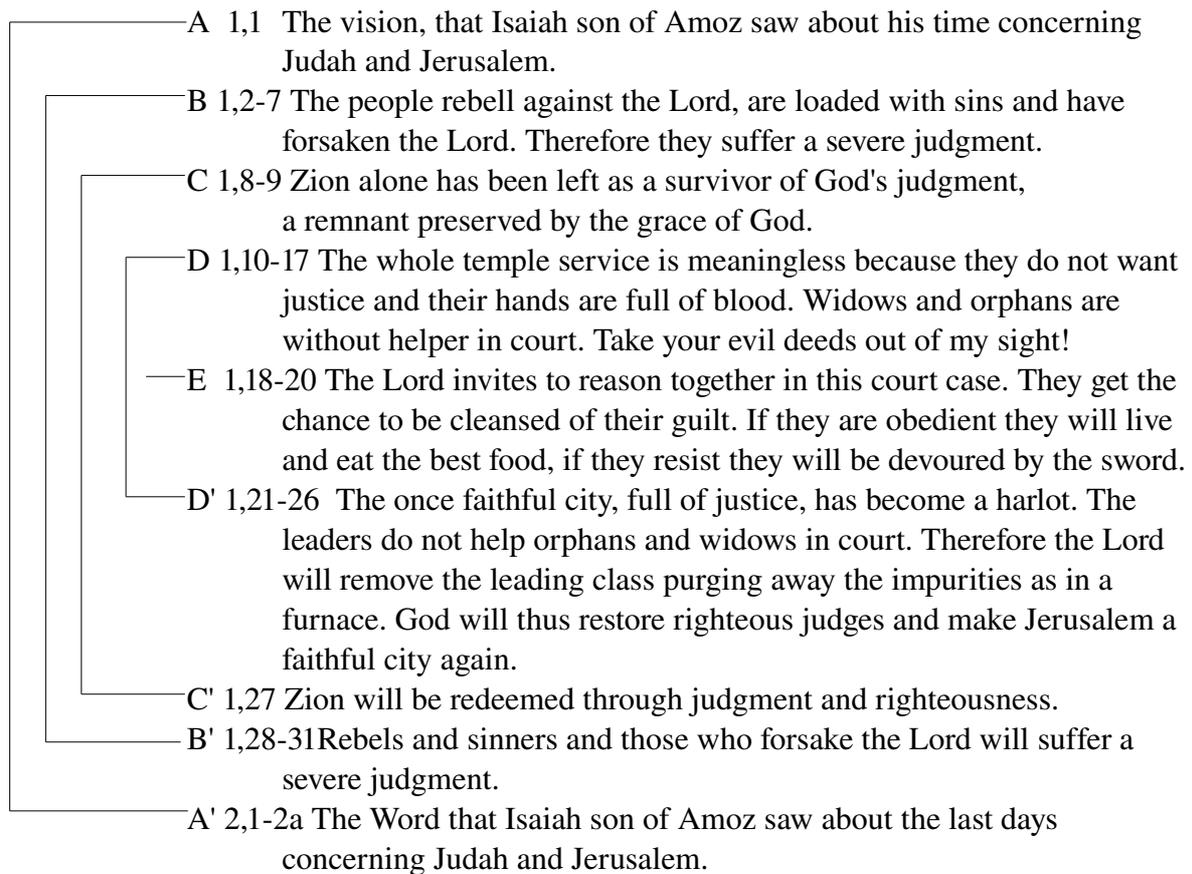


Some thoughts on the structure of Isaiah (Eddy Lanz, January 2007)

1. For any outline of Isaiah the superscriptions in 1,1; 2,1 and 13,1 and the narrative texts in Is 6-8 and 36-39 are essential.

When you consider the superscriptions you get three parts: I. chapter 1; II. chapter 2-12 and III. chapter 13-66. The narrative texts of Is 6-8 stand in the structural center of II. chapter 2-12 and the narrative texts of 36-39 stand in the structural center of 13-66.

2. Is 1,1-2,2: The rebellious Jerusalem of today is transformed through God's judgments to become the future world-center of the proclamation of the Word of God.



3. 2,1-14,23: The Lord has chosen Zion: Through his judgments he will empower his law and his messiah.

