

AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL READING OF IS 30, 1-17 (TM) IN THE LIGHT OF “UNITY MOVEMENT” FOR READING THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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Abstract

The Book of Isaiah has been truly complex for bible researchers for years. The primary difficulty arises from the poetic way of expressing the author, and this is of course associated with the difficulty of connecting different historical epochs described by the Book of Isaiah in its completeness. Lately, this book has been approached in a unitary way. This will say that it is sought to be read in its wholeness of parts, rather than dividing it as it has long been a trend, into three parts: Is 1-39; 40-55; 56-66. This so-called “unity movement” in research on the Book of Isaiah shows us how the Book can nevertheless be approached whole. Therefore, in this paper, we will seek to analyze the text of Is 30:1-17 (TM) in light of the so-called “unity movement” approach to the Book of Isaiah. It should be said however that the methodological path of this work will be primarily the so-called “close reading” of the text and then also will be given some possible intertextual echoes which link Is 30, 1-17 with other parts of the Book of Isaiah. At the end author will also try to depict a possible historical and theological message of the same biblical text.

Key words: Isaiah, „unity movement“, Hebrew poetry, salvation, history

INTRODUCTION

Situated in different historical environments, the Book of the prophet Isaiah describes rather poetically the uniqueness of Yhwh's salvation at the time of the great national crisis. For that, God's uniqueness has to correspond equally to the people's reciprocal response. As we will try to demonstrate, Is 30, 1-17 shows how Egypt is opposed to a God as a unique Savior, and as a possible

partner in order to escape from the threat of the Assyrian Empire. That alliance with Egypt is being negatively judged by the prophet. This statement will be defended in this paper by an analysis of the textual unit. Thus, this paper will try to analyze systematically the passage in Is 30, 1-17 in order to give the main reason for the prophetic judgment expressed in the text for the purpose of making clearer the specific nature of God's uniqueness. That will be done by a close reading of the text - Is 30, 1-17 in its immediate context of the Book of Isaiah and connecting it intertextually with other parts of the Book of Isaiah in the light of so called „unity movement“ for approaching the Book of Isaiah¹. All of this will hopefully show its unique theological message – the uniqueness of Yahweh as the only Savior.

1. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXTUAL UNIT – IS 30, 1-17 (TM)²

We propose the following translation of Is 30, 1-17:

30 ¹Woe to the rebellious children, an oracle of Yahweh, (because of) making counsels and not (with) from me, making an alliance (treaty) but not from my spirit, so that they carry away sin upon sin. ² They are going to descend to Egypt, but my mouth they do not ask (consult), for help under Pharaoh's protection to take refuge in Egypt's shadow. ³ Pharaoh's protection will bring you shame, taking refuge in Egypt's shadow will be an insult (to you). ⁴ For their nobles are at Zoan, and his messengers have arrived at Hanes. ⁵ All remain disillusioned, on account of that people they will not profit, for them they can give no help, just shame and *even more*³ – *disgrace*. ⁶ A burden⁴ of the animals of Negev in the land of anxiety and hardship, of a lioness and a lion among them (from them) a poisonous snake and a flying burning serpent, they carry their goods on the backs of donkeys, their treasures on the humps of camels to a people *that*

¹ Recent research on the Book of Isaiah indicates a tendency to view the Book as a coherent literary unit which is the product of several editions. Cf. Roy F. Melugin, Is 40-66 in *Recent Research: The "Unity" Movement*, Alan J. Hauser (ed.), *Recent Research on the Major Prophets*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield, 2008., 142-194.

² In our paper we use the Hebrew text by the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* which follows the Leningrad codex.

³ ׀ – is emphatic

⁴ נשׂמ – It is better to translate this word with „burden“ and not „oracle“ because of the immediate context

will not give them profit. ⁷ *And Egypt's help is vain and worthless,*⁵ therefore I asked her: "Are you proud, and you just sit down?"^{6 8} But now, go and write it on a tablet with them (in their presence), inscribe it in a book that will (that it may be) be there for the day after as a *witness*⁷ forever. ⁹ Because they are a rebellious people, deceitful sons, the sons that do not want to listen to Yahweh's law. ¹⁰ Who say to the seers: "Do not see", and to the visionaries: "Do not envision to us what is right, tell us smoothness, (you) see deception?" ¹¹ Turn aside from the way, leave the right path, stop (talk) in front of us about the Holy One of Israel. ¹² Thus, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Since you reject this word, trusting in brutality, being crooked and placing your support in him. ¹³ Therefore, it will be for you this iniquity like a break in a high wall, bulging out and about to fall, whose smashing comes suddenly in an instant. ¹⁴ Its breaking is like that of a potter's jar that is smashed without mercy, among its fragments no sherd will be found for taking fire from the fireplace or water from the cistern. ¹⁵ For thus says the Lord God the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and with rest you will be saved, in quietness and in trust will be your vitality, but you did not want this. ¹⁶ But you said: "No, we will flee upon horses – therefore you will flee. And "We will ride upon swift horses – therefore your pursuers will be swift. ¹⁷ A thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you will flee, until you are left like a flag on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

2. IS 30, 1-17 IN ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

The text of Is 30, 1-17 clearly appears to be a coherent textual unit. Its first verse has clearly opened the new textual unit and

⁵ This translation is based on the context.

