CHAPTER THREE
THE PARTICIPANT ZION/JERUSALEM

The previous chapter sought to analyze the various passages in Isaiah 40–55 in which references to the participant Zion/Jerusalem occur. In that chapter, various observations were made concerning the syntax within these passages, the discourse structure of these passages, and the role of Zion/Jerusalem in these passages. The present chapter concentrates on Isaiah 40–55 as a whole and discusses the role of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in the composition of Isaiah 40–55. The purpose of this discussion is to examine whether the step-by-step approach presented in the previous chapters leads to a coherent view of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55. This corpus-linguistic view is compared to views on Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55 in current exegetical literature. Furthermore, examination is made of whether this concept is also observed in other parts of the Book of Isaiah or in other biblical books where Zion/Jerusalem appears.

In discussing the role of Zion/Jerusalem in the composition of Isaiah 40–55, it is important to deal with the following points:

1. There are various designations of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55. Besides the names ‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’, one finds expressions such as ‘my city’ (Isa 45:13), ‘the holy city’ (Isa 48:2), ‘mother’ (Isa 50:1), ‘afflicted one’ (Isa 51:21; 54:11), and ‘barren one’ (Isa 54:1). Furthermore, at some places the references ‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ are expanded. Particularly noteworthy is Isa 52:1–2, where Jerusalem is spoken to as ‘captive daughter, Zion’ (v. 1) and Zion is spoken to as ‘Jerusalem, the holy city’ (v. 1) and Zion is spoken to as ‘captive daughter, Zion’ (v. 2). Finally, it is striking that in Isa 54:1–17, where Zion/Jerusalem is being addressed, the names ‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ are not mentioned at all. According to Beuken (1974: 30), ‘the lack of a name for the woman of Ch. liv is not devoid of sense.’

2. The references to Zion/Jerusalem in the composition of Isaiah 40–55 are not evenly distributed. In Isa 40:1–11, which has often been called the prologue to Isaiah 40–55, Zion/Jerusalem is mentioned three times. References to her occur less frequently in the immediately following chapters, Isa 40:12–48:22, which are traditionally taken as the first half of the book. However, in the second half of the book,
Isa 49:1–54:17, Zion/Jerusalem assumes a central position. In addition, her children are explicitly mentioned here. Isaiah 55:1–13, which has been frequently taken as the epilogue to Isaiah 40–55, does not contain clear references to Zion/Jerusalem. It is worth examining whether there is a connection between the literary composition of Isaiah 40–55 and the distribution of the references to Zion/Jerusalem in these chapters.

3. The relationships between Zion/Jerusalem and the other participants in Isaiah 40–55 are worth noting. The relationships between Zion/Jerusalem and her children and between Zion/Jerusalem and YHWH are particularly interesting. Furthermore, attention will be paid to the striking parallels between Zion/Jerusalem and the Servant of the Lord.

The present chapter is divided into three parts. First, the role of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55 is considered. In section 3.1, current views on Zion/Jerusalem in the exegetical literature, which do not take linguistic signals as their main point of departure, are discussed. Section 3.2 compares the considerations of these existing views with the outcomes of the analyses in the previous chapter. In section 3.3, an attempt is made to offer a coherent view of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55 on the basis of the results of the linguistic analyses contained in Chapter 2.

After this, we turn to the position of Zion/Jerusalem in the literary composition of Isaiah 40–55. In section 3.4, attention is paid to the literary composition of these chapters and to the position of Zion/Jerusalem in it. The question is considered of whether the distribution of the references to Zion/Jerusalem is tied up with the literary composition of Isaiah 40–55. The last part of this section discusses the presence of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 55. An answer will be given to the question of whether the speaker in Isa 55:1 should be identified as Zion/Jerusalem, as several exegetes have suggested.

Finally, section 3.5 seeks to compare the role of the participant Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55 with her position in other parts of the Old Testament. The question to be discussed here is whether one can observe similarities and dissimilarities between the portrait of Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40–55 and the depictions of Zion/Jerusalem in other biblical books such as Jeremiah, the Minor Prophets, the Book of Psalms, and Lamentations.