intertextual implications of Queen Zion along with the three puzzling motifs within the literary and canonical context of the book of Isaiah. Specifically, using the mirror text theory, this study explicates the rhetorical and theological role of Queen Zion and three motifs in Isa 62:1–5 by focusing on her intertextual relationship with other references to female Zion in 1:7–9 (Daughter Zion), 49:14–21 (the Abandoned Wife and Childless Mother) and 66:7–14 (the glorious Mother Zion). Subsequently, it reveals the literary and theological implications of the three motifs.

This article comprises four parts. The first part explains the mirror text theory, the core methodology of this study, which will establish the overall framework of this study and work to clarify the role of Isa 62:1–5. The second section presents a detailed discussion of how 62:1–5 personifies female Zion as a splendid queen and its literary and canonical connotations. The third section explains the three female Zions and their respective implications—daughter Zion (1:7–9), the abandoned wife and childless mother (49:14–21) and the glorious Mother Zion (66:7–14).⁴ Explicating the literary phenomenon of semantic

² David T. Andersen, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," *Biblica* 67 (1986):75–80; Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III: Isaiah 56–66* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 297–311; Paul V. Niskanen, "Who Is Going to Marry You? The Text of Isaiah 62:5," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 657–667.

³ Roger Norman, *Isaiah 40–66* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 245–255; John Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66* (ICC; London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 333–34; James Muilenburg, "Isaiah 40–66," in *The Interpreter's Bible 5: Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah* (ed. George A. Buttrick; New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 700–702.

⁴ The book of Isaiah has a rich theological message based on the diverse experiences of women's lives in the social and cultural context of ancient Israel. Through diverse female images, the book of Isaiah vividly delivers Zion's national calamities, sorrows and fears as well as eschatological restoration and salvation. See Paul E. Koptak, "Personification," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings* (ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 516–519; Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Mark E. Biddle, "The Figure of

dilation and semantic superimposition, two essential properties of a mirror text, the fourth part argues that Queen Zion along with three motifs in 62:1–5 retrospectively recalls female Zion in 1:7–9 and 49:14–21 and foreshadows female Zion in 66:7–14. Based on the aforementioned investigation, this study demonstrates that Queen Zion rhetorically provides the crucial clue—the reversal of Zion’s former fortune—for interpreting 62:1–5 as a mirror text in the book of Isaiah.

B THE MIRROR TEXT THEORY

A mirror text is a literary phenomenon whereby a text has ‘internal duplication’ and several diverse analogies at various junctures of the story that reflect on the overall narrative. In his exploration of the literary and theological function of Isa 33, Willem A. Beuken uses this notion to define Isa 33 as a mirror of the book of Isaiah.⁵ Beuken emphasises textual analogy and reflection as criteria of the mirror text: “First, textual analogies exist between our chapter and the entire book of Isaiah in both the preceding and subsequent passages. Therefore, Chapter 33 has both a retrospective and a prospective function in the overall structure of the book” (*my translation*).⁶ Owing to internal textual and thematic duplication, the mirror text produces at least two types of thematic reflections of the main narrative: (1) retrospective reflection that reflects the already completed story and (2) prospective reflection that reflects the story yet to come. Moreover, the mirror text strategically results in a new interpretative interpolation, thereby prompting a reader to re-interpret both the preceding and following texts from the vantage point of the mirror reflection.

Furthermore, the mirror text has at least two noteworthy literary and hermeneutical functions in the overall narrative. First, with the presentation of thematic duplication and variation, it makes *semantic dilation*. This is a literary feature in which significant terms, concepts, motifs and images converge. Lucien Dällenbach describes semantic dilation as something produced by semantic expansion through the accumulation of diverse themes, images and motifs.⁷

Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective: Scripture in Context IV* (ed. Lawson K. Younger, William W. Hallo Jr. and Bernard F. Batto; Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 173–194.

⁵ Willem A.M. Beuken, “Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 67 (1991): 5–35.

⁶ Beuken, „Jesaja 33,“ 10. Here is the original German text: „Erstens finden sich textliche Analogien zwischen unserem Kapitel und dem gesamten Jesajabuch sowohl in vorangehenden als auch daran anschließenden Textpassagen. Kap. 33 besitzt also sowohl eine retrospective als auch eine prospective Funktion im Gesamtaufbau des Buches.“

⁷ Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text* (trans. Jeremy Whitely; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 58–59.

Diverse thematic twists cause semantic amplification and transposition within the overall narrative, leading to the semantic confluence where several themes converge. Although not explicitly stated, Beuken points out semantic dilation in his article through eleven cases in which theme, motif and imagery in Isa 33 retrospectively and prospectively correspond to those in other texts of Isaiah, thereby demonstrating that it has thematic confluence in itself as a mirror text.⁸

