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The Fear of God in Isaiah

By Juan José Otero



A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Theology
at the University of Glasgow
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The Fear of God in Isaiah

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the role of the fear of God in relation to the prophecy of Isaiah. The fear of God is widely known as the motto and principle regent of the Sages writings, nonetheless it is hardly known as a constant force in the writings of the prophet Isaiah, even equalising Proverbs in references to it. The latter situation is addressed to correct it as the book presents an unprecedented plethora of contexts, situations and usages of the fear of God. In view of this, semantic analysis and possible variations will be addressed in order to understand current interpretations and contrast them in light of Isaiah's context. Additionally, an exploration of all passages expressing the fear of God was mandatory in order to find the nuances of our subject in each particular occurrence. Furthermore, Isaiah's prophecy serves as solid background in order to examine the relationship of the fear of God and other pivotal theological themes. Finally, this thesis is analysed in view of procuring a paradigm for the Latin American evangelical Christianity, mainly Peru's.

General Abbreviations

<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>ESV</i>	<i>English Standard Version</i>
<i>KJV</i>	<i>King James Bible</i>
<i>NASB</i>	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
<i>NICOT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>NITNT</i>	<i>New International Theological Dictionary of New Testament</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>NJB</i>	<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i>
<i>NLT</i>	<i>New Living Translation</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>OTWS</i>	<i>Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies</i>
<i>RAE</i>	<i>Diccionario de la Lengua Española, Real Academia Española</i>
<i>RSV</i>	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of Old Testament</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZTEB</i>	<i>The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible in Five Volumes.</i>

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Introduction

1. Basis for the present research

The prophet Isaiah's manifested interest in the fear of God has stimulated the author to research this subject. Isaiah recorded abundant material on the fear of God and consequently it is impossible to underestimate the value of the book in this thematic proposition.

The theme of the fear of God is generally ignored in evangelical pulpits as well as being disconnected from the *modus vivendi* of the church. Thus, this study pretends to be of significant contribution for the evangelical Christian community in Latin America, particularly in Peru.

The fundamental objective will consist in studying and investigating the canonical book of Isaiah with the final purpose of extracting theological principles and a paradigm which will contribute to the Christian praxis in the Latin American evangelical community. It is therefore intended to promote and stimulate dialogue, contextualization and the application of an evangelical theological discussion against the backdrop of complex social problems in our Latin American societies, several of them closely related to those in Isaiah's milieu.

The thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter One will analyse scholarly interpretations on the meaning of ‘fear’ and their influence on the fear of God as it is expressed in a variety of ways in the Hebrew denoting either the use of synonyms or a specification of terms. Additionally, the possibility of change in meaning throughout language and cultures must be addressed; therefore a semantical analysis results mandatory. This will be investigated in light of Isaiah’s five Hebrew words for fear:

עֲרֹץ, יִרָא, פֶּחַד, רָאָה, מוֹרָא.

Chapter Two intends to shed light on Isaiah’s presentation of the fear of God as a practical doctrine and also as a command to be obeyed. This doctrine is firmly rooted and embedded in this prophecy as it is present in the first part of the book (2:10, 19, 21; 6:5; 8:12-13; 11:2-3; 25:3; 29:13, 23; 33:6) as well as in the second (50:10; 57:11; 59:19; 63:17 and 66:2, 5) with vast representation. At the end of each Bible passage the nuances of the fear of God will be analysed.

Chapter Three will examine the theological implications of the fear of God and its relationship to recognisable theological subjects which are recurrent in Isaiah like wisdom, idolatry, God’s character (justice, righteousness and holiness). Also, knowledge of Yahweh, peace, judgement and the coming King.

Chapter Four will present suggestions for Latin America’s evangelical Christianity in order to clarify and encourage its usage in pulpits as well as to promote a healthy academic debate on this paramount doctrine.

2. A brief note on authorship

The approach to the book of Isaiah is done assuming that the book forms a literary unity that reflects in its canonical form. Consequently, this thesis does not have the purpose to spend much time in diachronic discussion though certain points of view will be briefly mentioned. Hence, a detailed critical study on the authorship of Isaiah will not be made since it will not be of significance for the objectives pursued here. Nevertheless, this much will be said: This student recognises the academic value of the theories of Deutero and Trito-Isaiah in as much as the prophecy is long and massive; nonetheless, unity will take priority over authorship.¹

¹ It is not incorrect to state that this vision is a unity, big and historical. Barry Webb. *Isaiah - On Eagle's wings*. (Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham: 1996), 26. As stated in his Foreword, for Leupold the 'Great Unknown' (Deutero-Isaiah) theory of chapters 40-55, although accepted in the field of biblical scholarship, cannot lay claim to being more than theory. H. C. Leupold. *Exposition of Isaiah Volume I Chapters 1-39*. (Weymouth: Evangelical Press, 1968). In this regard, Webb (*Isaiah*, 34) criticises the fact that under this speculations, only chapters 6-8 and 28 are proposed as Isaiah's writings. Furthermore, J. A. Motyer (*The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], 27) explains that there is no external "manuscriptal authority" for the three

Consequently, since the possibility of late editing by other scribes is plausible, and although Isaiah's time line is closer to the Assyrian invasion, the prophet could have been empowered to see beyond his time.² Needless to say, authorship is only one kind of unity as Webb suggests:

“A book may be from various hands, but have an editorial unity imposed by someone who has worked over the material and given it its final form; thus maintaining a theological unity”.³

This ‘editing’ allows for different possibilities of interpretation within the same chapter as several scholars venture to do. For example, Sweeney's editorial position allows him to propose the reign of King Cyrus (539-530 B.C.E) as historical setting for 2:1-4 while verses 5 to 22 belonging to

supposed divisions of Isaiah; on the contrary, in the case of the first Isaiah manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Q”), 40:1 begins on the last line of the column which contains 38:9 - 39:8.

² Christopher Seitz. *Isaiah 1-39 Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 38.

³ B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah. Old Testament*. (BST The Bible Speaks Today. Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1996), 33. The scholar correctly expresses that the OT as a whole (and by extension the whole Bible) has this kind of unity.

Hezekiah's milieu.⁴ This possibility will be revised, albeit briefly, in the exploration of passages in chapter two.

3. The fear of God in Isaiah: a general overview

In this thesis it will be argued that 'the fear of God' is not a recognised theme in Isaiah even though its constant presence suggests that this is one pivotal subject, even comparable to its place in Proverbs.⁵ Contrary to what it is known and rather unexpectedly, Isaiah equalises Proverbs in references to the 'fear of God' with 17 counts; notwithstanding, it contains one additional (albeit indirect) reference in 64:2 "to make your name known to your adversaries, *that* the nations may tremble at your presence" (NASB) and several '*no fear*' (because I am with you) commands.⁶ Contra Clines who

⁴ Marvin Sweeney. *Isaiah 1-39. The Forms of the Old Testament Volume XVI*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 98-103.

⁵ Proverbs counts fourteen occurrences: 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17. Nonetheless, other expressions are: fear Yahweh (3:7; 24:21) and the 'one fearing Yahweh' (14:2). A total of 17 occurrences in the Wisdom book *par excellence*.

⁶ As found in Isaiah 8:12-13 and 10:24 (do not fear Assyria); 35:4 (do not fear 'the just'); 40:9 (do not fear 'Jerusalem and Judah'); 41: 10, 13, 14, 43:1, 5 (do not fear 'Israel' for I am with you!); 44:2 (Do not fear Jacob, Jesurun); 51:7

rejects the last proposition, those commands could be suggested as a sub-division of the fear of God.⁷

4. One Century into the fear of God

Notwithstanding, the topic of the ‘fear of God’ has minimal presence in current evangelical circles, mainly pulpits, therefore it is suggested that this theme is disconnected from the *modus vivendi* of the church. This is the reason why there is a continuing relevance for the study of the ‘fear of God’ as renowned scholars have argued for decades; nevertheless, academic research on the subject has been scarce as materials for research proved to be exiguous.

(on fearing men’s opinions); 54:4 (do not fear ‘sterile woman Zion’, a fear directed to enemies).

⁷ Contra David J. A. Clines (*The fear of the Lord is wisdom (Job 28:28): A Semantic and Contextual Study* in Ellen Van Wolde (ed.), *Job 28: Cognition in Context*, Leiden 2003, 57-92, [62]. These commands are positive exhortations to encourage the godly, even the prophet. But unlike 8:13, these exhortations do not follow the formula ‘do not fear them, fear me’, they are directives on not to fear adversity. However, this could be suggested: it is impossible for the godly to avoid ‘fear’ altogether when devoid of the fear of God; consequently, I believe that in all the ‘*do not fear*’ orders, the fear of God is already contained in the order and with the recipients.

This is not a baseless affirmation, for it can be traced chronologically to Richard C. H. Lenski who affirms that there was a ‘prevalent opinion’ in his own lifetime (late 1800’s and early 1900’s) that only the OT preaches fear and the NT nothing but love.⁸ This statement is still characteristic of our present times one hundred years later, as it is still habitual to state that the fear of God in the OT yielded to ‘the love of God’ in the NT.⁹ In this regard, during the mid 60’s Leon Morris boldly voiced out that the ‘fear of God’ *is rather out of fashion*¹⁰ and Lindsay Wilson recognised that the apothegm is a concept of utmost importance in the OT and is surprised by the fact that “*no major monograph has been written in English on the subject, and those that have*

⁸ R. C. H. Lenski. *The Interpretation of 1 and 2 Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966, 61). This scholar opposes this view by stating that Jesus and the entire NT ‘bud us to fear God’.

⁹ G. B. Funderbunk. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible in Five Volumes* Merrill C. Tenney, editor. Vol II- D-G. ‘Fear’ (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 520.

¹⁰ Leon Morris. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; General Editor: R. V. G. Tasker. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976); 209.

appeared in French and German are now over 25 years old".¹¹ Needless to say, his article was written almost 25 years ago (1995).

Additionally, at the start of 2018, *Tabletalk* magazine dedicated an entire issue to the subject of the 'fear God' and in its introduction, not unsurprisingly, editor Burck Parsons criticised the fact that Paul's severe indictment of "no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18) was increasingly true of many professing Christians. His argument was that pastors simply avoid talking about the subject or about anything that would give people a reason to fear God.¹²

All this is certainly most surprising considering the respect and praise given to the motto by renown academic figures in the past such as Rudolf Otto's '*mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*' and G. von Rad who proclaimed that the fear of God is "Israel's most special possession".¹³

It is in view of this situation that this study has the purpose to pursue a deeper understanding of this pivotal precept and its implications for Isaiah, his

¹¹ Lindsay Wilson. *The Book of Job and the Fear of God*. *Tyndale Bulletin*, 46 (1995): 59-79 [59].

¹² *Tabletalk* serves as Ligonier Ministries' written platform founded by Presbyterian scholar and Minister R. C. Sproul. *Tabletalk: From Ligonier Ministries and R.C. Sproul; "Fearing God"*, January 2018, 2.

¹³ Von Rad and Otto in Henri Blocher, "The Fear of the Lord as the Principle of Wisdom", *Tyndale Bulletin*, 28 (1977) 3-28 [4-7].

contemporaries and the possibility to provide a paradigm for the current Latin-American evangelical Christianity.

Chapter 1: Semantic range of ‘fear’ and ‘dread’

Although the present study is not primarily linguistic in its focus, it seeks to understand the different possible interpretations attached to the fear of God in Isaiah, perhaps there is a *sui generis* understanding of the maxim.

1. 1 Seven Types of Meaning

In order to understand the different possibilities for the understanding of ‘fear’, it was considered pertinent to examine Leech’s 7 types of meaning.¹⁴ It is correct to assume that the Conceptual Meaning (or Denotative) of ‘fear’ is simply fear and all the words in that range. This seems to present no problem as the objective and logical significance is taken into account; nonetheless, complications will arise in the subjective Connotative Meaning as it could vary according to culture, background or social status. In view of this, we will review the six types of Connotative Meaning according to Leech.¹⁵ These are

¹⁴ As found in chapter two of his seminal work. Geoffrey Leech. *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*. 2nd Edition 1981. (1st Edition 1974). (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 9-23.

¹⁵ G. Leech, *Semantics*, 9.

unstable because the experience of fear is not the same in a low-class income household when compared to a medium or rich-class family in the West. Notwithstanding, the differences become unparalleled when compared to the rich and the poor in Peru.¹⁶ Even though the fear of death is common to all cultures, it could be influenced by external and subjective forces. In this regard, one could argue that the understanding of words could vary and even change according to culture. In view of this, and applying it to the fear of God, Blocher claims that Derousseaux (also Becker and Plath) have “shown conclusively” that words deriving from the same root (here אָרָא) cannot always be given the same semantic breadth. It is argued, for example, that the participle אָרָא does mean ‘terrible’ but the noun never means ‘terror’; it is used in a weaker moral or אָרָא religious sense.¹⁷ In the same line, Etienne Ellis in his summary of the work of several erudite concludes that for Eichrodt

¹⁶ Economic solvency is a powerful tool to live better and more comfortable lives. Almost 23% (over 7 million people) are poor in Peru as of July 2019 and in rural areas this percentage is 44.4%. Herbert Holguín. “La pobreza creció en Perú por primera vez en 10 años: ¿por qué sucedió? April 24, 2018. (“Poverty went up in Peru for the first time in 10 years, why did it happen? Translation mine) Accessed July 4, 2019.

<https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2018/04/24/pobreza-peru-por-que-inei/>.

¹⁷ Blocher, “The fear of the Lord,” 7.

(1935) the covenant made possible a transformation in the meaning of the fear of God by which *numinous terror changed into a reverential awe* based on trust and obedience.¹⁸ For Plath (1962) the lexeme underwent *a semantic development* from transmitting the emotion of fear to *a term with a certain ambivalence*, expressing submission to and worship of the deity.¹⁹

Additionally, Becker (1965) explained how the lexeme אָרַךְ came to be associated *with numinous experience and undergo even further semantic developments*.²⁰ In stark contrast to all this, Clines is suspicious concerning the idea of a semantic development in the meaning of the lexeme אָרַךְ and, on the other hand, the scholar does not have a problem with fear as a means to relating with God. As a matter of fact, he considers the fear of God to convey nothing other than fear, as we will see in the following section.²¹

Another pivotal point from Leech's propositions circles around Affective Meaning. In this regard, it shall be suggested that Isaiah's personal feelings

¹⁸ E. Ellis, "Reconsidering the Fear of God in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible in the light of Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*" *Old Testament Essays*. 27/1 (2014): 82-99, [87].

¹⁹ E. Ellis, "*Reconsidering*", 88.

²⁰ E. Ellis, "*Reconsidering*", 89.

²¹ E. Ellis, "*Reconsidering*", 94.

and affections certainly influenced his understanding of the fear of God, particularly after his grand vision (chapter 6) and the ‘strong hand’ of God upon him (8:11), as it will be explored in chapter two. Moreover, explaining the “tremendum” Otto suggests that “the nature of the numinous” *can only be suggested by means of the special way in which it is reflected in the mind in terms of feeling*.²² Otto recognises the negative connotations of the motto; nevertheless enunciates that “what is meant is something absolutely and intensely positive”.²³ Otto’s proposition is key to understanding the fear of God and one is left to wonder if ‘emotions’ are indeed the missing link. Building upon this, Clines questions the consensus in academia attesting that when God is the object of אָרָא or when the fear of God is mentioned, there is no reference to any emotion experienced by the person but rather: (a) their

²² Rudolf Otto. *The idea of the holy: an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey. (Oxford University Press). 1st Impression Nov 1923. Reprinted in the Oxford Bookshelf 1936 (after 6th Impression 1931), 12. The author had never heard of Otto’s work prior to this Thesis. Notwithstanding, through the reading of Henri Blocher his work was highlighted and motivated this section.

²³ Otto, *The idea of the holy*, 13.

attitude of respect or reverence and, (b) their ethical behaviour.²⁴ This was called into attention since this is one of the key features in Otto's Seminole work. Clines' main critic for the acceptance of change in semantic range precisely lies in the lack of consideration to emotions in 'fear' and focusing only on behaviour as he claims that 𐏁𐏃 is a "a term for the *emotion* of fear, and thus a mental state."²⁵

Additionally, Social Meaning is essential since the social context in evangelicalism is very diverse. Social diversity is reflected in the various contexts of interaction; for example, it is not the same to hear about the fear of God in a Sunday service or to learn it in a Seminary classroom. The same could be said about the study and learning process of the fear of God (and the interaction among members) according to their denomination.

Another point of inflexion occurs when meaning is affected in the company of other words: Collocative Meaning. For Stähli the meaning of 'important parallel terms' depend entirely on its collocation with other terms; hence, the 𐏁𐏃 word group means 'reverence' and ethical behaviour rather than 'fear'.²⁶

²⁴ Clines, David J. A. "*The fear of the Lord is wisdom (Job 28:28): A Semantic and Contextual Study*" in Ellen Van Wolde (ed.), *Job 28: Cognition in Context*, Leiden 2003, [57-92], 62.

²⁵ Clines, "The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28)," 67-8.

²⁶ Stähli in Clines, "The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28)," 67.

Notwithstanding, Clines does not accept this position as an evidence for change in the semantic range. Though not entirely in agreement, his position is in line with this research. Nevertheless, the ‘ethical’ and ‘reverence’ responses should be considered in light of the general context and other pivotal themes in Isaiah. This will be explored in chapter three. This particularity will be taken into consideration in chapter two in the exegesis of passages and in chapter three where the fear of God is analysed in light of other pivotal theological themes.

Concluding with Leech’s approach, Thematic Meaning implies that which is “communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organises the message, in terms of ordering, focus and emphasis”.²⁷

Noteworthy, the fear of God in Isaiah is consistent with all references and applications of the motto throughout the Old Testament.

One key recognition takes place in the fact that Leech suggests that Reflected, Collocative, Affective and Social Meanings have more in common with Connotative Meaning (subjective) than with Conceptual Meaning (objective).

In view of this, he consolidates them as “Associative Meaning”, the main problem is the following:

²⁷ Leech, *Semantics*, 19.

“Associative Meaning contains so many imponderable factors that it can be studied systematically only by approximative statistical techniques”.²⁸

With this in view, it is a suggestion that we should be more sceptical into attributing different terminology and the wide range of interpretations to the fear of God. Perhaps this has been done so more than it should have.

1. 2. Current debates on Semantical range

As already noted, the most recent evaluations and elucidation on the subject as recorded in Dictionaries like Günter Wanke’s in TDNT, Fuhs in TDOT and H. P. Stähli’s in TLOT follow a rigid position on semantic variation after Becker and the scholars quoted in the last section. Contra their position, Clines quotes Terrien’s work who argues that it is a “*grave error to soften the meaning of the fear of God*” since it should not be equated with reverence, piety or religion for this would make it impossible to reevaluate them in light of their “*now largely lost connotation of awesomeness*”.²⁹

Some scholars have probably gone too far, though perhaps not the place to cross Testaments, I consider this of utmost importance in the understanding (or misunderstanding) of the fear of God in our current days. There is a strong

²⁸ Leech, *Semantics*, 18.

²⁹ Terrien in Clines, “The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28),” 62.

consensus among scholars after Deroousseaux “*Old Testament fear becomes New Testament faith*”; thus, Blocher concludes the following:

Coming to Christ, taking his yoke, receiving the Spirit which is from God, this is the equivalent of fearing the LORD, and it can be summarised in the word ‘faith’.³⁰

We have already noted that there is a possibility that words could not mean the same across cultures; however, this is probably not the case with ‘fear’ and the *emotion* of fear. This situation is particularly problematic in Peru where reverence neither means nor denotes the fear of God. Clines boldly states the following:

My own view is suspicious of the alleged ‘semantic development’ from fear as an emotion to fear as ‘religion’ or ‘moral behaviour’ and indeed of the common assertion that the ‘fear of God’ can mean something other than the emotion of fear.³¹

It is important to notice that throughout the Old Testament fear normally refers to a fear of death, which is the fear common to all others.³²

In order to deepen the understanding of the nuances of the fear of God, the following section will analyse the different Hebrew words used in Isaiah to denote it.

³⁰ Blocher, “The fear of the Lord,” 27.

³¹ Clines, “The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28),” 64.

³² Clines, “The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28),” 60.

1.3 Five Hebrew terms

In the following section, we will investigate the use of terminology relating to “the fear of God” as found in Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21; 8:12-13; 11:2-3; 25:3; 29:13, 23; 33:6; 50:10; 57:11; 59:19; 63:17 and 66:2, 5. These passages show the phrase being used in a variety of contexts and with different purposes. From these verses we will note the following terms: מוֹרָא, יִרְאָה, פֶּחַד, יִרָא, עֲרִץ.

The usage of different lexemes in Isaiah marks a stark contrast with the ‘fear’ lexemes found in several references to the fear of God in the Old Testament.

Therefore, it is imperative to highlight that all references to the fear of God in the Sages as found in Job (1:1, 8; 2:3; 28:28), Proverbs (1:7; 9:10) and Ecclesiastes (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12 (twice), 13; 12:13) are expressed with יִרָא.

The same is mainly true in the Pentateuch, the Prophets and Psalms but due to space limitations we will not analyse these in detail, nonetheless, a summary of observations will be presented.

Consequently, in regard to the Covenant in “Deuteronomistic” literature, Becker and Deroisseaux observe that the use of “to fear Yahweh” is remarkably uniform, both grammatically and semantically and conclude that it is *unnecessary to discuss in detail the 'yr passages in the various strata or*

schools.³³ Though one must remain skeptical after such bold statement since it is doubtful that the fear of God means the same in stable form in the Sages, this is certainly not the case in Isaiah who uses different verbal forms to express the fear of God. However, taking the scholar's conclusion at face value only demonstrates the unique particularity, profound richness and depth in Isaiah's usage of the Hebrew language. Isaiah's selection of words also illustrates the widespread knowledge of the motto from the Torah and the Sages and its implications during the prophet's milieu.

Even though מוֹרָא and יִרְאָה are encompassed within יִרָא, we will study them separately with the intention to further the understanding of the fear of God according to each context, different books and writers.

The following order of analysis is not an orderly recollection of appearance but an intentional presentation beginning with the analysis of the nouns following up with the verbs.

1. 3. 1 môrā' (noun – fear) מוֹרָא

³³ H. F. Fuhs. יִרָא, יִרְאָה, מוֹרָא. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, (Editors).

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Volume VI. TDOT. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 290-315 [316].

We will proceed to analyse מוֹרָא as it appears in Isaiah 8:13 where the verse reads: אֶת־יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת אֱתוֹ תִקְדְּשׁוּ וְהוּא מוֹרָאֲכֶם וְהוּא מַעֲרָצְכֶם. Even though the ‘fear of God’ is not presented explicitly as in the motto, this passage (as with the lexeme עֲרָץ in the same verse) stands as an affirmative command to fear God alone.³⁴ This word can be found only twelve times in the Hebrew Bible and it denotes a very strong fear or terror before a superior kind of being.³⁵ Therefore, it is correctly interpreted as fear, terror and that which is feared or revered.³⁶ Similarly, in Gessenius’ מוֹרָא stands as fear and terror

³⁴ Noteworthy, מוֹרָא is first used in the previous verse where God commands Isaiah not to fear the confederacy.

³⁵ M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser Jr. ‘יָרָא’, in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis. Volume 2. NIDOT*. Willem A. VanGemeren -General Editor. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), 527-33 [527].

³⁶ William Wilson. *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*. (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Co. Unabridged Version), 159

with the addition of “object of reverence” when related to God.³⁷ To sum up, the use of this word is consistent with its other uses elsewhere in the canon.³⁸

In a context similar to Isaiah 2, מוֹרָא is used in regard to God’s judgement:

19 “Arise, Lord, do not let mortals triumph; let the nations be judged in your presence.

20 Strike them with *terror*, Lord; let the nations know they are only mortal” (Ps. 9:19-20).³⁹

In Jeremiah 32:21 מוֹרָא is used in the context of God’s terrifying signs and wonders in the land of Egypt: “And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror...” (cf. Dt 4:34; 26:8; 34:12). It is important that the same event was described with יָרָא in Torah where God is

³⁷ Francis Brown et. al. (Editors). *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, מוֹרָא in יָרָא (Based on the Lexicon of William Gessenius).

Clarendon Press: Oxford. Oxford University Press. 1951, p. 432.

³⁸ In Malachi 2:5 it is also used in a context of fear before God’s covenant (*i.e.* ‘the fear of God’).

³⁹ Similarly, Isaiah cries to the Lord not to forgive the ungodly (2:9) and highlights the fear of God’s presence negatively, though with עָרֶץ and פָּחַד. (Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21)

majestic in holiness, ‘awesome’ in glory, working wonders (e.g. Exo 15:11; 34:10; Dt 10:21).

In Malachi, מוֹרָא is used twice to denote the fear of God. The first one is while questioning the nation on their unfaithfulness in the context of the Covenant:

“A son honours his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honour due me? If I am a master, where is the *respect* due me?” says the LORD Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’

This passage speaks of the religious leaders’ corruption and the consequent disrespect of God in the nation, as in Isaiah 57:11, God questions the ungodly in regard to their refusal to fear him.⁴⁰

The second one is Levi’s example in fearing God’s word and Covenant (Mal 2:5): “My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name.” Hence, מוֹרָא is used in the context of Levi’s responsibility of fearing God’s word and Covenant (Mal 2:5).⁴¹ Noticeably, מוֹרָא, חֲתָת, and יִרָא are used within the same range in that verse.

⁴⁰ Similarly, stated with יִרָא, in Isaiah 57:11 the Lord questions the people why they do not fear him.

⁴¹ Similarly, the Servant questions the people’s fear of God and obedience in 50:10 with יִרָא.

1. 3. 2 yîr'â (noun - fear, awe) יִרְאָה

This noun is present in 11:2-3; 29:13; 33:6; 50:10; 63:17. Interestingly enough it first emerges to convey the fear of God as exemplified by the Messiah who *וְהָרִיחַ בְּיִרְאָת יְהוָה* “delights in the fear of God” (11:3). There is consensus in translations except for the NLT that renders ‘obey’ as it indicates the translators’ understanding of the practical implications of the fear of God.⁴² In 29:13 the ‘fear of God’ is stated negatively *וְהָיָה יִרְאָתָם* for the people in Judah falsely fear God. Noticeably, there are several differences in regard to translations since the NIV and NLT have ‘worship’, NJB and NASB⁴³ have ‘reverence’, while the KJV and RSV render ‘fear’. On the other hand, there is unanimity in translating 33:6; 50:10 and 63:17. In regard to the latter, only the NIV interprets “revere” marking a clear dissociation with the rest of translations.

The usage of yîr'â in Isaiah is consistent with its usage throughout the Old Testament. In the prophets, only in Jeremiah 32:40 is used for the fear of God:

⁴² Though not in favour of this interpretation, it is a logical one since obedience is a direct result of the fear of God (always with yāre') as in Deuteronomy 6:2, 24; 8:6; 10:12; 13:4; 17:19)

⁴³ NASB places ‘fear of me’ as an alternative in the footnote.