- A 2,1-5 The law of the Lord will go forth from the exalted Zion, convert all nations and bring peace to the world.
- B 2,6-22 The day of the Lord will also target his own people. Man will be made low, and the Lord alone will be exalted.
- C 3,1-4,6 In his judgment on Jerusalem and Judah the Lord will remove from men (3,1) and women (3,18) what is precious to them. In his grace he will give a glorious future to the holy remnant in Zion.
- D 5,1-7 Having waited in vain for the fruits of justice and righteousness the Lord removes (5,5) his protection from the unfruitful vineyard Israel and Judah, so that it will be destroyed in judgment.
- E 5,8-25 Six times (5,8.11.18.20.21.22) "woe" to God's people, his hand is raised to punish them.
- F 5,26-30 God uses a distant nation as a means of judgment against his own people, who will be submerged in darkness.
- G 6,1-13 Isaiah sees the king of the world, the holy Lord Almighty in his palace temple. He realizes his own sinfulness and impurity, is cleansed, called and sent on his mission.
- H 7,1-9 While Syria and Ephraim try to conquer Jerusalem Isaiah calls Ahaz to trust in the Lord. Isaiah's son Shear-Jashub serves as a sign. "If you do not stand firm in the faith, you will not stand at all."
- I 7,10-25 Ahaz chooses not to believe and not to ask for a sign as commanded. God gives him the sign of Immanuel. God will use Egypt and Assyria to punish the house of David and the people of Judah.
- H' 8,1-4 Isaiah's son "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" is a sign for the impending judgment of Syria (Damascus) and Ephraim (Samaria).
- I' 8,5-10 Assyria and the nations will flood Judah, but they will not be able to erase it because of Immanuel.
- G' 8,11-18 In his calling Isaiah was warned not to follow the way of "this people". The Lord will be a sanctuary for those who regard him as holy, but for both houses of Israel he will be a stumbling stone and trap. Isaiah and his children serve as a sign to illustrate this truth.
- F' 8,19-22 As long as this people does not seek the light of God's law, but consults mediums and spiritists, it will remain in the darkness of judgment.
- D' 9,1-6 The Son on David's throne is the light overcoming the darkness. He will establish a kingdom of peace through righteousness and justice.
- E' 9,7-10,4 The Lord judges Ephraim with his hand raised (9,12.17.21; 10,4). Woe to them (10,1)!
- C' 10,5-34 Woe (10,5) to the proud Assyrian, the rod of God's anger. The yoke of Assyria will be removed (10,27) from the repentant holy remnant of God's people in Zion.
- A' 11,1-12,6 The Messiah will rule and judge all nations from Zion creating an everlasting worldwide kingdom of peace. God's people are gathered in a second exodus from all the world and sing the song of salvation in Zion.
- B' 13,1-14,23 Oracle (massa') concerning Babylon: The day of the Lord over Babylon results in the exodus of Israel to go home and come into power. Now they can sing a song about the end of the tyrant of Babylon.

