ISAIAH 2:2-5 AND THE PSALMS OF ZION

John T. Willis

Scholars have often called attention to similarities of themes between Isa 2:2-4 = Mic 4:1-3 and psalms in which Zion plays a prominent role (Psalms 9-10; 46; 48; 66; 67; 76; 78; 84; 86; 87; 122; 132; 137). The present study attempts to present a systematic analysis of these similarities and to suggest some implications which this might have for understanding the function of Isa 2:2-4 = Mic 4:1-3 in their respective prophetic books.

I. THE STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 2:2-4 = MICAH 4:1-3

Taking Isa 2:2a = Mic 4:1a as a one-line introduction to the poem without a parallel line, Isa 2:2b-4 falls into eight two-line parallel­isms containing five thought units, each of which is closely connected to the other in the sequence, depending on the identity of the subject and object in each thought unit. This may be conveniently outlined.

A Yahweh will exalt Mount Zion (2:2b-c—synonymous)

B The nations will come to Zion (2:2d-3a—synonymous) as a result of encouraging each other to go up to Zion (2:3b-c—synonymous) in order that Yahweh might teach the nations so that they might walk in his paths (2:3d-e—synthetic)

C Yahweh's instruction will go out of Zion (2:3f-g—chiastic)

D Yahweh will arbitrate in disputes between the nations (2:4a-b—synonymous)

E The nations will beat their weapons into agricultural tools (2:4c-d—

---

1 Scholars differ as to which psalms should be included in the category "Songs (Psalms) of Zion," ranging all the way from only three (46; 48; 76)—so e.g. G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology [2 vols., Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1967 reprint] 2.157) to as many as seventeen (2; 46; 48; 65; 76; 84; 87; 95-99; 110; 122; 125; 128; 132—so J. D. Levenson, "Zion Traditions," ABD 6.1099). In this study, I am interested in psalms in which Zion plays an important role, and wish to avoid a discussion of the propriety of the term "Songs (Psalms) of Zion" for the psalms under consideration. For brevity, I will use the term "Songs of Zion" in this article merely for convenience.
This analysis reveals two significant aspects of this poem. First, thought units B and E apparently mark the two climactic foci of this poem. If so, Yahweh’s ultimate concern here is the well-being of the nations. He wants them (a) to come to the Jerusalem Temple to receive instruction from him, and (by submitting to this instruction?) (b) to live in peace with one another. Second, the pivotal thought unit in this poem is C (2:3f-g). This chiastically arranged parallel couplet begins with "because." The nations come to the Temple mountain in response to Yahweh’s instruction first going out of Zion, reaching their ears, and peaking their interest in wanting to hear more. Isa 2:3f-g do not contain the words of the “many peoples” to one another. These appear in 2:3b-e. Instead, 2:3f-g express the poet’s explanation to his hearers as to why the nations encouraged one another to go up to the Temple mountain. (On this, see further theme six under II. below.)

II. ISAIAH 2:2-4 = MICAH 4:1-3 AND THE SONGS OF ZION

Using Isa 2:2-4 = Mic 4:1-3 as the basis for comparison, there are nine themes which these two prophetic poems have in common with the Songs of Zion. This is important, because Zion-Jerusalem is the focal point of Yahweh’s work in behalf of the nations in these two prophetic texts.

First, Isa 2:2-4 = Mic 4:1-3 describe the Jerusalem Temple as יִדְרוֹת, “the house of Yahweh” (Isa 2:2a = Mic 4:1a); and יֵלְדוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “the house of the God of Jacob” (Isa 2:3c = Mic 4:2c); and the mountain on which it stands as יִדְרוֹת, “the mountain of Yahweh” (Isa 2:3b = Mic 4:1b). Similarly, psalms extolling Zion speak of the Temple as יִדְרוֹת, “your (his, i.e. Yahweh’s) (holy) Temple” (Pss 48:9 [Heb. 10]; 65:4 [Heb. 5]; 68:29 [Heb. 30]; cf. 5:7 [Heb. 8]; 27:4); יֵלְדוֹת, “your house” (Pss 65:4 [Heb. 5]; 66:13; cf. 5:7 [Heb. 8]); יִדְרוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “the house of Yahweh” (Ps 122:1; cf. 27:4); יֵלְדוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “the house of Yahweh our God” (Ps 122:9); יֵלְדוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “the house of my God” (Ps 84:10 [Heb. 11]); יֵלְדוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “your sanctuary” (Ps 68:35 [Heb. 36]); and יֵלְדוֹת יִרְאוֹת, “his sanctuary” (Ps 78:69); and of the Temple mountain as יִדְרוֹת, “his (i.e. Yahweh’s) holy mountain”