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The Dynamism of Salvation according to Isa 12:1-6

Dynamizm zbawienia według Iz 12,1-6

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STRESZCZENIE: Iz 12,1-6 to pieśń wysławiająca Boga, który jest doświadczany przez proroka i jego słuchaczy jako zbawienie. Szczególnym znakiem tej zbawczej obecności Boga jest Syjon. To tam są usytuowane „źródła zbawienia”, z których „będą czerpać z radością” adresaci pieśni. W kontekście Izajaszowej metaforyki wody związanej ze Syjonem Bóg objawia się jako zbawienie poprzez swoje słowa, którymi wzywa człowieka do porzucenia lęku i oparcia się wyłącznie na potęgę Jego osoby. To orędzie Iz 12,1-6 zostało odczytane poprzez usytuowanie tej pieśni wewnątrz Księgi Izajasza, następnie poprzez analizę kompozycji pieśni w relacji do motywów soteriologicznych w niej obecnych, wreszcie poprzez analizę egzegetyczną, która skupiła się na trzech elementach: dynamice świadectwa o Bogu Zbawcy, charakterystyce Boga jako Zbawienie i tożsamości „źródeł zbawienia” na Syjonie.

KEYWORDS: Book of Isaiah, Isa 12, metaphor of water, salvation, exodus, Zion

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Księga Izajasza, Iz 12, metafora wody, zbawienie, wyjście, Syjon

The text of Isa 12:1-6 provides a song of praise to Yahweh. While the main motive of praise is salvation, the praise involves not only the individual prayer, but also their audience and through them – the whole earth. Salvation has a relative dimension because it is identified with God, who himself is salvation for his people. This song incorporates a number of genres, which together form a song of individual thanksgiving. Just like some similar psalms, this song is timeless in its nature as it describes the paradigmatic deliverance on the part of God. To establish the principle elements of the salvific action of God, the article will discuss the position of Isa 12 in the historical and literary contest. Subsequently, on the ground of the following analysis of the passage structure, the text will present three aspects of the dynamism of salvation: salvation as experienced by the prophet, the character of God as tantamount to salvation and the means of salvation offered to the people.

I. The Context of Isa 12:1-6

In the opinion of many commentators, Isa 12 is a summary or conclusion for Isa 1–11¹. This passage modifies the tone of the previous oracles which first of all predict punishment. This prediction is not, however, the last word of God communicated by the prophet, because the ultimate message is one of salvation. The reversal of the perspective is seen when Chapter 1 is put together with Chapter 12, thus making inclusion for the first part of the Book of Isaiah. Yahweh, whom Israel didn't "know" (1:3), is now "known" by his people and other nations (12:4,5). Rejected by Israel as the "Holy One of Israel" (1:4), he now confirms his presence among them as the "Holy One of Israel" (12:6). In this way, Zion, the corrupt city full of injustice (cf. 1:7-9,21,26-27), will be once again the city of Yahweh (cf. 12:6). Zion will not suffer the scarcity of water any longer, for it will "draw water from the springs of salvation" (12:3). The term salvation repeated three times as the designation of the reality of God (cf. *yāšûâ* in 12:2 [*bis*], 3), refers also to the name of the prophet Isaiah (*yāš'a'yāhû*) introduced in the beginning of Chapter 1.

The theme of salvation in Isa 12 cannot be, however, analyzed only retrospectively. There are some terms and motives which are not mentioned in the previous chapters, but they are reiterated in the following parts of the book especially Chapters 40–55, which are traditionally bound with the anonymous prophet of the exile called Deutero-Isaiah. In this part some terms introduced in Isa 12 become key-words for Deutero-Isaiah². A good example is the verb *nāham* in the *Piel* which appears for the first time in Isa 12:1, where the prophet asks God for "consolation". The positive response is to be found only in Isa 40:1, where God encourages to "console his people". From that point on the consolation is one of the fundamental issues of the prophetic proclamation³. Hence, Chapter 12 plays the role of both caesura

- 1 Isa 12 is treated as a summary by: E. König, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Gütersloh 1926), 169; G. T. Shepard, "The Anti-Assyrian Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1–39," *JBL* 104 (1985): 197-198; L. Alonso Schökel and J. L. Sicre Diaz, *I Profeti* (Commenti biblici; 3rd ed.; Roma 1996), 188; whereas it is seen as a conclusion by K. Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja* (KHCAT 10; Tübingen – Freiburg – Leipzig 1900), 117; R. J. Marshall, "The Structure of Isaiah 1–12," *BR* 7 (1962): 19; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12. A Commentary* (OTL; 4th ed.; London 1996), 269; R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (Grand Rapids, Mich. – London 1980), 128.
- 2 The relation between Isa 12 and Isa 40–55 is the subject of analysis conducted by R. Rendtorff, "Zur Komposition des Buches Jesaja," *VT* 34 (1984): 294-300; H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford 1994), 119-125.
- 3 This verb appears in Isa 1:24 but is used in the *Niphal* with a different meaning ("take vengeance"). After Isa 12:1 it appears only in Isa 22:4, but there the prophet is lamenting because of the lack of comfort. The situation changes in Isa 40. From this moment on "consolation" is

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and a link between different parts of the book, particularly in the perspective of Isa 40–55.