Second, by overlapping its reflection onto the main narrative, the mirror text achieves *semantic superimposition*. Dällenbach explains that the mirror text functions as an explanatory note that superimposes critical clues and new synoptic perspectives onto the main narrative, defining this literary function as semantic superimposition.⁹ As a subtle flashback, the mirror text promptly results in "an initiatory impulse" and forces the reader to interpret the main narrative retrospectively and prospectively again.¹⁰ Positioning these simple, repeated or paradoxical duplications within the mirror text, the author articulates vital hints for the accurate construal of the overarching narrative. Thus, thematic superimposition operates to both clarify and intensify the story's main theme or implication. An example of this is Beuken's explanation of the double outlook in Isa 33:17–19 in which Yahweh's kingship (v. 17) retrospectively reflects His sitting on the splendid throne in Isaiah's vision (6:4) and simultaneously the downfall of the insolent people (v. 19) prospectively foreshadows the fall of Israel's enemies (65:13–15; 66:24). Beuken highlights that, compared with the description of Yahweh's kingship in 6:4, the description in 33:17–24 particularly underlines Yahweh's royal reign with his images of the mighty one, judge, lawgiver and king. In other words, although he does not mention semantic superimposition, Beuken indicates that 33:17 makes a semantic superimposition on the theme of Yahweh's kingship with the new layer of his royal reign. The double outlook in 33:17–19 then functions as a mirror text that foreshadows the end of history as described in the book of Isaiah, namely, the revelation of Yahweh's glory (66:18–23) and his judgment upon Israel's enemies (65:13–15; 66:5–6, 24).¹¹ As noted by André Gide, "nothing sheds more light on a narrative than its *mise en abyme* [mirror-reflexion]" in the narrative world.¹² Semantic dilation reveals the internal thematic arrangement of a mirror text, whereas

⁸ Beuken, „Jesaja 33,“ 12–25. For example, see enemy (33:1//21:2), hope, resolve, redemption (33:2//8:17; 25:9; 51:5; 59:11), God's intervention (33:3–4//30:27–33), justice and righteousness, wisdom, understanding, the fear of the Lord (33:5–6//11:2, 3, 4, 5, 9), God's rise (33:10//2:6–22), the sinners in Zion (33:14–16//1:12–17; 26:2–11) and God's kingship (33:17//6:4; 52:7–8).

⁹ Beuken, „Jesaja 33,“ 56–59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹² Quoted in Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, 55, from André Gide, *Journal 1889–1939* (Paris: Gallimard Pleiade, 1948), 41.

semantic superimposition reveals its semantic function to produce new implications for the whole narrative.

Adopting the mirror text theory in this study enables an interpreter to delve into an individual biblical text, Isa 62:1–5, and then expound its literary and theological functions in relation to the overall narrative plot of Isaiah.

C PERSONIFICATION OF ZION IN ISA 62:1–5: QUEEN ZION

Isaiah 56–66 (particularly chs. 60–62) deals with the eschatological restoration and glory of Zion; thus, these constitute the “rhetorical culmination” of the book of Isaiah.¹³ In particular, Isa 60 shows the external restoration of Zion with returning children, wealth and the rebuilding of the city whereas Isa 61 shows internal restoration with the transformation of Yahweh’s servants from diverse bondages. Then, concluding Isa 60–62, Isa 62 reaches the climax of 56–66 and highlights the eschatological and consummate restoration of Zion. Significantly, the first strophe (vv. 1–5) depicts the splendid restoration and prominence of the Zion among nations via the personified Queen Zion along with three conspicuous motifs.¹⁴

The portrayal of Queen Zion is seen in Isa 62:1–5, which reads:¹⁵

¹For Zion, I will not be still. For Jerusalem, I will not be silent. Until her righteousness moves forward like light, and her salvation burns like a torch light. ²All the nations will see your righteousness, and all the kings will see your glory. And you will be called by a new name that the mouth of Yahweh allows. ³And you are the beautiful crown in the hand of Yahweh. You will be a royal diadem in God’s hand. ⁴You will no longer be called an Abandoned woman (*‘azûbâ*), and your land will no longer be called a Desolate one (*šēmāmâ*). Rather, you will be called My joy is in her (*ḥepšî-ḥah*). Your land will be called a Married one (*b^eûlâ*). It is because Yahweh will be pleased with you, and your land will be like a married one. ⁵As a young man marries a virgin, so will your sons marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

In this text, Zion repeatedly appears with both the third person feminine singular suffix *šiqqah* and *yšû‘ātah* (v. 1) and the second person feminine singular suffix *šiqqēk*, *k^eḥôdēk*, *‘aršēk* and *bānāyik* (vv. 2, 4, 5), indicating that

¹³ Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66*, 46; S. L. Jeffrey, “Called to Proclaim Covenantal Transformation: A Text Linguistic Analysis of Isaiah 59:21–63:6” (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Deerfield, 1999), 85–153; Willem A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja Deel III A* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1989), 224–245.

¹⁴ In this study, Isa 62:1–12 consists of four main strophes: verses 1–5, 6–7, 8–9, and 10–12. See Jeffrey, “Called to Proclaim Covenantal Transformation,” 85–153; Beuken, *Jesaja Deel III A*, 224–245.

¹⁵ Translations are the author’s own unless otherwise noted.

it is personified as female. Zion's names in verse 4, *'azûbâ*, *šēmāmâ*, *ḥepšî-ḥah* and *b'ûlâ*, in the feminine participle form also substantiate Zion's female personification. Together with Queen Zion, the thematic interlinkage of the three core motifs is evident in this text.