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.” This is reminiscent of God’s promise in Isaiah 29:23, though in the latter יִעַרְיָצוּ is preferred. In Ezekiel fear is used to describe the “living creatures” of 1:18 and in 30:13 it refers to God’s judgement upon Egypt. Finally, the results of Jonah’s fear of God caused the foreign sailors to become terrified (Jon 1:10) and as a result, they feared God “exceedingly” (in KJV, Jon 1:16).

1. 3. 3 pāḥad (verb – to fear, dread) פָּחַד

This verb is not as common as יָרָא in Isaiah or in the rest of the canon, though it is more frequently used than עָרַץ and מִוֶּרָא throughout the Old Testament.

Wilson explains that this word indicates *to be under fearful apprehensions of a distant danger, which keeps the mind either in an uneasy suspense or in religious reverence; it implies a fear which is vehement.*⁴⁴ Fuhs adds that פָּחַד can be integrated as a ‘life-long fear’ which can be used as the fear of God or as to terrify and cause to dread; notwithstanding *in Isaiah Yahweh is the object of terror*; consequently, it can be concluded that the *fundamental meaning of*

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies*, 159-60.

pāḥaḏ is probably ‘tremble’.⁴⁵ This is in agreement with the NIV when speaking of the judgement upon the ‘people of the earth’ in Isaiah 24:17, 18. Consequently, the first appearance of the fear of God in Isaiah occurs in chapter 2 in a context of terror due to God’s judgement upon the land and the earth in general; hence, **יְהוָה פָּחַד** is presented with negative consequences as all rebellious people flee for ‘fear of God’ (Isa 2:10, 19, 21).⁴⁶

A similar situation will reappear in 33:14 with the sinners in Zion terrified before the Lord **פָּחַדוּ בְּצִיּוֹן הַטְּאִים**. It is also used for those who make worthless idols in 44:11 and even of the people of God who were terrified ‘because of the wrath of the oppressor’ in 51:13. Nevertheless, there are three verses in which this word is used positively, the first one is found in 12:2 at the closing of the Emanuel section where the poet and prophet sings of his trust and confidence in God: “I will not be afraid”. The second one comes as God’s order to Israel ‘not to fear’ in 44:8. Finally, in 60:5 the sense is of a

⁴⁵ Fuhs (*TDOT*, 294) adds that another cause of creaturely dread is the numinous, above all the deity as the quintessence of “terror”, the *mysterium tremendum*.

⁴⁶ This people cannot stand a chance facing God’s power, hence, Gesenius (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, פָּחַד , 808) interprets that they are terrified and “unfitting for action”. Noticeably, and in stark contrast, Job kept himself away from sin “for fear of his splendour” (Job 31:23).

heart that “shall fear and be enlarged” (KJV). This last passage includes a rather awkward usage of **תָּרַח** because the result is a heart that ‘will throb and swell with joy’ (NIV), though it is comprehensible that several translators opted for ‘thrill’ (NAS, NLT, and RSV) or ‘throb’ (NIV, NJB). Nevertheless, the LXX writes φοβηθήσῃ and only KJV has ‘shall fear’. In spite of the differences, the point is the same: people will be so amazed and surprised that they will be afraid of this truly astonishing experience; consequently, it should not be a surprise that fear could follow joy once the magnitude of the event is assimilated.

In regard to the negative usage of **תָּרַח** in Jeremiah this can be said: it is similar to the terror experienced by sinners in Isaiah (2:10, 19, 21; 4:17; 24:18). In Jeremiah 30:5 “a day of terror” is in the context of Israel and Judah’s rescue from bondage. On the other hand, 48:43-44 are in the context of God’s judgment upon Moab and 49:5 in regard to judgement upon Ammon. Jeremiah describes destruction and fear, his own sufferings and tears (Lam 3:47).

However, there are two passages which describe a repentance on the part of Israel who will fear God: Hosea 3:5 and Micah 7:17. The latter is particularly close to Isaiah 2 in its imagery: “They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the Lord our God and will be afraid of you.” The image is so vivid that the NIV chooses to add “trembling” (out of their dens).

Furthermore, פָּחַד is also used in the context of God's word the Psalms in similar manner: "My flesh trembles (סֶמֶר) in fear (פָּחַד) of you; I stand in awe (יָרָא) of your laws. (Psa 119:120)".⁴⁷

This lexeme is used elsewhere in the canon positively to emphasise the 'fear of God'.⁴⁸ In Genesis 31:42, 53 Jacob confronts Laban stating that if the 'terror' or 'fear' of his father Isaac would not have been with him, his family would have faced terrible consequences. Noteworthy, the fear of God in that particular passage is used as a designation of God himself. Another passage with פָּחַד־יְהוָה is 1 Samuel 11:7 where the people 'feared God' and united with Saul as one.

1. 3. 4 yāre' (verb – to fear) יָרָא

⁴⁷ In this regard, albeit with חָרַד, Isaiah 66:2, 5 recognises that God will look in favour those who tremble at his Word.

⁴⁸ According to Stähli in Fuhs (*TDOT*, 298), the root *pḥd* "seems to be quite close to *yr'* because it is used in expressions similar in form and meaning and this particularity can be deduced from the following case: *pahad-YHWH* (2 Ch. 19:7) and *pahad 'elohim* (Ps. 36:2[1]) correspond to *yir'at YHWH* and *yir'at 'elohim*. Notwithstanding, this particularity is not present in Isaiah or any other prophet but it is only evident in Genesis 31:42, 53 and Psalm 36:1; 119:120.

The Hebrew root *yr'* appears a total of 435 times in the OT and its verbal form, most frequently in the *qal* form, marks 330 counts meaning “to make afraid” and “to cause fear” and even though in a *few passages* the object of fear is a common circumstance of everyday life, *in almost 80% of the passages the object of fear is God*.⁴⁹

In other words, this is the ‘fear’ word *par excellence*. It is used for the consequences of sin (*e. g.* Adam in Gen 3:10; Sarah in Gen 18:15) and in the commands to not fear enemies because God will be with Israel throughout Torah and Isaiah. Additionally, it is used in the command to fear God and live holy lives in Leviticus.⁵⁰ Even at the early stages of Israel *יָרָא* has been used to express Joseph’s fear of God (Gen 42:18), the midwives’ in Egypt (Exo 1:17) and in the noting difference between Pharaoh’s officials who feared God (Exo 9:20) from those who did not (Exo 9:30).

⁴⁹ M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser Jr. *NIDOT*, 528. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁰ In the commands to “fear God” and act upon it; for example: Do not treat the blind and deaf badly 19:14. Observe the Sabbaths and have ‘reverence’ for God’s sanctuary (19:30; cf. 26:2). Respect and honour the elderly (Lev 19:32). Do not take advantage of each other (Lev 25:17). Do not take interest or profit from a fellow Israelite (Lev 25:36). Do not rule over fellow Israelites ruthlessly (Lev 25:43).

Accordingly, **סָרַח** is the most used lexeme in Isaiah denoting all types of fear; for example: Isaiah 7:4 (enemies), 7:25 (briars); 18:2, 7 (fearful people in Ethiopia); 21:1 (in the prophecy against Babylon); 51:12 (to fear even ‘mere mortals’). Additionally, the fear of God is metaphorically applied to non-living elements such as the islands and the ends of the world fearing God in 41:5 and even the mountains tremble before the Lord in 64:3. In addition, this verb is found in Isaiah as part of the foreign ruthless’ fear of God in 25:3 and a feigned fear of God in 29:13. Also, as a question formulated by the Servant himself in 50:10; as God’s questioning on the lack of in 57:11, and on the universal promise of the nations’ fearing God in 59:19.

It is important to make a reference to the several ‘do not fear’ commands in Isaiah as found in 8:12; 10:24; 35:4; 37:6; 40:9; 41:5, 10, 13, 14, 23; 43:1, 5; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4, 14.

Put differently, this incomparable lexeme is varied by “context-sensitive classifiers” (as noted previously) *in such a way as to cover the entire semantic range in all its variety, from alarm in the face of everyday threats through fear of numinous powers to fear of God.*⁵¹

In regard to the usage of **סָרַח** in Jeremiah we could summarise it as follows: In regard of a wholehearted fear of God (the prophet’s 10:7; Hezekiah’s 26:19).

It is also used as God’s reproach on their lack of fear due to him (Jer 3:8; 5:22,

⁵¹ Fuhs, *TDOT*, 295.

24). The latter is congruent with Isaiah's usage that includes the nation's false fear of God (29:13) and their lack of it (50:10; 57:11). Noteworthy is the promise in Jeremiah 32:39 which finds its counterpart in Isaiah 29:23, although in the latter **יִרָא** is not used but **עֲרִץ**. Jeremiah also contains God's commands to not fear the enemies (Jer 1:8; 10:5; 23:4; 30:10; 40:9; 42:11; 44:10; 46:27, 28; 51:46).

1. 3. 5 aratz (verb - to terrify) עֲרִץ

The prophet first uses this word to describe the terrible consequences of God's judgement when he rises "to shake" and/or "to terrify" the earth in 2:19, 21 and also in God's command to not fear the enemy but to fear him alone in 8:12-13. Additionally, it is used in 29:23 to express God's promise upon Israel who will finally "stand in awe of the God of Israel" (NIV):

וְאֶת־אֲלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲרִיצוּ.

It also describes "ruthless" people **עֲרִיצִים** in 13:11 and 29:5, 2 and the 'ruthless foreigners' who fear God in 25:3. All these passages will be further analysed in chapter two.

Noticeably, in 47:12 God challenges "the idols" to provoke fear, if capable, or as the NIV reads, to "cause terror": **אִלֹּהֵי תַעֲרִיצִי**. This could be read assuming that idols should be able to cause or generate fear; hence, God is the originator of the fear of God.

The lexeme **פָּרַח** expresses the fear experienced before someone else on account of *his power or violence* and consequently it is used of God, *who ought to be feared for his power, which none can resist; for his holiness and justice, which none can satisfy; and for his wisdom, which none can attain to*.⁵² In harmony with this thesis, Fuhs states that the root *ʿrs* in the *qal* and *hiphil* means “*be terrified, terrify*” and states that it appears *primarily in Isaiah as a term for fear of Yahweh’s omnipotence* (Isa. 2:19, 21; 8:12f.; 29:23; cf. Ma’ arasa in 10:33).⁵³

Finally, in regard to the usage of in the prophets, this much should be said: Isaiah is the only one who uses the word. However, it is used in the commands to not fear (Dt 1:29; 7:21; 20:3; 31:6; Jos 1:9) and to denote regular fear (Job 31:34; Ps 10:18). Psalm 89:7 is particularly noteworthy:

“In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared (**פָּרַח**); he is more awesome (**יָרָא**) than all who surround him.”

1. 4 Additional Hebrew ‘fear’ words in Isaiah

Up to 19 other different words were found in Isaiah within the “fear” range; nevertheless, not all will be quoted or analysed in this brief analysis since

⁵² Wilson, *OTWS*, 159. (Emphasis added).

⁵³ Fuhs, *TDOT*, 294. (Emphasis added).

several were only used once. The following words are used to denote shake, shatter, trembling, horror, quake, but also used in various occasions as ‘to tremble’ and ‘to be afraid’: **התת** (used in five instances)⁵⁴, **רגז** (seven instances)⁵⁵, **חרד** (five instances)⁵⁶. It is uncertain why Isaiah chooses **חרד** to denote the trembling before God’s word instead of any of the other words analysed thus far. Nevertheless, the similarities with the usage of **חרד** in Ezra

⁵⁴ The verb **התת** and its derivatives are found in 7:8 and 9:4 as shattered (NIV) and be broken (RSV, KJV). In 31:4 ‘not being frightened’ (NIV, NJB, NLT), KJV: ‘not be afraid’, 9 “and shall be afraid” (KJV) ‘will be terrified’ (NAS, the NIV, NJB); NIV and RSV have ‘panic’.

⁵⁵ The verb **רגז** is present mainly in the range of tremble as in 14:16 where the king of Babylon is in Sheol and 32:10-11 in regard to complacent women. Also, in 13:13 and 23:11 as “tremble” or “shake” the heavens and kingdoms respectively. Additionally, the mountains will “tremble” or “quake” in 64:2. Finally, 37:28, 29 is translated as “your rage” (NIV and KJV). This part is directed to the king of Assyria through Hezekiah (vv. 28-29).

⁵⁶ Noteworthy, **חרד** is present in 66:2, 5 in regard to the godly who tremble at God’s Word. Additionally, the verb is used 19:16 “be afraid” KJV, “tremble” (RSV, NASB); 32:11 “be troubled (women) in (KJV, NASB) and “shudder” in (NIV, RSV). In 41:5 “tremble” (NIV), “afraid” (KJV, NSAB).

are striking: unfaithfulness and intermarriage with foreign women from idolatrous nations (9:4; 10:3).

This variety proves that in Isaiah the fear of God is stated within the expected range used by his God-inspired predecessors and successors. Additionally, other words were found translated as ‘to be dismayed’, ‘anxious’ and ‘to feel alarm’, though certain translations opt for ‘fear’: ⁵⁷בהל, ⁵⁸רעש, ⁵⁹שתע,

⁵⁷ In 13:8 וַיִּבְהֹל from the verb בהל in KJV “be afraid”, NIV has “terror” and RSV has ‘dismayed’. In 21:3 ‘dismayed’ KJV, “terrified” (NASB), and “bewildered” NIV stand for וַיִּבְהֹל.

⁵⁸ In 14:16 רעש “shake” in the KJV, NAS, NIV; 24:18 “shake” in the KJV, NAS, NIV, “tremble” in the RSV.

⁵⁹ In 41:10 (verb שתע) “(do not) be dismayed” (KJV, NIV); “(do not) be anxious” (NASB). In verse 23 the word שתע reappears and it is translated as ‘dismayed’ (KJV, NIV, RSV) as in verse 10, the NAS has ‘anxiously look about us’ and NJB has ‘feel alarm’. The point is a fear experienced.

Nevertheless, the NAS, NIV, NJB, RSV have ‘fear’ except the KJV since there is a possibility with וַיִּרְא וַיִּבְהֹל to be translated as “see” or “afraid”. R. N. Whybray; *The New Century Bible Commentary. Isaiah 40-66*. (Grand Rapids: W.M. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, 1975), 69. The author states that the RSV correctly reads “terrified” instead of “see”; on the other hand, Baltzer prefers “see”. (Klaus Baltzer. *Deutero-Isaiah. Hermenia. A Critical and*

1. 5 Fear of God in Isaiah as translated by the Septuagint

Through this brief analysis we can conclude that φόβος is ירא's counterpart in the Greek as it is used to denote the fear of God or any other type of fear.

Nonetheless, there are six additional words used in the 'fear of God' range:

θραύω, ταράσσω, εὐσεβείας, εὐλογέω, τρέμω, σέβω.

All of these were used as follows:

In 2:10, 19, 21 the LXX opts for φόβος while translating פחד and רָעַךְ is translated as τρόμος. However, it is important to point out that in the similar context of 33:14, פחד is translated as ἀπέστησαν. In view of this, a brief commentary should be made here for it will allow to analyse the following passages under similar lens: it is not possible to determine in this Thesis whether the LXX translates or interprets the text considering the possibility of synonyms or it translates the passages rather indistinctively.

In 8:12 the LXX translates φόβος for ירא and מוֹרָא; nonetheless, ταράσσω is chosen for עָרַץ. Notwithstanding, in 8:13 the Greek only uses φόβος in spite the fact that the Hebrew uses two words: מוֹרָאֵיכֶם and מַעֲרָצֵיכֶם.

Historical Commentary on the Bible. [Augsburg Fortress, 2001, Minneapolis], 115).

Additionally, φόβος is also used in 11:3; 50:10; 57:11; 59:19; 63:17 in order to translate ירא and ערץ in 29:23. Even though ערץ is not the most common ‘fear’ word, it is translated in the latter verse as φοβηθήσονται (from φοβέω); notwithstanding, this is not its translation in 2:19, 21 where θράω was selected. It is of utmost importance to state that these words are similar in meaning since φόβος can be translated as fear, terror or even alarm (depending of the active or passive) but it could also imply ‘reverence’ or a ‘respect’ towards God, men, officials or a slave to his master.⁶⁰

Ergo, as a general rule, the Greek is very clear on φόβος being always equal to the emotion of fear. Considering our section on Semantics, one could suggest that the Greeks probably had a stronger sense of fear than the Jews since the “Greeks were always afraid” and “*the root cause of fear in pagan religions*

⁶⁰ F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. “φόβος”. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 863-64. A brief observation should be made: it is doubtful that a slave ‘reveres’ his master, ‘fear’ is certainly closer.

(is): to face something unknown or unpredictable.”⁶¹ Noteworthy is the fact that the Greeks posit the idea that “fear” is the *origin* of religion as viewed by Democritus of Abdera (c. 400 BCE), and followed by Epicurus (d. 270 BCE) and Lucretius (d. 55 BCE).⁶²

In stark contrast, the fear of God in Isaiah is not a matter of black and white, and the same is true throughout the Old Testament. While discussing Becker’s three meanings of the fear of God: cultic, legal and moral, Blocher points out that the LXX often changed the meaning into a legal one. However, Becker preferred to place the Sage’s motto (Proverbs) in the ‘moral’ category.⁶³

Similar to θραύω, which is only used in 2:19, 21, τάρσσω is only found in the command of 8:12 to not fear **לֹא תִצָּרֵץ**.

Another key word is εὐσεβείας translating **יִרְאָה** in the apothegm as found in 11:2 and 33:6. However, it is important to note that for the same **יִרְאָה יְהוָה** of the previous verses, the LXX opts for φόβος θεοῦ and φόβος κυρίου in

⁶¹ William Dyrness. *Themes in Old Testament Theology. Chapter 9 “The fear of the Lord”*. (The Paternoster Press, Paternoster House, Exeter, Devon, 1979); 162. Emphasis added.

⁶² Clines, “The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28),” 64.

⁶³ However, Becker preferred to place the Sage’s motto (Proverbs) in the “moral”. Blocher, “*The fear of the Lord*,” 7.

Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 respectively. Even though יָרָא is used in both verses next to the motif, the LXX seems to interpret the expression since εὐσεβείας is chosen pointing towards piety and godliness but in stark contrast, Isaiah 11:3 is expressed again with φόβου θεοῦ. Additionally, in 25:3 εὐλογέω is preferred for the ‘ruthless’ who fear God while in regard to the false fear of 29:13 σέβω was preferred. Finally, τρέμω is used in 66:2, 5 in agreement with all English translations which unanimously render ‘tremble’ for יָרָא.

In conclusion, it is possible that the LXX has chosen to interpret the fear of God, particularly when related to practical actions and attitudes of the godly towards God. Notwithstanding, this apparent contradiction is highlighted by the fact that Isaiah did not take the same liberty in those particular cases.

1. 6 Conclusions from our survey of the terminology relating to fear in Isaiah

It could be argued that the Hebrew words chosen for fear in Isaiah and in all references to the apothegm throughout the OT are similar to the ones for *any other common fear*, most notably יָרָא. This is by no means a negative situation; nevertheless it merits clarification for it is this student’s opinion that

this fact could have brought complications and misunderstandings onto the comprehension of the fear of God.

Conventionally, fear is related to an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. As a consequence, this thesis argues, rather unconventionally, that *emotions* should play a major role in the interpretation of the fear of God; nevertheless, this is not the case.

Notwithstanding, as in common parlance, fear is used in different ways, “all of which fall in two categories: beneficial or baneful.”⁶⁴ Noticeably, the most prevalent use of ‘fear’ in the Bible is the fear of God, interpreted by Funderburk as *the reverential or awesome side of the fear spectrum*, and the scholar adds: *this fear is a friend*.⁶⁵ Put differently, a change in interpretation occurs when fear is related to God and this is probably the reason why the ‘fear of God’ is widely understood, mainly interpreted and conventionally elucidated mainly as ‘reverence’ and ‘to stand in awe’; though ‘godliness’, ‘piety’ and ‘worship’ are also often used.

After several dozen lexemes were surveyed we can conclude that the Hebrew language has a variety of words which seem to be used not indifferently but

⁶⁴ G. B. Funderburk, ‘Fear’. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible in Five Volumes. ZPEB*, Vol 5 Q-Z. General Editor, Merrill C. Tenney. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 518.

⁶⁵ G. B. Funderburk, ‘Fear’, *ZPEB*, 519.

rather coherently in Isaiah as synonyms of fear. Even though **יָרָא** is the most recognised and emblematic word, Isaiah selects a plethora of terminology to designate ‘fear’, ‘dread’, ‘terror’, ‘angst’, ‘trembling’ and ‘shaking’.

In spite of this, the prophet opts for only five words to express the ‘fear of God’. There is an apparent careful selection of Isaiah and his words, nonetheless this does not appear to be the case with different Bible translations as they vary notably in several passages as it has been noted. Consequently, I will suggest that one strong reason the ‘fear of God’ is generally understood as the ‘reverence of God’, is the fact that certain Bibles versions, most commonly the NIV, have opted to translate several passages as ‘reverence’ (25:3; 63:17), ‘to stand in awe’ (29:23) or ‘worship’ (29:13) when ‘fear’ appears in conjunction with God.

Another distinction worth recalling is the fact that there is a marked difference between *any type of fear* and *the fear of God*. In Isaiah *any type of fear* falls in the ‘fear’ range (terror, fear, dread or tremble), even when related to the experiences of the ungodly before God. On the other hand, it is not clear if the fear of God is purposely translated interchangeably as fear, reverence, awe and even worship when related to the relationship of the godly with God; or if this is done so solely for interpretation purposes or preferences.

In view of this, the fear of God upon the ungodly is always in the fear, dread and terror range, while the fear of God upon the godly is generally in the same scope but with the proviso that it is a positive or a godly fear, interpreted

mainly as reverence. This final results and clarifications are by no means a defence into living terrified lives before God but they are also not intended to be a recollection of elucidations made by erudite on what the 'fear of God' is. The fear of God has been interpreted and translated as 'reverence', 'awe' or 'piety' (all reasonably correct); nonetheless, this thesis argues that those worthy qualities and attitudes do not cover the whole spectrum, depth and intensity of 'the fear of God'.

In this regard, it is uncertain if the Hebrew has been translated as such to suggest or imply a less intimidating stand instead of 'the fear of God'. A strong case for this hypothesis is the fact that this situation never occurs when 'fear' is experienced by the ungodly. It will be suggested that this fact could shed light on the possible semantical variation (or interpretation) of the fear of God. It is difficult to attest that obedience, awe, piety, reverence or worship are identical synonyms; nevertheless they are used interchangeably to translate the fear of God.

As already discussed, it could be granted that a degree of overlapping in the interpretations of the words 'fear' (of God) and 'reverence' might exist; nonetheless, there is room for argument that they are not synonyms *per se*. Consequently, it should not be forcefully argued for identical interpretation *a priori* either.

Chapter 2: Exploration of Selected Passages in

Isaiah

In this section the fear of God will be explored in light of both the immediate context and the larger context of the prophecy of Isaiah. In this regard, the purpose is to understand, interpret and analyse the nuances of the fear of God in each of the passages listed above. At the end of this chapter a brief survey of “recurrent subjects” will be exercised in order to find particular similarities and patterns which will be later reviewed in chapter 3.

2. 1 Exploration of Isaiah 2:6-22

In this passage the ‘fear of God’ is employed within a context of judgement as the wrath of God is unleashed upon the land because of Israel’s ever present idolatry.⁶⁶ Contrary to the nation’s carelessness, God will act upon his warnings as he had clearly stated “if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword” (1:20). In that forewarning there is a message of both destruction and salvation, a common theme throughout this prophecy. With this in view, it is not an understatement that Isaiah had made a brief summary of his prophecy in the first two chapters since “the plot elements of divine

⁶⁶ The subject of idolatry will be analysed separately in chapter three.

goodness, human sin, judgement, and salvation are present”.⁶⁷ Consequently, it seems pertinent to suggest that this chapter contains structurally a dual explanation of all the good and the bad that follows in the book as 2:1-4 appears to be anchored in a different timeline from verses 5-22.

If chapter 2 would be read by starting in verses 6 through 22 as the main core of the text it could be implied that Israel is at the very centre of God’s wrath. However, the first five verses teach us that God has not forgotten and will exercise his eternal covenant with Israel. Certainly, this divine scenario is not representative of Isaiah’s milieu. Hence, we can affirm that this opening unit of chapter 2 is a preparation of all that is to come throughout the book. Before all promises of the new Zion become a reality, God will execute his judgments. In other words, “Zion will be transformed via purifying judgment”.⁶⁸

2. 1. 1 The argument of the context

Contextually this chapter could be applied to different settings as different scholars voice their dissimilar opinions. For example, scholars Hayes and Irvine agree with Brueggemann in dating the passage near 700BC period but with different theological explanations; notwithstanding, the latter interpret

⁶⁷ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*. 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 37.

⁶⁸ B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 45.

this as a poetic act of imagination, not meant to be rational or even eschatological, it is at its core, “a serious warning directed towards the elite who were confident of their defences”.⁶⁹ This position implies that the hiding in terror before God’s presence is only a figure of speech and not a real event. Perhaps the scholar interprets this as a call to inspire people to dread the Lord’s presence in judgement, but this is not clear.

On the other hand, the former apply the events to a time when God’s judgement fell upon Israel through a destructive earthquake; additionally, annexed to this suggestion is the prosperity of the area, which characterised the reigns of Uzziah/Jotham and Jeroboam II.⁷⁰ This view agrees with God’s judgement; nevertheless, using an earthquake as ‘third agent’. Though in favour of this dating, Clements disagrees with the suggestion of natural disasters and voices that divine wrath and the terror of the Lord “in accord with prophetic convention”, will operate through human agents.⁷¹ This ‘third agent’ is the Assyrian army who terrifies them. While the dread of God

⁶⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 31.

⁷⁰ J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine. *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet: His times and his preaching*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 86.

⁷¹ R. E., Clements *Isaiah 1-39. The New Century Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), 45.

described in 2:10, 19 and 21 could be ascribed to a foreign invader, this is not clear. Notwithstanding, Isaiah suggests this with the 'razor' (7:20).

With a different reading, Childs is in favour of the disaster of 587 BC and interprets that the judgement is "unleashed solely from God" since there is no mention of a foreign army.⁷² Sweeney believes that the reign of King Cyrus (539-530 BC) provides the historical setting of verses 1-5; nonetheless, on the historical setting of verses 6-19, he suggests the reign of Hezekiah as fulfilment due to the king's political views and alliances.⁷³

Although these suggestions are clearly academic, it is important to notice that the fear of God, as an experience in judgement upon the ungodly, could be applied to any of them.

Noticeably, Isaiah's call to his own kinsmen to turn back to God in verse 5 is inspired by the fact that Israel *seems* to have been abandoned by God (v. 6). A fourth position seems to solve the conflict as this passage could find a partial fulfilment in every enemy incursion upon the land of Judah. In other words, a

⁷² Brevard Childs. *Isaiah*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 32.