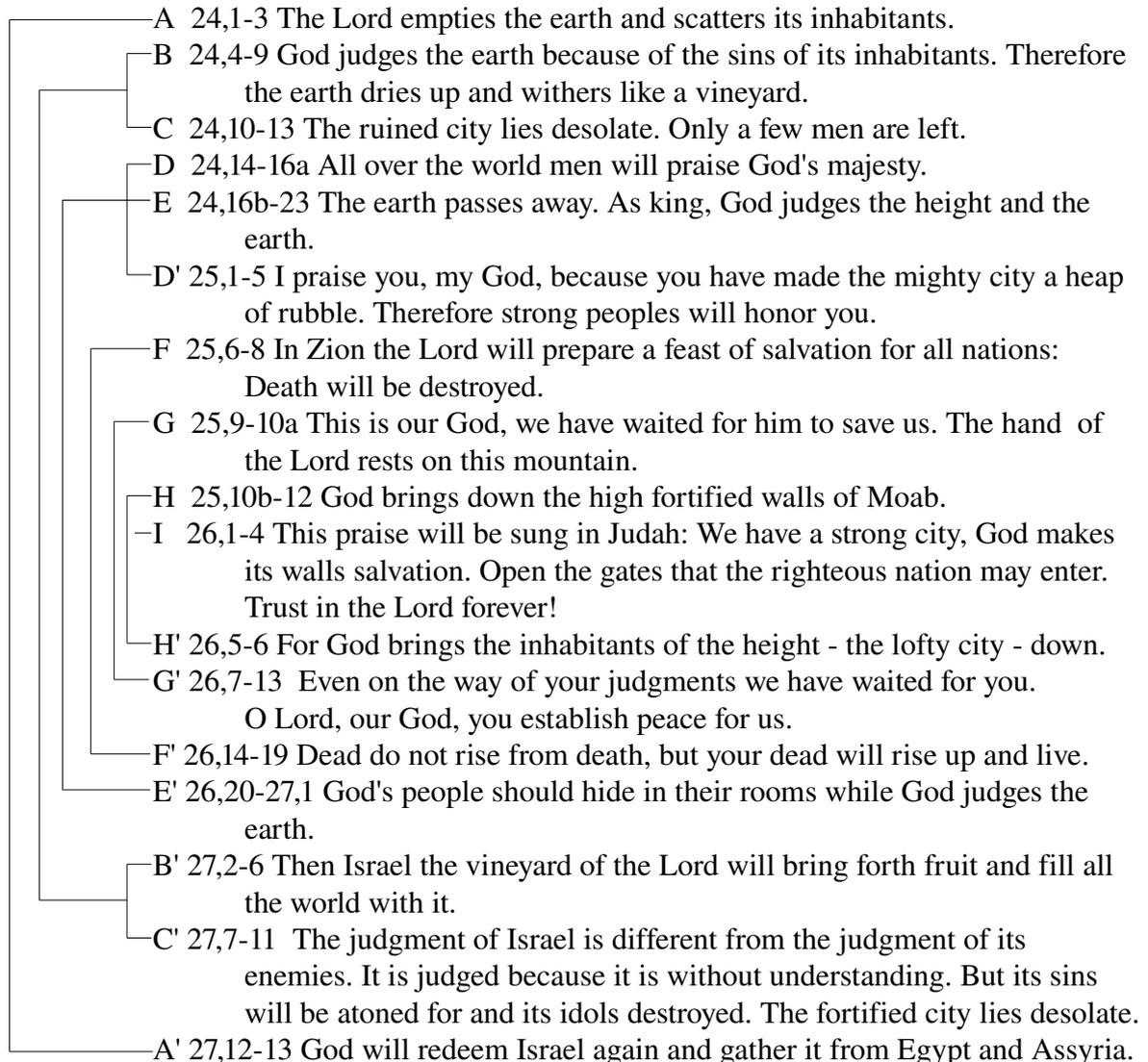
4. 13,1-66,24 From Babylon to Zion: The way of Israel and the nations into the kingdom of God through the servants of the Lord.

- A 13-27 From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.
 - 1. 13-23 Ten prophetic oracles (massa') about Babylon, the nations and Israel.
 - 2. 24-27 When the earth passes away on the day of the Lord there will be only a few men left. The Lord will be king in Zion and prepare a feast of salvation there for all nations: Death will be destroyed. The Exiles return from Egypt and Assyria.
- B 28-35 From "Woe to Israel" to the joy of the redeemed coming home.
 - 1. 28-33 Six woes to Israel, Judah and the destroyer.
 - 2. 34-35 The day of the Lord brings judgment for Edom and the nations. Heaven will pass away. The coming of the Lord brings eternal salvation for his people coming home.
- C 36-39 The Lord saves Jerusalem and the faithful Hezekiah from Assur and predicts to the healed Hezekiah that his sons will be exiled to Babylon.
- A' 40,1-52,12 From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.
- B' 52,13-66,24 From the redemption of the lost Israel through the servant of the Lord to the joy of the redeemed coming home.

5. A Is 13-27: From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.

- 1. 13-23 Ten prophetic oracles (massa') about Babylon, the nations and Israel
 - 1. 13,1-14,23 massa': An oracle concerning Babylon
 - 14,24-27 Assyria will be crushed in God's Land.
 - 2. 14,28-32 massa' with date: An oracle concerning the Philistines
 - 3. 15,1-16,14 massa': An oracle concerning Moab
 - 4. 17,1-3(11) massa': An oracle concerning Damascus
 - 17,12-14 Hoy: Oh, the raging of many nations. God rebukes the raging nations as he rebuked the Red Sea.
 - 18,1-7 Hoy: Woe to the land of Cush
 - 5. 19,1-25 massa': An oracle concerning Egypt
 - 20,1-6 Egypt, Cush
 - 6. 21,1-10 massa': An oracle concerning the Desert by the Sea (Babylon)
 - 7. 21,11-12 massa': An oracle concerning Dumah
 - 8. 21,13-17 massa': An oracle concerning Arabia
 - 9. 22,1-14 massa': An oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (Jerusalem)
 - 22,15-25 Shebna and Eliakim
 - 10. 23,1-18 massa': An oracle concerning Tyre

2. 24-27 When the earth will pass away on the day of the Lord there will be only a few men left. The Lord will be king in Zion. There he will prepare a feast of salvation for all nations: Death will be destroyed. The Exiles return from Egypt and Assyria.