The composite nature of Isa 12 and its position in the structure of the book clarify the fact that in the case of this chapter it is difficult to unanimously assume the authorship of Isaiah⁴. At the same time, there is still no consensus among the exegetes regarding the process of redaction and the historical context of Isa 12. Some commentators indicate the Josianic background of the song in the view of the connection of Isa 12 to Isa 11:10-16, the text, which proclaims the territorial expansion of Judah, the cessation of enmity between Ephraim and Judah (cf. 11:13-14), the return of the exiles from Assyria and Egypt (cf. 11:11-12,16) and the end of the Assyria empire (cf. 11:15). This situation corresponds to the decadent period of Assyria which fell down following the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C.E. The scenario predicated in this fragment finds its partial realization during the reign of Josiah, the king of Judah (641-609), who makes use of the weakness of Assyria for the reform and restoration of his kingdom. In this context, Isa 12 would be a song of thanksgiving to God for national restoration⁵. According to M. A. Sweeney, the liturgical character of the passage indicates that it may have played a role in Josiah's Passover celebration, giving support to his political and religious reforms⁶.

The above-mentioned standpoint assumes that Isa 11:10-16 stems from the Josianic time, but it does not make allowances for its redactional character. The list of the exiled Hebrews in Isa 11:11 is in fact based on the postexilic diaspora⁷. The tension between Judah and Ephraim is to be situated after the exile (cf. 11:13-14) and it is confirmed in the Book of Nehemiah⁸. The announcement of the return from the exile in Isa 11:15 is not compatible with the next verse: whereas in v. 15 the first exile through the Red Sea is indicated as a paradigm, in v. 16 there is a perspective of

truly experienced by the recipients of the prophetic message (cf. *nāham* in 40:1 [bis]; 49:13; 51:3 [bis], 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:6; 61:2; 66:13 [ter]).

- 4 There are a few commentators who follow this opinion, among them: A. Penna, *Isaia* (La Sacra Bibbia; Torino – Roma 1964), 147; E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1–18* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich. 1965), 401; J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1–39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich. 1986), 291.
- 5 Cf. G.T. Sheppard, “The Anti-Assyrian Redaction”, 194, 197-198; B.D. Sommer, *Allusions and Illusions. The Unity of the Book of Isaiah in Light of Deutero-Isaiah's Use of Prophetic Tradition*, in *New Vision of Isaiah* (eds. R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney) (JSOT.Sup 214; Sheffield 1996), 174, n. 37; M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids, Mich. – Cambridge 1996), 203, 209-210.
- 6 Cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 209-210.
- 7 Cf. H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12* (CC; Minneapolis, Mich. 1991), 488-489; W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12* (HThKAT; Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2003), 320.
- 8 Cf. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 319-320.

the journey through the wilderness on the route called *māsillā*. This type of road, constructed with piled rocks, was known only in the Persian period⁹. Therefore, the subsequent additions in Isa 11:10-16 encourage to postpone the time of if not the origin, then for sure of the redaction of the song in question.

This direction of interpretation is suggested by the exegetes who emphasize the connection between Isa 12 and the other parts of the Book of Isaiah, especially chap. 40–55. The most radical opinion is expressed by H. G. M. Williamson, according to whom the author of Isa 12 is Deutero-Isaiah¹⁰. The discussed chapter should be a sort of conclusion of the first part of the book, anticipating the themes presented in the Isaiah scroll. The other commentators are more cautious in that matter. They accept the anthological nature of the song¹¹ and claim that the salvation it delineates describes the situation of the people after the exile. The only problem is the exact time of the creation of Isa 12. Some exegetes espouse the period immediately after the decree of Cyrus (538 B.C.E.) when the realisation of the Isaiah's promises was still *in actu*¹². Others expose the presentation of Zion in Isa 12, which corresponds to the situation of rebuilt Jerusalem¹³. Another group of commentators notices the openness of Isa 12 to the foreign nations similar to Isa 63–66 which can be understood as a polemical voice against the nationalism of the postexilic community in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah¹⁴.

All the mentioned commentators shift the writing of Isa 12 to the post-exilic period on the basis of the presupposition that the author of this song wrote it from the perspective of the fulfilled promises of the new exodus, supplementing the salvific vision with the experience of the repatriates from Babylonia in the rebuilt Jerusalem. However, in the intention of its author the analysed song is a prophetic text open to the fulfilment of its message. This is clearly underlined in Isa 12:1, where the prophet first talks about the anger of God which falls upon him now, and then asks God: “Turn away your wrath, so that you comfort me”. For many commentators such a formulation is inappropriate for the thanksgiving psalm, but the *iussivum*-form (*yāšōb*) leaves no doubt that the future salvific event is being

⁹ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 497; Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 323.

¹⁰ Cf. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 123.

¹¹ Cf. P. Auvray, *Isaïe 1–39* (SB; Paris 1972), 150; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 502.

¹² Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 269; cf. G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (ICC; Edinburgh 1912) 229; H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 508.

¹³ Cf. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 129.

¹⁴ Cf. U. Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS 16; Freiburg 1998), 134, 545.

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envisaged¹⁵. In that context, the anger of God is objectified in the experience of the exile. The semantic and theological ties with Deutero-Isaiah appear to support the Babylonian exile as a historical context for Isa 12. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the redactor responsible for the present position of Isa 12 relates it with the hazard posed by Assyria to Israel. The prophecy about the end of the Assyrian domination in Isa 11:10-16 was subjected to different *relectures*, which transferred it to the period of the Babylonian hegemony. Hence, the present shape of Isa 12 is the result of many re-readings of the song originally composed in the historical context of the Assyrian period. Therefore, the interpretation of the salvific motives in Isa 12 should stem from the historical Isaiah, with whom Isa 12 is connected through its conclusive function in regard to Chapters 1–11.