⁷³ The scholar suggests that Cyrus is the king portrayed as building the Temple (Is. 44:28; 45:1) and therefore, Isaiah 2:5-9 establishes the need for the cleansing of Zion. Marvin, Sweeney. *Isaiah 1-39*, 98.

partial fulfilment and a later full-scale eschatological event. This is proposed by Oswalt who states that there are prophecies that won't find its "final endeavour until the end of times as we know them".⁷⁴ The academic's position is not particularly unsound insomuch as this description seems to portray an event not yet seen in its complete full spectrum; therefore, this view is pertinent as it allows for an objective, real fulfilment and consequent impact to be experienced by Isaiah and his contemporaries during the Assyrian conflict. This view also allows for future experiences of his disciples and compatriots under the Babylonian conquest, and even all that followed. This chapter certainly paints the rather sad picture of a nation with no fear of God. We could notice a discontinuity in the worldwide scenario (2:1-4) for Isaiah calls upon his kinsmen to walk in the light of the Lord (2:5). The consequences of their disobedience will be felt throughout Israel. Finally, the worldwide scenario is back in verse twelve.

2. 1. 2 A brief semantic analysis on the fear of God

The 'fear of God' is employed within a context of judgement and the following nuances are noted in regard to how God will act in judgement in the near future in such a way that leads those whom he judges to acknowledge his activity with dread, a dread that places Yahweh in a different category from

⁷⁴ J. N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, 1986), 126.

human beings. The focus is on the terror experienced by the ungodly before God's judgement and the nuances of the 'fear of God' are of terror and panic experienced by the people of Israel and the world in general. The Hebrew has **פָּחַד יְהוָה** in verses 10, 19 and 21 which are direct references to the fear of God with **פָּחַד** mainly as trembling or terror.⁷⁵ This fear can be directed to an enemy but also to the terror caused by God who is coming to: **לְעֶרְץ הָאָרֶץ**. The Hebrew lexeme **עֶרַץ** has similar translation: to be terrified, to inspire terror or dread.⁷⁶ The main idea is the same: people flee because the Lord's presence is fearful and terrifying and as a result, the ungodly are running away from God in terror as the call is made for people to penetrate inside the rocks and hide in the ground to escape from the fearful presence of Yahweh (2:10, 19, 21). In regard to the use of **לְעֶרְץ הָאָרֶץ** Harman argues that there is no escaping the fact that the message of verse 19 is taken up "with some slight variations" with

⁷⁵ **פָּחַד** in Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21 is terrifying and unfitting for action (Francis Brown, et al. Gesenius' *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 808). As already noted in the Semantics section, **פָּחַד** certainly stands here for a terror experienced, a terror that will send people into running and hiding, even into rocks.

⁷⁶ Francis Brown, et al. Gesenius' **עֶרַץ** *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 791-92.

the addition of the phrase ‘when he rises *to terrify* the earth’. Though several English versions have ‘shake’ instead of ‘terrify’ (NASB, NKJV, NIV) “yet the verb is clearly the latter”.⁷⁷ In view of this, we could conclude that Isaiah is emphasising the situation and selecting his words very carefully:

“to strike terror upon the earth” (lit. “To cause the earth to tremble in awe”) is another of Isaiah’s paronomasias.”⁷⁸

Similarly, both Leupold and Mackay explain that the point of the expression is to make sure the readers and the hearers understand that the Lord has come “to terrify the earth” לַעֲרֹץ הָאָרֶץ, and this is done so by the use of an alliteration.⁷⁹

2. 1. 5 God’s wrath in judgement on the day of the Lord

A distinction must be drawn between God’s presence in this passage and other examples of divine manifestations. In Isaiah theophanies can occur for the sake of judgement (e.g., Isa 30:27-33). In view of this, this experience of fear and terror marks a disassociation with other theophanies whose main purpose was not to scare people off and pass judgement upon them but a means for

⁷⁷ A. Harman. *Isaiah*, 50-51.

⁷⁸ J. N. Oswalt. *Isaiah 1-39*, 128.

⁷⁹ Leupold. *Isaiah*, 100. Also, J. L. Mackay. *A Study Commentary on Isaiah. Volume 1: chapters 1-39*. (Webster: Evangelical Press, 2008), 100.

God to call people to his service.⁸⁰ In other words, divine theophanies indented for the calling into divine service were only experienced by godly men and even though they resulted in terror, death was not the final result.

In stark contrast, in the present depiction we see God coming as Judge and bringing about a most terrifying scenario. Brueggemann agrees with this interpretation and states that “contrary to those divine manifestations, we must not forget that this fear is generated by the Lord of Hosts Himself in an astonishing manner bringing judgement in all power and wrath”.⁸¹

⁸⁰ For example, the calling of Moses (who hid his face because he was afraid to look at God Ex 3:6), Gideon (Jdgs 6:22-23) and Samson’s parents (Jdgs 13:21-22) who were afraid, Elijah (who pulled his cloak over his head, 1 Kgs 19:13) and even Isaiah himself (who exclaimed Woe to me! Isa 6:5). In all those situations, fear was a palpable and constant sentiment; consequently, encounters with God were understood as to being in the very presence of holiness and considered deadly. In this regard, Fuhs (*TDOT*, 301) suggests that the “fear of death is therefore the natural human reaction” when someone is exposed to divine revelation in a theophany, dream or vision, including the hearing of God’s voice (as in Ex 20:19; Dt 4:33; 5:23).

⁸¹ Additionally, the scholar suggests that Yahweh appears now with full title: “the Lord of Hosts”, Yahweh in awesome, ferocious power; “*Yahweh in battle*

Certainly, things cannot remain the same and purifying is mandatory, Isaiah defines this moment as ‘the day of the Lord’ (2:11, 12, 17, 20) and it is believed to be both a day of blessing and of since the day of the Lord was probably understood as a time when God “would vindicate his people and bless their endeavours”.⁸² But the prophets’ words align better with a time of destruction and terror followed by a blessed time. In short, it is portrayed here that all of humanity, and not just Israel, will suffer the consequences of God’s judgement upon the earth, hence, all will equally fear and hide in terror.⁸³ This is the first reference to the ‘fear of God’ in Isaiah and the scenario is that of terror, panic and desperation as experienced by the ungodly in Israel and the world in general. The warning is given three times in verses 10, 19 and the refrain comes to climactic expression in verse 21.⁸⁴ In the two latter verses the conclusion is the same: the people flee ‘from’ or ‘before’ the Lord because his presence is fearful and terrifying.

dress ready for a moment of self-assertion, combat and triumph”. W.

Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 30 (emphasis added).

⁸² J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 126.

⁸³ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 37. On the same lines, B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 32.

⁸⁴ Allan, Harman. *Isaiah. A Covenant to be kept for the sake of the Church*. (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 52.

Isaiah's calling for refuge is vivid and certainly meant to inspire fear and bring about change in his audience. Calvin explains that: "*it is customary with the prophets, when they threaten sinners, with the view of producing terror, to add lively descriptions...*"⁸⁵ This is definitely a chapter with a plethora of lively terrifying descriptions; nonetheless, the problem with Calvin's explanation it is not so much his perspective but rather his imagination or perhaps lack of it (considering his time and context) on what could very well be a real live experience before an objective 'life and death situation'.⁸⁶ Notwithstanding, in regard to the ungodly's unfruitful escape, this reality is clearly understood in any rural area of a third world country where tribes must hide from the "modern man" in caves or any place possible while carrying their treasured idols.

⁸⁵ Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Vol I.*

Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1850, 110.

⁸⁶ Even godly men had to experience this reality: David went from cave to cave hiding from King Saul (1 Sam 22-24), and very much like 'a man after God's own heart' (1 Sam 13:14), godly people undoubtedly would seek shelter when the enemy is on the verge of taking over their walled city. Hence, under siege, it is common for people to hide underground, in caves or surrounding crags and villages.

In a different note, Kaiser declares that “*when the terror of God comes upon the people (cf. 1 Sam 11:7; Job 13:11; 11:23) and shatters every protection they have, and when God reveals his majesty in the thunderstorm and in the catastrophes of history (cf. Job 37:4; Ex 15:7), then, consciously or unconsciously, man must give God the honour due to him*”.⁸⁷ On the one hand, it is true that God reveals himself in occurrences in nature and in historic events, on the other hand, the fact that man “must” honour God because of such events seems doubtful. As a matter of fact, Isaiah 8:21 teaches quite the opposite: the ungodly actually curse God in those type of situations. Needless to say, several ungodly people will eventually believe and repent, as in the case of the ‘ruthless’ who fear God in 25:3, but the vast majority of people will certainly not believe, whether “consciously or unconsciously”. This fear reflects ‘not only a feeling’ but also an ‘objective dreadfulness’, a terrifying experience as a consequence of Yahweh's majestic splendour. As a result, both the dread and the splendour are implicit in Yahweh's holiness, "Isaiah's key motif".⁸⁸

2. 1. 7 The fear of God upon the godly and the ungodly

⁸⁷ Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1-12*. Old Testament Library. 2nd. Ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), 36.

⁸⁸ J. Goldingay. *Isaiah*. *New International Biblical Commentary. Old Testament Series*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001), 45.

The fear of God is experienced in a twofold manner: the ‘fear of God’ as experienced by the godly and by the ungodly. The godly fear God for who he is (the thrice holy, *c.f.* Isaiah 6:3) and what he is capable of, while the godless fear God (at least in this passage) because of the negative consequences of their unbelief or even their lack of. Both Clements and Harman interpret the ‘fear of God’ in this passage as describing the terror that God’s presence causes and Oswalt adds that this is the “true terror” that would be experienced by all sinners who had lived their lives for themselves.⁸⁹ Thus, it is safe to affirm that humans will experience different feelings and reactions before the Lord’s acting upon the earth, as Leupold voices out, the ungodly will experience “sheer terror” while the godly will see a manifestation of the “glory of the majesty”.⁹⁰ However, this is not to suggest that the godly will not be scared; nonetheless, this terrifying event will be experienced differently among human beings.

In the face of destruction there are only two possible responses and Webb summarises them like this:

⁸⁹ R. E. Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, 45; A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 51; J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 124

⁹⁰ Leupold. *Isaiah*, 85. Also suggested by John L. Mackay in *Isaiah*, 85.

The day of the Lord is the ultimate threat, and poses in its most acute for the question of where our ultimate trust is placed.⁹¹

Consequently, we see Israel faced with one question: Who to serve?⁹² Israel has chosen to worship hand-made idols. Therefore, we can conclude from this passage that there are two categories or types of people: the ones who feared God acted upon it in trust (though not made clear in this passage but in agreement with the scholars quoted above), and the terrified ungodly who hid in the rocks because of their sinfulness.

The theme of humiliation in Isaiah 2 is portrayed in the fact that man raises idols, but is really debasing himself in so doing; but there is coming a day when the real God will alone be exalted. Humiliation will be experienced by the ungodly as they face and acknowledge the true God they had scoffed and denied. Isaiah's compatriots will experience humiliation as they hide in the crags, just like animals and in possession of their worthless idols.

With all this in view, different interpretations could arise in regard to the experiences of the godly and the ungodly before God. Since we are not told what happens or where are the godly, we will assume that they too will fear

⁹¹ B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 46.

⁹² As in the days of Joshua, the question remains the same: who to serve? (Josh 24:15)

and tremble but will not die at the hands of God when he comes to judge the earth. In contrast, it will be suggested that the ungodly will finally acknowledge the reality of God through his powerful might, only too late. Israel's main problem is their disregard for the fear of God, they thought God would not destroy them. They had false expectations and in doing so they revealed they had no fear of God. They became idolatrous, and by doing so, they revealed they had no knowledge of God.

2. 2 Exploration of Isaiah 6:1-12

2. 2. 1 The argument of the context

The rather conflicting position of the chapter should not be regarded as an act of "haphazardness" or "carelessness" on the part of Isaiah, Young suggests that the prophet's purpose was to first present the heart of his message and later relate the account of his own prophetic call.⁹³ Young insists on the unity of the chapter with the previous five chapters and achieves this rather convincingly giving a plethora of examples.⁹⁴ This historical reference implies

⁹³ Edward J. Young. *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes. NICOT; Volume I. Chapters 1 to 18.* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 233.

⁹⁴ That chapters 2-5 are a unity may be seen from the following considerations according to Young (Isaiah 1-18, 233): 1:10 is taken up in 3:9 (cf. 1:19, 20

that chapters 1-5 belong in Uzziah's lifetime while chapters 7-8 will expand this historical identification.⁹⁵ Similarly, Webb recognises that taken together, the woes of chapter five probably reflect the conditions that developed in Judah during the reign of Uzziah (= Azariah, 791-740 BC).⁹⁶

There is a noting difference with Isaiah's attitude and Israel's *modus vivendi*, Isaiah is terrified before God's sanctity while Judah does not fear God. This was a golden age of impressive achievements though it also had a darker side: "greedy lad-grabbing (8), drunken debauchery (11-12), arrogant defiance of God (18-19), self-justifying sophistry (20), conceit (21) and perversion of justice (22-23) were among their terrible practices".⁹⁷

Decisively, there is no fear of God in Israel. Noteworthy, chapters 7-12 show God's judgement upon Israel, and consequently, chapter 6 paved the way for the "specifics of the historical circumstances of Judah and Jerusalem" and also

with 3:10, and 11). 3:14 is developed in 5:1-7 and 3:9b, 11 in chapter 5 generally. Compare 3:14 with 5:5; 2:9, 11, 17, with 5:15, 16; 5:9, 10, 13, 14, 17 with 6:11-13; 5:9 with 6:11; 5:5 with 6:13; 5:24 with 6:13b; 5:26 with 7:18; 5:5, 6 with 7:23-25; 5:30 with 8:22.

⁹⁵ J. D. Watts. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 24. Isaiah 1-33*. (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 76.

⁹⁶ B. Webb, *Isaiah*, 58

⁹⁷ B. Webb, *Isaiah*, 58

in the particular “hardening foreshadowed in 6:10” which is probably reflected in Ahaz’s response to Isaiah in 7:12”.⁹⁸

Even though chapter five leaves no doubt in regard to God’s love for Israel in spite of their sinfulness, it also leaves no doubt in regard to God’s justice in sending judgement upon sin.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Isaiah six stands in a tradition in which *God reveals (and in some measures defends) his decisions to bring judgement.*¹⁰⁰ The prophet question (until when?) only strengthen *the gravity and the long-term effect of the judgement.*¹⁰¹ Notwithstanding, Young suggests that God’s judgement has a different reading: God’s judgement upon them is true but it is also true that Isaiah loves and cares for this people and asks God for how long shall he preached (v. 11).

2. 2. 2 The prophet’s fear of God

In order to understand the prophet’s fear of God, we must focus on the vision and consider several basic aspects. For Zimmerli there is no indication that this is the prophet’s first vision or his first prophetic experience.¹⁰² On the

⁹⁸ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 58

⁹⁹ E. Young, *Isaiah 1-18*, 233.

¹⁰⁰ J. D. Watts, *Isaiah*, 72.

¹⁰¹ J. D. Watts, *Isaiah*, 77. With a different reading: Young (*Isaiah 1-18*, 261)

¹⁰² Zimmerli in J. D. Watts (*Isaiah 1-33*, 70).

other hand, Young suggests that Isaiah's exclamation reveals that this is an inaugural call since the prophet acknowledges that he is undone and that he will certainly perish. This negative feeling would have not been produced if this is not a first vision.¹⁰³

In view of this, it seems sound to agree with the latter possibility, had he engaged in previous speaking and prophesying, he would have known that the One whom he served "was gracious and merciful toward him", as a result, the prophet would not have shown this type of fear.¹⁰⁴

In stark contrast to the fear of God's presence in chapter two, Isaiah's 'fear' recognises Yahweh's holiness. The prophet is a man who fears God accordingly, he is terrified before the thrice holy and he knows he is not worthy.

In view of this, the holiness of God (6:1-4) is sharply contrasted to human sinfulness (6:5-7) as images from chapter six recall the earlier discussion of Isaiah 1:2-28, in which the Prophet's understanding of Israel's sin is tied to his participation in the sin of his people (6:5), and just as sin and iniquity are

¹⁰³ E. Young *Isaiah 1-18*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ E. Young, *Isaiah 1-18*, 232.

purged by fire (6:7), so must be the case for Israel.¹⁰⁵ It is important to notice that the present chapter moves from a vision of God (1-4), to confession of sin (5), to cleansing (6-7) and finally to commissioning (8-13), a path that should have been imitated by Israel.¹⁰⁶

It is not an understatement to suggest that this event made a lasting impression in Isaiah since his understanding of God and his own mission “was crystallised as the vision intimately relates to all what precedes and what follows”.¹⁰⁷ In other words, it is impossible to separate the vision from the message. Isaiah is commanded to preach God’s word (6:8-13) and as it has been suggested, it is not uncommon for the Lord to present himself to people and commission a man into his service, as already seen in the last section. In other words, the fear of God upon the godly is always related to acting upon it in service to him and not just hiding away in terror from his presence.

2. 2. 3 The nuances of the fear of God

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Leclerc on chapter 6 and God’s holiness (*Yahweh is Exalted in Justice. Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 63.

¹⁰⁶ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 58

¹⁰⁷ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 58

Although the ‘fear of God’ is not present *per se*, the essence and results are certainly recognisable as the prophet cries out in despair “woe to me” and “I am ruined” (v. 5). What gives relevance to this study is the fact that יָאֵ is related to one similar range: adversity, anguish, calamity, trouble, and curse. Also interjectionally: Oh! -- Alas, woe.¹⁰⁸ In this particular case this statement relates to someone who is cursed, under affliction or in calamity, in other words, this situation implies being in the worst case scenario and soon to be pulverised by God himself: אֵלֹהִים יִכְרֹתָ לִי כִּי־נִדְּמִיתִי

Additionally, דָּמָהּ dāmâh implies to be ‘cut off’ at the sight of a theophany.¹⁰⁹

In view of this, the nuances are fear and dread before God’s presence.

Young suggests that the smoke would have produced “a solemn environment of reverence and awe”, and since no one can stand before God, the moment Isaiah saw the throne he saw his own sinfulness. As a result, terror came first

¹⁰⁸ Luis Alonso Schökel. יָאֵ in *Diccionario Bíblico Hebreo-Español*. (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1994), 38. (Translation mine).

¹⁰⁹ This same lexeme is found in several passages of Isaiah (3:14; 6:5, 11; 15:1; 24:10; 49:19; 60:12; 61:4). Schökel interprets דָּמָהּ as succumb, to perish, cease, to be finished and applies it to Isaiah 6:5 (*cf.* 15:1). The scholar adds that “to be permanently silenced” fits in almost all cases. L. A. Schökel. דָּמָהּ *Diccionario Bíblico Hebreo-Español*, 181. (Translation mine).

and he screamed. The prophet's 'woe' indicates that calamity has fallen or is about to fall upon him.¹¹⁰ At the same time he exclaimed "I am undone" implying that he is doomed to die.¹¹¹ In other words, Isaiah recognises that his very existence is threatened.¹¹² This is because *the vision of God produces not rapture but sheer terror* in the prophet.¹¹³ He knows himself to be utterly "ruined", for two reasons: he is unclean, and he has seen God.¹¹⁴ This produces a recognition of sin and it is remarkable to see the prophet identifying himself completely with those whose sins he has been denouncing in the previous chapter. Conclusively, it is not an understatement to accept that in the presence of God degrees of sin become irrelevant.¹¹⁵ Hence, it is unfruitful to compare oneself to others since it is the holiness of God which

¹¹⁰ Isaiah's cry recalls that of Gideon (*cf.* Judg 6:22; 13:22). E. Young, *Isaiah 1-18*, 247.

¹¹¹ E. Young, *Isaiah 1-18*, 247.

¹¹² J. D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 74.

¹¹³ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 59.

¹¹⁴ Oswalt (*Isaiah*, 171) rightly points out that 'lost' (RSV) is too weak to capture the force of the verb.

¹¹⁵ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 60.

reveals to all, even to the godly their true condition. Paradoxically, Isaiah's confession of being unclean like his fellows set him apart from them.¹¹⁶

It is important to notice that the present chapter moves from a vision of God (1-4), to confession of sin (5), to cleansing (6-7) and finally to commissioning (8-13), a path that should have been imitated by Israel.¹¹⁷

2. 2. 4 A case for “Stages” in the fear of God

In regard to the Prophet this must be acknowledged: he is terrified before God, yet he does not die but confesses his sins. He is forgiven and commissioned for ministry. As a result of this encounter, I will suggest that the fear of God must be analysed and interpreted through the lenses of ‘stages’. This stages could start in terror before God's presence; nonetheless, the Lord will reduce, and eventually minimise that initial fear through confession. The confirmation of forgiveness in Isaiah is the commission to serve the Lord.

Noticeably, in a particular short span of time there is a shift in Isaiah's emotions. There is a change or development in Isaiah's relationship and understanding of God, thesis suggested in this study as ‘stages’ in the fear of God.

¹¹⁶ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 60.

¹¹⁷ B. Webb. *Isaiah*, 58

The ungodly will hide in terror before God's presence, the godly could also experience fear, a fear of death and a fear of being completely exposed and vulnerable before the Almighty. It is of utmost importance to recognise that it is God alone who can allow his children to survive and live in the fear of God thereafter (Ex 33:20).

In conclusion, the fear of God in Isaiah six can be explained in 'stages' as it is related to sheer fear but also to confessing and recognising one's sins and unmerited condition before a thrice holy God. This is the gate to God's forgiveness and it could be suggested that it is also to all of God's treasures (*cf.* 33:6). Consequently, this passage contains a straightforward interpretation of the fear of God: it contains terror, awe and the recognition of sin. After being terrified, Isaiah confesses his sin and is cleansed, takes courage, accepts participation and is commissioned by God to preach his message.

2. 2. 5 Forgiveness in God alone

In the first part of this section the placement of the book was analysed. It is my opinion that Oswalt correctly answers the placement while harmonising it with the subject of forgiveness. The scholar suggests a reading of Isaiah 6 based on 'bipolarities'. In other words, understanding Isaiah under the lens of apparent contradictory themes such as judgement and hope. He argues that the placement of the book is to show how filthy Zion can become holy Zion. He

argues that Isaiah's message is straightforward: "It can happen when the nation of unclean lips has the same experience the man of unclean lips had."¹¹⁸

There are various passages in Isaiah that teach about God's promise of the forgiveness of sins (e.g. Isa 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; 53:6, 11). In both 43:25 and 44:22 the Lord is willing to forgive their sins, even idolatry. Finally, in chapter 53 the Servant suffers for this people and carries the burden of their iniquities.

In view of this, is the fear of God related to forgiveness of sins? The interconnection seems probable. In the following song of ascents this is confirmed:

"If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, fear you". (Psalm 130:3-4)

Considering that the Servant 'fears God' (11:2-3), then to suffer in obedience and in faithfulness unto death is certainly related to the fear of the Lord and forgiveness.

¹¹⁸ John N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah: A Short Course on Biblical Theology*. CTJ 39 (2004): 54-71 (Calvin Theological Journal), 60-61.

2. 3 Exploration of Isaiah 8:12-13

2. 3. 1 The argument of the context

Contrary to this thesis' proposed context, Miscall suggests that Isaiah is fast-forwarding a whole century to the Babylonian invasion, even when Jerusalem falls.¹¹⁹ With a different reading, Childs argues that the focus of chapter 8 differs markedly from chapter 7 and is hardly just another "duplicating sign sequence".¹²⁰ This is a strange observation considering the association between the two chapters as there is strong internal evidence to join chapters seven and eight as one unified passage describing and foretelling the same events. Both 7:17 and 8:5 refer to Assyria and Isaiah speaks to Ahaz when the fear of the invasion is pervasive. In agreement, Leupold recollects that all this

¹¹⁹ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 51-52.

¹²⁰ Brevard Childs. *Isaiah*, 71-73. The erudite suggests that the narrative setting of the oracle reflects a time later than the one starting in 7:10 when Isaiah challenged Ahaz to respond in faith to God's promise to the house of David. Since the decision of unbelief has already been made in chapter 8, Isaiah uses the image of the "waters of Shiloah" to draw his analogy. Even so, this position cannot pretend to describe a long time between the fulfillments of these events.

was staged during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war, of which chapter 7 “had given some intimations”.¹²¹

It is important to analyse the setting of the context as it paves the ground for God’s command to fear him alone.

2. 3. 2 Conspiracy Theories in Isaiah 8:5-8

In this context, the people in Judah are faced with three alternatives before a potential war: unite with the Syro-Ephraimite alliance, unite with Assyria or unite with the Lord. Put differently, who shall they fear and pay tribute to? The severe political situation was pressuring Ahaz and his court and they were faced with one decision: who to ally with? In 7:2 we are told that the hearts of the king and his house “were shaken”, precisely in that time the prophet is sent to strengthen the king and encourage him to trust in God (Isa 7:7-9). There was a group of political leaders who chiefly advocated alliance with Assyria while others advocated for the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. On the former, ‘treason’ meant not approving an alliance with Assyria.¹²² On the latter, the idea of a conspiracy arose because there was a faction in Judah

¹²¹ Leupold, *Isaiah*, 166.

¹²² Both John L. MacKay and Leupold agree on this position. H. C. Leupold, *Isaiah*, 172; J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 172.

sympathetic to the aims of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition.¹²³ Some people loyal to Ahaz probably did not agree with Isaiah's words towards the king and accused him of treasonable disloyalty by suggesting that he wanted Ahaz to be deposed (cf. 7:9).¹²⁴ By counselling Ahaz into trusting God, he seemed to be representing the concerns of Assyria or even the possibility of "impeachment".¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Isaiah 'feared God' and advocated for a theocracy, but to do so was interpreted as an act of conspiracy and it is likely that the Davidides thought that Isaiah had united with the enemy.¹²⁶ Noticeably, Isaiah will live out to the fear of God in this context, he must remain constant and trusting God's word (cf. 66:2, 5) in the midst of war as it will be further analysed.

2. 3. 3 To fear God alone: Isaiah 8:11-14

On this situation we can propose that every conflict comes with its own internal and external temptations, consequently, the 'fear of God' could very well be a 'thermometer' of trust in God or trust in man. In this chapter the fear of God is also the basis on which you make decisions in crisis. In other word,

¹²³ R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 99.

¹²⁴ R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 99.

¹²⁵ J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine. *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 153.

¹²⁶ E. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 310.

the fear of God will encourage the godly, give them wisdom and the strength to resist the fear of adversities when under pressure.