6. B 28-35 From the woe to the lost Israel to the joy of the redeemed coming home.

1. 28-33 Six woes to Israel, Judah and the destroyer.
 1. 28,1-29 Woe to that wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards. Judgment of Samaria 1-4, promise 5-6 7, judgment of Judah 7-22, promise 23-29
 2. 29,1-14 Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city, where David settled! The siege of Jerusalem 1-8, the people are blind to God's word 9-14.
 3. 29,15-24 Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plan from God. It is impossible to hide anything from the Lord. 15-16 Israel will be transformed, the deaf will hear and the blind see. 17-24
 4. 30,1-5 Woe to the obstinate children. Against the Egypt policy. 1-5
- 30,6-33 massa': An oracle concerning the animals of the Negev Against Egypt 6-7, God lets Isaiah write a book to be an everlasting witness against those who reject God's revelation 8-17, Zion's

- redemption 18-26, judgment of the nations, especially Assyria 27-33.
5. 31,1-32,20 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help.
Against the Egypt policy 31,1-3, Assyria will be punished, Zion will be saved 4-9, the future kingdom of righteousness 32,1-8, against the complacent women 32,9-14.
The great transformation: The Spirit is poured out from on high 15-20.
 6. 33,1-24 Woe to you, destroyer ...
The nations and the destroyer are punished. 1-13
Zion's redemption, the appearance of the Lord. 14-24
 2. 34-35 The day of the Lord brings judgment for Edom and the nations. Heaven will pass away. The coming of the Lord brings eternal salvation for his people.
 1. 34,1-17 God's judgment of the nations, especially Edom.
The eschatological judgment of the whole world 1-4
The judgment of Edom 5-17
 2. 35,1-10 The coming of the Lord brings eternal salvation for his people who come home to Zion.

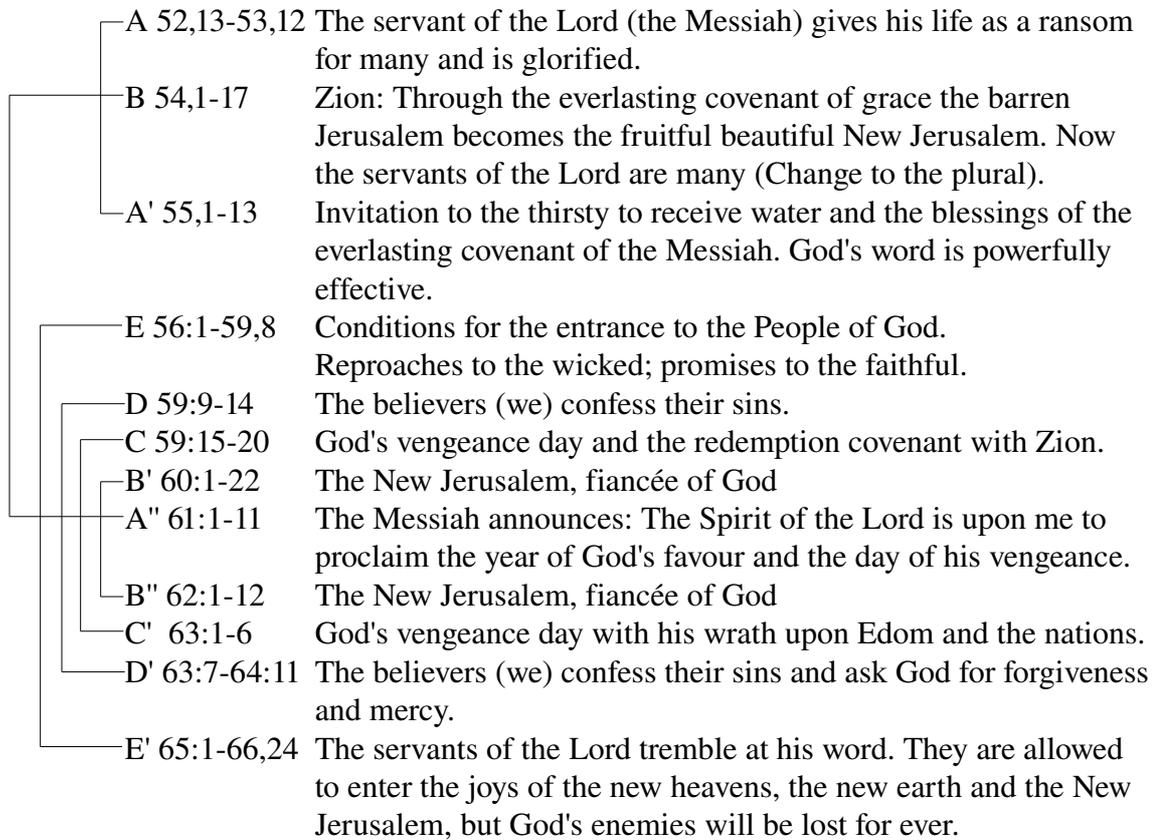
7. C 36-39 The Lord saves Jerusalem and the faithful Hezekiah from Assur and predicts to the healed Hezekiah that his sons will be exiled to Babylon.