2. The Rhetoric of Salvation in the Light of the Composition of Isa 12

The text of Isa 12 is composed of two parts: vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-6. They are both introduced with the syntagm: “you will say on that day” (*wəʾāmartā*, v. 1; *waʾāmartem*, v. 4). The function of the initial term is done with the use of the verb *yādā* in the *Hiphil* – “praise” (*ʾōdkā*, w. 1; *hōdū*, v. 4), whose object is the name of Yahweh. Each of these two parts contains a change of the addressee. Whereas in vv. 1-2 the subject appears in the 1st-person singular, in v. 3 it shifts to 2nd-person plural, which continues in vv. 4-5. The last verse (v. 6) addresses once again an individual in 2nd-person singular. The unit of vv. 1-2 is confirmed by the name of Yahweh as the extreme term. These two verses are also tied by a subordinate causal clause (conjunction *kī*), which in v. 1 introduces the motive of praise of God and in v. 2 the motive of trust in God. The name of Yahweh takes the position of the extreme term in vv. 4-5. The structural unit of these two verses is reinforced by the repetition of the verb *yādaʿ* in *Hiphil* (“make known”) completed by the adverbial of place (“among the peoples”, v. 4; “throughout the whole earth”, v. 5). Hence, it is possible to consider two parts of the song as parallel (vv. 1-3.4-6). Together the delimited four pieces form a rhetoric figure ABA'B'. The semantic relations create a parallelism between vv. 1-2 (A) and vv. 4-5 (A') as well as between v. 3 (B) and v. 6 (B').

¹⁵ The *iussivus* is accepted in a few commentaries, cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 500; L. Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza 1–39. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz* (PŚST 9.1; Poznań 1996), 270.

The semantic connection between the pieces A and A' is established by the narrative formula: "you will say on that day" (vv. 1.4) which introduces two speeches "praising" God. In spite of their parallelism, they present two different communicating situations. The praising subject in A is in 1st-person singular, whereas in A' – in 2nd-person plural. The utterance of the individual in A is a real act of praise (*ʾôdkā – yiqtol* in v. 1), while the collective subject in A' is invited to encourage the "nations" (v. 4) and the "whole earth" (v. 5) to praise God (*hōdû – imperative* in v. 4).

The motives of praise to God is also articulated differently in the examined pieces. Piece A consists of the causal sentence mentioning the anger of God which touched the individual ("you have been angry with me"). The object of the petition is the change of this situation, which is still to happen in the future (cf. v. 1b), but the prayer already recognises "his salvation" in God (v. 2). It is expected of the community to participate in this salvation and to call the others to extol Yahweh (v. 4). As an argument they should recall "his deeds" (*ʾālilōtāyw*, v. 4) and the "splendid things" (*gēʾūt*, v. 5) through which "his name will be exalted" (*nišgāb šəmô*, v. 5). So, the analysed parallel pieces present two acts of praise which are different in relation to the speaking subject, the motivation of the praise and its temporal context. At the same time the parallel elements permit to see a certain progress between these utterances. This becomes perceptible, if one takes into account the parallelism of the pieces B and B'.

In piece B a new 2nd-person plural subject appears, though without the precise designation of its identity. From the syntactic point of view, the subject must be identical to the one present in v. 4. This results from the same *weqatal* form of the verb opening these verses (*ušəʾabtem*, v. 3; *waʾamartem*, v. 4). A similar change of the subject can be noticed in piece B': there is a transition of the addressee of the imperatives from 2nd-person plural to 2nd-person singular. This new subject is designated as the "inhabitant of Zion" (*yōšebet šiyôn*, v. 6). Syntactically, this collective figure is connected to the community which is ordered in v. 4 to invite other nations to praise God. Therefore, the subjects present in v. 3 and v. 6, although grammatically different, rhetorically seem to be identical. The parallelism between the discussed units is constructed also by the adverbials of place. "Zion" from v. 6 functions as the geographical context for the "springs of salvation" in v. 3. Finally, the pieces B and B' are unified by the joy experienced by their common addressee. Expressed by the noun *šāšôn* in v. 3, this joy is said to accompany *explicite* the subject in its "drawing water from the springs of salvation". In v. 6 the joy appears *implicite*, evoked by imperative forms of the verbs *šāhal* and *rānan* ("cry out and shout").

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In the light of the above analysis, the structure of Isa 12 could be presented in the following way:

- A (vv. 1-2) the subject in the 1st-person singular praises Yahweh – his salvation
- B (v. 3) the joy of the subject in the 2nd-person plural because of the access to the “springs of salvation”
- A’ (vv. 4-5) the subject in the 2nd-person plural invites people to praise Yahweh
- B (v. 6) the joy of the “inhabitant of Zion” because of the presence of the “Holy One of Israel” in their midst.

The parallel composition is only seemingly static. The parallel relations not only reinforce the theological key-motives of this text, but also develop them. Two parallel acts of speech (vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-6) constitute in fact the record of one speech act uttered by the subject in the 1st-person singular (v. 1)¹⁶. Praising Yahweh, who has become his salvation (v. 2), he addresses his audience to proclaim to them the access to the “springs of salvation” (v. 3). At the end of the speech they are identified as the inhabitants of Zion (v. 6). In this way, the presence among them the “Holy One of Israel” (v. 6) corresponds to the soteriological metaphor of water in v. 3. This salvific experience is to become a fundament of the invitation to praise God, which they have to direct to other nations (vv. 4-5). Hence, the increasing range of the praise of Yahweh is inscribed in two expanding circles. It starts from the subject speaking in the 1st-person, then it is widened by his audience, who is finally identified with the “inhabitant of Zion”, through whom the knowledge of Yahweh should reach other people. The second circle has a geographical dimension: its centre is Zion, which as a soteriological space includes the “spring of salvation” and which in the end is distended to the “whole world”.