The question to be considered is what literary and canonical significance does Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 convey along with three prominent motifs in its immediate context? To answer this, it is necessary to attend to the thematic reconceptualisation of the Davidic covenant in the book of Isaiah as described specifically by Marven A. Sweeney.¹⁶ According to Sweeney, the overall plot of Isaiah shows a process of reconceptualising the Davidic covenant. In particular, a democratisation of the Davidic covenant occurs in 55:1–5 where the primary recipient of YHWH's steadfast love is no longer the king of the Davidic dynasty as in Isa 1–39 (9:1–6; 11:1–16; 32:1–20), but servants of Yahweh who faithfully participate in the new covenant. Isaiah 56–66 then thematically clarifies the glory and privilege of those who receive the inheritance of the Davidic covenant (Isa 55:1–5; 59:21; 61:8). Regarding the flow of the message from 59:21–62, it is salient that the message of Zion's grand restoration in Isa 60, the servant community's far-reaching transformation in Isa 61 and the splendid salvation of Zion in Isa 62, all stem from 59:21 which highlights the new covenant accentuating the restoration of the servant and his descendants. This emphasises the significance of the everlasting (new) covenant between Yahweh and his people.¹⁷ Furthermore, the portrayal of Queen Zion is crouched between 61:8, which highlights the everlasting covenant between Yahweh and his servants, and 62:8–9, which speaks of Yahweh's covenantal oath to reverse the covenantal curse upon the City Zion into her covenantal blessing (Deut 28:33, 39, 50–51).¹⁸ Of course, Isa 62:1–5 does not explicitly speak about the eternal covenant nor is the notion of covenant implied in verse 3 on its own. Nevertheless, it is not hard to see that the interpretation of Isa 62:1–5 is coloured by its literary context which highlights the overwhelming ramification of the everlasting covenant which the prophetic author intended for his reader from the gradual and sequential writing from 59:21 to 62:12. Therefore, it is arguable that Queen Zion, along with the three motifs, figuratively delineates the glorious and eschatological restoration of Zion based on the establishment of the everlasting covenant in Isa 62:1–5.

¹⁶ Marven A. Sweeney, "The Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift of Beuken* (ed. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 41–61.

¹⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 511.

¹⁸ Yahweh's oath in Isa 62:8–9 is conveyed in covenantal language. Namely, the gist of Yahweh's oath is to undo the Sinaitic covenantal curse upon unfaithful Israel by granting new grain, new wine and oil with the prosperity and security of the city (Deut 11:14; 28:33, 39, 50–51).

Evidence for this can be found in a more detailed analysis of the three motifs in 62:1–5. Verses 1–2b refers to the unceasing proclamation by the servant figure regarding the robust irradiation of Queen Zion's righteousness, salvation and glory among the nations as a token of her restoration. Our careful consideration that Lady Zion not only represents the people as a collective but also the city or place in which they dwell in the book of Isaiah, shows that with the continuing proclamation to Yahweh, the servant intends to intercede with Yahweh for the splendid restoration of both the people and the city of Zion together.¹⁹

Verse 2c–d suddenly deals with the conferral of a new name upon Queen Zion by Yahweh. Some scholars connect the new name in verse 2c–d with the renaming in verse 4 and associate Jerusalem's salvation and glory in verses 1b–2b with the beautiful crown and royal diadem in verse 3.²⁰ Thus, Claus Westermann contends that verse 2c–d is a later gloss that introduces the new name in verse 4, suggesting that we should rearrange the passage and read verse 2b after verse 3.²¹ However, if we scrutinise the thematic and rhetorical structure of Isa 62:1–5, it is obvious that verses 2–4 constitute an overall chiasmic framework as follows:

(A) Yahweh's promise to confer the new name (v. 2c–d)

(B) Zion as the crown in the hand of Lord (v. 3)

(A'') No longer be called by the old name (v. 4a–b)

(A') Fulfilment of the conferral of the new name (v. 4c–d)

Within such a rhetorical and thematic framework, it is feasible that verse 3 forms the central axis of the above passage, signifying the pinnacle of Queen Zion's glorification like a crown (B) as the main theme. The new name (A, A') motif then serves to illuminate her restored status and condition along with both the crown motif in verse 3 and the marriage motif in verse 5. Notwithstanding, it is probable that the implication of the new name motif cannot be fully interpreted until the exact name of Zion is revealed in verse 4.

In verse 3, the text introduces the crown, which symbolises the glory of Queen Zion at the royal wedding. What does it mean that Lady Zion appears as the crown in the hand of Yahweh here? As already mentioned, Andersen

¹⁹ Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 181.

²⁰ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1969), 375–376; Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Übersetzt und Erklärt 5. Auflage, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 3.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892), 459; Karl Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 1900), 388.

²¹ Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 375–376.

attempts to construe Isa 62:2–4 with a background of the ritual of the “royal wedding.” Specifically, two terms, *‘aṭeret tip’eret* and *ṣenip m^elūkâ*, in Isa 62:3 mean a royal crown in the Old Testament (Jer 13:18; Ezek 21:26; Ps 21:4; Esth 8:5; Zech 3:5). The fact that *‘aṭeret* and *ṣenip* have a strong connotation of royal wedding offers a clue to understanding the identification of the crown with female Zion depicted as a bride here. He comments, “If on his wedding day a bridegroom receives two beautiful things—a beautiful crown and a beautiful bride—it would be tempting for a poet to use one as a metaphor of the other.”²² Since the two beautiful entities of the crown and bride at the wedding may act as interchangeable poetic metaphors, female Zion as the bride can be symbolised as the royal crown in Isa 62:2–5. Then, as Song of Songs 3:11 mentions, in royal wedding ceremonies, the bridegroom wears a crown on his head.²³ This denotes the fulfilment of the wedding as well as the unity between bridegroom and bride. In addition, Zion as a bride at the royal wedding receives new names in verse 2 and verse 4.²⁴ According to Andersen’s interpretation, the crown in the hand of Yahweh therefore signifies that she is not only installed as a royal queen but has also acquired a new and glorious identity and royal prestige.