- I. 36,1-37,38 Jerusalem is threatened by Assyria and saved by the Lord.
- A 36,1 Sennacherib's victory over all fortified cities of Judah.
 - B 36,2-22 Sent by Sennacherib Rabshakeh orders Jerusalem to surrender to Assyria, claiming that the Lord would not be able to protect them.
 - C 37,1-7 Hezekiah's request from Isaiah. God's answer through Isaiah.
 - B' 37,8-13 Sennacherib sends a letter ordering Jerusalem to surrender, claiming that the Lord would not be able to protect them.
 - C' 37,14-35 Hezekiah's prayer to God. God's answer through Isaiah.
 - A' 37,36-38 Sennacherib's defeat and doom according to God's word.
- II: 38,1-22 Hezekiah is threatened by a deadly illness and saved by the Lord.
- A 38,1 God's word through Isaiah: Hezekiah will not live.
 - B 38,2-3 Hezekiah's request: Remember my pious life.
 - C 38,4-8 God's word through Isaiah: 15 years added to Hezekiah's life. Jerusalem will be saved from Assyria. God grants a sign.
 - C' 38,9-20 Hezekiah's psalm of thanksgiving after being healed. The father tells his children about God's faithfulness. Hezekiah's joy to go to the temple of the Lord.
 - A' 38,21 God's word through Isaiah: Hezekiah will live.
 - B' 38,22 Hezekiah's question: "What is the sign that I will go up to the temple of the Lord?"
- III. 39,1-8 Hezekiah will lose everything to Babylon.
- A 39,1-2 After his healing Hezekiah joyfully shows the Babylonian diplomats everything.
 - B 39,3-8 God's word through Isaiah for Hezekiah: Hezekiah will lose everything to Babylon. Even some sons will go there into exile.