⁶ The word קָהָב can be translated by "pride". The text, in our view, is replete with sarcasm and irony. This is also the opinion of other commentators as we will indicate later

⁷ וְעֵד – should stay and this word is possibly wrongly transmitted in the TM. We will translate it as a part of the text but vocalize it differently. Not as וְעֵד, but as וְעֵד. This reading is supported also in the Old Greek versions of this text: α σ θ ς ς ς ς: וְעֵד

Some modern Bible translations read - NRSV: "For Egypt's help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, "Rahab who sits still.; NAB: "Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty. Therefore, I have called her "Rahab who has been exterminated."; NKJ: "For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shebeth."

shifts away from the preceding pericope. The textual break is visible in verse 1: *וַיִּבְנִים סוֹרְרִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה*. The introductory *וַיִּבְנִים* begins a new section, indicated by the marker word *וַיִּה* and also with a new character which is now “the sons” - *בְּנִים*. Nevertheless, this unit is not separated from its immediate context, because when reading the Book of Isaiah synchronically we can say with many commentators that chapter 30 belongs to the larger unit which begins with chapter 28, and ends with chapter 35. This unit is characterized by the woe (*הוֹי*) that is repeated six times against different characters: Ephraim (Is 28, 1-29), Ariel (Is 29, 1-14), the people (Is 29, 15-24), the sons (Is 30, 1-33), Jerusalem (Is 31, - 32, 10) and the rebellions (Is 33, 1- 35, 10). Each of these sections begins with a “woe”, and it is noticeable that each unit ends with words of salvation. That is clear in Is 30, 1-33 as well.⁸

The text – Is 30, 1-17 – appears to be a coherent unit and its individual parts are strongly connected. The first five verses and the sequence seem to be interrupted with verses 5 and 6, but they also depend on the same theme – against the confidence in Egypt which, according to the prophet, is not the place that can give the security to the sons of Israel. Later from verse 8, the text is well-composed in the sense that each line follows the previous one and in that way, the coherence of the text is confirmed. This is what we will attempt to demonstrate in our analysis.

3. GENRE OF THE TEXTUAL UNIT Is 30, 1-17

When dealing with a biblical passage, it is always important to take into consideration its genre. Because otherwise it might be very difficult to reach a proper understanding of it. With Robert Alter we can say that this textual unit fits the genre of prophetic poetry, or more specifically, this text is a prophetic oracle of judg-

⁸ Most of the commentaries of the Book of Isaiah agree with that. See for instance Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London, 2000., 380 – 385.; Henry W. Jüngling, *Il libro di Isaia*, Erich Zenger (ed.), *Introduzione all' Antico Testamento*, Queriniana, Brescia, 2013., 711 – 746.; 720 – 721.; Ronald E. Clements, *Jerusalem and the Nations. Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, Sheffield, 2011., 85-86.; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 28-39*, Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien, 2010., 160-161.; Ulrich F. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah. Its Composition and final form*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield, 2012., 182-184.; Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Reading Isaiah. A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Smyth&Helwys Publishing, Macon, 2016., 146.

ment shaped poetically. Alter emphasizes that the principal modes of prophetic poetry are:

1. *direct accusation;*
2. *satire;*
3. *the monitory evocation of impending disaster.*

The main purpose, of course, is reproof,⁹ and another important thing is prophetic poetry's use of the vocative force referring to the audience. All these characteristic can be seen in our textual unit. Alter claims also that: „Such poetry is a kind of terrific verbal buttonholing of the listeners, directly calling them the names they have earned through their actions, reminding them of all that they have perpetrated“.¹⁰ Because of, the accusation the author quickly reverts to sarcasm and irony.¹¹

4. STRUCTURE OF THE TEXTUAL UNIT IS 30, 1-17

Having done the translation of the textual unit and explaining briefly the genre of the textual unit we can now propose following structure of the textual unit:

1. The „woe“ against the futile confidence in Egypt
 - Is 30, 1-5
 - The theme introduced – the futility of trust in Egypt
 - Is 30, 6-7
 - The burden of the animals of Negeb – the road leading to Egypt
2. The further accusation in written form
 - Is 30, 8-14
 - the prophet is describing the real nature of the guilt/sin of God's people
3. The consequence of refusing the Lord's solution
 - Is 30, 15-17
 - “In returning and with rest you will be saved...But you said: “No, we will flee upon horses...”