3. The expanding testimony to God, the Saviour

The lyrical subject of Isa 12 is the person addressed by the opening order: “you will say on that day”. The speech act of this subject announces the future presence of other speakers, who together with him will create a chain of persons praising God: the subject in the 2nd-person plural (vv. 2-4a), identical with

¹⁶ Cf. A. L. H. M. van Wieringen, *Isaiah 12,1-6. A Domain and Communication Analysis*, in Fs. W. A. M. Beuken, *Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (BETHL 82; Leuven 1997), 158-160; Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 330-331.

the “inhabitant of Zion” (sg.f., v. 6), addresses the next subject in 2nd-person plural (vv. 4b-5b), whose recipient are the “nations” (v. 4b) and the “whole earth” (v. 5b). There is a conviction among the exegetes that the individual speaker in vv. 1b-2 is a collective figure, identical with the group speaking in the following pieces of the song. This “I” does not seem to be different from the “I” of the orant in the psalms¹⁷. In the Psalter, the function of the “I” is to unify in himself the community of Israel, who for God is not an anonymous mass, but is always perceived through the experience of individual humans who co-create it. If there were a formal difference among the individual speakers present in Isa 12, it would appear inside the members of the same community of Israel. For H. Wildberger, the “I” in this song is the inner community which stands alongside the “you” (pl.) – the general population of the people of God. The first group he calls the “Israel of the spirit”, while the second – the “Israel of the flesh”¹⁸. A step further in this specification is made by J.D. Watts. In his opinion, whereas the singular masculine in vv. 1b-2 refers to the city of Zion, the plural masculine in v. 3 is linked with the male inhabitants of Zion (presumably the priests) and the feminine indication *yōšebēt šiyḡôn* in v. 6 with the female inhabitants of Zion¹⁹. Regardless of these efforts, in order to identify the singular voices inside the song, Israel as the lyrical subject would be identical with the Remnant of Israel – considered as the community of the Second Temple or as the messianic people²⁰ – praising God for the fulfilment of the promise of salvation.

The interpretation of the “I” speaking in Isa 12 as the collective subject representing Israel is confronted with certain criticism, which found its detailed expression especially in the article of A. van Wieringen from 1997²¹, who analysed the speech acts of the song on the basis of the *verba dicendi*, the changing of the direction of speech and the role of the narrator. Each

¹⁷ Cf. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 230; Auvray, *Isaïe 1–39*, 149; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 270; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 502.

¹⁸ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 502-503.

¹⁹ Cf. J. D. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33. Revised Edition* (WBC 24; Nashville, Tenn. 2005), 219-221.

²⁰ The designation of the Remnant of Israel comes from B. S. Childs, *Isaiah. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky. – London – Leiden 2001), 109; of the people of Second Temple from Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 270; of the messianic people from: J. Fischer, *Das Buch Isaias. Kapitel 1–39* (HSAT 7/1.1; Bonn 1937), 108, cf. F. Delitzsch, *Commentar über das Buch Jesajas* (BCAT 3.1; Leipzig 1889), 199; Young, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1–18*, 401. Without a more specific indication Israel is proposed by B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (GHAT 3.1; 4th ed.; Göttingen 1922), 84; O. Procksch, *Jesaja I* (KAT 11.1; Leipzig 1930), 160; S. H. Widyapranawa, *Isaiah 1–39. The Lord Is Savior: Faith in National Crisis* (ITC: Grand Rapids, MI – Edinburgh 1990), 73.

²¹ Cf. van Wieringen, *Isaiah 12, 1–6*, 149-172. The same direction is taken by P. Höffen, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kapitel 1–39* (NSK.AT 18.1; Stuttgart 1993), 126; C. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39* (Interpretation; Louisville 1993), 113; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York 2000), 270; Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 329-331.

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of the speakers mentioned in the song is different and is placed in versatile communicative situations, which results from different recipients of their utterances and from different motives for their praise of God. A. van Wieringen begins the discussion of the identity of the individual speaker with a critical assessment of the proposal to see in the “I” of the song the ideal king, who as an exemplary Israelite, speaks to his people²². Following van Wieringen, it is possible to assume that the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the future royal descendent in Chapters 7, 9 and 11 represent a dynamic unity. However, there is no allusion to the person foretold there. What is more, the last of these oracles in Isa 11:1-9 is a form of climax which concludes the whole set.

The position of Isa 12 in relation to the previous part of the book induces the readers to look in chap. 1–11 for a formal starting point for the identification of the person speaking. The starting point is the order to speak in 12:1a (*wəʾāmartā*), which appeared before in 6:9 and 7:4, both addressed to Isaiah²³. In the first text the form describes the fundament of the prophetic communication with the people. The second text reports the culminating point of the activity of Isaiah, who addresses his words to king Ahaz. Repeated for the third time in 12:1, the order makes a natural allusion to these two instances, simultaneously building a new communicative situation. The situation is analogous with the one mentioned by the prophet at the end of his *Denkschrift* (8:16-18). The expanding circle of the recipients and at the same time witnesses of the Isaiah words, corresponds to the paradigmatic model of the prophetic communication of Isaiah. Isaiah himself should incorporate the word of God in his life. His witnesses will be a faithful group of Israelites (vv. 3-4a), called the “inhabitant of Zion” (v. 6a). Through them the word of God should reach the whole Israel (cf. vv. 4b-5) and in this way become known among the nations (cf. vv. 4b.5b).

In this context, there arises a question regarding the content of testimony given by Isaiah in Chapter 12. It consists not only of the verbal material, but also of the attitude of Isaiah, who becomes a sign for Israel.