The fear of God is closely related to trust and to making decisions in this chapter; thus the people in Judah are faced with two options: to trust or not to trust the Lord. Isaiah experiences this *prima facie* in his ministry for it could be suggested that God intended to put physical pressure on the prophet to warn him beforehand, though this is not to suggest that Isaiah was inclined to a particular type of alliance, nevertheless we could speculate that he was dubitative as to what stance to take and what decision to make. **Consequently, the Lord allowed him to experience his power firsthand and subsequently encourages Isaiah to fear him alone. Motyer suggests that this is not to say that Isaiah had better political insight but divine inspiration, ‘compelling power’ by means of the word of the Lord.¹²⁷ Interestingly, Jeremiah 15:17 reads:**

**“I never sat in the company of revellers, never made merry with them;
I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with
indignation.”**

God’s call requires relentless confidence (trust) even in the midst of danger and therefore, it can be concluded that doubting him is at the very opposite of ‘fearing God’; hence, the ungodly do not have ‘the fear of God’ as it has been suggested in Isaiah 2:10, 19,21. They should have regarded the Lord as holy,

¹²⁷ A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 94.

which is a human being's ultimate recognition, to set Him apart from everything.¹²⁸

In view of this , and in spite of verse twelve being an order not to fear the enemy, it is it a most positive statement as it is a calling to remain faithful to God's cause and commands:

לֹא־תִאֲמְרוּן לְנֶשֶׁךְ לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־יֹאמַר הָעָם הַזֶּה קָשָׁךְ וְאַת־מִוֶּרְאוֹ לֹא־תִירָאוּ וְלֹא תַעֲרִיצוּ

We have suggested that the commands 'do not fear' (because I am with you) and the command 'to fear God' converge in that both are helpful and positive statements from God to Isaiah and to his people as found in 8:12; 10:24; 35:4; 40:9; 41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2; 54:4. In other words: the godly cannot stop fearing others, or to fear altogether, unless they first have the fear of God.

Even though the 'fear of God' is not presented explicitly in the form of the motto, it is directly related and stated as an affirmative command in verse 13:

אֶת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אַתּוּ תִקְדִּישׁוּ וְהוּא מִוֶּרְאֵכֶם וְהוּא מַעֲרָצְכֶם

As it was first introduced in regard to 2:19 and 21, Isaiah once more chooses the verb תַּעֲרִיצוּ which can be translated as fear and dread.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ The relationship of the 'fear of God' and holiness will be discussed in chapter 3.

¹²⁹ It should be noted that עָרַץ is translated in chapter 2 as 'to shake' the earth but here it is translated as 'dread' (both in NIV).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that מִרְאָכָם יְהוָה מְעַרְצָכֶם is correctly translated in this passage as ‘fear’ and ‘dread’ by almost all translations. Were we to assume that the ‘fear of God’ is equal to reverence in every context, then the command in verse 12 should have been translated as ‘*do not revere what they revere*’. It is clear that the mandate loses its strength while undermining Isaiah’s careful language selection.¹³⁰

Certain clarifications are proposed and for that matter we quote Calvin:

Though he speaks not only of *fear* but of *dread*, yet he does not mean that the Jews should be filled with horror at the name of God, so as to

¹³⁰ J. Goldingay (*Isaiah*, 156) acknowledges this fact and explains that the first verb derives from the root ירא which is usually translated as ‘fear’ or ‘to be afraid’. Despite his elucidation, he chooses to translate the verse as follows:

“and do not revere nor regard with awe the one whom it (this people) reveres.”

In the last chapter of this thesis, ‘reverence’ will be analysed accordingly.

Additionally, Goldingay suggests that the call לֹא-תִירָא is tainted with political overtones expressing the obedience of a vassal towards a suzerain.

Nevertheless, his observation can be misleading since any political leader under the control of a tyrant does not revere his superior, either he is afraid and terrified of him or detests him, or consequently, he would try to conspire to break the yoke imposed by that suzerain.

desire to flee from him, but merely demands from them reverence for

God, and uses both words in order to express continuance.¹³¹

It seems that there is confusion of terminology (unless underestimating Isaiah's conscious usage of words) which unnecessarily complicates the point since the Reformer uses 'horror' instead of fear or dread and prefers the use of reverence to describe the fear of God.

Nevertheless, it is sound to conclude that God does not want the Jews to be filled with 'horror' as the ungodly (e.g., 2:10, 19, 21), on the contrary, he wants them 'to fear and dread him' (alone) since the fear of God is the only positive and godly type of fear.

Additionally, Calvin suggests that the Jews desired to have the Assyrians for allies because they were terrified and their *blind fear* clouded them to look for the Lord's assistance; simply put: fear "took away their judgement".¹³² In other words, it is clear that they had no 'fear of God' since their fear only blinds them. Had there been a proper 'fear of God' there would not have been this present distrust.¹³³ In view of all this, in verse 14 we interpret "but" to contrast those who fear God from the rest in Jerusalem who certainly do not fear God, to the former he will be a "sanctuary", to all other he will be a "trap

¹³¹ J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 278-9.

¹³² J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 277.

¹³³ E. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 311.

and snare”. The rock of their security is now the rock of stumbling, astonishingly, the one who should protect them from “snare and trap”, has now become snare and trap.¹³⁴ We shall conclude that the condition of the people is atrocious, there was simply “no fear of God in that place” (*cf.* Gn 21:14).

2. 3. 4 The nuances of the fear of God

God’s call requires relentless confidence (trust) even in the midst of danger and therefore, it can be concluded that doubting him is at the very opposite of ‘fearing God’; hence, the ungodly do not have ‘the fear of God’ as it has been suggested in Isaiah 2:10, 19, 21. They should have regarded the Lord as holy, which is the ultimate recognition, to set Him apart from everything.¹³⁵

It is noteworthy that Judah feared the enemy and the consequences of the coalition but did not fear God and the consequences of disobeying him. In other words, God’s chosen people preferred to ally with the enemy and not with God, and by doing so, they made God appear insignificant.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 78.

¹³⁵ The relationship of the ‘fear of God’ and holiness will be discussed in chapter 3.

¹³⁶ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 234.

2. 4 Exploration of Isaiah 11

YO: from all the previous analysis: the botanical figure and the promises of chapter 9. All these do not speak of a next-in line Davidide, it speaks of a totally new regal. Also, this promised king ‘delight’ in the fear of God. So far, people hide in terror before God’s presence (2:10, 19, 21), the prophet screams in ruin (6:5) and the prophet is commanded to fear God (8:12-13). Thus far, no one has delighted in the fear of God. The same will be true in all the following verses of this grand prophecy. As a matter of fact, one could conclude that the fear of God was hardly found in Israel (29:13; 50:11) as it was exchanged for idolatry (57:11; 2:10, 19, 21). Nonetheless, God commends those who fear his word and take it at face value (66:2, 5). The prophet allows us to understand that it is God’s gift to his people (63:17; 33:6), even to foreigners (25:3; 59:19). With all this in mind, God promises that there will a time when his people will truly fear him (29:23)

In view of all this, the vision of chapter 11 is central to the fear of God for conclusively, no one has ever ‘delighted’ in the fear of God, even if it is delightful.

Consequently, the importance of this chapter is beyond measure for it provides a closer insight into the fear of God in the life of the promised Messiah who is empowered by the Spirit to rule over the world. Not intended to only overemphasise the fear of God in verses two and three, Isaiah wants the reader to note the impact this would have on the Messiah’s ruling activity. The

consequences for the people over whom he rules are extraordinary and unimaginable humanly speaking: peace, order, justice, righteousness, unity among the Northern and Southern kingdoms, peace and gladness in Zion. All these are the direct results of the Messiah's delighting in the fear of the Lord as he divinely exemplifies it.

2. 4. 1 The argument of the context

As it was the case with chapter two, there is wide scope of interpretations such as reading the chapter in nonmessianic manner, dating it as postexilic (Scott) and assuming the 'stump of Jesse' to the destruction of the David monarchy in 587 (Clements). Still others separate verses 1-5 from 6-9 assigning only the latter to "post exilic redactional layer" (Becker, Barth).¹³⁷

In contrast to the previous elucidations, this study agrees with several other scholars who argue for the Assyrian and the Syro-Ephraimite conflict as the context in which Isaiah 11 was written. While Schreiner suggests that chapters 7-10 describe the sparing of Jerusalem from Assyria and Kaiser supports the Syro-Ephraimite threats of extinction against the Davidic dynasty; Hayes and Irvine argue that this section did not originally look forward to a future

¹³⁷ All possibilities in B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 104-05.

Messiah, but to an immediate fulfilment in the Davidic monarch, Ahaz.¹³⁸ As it is not uncommon with prophecies, the former interpretations seem to fit that

¹³⁸ T. R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 335; W. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 162 and J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 213-215. Additionally, Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, 204) interprets Josiah as the “small boy leading them” since Ahaz and later Hezekiah were never replaced. According to Darrell Bock (*Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and methods*. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 131) Judaism did not have a single view of messianic hope in this period, some hoped for a wise, powerful Davidic regal figure (cf. Psalms of Solomon 17-18) *who will exercise God’s judgment and vindication, bringing victory, peace and wisdom as Gentiles were overcome*. Additionally, intertextual passages in the canon explain this righteous kingdom, noteworthy is Jeremiah 23:5 “when I raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely...” which sheds light into the expectation and (at least) a partial understanding of this future leader. Similarly, Beaton argues that this prophecy “*presents a fluid conceptualisation of the identity and function of the eschatological figure of the end of times...*” Richard Beaton; *Isaiah’s Christ in Mathew’s Gospel*. Society for New Testament Studies; Monograph Series 123. “*The Servant of the Lord*”. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 162.

particular time well and they could be recognised as a word of assurance for the dark day of the Assyrian threat but also containing indications of a partial fulfilment giving way to “a brighter and complete fulfilment in a royal figure to come”.¹³⁹ In spite of the various interpretations and possibilities, this is important for the argument of the fear God in the Messiah. If this is not an eschatological imagery, then a Davidide fears God and lives up to the expectations. On the other hand, if this is the Messiah himself, the fear of God as empowerment by the Spirit must be interpreted through a different lenses.

2. 4. 2 On unity

It is correct to affirm that this grand prophetic book has caused disunity in academia regarding every single chapter, this one included. Nevertheless, it is mandatory to highlight that chapter eleven is key for the understanding of the fear of God in Isaiah. Sweeney questions the argument that 10:5-12:6 are “originally independent units” since several features indicate that there is structural unity.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, Childs is in favour of a conceptual unity in 1-9 as *the themes of the restoration of Zion (1:26), the eschatological assembly of the nations at the sacred mountain (2:1-4), and the establishment of a righteous*

¹³⁹ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 120.

¹⁴⁰ For a list of opposing arguments see M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 198.

*rule by a future messianic ruler (9:1ff.) are reiterated by means of intertextual references throughout 11:1-9.*¹⁴¹

Also, against disunity in regard to verse 10, Motyer describes them as a “very skilful piece of literature”, not disruptive but unifying; hence, coining this editing “the hallmark of Isaiah”.¹⁴² The unity is clear as the opening words of verse 10 plainly clarify that this statement has “the same end-time focus as verses 1-9”.¹⁴³

It is important to analyse this positions in light of the significance and impact of the fear of God in the Messiah.

¹⁴¹ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 99-100.

¹⁴² Verse 10 forms an ‘inclusio’ with verses 1-2 by reintroducing *Jesse*, *Root* and *rest* (in verse 2 the Spirit rests on him; in verse 10 he provides a place of rest). J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 121-25. This is done so by picking up key words from vv. 1 and 12 with verse 10 joining the two oracles together in a larger unit. For a full disclosure and summary of the information, see J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine. *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 215. Most scholars agree in dividing the chapter in two main o units, 11:1-9 and 11:11-16, with v. 10 forming a connecting bridge between the oracles. B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 99.

¹⁴³ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 76.

In view of this, it seems pertinent to divide the chapter in two major units, 11:1-9 and 11:11-16, with v. 10 forming a connecting bridge between the oracles.¹⁴⁴ The first part focuses on the Messiah, his character (11:1-5) and the nature of his kingdom (11:6-9) while the second part is a poetic description of the ingathering of the scattered people of God (11:12-16).¹⁴⁵

2. 4. 3 The grandest discontinuity of the kingly office

Harman recalls the allusion of this chapter back to Immanuel (7:14) or to the royal child (9:6-7), thus proclaiming a unity in the presentation of a “remarkable birth”.¹⁴⁶ Notwithstanding, this must be noted: the child of 7:14 will eat and be nourished in a virgin’s home, a clear depiction of a deity in human form.

Furthermore, the botanical analogy provides supplementary analogy for unity in the continuity of the tree metaphor: “The Lebanon with its majesty will fall” (10:34) while “the stock or stump of Jesse” will grow (11:1).¹⁴⁷ Kaiser’s observation on the “botanical figure of speech” could be applied properly to

¹⁴⁴ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 99.

¹⁴⁵ J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 288. This view is different from that of Webb (*The Message of Isaiah*, 74) who reads these verses as concrete particulars.

¹⁴⁶ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 110.

¹⁴⁷ J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine. *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 211.

this interpretation as he understands David's final words in regard to the eternal promise of his royal lineage since the king trusts in God to "branch out" a descendant.¹⁴⁸ The similarities with the promises of 11:2-5 and 9:7 are evident: anticipation of his coming from David's lineage (cf. 11:1) and justice and righteousness as central virtues in upholding and establishing his kingdom (cf. 11:3-5).

Still, taking up from the botanical imagery, Motyer's suggests that since the expected king is the "Root of Jesse", this implies that Jesse sprang from him;

¹⁴⁸ David exclaimed prior to his death regarding God's covenant to his house: "Will he not bring to fruition [or: cause to sprout, branch out, shoot] my salvation and grant me my every desire?" (2 Sam 23:5). Kaiser proposes that what was a verb in David's last word, now in Isaiah becomes "a proper noun and a designation for the Messiah". Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 156. Similarly, Webb argues that this is not the first time in the book that *the transition from judgement to salvation has been depicted as the springing up of a plant, but clearly there is a more particular application of that imagery here (c.f. 4:2)*. (Webb, *The message of Isaiah*, 74-5, emphasis added). Likewise, Dempster compares this verse to 53:2 where the Servant of the Lord "grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground", comparing the royal to "a plant growing in difficult circumstances". As quoted by T. R. Schreiner. *The King in His Beauty*, 335.

in other words, “*he is the root support and origin of the Messianic family in which he would be born.*”¹⁴⁹ This statement correctly supports the divine essence and character of this new Davidide marking a significant discontinuity between the frequently arrogant and unfaithful dynasty.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the metaphor of the stump also “picks up textually” the holy seed in the stump of 6:13 and in spite of poor leadership there is hope for Israel because the coming Messiah is evidence of Immanuel.¹⁵¹ Though suggested by some scholars, Ahaz’s baby is no match to the Branch. Nevertheless, this expectation may have bolstered hope during Assyria’s domination but it is not possible to equate Hezekiah with the promised one here.¹⁵²

On a rather different note, there are scholars who suggest that the reference to Jesse implies the possibility of a critique of David himself, “whose weaknesses are exposed in Samuel-Kings”; thus, suggesting a discontinuity in

¹⁴⁹ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 121.

¹⁵⁰ J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 289.

¹⁵¹ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 102. On the prediction of Isaiah 6:13 also J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122.

¹⁵² Calvin (Isaiah, 372-74) points out that this cannot be applied to Hezekiah or Josiah for the king was far from attaining that greatness which is shortly afterwards described. Mackay states that this weakness is clearly seen in Isaiah 39:4 when he ceded to Babylon’s temptation. J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 288.

kingship and a permanent replacement of the Davidic monarchy. This being so, the Branch should not be applied to another king in David's line but rather to another David.¹⁵³ In other words, the David promise remains but the source is different. Certainly, there is discontinuity pointing forward in time.

2. 4. 4 The anointing of the Messiah in 11:2 וְנִתְּנָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה

What is the extent of the Branch's need of the Spirit to perform all this godly activities is beyond full comprehension, perhaps it is simpler to state that through the Spirit's empowerment he would become humanity's perfect example of experiencing and living out the fear of God. In this regard, the promised ruler will be human in all respects; however, Isaiah emphasises the significance of the anointing of the Spirit in his powerful, just and everlasting reign and also an evidence of his submissiveness before God.¹⁵⁴

Notwithstanding, it is obligatory to note the centrality of this relationship in

¹⁵³ Peter D. Quinn-Miscall. *Reading Isaiah. Poetry and Vision*; (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2001), 181. Also, J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 83-84. Similarly, J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 289. The following verses are proposed to confirm this proposition: (Jer 30:9; Ezk 34:23-24; Hos 3:5).

¹⁵⁴ In Isaiah, the Messiah is the Spirit endowed one (42:10; 59:21; 61:1). J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122.

Messiah's purposes, especially as the Spirit is mentioned nearly four hundred times in the Old Testament alone.¹⁵⁵

Consequently, the abiding work of the Spirit in his life “*qualifies him for his messianic mission as both the Son of God and the son of David*”, and he will succeed precisely because of that.¹⁵⁶

Explicitly, the Spirit anoints the Branch with six attributes, seven if adding the resting of the Spirit himself; thus the coining by several scholars: “the sevenfold work of the Spirit”, with which he surpasses all previous kings.¹⁵⁷ These attributes can be divided into three pairs of characteristics: wisdom and understanding for government, counsel and might for war, and knowledge and fear of the Lord for spiritual leadership, it is evident that no king in Israel or

¹⁵⁵ Robert Letham. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2004), 28.

¹⁵⁶ Kaiser also suggests that Yahweh appoints the Servant and the Spirit anoints him, thereby making one of the earliest constructs of the doctrine of the Trinity. W. Kaiser Jr. *Messiah in Old Testament*, 165, 183.

¹⁵⁷ T. R. Schreiner. *The King in His Beauty*, 335. Calvin correctly clarifies that the Prophet does not here enumerate all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as some have thought. J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 375.

Judah ever had all these gifts.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, all what follows is the description of the exemplification of the fear of God in the Messiah and the results thereafter.

2. 4. 5 Spirit of wisdom and of understanding: רִיחַ חָכְמָה וּבִינָה

The Branch's mental endowments of wisdom and understanding as judicial mark a contrast with the proud boast of the king of Assyria (10:13).¹⁵⁹ Thus, in regard to 'wisdom' we can state that it is the gift of practical ability and skill that derives from discernment, this implies the ability to distinguish good and evil.¹⁶⁰ In chapter 3 we will further discuss the relationship between wisdom and the fear of God. With regard to 'understanding' we can conclude that the Branch will be able to perspicuously comprehend the endeavours of his people and also understand the times and the fulfilment of God's prophecies, as Calvin states: he will have sagacity.¹⁶¹

2. 4. 6 Counsel and power: רִיחַ עֲצָה וְגִבּוֹרָה

¹⁵⁸ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 111. Noteworthy is the suggestion that all six terms overlap to some extent. MacKay, *Isaiah*, 291.

¹⁵⁹ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122.

¹⁶⁰ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 103.

¹⁶¹ J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 374.

It shall be noted that the words translated here as ‘counsel’ and ‘power’ also appear as ‘strategy and military strength’ in 36:5. Consequently, counsel enables the ruler to devise a right course of action, “coupled with the personal prowess to see it through”.¹⁶² In this regard, unless a king had both the ability to gather data for decision making and the ‘forcefulness’ to make decisions, he was doomed to be ineffective.¹⁶³ As the “mighty God”, he is untouchable and his power will not go unnoticed as the world acknowledges his might.¹⁶⁴ A rather disturbing aspect and apparent contradiction emerges for it is suggested that conflicts will still be present and this two endowments are required to *forcefully constraining the wicked and adroitly discerning both the good and the evil of human society (v. 3b)* because for Isaiah the messianic age is not construed as *one of heavenly sweetness and light*.¹⁶⁵

2. 4. 7 Knowledge and the fear of God: **רוּחַ דָּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה**

¹⁶² J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122.

¹⁶³ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 276.

¹⁶⁴ Though speculative, it is probable that Isaiah and his audience envisioned this promised Messiah as a divine conquering warrior. Kaiser also sees a connection with chapter nine in regard to his might and power (*cf.* 9:6). W. Kaiser Jr. *Messiah in Old Testament*, 163.

¹⁶⁵ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 103.

Knowing a person involves a close relationship (Gen. 4:1) and when that person is the Lord, that affinity must comply both religiously and morally; consequently, ‘evildoers’ are those who ‘do not know’ (Ps. 14:4).¹⁶⁶ The promised King is the only regal who truly ‘knows’ the Lord and from within that harmonious relationship views all things adequately and consistently, as he alone could. In view of this, the relationship between knowledge and the fear of God will be revisited in chapter 3.

2. 4. 8 The Messiah and the fear of God (11:2-3)

It is important to mention that verses two and three have **וַיִּרְאַת יְהוָה** and **בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה** respectively, whereas **פֶּחַד יְהוָה** is used in chapter 2 denoting the ungodly’s fear of God.¹⁶⁷ When searching for the interpretation, meaning and nuances of the fear of God, (though the contexts may vary), Dictionaries tend to render ‘reverence’ as already analysed in chapter one. This particularity seems to suggest that when fear is directly related or directed to God, ‘reverence’ and/or ‘piety’ are preferred. In stark contrast to the running and hiding before God’s presence in chapter 2, the Branch will: **וְהָרִיקוּ בְּיִרְאַת**

¹⁶⁶ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 103. Also, J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122.

¹⁶⁷ Brown et.al. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ירא, 432.

The fear of God, reverence, piety and Isa. 11:3; 33:6 are quoted as examples.

נִחַח? (v 3). Isaiah insists that the apothegm is the “delight” of the Branch linking this passage to the motto, albeit as a living example of it.¹⁶⁸ These verses are clear in sentencing that it is the Spirit who will impart these same gifts to the promised stump of Jesse, even the ‘fear of God’. As already stated, the fear of God is exemplified by the Messiah through the Spirit’s empowerment. The “delighting in the fear of God” suggests that *all his capacity for delight will be spent on this great object*.¹⁶⁹ In other words, the whole life of this future ruler will be lived “*under the control of the divine will that commissions him to act*”.¹⁷⁰ These two statements are not unimportant elucidations for they present the centrality of the fear of God in Messiah’s life and rule; noteworthy, this “delight” is the ultimate relationship with Yahweh and from that privileged position he will judge justly, demonstrating a commitment towards his subjects, marking an unambiguous discontinuity with Israel’s previous monarchs. Above all, only Messiah can “delight” in the fear of God as a permanent way of life and a characteristic of his reign, all other kings, as

¹⁶⁸ As found intertextually in Prov 1:7; 9:10; Eccles 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13 Job 28:28; Ps 119:120; (cf. Isa 33:6). This relationship will be further discussed in the exposition of Isaiah 33:6.

¹⁶⁹ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 123.

¹⁷⁰ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 111. This divine relationship and endeavour is a good topic of interest for further research as it will require a complete new research on the fear of God in the New Testament.

faithful and trustworthy they proved to be were never able to reach that hallmark. Before we reach further conclusions it is pertinent to discuss how several scholars interpret the fear of God in the Messiah.

2. 4. 9 The nuances of the fear of God in Isaiah 11

On the why the divine Davidide will fear God, it probably is a question beyond comprehension. Notwithstanding, scholars have attempted to approximate as it will be reviewed.

I consider this analysis pivotal for the general understanding of the fear of God in the Messiah as it requires making comparisons and contrasts among scholars and interpreting their positions in light of Isaiah's own elucidations. For Quinn-Miscall it is a matter of "religious awe" and "respect" while Childs voices out that the apothegm expresses both the beginning and end of life and "issues in reverence and worship".¹⁷¹ Motyer expatiates on the practical realms suggesting that it certainly includes moral concern (Gn. 20:11), motivates obedience (Ex. 20:20) and moulds conduct (Ne. 5:9, 15).¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 54. Additionally, B. Childs, (*Isaiah*, 103) who correctly applies this passage to Isaiah's own encounter with the Lord. It is a response corresponding to the holiness of God, "epitomised in the heavenly liturgy" of 6:3.

¹⁷² J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 122-3.

Apparently, all the latter elucidations were derived from Calvin who interpreted “godliness” as the true fear of God and also as a sincere desire to worship God.¹⁷³ Hence, we can conclude that the ‘fear of God’ (commonly *interpreted* as reverence) leads to obedience on the part of the godly (godliness).¹⁷⁴

In conclusion, the Branch’s *יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ* is mainly interpreted as sincere reverence, respect, the desire to worship God and it is expected to come alive in pious obedience to God’s will in every manner. In practical manners, this fact distinguishes the future leader from all his predecessors since he fears God and seeks only his approval, not the “plaudits and favours of mankind”.¹⁷⁵ Notwithstanding, none of the scholars make an effort to elucidate on the reasons why the Messiah should or must ‘fear God’. At the same time, as analysed in chapter one, the ‘emotions’ surrounding the fear of God are non-existent in their interpretations. As complex as this proofs to be, the “simplest” answer is that the “root of Jesse” is to become human in all possible facets and an example of godliness; nonetheless, interpreting the magnitude of this broad affirmation is probably beyond human comprehension. In spite of this paradox, it is compulsory to establish the

¹⁷³ J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 375.

¹⁷⁴ This is probably why the NLT opts for “obeying the Lord” in verse three; even though in verse two it renders “the fear of the Lord”.

¹⁷⁵ J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 293.

impact of the ‘fear of God’ upon the future king. As it has been reviewed, most scholars do not speak of a next-in line Davidide but of a totally new regal. And one who ‘delights’ in the fear of God. This far, people hide in terror before God’s presence (2:10, 19, 21), the prophet screams in ruin (6:5) and the prophet is commanded to fear God (8:12-13). Thus far, no one has delighted in the fear of God. The same will be true in all the following verses of this grand prophecy. As a matter of fact, one could conclude that the fear of God was hardly found in Israel (29:13; 50:11) and it was exchanged for idolatry (57:11; 2:10, 19, 21). Nonetheless, God commends those who fear his word and take it at face value (50:10; 66:2, 5). The prophet allows us to understand that it is God’s gift to his people (63:17; 33:6), even to foreigners (25:3; 59:19). With all this in mind, God promises that there will a time when his people will truly fear him (29:23)

The vision of chapter 11 is central to the fear of God for it can stated with confidence, no one has ever ‘delighted’ wholeheartedly in the fear of God.

2. 4. 10 What the fear of God looks like under Messiah

As stated above, the ‘fear of God’ requires total obedience and devotion to God and His will in every practical issue. Verses three to five paint a clear picture of heavenly endowments incarnated by the Messiah in order to divinely rule the earth. The last part of verse three speaks of his opposition to unjust dealings and verse four centres on the Branch’s proceedings: with righteousness he will “judge the needy and with justice he will give decisions

for the poor of the earth”. This does not only represent a vision but the highest standard of living with the Branch not being passive in regard to injustice and the abuse of power; consequently, the unprotected of society will finally have a fair and righteous judge.¹⁷⁶ Rather incomprehensible, the Messiah will not have a clear path at the outset of his ruling, but unlike all former monarchs, he will use all his divinely endowed attributes, particularly the ‘fear of God’ for the emphasis on ‘the delight’ of the fear of God is to lead mankind into an everlasting reign.

Noteworthy, “righteousness” will be a distinctive mark of his reign and that being so, corrupted and dishonest hearings will forever cease.¹⁷⁷ Accordingly, it is correct to place righteousness as one key spectrum onto measuring the fear of God in a person.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Isaiah 59 is a *tour de force* on the Messiah’s establishment of his righteous kingdom.