Significantly, however, the interpretation of the crown motif itself in verse 3 within the socio-cultural context of the ancient Near East provides another viable method as it not only discloses the aspect of the female personification of Zion but also that of her spatial territory. According to Mark E. Biddle, the crown was an important mythological motif that epitomised a capital city in its splendour in the literature, paintings and coins of the ancient Near East.²⁵ This was because a capital city with its battlement was typically shaped like a mural crown in that era. Capital cities were also deified as goddesses in the Mesopotamian and Western Semitic worlds to highlight their sanctity and royal dignity like a crown.²⁶ Notably, the crown is normally placed on the head of a patron deity, figuratively signifying the unification between the patron deity and the goddess. Therefore, the crown is a prominent symbol having multiple connotations in the ancient Near East such as the capital city, a goddess and the unification between the patron god and goddess. It is significant that in supporting the Yahwistic monotheism, the prophetic author can only accept this mythical concept related to the crown through an elaborate process of theological modification.²⁷ One prominent example is found in Isa 62:3 where the crown is not placed on Yahweh’s head but in his palm, deliberately rejecting “the ancient

²² Andersen, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah,” 78.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Biddle, *The Figure of Lady Jerusalem*, 174–82.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 175, 182; Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah’s Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 125–164.

²⁷ Biddle, *The Figure of Lady Jerusalem*, 187.

Oriental image of a deity who wears on his head the mural crown."²⁸ Nonetheless, we may infer that the crown in the palm of Yahweh implies the indelible and intimate relationship and the unity between Yahweh and Zion (cf. Isa 49:16).

Additionally, Zion does not appear as a goddess but as a female personage who restores her relationship with Yahweh and then receives the royal status and glory from him at the royal wedding (Isa 55:1–5; 59:20–21; 61:8–11; 62:5).²⁹ With the delicate theological modification, therefore, the crown is possibly used as a prominent poetic and theological device that has at least three implications in Isa 62:3: (1) rebuilding City Zion as a glorious capital city, (2) Lady Zion ascending and becoming Queen Zion and (3) the unification between Yahweh and Lady Zion. Furthermore, reflecting on the early history of Israel, prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel adopted the crown as a major symbol that implied the glorious covenant between Yahweh and female Zion (Ezek 16:12–14; Lam 5:16). Thus, it is appropriate to maintain that the crown motif signifies that Lady Zion has acquired the glorious status and prestige of a royal queen whereas City Zion is rebuilt as a splendid capital city providing its inhabitants with peace, plentiful food and security (Isa 60:4–14) through the establishment of a new covenant with Yahweh.³⁰

In verse 4, the name-change motifs suggest that Queen Zion underwent fundamental and wide-ranging transformation, semantically substantiating her covenantal restoration in verse 3. There are two instances of name change: (1) from *'azûbâ* to *ḥepšî-ḥah* and (2) from *šēmāmâ* to *b^eûlâ*. It is obvious that while the first name change depicts Zion's transformation in terms of personification, the second represents spatial territory. Of course, this elaborates on two aspects of Zion's transformation in verse 3. Then, it is significant that the two new names with the phrase "no longer... called (*lō'...ôd*)" in verse 4 recall the new covenant Yahweh has established with Abraham and Jacob with the granting of a new name (Gen 17:5) based on his own fidelity, thus signifying "a sign and guarantee of the [new] covenant' between Yahweh and Queen Zion here."³¹ Therefore, two pairs of name change in verse 4 promptly imply that through the confirmation of the new covenant, wife Zion, who had been abandoned in the past, is radically transformed into a royal queen who delights her husband. Her territory that had

²⁸ Koole, *Isaiah 56–66*, 307.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁰ Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 92. For the relationship between the city and mural crown in the ancient Near Eastern world, see Aloysius Fitzgerald, "The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403–416; Biddle, *The Figure of Lady Jerusalem*, 173–194.

³¹ Andersen, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," 76; Jeffrey, "Called to Proclaim Covenantal Transformation," 259.

been devastated in the past is rebuilt into a glorious (*k^ebôdēk*) city like a crown.³² As Roland de Vaux explains, "the name denotes the *essence of a thing*...since the name defines the *essence*, it reveals the *character and destiny of the bearer*" in the social context of ancient Israel (*italics added*).³³ In this context, the new names in verse 4 readily signify the new identity as well as the restored fortune of Queen Zion. Revolving around the apex of verse 3, which describes Lady Zion as a royal crown, the new names function to expound upon the nature of her glorification, indicating that her people and territory have attained far-reaching and radical covenantal restoration based on Yahweh's covenant fidelity.³⁴

In verse 5, the marriage motif emphasises that Yahweh delights in his bride Zion, thus signifying an intimate and faithful relationship between them.³⁵ Following thematically the wedding imagery in Isa 61:10, this motif explicitly suggests that the overall story of Isa 62:1–5 is formed within the framework of the covenantal unity between Yahweh and Queen Zion. This warrants her glorious and eschatological restoration in verses 1–4.

