Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12, Arguments Pro and Con for Second Isaiah (Isa 40-66) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12, Arguments Pro and Con for Second Isaiah (Isa 40-66), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Robert Vannoy's lecture explores arguments surrounding the authorship of Isaiah 40-66, often called Deutero-Isaiah. He analyzes differing concepts and linguistic styles, specifically addressing the use of certain words to argue for multiple authors. **Vannoy references scholars like Driver, Aalders, and Margalioth, who debate the significance of linguistic differences and similarities between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66.** Statistical linguistic analyses and their conflicting conclusions, as highlighted by Oswalt, are also considered, cautioning against overreliance on nascent computational methods. **The lecture pivots to the argument from historical background, noting the shift from Assyrian threats to Babylonian exile and the rise of Cyrus, questioning whether Isaiah could have written prophecies relevant to a distant future.** Ultimately, Vannoy suggests that arguments based on language or historical setting cannot conclusively prove or disprove single authorship.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.

Vannoy_MP_Session12.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12, Arguments Pro and Con for Second Isaiah (Isa 40-66)

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on the arguments for and against Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66).

Briefing Document: Arguments For and Against Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66)

Source: Excerpts from Robert Vannoy, *Major Prophets, Lecture 12*

Main Topic: This lecture explores the critical arguments surrounding the authorship of Isaiah 40-66, often referred to as Deutero-Isaiah, examining the evidence for both single and multiple authorship. Vannoy analyzes the arguments based on differing concepts, language/style, and historical background, and the issues with these arguments.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Arguments Based on Differing Concepts and Ideas:** Vannoy dismisses this as unconvincing, without citing any specifics from the source text.

2. **Arguments Based on Difference in Language and Style:** This is considered a more important argument, but also not conclusive. The claim is that Isaiah 40-66 uses different vocabulary and linguistic structures than Isaiah 1-39.

- **Specific Example: Use of 'Ani' vs. 'Anoki' (Forms of "I"):** Some scholars argue that the preference for "ani" over "anoki" in Isaiah 40-66 indicates a later, post-exilic date. However, Vannoy, referencing Aalders, counters that the usage of "ani" is prevalent in post-exilic books like Haggai and Zechariah, but also in Ezekiel, which is exilic. Therefore, the frequency of "ani" in Isaiah 40-66 compared to the earlier chapters does not definitively prove a later date; it might even suggest an earlier, pre-exilic date based on the comparison to Ezekiel. "In other words, it would seem to indicate that these chapters are earlier than Ezekiel."

- **Counterargument: Linguistic Agreements:** Vannoy mentions studies demonstrating linguistic agreements between the two sections of Isaiah. For example, the unique variant of "Thus says the Lord" ("kol yomer Adonai" with an imperfect tense) appears in both Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66. "It is a variant from a very common expression and occurs only in Isaiah and occurs in both sections of Isaiah." This suggests a potential unity of authorship.

- **Rachel Margalioth's Argument for Unity:** Margalioth argues strongly for the unity of Isaiah based on shared language and style. She criticizes the practice of attributing any shared expressions to Deutero-Isaiah, even when found in Isaiah 1-39. She claims the two sections are unified by enumerable like expressions peculiar to the whole book: "Not only are the two sections similar both in language and style, but they are remarkable for their unity in that the similarities between them cannot be ascribed to any influence whatever." She categorizes the entire book by subject and shows how both parts employ similar expressions and usage.

- **Vannoy's Assessment of Language/Style Arguments:** He finds neither side conclusive. He acknowledges that similarities could be attributed to Deutero-Isaiah deliberately emulating Isaiah 1-39. Conversely, differences don't necessarily prove separate authorship; a single author's style can change over time. Ultimately, Vannoy believes that one cannot prove either the unity or disunity of the book through arguments on language and style. "So from this type of argument, I don't think that you can prove conclusively either the unity of the book or the disunity."