Based on the above proposed literary structure of the textual unit we will now proceed to the close reading of the textual unit.

⁹ Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Basic Books, New York, 2011., 175 – 177.

¹⁰ Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 177.

¹¹ Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 177.

Our analysis will be done by the close reading of the text or analyzing the main textual or poetical features used by the author of the text which are the characteristic of the Hebrew poetry.

5. CLOSE READING OF THE TEXTUAL UNIT IS 30, 1-17

5.1. The futility of trust in Egypt

In the beginning of our analysis, we said that this text is a remarkable example of hebrew poetry, a characteristic feature of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. The textual unit in many places uses parallelisms and other key features of hebrew poetry. The textual unit begins with the opening הוי ¹² and continues with a clear accusation. The prophet is accusing his people for not having consulted their God and for having made alliances with other nations which is clear from the first verse where we have a parallelism between: לנסך מסכה - לעשות עצה ¹³. This verse is a good example of the synonym parallelism where the counsel in the first part corresponds to the making of an alliance in the second line. Even more, this verse also shows the double negation - ולא מני and רוחי ולא present in this verse. When something is repeated in hebrew poetry, it is often done for the sake of emphasis.¹⁴

In the second verse the repetition of the words מצרים and עון and making explicit that the sons are calling for protection from the pharaoh of Egypt. That is, the prophet is beginning his speech. So, right from the beginning, it is clear what is going to be a prominent theme which the prophet wants to deal with – is it the Lord, the only Savior of the people, or could it be that someone else will protect the people?¹⁵

With verse 5 the accusation of the people continues. We note the parallelism based on the play of the verbal forms of the same verb יעל. In the first part of the verse we have: לא ייעילו and then in

¹² הוי could have three possible meanings: a) describes a funeral lamentation; b) a call for attention; c) announcement of punishment; cf. Donatella Scaiola, *I Dodici Profeti: perche "Minori?"*. *Esegesi e teologia*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2011., 134.

¹³ Cf. Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 30, 1". *Isaiah in Context*, in: Michael N. Van der Meer-Percy Van Keulen – Wido Van Peursen-Bas Ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2010., 185-196.

¹⁴ Cf. Luis Alonso Schökel, *Manuale di poetica ebraica*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1989., 97-105.

¹⁵ Cf. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Reading Isaiah*, 147.

the second line: ולא להועיל. Thus, using the same verb in different verbal forms: in the first line *hif. imp.* and in the second *hif. inf.* All of this in order to demonstrate how reliance on Egypt will not produce anything good.

5.2. The burden of the animals of Negeb

Verses 6 – 7 form another subunit of this textual unit. Now, the prophet is describing with very suggestive imagery what kind of land Egypt is in order to repeat that from Egypt no real help for God's people can come. The prophet first describes the land of Egypt (בארץ צרה וצוקה) and then presents an image of sending tribute on the animals to the same land in order to get some help from it (בהמות משא).¹⁶ Blenkinsopp would say that “the idea seems to be to set up a contrast between the futility of the goal and the immense pains and dangers involved in trying to achieve it.”¹⁷

Verse 6 continues the prophetic poetry where we see a good example of the play on sounds: בארץ צרה וצוקה. The prophet is using the words closely tied one to another in order to produce the sound effect on his reader. The words are in our view chosen deliberately for the sake of poetry. The letter צ resounds in the three words that simply make the sounds, and we can say that this could be an example of *onomatopoeia*, where the words reflect the sounds from nature. It is also interesting that the same root צרה can be seen in the word for Egypt – מצרים, which is the main reason for the prophet's accusation. The word מצרים has been used by the prophet in verses 2 and 3 and will be used later in verse 7, right after the poetical presentation in verse 6. In this way verse 6 perfectly fits into the unit describing what Egypt really represents. It is to be mentioned also that צרה וצוקה is actually a synonym parallelism. Then the same verse 6 mentions the several animals which describes the land where the sons want to go. The animals are presented in pairs, that is, in parallelisms:

לביא וליש;
אפעה ושרף מעופף.¹⁸

¹⁶ For this reason we translated the beginning of v. 6 as follows: „burden of animals“ and not „oracle of animals“. Both translations are possible, but the first fits the context better.