In summary, given two inherent aspects of both the female personification and the territorial space, Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 figuratively presents her acquisition of an exalted position as the royal queen among nations whereas her territory is rebuilt as a glorious capital city. Particularly, the three motifs are rhetorical and literary devices that conceptualise the far-reaching effect and ramification that the establishment of the everlasting covenant has brought to Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5.

D PERSONIFICATION OF ZION IN ISA 1:7–9; 49:14–21 AND 66:7–14

This section scrutinises several references to female Zion and their theological implications in Isa 1:7–9; 49:14–21 and 66:7–14. Although several other texts (Isa 3:16–26; 54:1–8; 60) mention Lady Zion, we have selected only these three texts owing to the space limitation of this article. They have a significant thematic and canonical role in presenting the major tenet of the three sections of Isaiah (chs. 1–39; 40–55; 56–66) and contain the representative of the female personification of Zion. This section provides a backdrop against which we can grasp the theological and hermeneutical roles of Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 in the

³² Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 181–182.

³³ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Instructions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 43. Allen P. Ross also argues that, "In the ancient Sem. World a person's name often carried more significance than an identification mark... in Heb. the name was the speaking reality of the essence of a person." See Allen P. Ross, "אִשָּׁה," *NIDOTTE* 4:147–149.

³⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (WBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 221.

³⁵ Jeffrey, "Called to Proclaim Covenantal Transformation," 249.

book of Isaiah.

1 Personification of Zion in Isa 1:7–9: A Daughter Zion Left Alone

Isaiah 1 is an introduction to the main themes of the book of Isaiah: Yahweh's rebuke of the rebellious people (vv. 4–9), the criticism of hypocritical worship (vv. 10–17), the purification of Zion through the judgement (vv. 21–23) and Zion's redemption by righteousness and justice (vv. 24–26). In that thematic structure, verses 7–9 personify Zion as a daughter left alone:

⁷Your country lies desolate (*šēmāma*); your cities are burned with fire, in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate (*šēmāma*), as overthrown by foreigners. ⁸And Daughter Zion is left (*nôṭ'ra*) like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. ⁹If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.

Within the literary context of Isa 1:4–9, which describes devastation of Israel and Zion, daughter Zion appears alienated from her family's care and protection. What literary and theological connotation does she convey? To adequately appreciate the implications of daughter Zion here, Christl M. Maier argues that it is necessary to understand the general nuance, role and place of a daughter in ancient Near Eastern society:

As a member of the family, the daughter is protected as well as utterly dependent on the father (or any male family head) in economic and juridical terms... In a patriarchal society such as ancient Israel, the highest grade of protection is offered to the daughter who is not yet married... Daughter Zion conflates the city space and its population into a personified woman who is loved and protected by YHWH like a daughter by a father.³⁶

In ancient societies, a daughter was offered maximum protection by her father and family members. It was the whole family's honour (especially the patriarch's) to preserve her virginity until marriage and shame came to all of them in the case of its premature loss.³⁷ Against this background, daughter Zion being left alone (*nôṭ'ra*) in verse 8 signifies "a state of complete isolation" without any legitimate safeguard, meaning she is powerless and vulnerable.³⁸ In addition, her situation is addressed by the metaphorical construction of a booth in a vineyard and a lodge in a cucumber field, both indicating that she is as unstable and impermanent as those buildings in the farming season. Moreover, Zion is like a besieged city facing the formidable attack of the foreign army

³⁶ Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 73–74.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁸ Hugh G.M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5* (ICC; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 70.

which has already destroyed Israel (v. 7). Without a doubt, Zion's exigent and worrisome condition stems from the covenant infidelity of the people forsaking the Holy One of Israel with their rebellion (vv. 4–7). Therefore, the portrayal of daughter Zion here rhetorically maximises both the sense of hopelessness the people feel without Yahweh's protection and the vulnerability of the city of Zion that cannot provide safety and material to them anymore.³⁹

2 Personification of Zion in Isa 49:14–21: A Forsaken Wife and a Childless Mother

In Isa 49–55, along with the male servant who achieves the vicarious sacrifice and death for the righteousness of the remnants (Isa 49; 50; 53), according to John F. Sawyer, diverse Lady Zions appear as prominent literary figures to crystallise the agony of Yahweh's people in the Babylonian captivity.⁴⁰ The Lady Zions play a central role here, vividly embodying their dire pain and sentiment within the bleak mood of despair, anxiety and sorrow during Babylonian exile but also foreshadowing their splendid restoration in the future (Isa 49:14–26; 54:1–10). In this literary and theological context, 49:14–21 presents two Lady Zions with significant rhetorical and theological implications.