¹⁷⁷ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 111.

¹⁷⁸ L. Wilson, *Job*, 29. The scholar suggests this in regard to Job while quoting Isaiah 11:2-3 and the Messiah as reference. Motyer (*The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 123-24) provides relevant explanation on righteousness: “that which follows the inviolable norm of the divine will’ and adds that faithfulness is that ‘which holds immovably to the course divinely appointed...’ and also ‘moral integrity and steadfast loyalty’.

In order to understand the extent of the discontinuity in governorship and how drastically the Branch is different from all his predecessors, it is mandatory to acknowledge Israel's condition and total corruption: Oppressive treatment of widows and orphans, who may stand for all the weaker members of society (1:17, 21-23; 3:14); theft and murder (1:21); injustice by taking bribes (1:23; 3:9; 5:23; 10:1-2; 29:21); expropriation of land belonging to the poor (5:8-10); drunkenness (5:11-17, 22; 28:1-14); excessive luxury, personal adornment, and the accumulation of wealth and status (3:16-4:1; 9:9-12; 22:15-19; 32:9-14).¹⁷⁹ Thus, the stump of Jesse will judge with righteousness and justice and he will also take a stance to defend the just cause of the poor and the needy.¹⁸⁰ To what degree this might be related to socialism is unclear; nevertheless, this style of ruling demands divine excellence in leadership. Additionally, the fact that he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips (v. 4) clearly manifests the Messiah's divinity and godly

¹⁷⁹ This short list sheds light on the stark discontinuity with the results of the Messianic kingdom. John Barton; *Isaiah 1-39*; Old Testament Guides. (Sheffield Academic Press; 1995), 46-47

¹⁸⁰ T. R. Schreiner. *The King in His Beauty*, 335. The scholar rightly relates this passage with 16:5. Not unimportantly, MacKay (*Isaiah*, 294) is right to ascertain that the poor are not necessarily in the right just because they are poor, but with the Messiah they will not to be dismissed without consideration.

character. This picture cannot be applied to any merely human king, it is either an unattainable ideal or the figure envisioned is somehow superhuman.¹⁸¹

2. 4. 11 Final remarks

In rather stimulating form, Webb states that a “radical foreshortening of the historical processes” is involved here, from the overthrow of the human kingdom (Assyria) to establishing the kingdom of Messiah.¹⁸² To achieve all this, a divine intervention is needed, to this day mankind has struggle to find peace, the solutions to end poverty, fight diseases and provide equal opportunities for all; nonetheless, things will be entirely different under the new Davidide as the unprotected in society and the least of them will have a place of honour before his eyes. This is due to the fact that the divine ruler will not judge according to appearances, worldly power and influences, nor will He be persuaded by what people say; on the contrary, he will be just, righteous and faithful.

It is undeniable that these promises became true words of assurance and hope during the dark days of the Assyrian threat, the Babylonian exile and the

¹⁸¹ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 278. Webb (*The Message of Isaiah*, 75) agrees that the extraordinary power of his spoken word (4b) implies that he will be more than an ordinary mortal.

¹⁸² B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 74.

return to Zion. In view of this, Motyer correctly closes this section encouraging that “*undated hope is a living, ever-present assurance for God’s people*” and this passage speaks as much to the godly now as in Isaiah’s time.¹⁸³

To conclude this section, the ‘fear of God’ as exemplified by the Messiah in living and in ruling leads to practical blessings upon the dwellers of the land. There is not a more complete connection between the fear of God and other different theological themes as in 11:2-3 and the rest of the chapter.

2. 5 Exploration of Isaiah 25:3

2. 5. 1 The argument of the context

In this chapter the ‘fear of God’ is employed within a context of praise of God’s wonders and the conversion of ruthless foreigners. *At this point we must answer who are this aliens, their conversion to ‘fear’ is important. Interestingly enough, diverse theories are formulated in regard to the citizenship of the ruthless.* Seitz assumes that ‘the ruthless’ are ‘the tyrants’ laid low by the Lord (*cf.* 13:11) while implying that this is Babylon who was accustomed to trusting in their own strength; needless to say, they finally met the “true source of strength”.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 120 (emphasis added).

¹⁸⁴ Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 187.

It is important to notice that Assyria is closer to Isaiah's milieu, though we shall not discard Babylon. Nevertheless, as is customary with prophecy, there is the possibility to look further in time and acknowledge that 'these ruthless' describe the conversion of the nations in terms of them coming to fear the Lord. In this regard, Calvin suggests that this is not Jerusalem but many cities reduced to ruins while Oswalt is not specific, on the contrary, speaks of all bastions of the earth. Similarly, Motyer suggests the 'city of meaningless' of 24:10, the city that stands for the world structure without reference to God but composed of many nations.¹⁸⁵

Hayes and Irvine see a reference to Assyria while Sweeney and Childs apply this to Babylon.¹⁸⁶ On a different note, Clements argues for a later edition, not from the hands of Isaiah¹⁸⁷.

It seems that there is a misconception into the destruction of Jerusalem, Young questions it since it would be impossible that Isaiah would praise God for the destruction of his own city".¹⁸⁸ Two things must be stated. First, Isaiah knows Jerusalem has been trampled by foreigners (1:7) and idolatrous people with

¹⁸⁵ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 208.

¹⁸⁶ Childs (Isaiah, 184) interprets the "never rebuild" (Babylon: 13:20; 14:22).
M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 336.

¹⁸⁷ R. E. Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, 206.

¹⁸⁸ E. Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 187.

whom he wishes to depart (2:9). Second, Isaiah has received first-hand information from God (6:8-13; 8:12-22) and knows that God's judgement is necessary to transform old Zion into new Zion.

In this regard, Seitz is also open for the possibility of Jerusalem; similarly, Miscall sees in Jerusalem the fortified city and in Assyria the one empire who reduces 'fortified' cities to heaps (36:1; 37:26).¹⁸⁹

It is important to highlight that Childs recommends that "neither *honour* nor *reverence* require us to understand that these people have come to faith in the Lord", these people *respect* and *fear* God now as a result of his mightiness and the consequent overthrow of their system.¹⁹⁰

Perhaps this elucidation interferes with other people's appreciations and interpretations, particularly if they come out of pulpits. Could a person respect, fear, honour and reverence God but not know him?

¹⁸⁹ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 85. These cities are never rebuilt, although Jerusalem is an exception (44:28). Seitz, (*Isaiah 1-39*, 187) also allows for the possibility that this could be Jerusalem while reading 25:1 and (26:2) "to be righteous".

¹⁹⁰ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 208.

In regard to the ruthless' conversion, Webb argues that God destroys the city not for any "spiteful satisfaction", but in order to bring the nations "to their senses".¹⁹¹

It is important to notice that 'honour' יְכָבֵד is present in 25:3 and 29:13 alongside the fear of God. In regard to 29:13 Motyer sees honour as an outward observance such as honouring with mouth and lips with no heart reality; in regard to the 'fear of God' he sees an inward false religion only based on human instruction.¹⁹²

Young sees the conversion in terms of a "true spiritual turning unto God, such as is represented by the verbs "honour" and "fear".¹⁹³ Young interprets the former as "to ascribe unto Him and to acknowledge as belonging to Him the honour that is His". On the latter: "to fear Him is to approach Him in reverential awe".¹⁹⁴

At this point, it seems reasonable to suggest that this passage contains a paradox: how is it possible that the strong and ruthless foreigners 'fear' God? Nonetheless, this is precisely the point: the absurd has become a godly reality

¹⁹¹ Webb (Isaiah, 108) sees the city as representative of the organised world in opposition to God.

¹⁹² J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 240.

¹⁹³ E. Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 188.

¹⁹⁴ E. Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 188-89.

as the ‘fear of God’ is exemplified by ruthless outsiders while idolatry is the norm within Israel.

2. 5. 2 God’s universal love

After a rather long list of messages to specify nations, Isaiah leaves no room for doubting who the Lord of all the earth is. At first glance, it is difficult to interpret Isaiah’s understanding of God’s plan for the nations for his prophecy is filled with woes and promises for them. In view of this, Seitz sees the context of this chapters (chaps. 13-27) with retroactive approach as he suggests that “the largest sustained section of the book of Isaiah is concerned with establishing the God of Israel as God of all nations”, implying that God’s love will not be directed to Israel alone but to the nations alike, and consequently they will stand under a similar rule of universal justice.¹⁹⁵ In view of this elucidation, this passage is the confirmation of God’s universal love as the ‘fearsome ruthless’ *fear God* (v. 3) and it also portrays the world praising God in Mount Zion as he has wiped away the tears and the disgrace of his people (v. 8. *c.f.* 2:1-5).

The ‘ruthless’ reappear in 29:20 where it is assured that, alongside mockers, they will disappear; nevertheless, some of them will be among the ones who ‘fear God’ here in verse three; this is certainly most unexpected.

¹⁹⁵ Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 39.

2. 5. 3 Nuances of the fear of God

As it was the case in 2:19, 21 and 8:12-13 עָרֶךְ is again used denoting fear, this time as the adjective עָרֶכֶּה, (meaning ‘of the terrible’) in order to describe ‘the ruthless’ as they now fear God (revere God in NIV): עָרֶכֶּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם.

Calvin correctly argues that this praise does not consist just of words or outward gestures but in the sincere feeling of the heart, hence, the ‘fear of God’ implies “the entire worship of God”.¹⁹⁶ With this in mind, it could be suggested that fear is a synecdoche for all of worship.

Similarly, Young interprets it as to “approaching God in reverential awe”.¹⁹⁷ In a completely different note, Motyer suggests that this ‘reverence’ does not necessarily insinuate that they have faith in God, he rather suggests the following: “*As a result of the mightiness of his power, evidenced in the overthrow of their system, they ‘respect’ and ‘fear’ this mighty God.*”¹⁹⁸ I disagree with his point since it is closer to ‘resignation’ than to respect, reverence or to the fear of God. I would argue that one thing is to ‘fear God’ out of love and respect, (even upon knowing that the outcome could be

¹⁹⁶ J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 193.

¹⁹⁷ Edward J. Young. *The Book of Isaiah; Volume II: Chapters 19-39. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*; (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1969), 188.

¹⁹⁸ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 208.

devastating as in Isaiah 8:12-13), and another thing is to be obedient but only out of fear of terrible consequences, particularly the destructive ones (as in Isaiah chapter 2). This is not to deny that this ‘ruthless’ (or any other person for that matter) could have undergone a rather painful and terrifying transformation in their lives through the hand of God.

2. 6 Exploration of Isaiah 29:13 and 29:23

2. 6. 1 The argument of the context

The ‘fear of God’ in this chapter is employed within a context of Israel’s false fear of God which has been wrongly taught by humans but the chapter also marks a discontinuity as Jacob/Ariel will truly ‘fear God’ in the future.

Noteworthy, it is difficult to separate these oracles from all that precedes.

Consequently, it is rightly suggested that this chapter belongs to the major unit of oracles in chapters 28 through 33 and because of this implication it can be stated that this chapter could be applied to the people in Zion in a period before the fall of Ephraim (28:1-4) and the period of Hezekiah.¹⁹⁹ These oracles are rather complex theologically, perhaps contradictory, but a closer reading reveal that they range from woes to blessings and it should be noted that they are of high theological complexity, mainly that “God both kills and

¹⁹⁹ Brevard Childs. *Isaiah*, 199.

brings to life”.²⁰⁰ This reality can be deduced from the first four verses as the Lord himself will besiege the land, encamp and encircle the city with towers. This situation resembles chapter eight where the Lord unleashes his power and determination through human agency. As it is customary in Isaiah and other prophets there is light at the end of the tunnel, nevertheless, we are reminded that calamity will come before blessings.²⁰¹ And this calamity is a consequence of the Lord’s weariness of Judah’s false devotion and deceiving and corrupted ways as described in verses 13-16 and 20-21. As a matter of fact, the Lord confronts their feigned fear of God as it will be further analysed.

2. 6. 2 The nuances in the false fear of God of Isaiah 29:13

This verse is of particular relevance to our study for all that it represents. It is suggested that the “heart” stands for the capacity to think and make decisions but also as the organ of true worship.²⁰² In this verse, the ‘fear of God’ is a form of religious ‘worship’ (NIV) based on a set of human-made rules that have no life or saving power in themselves. This ‘fear’ has to be understood

²⁰⁰ Brevard Childs. *Isaiah*, 218 and Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, 375) agree in the sovereignty of God in punishing and destroying the ungodly.

²⁰¹ J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 161.

²⁰² Both Young (*Isaiah 19-39*, 319) and Goldingay (*Isaiah*, 161) give the heart a prominent role in ‘fearing God’.

only as an outward counterfeited attitude on the part of the original depositaries of the fear of God who had no regard for true worship from the heart. Therefore, the Almighty is accusing this particular people of false honour and false fear of him.²⁰³ This type of ‘feigned’ fear of God was devoid of all humble devotion for God.²⁰⁴ Schreiner correctly points out that this verse summarises these people’s hypocrisy as they go through “the motions of religion and ritual” while at the same time practicing injustice and unrighteousness (*cf.* 1:11-17, 21-23).²⁰⁵

It is only a supposition that the following disparity has affected the wide range of interpretations for *יִרְאָה* (from *יָרָא*): The NIV and NLT have ‘worship’, NAS and NJB have ‘reverence’ while KJV and RSV place ‘fear’. Not only has this verb been evenly translated in a fear, dread and terror range before in almost all translations (as in chapters 2 and 8) but the following verse reads: “therefore I will (once more) astound these people with wonder upon wonder” (v. 14). It seems logical to suggest “the wonder” *par excellence* is the Exodus and what Isaiah seems to be implying here is that they will see the holiest, grandest, and consequently, the ‘worst’ of God once again. At Sinai, fear was their natural reaction while Moses exhorted them not to fear (Ex. 20:20);

²⁰³ M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 377.

²⁰⁴ E. Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 319-20.

²⁰⁵ T. R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 328.

therefore, it is a suggestion that to substitute fear for worship in this passage derives in a different interpretation and understanding of the final two verses (particularly, verse 23).

The consequences of their corrupted devotion are indeed strange: a hardening in the understanding of the truth and the right ways (29:11-12) and as a result, wisdom and unity will not be found since the leaders of Israel are devoid of any guidance.²⁰⁶ Significantly, these verses show that in Isaiah's century the fear of God and wisdom had been "joined together long enough for hypocritical corruption to take place".²⁰⁷ In direct opposition with 25:3 where the foreign ruthless fear God, this chapter speaks of Ariel's (Judah's) negative and false fear of God. What gives this passage a more dramatic reading is the fact that it is God Himself who climactically states it.

It is my opinion that verse 14 gives a clue into the possible change of attitude of Israel: the Lord will "astound these people with wonder upon wonder". I doubt that the future promise of the fear of God would come pleasantly for them. A clue into this proposition may fall on the fact that these people will

²⁰⁶ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on The Prophecies of Isaiah*. (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 22.

²⁰⁷ H. Blocher, "The Fear of the Lord as the Principle of Wisdom," 20. The scholar provides a thoughtful survey of these proposals. The close relationship between wisdom and the 'fear of God' will be discussed in the commentary of 33:6 and in more detail in chapter 3.

acknowledge the ‘holiness of the Holy One of Jacob’ and much like Isaiah was terrified, the same could be true of Israel.

2. 6. 3 The nuances of the fear of God in the “promise” (29:23)

In stark contrast with verse 13, verse 23 describes a truthful and praiseworthy ‘fear of God’. In regard to the former Isaiah writes: **וְלִבּוֹ רִחַק מִמֶּנִּי וְתִהְיֶה**

וְרָאִיתֶם אֹתִי מִצָּנוֹת אֲנָשִׁים מִלְּמַדָּה

While on the latter he places: **וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲרִיצוּ** thus using **עָרַץ** for the promise while for the false fear uses the lexeme **יָרָא**. However, **עָרַץ** was also present in chapters 2 and 8 in the fear and dread range. In this particular case the NAS, NLT, RSV and NIV all have ‘stand in awe’. In stark contrast, the LXX reads **καὶ τὸν θεὸν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ φοβηθήσονται**, the same as KJV which should be preferable considering the usage of the verb in every other part of Isaiah, particularly after using **יָרָא** in regard to the false fear of Yahweh.

Notwithstanding, in light of the current translations and interpretations, we shall conclude that ‘to stand in awe’ is probably the preferred nuance in this passage.

As in several passages in Isaiah, the Spirit has a prominent role in this chapter and it is suggestive to attribute all shift to the Spirit working in each individual

since there is an unusual connection between verses 24 and 10 in the fact that the former has the רוּחַ בִּינָה (“spirit of understanding”) in contrast to רוּחַ תַּרְדֵּמָה (“spirit of deep sleep”) of the latter which portrayed the people’s blindness and deafness. Miraculously, people are now able to understand and hear the words of the scroll.²⁰⁸ In other words, there is a discontinuity in the people’s “spirit of deep sleep” (ruah tardema) in v. 10 with the “spirit of understanding” (ruah bina) in v. 24 and through God’s agency these people will understand and hear the words of the scroll, unlike their prior blindness and deafness (as in verses 9 through 12).²⁰⁹ There is certainly a close relationship between the Spirit and the fear of God (*cf.* 11:2-3). This fact also speaks volumes on the fact that the fear of God can be taught (even falsely by men 29:13) and the Spirit of God functions as the catalysts. Additionally, it is worth noticing that Chapter 29 ends in a quite similar manner as chapter 28. In 28:29 we have “the Lord Almighty wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom” and 29:24 also closes with “understanding” and “instruction”. This particularity has led certain scholars to praise Isaiah for connecting the sanctification of the “name of God” with the learning of understanding and perception.²¹⁰ As already suggested, it is

²⁰⁸ M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 375.

²⁰⁹ M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 375.

²¹⁰ E. Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 333.

preferable to suggest that there is a close connection between Isaiah and the Sages.²¹¹

To conclude this section, it is remarkable that God is faithful and will remember his covenant with them, consequently, it is important to notice that Isaac's son is mentioned three times in two verses recalling the covenant with Abraham and the Patriarchs.²¹² As in all the previous chapters analysed thus far, God will exterminate all evil (v. 20); though showing mercy once more (29:22-24).

2. 7 Exploration of Isaiah 33:6

2. 7. 1 The argument of the context

The 'fear of God' is employed in this chapter within a context of thanksgiving and praise which is not uncommon with the reading of Isaiah. Different opinions surround the setting of this passage, particularly the dating, Oswalt describes the widest kind of disagreement, extending from exilic (Barth, Clements) to Persian (Wilderberger) to Maccabean (Duhm, Kaiser, Scott)²¹³

²¹¹ J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 163. This connection will be analysed in 33:6.

²¹² Noteworthy, when confronted by Laban on his running away, Jacob sentenced that were it not for the Lord, "the fear of his father Isaac" (Gen 31:5, 42) things would have gone terribly for him and his household.

²¹³ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 590.

but I will opt for the time Hezekiah paid tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-16) who did not draw back from his intentions and his army is struck by the angel of the Lord.²¹⁴ Hence, the destroyer and traitor is finally defeated (Isa 33:1). This decision is made solely on the fact that the passage's position is closer to that timeline.

In a different note, it is tempting to suggest with Goldingay that this chapter comprises a "reworking of phrases" from preceding chapters²¹⁵; nonetheless, it lacks certain peculiarities even from chapter one, for example: God's confrontation to the Israelites (1:10-17). Israel's comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah (1:9-10) and even as a harlot (1:21) are missing. Giving credit to the scholar's suggestion, chapter 33 contains (and it could 'make up' for all that is missing) the reference of the sinners in Zion being terrified and crying out in distress about the impossibility to dwell with the Lord. (v. 14) Nevertheless, this chapter is also exempt of God's confrontation regarding their meaningless offerings, detestable sacrifices and evil assemblies (1:13) which the Lord cannot bear for he detests their festivities (1:14) and therefore, he will not listen their prayers (1:15). Noticeably, this depiction clearly represents a nation devoid of the fear of God. As a consequence, Isaiah describes the terror they will experience before God's presence in 33:14.

²¹⁴ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 139-140; Similarly, J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 590.

²¹⁵ J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 186.

2. 7. 2 Fear analysed in Isaiah 33

This chapter is significant for this research as it contains four different Hebrew words for fear. As in chapter 11, the ‘fear of God’ יִרְאַת יְהוָה is accompanied by wisdom and knowledge in verse 6 where the key to God’s treasure is the Sages’ motto.²¹⁶ The other three words are found in verses 14 and 18 with the first two appearing in the context of God’s judgment in Zion (v. 14): the “godless” who are terrified פָּקָדוֹן and trembling רָעָדָה. Lastly, when the people get to see the King in his beauty, they will remember their former terrors אִימָה and realise these are never to be found again (v. 18). As it is the case throughout the book, this chapter is a good example and reminder that Isaiah had chosen all ‘fear’ words carefully.

In regard to verse six, the fear of God is related to the Sages since Isaiah’s preaching illustrates the motto of Proverbs as he binds wisdom and knowledge to the fear of the Lord (33:6) and even for the coming of the son of Jesse, whose הֵרִיחוֹ "delight" will be in the ‘fear of God’ (11:2).²¹⁷ The Hebrew reads יִרְאַת יְהוָה הִיא אוֹצָר and Hayes and Irvine recognise that this verse is difficult

²¹⁶ The relationship between the fear of God and the Sages will be further revised in chapter three.

²¹⁷ H. Blocher, “The Fear of the Lord as the Principle of Wisdom,” 22.

to translate because “the passage contains a reference to Yahweh in the third person in the context of second person address to the Deity –“the fear of Yahweh, that has been his treasure [or store]”. These scholars state that this apparent incongruence may be explained as “*simply a slip in addressee (as often occurs in prayers!), or the expression “fear of Yahweh” may have been so common that one used it in direct address to Yahweh than “fear of you.*”²¹⁸

This is conclusive for the idea that the ‘fear of God’ was widely known and used in everyday language among the godly. We must add that similarly to Isaiah 11:2-5, verses 5 and 6 list the gifts which the Lord will bestow on his people: *justice, righteousness, a sure foundation, salvation, wisdom and knowledge.*

The final line identifies *the ‘fear of the Lord’* as the supremely precious gift: *the key to this treasure*, which crowns and sums up all other gifts. It is crucial to clarify that even though the ‘fear of God’ is the key to all these blessings, mere humans cannot obtain it, for it is also a gift from God.²¹⁹

This is probably the most important question of all: how to obtain the fear of God? The nuances of the fear of God are essentially the same and only vary according to the context: in certain situations it would be terror, fear or dread. In other cases the nuances could be similar to reverence, to stand in awe, probably even worship and respect. However, one thing remains constant: it is

²¹⁸ J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine. *Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 366-7.

²¹⁹ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 140.

of utmost importance to acknowledge the fear of God's divine origin and divine influence in the experience, attitude, emotions and consequences of the fear of God.

2. 7. 3 The nuances of the fear of God

This chapter contains both aspects of the 'fear of God' proposed in this study: a positive 'fear of God', as experienced by the godly alone, which is a treasure and key to riches (v. 6) and a negative one as exemplified by the sinners in Zion (v. 14). 'Terror' and 'trembling grips' take hold of all whose hearts are far from the Lord, they have rejected the one who has recently destroyed the enemy and is now in Jerusalem as a "devouring fire".²²⁰ Unfortunately, 'pagans' is precisely what they had become.

On the other hand, the godly will not face God's punishment since they already fear the Lord in a holy manner and will defiantly see the 'King in his glory' (v. 17). Their former questions are now answered with a focus on righteousness, a paramount quality and attitude of a godly man or woman of God, as already highlighted in 11:2-3.²²¹ Finally, the godly will realise that there is no need to fear anymore (v. 18), their former fear was incompatible with trust as it has now metamorphosed into the 'fear of God'.

²²⁰ W. Kaiser Jr. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. 346-7.

²²¹ W. Kaiser Jr. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 347.

2. 8. Exploration of Isaiah 50:10

Several themes reappear in the second part of the book. It is important to state that these do not vary the nuances of the fear of God. On the contrary, it is suggested that our subject manner is a recurrent subject in Isaiah and a strength to the unity of the Book.

2. 8. 1 The argument of the context

In order to continue with the exploration of the passages belonging to the second part of Isaiah it is pertinent to place two antagonist views. For Childs Chapter 39 marked the historical change in the agent of God's destruction from Assyria to Babylon. In view of this, he suggests that Second Isaiah (40-55) was directed "to a destroyed and exiled people".²²² On the other hand, Motyer suggests that chapter 39 is based on Isaiah's time (702 BC).²²³

²²² B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 302.

²²³ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 296. The scholar refers that Kayser dates the whole narrative post-586, treating it as an imaginative fiction. He argues that we should not insert what we "know of what hindsight is".

Perhaps it is better to see, after Harman, that the exile and beyond is the focus of chapters 40-66, yet the exile and redemption from it, is also prominent in the earlier parts of the prophecy (chaps. 1-12).²²⁴

2. 8. 2 The God-fearing Servant

The first verse directs the reader through judgement and sin, while verse two distinguishes God from all humans for he is powerful to rescue them. In other words, Isaiah discusses why the relationship broke down while in the following verse God complains of Israel's inattention to his great power on their behalf. Motyer is correct to point out that Israel knew about being "sold" to foreigners (*c. f.* Jdg 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7); and because of that, they should have realised that "God never left them at their own luck but raised up saviours (Jdg 3:9, 15)".²²⁵

Our attention must shift to verse four to someone who has been given by the Lord Almighty an "instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary...". This is why Webb concludes correctly that the Servant is a skilled counsellor because he himself has been taught by the Lord and exemplarily he

²²⁴ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 25-6. It could even be suggested that Isaiah looks even beyond to the Medo-Persian empire (13:17; 21:9)

²²⁵ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 397.

is a disciple before he is anything else, and as such, *his outstanding characteristic is attentiveness to God*.²²⁶

Noticeably, the similarities of the God-fearing Servant with the Branch of Isaiah 11 are unmistakable. The Branch also sustains the weary (v. 4) as he will righteously judge the needy and with justice decide for the poor (*cf.* 11:2-3). In this regard, the call to fear God in verse ten is echoed in 66:2-5 where the poor and contrite in spirit tremble before God's word (e.g. instructed by the Lord). He is instructed with God's Word and he has experienced pain and suffering as vividly described in verses six through eight:

“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”

Motyer highlights that the Servant is more than the personification of Israel or the Remnant...This is someone who has actually experience the blows”.²²⁷ The Servant is confident that the Sovereign Lord will help him and as a consequence he will not be disgraced nor put to shame. The fear of God in Isaiah stirs in the godly the will to live in obedience, trust and to face enemies with no fear. This is the Servant's proof of the fear of God in him, he is fearlessly ready to battle against his accusers (v. 8-9).

²²⁶ Webb, *Isaiah*, 198.

²²⁷ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 400.

The fear of God allows him to go through such pain and suffering, and to stand proud and feel vindicated before his enemies. To sum up, the fear of God is exemplified in the Servant for he alone is worthy to question others on their fear of God.