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 413.

¹⁸ We should note a variant reading in 1QIsa^a: לביא וליש ואין מים – “there is no water”. This is a new reading of 1QIsa^a. But the context requires another animal and

Both pairs present the same kind of animals in fact. On the one hand, lioness and lion, and on the other a serpent and a flying serpent.

Verse 7 describes Egypt more profoundly and very sarcastically. This verse in fact plays with the parallelisms: ומצרים הבל וריק. The words הבל וריק are in some way synonyms: worthless and empty. The same verse has also the very fine irony which is also used by the Hebrew poets. We read: רהב הם שבת – though, the text is not clear¹⁹. However, these words can be understood as a very sarcastic way of describing Egypt. Egypt is called by the name רהב, the one who sits still. Thus, it means that there is no possibility of any help. Furthermore, we can say that commentators point also to the possible meaning of רהב which has often been understood as the sea monster or the monster of chaos, the monster which Yhwh defeated.²⁰

5.3. The further accusation in written form

With verse 8 there is the beginning of a new subunit and we can substantiate this statement by observing how the particle עתה begins a new direction of prophetic discourse. Now, after an oral accusation of the people, the prophet was given the task of writing down a testimony for the future generations.²¹ With this verse our prophet begins to specify the real sin of the people. His words are also later in verses 12 and 15 confirmed by the authority of the Holy One where we read: לכן כה אמר קדוש ישראל.²² In the same way Alter underlined: „The special situation of prophetic discourse is that in the vast majority of instances it is not, in formal terms, the prophet

the word water does not make much sense here; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 413.

¹⁹ A variant reading is found in 1QIsa^a: רהבהם שבת – Rahab (who) sits. The text is very problematic as it stands and we can simply mention some of the relevant proposals as Blenkinsopp brings them up in his commentary: a) „Rahab out of work“; b) „A monster condemned to inactivity“. Only the root *šbt* is clear. For further explanations, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 413.

²⁰ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 413-414.; Jimmy Jack M. Roberts, *First Isaiah. A Commentary*, Peter Machinist (ed.), Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2015., 386.

²¹ Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39. Interpretation*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1993., 218.

²² We note the particle וְכֵן which „in prophetic rhetoric, indicates a prophetic sentence now to be pronounced on the basis of the indictment already offered“ as Walter Brueggemann emphasized in his Book *Redescribing Reality. What We do when We Read the Bible*; cf. Walter Brueggemann, *Redescribing Reality. What We do when We Read the Bible*, SCM Press, London, 2009., 40.

who is speaking but God who is speaking through the prophet's quotation.²³ This feature gives a more solemn tone to the textual unit. And now we see that the real accusation lies in disobedience to the Lord and in refusing the Torah of Yhwh (cf. Is 30, 9: (לא אבו שמוע תורת יהוה) and not in calling for help from Egypt.

In verse 10 there is a parallelism and a play on the verbs in order to show the real behavior of people: אמרו לראים לא תראו ולחזים לא תחזו לנו. The roots of the verbs are used for describing the acts of people. Also this verse deals with a play on sounds. The prophet is using words with very similar roots. The text says: לא תחזו לנו נכחות דברו לנו חלקות חזו מהתלות. It may be that the plural suffix of the nouns ות is repeated three times for to emphasize what the author wanted to produce on his readers, and even more so on his auditors who knew Hebrew. This play on sounds once again emphasizes their eager refusal of the truth and their relying upon other sources of help rather than on their God.

With the verse 11 our prophet accuses the people departing from the right way (דרך) which serves as a further accusation of their conduct. We note the parallelism:

סורו מני־דרך
הטו מני־ארח.

In this verse the verbs and words in pairs are used to make a synonym parallelism. In this way we once again have a strong poetical fashion in our unit.

With verse 13 the author is using another classical feature of poetry for the first time – images and metaphors²⁴. By means of very suggestive images our author can now describe the situation more vividly. The image is that of breaking down walls - כפרץ נפל - נבעה בחומה נשגבה. Images can always produce a strong effect on an audience. The image is furthermore underlined with the word-pair: פתאם לפתע which highlights an already strong image with much more urgency. The line ends with the word שברה which will be the first word of the next verse which reads: ושברה כשבר. Our author uses

²³ Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 175.

²⁴ Cf. Luis Alonso Schökel, *Manuale di poetica ebraica*, 120-173.; Yehoshua Gitay argues about why we find metaphors in the Hebrew Bible and his conclusion is basically that metaphors in a very fine way shows something that is well known to everybody but it is sometimes hard to explain using just regular terms; cf. Yehoshua Gitay, *Why Metaphors? A Study of the texture of Isaiah*, Craig C. Broyles-Craig A. Evans (ed.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretative tradition*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln, 1997., 57-65.

another poetical feature simply called *repetition*²⁵ whereby the author repeats the same word in the new line with which the last one just ended. In this manner the text is more persuasive and it is shaped more emphatically. The emphasis is also maintained by using the root שבר which describes the severe disaster.