1. **Radday's Statistical Linguistic Approach & Oswalt's Response:** Vannoy discusses the use of computer linguistic analysis, referencing Radday's study which concluded that linguistic variations were so severe that one author could not have produced the whole book of Isaiah. "As a result of these researches, he concluded that the linguistic variations were so severe that one author could not have produced the whole book of Isaiah." However, Vannoy, citing Oswalt, raises concerns about the infancy of the field of statistical linguistics and questions whether we fully understand the limits of variation in a person's writing. He notes that other computerized studies have reached conflicting conclusions. He also points out the irony that scholars who lauded Radday's methodology for Isaiah were less convinced when he applied the same methodology to Genesis and concluded it was a unified work. Furthermore, there is no manuscript evidence for two Isaiahs, as the Dead Sea Scroll material presents it as a single book.

2. **Argument from Historical Background:** Vannoy considers this the most important argument, but not necessarily convincing.

- **Differing Historical Contexts:** Isaiah 1-39 focuses on Assyria as the threat and warns of impending judgment and exile. Isaiah 40-66, however, speaks of the Babylonian exile as a present reality and emphasizes comfort, hope, and deliverance through Cyrus of Persia. "It's undeniable that Isaiah 40-52 has a very

different historical background than the earlier part of the book... In the first part of the book there are many references to the Assyrians as the great enemy. But you get to the latter part of the book, and it's not the Assyrians who are in view but the Babylonians, and the rise of Cyrus, the Persian."

- **Two Explanations:**

- **Critical View:** Deutero-Isaiah was written by a different author living during or after the Babylonian exile.

- **Traditional View:** Isaiah wrote the entire book, inspired by the Spirit to provide hope and comfort to his people during a future exile.

- **Whybray's Argument:** Whybray argues that Isaiah 40-55 would have made no sense in the 8th century B.C. when Judah was still independent and Babylon was a minor power. "Chapters 40-55 then would have made...no sense in the 8th century when the people of Jerusalem and Judah were still living at home under the rule of their own kings."

- **Freedman's Counterargument:** Freedman argues that not all prophecy needs immediate application. He cites examples like Zechariah 9-14 and Daniel 11-12 as prophecies reaching far beyond their contemporary contexts. "Not every prophecy needs to be traced to a definite contemporary historical situation nor directly applicable to the generation to whom it is spoken."

- **Vannoy's Reconciliation:** He acknowledges Freedman's point but argues that Isaiah 40-66 still had relevance to Isaiah's contemporaries. It offered hope to the "godly remnant" that the exile would not be permanent. He also notes that the second part of Isaiah was probably written during the dark period of time of Manasseh.

Overall Assessment:

Vannoy presents a balanced overview of the arguments surrounding Deutero-Isaiah. He finds the arguments based on language and style inconclusive, the statistical analyses interesting but not definitive, and the historical background argument significant but open to interpretation. He doesn't take a firm position but suggests that the traditional view of single authorship is still viable, even with the complexities and apparent historical discrepancies.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12, Arguments Pro and Con for Second Isaiah (Isa 40-66)

Isaiah: Unity or Disunity? A Study Guide

I. Key Concepts and Arguments

This study guide focuses on the debate surrounding the authorship of the Book of Isaiah, specifically whether chapters 40-66 (Deutero-Isaiah) were written by the same author as chapters 1-39 (First Isaiah).

A. Arguments for Multiple Authorship (Disunity):

- **Differences in Concepts and Ideas:** Focuses on thematic shifts between the two sections, such as the shift from judgment to consolation. (Vannoy says this is hardly convincing)

- **Differences in Language and Style:** Claims that vocabulary, grammatical structures, and stylistic preferences differ significantly.

- Examples: The shift in preferred pronoun from 'anoki' to 'ani' in Deutero-Isaiah.

- The unique expression "kol yomer Adonai" with an imperfect tense.

- **Differences in Historical Background:** Argues that Isaiah 40-66 reflects the context of the Babylonian exile, while Isaiah 1-39 reflects the pre-exilic period of Assyrian dominance.

B. Arguments for Single Authorship (Unity):

- **Linguistic Similarities:** Highlights shared vocabulary, stylistic features, and unique expressions across both sections of Isaiah.

- **Thematic Connections:** Emphasizes that both sections address similar theological themes and concerns.

- **Prophetic Foresight:** Attributes the references to Babylonian exile and Cyrus in Isaiah 40-66 to Isaiah's prophetic vision.

- **Manuscript Evidence:** Points to the Dead Sea Scrolls as evidence of a single, unified book of Isaiah.