In this regard, Childs sees a dare in verse 11:

“The challenge is extended to anyone who rightly fears the Lord, and thus identifies with the message of the servant, to trust in God even though it still involves walking on a path of darkness, just like the servant.”²²⁸

2. 8. 3 Obedience and the God-fearing Servant

Throughout the Servant Songs (this one being the third and also an autobiographical one), we see the Servant in obedience to God.²²⁹

It results of utmost importance to acknowledge the relationship between God and the Servant, in regard to obedience, his attitude towards learning from God and his responsiveness to action.

²²⁸ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 396.

²²⁹ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 398.

Verse eleven validates the centrality of the fear of God in Isaiah since it is the Messiah himself who accentuates this fact by directing the attention on those who fear God יִרְאָה יְהוָה:

Interestingly, this chapter explains that God's judgement is caused by the sins and transgressions of its people, and not *any cooling of affection on God's part* since the children are as guilty as the mother.²³⁰ In stark contrast to Israel who failed to be obedient, the Servant has not been rebellious (v. 5-7) and translates all the instruction into obedient action. This obedience leads him into painful and drastic punishment by the hands of sinners. In other words, the Servant "is obedient no matter the cost" and consequently, he is not simply to be admired or wondered at: he is to be obeyed (v. 10).²³¹

Additional clarifications are relevant in regard to the fear of God as it is clear from verse eleven that to obey the Servant is a direct consequence of fearing him. Oswalt takes one step further and argues that "to obey the Servant is to fear God".²³² Notwithstanding, in the Old Testament, particularly in Deuteronomy, the fear of God and obedience to God's commandments go hand in hand. Similarly, in Isaiah the fear of God results in obedience to the

²³⁰ Webb, *Isaiah*, 197 (emphasis added)

²³¹ Webb, *Isaiah*, 199-200.

²³² J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 329.

word of the Servant and demands to act in trust and reliance of God. In view of this, Young states the following:

Fearing the Lord and hearing in obedience the voice of His servant go hand in hand.²³³

In the grander theological scope, the fear of God should be considered a major doctrine while obedience would be a consequence of acting upon it. Motyer correctly acknowledges that “the absolute power of *the Mighty One* (49:26) means nothing to Zion; it means everything to the Servant (5, 7, 9)”.²³⁴

From the description of the Servant in 50: 4-11 we learn that ‘fear’ and ‘obedience’ to the Servant are concomitant realities, and the verse could be read as suggesting that the fear of God is synonym of a right relationship with God. The final part of the verse adds to the understanding as the Messiah calls on people to manifest and prove their trust.

The fear of the Lord *is not one in abject terror*, but one which reverently and in awe fears before the Lord, such *godly fear* manifests itself in obedience to God’s commands.²³⁵ The one who fears God and obeys the word of his servant will never dare to bring charges against the Servant, neither confront nor

²³³ E. Young. *The Book of Isaiah. Volume III Chapters 40-66. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 304.

²³⁴ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 399.

²³⁵ E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 304.

condemn him. Hence, the fear of God upon the obedient godly will not be terror but neither will it be ‘to reverently stand in awe’ either.

2. 9 Exploration of Isaiah 57:11

2. 9. 1 The argument of the context

Since the following chapter is set within Trito-Isaiah theories (Whybray and similar Hanson), this much would be said: contrary to the argument of internal divisions due to the return from exile to a cramped circumstance in Jerusalem as they face foreigners living there and the mixed population in Samaria, we will argue that the sins have not changed, and on the contrary; this is similar to the situation of 8:11-20.²³⁶ Thus, Motyer argues correctly that it is strange that the sins specified are those well-known in Isaiah’s Jerusalem, certainly idolatry and the Canaanite cults are pre-exilic.²³⁷

Over what period can it be truly said that the Lord was inactive while his people pursued other gods and flirted with foreigners and political alliances? It is my opinion that the exile could be excluded because it was in itself, a divine action against those very sins. It seems rather contradictory to go back to idolatry after spending decades in a foreign and idolatrous culture. But nothing is impossible with Israel.

²³⁶ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 460.

²³⁷ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 462.

With this in mind, the chapter carries on with God's confrontation which started in 56:9-12 as the prophet does not hold back any adjectives and calls them 'offspring of adulterers and prostitutes' (v. 3). In verse eleven God confronts them by stating: "You have not been true to me". This passage holds a parallel with chapter 50 in the fact that these people have been untrue, do not remember God and do not take to heart their terrible reality. The results are catastrophic for their society: Good people are attacked and no one cares (57:1-2). Superstition and false religion have flourished; in other words, their religion is centred in idolatry (3-10). Noteworthy, as in chapter two, idolatry is at the centre of their lives and it is the main influence of their spiritual debacle. To conclude this section, judgement reappears, and so brief notes will be made: God is left with no option but to judge (12-13a) and intervene with wrath and anger because Israel was faithless and did not fear him (because God was silent).²³⁸ God calls the ungodly to account by questioning their motivation to be untrue to him and describing this rebellious attitude in a threefold manner: "They lied, they did not remember me, and they did not take it to heart."²³⁹ Oswalt intends to answer the reasoning behind this negligence by assuming that "if God meted out instant justice on sinners more attention

²³⁸ E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 407.

²³⁹ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 481.

would be paid”; nonetheless, he clarifies that if God were to do such cleansing the world would be quickly “depopulated”.²⁴⁰

2. 9. 2 Idolatry and the fear of God

It is clear that not having the fear of God will lead to fear and dread others instead of God. When the fear of God is lost, then other unhealthy fears take over (57:11) and God is left with no option but to judge them (12-13a).²⁴¹ While it is true that God will judge the ungodly, complications arise when one accepts the possibility for the fear of God to be lost. It is true that one could argue that before God chose to be silent they probably feared God (57:11c); nonetheless, it will be suggested that there was never a fear of God in them. It is my opinion that Isaiah does not argue for a concept so subjective as to losing one’s fear of God, particularly after having explored the prophet’s own fear of God (6:5 and 8:13), the Branch’s empowerment and the clear revelation that the motto is God’s gift and it is not earned freely (11:2-3; 33:6; 63:17). Furthermore, we are clearly told that those who are terrified before God are the idolatrous sinners (2:10, 19 and 21) and that the land is filled with those who teach and those who are taught a feigned fear of God (29:13). Finally, we are told that it is God who brings both judgement and salvation (also through his Anointed in 50:10) upon the land and the world and as a

²⁴⁰ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 482.

²⁴¹ B. Webb, *Isaiah*, 223.

result, even ruthless foreigners will fear him (25:3; 59:19). In addition to all this: a future promise to fear God stands in 29:23 but in the meantime God looks in favour to those who tremble before his word (66:2, 5).

However, it is true that there could have been godly men and women who feared God but have been ungrateful or not careful with their fear of God but certainly not to the degree of forgetting God altogether. The ungodly do not care about God and do not fear him. Ergo, this chapter is centred on the ungodly's behaviour. Idolatry is at the core of all evils and must be categorised as a subject often revisited by the prophet as we have already highlighted.

2. 9. 3 The nuances of the fear of God

After a very strong confrontation on their idolatry (vv. 1-10, *cf.* 12-13), the Lord questions the reasons behind fearing others and not fearing him. As already highlighted in chapter eight, not having the fear of God will lead to fear and dread idols and other people.

The Hebrew words are the following: “whom have they been so afraid **דָּאָגָה** from the Verb **דָּאָג** and **וַתִּירָאֵי** feared?” This is why the Lord confronts them on not ‘fearing him’ **לֹא תִירָאֵי**.

God's questioning is not intended for the godly but to the ‘brood of rebels’ of verse four who certainly do not fear, respect, revere nor stand in awe of God. This false actions imply that the people had not remembered God; He was not

in their thoughts.²⁴² The interrogation carries implications of worshipful commitment and a healthy godly fear.

Nevertheless, the following two verses indicate that they will be terrified before God for their idols will not be able to do a thing for them. A striking similarity between chapter two and this one is evident, the subjects of idolatry and judgement permeate both chapters (*cf.* 2:10, 19, 21). This reality prompts the Lord to highlight their lack of fear of him, which results in unrighteousness and unwise living. When God's judgement comes, the ungodly will realise the futility of their idolatry (*cf.* 2:20). On the other hand, the one who fears God remembers God and takes him at face value (v. 11). Such person understands that there is refuge in the Lord (and not in idols) and will certainly inherit the land and possess God's holy mountain (v. 13; *cf.* 2:1-4).

2. 10 Exploration of Isaiah 59:19

2. 10. 1 The argument of the context

The essence is similar to that of chapter 57 where we are told that the just and the good die (57:1-2), the moral and spiritual condition of Israel is at its lowest as truth is detained and the one who departed from evil was thrown in prison (59:14-15). In this regard, Webb realises that the godly are the same mourners

²⁴² E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 407.

from 57:19, whose cries are centred on the absence of justice as it was even dangerous to protest (14-15).²⁴³

Marking a discontinuity, Israel should have fear God's name and his glory, but now foreign nations do so as they recognise God's greatness and power (*cf.* 25:3). The Lord sees the ungodly's indifference, and acting as a warrior, he dons 'righteousness', 'salvation', 'vengeance' and 'zeal' (v. 17). Interestingly, Webb suggests that the first two are related to the deliverance of his people while the last two, to the punishment of their enemies.²⁴⁴

2. 10. 2 To fear God's name

We agree with Oswalt who suggests that to fear God's name is to fear him as he has been revealed in his acts on the earth (*cf.* Dt 28:58; Neh 1:11; Ps. 86:11).²⁴⁵ Similarly, for Young to fear his wondrous name is to 'fear himself'.²⁴⁶ But the similarities end there as they assume this fear rather differently. For Oswalt this fear is one of terror of retribution (*cf.* 30:27-28) and the wrath of God against sin is what sets the tone; on the other hand, Young interprets this fear as *godly, reverent, childlike fear* before God for all

²⁴³ Webb, *Isaiah*, 228.

²⁴⁴ Webb, *Isaiah*, 229.

²⁴⁵ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 529.

²⁴⁶ E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 439.

that he achieves.²⁴⁷ In other words, for the latter the fear is closer to the terror experienced by the ungodly of 2:10, 19, 21 and 33:14 but with the positive additive that they will finally fear God's name and glory. On the other hand, Young accepts this transformation but his fear is closer to reverence than to actual fear. Isaiah describes the Lord contemplating the people's injustice and will no longer tolerate it, what follows is an apocalyptic description of God's mighty acts as he repays wrath and retribution to his foes (v. 18). Webb is closer to Oswalt as he suggests that God's intervention is so drastic and so overwhelming that any thought that he is indifferent or powerless is utterly driven from human minds.²⁴⁸ And it is because of that particular intervention that they will fear God. As it has been proposed in this thesis, Oswalt concludes that 'fear' has both positive and negative connotations.²⁴⁹

In view of this we will note that there is a text-critical issue in the fearing of God's name involving only one vowel point in MT. The NIV favours the Lord acting like a pent-up flood, Motyer accepts that no translation is free of difficulty but prefers to translate in this manner: "When an adversary comes screaming in, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord lifts a banner against

²⁴⁷ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 530; E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 439.

²⁴⁸ Webb, *Isaiah*, 229.

²⁴⁹ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 530.

him”.²⁵⁰ His point is that against all opposition “the Spirit turns to the attack, reducing the whole world to reverence and bringing redemption to Zion”.²⁵¹

2. 10. 3 The nuances of the fear of God

The fear of God is present in this passage in a ‘promise’ format (*cf.* 25:3;

29:23): וַיִּירָאוּ מִמַּעַרְבֵי אֶת־יְהוָה יְהוָה:

Noteworthy, the NIV adds the word ‘revere’ in order to translate ‘revere his glory’, though there is no Hebrew word for it and the train of thought comes from “shall fear” in the first line of the verse. The point is that people will fear the name of the Lord and his glory as well. In regard to translating ‘fear’ as ‘reverence’ it should be considered that this is done so in various occasions when the fear is directed towards God. It is suggestive why NIV adds the word *revere*, I believe this justifies the coining of ‘reverence’ and ‘to stand in awe’ as examples of *antonomasia* for “fear of God”.

The main point is that, in similar fashion as the ‘ruthless foreigners’, these people will fear God as well. Therefore, earth’s remotest nations will fear the Lord since no enemy can conquer His people.

²⁵⁰ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 492.

²⁵¹ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 492.

2. 11 Exploration of Isaiah 63:17

2. 11. 1 The argument of the context

The Anointed Conqueror emerges throughout chapters 59 and 63 as he dons garments for the task of salvation (59:15-20) and righteousness (61:10) in order bring the latter to the nations (61:11) and Zion (62:1) concluding his work of vengeance and redemption here (63:1-6).²⁵²

With opposing views, Childs sees the judgement upon Edom, which was foretold starting in 34:6, as a completed action. On the other hand, Motyer sees the NT counterpart of this in the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:15ff.) and the treading of the winepress the wrath of God (Rv. 14:17-20; 9:15).²⁵³

The similarities with 59:16-20 are evident, the Lord donned the garments of salvation and vengeance achieving all by himself (59:16b; 63:5ab).²⁵⁴

One more striking similarity is that the Anointed speaks the Lord's same words of 59:16: *My own arm worked salvation for me* is identical.²⁵⁵

²⁵² J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 489.

²⁵³ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 517. J. A. Motyer, (*Isaiah*, 208) adds to his position that “now it folds to the final Song to unfold the last act of the drama, the day of vengeance and of the victory of the Anointed Conqueror (63:1-6)”.

²⁵⁴ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 509-10.

²⁵⁵ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 511.

This passage portrays a warrior coming to execute judgement upon sinners on a day of vengeance and a year of redemption (v. 4) Interestingly, several possibilities have been recorded for decades in regard to the interpretation, structure and function of this part of Isaiah. Childs acknowledges several of these alternatives: a sentry's cry (particularly after the watchmen in chapter 62) though the scholar also suggests that there are close similarities with Yahweh's coming in 59:8-20. Even though Childs recommends a Third Isaiah reading of the text, he cautions his readers into "assuming a single, unilinear trajectory of redactional growth."²⁵⁶ Since the fear of God was present in 59:19, similarities could be accepted between both chapters but not necessarily a post-exilic interpretation of Edom as archenemy.²⁵⁷

In regard to the executor, Webb calmly suggests that the prophet's questions of identity are "natural ones" and are answered immediately: the avenger is God himself.²⁵⁸ Oswalt places an interpretative question: Is Isaiah's Messiah the suffering servant or the divine warrior? He answers that he is both, but the blood is his own.²⁵⁹

The following verses describe God's love for Israel (vv. 7-9) and the people's

²⁵⁶ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 516.

²⁵⁷ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 516.

²⁵⁸ B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 240. Also, B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 517.

²⁵⁹ Oswalt, *CJV*, 67.

rebellion against the Lord, which results in God becoming their enemy (v. 10). Since he is a god-fearing man, Isaiah identifies himself (again) with those for whom he intercedes (*cf.* 6:5) and confesses the Lord as their Redeemer (v. 16). The prophet follows it all up with a desperate call: why has God hardened our hearts so that we do not fear him? Isaiah knows the reason. In view of this, Webb sees in this hardening an allusion to the judicial hardening of 6:10, *which was to remain in force until the exile, when God's judgment had finally fallen on Jerusalem.*²⁶⁰

This eschatological event is the final coming of God's kingdom in vengeance for all evil exercised upon his creation and against himself as there is certainly a proper place and time for vengeance in the Bible.²⁶¹

The day of the Lord is called here the day of vengeance, but this incomparable event also emanates blessings in favoured of his people for the key to verse four is in the vengeance of his 'redeemed' or 'his people' אֲנִי־אֶחָדָם and not on the redemption *per se* alone.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Webb, *Isaiah*, 243. Additionally, Oswalt (*The Book of Isaiah*, 614) sees in this prayer the cry of a man who has seen the fulfilment of the words spoken to him at the beginning of his ministry (6:9-10).

²⁶¹ Webb, *Isaiah*, 239

²⁶² Webb clarifies that this אֲנִי־אֶחָדָם are the same as in 62:11 (*cf.* 35:9; 51:10) and also explains that the NIV misses the point with its more general translation

2. 11. 2 The fear of God in Isaiah's prayer

As in 29:13, the heart proofs to be central for Isaiah and after the uncomfortable question is raised, one is left to wonder on the timing, context, reason and manner of the fear of God. Is God the one hardening their hearts so they will not fear him? Or, is it the people's responsibility?

Where there is no fear of God the results are always to err in all of God's ways. According to Oswalt, the people make three basic points:

They cannot break out of their pattern of sinning because God's help is not experienced or sensed; the temple is in ruins and this leads to a depressing thought that they do not longer have a relationship with God.²⁶³

On the other hand, Watts assumes that this response recognises no guilt for sin; in other words, Yahweh is responsible for their errant ways and not them; consequently the academic concludes that *all kinds of wrong views are being*

"the year of my redemption". This wondrous work of God was in his plans for a long time precisely because of his deep commitment to his 'redeemed'.

Webb, *Isaiah*, 240.

²⁶³ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 613.

expressed in this passage.²⁶⁴ Though this hardening could have been misinterpreted primarily by the ungodly and probably questioned by the godly, this leaves no room for excuses and vindications for this does not absolve all of their responsibility, *for the people's lack of blessing is due to their own sinfulness*.²⁶⁵ The question is not an attempt to lay the blame on the Lord, “since heart-hardening is humanly irretrievable, only a ‘turning’ on the part of God can help (Ps 80:14{15}; 90:13)”.²⁶⁶

In this regard, is God ‘forcing’ or ‘allowing’ the fear of God upon people? It could be stated that, as in Isaiah 11:2-3, the Spirit is the one who does an ‘anointing’ work on his servants. As a result, we must conclude that the fear of God is the Lord’s gift to his people. Throughout this prophecy, it is evident that Isaiah understands it this way.

2. 12 Exploration of Isaiah 66:1-5

2. 12. 1 The argument of the context

The issue of Isaiah’s view of the Temple is complex. On the most extreme

²⁶⁴ Watts, John D. *Isaiah 34-66. 25 Word Biblical Commentary*. (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 334.

²⁶⁵ E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 488-89.

²⁶⁶ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 517.

from is Duhm who argues that this is the Samaritan temple in Mt. Gerizim of fourth century BC.²⁶⁷ Put simply, it is a matter of interpretation of the dating or First, Second or Trito Isaiah.

The Temple played a pivotal role in Israel's spiritual devotion and in this lines its relevance might appear to be wearied down by God or even by the prophet; however, Isaiah is not against the Temple, but against the misuse of it.²⁶⁸ This is due to the fact that people were both sacrificing animals before God but also committing idolatry; therefore, the Lord will tolerate that anymore (vv. 3-4). It is astonishing to meditate upon the religious condition of God's chosen people. God questions their worthless adoration, what is the purpose of a Temple if idolatry is ever present? This apparent rejection centres on the old priestly ways in contrast to the *installation of a more direct spirituality for the meek who tremble at his word*.²⁶⁹ Motyer captures the essence of this misbehaviour as he states that there is no point of a building and sacrifices if all is divorced from 'trembling at the Lord's word' since the word of God is the key to everything.²⁷⁰ The scholar's highlights the centrality of God's word in the temple. The following description centres on the fear of God as the prophet clearly separates those who trembles before God's word from those

²⁶⁷ Duhm in J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 532.

²⁶⁸ B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 246.

²⁶⁹ Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 351.

²⁷⁰ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 535.

who do not.

2. 12. 2 Trembling at God's word

Similar to 50:10, to fear of God implies to hear and act upon the word of the one who created all things. Nevertheless, this brings exclusion upon the godly who are to be brave as they are excluded by those who do not fear God's word (v. 5). The fear of God in these verses centres on the emotions and behaviour of the person, someone who is humble enough to recognise God's word as only authority (v. 2). This is repeated in verse five with the addition of persecution towards the godly, marking parallels with 51:7 where they are called not to fear men's attacks for the just and pious were perishing unnoticed (cf. 57:1). We should add that Childs sees an echo with chapter 6, "where the themes of temple and judgement are closely joined" for he suggests that God's voice comes from the heavenly temple and not the earthly one.²⁷¹ With a different reading, we suggest that those who tremble before God's word will see the people who hate them screaming as God's judgement falls upon them, even from within the Temple (vv. 5-6). As a result, God calls the godly to rejoice on his future works as he unleashes his judgement (v. 10). Consequently, Webb suggests that the judgement that begins with the house of God is a sign of the final, universal future judgement (v. 14-17).²⁷²

²⁷¹ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 540.

²⁷² B. Webb. *The Message of Isaiah*, 249.

2. 12. 3 The nuances of the fear of God

The following nuances are then regarded as interpretations of the fear of God in this passage:

Motyer interprets ‘tremble’ as a sensitive longing to obey.²⁷³ This is certainly an interpretation, but one that is probably attached to the close relationship between the fear of God and obedience in Torah, particularly Deuteronomy. Nonetheless, these two words should not be treated equally in Isaiah, as we have already seen, the fear of God in Isaiah is certainly more varied than any other book in the Old Testament.²⁷⁴

For Watts the response to God’s word is the measure of piety and not sacrifices at the Temple.²⁷⁵ Oswalt sees the “contrite in spirit” (cf. 57:15; 61:1) as the one who trembles at God’s word by obeying it with *reverential and fearful expectation* and not going their own ways.²⁷⁶ To sum up, the only adequate path for the godly to worship God is the desire to do nothing other

²⁷³ J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 534.

²⁷⁴ The word for ‘tremble’ here is **חָרַד** and it is analysed in chapter one under “Additional Hebrew Words”, section 1.4.

²⁷⁵ The scholar sees a close relationship with 2:3 where people go to the mountain of the Lord to hear his word. Watts, *Isaiah 40-66*, 356.

²⁷⁶ E. Young, *Isaiah 40-66*, 522.

than what it is described here: to tremble at his word. In regard to this truth

Oswalt states the following:

When this is present (the trembling before God's word) then the expression of such a spirit through the medium of ritual and symbolic worship is entirely pleasing to God.²⁷⁷

The turning point is the place of God in the human heart, otherwise all worship could be masqueraded in a cult-oriented worship instead of word-oriented.²⁷⁸ I shall include real trembling as well. This is evidenced in verse three as the religious sacrifices performed by the ungodly are idolatrous at its core and devoid of any fear of God. Hence, God will bring upon them what they “dread” (v. 4; cf. 8:12-13). The similarities with other passages analysed above are evident (cf. 2:10, 19, 21; 33:14): the sound of “uproar from the city”, “noise from the temple”. Why? “It is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve” (v. 6)

In regard to the meaning of the fear of God, no further requirements are demanded since all translations opt to translate verse two וַיִּתְּרֵם עַל־דְּבָרֵי and

²⁷⁷ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 667.

²⁷⁸ God's sanctuary is the human heart (cf. 57:15), and unless he dwells there, all other sanctuary building is an exercise in futility. But the results of those earnestly and reverently obeying God's word will be to find the great joy and comfort. J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 667-69.

verse five **הַחֲרִידִים אֶל־דְּבָרוֹ** as “tremble”.

To sum up, the nuances are closely related to fear and tremble in the strictest sense for they are proclaimed in a rather negative scenario. It is one of false worship of God but also one of hate and persecution against the godly who remain faithful to God’s word in spite of those attacks. This fidelity is only possible through the fear of God, a fear that leads to obey his Word at all costs. To obey God’s word under such hostility demands total commitment, even unto death. Hence, real fear of failing God and not ceding to the temptation to ‘fit in’ among the ungodly is mandatory. In other words, the fear of God is closely related to the word of God which stands as the paramount principle upon which the godly must stand.

What better way to finish this grand prophecy with the praise “to tremble before God’s word” for it is the key element of the person who fears God in Isaiah. The relationship with the fear of God and his word is unquestionable: it is commanded in 8:13 (cf. 6:8-13); related to the Sages in 33:6 and to God’s silence (57:11). It is also commended by God (66:2, 5) and also commended and commanded by the Servant (50:10). It is also falsely taught (29:13) but the promise stands: people will fear God, receive understanding and will accept instruction (29:23).

2. 13 The fear of God in Isaiah: summary of points

This study has recognised different circumstances in which the fear of God is presented in Isaiah:

1. The fear of God is present amidst judgement and experienced as terror upon the ungodly (2:10, 19, 21; 33:14).
2. It is completely different to fear others than to fear God (8:12-13; 57:11).
3. A noting contrast: the fear of God as related to worship, reverence and respect (29:23) as compared to a feigned fear of God (29:13). In other words, the fear of God taught by God (29:23) or a false one taught by sinful men (29:13).
4. Against all logic, the Gentiles fear God (25:3, 59:19).
5. The fear of God is closely related with security of salvation (8:13; 25:3; 29:23; 33:6)
6. The Messiah's fear of God as exemplary (11:2-3) and as the one who calls on others to fear God (50:10).
7. To fear God is related to being true to God and to remember him (57:11)
8. The practical relevance of the fear of God in the fashion of the Sages is revealed (11:2-3; 33:6).
9. The fear of God is described as a treasure (33:6) and as a delight (11:2-3)
10. The fear of God is directly related to obedience since it is commanded (8:12-13) and commended (50:11; 66:2, 5).

11. The fear of God as a thermometer of trust (8:12-13; 50:10; 57:11; 63:17).
12. Isaiah questions God on the why the fear of him is lacking amidst his people (63:17).
13. God is the author of fear as experienced differently by the ungodly before his presence and holiness in 2: 10, 19, 21 and 33:14 while experienced positively by the godly in 6:1-5; 29:23; 59:19; 66:2, 5).
14. God can hardened hearts in order to not fear him (63:11)

Finally, the fear of God in Isaiah is vastly used in a plethora of circumstances and with different purposes. Additionally, we shall also note that the fear of God is necessary to worship God (25:3; 29:13, 23); revere his glory (59:19), acknowledge his holiness (6:1-5; 29:23), be called into service (6:1-13), and for a righteous government and impartial administration of justice (11:2-3).

Broadly speaking, the book is centred upon the relationship of the Holy One with both his remnant and Israel's idolatrous people. Consequently, the subjects of divine judgement and salvation are at the heart of the prophet's message who makes this clear from the outset as the leaders of Sodom and Gomorrah function as synecdoche for the house of Jacob or Israel and as metonymy of leaders in Jerusalem and Judah (1:10, 23, 26). Social injustice, corruption in political spheres and hypocritical and cynical spiritual leadership were a constant in Isaiah's milieu. Having no fear of God (2:10, 19, 21; 29:13;

33:14; 57:11; 63:17; 66:5) will result in God's judgement. In other words, captivity, destruction and exile are the cup the ungodly have to drink as a consequence of such degeneration.

In view of all this, similar situations and contexts gave way for a recurrent relationship between the fear of God and several major theological themes of the Old Testament. This particular relationships will be addressed in the next chapter.