Another image used by the prophet is גבל יוצרים (a jar of pottery). This may be simple irony. For the author, the first word נָקַל could be connected to the root²⁶ גבל which means futile or worthless. Hence, the breaking of the jar could refer to the status of the people who are clearly as worthless as their Egyptians partners who are earlier in the text called הבל וריק. The material of the jar is יוצר, that is *pottery*. This may be seen as an allusion to the word מצרים or Egypt. Thus, the jar which will be smashed, could be seen as the metaphor for the destruction of Egypt.

5.4. *The consequence of refusing the Lord's solution*

The last three verses of the textual unit we are analyzing shows the Lord's or the prophet's solution for the people in order to avoid a catastrophe just described in the previous verses. Verse 15 says: שובה ונחת תושעון בהשקט ובבטחה. First, we can see the word pairs שובה ונחת describing a possible solution from the catastrophe that is coming. The same verse also shows that three words are all linked to the preposition ב: בשובה; בבטחה; בהשקט. All those words emphasized the same theme of a peaceful return to the Lord as the only Saviour. This return to the Lord has to be understood theologically, as Beuken pointed out.²⁷ But, because of this refusal, the prophet announces the consequence in verses 16-17.

Verse 16 is an impressive example of Hebrew poetry.

על-סוס ננוס
על-יכן תנוסון
ועל-קל נרכב
על-יכן יקלו

This verse is an example of synonym parallelism where to the word סוס corresponds to the word קל in the second part of the ver-

²⁵ Cf. Luis Alonso Schökel, *Manuale di poetica ebraica*, 97-100.

²⁶ Cf. nbl, Ludwig Koehler-Walter Baumgartner, (ed.), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, I-II, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln, 2001., 663.

²⁷ Cf. William A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah 30: A prophetic oracle transmitted in two successive paradigms*, Craig C. Broyles-Craig A. Evans (ed.), *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretative tradition*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln, 1997., 369-397.

se. The preposition *לע* is used four times to make a much clearer connection between the parts of the parallelism. In addition, the words *סוס* and *קל* have their corresponding verbs in the same verse: *קלל – נוס*. And another element has to be emphasized: the prepositional phrase *עליכן* does exactly that. Verse 16 in this way shows how they put all their confidence in the military or material power of the horses. From an historical point of view, that confidence is useless because at that time Egypt was no longer a strong nation in any way.²⁸

The textual unit ends with a proverb which is a very fine example of Hebrew poetry. Verse 17 used this proverb: *אלף אחד מפני גערת אחד מפני גערת חמשה תנסי*, though it is very enigmatic and a *crux interpretum*.²⁹ I would like to emphasize only the poetic nature of this proverb which describes the disproportion between the number of enemies involved here. The proverb, however, is not to be immediately interpreted yet it is an example of classical Hebrew poetry.

The last verse ends with the beautiful image of the people remaining on the mountain: *אם-נותרתם כתרן על-ראש ההר וכנס על-הגבעה*. With this image, we come to the end of this textual unit which once again states its poetic nature. This poetic nature usually consists of beautiful scenes of nature. And it is to be also mentioned that this verse portrays the synonym parallelism already seen in this textual unit as the prominent feature of Hebrew poetry. The parallelism is in fact dual:

כתרן על-ראש ההר
וכנס על-הגבעה.

Two words are put in the parallelism: *ותר* and *סו* and *רה* and *העבג*. That kind of parallelism is the one that indicates synonyms which are being linked.

Having analyzed the textual unit *Is 30, 1-17*, we can add another element: the unit *Is 30, 8-14*, according to Luis Alonso Schökel, can be called the following bifurcation because the unit is continuously developed from v. 8 up to verse 14. Verse 8. has introduced the theme that will be later developed in detail. Each verse that follows is closely related to the one preceding it.³⁰

²⁸ Cf. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986., 546.

²⁹ This verse is problematic because the text is not clear. The BHS indicates that part of the verse was probably added later. Cf. *Is 30, 17 (TM)*.

³⁰ Cf. Luis Alonso Schökel, *Manuale di poetica ebraica*, 94-96.