First, Zion is personified as an abandoned wife by her husband Yahweh (vv. 14–16):

¹⁴But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken (*'azāḥani*) me; my Lord has forgotten (*š'kēḥāni*) me.' ¹⁵Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

In verse 14, Lady Zion makes a poignant complaint to Yahweh that he has forsaken and forgotten her, linguistically and thematically reflecting the motif of Yahweh's "abandoning (*'azāḥani*)" and "forgetting (*š'kēḥāni*)" of his people in Lam 5:20. Adopting the analogy of the husband-and-wife relationship, she indicates that the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the Wife Zion in the Babylonian exile turns into the ostensible death due to her sin (42:24–25; 43:24, 27; 53:12). However, Yahweh's bold statement impressively highlights that his loving-kindness towards her is unchanged and ever superior to that of a mother towards her newborn baby in verse 15. Even in captivity, Yahweh is unable to forget and forsake his people, thus invalidating their sense of abandonment, grief and forlornness. Based on his immutable covenant with Zion, it is revealed figuratively that Zion's wall is engraved on the palm of Yahweh's hand in verse 16, signifying the future restoration of Zion (Isa 51:13; 52:5; 54:11ff). The LXX renders verse 16a as "ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν χειρῶν μου

³⁹ Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 77.

⁴⁰ John F. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison," *ISOT* 44 (1989): 89–107; Koptak, "Personification," 516–519.

ἐζωγράφησά σου τὰ τεῖχη (Behold, upon my hands I portrayed your walls).” Following this rendition of verse 16a, scholars such as Koole and Blenkinsopp argue that because Yahweh engraved Zion’s walls in his palm, her walls are always before him in verse 16b.⁴¹ For Koole, this engraving signifies the indelibility of abandoned wife Zion by Yahweh based on his lasting covenant faithfulness, counter-arguing that she is forgotten in the exilic situation.⁴²

Second, Zion is described as a mother who has lost children (vv. 18–21):

¹⁸ Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does. ¹⁹ Surely your waste and your desolate places (*šōmmōtayik*) and your devastated land—surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away. ²⁰ The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: ‘The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.’ ²¹ Then you will say in your heart: ‘Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?’”

Since the inhabitants of the city of Zion are regarded as Mother Zion’s children, she is here described figuratively as being bereaved after their exile into Babylon (vv. 19–21). Namely, childless Mother Zion sentimentally denotes the desolation (*šōmmōtayik*) of empty City Zion without its population. However, verse 18 predicts that Mother Zion will also have a splendid restoration when the children return to her arms and the enemy who has devastated her leaves. Eventually, she becomes like a splendid bride as she puts them all on as an ornament (v. 18).

In Isa 49:14–21 therefore, two female Zions metaphorically signify the unbearable sorrow, hopelessness and devastation of both the people and the city of Zion during the Babylonian exile. However, both Yahweh’s confident statement about her future and her joy upon the coming children from Babylon also intensely reflect the concern for the immediate and splendid restoration of Zion.

3 Personification of Zion in Isa 66:7–14: A Mother Giving Birth to a Child

It is widely accepted that Isa 66 together with Isa 65 provides the conclusion to the entire book of Isaiah. Whilst Isa 66:1–6 describes the characteristics and

⁴¹ Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah IV: Isaiah 49–55* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 56; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 311.

⁴² Koole, *Isaiah 49–55*, 56–57.

faithfulness of servants, 66:7–14 depicts Zion's future comfort and glory. In 66:7–14, Zion is personified as a mother giving birth to a child:

⁷Before she was in labour, she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. ⁸Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labour she brought forth her children. ⁹Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?' says the LORD; 'shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?', says your God. ¹⁰'Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; Rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her.'¹¹'For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; You will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.'¹²For this is what the Lord says: 'I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like the flooding stream, you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees, ¹³As a mother comforts her child; so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.'¹⁴When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes.

To portray the process of childbirth by Mother Zion, verses 7–9 highlight the labour (7a, 8bc), the opening of the womb (9a) and the birth of a child (7a, 8d, 8e, 9a, 9c). In the Old Testament, the portrait of 'a woman in labour' has two contrasting connotations. On the one hand, there is the negative connotation of calamity, impotence, hopelessness and the horrible terror in war and death (Isa13:8; 21:3–4; 26:17–18; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 22:23; 50:43). On the other hand, the positive connotation points to salvation and new creation (Isa 66:7–14; Mic 4:9–10).⁴³ One can infer thus that women's labour in childbirth either turns pain into the joy of a new child or causes the death of both the mother and child, which is an extreme misfortune. In this sense, the lack of strength during childbirth has a negative connotation whereas childbirth has a positive overtone *par excellence* in the Old Testament.

Bearing this point in mind, Isa 66:7 repeats a preposition 'before (*b^eterem*)' twice to emphasise that Mother Zion rapidly gave birth to a child before the labour pain. In the literary context depicting the New Heaven and New Earth in Isa 65–66, this possibly implies that the punishment Yahweh imposed on Eve, the primeval mother, is redeemed (Gen 3:16).⁴⁴ Namely, this scene of Zion's miraculous childbirth readily suggests that the future for Zion is like the "paradisiacal situation of Eden," signifying the new creation in the *eschaton*.⁴⁵

⁴³ Reed R. Lessing, *Isaiah 56–66* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 466–468; Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66*, 494–500; Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 202.

⁴⁴ Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 202.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 98.