2. 14 Recurrent Subjects

This list is by no means exhaustive, nevertheless it will allow to see the recurrent situation of Isaiah and its internal unity in regard to the relationship of the fear of God and grand theological themes. Consequently we could conclude with Oswalt and Harman who suggest that it is the theology and the presence of major themes that give Isaiah its coherence.²⁷⁹

Idolatry is at the heart of all evils (2:6-22; 8:19; 57:3-13; 66:3, 17) and prompts God's judgement (2:6-22; 8:5-10; 33:14; 50:11-12, 22; 57:16-18; 63:1-6; 66:14-17). Nevertheless, salvation (2:1-5; 8:14; 33:2, 22; 50:6, 9; 63:1,5), forgiveness (33:24, 50:11-12, 22; 57:21; 63:4; 66:10-14) and peace (2:1-5; 11:2-9; 32: 15-17; 33:5-6, 22; 57:13, 17, 20; 59:1-8) are promised to Zion (33:20; 50:20; 57:17; 66:10-14). The theme of Kingship (2:1-5; 6:1-12;

²⁷⁹ Oswalt, *CJV*, 54; A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 24.

8:13-14; 11:10-16; 33:17; 50:1-3; 17; 63:1-6) is present as Justice (33:5-6, 22 50:5, 15) and righteousness (11:4-5; 33; 5, 15; 57:12; 59:1-8; 63:1) will be standardised throughout the land.

In the following section these themes will be further analysed.

Chapter 3: Isaiah's fear of God in relationship to other theological themes in Isaiah

This section intends to analyse the experience and results of the fear of God upon the recipients of Isaiah's message, the people of Judah and by extension all of Israel, even 'ruthless' foreigners. This will be done by answering the following question: what are other key aspects associated with the fear of God in Isaiah.

3. 1 Fear of God and Wisdom

Wisdom could be interpreted as the virtue to apply the knowledge of God's word into one's personal daily live in practical manners. Childs adds that wisdom "is the gift of practical ability and skill that derives from discernment... allows to distinguish good from evil."²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 105.

In this regard, the fear of God is closely related with wisdom in Isaiah. The relationship is evident in 11:3 where it is endowed upon the Branch and in 33:6 as one of God's gifts given in abundance to his people.²⁸¹ In this regard, Leclerc suggests the following:

“The last three qualities of 33:6, wisdom, knowledge, and fear of the YHWH, had earlier been associated with the sprout from the stump of Jesse (11:2); now they are associated with YHWH's presence in Zion.”²⁸²

The wisdom that is spoken of in 33:6 is spiritual in nature, “rooted in the fear of the Lord and therefore forming a contrast with the folly of the ungodly (32:6)”.²⁸³ This relationship is so profound for the godly that it shows the way towards a truly blessed life.²⁸⁴

According to 33:16, such a person needs not to tremble like the sinners (v. 14); on the contrary, he rejoices in it. Finally, wisdom should make the godly reconsider their former terrors before “the chief officer” in 33:18 and conclude that their fear is the opposite to trust, and since “the fear of the Lord is the

²⁸¹ Both passages are explored in chapter two.

²⁸² Leclerc, *Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah*, 85.

²⁸³ Jan Ridderbos. *Bible Student's Commentary. Isaiah*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 271.

²⁸⁴ J. Ridderbos, *Isaiah*, 271

beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7), this reaction must be ‘the beginning of foolishness’. In other words, fearing men and fearing unmanageable circumstances is ‘foolishness’ in itself.

We can state that Isaiah 33:6 is part of a long list of verses containing the divine aphorism; therefore, it seems logical to assume that Isaiah understood and was familiar with the motto as found in Wisdom Literature since he wrote some 300 years later. This in-depth relationship between wisdom and the fear of God is a subject that demands an entire research in itself; nonetheless, it merits at the least a modest recognition in this study. I will add a brief sentence summarising praiseworthy academic articles whose main propositions lie in the centrality of the fear of God as pivotal for the understanding of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ The following articles were used at an earlier stage of this research but have been partially omitted for they focus in the Sages and not in Isaiah.

Nonetheless, at this stage they provide relevant insight into Isaiah’s interpretation of the fear of God in relationship to wisdom:

Waltke argues for the place of Proverbs in the canon not because it is ethical in nature but because it contains the commands to fear Him and to love men.

Bruce Waltke. “The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament

Theology.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 136:544 (Oct 1979), 302. In addition, Johnson states that once a person understands the truth of the motto, (which he also

In spite of all the previous praises for the fear of God, and solely for arguments' sake alone, I will quote from Wilson's commentaries on Job. I will do so since he claims that the 'fear of God' is not only the beginning point or even the first principle (depending on the interpretation and translations), but that the motto "exhausts wisdom; it covers the whole field".²⁸⁶ It is only obvious that I am strongly in favour of this suggestive and even controversial approach.

3. 2 Fear of God and Idolatry

considers the cornerstone of Proverbs), then the reader is ready to comprehend the rest of the book. John E. Johnson. "An Analysis of Proverbs 1:1-7." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144:576 (October 1987), 430. On the inseparability of wisdom and the fear of God Hawkins argues for *reciprocity of wisdom and the apothegm since the latter is the beginning of the former and without wisdom one cannot comprehend the fear of God*. Tom R. Hawkins. "The Wife of Noble Character in Proverbs 31:10-31." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 153:609 (1996), 17. (Emphasis added). Finally, Zuck argues in regard to Ecclesiastes for the understanding of the meaning in life only in fearing God. Roy B. Zuck. "God and Man in Ecclesiastes." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 148:589 (1991), 48.

²⁸⁶ Lindsay Wilson: *Job. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 139.

If the fear of God results in reverence, trust and obedience to Yahweh; then idolatry is at the very opposite end. Idolatry was probably the number one problem in the land and it will not go unnoticed in Isaiah, as early as 1:21, 29 and a plethora of references throughout the book speak volumes of the nation's religious condition. Isaiah returns repeatedly to the theme of idols in passages such as 30:22; 31:7; 40:19-20; 41:7, 22-24; 44:9-20; 46:5-7.²⁸⁷

Noteworthy, chapter 2 highlights the subject of idolatry and its relationship with a "negative" fear of God as consequence of the presence of the Lord in judgement. Idolatry is present in verse six, but if we consider the relationship between mountains and idolatry (as it has been in almost all cultures and religions throughout the entire human history) the subject of idolatry is "inversely taught" as early as verse two where God has defeated all false gods and has established his holy mountain as the only true place to worship.²⁸⁸

The fact that Israel had neglected the one true God whom all nations will eventually end up worshipping (Isa 2:1-5) is in itself ironic.

²⁸⁷ A. Harman, *Isaiah*, 53. Notwithstanding, there are several other passages related to idolatry: 8:19; 57:3-8 (even sacrificing their children) and God's challenge to 'idols' to generate fear (47:12) and come to the rescue (65:7).

²⁸⁸ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 54.

There is a noting contrast: on the one hand, the Gentiles go to learn from God but Israel is full of the Gentiles' ways.²⁸⁹ Not only were they worshipping idols but fabricating them, and verses seven and eight have to do with silver, gold and monetary possessions, basically all of Israel's treasures. Additionally, the inclusion of horses and chariots speak of military power and excessive luxury proves that idolatry takes different forms. It should be of no surprise that Israel is "full" of all that God has warned them about.²⁹⁰ Paganism had become the norm in Israel and they were full of possessions that would eventually end up possessing them. In short, the land was full of false prophets, natives, foreigners who put their trust in idols, armament and are boastful of all their wealth.²⁹¹ As it is often the case, increased wealth had brought a diminished view of God. It can be deduced that this people do not fear God; on the contrary, they are probably comfortable with their sinful ways. These people felt secure in their sins as long as they performed the appropriate rituals (1:12-17).

Their idols had become guiding lights and God is going to hold them accountable for it. Therefore, if they do not change their ways (as they in fact

²⁸⁹ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 122.

²⁹⁰ In Isaiah 2:6-8 "full" of superstitions (v. 6), silver and gold, horses (v. 7) and idols (v. 8).

²⁹¹ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 32.

they do not), then restoration “can only come to them through humiliation and the destruction of their false hopes”.²⁹² The lack of fear of God in Israel is evident in their idolatry, consequently, in regard to the “abandonment” in verse six it is of utmost importance not to take any responsibility off from Israel, they had performed unspeakable deeds well before the ‘alleged’ abandonment. But the truth is that Israel has had enough warnings and although it might appear to be a contradiction, most of the people in Israel had turned apart from God becoming like the rest of the world: enemies of God.²⁹³ Seitz summarises this apparent contradiction with a valid point: “*Also striking*

²⁹² J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 122.

²⁹³ God had clearly ‘not abandoned’ them yet they performed terrible deeds. A few examples should suffice to recognise this truth: After the people of Israel were saved from the Egyptians they “were terrified before God” at Mount Sinai (Ex 20:20) and the Lord warned them about idolatry upon conquering the Land (Ex 20:23; *cf.* 6:12-14), yet they ended up committing a most despicable act of idolatry only a few days later (Ex. 32:1-6). The same could be said during the time of the Judges when everyone acted upon their own views (Jgs 17:6; 21:25) and also of the disastrous reigns of David's descendants. In Isaiah, God had already complained about their terrible deeds, the detestable festivals he hates and how he would not listen to their prayers (Isa 1:11-17).

*is the way “the house of Jacob” is spoken of in the third person, as though the author of these denunciations wished to keep distance: Israel has become ‘foreign’ ”.*²⁹⁴

It is evident that the prophet is not pleased with Israel’s behaviour (2:9) and *“the prophet aligns himself with the indignation of God in concluding that reconciliation is not possible and should not be possible”*.²⁹⁵

The prophet’s opinion should not be interpreted as an inconceivable and inconsistent thought, considering the situation, it seems sound to imply that verse nine expresses the prophet’s own views and feelings in regard to Israel and God’s abandonment.

Since idolatry is of such relevance in Isaiah, further subdivisions are required.

3. 2. 1 The fear of God and human exaltedness in 2:11-21

Not only fabricated idols were being exalted, but the primary focus is centred on the exaltedness of human beings, particularly starting in verse 11.

Strangely, Clements argues that this verse *“is certainly an addition which now breaks up the connection between vv. 10 and 12-17. It introduces the rather*

²⁹⁴ Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 41.

²⁹⁵ W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 29. In regard to the astonishing conclusion of the Prophet in verse nine “to not forgive them”.

trivial lesson that men will lose all their proud looks when Yahweh's day of judgement comes".²⁹⁶ Contra Clements, verse 11 perfectly introduces all what follows and summarises the reason why Israel is being punished: arrogance and human pride, as expressed in verses 9, 12 and reappearing in verse 17 with the addition of "the arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled". The main point is the same: God alone will be exalted. Noteworthy, verses 13 through 16 describe people being boastful of their abilities and their possessions on which they have placed their trust. Ergo, the Lord will not accept this erroneous and vain exaltedness any longer. Verse 22 is a pertinent way of closing chapter two: man is not the Creator and cannot be trusted because he has no power before God. Therefore, I will suggest that the trusting in man is the ultimate form of idolatry and the Lord would not tolerate that anymore and hence, human pride is "*humbled and haughtiness shamed, and all its vaunted works rendered worthless*".²⁹⁷

3. 2. 2 Idolatry and contamination in 2:19-22

These few verses proof how foolish they had been by trusting that which other human hands had built, they threw their valuable idols in utter disgust.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ R. E. Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, 45.

²⁹⁷ B. Childs. *Isaiah*, 32.

²⁹⁸ E. Young. *The Book of Isaiah*, 132.

These artefacts prove to be worthless and all they accomplished for their owners was anger and frustration. The ungodly entered caves filled with bat and mole dung, and besides this being totally unpleasant, bats and moles are impure animals and contact with them defiled and made them religiously unacceptable.²⁹⁹ As a result, idolatry had brought covenant impurity on the nation. Idolatry crosses a very clear line, one that the Lord had clearly established for centuries. It is shockingly unacceptable that this people had no fear of God and dared to cross the line. Idolatry robs God his rightful place and it is the key point why judgement is brought upon them and it also is the root from whence all other evils flow.³⁰⁰ Conclusively, there is ground to propose that *the 'fear of God' is diametrically opposed to idolatry*. The end is emphatic: 'the idols will totally disappear' (v. 18). In that particular scenario God's majesty and exaltedness "*are a reason that what is humanly lofty and exalted must be put down*".³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 31. Waltke also agrees on the coherent relationship between the 'fear of God' and God's Covenant and agrees that the motto is correctly designated as a "covenant formula" since it is used in conjunction with the commands to "love" (Deut 10:17), "hold fast" (10:20), walk in His ways" (8:6), "follow after" (13:5), and "serve" (6:13). Bruce Waltke. "The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology," 302.

³⁰⁰ E. Young. *Isaiah 1-18*, 129-30.

³⁰¹ J. Goldingay. *Isaiah*, 46.

3. 3 Isaiah's three pillars: justice, righteousness and holiness

Isaiah's prophecy presents several overlapping grand themes which are worthy to be acknowledged since they correspond theologically in Isaiah with the fear of God. Hence, this brief section will intent to bring to light the themes of justice, righteousness and holiness which are brought up by Isaiah as early as chapter one with 1:4b reading "they have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel, and turned their backs on him" and 1:27 reading: "Zion will be delivered with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness".

In regard to this particular relationship Leclerc clearly elaborates on God's justice, righteousness and his holiness:

We have seen that the thrice holy God (6:3) is "sanctified" by justice and righteousness in 5:16 and explicitly identified as "the God of justice" (30:18); consequently, holiness and justice emerge as concomitant realities and God can only be honoured as holy by people who live in justice, for it is only by the restoration of justice that Israel's worship will have value (1:10-17) and God's holiness will be vindicated.³⁰²

Both righteousness and justice are divine attributes consistent with Isaiah's theology who acknowledges the Lord as "righteous God" (45:21; cf. 42:21;

³⁰² Leclerc, *Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah*, 63.

45:19) with a “righteous right hand” (41:10). In view of this, Isaiah highlights the fact that the Servant will bring justice (42:1-3).

Notwithstanding, it is holiness where all the attention is primarily focused, and rightly so. It is noteworthy that statistically “Isaiah is the prophet of holiness” as this term it is used of God more frequently than in all the rest of the Old Testament taken together.³⁰³

Clements is of great help to close the gap between this elucidation and the fear of God while commenting on the vision of chapter six:

Certainly ‘holiness’ contained the emotions of awe and fear, and
Isaiah is warned to remain steadfast in his awe of God, even in the
face of physical threats and ostracism of the people.³⁰⁴

The fear of God in Isaiah is of such importance that runs parallel to holiness several times and within different situations, most notably in 29:23 “they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel” (NIV). God’s holiness is preserved by fearing God alone and this relationship is present throughout Isaiah though it would require an

³⁰³ Thirty-three times in Isaiah compared with twenty-six times in the rest of the OT. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 17. Webb (*Isaiah*, 40) collaborates with the following examples: *E.g.* 1:4; 5:19; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11; 37:23; 41:14; 43:3; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 55:5; 60:9, 14.

³⁰⁴ R. E. Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, 99.

entire new research to formulate this accurately.³⁰⁵ In this regard Oswalt states the following:

It is no accident that of the thirty occurrences in the Bible of the phrase *The Holy One of Israel*, fully twenty-five of those are in Isaiah, and one of the other five is in the parallel passage in 2 Kings 19. This means there are only four occurrences of the phrase outside of this book, two in the Psalms (78:41; 89:18), and two in Jeremiah (50:29; 51:5).³⁰⁶

Throughout the land, both justice and righteousness are nowhere to be found (59:14-15). This condition is present from the onset of the book (1:4, 27). This people are far from God's righteousness for they are stubborn-hearted (46:12). Nevertheless, for the sake of his praise he has delayed his wrath and has not destroyed them completely (48:9). Notwithstanding, they will certainly drink from God's wrath (51:17, 20, 22) in the day of the Lord's vengeance (34:8; 35:4; 63:4; 66:6), a day in which he will judge both the unrighteous in Israel and the rest of the world alike. This will be further analysed in the following section.

³⁰⁵ M. Sweeney. (*Isaiah 1-39*, 168) suggests in similar fashion regarding to 'sanctify' and to 'fear': "Israel must sanctify and fear YHWH, *nevertheless they both are different things*". (Emphasis added)

³⁰⁶ Oswalt, *CJV*, 67.

3. 4 Fear of God and Judgement

Throughout the book there are a plethora of references to God's judgment in a variety of descriptions and contexts, whether immediate, future and even as part of the eschaton. Notwithstanding, as space allows we will only focus on a few of them with a view in determining the relationship of God's judgement and the 'fear of God'.³⁰⁷ Additionally, it is mandatory to state that several nuances of judgement have already been discussed and analysed in almost all of the chapters selected for this research as explored in chapter 2.

It is suggestive to imply that Isaiah learned the time frame for his message of judgement in chapter six involving "a massive judgement, the survival of a tenth, and the further burning of that tenth, until only a holy seed is left (6:13)".³⁰⁸ Surrounding this context there is a serious warning intended to highlight that God's anger "is not turned away and his hand is still upright", this line will be repeated in 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4.³⁰⁹ There is an immediate fulfilment of this warning as Assyria is in view, and Judah starts to experience

³⁰⁷ Noticeably, J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine (*Isaiah the Eight-Century Prophet*, 86) see a very close relationship between this two subjects and idolatry; however they do not explore it.

³⁰⁸ Seitz. *Isaiah 1-39 Interpretation*, 27.

³⁰⁹ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 58.

the Lord's hand upraised in judgement; but worse was yet to come.³¹⁰ In chapter six, Isaiah received a clear message of judgement in verses nine through thirteen: there will be a hardening of hearts (vv. 9-10) and the devastation of the land and people (vv. 11-12).³¹¹

It is staggering to acknowledge that the "godly" nation was full of "godless" inhabitants and the realisation of God's judgement as described in 2:10-21 is a spectacle of terror with panic connotations which sends the people running and hiding in the caves and casting all their idols away in utter angst.

Within this general context, we can confidently agree that the day of the Lord is relevant as it carries implications of both judgement and salvation (2:5-22; 4:2-6; 7:17-20; 10:20; 11:11-16; 19:16-25; 22:1-25; 24:21; 27:12-13; 28:5; 34:8).³¹²

Additionally, Webb correctly sees a correlation between judgement and salvation in the succession of events during Ahaz's rule, particularly in chapters seven through twelve which show how the judgement passed on Israel by the Lord in chapter 6 began to work out in the specifics of the

³¹⁰ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 58.

³¹¹ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 61.

³¹² T. Schreiner, *The King in his beauty*, 329. Isaiah is no short in descriptions of this pivotal theme, to the former list we could add (35:14; 63:4; 66:6).

historical circumstances of Judah and Jerusalem.³¹³ From this situation we can conclude that terrible things are in store for Israel, nonetheless, it is of utmost importance to recognise that it is the Lord Himself who will be perpetrating every act.³¹⁴ Hence, the relationship between God's judgement and this descriptions is centred in the defining fact that it is God himself who brings all punishment (Isaiah 63:1-6) with red garments tainted in blood.

Notwithstanding, the judgement of Israel is a theme that "bridges" the two main parts of Isaiah as Judah was warned of its imminent destruction (lest they repent) during the Assyrian siege, although spared through God's divine intervention (as explained in chaps. 36-38), they were exiled to Babylon over a century later because of their transgressions (chaps. 40-66).³¹⁵

And with that shift from a present state focus to the expectation of the final consummation, the arrival of Messiah and his kingdom were considered to be characterised by judgement upon the ungodly (Is. 11:1-4) resulting in an era of

³¹³ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 58.

³¹⁴ To deepen the argument we could add God's wrath in Isaiah 2:10-12, 17, 19, 21; 7:17-20; 8:1-8 13-14, 18. I will also add God's wrath in 51:17-23; 59:16-18.

³¹⁵ T. Schreiner, *The King in His beauty*, 327-28.

justice for the righteous.³¹⁶ Young sees here a reference not to Isaiah's own contemporaries, but to that godly remnant in the future which will survive when the apostate nation is rejected.³¹⁷ Conclusively, the judgement that begins with the house of God (64:14-17) has significance in what it points to: "it is a sign of the final, universal future judgement".³¹⁸

3. 5 Fear of God and Knowledge of Yahweh

The close knitted relationship of knowledge and the fear of God is explicit in chapter 11 where they are recalled as part of the Spirit's anointing upon the Branch (11:2-3). One could even venture to argue that without the fear of God there would be no knowledge of God (similar as the fear of God being the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs 1:7); however, this would probably result in a futile exercise that could go in circles as Proverbs 9:10 places both the fear of God and knowledge as parallels.

Divisions apart, it is noteworthy that as a result of the 'knowledge of the Lord' (11:3), Webb interprets that God will be known and his rule experienced everywhere.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ R. Beaton; *Isaiah's Christ in Mathew's Gospel*, 161.

³¹⁷ Young, *Isaiah 1-18*, 522.

³¹⁸ Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 249.

³¹⁹ B. Webb, *The message of Isaiah*, 75.

As already noted, a fundamental characteristic of the Branch's rule will be righteousness, resulting in a particular preoccupation for the poor and meek (11:4-6) "which the current kings had conspicuously failed to bring about (cf. 3:12-15)". Nonetheless, this godly royal "will be in a position to execute perfect justice because he will be possessed of perfect knowledge (3b)".³²⁰

Mackay correctly sees that knowledge is closely related to the "fear of Yahweh", as they both denote "the absolute loyalty to God which characterises a life of piety lived in accordance with the divine will."³²¹

Finally, the effects of this unsurpassed knowledge upon his reign will be universal peace (symbolic of Eden) as "the entire earth, not just Jerusalem/Zion, will be the Lord's holy mountain (11:9, cf. 2:2; 4:5) in other words, he will be known, and his rule will be experienced, everywhere."³²²

Notwithstanding, it is compulsory to understand that this knowledge of the Lord is not the same as to state that everyone will hear the Gospel, this is deeper than that, this is 'knowing God' in a personal level, maybe even more objectively. This would imply to fear his word and to delight in the fear of God (as in 11:3; cf. 50:10; 66:2, 5). Considering that everyone will *know* who God is, it can be concluded that all will be filled with the fear of God. To

³²⁰ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 75.

³²¹ J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 292.

³²² B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 75.

conclude this section, it is mandatory to relate the knowledge of God to peace as it will be proposed in the following section.

3. 6 Fear of God linked to Peace

As it has already been stated, chapters two and eleven could find partial fulfilment during Isaiah's milieu; nevertheless, final peace is promised. This restoration is interpreted by Seitz as "the end to warfare and the beginning of world unity".³²³ Hence, we can conclude that Isaiah's vision is exclusive in the fact that Mount Zion will stand high and alone; on the other hand, the vision is also inclusive in the fact that all nations will also benefit from God's blessings.³²⁴ This peace portrayed in chapter two finds its parallel passage in 11:9, with the promise of "no harm" and "no destruction" on God's holy mountain. This is a most pertinent verse to reintroduce the repercussions upon human's interactions as it refers to restoration in the grandest scale. As already

³²³ Christopher Seitz. *Isaiah 1-39 Interpretation*, 39. Additionally, Seitz's approach to verses one through four is rather straightforward and not one devoid of conflict: "*it would be very difficult – impossible – to argue that the vision of restoration found in 2:1-4 had been fulfilled in the lifetime and circumstances of a later editor. We still look for the time when nation shall not lift up sword against nation*". (Ch. Seitz. *Isaiah 1-39 Interpretation*, 44)

³²⁴ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 45.

noted, this Edenic paradise is only possible because the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God (11:9). Childs interprets that not only the righteous king and his people, but the entire world will be “filled with the knowledge of Yahweh”³²⁵ and Motyer declares that it is in this description that Mount Zion will become “a Zion which fills the whole earth” as peace (9a), holiness (9b) and ‘knowing the Lord’ (9c) pervades all.³²⁶ All these promises come with a discontinuity of unprecedented magnitude between the arrogant, unfaithful dynasty and the messianic rule.³²⁷ When this new David arrives, on the positive side, there will be a new exodus, a new creation, and a new Jerusalem; but on the negative side, (though entirely positive for the remnant), the wicked will be judged and removed and there will be peace forevermore.³²⁸

Notwithstanding, if the ‘knowledge of the Lord’ fills the earth there would be no need for judging the abusive or helping the poor (11:3-5); nevertheless, we are told of strifes among nations (v. 14). This state of affairs is not altogether clarified. Different issues must be considered; for example, the presence of

³²⁵ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

³²⁶ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 124.

³²⁷ J. L. Mackay, *Isaiah*, 289.

³²⁸ T. R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 337.

ruthless and unjust people, and the fact that disputes are still present and demand a rightful ruler to deal with them justly.³²⁹

Not intended to be a counter-statement but 11:3 introduces the ‘supposed’ contradiction of “counsel” and “force” (might) as collaborative aspects of this perfect reign; notwithstanding, peace, justice and righteousness seldom *come peacefully in corrupted societies*, as suggested by Motyer:

Very seldom peace has been won without wars, particularly against the oppressors and it is also probable that Isaiah saw the Messiah as a warrior.³³⁰

All this apparent contradiction could be harmonised by the fact that Messiah will establish a rightful kingdom that would begin in God’s holy mountain and from there on expand towards the ends of the earth. Is this an automatic result or will it become a reality in time? Will everybody know the Lord and not fight anymore or will some people simply obey because they have to? Such are the questions this raises and prompts different interpretations. In this regard, a further conjecture has already been proposed by this student in chapter one: that there are apparent “stages” in the understanding of the ‘fear of God’ and the same could be applied to this ‘knowledge’ of the Lord. As time progresses, the citizens of this new world order will learn to acknowledge

³²⁹ B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

³³⁰ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 126.

who God is and hence, submit fully and wholeheartedly to the “root of Jesse’s” authority.

To sum up this section, the domination over Israel’s enemies result in a long-lasting peace throughout the whole earth. Perhaps it is correct to agree with Motyer who emphasises that “to know the Lord” should be understood as entering a personal and intimate “communion” with God.³³¹ This knowledge of God will fill the earth with peace and holiness and bring all of humankind into a state of brotherly harmony, as Calvin understood it, particularly because “they will have learned that they have the same Father”.³³²

3. 7 Fear of God and the Coming King

The subjects of God’s kingship and the future of his universal ruling permeate Isaiah’s prophecy throughout the 66 chapters. This subdivision will focus on

³³¹ The erudite insinuates that these people have a relationship with God under the Messiah. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 124. Additionally, he argues that under the new David’s ruling the “*spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*” becomes simply the “*knowledge of the Lord*”. Such are the generalisations the ‘fear of God’ generates in the interpreters. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 120.

³³² J. Calvin, *Isaiah*, 386. Calvin quotes Malachi 2:10 as canonical proof of this reality.

Isaiah 11 in order to explore key aspects of Messiah's reign pertinent to this final section.