6. INTERTEXTUAL ECHOES FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF IS 30, 1-17

Although our primary focus in the analysis was on the close reading of the text in Is 30, 1-17 we will now shed some light also on the the vocabulary of this textual unit because it is our view that exists many intertextual echoes within the text of Is 30, 1-17 that links this passage with other parts of the Book of Isaiah. All of that indicate how the Book of Isaiah possibly works as a coherent literary unit.³¹ Some words that hint to the possible intertextual echoes are following:

הוי:	Is 1, 5; 1, 24; 5, 8; 5, 11; 5, 18; 5, 20; 10, 1; 10, 5; 28, 1; 29, 1; 29, 15; 31, 1; 33, 1; 45, 1; 45, 10; 55, 1;
בנים סוררים:	Is 1, 23; 30, 1; 65, 2;
כתבה:	Is 4, 3; 8, 1; 10, 1; 10, 19; 30, 8; 44, 5; 65, 6;
קדוש ישראל:	Is 1, 4; 5, 19; 5, 24; 10, 20; 12, 6; 17, 7; 30, 11-12; 30, 15; 31, 1; 37, 23; 41, 14; 43, 3; 43, 14; 45, 11; 47, 4; 48, 17; 54, 5; 60, 14;
ישע:	Is 17, 10; 25, 9; 30, 15; 33, 22; 35, 4; 37, 20; 37, 35; 38, 20; 43, 12; 45, 8; 45, 17; 45, 20; 45, 22; 46, 7; 47, 13; 49, 25; 51, 5; 59, 1; 59, 16; 61, 10; 62, 11; 63, 1.5.9; 64, 4;
תורת יהוה:	Is 5, 24; 30, 9

Based on the occurrence of the words listed above, we can conclude that this textual unit is strongly connected with the first part of the Book of Isaiah as it now stands (as a whole), and also with the second and the third parts of the Book. While in the first part of the Book the refusal of the Lord or the Holy One of Israel dominates, His guidance is strongly emphasized in the other parts of the Book. The Lord will be the only refuge and Saviour of his people. The concepts of sin and salvation are remarkably connected. While in the first part of the Book the non-recognition of sin and confidence in other nations dominated, in the second part of the Book God's salvation and peace are repeatedly highlighted.

For our analysis it is important to see how chapter 30 recalls chapters one, five and eight where the plausible historical situation is the dangerous threat from Assyria. The words בנים סוררים, קדוש ישראל, תורת יהוה, חטאת על-חטאת – resound in chapters 1-8 where we

³¹ It is not possible to do an overall and detailed analysis of all intertextual echoes of Is 30, 1-17 that we will show in the following table. We will be focused on some important elements that are relevant for the analysis of our passage which is Is 30, 1-17.

find the prophet in a time of a great national crisis because of the powerful Assyria. More specifically, we can also mention the so-called Syro-Ephraimitic crisis in 734-732 BCE³² during the reign of King Ahaz. The motif for writing on the tablet appears there as well (cf. Is 8, 1). But, as in those chapters, the people or their rulers do not want to put their confidence in the Lord. Rather, they are much more confident in some other help, such as that from the Egyptians. We will discuss this plausible historical background of the passage below.

6.1. Egypt

With regard to the intertextual analysis of this textual unit, it appears to be also very important to analyze the word “Egypt,” because this analysis could be a possible key for a better understanding of this textual unit. The word appears in the following places: Is 10, 24.26; 11, 15.16; 19, 1-4.13-19; 19, 19-25; 30, 2-3.7; 31, 1-3; 36, 6.9; 43, 3. Firstly, we would like to point out that Egypt is an old motif in the Hebrew Bible. The prophets also sometimes used the motif metaphorically. When remembering the Exodus from Egypt, the prophets want to emphasize the Lord’s role in the history of liberation. That was the first mighty act of God that has to be remembered. In any event, the formula “I brought you out from Egypt” is an ancient formulation often used in the Hebrew Bible and reminds its audience of Lord’s mighty deliverance and favoring of his chosen nation. In the present passage we do not find that formula but what we do find could be an ancient echo that wants to recall God’s sovereignty in Israel. He is the only one who can save and liberate his people from oppression. That motif of liberation from Egypt is also used metaphorically for the oppression under the Assyrian Empire, as we read in prophet Hoshea (cf. Hos 7, 11; 12, 2). So, we should be aware of this close similarity of motifs when reading Is 30.³³

7. POSSIBLE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEXTUAL UNIT IS 30, 1-17

Although it is very complicated to establish a clear date for any biblical record in the OT, we should attempt this in order to better

³² Cf. Luca Mazzinghi, *Storia d’Israele dalle origini al periodo romano*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2017., 72.

