CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGESIS OF INDIVIDUAL PERICOPES WITHIN ISAIAH 28
AND THEIR RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

4.1. Introduction

In dealing with the issues surrounding the delineation of pericopes in § 3.3., we were able to conclude that the Zion text of Isa. 28:16 constitutes part of the pericope 28:14–22. Although we were able to carefully delineate the said pericope within its immediate context, it appeared nevertheless to exhibit both redactional and content based associations with the preceding pericope, namely 28:7–13. The redactional association between the two pericopes is established by the particle יָקַל at the beginning of 28:14, while reciprocal cohesion is determined in terms of content by the fact that both 28:7–13 and 28:14–22 presuppose a period of time in which Judah and Jerusalem were under threat from the Assyrians. In spite of the fact that the pericope 28:7–13 in its turn exhibits both thematic and redactional links with 28:1–4(6) and that semantic and redactional cross-references would likewise appear to exist with respect to 28:23–29, there is much to be said for the suggestion that both 28:7–13 and 28:14–22 should be considered central pericopes within the context of Isaiah 28. Within the framework of the present study, with its focus on the Zion text of 28:16, the exegesis of both pericopes will thus be given pride of place. The next paragraph will deal, therefore, with the exegesis of 28:14–22, followed by an excursus on the so-called ‘covenant with death’ referred to in 28:15 and 18, and a paragraph dedicated to the exegesis of 28:7–13. Once the exegesis of both 28:14–22 and 28:7–13 is complete, we will compare the results of both studies, by way of evaluation, in order to determine the degree of cohesion evident between the pericopes as well as the apparent differences. A concluding paragraph will focus attention on the outermost pericopes of Isaiah 28, namely 28:1–4(6) and 28:23–29 respectively.

The exegetical method we intend to follow can be described as a combination of both synchronic and diachronic analyses, whereby historical and structural questions are treated together. Based on the
pericopes delineated in § 3.3., we will endeavour to establish the literary structure of the individual textual units, paying due attention to the genre of the text in question. Genre, after all, determines to an extent the nature of the message that the text intends to communicate. While the establishment of genre has long been employed in the context of traditional form criticism as an important aid in the historical reconstruction of a text, it ought to serve in the first instance as a means to determine the singularity of a given text. This is of particular importance where prophetic texts are concerned, since the creativity of the prophet is often given expression, albeit in part, in the way he employs a specific genre. Based on its literary structure, we will divide the text of the most important pericopes for the present study (28:7–13 and 28:14–22) into a number of segments which, for the sake of convenience, will be treated separately in sub-paragraphs. Our study will focus significant attention on the poetical features of the various segments of the text, bearing in mind that such features fulfil an important function in the communication process. Form and content in this regard are inseparably linked. The Masoretic text serves as the point of departure. It goes without saying, however, that readings based on other textual traditions (such as Qumran or the Septuagint) will be discussed in relation to the text in question where they are considered important for our exegesis. To conclude our discussion of the individual text segments, an evaluative review will return, among other things, to the question of the historical situation and authenticity of the textual units already considered in some detail in § 3.3. to § 3.6. in connection with Isa. 28:14–22. It is important to determine whether the conclusions reached in the said paragraphs can be confirmed by the exegesis of the individual textual units.

4.2. Isa. 28:14–22

In order to guarantee a thorough and systematic exegesis of 28:14–22, it makes sense to begin by determining the genre thereof and provide a more detailed picture of the structure of the said pericope. The genre to which 28:14–22 belongs can be recognised quite simply as a prophecy of judgement. Characteristic of the pattern associated with this genre is that it commences with a complaint which is then followed by an announcement of judgement. This pattern is clearly evident in 28:14–22. The complaint is unmistakeably recognisable and is formed by verses 14–15. An introductory call to listen addresses and accuses