C. Key Figures in the Debate:

- **Driver:** Known for his detailed linguistic analysis arguing for multiple authorship.

- **G. C. H. Aalders:** Challenges the idea that the use of 'ani' instead of 'anoki' supports a later dating of Deutero-Isaiah.

- **Rachel Margalioth:** Argues strongly for the unity of Isaiah based on linguistic and stylistic similarities.

- **Y. Radday:** Used computer-aided statistical analysis to argue for multiple authorship.

- **John Oswalt:** Commentary on Isaiah challenges the certainty of statistical linguistics.

- **Whybray:** Argues for a post-exilic setting for Isaiah 40-66, emphasizing the explicit references to Babylon and Cyrus.

- **Freedman:** Argues that not every prophecy needs to be traced to a definite contemporary historical situation nor directly applicable to the generation to whom it is spoken.

II. Quiz: Short-Answer Questions

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the central question being debated concerning the book of Isaiah?

2. Briefly describe the argument for disunity based on language and style.

3. According to Aalders, how does the use of 'ani' and 'anoki' factor into the debate surrounding Isaiah's authorship?

4. What is Rachel Margalioth's primary argument for the unity of Isaiah?

5. How did Y. Radday contribute to the debate, and what was Oswalt's response to his methodology?

6. What is the argument for disunity based on historical background?

7. According to Whybray, why would Isaiah 40-66 make "no sense" in the 8th century?

8. What is the counterargument against Whybray offered by Freedman?

9. What does Vannoy suggest was the purpose of Isaiah 40-66 to the godly remnant in Isaiah's day?

10. What evidence exists for the unity of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls?

III. Quiz: Answer Key

1. The central question is whether the Book of Isaiah is the work of a single author, specifically whether chapters 40-66 (Deutero-Isaiah) were written by the same author as chapters 1-39 (First Isaiah). This debate revolves around differences in style, language, historical context, and theology between the two sections.

2. The argument for disunity based on language and style suggests that there are significant differences in vocabulary, grammatical structures, and stylistic preferences between Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66. Proponents point to lists of words unique to each section, such as the preference for 'ani' over 'anoki' in Deutero-Isaiah, as evidence of different authorship.

3. Aalders challenges the argument that the preference for 'ani' over 'anoki' indicates a later date for Deutero-Isaiah. He notes that the usage of 'anoki' decreases in post-exilic texts, but its presence in Deutero-Isaiah suggests that this section is not necessarily post-exilic but perhaps from the exilic or pre-exilic period.

4. Rachel Margalioth argues for the unity of Isaiah based on a detailed analysis of linguistic and stylistic similarities between the two sections. She emphasizes that unique expressions, formulas, and stylistic devices are shared across both parts of the book, demonstrating a cohesive literary style.

5. Y. Radday used computer-aided statistical analysis to study numerous linguistic features in Isaiah, concluding that linguistic variations were so severe that one author could not have produced the whole book of Isaiah. Oswalt questions the infancy of the field of statistical linguistics and the certainty of the limits of variation in a person's usage.

6. The argument from historical background suggests that Isaiah 1-39 reflects the pre-exilic period with references to Assyria, while Isaiah 40-66 reflects the exilic context of Babylonian captivity and the rise of Cyrus. This shift in historical focus is attributed to a different author writing in a later period.

7. Whybray argues that Isaiah 40-66 would make "no sense" in the 8th century because it references a historical situation (exile in Babylon and the rise of Cyrus) that did not yet exist. In the 8th century, Babylon was merely one of the cities of the Assyrian empire and Cyrus had not yet been born.

8. Freedman argues against Whybray saying that not every prophecy needs to be traced to a definite contemporary historical situation nor directly applicable to

the generation to whom it is spoken. He cites examples such as Zechariah 9-14, Daniel 11-12, and Isaiah 24-27.

9. Vannoy suggests that the purpose of Isaiah 40-66 to the godly remnant in Isaiah's day was to provide hope during the dark period of Manasseh. The message of deliverance from exile would have been a comfort to those who listened to Isaiah, assuring them that the nation would not be destroyed.

10. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide manuscript evidence for the unity of Isaiah, as the earliest manuscript contains the entire book as a single unit, without any divisions suggesting separate authorship. This argues against the theory of multiple authors.