³³ Cf. Mario Liverani, *Oltre la Bibbia. Storia antica di Israele*, Laterza, Bari, 2017., 175-182.

understand the present passage, Is 30, 1-17, as well as considering its plausible historical situation. Many authors will agree in saying that this passage should be placed in the Judean Kingdom and not in the Northern Kingdom.³⁴ In fact, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amos, prophesized in the Southern Kingdom, or in the Judean Kingdom. A close literary comparison of this chapter with other parts of the Book of Isaiah could give us the possible historical setting of this passage. The passage shows notorious similarities with chapters 1-11 and with chapters 36 – 39 of the Book of Isaiah. Since the first unit just mentioned, chapters 1-11, talks about the situation in the Northern Kingdom during the kingdom of Ahaz (cf. Is 6-10), chapters 36-39 describe the Southern Kingdom and King Hezekiah. While his father is depicted very negatively, he, however, will be depicted by the prophet Isaiah as a righteous king. Hence, Isaiah offers a completely positive picture of his kingdom. On the other hand, 2 Kings 18-19 presents Hezekiah differently. In the eyes of the Deuteronomistic historian, he is described negatively as one who has paid tribute to the Assyrian kings, as his father does. Now, we may ask ourselves how this is connected with the textual unit of Is 30, 1-17. This textual unit probably describes the situation in the Judean Kingdom around 701 BCE, that is during the reign of king Hezekiah. There is a real political crisis when the Assyrian Empire also wanted to take over and control the Judean Kingdom. A political regime was seen at the time as a possible solution for that problem, namely, to make an alliance with the Egyptian Empire in the South. That alliance and any other alliance with the Israelites, except the alliance with Yahweh, was in the eyes of the prophet Isaiah the great sin, or even an act of faithlessness. So, while Ahaz was described as an Assyrian vassal, Hezekiah, on the other hand, seems to be an obedient king to the Lord. However, that in fact is not sufficiently clear because as stated above, when we read 2 Kings 18-20 we can see that he was also paying tribute to the Assyrian kings.³⁵

³⁴ Cf. Luca Mazzinghi, *Storia d'Israele dalle origini al periodo romano*, 75-78; Some authors such as Reinhard G. Kratz would say that this chapter is actually a rewriting of the events once took place in the Northern Kingdom and it is now rewritten for the Southern Kingdom; cf. Reinhard G. Kratz, *Rewriting Isaiah. The Case of Isaiah 28-31*, John Day (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, T&T Clark, New York-London, 2010., 245-266.

³⁵ Cf. Luca Mazzinghi, *Storia d'Israele dalle origini al periodo romano*, 75-78.; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 415-417.

When comparing our text to other ANE texts, such as those from Mari, we can see some similarities with the textual unit of Is 30, 1-17. The motif that connects the two texts is seeking advice from someone else before consulting the deity. Mari prophets were complaining about Zimri-Lim's negotiation with Eshnunna before consulting the deity.³⁶ This motif is also found in our text from Isaiah. The prophet is criticizing those who have not consulted first their God, but instead they consult with the Egyptians. Thus, now we see what is the fundamental problem of our passage from a historical point of view.

8. THE THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE BASED ON A CLOSE READING OF IS 30, 1-17

After having analyzed the textual unit, we will now try to articulate its theological message. As we have seen, this textual unit deals with one prominent theme – an alliance with Egypt or trust in Egypt's assistance instead of turning to the Lord as the only Saviour. And the prominent theme from the very beginning confirms the thesis that this text is a strongly coherent unit. From the first verse of chapter 30, it is clear that the prophet and later God himself, are accusing the sons, and later the people (v. 9), because of their trust in something other than the Lord. People are making an alliance with different nations, and that is clear from v. 1: לעשות עצה ולא מגי וינסך מסכה.³⁷ In the second verse, it is clearly stated what is the nation with whom the sons are making the alliance. They are the Egyptians. That nation is seen by the prophet to be a futile and useless nation that cannot offer assistance to the people of God. The theme of worthless trust in Egypt is developed later in verses 3-7. Then, with verse 8, a slightly different narrative begins. At the same time, however, it is closely related to the previous narrative. Now, the prophet shifts his focus from Egypt to the people. The shift is also noticeable with the literary marker – עתה – and in the command given by God to write down the prophecy or oracle: כתבה על-לוח אתם ועל-ספר חקה. This written text should be a reminder for future generations.

³⁶ Cf. Jimmy Jack Roberts, *Blindfolding the Prophet. Political Resistance to First Isaiah's Oracles in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Attitudes toward Oracles*, Jimmy Jack Roberts (ed.), *The Bible and the Ancient Near East. Collected Essays*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 2002., 282-291.