The fundamental subject of the Isaiah testimony is the anger of Yahweh. Paradoxically, the anger is the cause of the prophetic “praising” (*ʾōdkā*) of God (“because you have been angry with me”, v. 1b). This statement is comprehensible when the significance of that anthropathism and the semantics of the verb *yāḏā* in *Hiphil* are explained. The anger of Yahweh is a metaphor of the divine action in the context of the relation of the covenant. The reaction of Yahweh is neither emotional nor arbitrary. This is indicated by the

²² Cf. van Wieringen, *Isaiah 12,1-6*, 163-165.

²³ Cf. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 333.

sentence repeated several times in the previous oracles of Isaiah that the anger of God in front of the sin of Israel “has not been turned away and his hand is yet raised” (5:25; 9:11, 16,20; 10:4). The cause of this is that “the people don’t turn back to him who struck them, not do they seek Yahweh Sabaoth” (9:12). The divine wrath experienced by Isaiah seems to be a consequence of the solidarity of the prophet with the sinful people, which manifests itself when during his call he confesses to be “a man of unclean lips” (6:5). Thanks to God’s forgiveness and purification, Isaiah asks now that Yahweh “turn away his wrath” and in so doing “comfort him” (v. 1b). On the one hand, it is a recognition that humans themselves are unable to come back to God (cf. 9:12). On the other hand, the request transforms into the act of faith in God who “comforts” (*nāḥam* in *Piel*). It is not only a matter of verbal or spiritual consolation. In the light of other appearances of this verb in the Book of Isaiah the comfort of God puts an end to human guilt and to the punishment related to it (cf. 40:1). It is also an expression of God’s remembering the sinner (cf. 49:13-15), the act which turns out to be redemption (*gāʾal* in 52:9).

Faced with God’s anger the prophet discovers the truth about God desiring salvation for his people. In this perspective, it is clear why Isaiah is “praising” the wrath of God. The verb *yādā* in *Hiphil*, which in the Psalter functions as the technical term to utter thanksgiving and praise to God, defines the “recognition” and “acknowledgement” of Yahweh as the source of kindness and mercy, deliverance and forgiveness, and finally – the source of life²⁴. Recognising the reality of God’s anger, the prophet acknowledges its cause – sin, and passes on to the confession of faith in Yahweh who wants to offer a new life to Israel. The punishment involves at the same time the certainty of salvation.

This conviction is presented in v. 2, where the prophet speaks about his confidence and refusal of fear (*ʿebṭah wālōʾ ʿepḥād*). Once again his behaviour assumes the value of the paradigm for the audience. In this way, Isaiah “doesn’t follow their path” (8:11), the path which turned out to be written with fear and lack of trust in God. This negative attitude of the king and the people is shown in the previous chapters by the use of the pairs of verbs *yārāʾ* and *ʾāman* in *Hiphil*. King Ahaz rejects the invitation to keep calm (7:4) and so do the people (8:12; cf. 10:24). Ahaz does not accept the encouragement to confide in Yahweh (7:9) and as a result, his and the people’s hearts shake in front of only apparent threat (7:2; cf. 8:6, 12). Meanwhile, on the example of his own attitude Isaiah shows the right relationship with God. Its fullest expression is expressed in the later testament of Isaiah (30:8). As the way to salvation in 30:5 the prophet

24 Cf. G. Mayer, 777, *TWAT* 4:460-464.

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indicates “repentance and rest” (*šûbâ wānaḥat*), as well “quietness and trust” (*hašqēt ûbēbiṭhâ*). The salvation is then not an abstract but a relational reality, built upon the trust in Yahweh who is people’s salvation. This trust is revealed also by the name of Isaiah (*yāša’yāhû* in 1:1), which corresponds to his confession that God is his salvation (*’ēl yāšû’ātî* in 12:2).

The experience of Yahweh as salvation in which Isaiah participates in person is shown in his testimony as a real possibility for his audience. Among the audience there is not only Israel (or its part seen as the Remnant) but also the pagan nations. The prophet’s confession of faith consists not solely of the communication of his personal testimony, because it also aims to demonstrate the salvific competence of God towards the whole world.

4. The characterisation of God as salvation

Isaiah does not limit himself to the personal experience of deliverance, but appeals also to the testimony of faith given by the community of Israel throughout its history. In the discussed song, which uses the cultic and thus stereotypical language, it is possible, however, to spot the fundamental components of the Israel’s credo.

The source of the orant’s trust is first of all the exodus. This event is recalled in v. 2b, which is the verbatim repetition from the Mose’s “Song at the Sea” (cf. Exod 15:2). The citation does not expose the exodus as such, but rather recollects the might of Yahweh, which proved to be the rescue for the Israelites (cf. Exod 15:19) and the destruction in the Red Sea for the Egyptians pursuing them (cf. Exod 15:1b, 4-5, 8-10). God is more than someone who only grants help, for in him help is personified²⁵, and being exalted in the song, it self-dispenses to the orant²⁶. For that reason, this original, and thus fundamental experience of the strength of Yahweh, permanently entered the cult and assumed the shape of a liturgical formula, which is attested by its appearance in Ps 118:14. In the liturgy of the Second Temple the acclamation is already fixed. As a thanksgiving formula, it praises not only the deliverance, but ultimately also the victory by the power of God. Thanks to the terms synonymous to *’ōz*, in the psalms this acclamation has a military connotation: Yahweh as a “strength” of the psalmist is his “shield” (*māḡinnî* in Ps 28:7), “fortress” (*mišgabbî* in Ps 59:18; 62:7) and “refuge”

²⁵ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 504.

²⁶ Cf. W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 2; New York 1998), 512.