Furthermore, the prompt miraculous childbirth by Mother Zion in verses 8–10 implies the astonishing birth of a new Israel, the pinnacle of Yahweh’s new creation in the overall plot of Isaiah. As Yahweh and Mother Zion co-operate in giving birth to and comforting her children with his infinite power (vv. 9, 13), the calamity of the miscarriage and stillbirth is no longer remembered (Isa 37:3). Moreover, she will breastfeed them abundant nutrition (v.11), carry them on her hip and dandle them on her knee (v.12), indicating that a glorious city personified by Mother Zion will provide her inhabitants peace, safety and material and food in abundance. Thus, as Sawyer has mentioned, Isa 66:7–14 “develops the positive images of maternal warmth, contentment, and fecundity to a degree unparalleled in biblical tradition—a quite remarkable climax, both theologically and emotionally, to the story of the ‘Daughter of Zion.’”⁴⁶

As we have seen, the thematic variations of Lady Zion in the book of Isaiah are ample. Each personification of Zion as a woman presents a lively reflection of the historical state and social concerns of the Israelite community across different eras. Further, each personification carries distinctive imagery and terminology that explicitly or implicitly refers to the historical, social and religious condition of both the people and the city of Zion. We categorise them in the table below.

Table 1: Elements of the Personifications of Zion

	Isa 1:7–9	Isa 49:14–21	Isa 66:7–14
Lady Zion	Daughter Zion	Abandoned wife and childless Mother Zion	Glorious Mother Zion giving birth
Relationship with Yahweh	Left alone	Divorced	Co-operation
Building-Image	A booth and a lodge	Wall in the palm of Yahweh	Wealthy and glorious city
Social and Historical Condition	Vulnerable and defenceless	Desolate and devastated	Wealthy, joyful and glorious

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

The profound message of the salvation and denouement of new creation unfolds through the various female personifications of Zion in the book of Isaiah. As the chart above shows, daughter Zion left alone in Isa 1:7–9 is altered into the abandoned and childless wife Zion in 49:14–21 and then she suddenly transforms into a glorious mother who gives birth to the new Israel in 66:7–14. Thus, examining the wide spectrum of variegated Lady Zion indicates how a significant turning point occurs in her status and fate with the glorious appearance of Queen Zion in 62:1–5.

E THEOLOGICAL AND INTERPRETIVE FUNCTION OF QUEEN ZION IN ISA 62:1–5: THE MIRROR TEXT

The question remains as to what literary and theological role Queen Zion plays in Isa 62:1–5 regarding the overall message of Isaiah? To answer, we must analyse the semantic dilation and semantic superposition that Isa 62:1–5 produces in relation to Isa 1:7–9; 49:14–21 and 66:7–14 in terms of female personified Zion. This will enable us to clarify the role of the three enigmatic motifs in Isa 62:1–5.

1 Semantic Dilation of Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5

Certainly, Isa 62:1–5 uses a mixture of diverse themes, motifs and figures to portray Zion as Queen Zion and her glorious state—Zion (vv. 1, 3), salvation (v. 1), righteousness (v. 1), glory (v. 2), a new name (vv. 2, 4), a crown (v. 3), desolation (v. 4), forsakenness (v. 4), a marriage (v. 5), a bridegroom (v. 5), a glorious bride (v.4) and delight and joy (v. 5). It is not too much to say that in comparison to other Zion texts (1:7–9; 49: 14–21; 66:7–14) and other texts in Isaiah, this text has the semantic explosion through the confluence of diverse themes, motifs and figures, thus demonstrating the literary phenomenon of the semantic dilation. Based on their confluence, Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 can retrospectively recall female Zion in Isa 1:7–9 and in 49:14–21 and prospectively foreshadows her in 66:7–14. Structurally, it construes the overall coherence of the book of Isaiah. This network formed via the axis of Queen Zion has significant literary and theological implications when the book of Isaiah and, more specifically, the overall message of salvation in Isaiah, is synchronically interpreted.

2 Semantic Superimposition of Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5

Semantic superimposition is revealed by analysing the rhetorical and intertextual implications of the diverse correspondence between Queen Zion and other Lady Zions in Isa 62:1–5. Specifically, this involves investigating the textual networks created by the three conspicuous motifs in Isa 62:1–5 that led Queen Zion to cohere with other Zions retrospectively and prospectively.

First, the crown motif symbolises the royal prestige and status of both Lady Zion and City Zion. The crown motif has at least two important

implications: (1) Lady Zion's ascension to the position of royal queen and (2) City Zion's reconstruction as a splendid capital city. Two elements of this motif recall and predict several versions of Lady Zions and figurative imagery in the book of Isaiah. On the one hand, Queen Zion alluded to by the crown motif recalls the vulnerable and anxious Daughter Zion who was left alone and alienated from the Lord in Isa 1:7–9. Yet, the crown motif implies that her past condition has been reversed into one of safety and glory. This figure also recalls the Forsaken Wife Zion and childless Mother Zion in Isa 49:14–21, both denoting the hopeless and miserable condition of the people during the Babylonian exile. However, the figure's transition into Queen Zion implies that her state of divorce and widowhood has been transposed into one of unification and dignity as a royal queen. This anticipates glorious Mother Zion in 66:7–14, who gives birth to and nurtures her children with overflowing comfort. On the other hand, the crown as an icon of the capital City Zion is compared to a booth in a vineyard and a lodge in a cucumber field, signifying the temporary and incompetent state of City Zion, unable to provide safety and material for its inhabitants in 1:7–9. However, the crown indicates that the fragile and unprotected City Zion has been reconstructed into a crown-shaped fortress. Furthermore, the crown in the hand of Yahweh in Isa 62:1–5 coheres with the prediction in 49:16 (cf. 54:11ff) that the wall of Zion will be engraved in the palm of Yahweh and suggests that "the construction plan for the new Jerusalem" in the latter is realised in the former.⁴⁷ Finally, the glory of the crown in 62:2–3 anticipates the glorious (*kēḥôḏah*) and prosperous city of Zion that provides its inhabitants with affluent nurture and overflowing comfort in 66:7–13. The vulnerable and miserable status of the people and City Zion is completely reversed in 62:1–5 whereas full-blown glory and restoration are anticipated in 66:7–14.