³⁷ Cf. Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 30, 1*, 185-196.

However, the real guilt (sin) of this people lies in its rejection of the Lord, or in the refusal of the Torah of the Lord. That is clearly stated in verse 9: *בנים כחשים בנים לא־אבו שמוע תורת יהוה*: 9. However, it seems that they are not aware that this is the real reason for their society's sudden destruction.³⁸ That is also later confirmed by the authority of the Holy One of Israel. The prophet uses the phrase three times: *קדוש ישראל* (v. 11; 13; 15). So, the guilt (sin) of the people consists in the fact that they refused (cf. Is 30, 12: *ותבטחו בעשק מאסכם בדבר הזה*: the Holy One of Israel (*קדוש ישראל*), or in other words – they refused the Lord of Israel.

Although it is clearly stated that the people did not give ear to the Lord, the Holy One of Israel who calls them to return and to place their trust in him: *בהשקט ובבטחה בשובה ונחת תושעון*. Nonetheless, they refuse to listen and to return to the Lord. That is repeated many times in our textual unit. Several times the author uses the negative particle – *אל*, to show their eager refusal³⁹. The refusal of the Lord then is connected with a sudden destruction which is described through incredible images in a poetic manner.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the textual unit which is Is 30, 1-17 applying first of all so called „close reading“ of the text in the light of the unity movement for the reading the Book of Isaiah we can draw some conclusions. We saw that the Book of Isaiah seen as a coherent unit has a strong message for its audience but only if the Book is read as a unit.

In other words we can say that the textual unit which is Is 30, 1-17 had a powerful message for its historical audience. It also has a powerful message today for any reader. The prophet Isaiah describes for the readers by means of beautiful poetical images how the only reliable trust one needs is trust in the Lord. It is this Lord who has proven many times in history to be the prominent liberator from oppression. The tone of the narrative and its poetic language sharply describe the close relationship of Yahweh to his people. From the very first line the Lord is described as the one to consult, and there are no other possible sources of help. The narrative unit repeatedly affirms that the Lord is calling his people to come near to him in order to find peace and salvation. At the same time, we can note that the author emphasizes the eager disobedience and the lack of

³⁸ Cf. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *Reading Isaiah*, 148.

³⁹ Cf. Is 30, 1. 2. 5. 6. 9. 10. 14. 15. 16

the people's will to listen to the Lord. For this reason, the people are described as rebellious and disobedient. Their main sin is not only their reliance on material security. As it was shown in the analysis, they do not want to put their trust in the Lord but instead they trust in the military power of Egypt. Although, at that time Egypt was not a power that could give them any trust. Thus, the text is profoundly ironic. Looking at our reality as people of the 21st century, we can conclude that very often we live our humanity in a very ironic way: we put all our trust in our material security and do not regard God as our only Savior. In conclusion, we can say that this passage is a clear call to fidelity in the Lord and His uniqueness, a uniqueness that requires our personal disposition and act of faith.

EGZEGETSKO-TEOLOŠKO ČITANJE TEKSTA IZ 30, 1-17 (TM) U SVJETLU „UNITY MOVEMENT“ PRISTUPA ZA ČITANJE KNJIGE PROROKA IZAIJE

Sažetak

Knjiga proroka Izaija godinama je uistinu kompleksna za istraživače Svetog pisma. Primarna poteškoća proizlazi iz poetskog načina izražavanja autora, a uz to se naravno vezuje i poteškoća povezivanja različitih povijesnih epoha koju opisuje Knjiga proroka Izaija u svojoj cjelovitosti. U posljednje vrijeme ovoj se Knjizi pristupa na unitaran način. To će reći da ju se nastoji čitati u njezinoj cjelovitosti dijelova, a ne dijeleći ju kako je to dugo bio trend, na tri dijela: Iz 1-39; 40-55; 56-66. Taj takozvani „unity movement“ u istraživanjima Knjige proroka Izaije pokazuje nam kako se Knjizi ipak može pristupiti cjelovito. Stoga ćemo u ovome radu nastojati analizirati tekst Iz 30, 1-17 (TM) u svjetlu takozvanog „unity movement“ pristupa Knjizi proroka Izaije. Valja ipak reći da će metodološki put ovoga rada prije svega biti takozvani „close reading“ teksta, a potom i osvrt na moguće intertekstualne poveznice teksta u Iz 30, 1-17 sa drugim dijelovima Knjige proroka Izaije. Na samome kraju autor će ponuditi i prikaz moguće povijesno-teološke poruke istog biblijskog teksta.

Ključne riječi: *Izaija*, „unity movement“, *Hebrejska poezija*, *spasenje*, *povijest*