3. 7. 1 Early promises in Isaiah

It is impossible to separate the promised reign of the Messiah from the fear of God which is his delight as he reigns supreme (11:3). Although certain hints of the promised Messiah are in chapter four and the botanical figure later picked up in chapter 6 which is finally explored in chapter 11, theologically is correct to assert that those chapters belong to the 'realms' of the Book of Immanuel with chapter 9 containing a "detailed description of the Promised One".³³³

This royal figure appears with titles only attributed to God (9:6), endowed with the Spirit and ruling with perfect justice (11:2-9), though "strangely altered", he reappears as a humble and gentle servant (42:1-3) who is opposed, persecuted and cruelly killed (49:4; 50:6; 53:8-9), notwithstanding he is raised and glorified and all of God's purposes prosper in his hand (53:10; 55:3-5).³³⁴

3. 7. 2 God's sovereignty

³³³ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 228. Webb (*The Message of Isaiah*, 65)

remarkably adds that "Immanuel here points forwards as well as back".

³³⁴ Barry Webb, *Isaiah*, 29.

It is manifested that in Isaiah there are a plethora of references in first person, powerful statements which have no human parallel such as God the judge, lawgiver and king (33:22), the God of history (48:14-16), the strong of Israel/Jacob, (49:26; 60:16) and his powerful arm (51:9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8; 63:5-6). Also, Saviour (60:16; 62:11; 63:8), the Lord of Hosts (cf. Lord Almighty 1:24; 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:5) and the central subject of the ‘day of the Lord’ (34:8; 35:14; 61:2; 63:4; 66:6). At the same time, one could add God as creator (40:22-31; 42:5; 43:1; 44:2, 21, 24; 45:9, 18; 48:13; 49:13; 54:16) and as Lord and sovereign over all (40:15-24; 48:3-6, 16); nonetheless, merciful (63:7) and even distressed on account of his people (63:9).³³⁵

God’s sovereignty is highlighted in Isaiah 48:16

“Come near me and listen to this:

“From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret;

at the time it happens, I am there.”

And now the Sovereign Lord has sent me, endowed with his Spirit.”

The fear of God is directly related to Kingship for it implies obedience and an almost incomprehensible trust in God’s sovereignty over the world and one’s

³³⁵ Even though this list is by no means exhaustive, it underlines God’s kingship and his sovereignty.

individual affairs.³³⁶ This obedience and trust relies in fearing God alone and it is evident from this prophecy that Israel, particularly its leaders, did not recognise God's kingship. Webb suggests that this lack of recognition is a central theme in Isaiah as divine kingship was exchanged by a trust in "mere humans" which in itself became the root problem underlying Israel's failure (cf. 2:22).³³⁷ They were called to fear the Almighty God and to delight in it. This is inexcusable, Israel was the depositary of God's word; therefore, they are guilty of not trembling before it (66:2, 5).

Furthermore, in 8:5-10 God is portrayed as reigning over all nations and ruling over all circumstances. Hence, he is the only one who deserves to be feared and dreaded. In view of this, it is impossible to separate God's sovereignty in the promised reign of the Messiah from the fear of God in which he delights in (11:3).

³³⁶ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 57-9. The Lord's sovereignty over the world has been manifested throughout every empire on earth: the Egyptians, Assyria, Babylon, the Persians, the Greek and the Romans, to name only a few, particularly those related to Israel.

³³⁷ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 59. The academic correctly relates God's sovereignty to the "whistle" and the "razor hired" (7:18-20) and acknowledges the call to rely upon the Lord as a consequence. Israel's disobedience led them chose the human alternative (B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 63)

3. 7. 3 Transformation or return to innocence

The rule of the Messiah brings about several contrasting features and these particular verses contain a message that it is impossible to fully understand humanly speaking, are this metaphorical moral teachings, plain imagination, wishful thinking or a future reality? Is this a revolutionary transformation or a return to innocence? We are not given any explanation on the how's and the why's of the continuing presence of conflicts among men (11:14) or on another extreme, that animals cease to attack each other. A possible explanation is suggested by Goldingay who advocates for a symbolic portray of order and blessing, a metaphor for harmony in the human world, no more to be interpreted literally than the geophysical transformation of 2:2-4.³³⁸ Childs gives a different interpretation and suggests that this picture is inspired in "eschatological portraits" of the future harmony among the peoples who flow to the holy mountain and not a return to paradise.³³⁹ There are others who are

³³⁸ J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 88.

³³⁹ Although agreeing that there are hints in Genesis (particularly 3:15 and 9:12ff) of an enmity between man and the animals, the scholar suggests that the concept of harmony in the animal kingdom was never fully developed and only "infrequently shimmers behind the text". B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

Similarly, Harman (*Isaiah*, 111-12) allows the possibility that animals could have been enemies even at the earliest of stage after Creation. Though this is

persuaded by the fact that this restored paradise could become a real scenario since every square inch of the world will be the “holy mountain” of the Lord.³⁴⁰ Astonishingly, animals seem to welcome each other, the fiercest live and eat along the meekest; in other words, animal kingdom restored and consequently, a return to the paradisiacal world described at the close of Genesis 1 when animals and humans ate different grasses and not each other.³⁴¹ In a similar line, Schreiner states that the consequence of his rule will be a new creation, an Edenic paradise for humans.³⁴² Specifically, Motyer points out that the mention of “their young” indicates that the change in the adult beast reappears in the next generation, thus, assuming an ‘Edenic’ element while suggesting three facets: “a reconciliation of predators and prey” (v. 6), “a herbivore nature of all creatures” (v. 7) and “the curse removed”, the

only speculative, his argument could be contra-productive since it involves admitting death before the Fall. Nonetheless, this probability should place no distinctive theological problem as it is only extended and suggested to the animal kingdom where there is no sacrificial requirement to fulfil.

³⁴⁰ R. C. Ortlund, *Isaiah. Preaching the Word*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005, 115.

³⁴¹ P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 182.

³⁴² T. Schreiner, *The King in his beauty*, 336.

enmity between the woman's seed and the serpent is gone as was first introduced in Genesis 3:15 (v. 8).³⁴³

In this imagery, a baby could touch the savage animal's nest and even a child could exercise leadership over the fiercest of all the wild animals (v. 6); hence, this is a place and a time where there are no territorial issues among animals anymore. Were all this to be accepted, a miracle is required for this cannot be simply realised through time, luck, good manners, good education, mass economic funding or an enlightened ecological behaviour, it is simply impossible.

3. 7. 4 The Remnant on the King's Highway (11:10-16)

"In that day" stands for the beginning of the end, the moment in which everything changes as the Branch stands as a "banner" to all, even the Gentiles; consequently, this will be the final moment in which a true levelling in the significance and value of all humans occurs. Thus, in accordance to 2:1-4 Jerusalem is the "initiating point of newness" for the world in general but

³⁴³ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 124.

what form this ‘signal’ would take is not specified.³⁴⁴ Harman is certain about the ensign’s identity: “it is the messianic ruler himself!”³⁴⁵

During Isaiah’s milieu this passage could have been read as a return from Assyria, and while acknowledging this fact, Calvin interprets this as a call to remember the great past deliverance and the power of God to do so again “for at that time the Israelites were not brought back from Egypt, Ethiopia, and other countries.”³⁴⁶ Kaiser calls Isaiah’s prognostication “mind-boggling” as this large highway will unite the remnant of three nations who will worship together.³⁴⁷

It is then safe to assume that Assyria will come under God’s judgment and out of that verdict a remnant will return to the land.³⁴⁸ Notably, the deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria points to a future act of salvation that is greater and more permanent than the rescue from the Assyrian siege as it points out towards “a time when Israel would be delivered from all its enemies”.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ R. E. Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, 125.

³⁴⁵ A. Harman (*Isaiah*, 112) points towards a fulfilment in the NT quoting from John 12:32 (*cf.* 3:14) and Philippians 2:19-11.

³⁴⁶ Calvin, *Isaiah*, 389-90.

³⁴⁷ W. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 167.

³⁴⁸ J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 277-8.

³⁴⁹ T. Schreiner. *The King in His Beauty*, 335.

Isaiah's possibilities in regard to this promises are very elastic, as Webb suggests:

The movement from the overthrow of the human kingdom (represented by Assyria) to the setting up of the kingdom of God (represented by the Messiah) is a natural one theologically, even though it involves radical foreshortening of the historical processes involved. (*cf.* Dn 2:44; Rev 11:15).³⁵⁰

Chapter 4 Final Analysis

This final chapter is intended to serve as a compendium and an application to Peruvian Christianity. Since the fear of God is commanded and commended by God (and by the Spirit's anointed Messiah), it shall be suggested that the emotion of 'fear', regardless of how antithetical to the academic status quo this might be, should not altogether disappear from evangelical parlance. Particularly, it should not disappear from pulpits, seminaries, and academic material. Also, it shall be proposed that the 'fear of God' is a concept too wide and profound to reduce it to a kingly respect or to pious reverence, devoid of the real emotion of fear. Additionally, in view of the propositions in

³⁵⁰ B. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 63.

semantical variation, through this study it is suggested that the fear of God could have been understood differently in ancient biblical parlance as compared to our current 21st century understanding of the maxim as reverence. In view of this, the following sections will be centred into further developing the statements above in order to find a paradigm for Peru.

4. 1 Should ‘fear’ still be included in the fear of God?

The ‘fear of God’ is categorically different from any other division of fear and classifications have led to a wide range of interpretations, as reviewed in chapter one. A clear example of what has been stated is the following annotation:

Numinous fear thus becomes the starting point of a *semantic development that reduces the element of literal fear to a “moral fear of God”* and through affirmation and confession of Yahweh approaches the “cultic concept” (fear = worship).³⁵¹

This thesis argues that this is not true for this statement is based on אָרַ' primarily; nevertheless, Isaiah is the only writer in all of the Old Testament who uses six different words to denote the fear of God.³⁵² As analysed in

³⁵¹ Fuhs, *TDOT*, 303.

³⁵² Including אָרַ' as in “(those) who tremble at my word” and “you who tremble at his word” in 66:2 and 66:5 respectively.

chapter one, there is a presupposition that the fear of God as maxim has varied its semantic range and consequently, its interpretation. Notwithstanding, the word ‘fear’ (by itself) has not suffer the same fate. But this much could be acknowledged: the word fear is probably not experienced, and consequently, not interpreted the same throughout different cultures and languages. This is historically correct:

“The scanty attestation in other Semitic languages stands in marks contrast to the situation in Hebrew, where *yr’ and its derivatives* have an impressive total of 435 occurrences.”³⁵³

The problem then relies in harmonising it with our current understanding of the word and its relationship towards God. In NIDOT there is a transparent attempt to understand and accept that the ‘aspects’ of fear encompassed by *yr’* include terror, respect and worship, and that *the aspect of respect* can be either *a weakened sense of fear or worship*, and consequently, *only by context can the particular sense of each occurrence be determined*.³⁵⁴

Notwithstanding, this approach forces the reader to concede that worship, honour, awe, reverence and fear have similar meanings. I will comfortably concede that these words overlap to a certain degree; nonetheless, they also encapsulate their own private and individual purpose and meaning. However, it could be formulated, albeit only hypothetically, that a wider room for the

³⁵³ Fuhs, *TDOT*, 281.

³⁵⁴ Van Pelt; Kaiser, *NIDOT*, 528, (emphasis added).

interpretation of a word or an emotion could merge from one culture to another and drastic changes could occur through time.

Consequently, this study accepts and acknowledges the fact that language can change from culture to culture and also throughout time; consequently, grammatical accommodations could be made. Nevertheless, as it was observed in chapter one, it seems correct to suggest that in regard to *emotions* this change is more difficult to accept since there is a lesser degree of variation even in language or culture.

Consequently, it is suggested here that *emotions play a far greater role* in the understanding of the fear of God that it has been attributed to. In view of this, it is not an understatement to highlight that the fear of God is not enslaving but liberating, it is the fear that overcomes all fears. To approach the fear of God as a negative attitude and sentiment, or to compare it to other religious activities such as worship would be misleading. The worship of God includes positive attitudes of adoration with implicit and explicit emotions (which could derive in singing, joy, crying, and the like). Furthermore, it could be even be accepted that similar experiences could partake in the fearing of God; nevertheless, none of them are necessarily equal to the fear of God.

4. 2 Reverence is also present in the Old Testament

Tough not the place to embark in an in-depth study of ‘reverence’ in the canon, it should be added that words denoting ‘reverence’ do exist in both HB and

LXX. For example, in Esther 3:2 ‘reverence’, ‘bow down’ and ‘paid homage’ are translated from **יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה** from the lexeme **שָׁחָה**. This word reappears in 2 Samuel 9:6 and 1 Kings 1:31 where the concept is the same: to bow down in reverence. This reverence is a respect and honour due before a superior in the highest authority like King Xerxes, Haman, Mordecai or King David. This type of ‘reverence’ is amply understood and its meaning is akin to most cultures, particularly through the lens of Spanish-speaking Catholic countries like Peru.

Scholars agree with this reading and generally *only* allow differentiation in reverence when related to the fear of God. However, this is not the case in regard to **שָׁחָה** since there is no possible misunderstanding. Wilson states that **שָׁחָה** “*implies to bow down the head or body in token of reverence*” while Pick renders as reverence both **פָּחַד** and **שָׁחָה**, the latter related to bowing down and the former related to fear.³⁵⁵ In Schökel the reference of **שָׁחָה** in Isaiah 51:23 implies “to present one’s back as ground for someone” and in the ‘hithpael’ it

³⁵⁵ Wilson in *Old Testament Word Studies*, “Reverence”, 354-55. Also, Aaron Pick. (*Dictionary of Old Testament words for English readers*. “Reverence”. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), 377.

means “to bow down very low, prostrate, all this to express respect, reverence to a person, submission to a superior and adoration to the divine”.³⁵⁶

To the interest of our study, this verb is also present in Isaiah and translated as ‘worship’ by the KJV in several passages: Isaiah 2:8 (bow down to idols); 2:20 (idols made to worship); 27:13 (worship the Lord); 36:7 (worship the Lord); 37:38 (worshipping God Nisrok); 44:15, 17 (worship idols); 46:6 (worship idols); 49:7 (worship the Servant); 66:23 (worship the Lord). The NIV mainly translates this passages as to “bow down”.

In Esther 3:2 כָּרַע is used next to שָׁחָה denoting “to bow down”;

notwithstanding, LXX opts to translate both words as one: προσκυνέω which denotes to bow down in worship. In view of this, we conclude that both the Greek and the Hebrew had their own choices for reverence, and those verbs could have been used to denote the fear of God; nonetheless, this is not the case in this passage and the same is true throughout Isaiah.

Furthermore, in the following intertextual passages, three different words are used to denote ‘to bow down’:

כָּרַע from כָּרַע; נִפְל from נָפַל and וַתִּקֹּד from קָדַד in Esther 3:2; 2 Samuel 9:6 and 1 kings 1:31 respectively.

³⁵⁶ L. Schöckel, *Diccionario Bíblico Hebreo-Español*, 755-56. (Translation mine).

The first verb could be used as reverence or as worship since it is used as “to bow down” in Isaiah 10:4 (fall under prisoners); 45:23 (every knee will bow down before God); 46:1-2 (bow down before idols like Bel); 65:12 (bow to the slaughter). Hence, this verb is used in a twofold manner: positively as bowing down before God or negatively, as bowing down before idols or even enemies. Furthermore, the last two words of the list above do not mean ‘to revere’ but mainly the gesture ‘to bow down’.

Finally, there is another word used in Isaiah alone: נָפַד which is used as “to fall down to worship idols” (44:15, 17, 19; 46:6).

In view of this, it is suggested that if reverence was the original interpretation intended by Isaiah, he could have used a more straightforward and not the full expression of the maxim.

In conclusion, reverence, awe and all other derivatives are indeed correct, nevertheless inasmuch as they are a consequence or a part of ‘the fear of God’ *per se*. Notwithstanding, it is imperative to clarify that this student has no intention of invalidating terms so notorious, widely used and accepted by generations of reverent scholars, nor would this student propose to substitute it (which is probably a futile endeavour) with different wordings since the terms ‘reverence’, ‘awe’ and ‘worship’ have been widely acknowledged and accepted by the universal church with providential blessing.

4. 3 Re-reading the fear of God in a Peruvian context

In this section the social and religious aspects of Peru's evangelical context will be explored in order to make some clarifications. Additionally, in order to deepen the understanding, a semantical analysis will be performed on the Spanish words used for fear, reverence, worship and veneration as they are compared to the fear God. This reading posits an interpretative problem which will be discussed in this section.

In regard to the religious and political aspects, it will be suggested that the fear of God in Isaiah is of current relevance in Peru as several similarities can be observed: idolatry is massively present throughout all three regions of Peru (Coast, Highlands and Jungle) and political corruption is at its highest. Hence, it can be concluded that 'there is no fear of God in Peru, or perhaps it is better to recall, considering Peru's Catholic tradition, Isaiah's recollection of God complaining that the people's fear of God is based on human teachings (Isaiah 29:13).³⁵⁷ In spite of this, the closest similarities between Isaiah's Israel and

³⁵⁷ In regard to politics it shall be briefly mentioned that out of the last five presidents, three are in jail, one committed suicide on the day of his arrest and the other is imprisoned in the USA waiting to be extradited. This reality is Providential; otherwise, all of them would still be running for office in the 2021 elections. The same is true of several members of Congress and a plethora of public Prosecutors and Judges. In regard to idolatry, we do not

21st century Peru come in the form of neglect of the evangelical community as it is systematically silenced (*cf.* Isa. 57:1-2; 59:14-15).³⁵⁸

intent to reflect on Catholic religious idolatry alone, Peru is home to multitudinary festivals dedicated to city patrons (saints), Mary and Jesus (both are coined with different names according to regions) and even death and the dead. Peru also boasts performing Inti Raymi (the Sun Festival) every 21st of June in Cuzco with worldwide celebrities and dignitaries coming to be filled with 'positive energy'. Also, throughout the Northern cities, towns and villages, 'Shamans' are still consulted as mediums to the supernatural. Furthermore, in the jungle there are hundreds of tribes (several of them have not even been contacted) who celebrate a variety of mystic activities. In 'civilised' Lima, the current trend in supernatural activity (practiced primarily by young middle and high-class hipsters) is the egocentric hallucinogen drug called "Ayahuasca", based on the beverage from the plant with homonymous name which claims supernatural and introspective powers.

³⁵⁸ New Atheist, ideologues of Identity Politics, several politicians, High School and Public University professors, TV and radio anchors, they all seem to have a similar agenda with Mainstream Media in regard to freedom of expression, religion and education. Evangelical Christianity is considered ancient, biased, homophobic, fascist and intolerant (though unsurprisingly there are certain "wings" which probably are).

Not to expatiate on the subject, I will briefly explain the semantic range of fear in the Spanish language. Similar to English, there are a variety of synonyms for ‘fear’ ranging as dread, tremble, terror or even horror. Each one of these words have their own synonyms as well. Therefore, it is only reasonable to find similarities and some overlapping between words. The fear of God in Spanish could also imply a ‘reverent respectful fear before God’.³⁵⁹ There is a tendency in both languages to separate ‘fear’ and ‘trembling’ from the fear of God. However, cultural differences must not to be disregarded, ‘reverence’ is not the same in the West as in Latin America. In the latter, reverence is a respect and admiration towards something or someone, particularly ‘sacred things’ and it is also interpreted as the ‘bending of one’s body or legs as respect’ mainly directed towards religious people (evidently implying Catholic priests).³⁶⁰ In religious interpretation, reverence consists of “fear, awe, and

³⁵⁹ “Temor” in *Diccionario de la Lengua Española, Real Academia Española*, 22 ed. 2001, Tomo 2. (Madrid: Ed. Espasa Calpe, 1969), 966. (Translation mine).

As a brief note, this dictionary is the work of the Royal Academy of Spanish language.

³⁶⁰ “Reverencia” in *El Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado 1997*. (México, D. F.: Ediciones Larousse, 1996), 882. (Translation mine) There is clear difference in the appropriation of this word religiously, Protestant believers, whether in

deference in worshipful tribute paid to God, or some other deity and things sacred”.³⁶¹ In other words, the same tribute paid to God could be paid to a deity or to “sacred” things. Throughout Latin America and Peru, reverence is due to Mary, the saints and even priests. This is precisely why it is suggested that interpretations play a pivotal role for it is not easy to distinguish the fear *of God*” from the reverence *due to* God, dignitaries, a priest or even a pastor. Though it is true that there should be a correct respect and reverence for our religious leaders and also for our country’s leaders, probably even a nervous trembling; nonetheless, as Evangelicals we must make a clear distinction between human leaders and the Lord, for one thing it is to fear God and another to fear the President or the Prime Minister.³⁶²

the West or Peru, will never bend their knees before their pastors. On the other hand, Catholics are expected to do so before the archbishop or the Pope, and also before priests in confession or as part of the “Eucharist” (Holy Communion).

³⁶¹ G. B. Funderburk, “Reverence”, *ZPEB, Vol V; Q-Z*, 99.

³⁶² To analyse how personal and past experiences shape the exegesis and the appropriation of key spiritual idioms is beyond this brief summary; nevertheless, contradictions could arise when the analysis is influenced by personal experiences in the realm of emotions. For example, one shall ask: is the erudite accustomed to stand regularly before high dignitaries? This will

Furthermore, in Spanish-speaking cultures, the word ‘venerate’ must be carefully acknowledged because ‘to venerate’ is to “*feel or show respect in the highest level to someone ... worship God, the saints and sacred things.*”³⁶³ In other words: almost identical conclusions as the previous ‘reverence’. This difference does play a massive and conflicting role in Latin-American Spanish speaking countries where Catholicism exceeds Evangelicals by at least six times (as in the case of Peru), and where the Virgin Mary is ‘revered’ and ‘venerated’ by millions every day.³⁶⁴ It could be argued that she is the

certainly vary his language spectrum. The reverence, respect, fear and honour experienced before the world’s leaders is unparalleled to God’s holiness. It is my suggestion that *the fear of God* in the Bible was probably coined so, (instead of *the reverence of God*), among other reasons, because of this particular problematic.

³⁶³ “Venerar” in *RAE 22 ed. 2001, Tomo 2*, 1024. (Translation and emphasis mine).

³⁶⁴ Mariela Sausa. “El 76% de Peruanos es Católico, pero sólo el 10% es fiel a la Iglesia.” (76% of Peruvians are Catholic but only 10% is faithful to the Church, translation mine). January 13, 2018. Accessed November 17, 2018. <https://peru21.pe/peru/papa-francisco-peru-76-peruanos-catolico-10-fiel-iglesia-391759>.

quintessence of reverence in Peru.³⁶⁵ The maxim is that Catholics do not ‘worship’ or ‘adore’ Mary but only *revere* and *venerate* her.³⁶⁶ As a direct consequence, mothers are revered and even ‘feared’ in all Latin American cultures as well. Needless to say, this tradition has greatly influenced the

³⁶⁵ The Spaniards introduced different Virgin festivities in order to replace indigenous worship of Mother Earth (in Quechua ‘Pachamama’). This proved to be an unfruitful endeavour as the locals just combined the two traditions and this is why Mary is considered their “mother”.

Carlos Tello. “Dancing for the Virgin of Candelaria in Peru.” February 8, 2016. Accessed November 17, 2019.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/02/dancing-virgin-peru-160203144323308.html>

³⁶⁶ John Henry Newman wrote an article in 1832 with a revealing title: “The reverence due to the Virgin Mary”. The article is published by the “The International Centre for Newman friends”. Accessed July 04, 2019.

<http://www.newmanfriendsinternational.org/en/the-reverence-due-to-the-virgin-mary/ary>. This article is important for two main reasons: first, because it was not written in a Spanish speaking country where this is the norm. In Latin America Mary is venerated for being close to God and also for being an intercessor for her proximity to her son Jesus. Second, because it was written in a non-Catholic country by a former Anglican priest and later a Catholic priest and Cardinal on March 25, 1832.

choice of words for the fear of God and the emotional and affective responses it generates. There is certainly an element of ‘real fear’ in Catholic influenced countries, particularly death and hell, where evangelicalism has only been a small part of the Christian understanding of society for little over a century. Consequently (and untraditional enough), I suggest that reverence is not similar to the fear of God in Latin America. Additionally, it must be stated that this doctrine came along with the Gospel from the West along with its western approach. Most adequately, reverence is closer related to worship and respect than to the fear of God. Conclusively, definitions do vary according to contexts, languages and religious backgrounds, as it is clearly the case here.

Conclusion

Throughout this study the fear of God was analysed in a variety of contexts and it was also scrutinised contextually, semantically and theologically. Consequently, in this final section, a brief summary of the fear of God in Isaiah will be presented.

The fear of God in Isaiah is described as a treasure (33:6) and as a ‘delight’ (11:3). Furthermore, it is experienced in godliness and piety (11:2-3; 33:6) and it is reflected in obedience and trust as it is commanded and commended by God (8:12-13; 25:3; 50:10; 59:19; 63:17; 66:2, 5). The fear of God also stands as a promise for the “ruthless foreigners” (25:3; 59:19) and for idolatrous Israel as well (29:23). In this regard, having no ‘fear of God’ derives in

idolatry, feigned religion and corrupted leadership (2:10, 19, 21; 8:12; 29:13; 33:14; 57:11). Hence, God's wrath in judgement, captivity, exile and destruction are the cup to drink as consequence of such degeneration (2:10, 19, 21; 33:14).

Throughout this passages it has been recognised that emotions do play a major role in the understanding of the fear of God. This allows to broaden the understanding on why the fear of God is commanded or commended. In this regard, the godly's fear of God and the consequent fear of failing our greatest love is a divine blessing, the ultimate and beneficial fear for all the godly.

This is certainly one positive side of the fear of God spectrum, it is a dread that evolves. The student has suggested the fact that the godly's fear of God is developed through time and particularly, through the knowledge of the thrice holy. This is proposed as "Stages" and it has been explained in different parts of this research.

Several more characteristics and consequences of the fear of God could have been stated here; nevertheless, these have already been amply highlighted in chapters two and three. Notwithstanding, the Messiah raises high the centrality of the fear of God as he personally incarnated and exemplified it in 11:2-3; moreover, he delighted in the fear of God (11:3) and in 50:10 God is to be feared and he is to be obeyed.

In order to conclude, the fear of God is widely interpreted as reverence or as to stand in awe, but it is my suggestion that it is also closer to fear than it is accepted. While in search of a paradigm for Peru's evangelical church it shall

been stated that the fear of God loses its centrality when translated as reverence in Latin American Spanish speaking countries. Reverence is used as religious veneration of Mary, the saints and even politicians. It is closely related to respect, veneration or the bending one's knees before a powerful or a much respected person.

In order to conclude, I must categorically state that the fear of God qualifies as a paramount theological subject but also as an attitude, emotion and response which should be standardised as a key doctrine *sine qua non* to understand God's holiness and walk in His ways by means of obedience.

Consequently, my closing words accept that Isaiah's fear of God relates to awe, reverence, obedience and worship but as encompassed within the fear of God. Thus said:

The "fear of the Lord" is the acknowledgement of the significance of God, putting him in his proper place of lordship over the world and one's life. *It is not terror, but neither is mere reverence.*³⁶⁷

The case to fear God is relevant:

"There is sometimes a need to fear God boldly!"³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 234. (Emphasis added)

³⁶⁸ L. Wilson, *Job*, 266.

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