CHAPTER ELEVEN
ISAIAH 40–55 AND LAMENTATIONS

Introduction

Indirect support for a Judahite setting of Isa 40–55 can also be found in the use of allusion in Isa 40–55 to Lamentations.\(^1\) In this final chapter, I shall show that the allusions to Lamentations in Isa 40–55 emphasize the Judahite perspective of the latter text. I shall first discuss some general aspects relating to the matter of inner-biblical textual allusions and then look at the specific notion of the allusions to Lamentations in Isa 40–55. I shall focus in particular on the allusions in Isa 40:1; 49:14–26; 49:13; 51:11–12, 17–23; 52:1, 11. A number of scholars have looked at this issue before. However, since they all presuppose that Isa 40–55 is exilic in origin, while Lamentations is Judahite, they have all interpreted it as an example of cross-communal inter-textuality, i.e. where one community alludes to the texts of another community. The resulting exegesis has accordingly been one of replacement. Through the allusions, the exilic community adopts the Judahite language of Lamentations in order to replace that community. The present chapter proposes a different scenario. Instead of one community replacing the other, I suggest that the allusions to Lamentations in Isa 40–55 served the Judahite community as a means of strength and support.

In contrast to the preceding material, this chapter does not argue for a Judahite setting of Isa 40–55. Rather, it assumes it in order to demonstrate some of the exegetical consequences that stem from a Judahite setting of Isa 40–55. At the same time, if it turns out that this assumption

enables us to understand the allusions to Lamentations in Isa 40–55 in a more straightforward and coherent manner, this would, in itself, be a confirmation of the Judahite provenance of Isa 40–55.

1. Inner-Biblical Textual Allusions

Before looking at inner-biblical textual allusions, three key factors must be established. First, we need to decide the direction of the allusions: which is the source text and which is the alluding text? Secondly, we need to ascertain that we are dealing with actual dependency rather than merely shared outlook and vocabulary. Thirdly, we need to determine that the alluding text had access to the source text. In the case of Lamentations and Isa 40–55, both texts can be dated to roughly the same time period (ca. 586–522 BC). There is, however, little doubt that Isa 40–55 is the later composition. It is likely that many, if not all, of the laments in Lamentations were composed before 539 BC (cf. chapter 2). In contrast, it is doubtful that any text in Isa 40–55 was written long before the same date (cf. chapter 1). In addition, as I have already touched upon in chapter 9 and shall demonstrate further below, Isa 40–55 actively interacts with and sometimes also reverses statements in Lamentations. This phenomenon points not only to the direction of the allusions but also suggests the actual dependency of Isa 40–55 on Lamentations. In fact, although running the risk of circularity, more than one scholar uses the allusions to Lamentations in Isa 40–55 as a tool for determining the terminus ad quem of Lamentations.2 Finally, given the likely liturgical use of Lamentations (cf. Zech 7:3, 5), it is reasonable to assume that the authors of Isa 40–55 had access to Lamentations, although not necessarily to its final form.

Further, we need to determine the types of and the reasons for the use of Lamentations by the authors of Isa 40–55. There are several ways in which one text can consciously refer to another text (allusion, influence, echo and exegesis).3 In the case of the textual interaction between Isa 40–55 (the alluding text) and Lamentations (the source text), the term “allusion” is the most fitting. From an external perspective, the reader of Isa 40–55 recognizes a “marker”, i.e. an identifiable element or pattern from

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2 See Berlin, Lamentations, p. 34, Westermann, Klagelieder, pp. 95–96.