8. A' 40,1-52,12 From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.

- A 40,1-11 Comfort, comfort my people: God is coming and gathers his people with his mighty arm like a shepherd and leads them.
- B 40,12-41,7 The unique greatness of the true God. Court case with the nations. The Lord lets the future things happen. Against idolatry.
- C 41,8-29 The Lord helps his servant Israel, also through waters in the desert. The Lord alone predicts the future and lets it come. Idols are nothing.
- D 42,1-12 The Lord presents his servant (the Messiah), who is a covenant for the people and light of the nations. The servant will let God's law and justice go out to all nations. Men of the earth, the seas and the mountains will rejoice.
- E 42,13-24 Mountains and hills become a desert, rivers dry out. God's servant Israel is blind to God's law because of idolatry and disobedience. God got him punished, but now he heals him and leads him through light to freedom.
- F 42,25-43,13 Having burnt his people with the fire of his anger God wants to protect his people on their way through waters and fires and prove to all the world that he is the one and only saviour.
- G 43,14-21 The Lord breaks the bars of Babylon through someone whom he has sent, so that Israel can return through the desert with streams of water provided.
- H 43,22-28 The Lord himself blots out Israel's transgression.
- I 44,1-5 The Lord pours out his Spirit on the Israelites like streams of water on the thirsty land so that they grow like trees by flowing streams.
- I' 44,6-20 The unique greatness of the true God, who reveals future things. To worship idols is foolish, because idols are only pieces of wood fashioned by humans.
- H' 44,21-23 God's servant Israel is redeemed through the forgiveness of his sins.
- G' 44,24-45,13 The Lord dries out the watery deep and the streams. Through Cyrus, his shepherd and Messiah, he breaks the bars of Babylon and lets Jerusalem and the temple be built again.
- F' 45,14-25 God wants to save his own people and the fugitives of all nations and show thus to all the world that he is the one and only saviour for all.
- B' 46,1-47,15 The Lord shows his unique greatness through the fall of Babylons idols. He invites Israel to repent. Judgment of the daughter of Babylon.
- C' 48,1-22 The Lord alone predicts the future and lets it come. Idols cannot do that. Israel should understand that, repent, leave Babylon, come to the Lord and experience waters in the desert on the way home.
- D' 49,1-13 The servant of the Lord (the Messiah) is a covenant for the people and light of the nations. Heavens, earth and mountains rejoice.
- E' 49,14-50,3 Zion's lamentation, redemption and glorification. The cause of the misery was Zion's guilt.
- D'' 50,4-11 God has opened the ear of the servant of the Lord (the Messiah) for his word. Even in sufferings he is obedient and does not draw back.
- E'' 51,1-8 The Lord comforts Zion and let's his law and justice go forth as a light of the nations to all the world. Heaven and earth pass away, but the people with God's law in their hearts have eternal salvation and justice.
- A' a 51,9-16 Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the Lord. He creates heavens and earth anew and tells Zion: You are my people.
- b 51,17-23 Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem. God takes away the cup of his wrath from Jerusalem's hand.
- b' 52,1-10 Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. God is coming to Zion, he has revealed his holy arm.
- a' 52,11-12 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing!

9. B' 52,13-66,24 From the redemption of the lost Israel through the servant of the Lord to the joy of the redeemed coming home to the New Jerusalem.



Gregory J. Polan¹ refers in his book "In the ways of justice toward salvation: a rhetorical analysis of Isaiah 56-59" some views of Isaiah 56-66 as a unified whole. He acknowledges especially the outline of E. Charpentier², which was later somehow modified but was basically pointing to the right direction:

- "(A) 56:1-8 - Conditions for the entrance to the People of God
 (B) 56:9--58 - Reproaches to the wicked; promises to the faithful
 (C) 59:1-14 - Two psalms and confession of sin
 (D) 59:15-20 - Divine Vengeance
 (E) 60:1-22 - The New Jerusalem, fiancée of God
 (F) 61:1-11 - The announcement of messianic times.
 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.
 (E') 62:1-12 - The New Jerusalem, fiancée of God
 (D') 63:1-6 - Divine Vengeance
 (C') 63:7-64:11 - Two psalms and confession of sin
 (B') 65:1-66,17 - Reproaches to the wicked; promises to the faithful
 (A') 66:18-24 - Conditions for the entrance to the People of God".³

¹In the ways of justice toward salvation: a rhetorical analysis of Isaiah 56-59, Dissertation, AmerUnivSt 7/13, New York: 1986.

²Charpentier, Etienne, Jeunesse du Vieux Testament, Paris: 1963, pp. 79f.

10. Repeated similarities of motives closing the big sections:

At the end of the big sections of the above named structure you have the recurring motives of

- the end of the old heavens and earth and
- the coming of the new heavens and earth
- the gathering of the saints from all the corners of the earth to come home:

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|------------|---|
| 1. 2-12 | apocalyptic closure: | 11-12 | (new world as in 65) |
| 2. 13-27 | apocalyptic closure: | 24-27 | (end of the earth in 24) |
| 3. 28-35 | apocalyptic closure: | 34-35 | (end of the heavens in 34) |
| 4. 40,1-52,12 | apocalyptic closure: | 51,1-52,12 | (end of earth and heaven,
new heavens and earth in 51) |
| 5. 52,13-66,24 | apocalyptic closure: | 65-66 | (new heavens, new earth in 65-66). |

Sometimes the emphasis is on the end of the old (as in 24 and 34), sometimes on the new (65), but all texts presuppose a total change of order, the coming of a new world. The coming home of the saints is the coming home to a new world order.

³Polan, *Ways of justice*, o.c., pp. 15-16. Compare similarly Emerson, Grace I., *Isaiah 56-66*, OTG, Sheffield: 1992, p. 20 and Berges, *Komposition und Endgestalt*, o.c., pp. 419-420.