(*maḥsī* in Ps 62:8). In this context, the recalling of the crossing the Red Sea serves in Isa 12 to present a paradigm of God's activity towards his people, creating in this way the basis for the trustful request to God in front of the approaching new exodus (cf. Isa 11:10-16).

Isa 12:4b second invitation to praise Yahweh and to call upon his name also entered into the liturgical language. It is literally appropriated by Ps 105:1 and then by 1 Ch 16:8. A number of exegetes assumes that the Isaiah song quotes Ps 105:1²⁷, but the acclamation of Isa 12:4b inscribes itself in the multiple psalmic summons to the nation of Israel, dispersed all over the world and called upon to praise the deeds of God (cf. Ps 9:12; 57:10; 77:15). In the light of the list of the divine acts extolled in Ps 105, this text seems to be post-exilic, employing the priestly tradition²⁸. Hence, the original historical-salvific context of that formula is not to be found in Ps 105, which starts from the covenant with the patriarchs (vv. 6.8-11.42) only to concentrate on the deeds through which Yahweh realizes the promise of the land he gave them (vv. 11.43-45). In Isa 12 the historical-salvific perspective is delimited by the noun *ʿāḥilōt* (“deeds”, v. 4b) and hence more narrow. This noun appears in the psalms always in the context of the crossing of the sea, recognizing in that event the first and fundamental act performed by God in the history of Israel. The exodus is not exclusively the experience of Israel. Although there is no direct mention of the pharaoh, the allusion to his pride ignoring the authority of Yahweh is to be found in the parallel description of the divine deeds in v. 5a: *ḡēʾūt* (“magnificent things”). In the light of its occurrences in Isa 26:10 and Ps 93:1 the acts described by this noun express the royal power of God. In the event of exodus Yahweh reveals himself as the Lord of the history. Therefore, his name is “exalted” (*nišgāb*, v. 4b). The idea of the rule of God denoted by the verb *šāgāb* is evoked previously in Isa 2, which announces the exaltation of Yahweh, who will lower the human pride by his action towards Israel (vv.11.17; cf. 33:5).

Israel's trust in God is founded not only upon the deeds of God which reveal his might in history. Through his actions Yahweh makes his name known to the people of Israel. The name of Yahweh reappears several times throughout the song (vv. 1a.2b.4a.5a) and at the song's end there occurs the title of the “Holy One of Israel” (v. 6b). The analysis of the appearances of the term “name” (*šēm*) used in relation to God in the Book of Isaiah provides a more profound characteristic of the divine name. The name does not embrace

²⁷ Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 506; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 270.

²⁸ It results from the omission of events connected to the sinaitic covenant, instead of which the covenant with Abraham is exposed, cf. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60–150* (CC; Minneapolis 1993), 309.

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exclusively the semitic concept, according to which the noun “name” would be a surrogate to the person of Yahweh²⁹. The content of the divine “name” in Isa 12:4 is suggested first of all by the syntagm “to call on someone name” (*qārā’ + bāšēm*). This expression resurfaces in Isa 43:1 and from divine perspective describes God’s relationship with Israel. The calling upon someone name is possible only when there is a relationship of reciprocal adhesion between the caller and the addressee³⁰. The reciprocal knowledge of the name implies their intimacy and familiarity. In spite of the fact that there is no direct reference to the covenant, its presence is presupposed exactly through the idea of the “name”, in which is inscribed also the attachment of Israel to Yahweh. The covenant is seen not only as a punctual event, but as a relationship being made real throughout the whole history of Israel with Yahweh “making for himself a name” (Isa 63:12, 14; cf. 25:1). This results in some risk, because in a certain sense the recognition of the name of God in the world depends on the attitude of Israel and its involvement in the relation with God. Thus, the name of Yahweh is insulted when his people break the covenant and as a consequence suffer punishment (cf. Isa 52:5-6; 66:5). In the eyes of the nations the disasters inflicted upon the chosen people, and especially the necessity to leave its own country (cf. Ez 36:20), are the proof of Yahweh’s weakness. The reputation of his name becomes for God one of the principle motives of his soteriological action towards Israel (Isa 48:9). The same will be asked for by the people, when they comprehend their vital dependence on God (Isa 64:6; cf. 26:13), similar to a filial relationship (cf. Isa 63:16; 64:7).

The closing sentence of Isa 12 – “for great is in your midst the Holy One of Israel” (v. 6b) – takes the role not only of the argument in favour of praising Yahweh. It is a conclusion of the confession of faith made in the song. The central truth of the credo is the holiness of God which belongs to him in the absolute degree, as expressed by the adjective “holy” (*qāḏōš*) repeated three times in relation to God in the acclamation of the seraphim during the prophetic call of Isaiah (Isa 6:3). In the Book of Isaiah as well as in the whole Hebrew Bible, the holiness is not a static quality of God, which establishes the opposition of God to the people or his separation from them. The holiness unveils the dynamic action of God, who is interested in leading the chosen people towards the vital relationship with himself. The appearances of the title “Holy One of Israel” in the previous chapters induce the readers to consider holiness as attribute connected with the covenant of Yahweh with

²⁹ This is the interpretation followed by Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 27; Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 129; Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza 1–39*, 271.

³⁰ Cf. Isa 41:25; 43:7; 44:5; 48:1; 65:1.