Second, the new name motif readily implies that Lady Zion in Isa 1:7–9 and 49:14–21 has undergone an ontological transformation in 62:1–5. Specifically, Queen Zion's old name (*ʿazûḇâ*) in 62:4 evokes the helpless and vulnerable condition of daughter Zion being left alone (*nôṭēra*) in 1:8, which must be the prior state of the Mother Zion's desolation in the Babylonian exile. Her two old names (*ʿazûḇâ* and *šēmāma*) in 62:4 also linguistically remind one of the abandoned and desolate states of Zion's inhabitants and city in the Babylonian exile (*ʿazāḇani* and *šōmmōṭayîk*) in 49:14 and 19. However, it is of great significance that the two Hebrew terms, *ʿazûḇa* and *šēmāma*, which denote the physical and social condition of both the people and city of Zion in the earlier texts, are used here as specific names to imply an essential and ontological state of Zion's being in 62:1–5. Given the social and cultural backdrop of ancient Israel where one's name indicates essential character and destiny, it is arguable that the two general terms, *ʿazûḇa* and *šēmāma*, which describe the physical and historical abandonment and devastation of both people and city of Zion in the

⁴⁷ Koole, *Isaiah 49–55*, 56.

previous texts, are now transformed and reinvented as name terms to reveal her essence and fate in 62:1–5. Significantly, the fact that no longer will she be called by old names but by her new names with Yahweh's restored delight and plan for her fruitfulness indicates that she becomes a new entity with a new shape and future. Thus, Zion's new names in stark contrast to her old names in verses 2–4 emphatically stress that Lady Zion has a new and glorious being with a new fortune incomparable to those of the past through the rectification of the everlasting covenant. Furthermore, Queen Zion's new names, *hep̄ṣî-bah* (my delight is in her) and *b^eûlâ* (the married), predict not only Jerusalem being full of overflowing delight and comfort but also her fruitfulness in giving birth and nurturing children in 66:10–14.

Finally, the marriage motif that signifies the unification between Queen Zion and Yahweh in Isa 62:1–5 evokes other descriptions of Lady Zion in the book of Isaiah. This marriage implies the covenantal unification of Lady Zion and Yahweh and attributes her solitude and vulnerability to her infidelity in 1:8. Additionally, the royal wedding in Isa 62: 3–5 thematically coheres with the state of the divorce between them owing to her covenant breach in 49:14–16. However, in 62:4–5, the marriage motif along with her new name *b^eûlâ* (the married) that implies her reconciliation with Yahweh prospectively foreshadows Mother Zion's miraculous childbirth and nurturing of her children in 66:7–14 tantamount to the new creation in the *eschaton*. Therefore, it is feasible that by mirroring earlier and later verses, the marriage motif in 62:1–5 offers a vantage point for conceptualising the state of the relationship between Yahweh and Lady Zion in the book of Isaiah as a whole. Thus, it is clear that a decisive turning point in their relationship takes place here.

As such, we find that Queen Zion in Isa 62:1–5 alludes to other Lady Zions retrospectively and prospectively in the book of Isaiah through the rhetorical device of the three motifs. This vividly embeds her new status and fate, underlining her "remarriage, re-enthronement, a new beginning" through the rectification of the new covenant with Yahweh.⁴⁸ These diverse references to Lady Zion indicate that her past misfortune is dramatically reversed in 62:1–5 and then foreshadow her joyful and fecund life in 66:7–14. With the close literary interaction of these three motifs, the prophetic author intentionally superimposes a vital hint about the reversal of Zion's former misfortune via the splendid appearance of Queen Zion. Thus, 62:1–5 is a mirror text for the proper construal of how the vulnerable daughter Zion and the abandoned and childless wife Zion in Isa 1–55 will turn into the glorious Mother Zion in Isa 66:7–14, informing how we conceive its reading as a unified whole.

F CONCLUSION

⁴⁸ Darr, *Isaiah's Vision*, 203.

Unlike former studies that have explicated the historical and social backgrounds of Isa 62:1–5, this study conducted a literary and contextual interpretation of the theme of Zion by connecting Queen Zion with the Lady Zion in Isa 1:7–9, 49:14–21 and 66:7–14. The study argues that the splendid appearance of Queen Zion with three conspicuous motifs retrospectively reflects Lady Zion in 1:7 and 49:14–21 and prospectively foreshadows her in 66:7–14. Additionally, it is demonstrated that the three motifs—crown, renaming, and marriage—are prominent literary and rhetorical devices that denote Queen Zion’s new and glorious status and fate through the rectification of the everlasting covenant with Yahweh. This provides evidence for interpreting her theological and hermeneutical role as a reversal of Zion’s fortune. The literary and hermeneutical role of Queen Zion demonstrates that Isa 62:1–5 acts as a mirror text and provides readers with an informed conception of the book of Isaiah.

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