The differences between Isa 40–55 and Isa 1–39 are well documented. Most scholars, observing historical references to Babylon and Cyrus, detecting unique figures like the Suffering Servant and Lady Zion, and identifying a shift in language and literary style, treat Isa 40–55 as deriving from an unidentifiable prophet in the exilic period located in Babylon. As a result, Isa 40–55 is often extracted from its setting in the book and studied only in the historical context of Babylonian exile. Over the past forty years, however, advances in redaction, form, canonical, and tradition-historical criticism and the acceptance of synchronic approaches gave scholarly impetus to considering the place of Isa 40–55 within the entire book. The aim of this chapter is to consider the motif of food and drink in Isa 40–55 in light of its placement following Isa 1–39. Two presumptions, then, will frame the study below: (1) Isa 40–55 is a discrete, organized unit; (2) Isa 40–55 is part of the book of Isaiah. In isolation, presumption one results in scholars inferring from the evidence supporting the discrete, organized nature of Isa 40–55 that it should be interpreted as

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an independent unit set within the Babylonian exile, unrelated to the rest of the book of Isaiah. In isolation, presumption two leads to a minimization of the uniqueness of Isa 40–55. When these two presumptions are allowed to inform one another, this enables a reader to identify the unique nature of a theme in Isa 40–55, yet allow the rest of the book to contribute to its interpretation.

Since an exhaustive analysis of the eating theme in Isa 40–55 exceeds the scope of this study, an entrée to the theme will be made possible by considering Isa 55:1–3a initially within the context of Isa 40–55 and then in association with Isa 1–39. The reason for focusing on Isa 55 as a starting point for exploring the topic is because it brings closure to Isa 40–55. In support of this, one may note an inclusio around the “word” concept between Isa 40 and 55. Furthermore, cohesion between Isa 56:1–8 and 66:18–24 suggests Isa 56–66 is a unified section, indicating that Isa 55 belongs to what precedes. This does not mean, however, that Isa 55 cannot bring closure both to Isa 40–55, making it discrete, and transition to Isa 56–66 in the final form the book. The investigation below will focus on how Isa 55:1–3a relates to the use of eating in Isa 40–55 as an avenue for discerning the role of food and drink in Isa 40–55. This will give rise to reflections on how the use of eating in Isa 40–55 relates to Isa 1–39 in a sequential-synchronic approach to the book.

Eating in Isaiah 55:1–3a within Isaiah 40–55

Isaiah 55:1–3a opens the final chapter of Isa 40–55 with food and drink. There are three prominent positions, at times overlapping, regarding the form-critical background of these verses: (1) an invitation to a feast; (2) an invitation by Wisdom; or (3) an invitation from a merchant.

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3 Most agree that the “word” concept binds Isa 40 to 55, see, for example, Melugin, *Formation*, 81. See, however, Katie M. Heffelfinger, *I Am Large, I Contain Multitudes: Lyric Cohesion and Conflict in Second Isaiah*, BIS 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 133–38. She argues that because the “word” theme occurs previously in Isa 40–55 (cf. 41:28; 44:26; 45:23; 50:2; 51:16) the parallels between 55:11 and 40:8 should not be understood as binding. This leaves Isa 40–55 open-ended in her opinion. Heffelfinger’s argument fails to consider that the “word” theme does not recur in Isa 56–66 and that Isa 55:11 and 40:8 uniquely associate arboreal imagery with the “word” motif.