Israel. On the one hand, it is the element which verifies the persistence of Israel in the covenant with God. The people broke the covenant when they “despised the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 1:4). The rejection of the holiness of Yahweh took place in the moment of violation of the divine justice by the chosen people (Isa 5:16). The sins of Israel seem to almost call in question the holiness of God, provocatively reproaching him for the lack of reaction against the people’s offences (Isa 5:19). These offences will be, however, punished and Yahweh will reveal His holiness restoring the order established by his law and justice (*tôrâ* and *ʾimrâ* in Isa 5:24; cf. 29:19). On the other hand, the existence of Israel depends on the holiness of God, because its pre-condition is the “reliance (*šāʿan*) on the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 10:20). This “reliance” means the recognition and approbation of Yahweh and his laws as the fundament of the social life of Israel (Isa 30:12; cf. 3:1). In the context of international relations the reliance demands from Israel to remain in the covenant with Yahweh as the only faithful and trustful guarantee of their life (Isa 31:1; 36:6; cf. 17:7).

Such an expression of the divine holiness is not a virtual reality for Israel, because it materialises “in their midst” (*baqirbēk* w Isa 12:6b). The “personal” localization of the Holy One of Israel is comprehensible in the context of the previous invitation directed to the “inhabitant of Zion” to joyfully praise Yahweh (Isa 12:6a). Therefore, the presence of God is manifested by the material sign of Zion, which is mentioned before by the prophet as the dwelling place of the Holy One of Israel (cf. Isa 2:2-3; 8:18; 10:12). In this soteriological ambience the aquatic metaphor of “drawing water from the springs of salvation” (Isa 12:3) should be interpreted.

5. The Word of God as the “Springs of Salvation”

The interpretation of the “springs of salvation” is conducted in the exegesis in three directions: historical-salvific, cultic (ritual) and symbolic. The first two are interested not exactly in the metaphorical sense of the image, but in its genealogy.

In the instance of the first concept³¹ the attention is given to v. 2 of the song, where the acclamation of Exod 15:2 revoking the exodus is repeated. In the view of the record of the crossing of the Red Sea, the “springs of salvation”

³¹ Cf. Delitzsch, *Commentar über das Buch Jesajas*, 199; Young, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1–18*, 404-405; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 1–39*, 294; Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza 1–39*, 210; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 270; Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 335.

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seem to allude to Yahweh bringing out water from the rock in order to satisfy the people's thirst in the wilderness (cf. Exod 17:1-7; Num 20:1-11). A similar experience will become the privilege of the addressees the song, who will quench their thirst for life with the water of salvation.

The cultic background of the metaphor is based on two different rites. One of them is alluded in 1 Sam 7:6 (cf. 23:16)³². The text describes the ritual of community purification which takes place in Mizpah. The rite consists of fasting, confessing the guilt and water libation ("they drew water and poured it out before Yahweh"). While the libation was supposed to wash away guilt, there is no mention of such a practise in other biblical texts. Nevertheless, as confirmed by the extra-biblical sources (cf. *Sukkah* IV and V), a similar manipulation of water is known from the Feast of the Tabernacles³³. Each day water was drawn from the pool of Siloah and was poured into the basin of the great altar. During the procession to the temple the priest was chanting the acclamation of Isa 12:3. The sense of pouring out of water could be twofold. There was a belief that through the cleft into which it was poured the water was to reach the primordial water of creation and, according to Ez 47:2, in this way fill all the reservoirs of Palestine. The second explanation was connected with the agricultural character of the feast. The libation should have a magical sense – the assurance of the autumn rainfall. The cultic interpretation constructs a motivation parallel between the "water of salvation" and the pool of Siloah, or rather the Gihon spring, the water of which supplied the pool. But the commentaries do not explain the content of this metaphorical motivation and limit themselves to the statement that Yahweh is the source of living water.

This statement is in fact a symbolic explication of the metaphor, the third of the above-mentioned interpretative approaches to Isa 12:3³⁴. It makes a reference to the Jeremiah's depiction of Yahweh as the "fountain of water of life" (*məqôr mayim hayyîm* in Jer 2:13; 17:13). The symbol of the soteriological presence of God in Zion is here the water flowing from the temple. In reality, it was water drawn from the Gihon spring. In the Jerusalemite cult

³² Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 505.

³³ This explanation is proposed by König, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 168; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 272; Jacob, *Esaïe 1–12*, 170; Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza 1–39*, 271; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 269-270; Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 220.

³⁴ Cf. Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 116; Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 231; Procksch, *Jesaja I*, 161; P. Reymond, *L'eau, sa vie, et sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament* (VT.Sup 6; Leiden 1958), 237; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah 1–XXXIX* (Dublin 1941), 142; Penna, *Isaia*, 147; Auvray, *Esaïe 1–39*, 151; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 272; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 505; Jacob, *Esaïe 1–12*, 170; R. Kilian, *Jesaja 1–12* (NEchtB; Würzburg 1986), 93; Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza 1–39*, 271.

this water is celebrated as the source of life (cf. Ps 36:10; 87:7), whereas from the prophetic perspective it constitutes the source of eschatological renewal of the world (cf. Ez 47:1-12; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8). The exegetes who are in favour of the symbolic interpretation do not try to explain the difference between the symbolising image and the symbolised reality. Therefore, the question about the way in which God is the “spring of salvation” for Israel, as well as the one about the manifestation of God corresponding to this aquatic quality of salvation, remain open. The answer should first verify the metaphorising element and then establish its relation to the metaphorised person of Yahweh. It is also necessary to contextualize this metaphor in the Book of Isaiah.

In light of the structural analysis of Isa 12, the “springs of salvation” are situated in Zion. In his previous prophecies Isaiah has already mentioned some waters related to Zion. These are the “waters of Siloah” Isa (8:6) – the waters flowing slowly through the canal which joins the Gihon spring and the Siloah pool³⁵. In the context of the Syro-Ephraimitic War the prophet reproaches the people for “having rejected the waters of Siloah which flow along gently” and simultaneously “rejoicing in Rezin and the son of Remaliah” (Isa 8:6)³⁶. The criticism is aimed at this group of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who declare themselves in favour of the anti-Assyrian coalition of Syria and Ephraim. Previously, a similar critical opinion, the background of which is also the Siloah pool, appears in Isaiah’s prophecy addressed to king Ahaz (cf. Isa 7:3). Threatened with the invasion of Israel and Aram, the king looks for support from Assyria (cf. Isa 7:4-9). In both cases the king and the people reject Yahweh, who through the prophet invites them to abandon fear and to trust in him as the Lord of history. The people do not want to admit that the sovereigns of Israel and Syria (cf. Isa 7:8-9), as well as the king of Assyria (cf. Isa 8:7-8), depend entirely on Yahweh. Thus, the image of the “gently flowing waters of Siloah” describes the activity of God on behalf of his people, which manifests itself in the words of Isaiah. These could appear inconspicuous and frail compared to the human powers which

35 Cf. the discussion about the route of this canal and the localization of the Siloah pool in relation to the Gihon spring in: Z. Abells and A. Arbit, “Some New Thoughts on Jerusalem’s Ancient Water Systems,” *PEQ* 127 (1995): 2-7; D. Ussishkin, “The Water Systems of Jerusalem during Hezekiah’s Reign,” in Fs. H. Donner, *Meileustein* (AAT 30; Wiesbaden 1995), 294-303.

36 The textual problems of this verse are examined by: M.A. Sweeney, *On ûm’šôš in Isaiah 8,6*, in *Among the Prophets. Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings* (eds. P. R. Davies and D. J. A. Clines) (JSOT.Sup 144; Sheffield 1993), 42-54. He demonstrates the reason for the literal translation of the term *mšwš*, which the commentators usually emend to *mšwm* (“to tremble”). In this way the motif of joy built upon the stem *šwš* connects Is 8:6 to Isa 12:3.

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resemble the wind destroying forest trees (cf. Isa 7:2) or the catastrophic flood inundating Judah (cf. Isa 8:7-8)³⁷. Therefore, the phrase the “springs of salvation” underlines the salvific presence of Yahweh in Zion, which leads to the deliverance of the people from the danger of death and bestows them with a new life. Such an experience of God is evoked by the prophet at the beginning of the song. Recognising the fairness of the anger of God, Isaiah confesses his faith in God as his salvation (cf. Isa 12:1-2).

The revelation of Yahweh as salvation is, however, materialised neither by the water drawn from the Gihon spring, nor by the rite connected to it³⁸. The prophet criticises the people for “having rejected” (*māʾas*) the water of Siloah (Isa 8:6). In the context of human attempts to resolve the problem of danger on the part of the foreign troops, this conduct means the rejection of the word of Yahweh. The same verb appears in the oracles in which Isaiah blames his audience for “having refused” the word of God. This word is designated in Isa 5:24 as *tōraṭ yhwḥ* and *ʾimraṭ qəḏōš-yiśrāʾēl*, whereas in Isa 30:12 as *haddāḇār hazzē*. Thus, the reality of the divine word seems tantamount to the “springs of salvation”. They flow out in Zion, from where stem both the Law and the word of Yahweh (*tōrā ūḏəḇar-yhwḥ* in Isa 2:3). Through them God appears to be the “judge”, “lawgiver” and “king” of Israel, and in this way the One who “saves” them (Isa 33:22).

The identification of the salvific word of Yahweh as the “springs of salvation” emphasises the fact that in its activity it is similar to spring water. The image of the spring highlights not only the revitalising force of the word of God, but also this word’s permanent availability, its abundance and inexhaustibility. Everything one needs to do is to “draw” from it, which in the context of the song signifies trustful confidence in divine word and, thereby, in the salvific power of Yahweh this word communicates³⁹. These dynamics of the word of God is deepened in Isa 55.

37 A similar acquatic symbolism is used by Isaiah in relation to Assyria (cf. 7:20; 11:15), Egypt (cf. 7:18; 11:15; 19:4-8; 33:21) and Moab (cf. 15:6-9); cf. W. Pikor, *Soteriologiczna metafora wody w Księdze Izajasza* (Studia Biblica Lublinensia 4; Lublin 2009), 230-235.

38 H. Wildberger’s opinion about the sacramental character of the drawing of water during the Feast of the Tabernacles is doubtful: “The salvation transmitted here is something real; it opens up and guarantees ‘life’ in its fullness and power” (*Isaiah 1–12*, 505-506). In fact, the water drawn from the Gihon does not itself have a salvific value. The drawn water seems to be a sign-action which indicates the real “springs of salvation”. This is suggested by the above analysed acclamation of Is 12:3 used in the ritual.

39 Some exegetes maintain that from the diachronic perspective the sense of the “springs of salvation” extends over the whole prophecy marked with the name *yəšaʾyāhū*. In this sense from the redactional point of view, Isa 12:3 confirms the canonical status of the Book of Isaiah, cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 272; H.-P. Mathys, *Dichter und Beter. Theologen aus spätalttestamentlicher Zeit* (OBO 132; Freiburg 1994), 189; Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 335.

* * *

The song of praise in Isa 12 is a confession of faith in Yahweh. Trust arises from the recognition of the activity of God in the history of Israel. In the historical events Israel can still re-experience the might of God, especially in the exodus, through which God makes his name known to the world. The name of Yahweh is inextricably connected with Israel, which is confirmed by the title the “Holy One of Israel”. The title underlines the vital self-offering of God, who is dwelling among His people in Zion. In this context, the “springs of salvation” are the metaphor of the salvific action of God, who through his words calls the people to abandon fear and to lean exclusively on the strength of his person. The trust in the word of Yahweh permits Israel to “draw from the springs of salvation”.