IV. Essay Questions

1. Critically analyze the arguments for and against the multiple authorship of Isaiah, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.

2. Discuss the significance of linguistic analysis in the debate over Isaiah's authorship. How persuasive are the arguments based on differences and similarities in language and style?

3. Evaluate the argument from historical background in relation to the debate over Isaiah's authorship. How compelling is the evidence that the two sections of Isaiah reflect different historical periods?

4. Examine the role of prophetic foresight in the Book of Isaiah. Can the references to Babylonian exile and Cyrus in Isaiah 40-66 be attributed to Isaiah's prophetic vision, or do they necessitate multiple authorship?

5. How does the debate over Isaiah's authorship impact our understanding of the book's message and significance?

V. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Deutero-Isaiah:** The term used to refer to Isaiah chapters 40-66, often attributed to a different author than Isaiah 1-39.

- **First Isaiah:** The term used to refer to Isaiah chapters 1-39, traditionally attributed to the prophet Isaiah.

- **Pre-Exilic:** Refers to the period before the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.).

- **Exilic:** Refers to the period of the Babylonian exile (586-539 B.C.E.).

- **Post-Exilic:** Refers to the period after the Babylonian exile, when the Jewish people returned to their homeland.

- **'Ani':** The Hebrew first-person singular pronoun, meaning "I."

- **'Anoki':** Another Hebrew first-person singular pronoun, also meaning "I."

- **Statistical Linguistics:** The use of statistical methods to analyze linguistic features in texts, often used to determine authorship or dating.

- **Cyrus:** The Persian king who conquered Babylon and allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland.

- **Assyria:** An ancient Mesopotamian empire that dominated the Near East before the rise of Babylon.

- **Babylon:** An ancient Mesopotamian city and empire that conquered Judah and exiled its people.

- **Dead Sea Scrolls:** Ancient Jewish manuscripts discovered in caves near the Dead Sea, including fragments of the Book of Isaiah.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 12, Arguments Pro and Con for Second Isaiah (Isa 40-66), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Isaiah Authorship FAQ

- **What is the main argument for the existence of a "Deutero-Isaiah" (Second Isaiah)?**

- The primary arguments for the existence of Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-66 of the Book of Isaiah) center on differences in concepts and ideas, language and style, and historical background between chapters 1-39 and 40-66. Critics argue that these differences suggest different authors living in different time periods.

- **What are the specific linguistic differences cited to support the two-author theory?**

- One linguistic argument involves the preference for the first-person singular pronoun "'ani" in Isaiah 40-66 over "'anoki," which is more common in Isaiah 1-39. Critics argue that "'ani" reflects a later linguistic usage. However, this argument is not conclusive, as the usage of these pronouns varies across different books of the Old Testament, and the frequency in Isaiah 40-66 doesn't definitively place it later than other books.

- **Are there linguistic similarities between the two sections of Isaiah?**

- Yes, there are. Some scholars argue for the unity of Isaiah based on linguistic similarities. For instance, the variant expression "Thus says the Lord" (kol yomer Adonai, with an imperfect tense) appears in both sections of Isaiah, suggesting a unique stylistic element shared throughout the book. Furthermore, Rachel Margalioth argues that similarities in language and style demonstrate the unity between the two sections. She notes that unique expressions are found throughout the book and that the book is remarkably unified because the similarities between the two sections cannot be ascribed to any influence.

- **How have computers been used to analyze the authorship of Isaiah, and what are the results?**

- Computerized statistical linguistic analyses have been employed to assess the authorship of Isaiah. One study concluded that the linguistic variations were so severe that one author could not have produced the whole book of Isaiah. However, other studies using similar methods have reached opposite conclusions, suggesting a unitary composition or different divisions of the book than initially proposed. The field of statistical linguistics is still developing, and the reliability of its application to biblical texts is debated.

- **What is the historical argument for a separate author of Isaiah 40-66?**

- The historical background in Isaiah 40-66 differs significantly from that in Isaiah 1-39. The latter part of the book refers to the Babylonian exile and the rise of Cyrus the Persian, while the earlier part focuses on the Assyrian threat. Critics argue that Isaiah 40-66 must have been written by someone living during or after the exile, making Cyrus a contemporary figure.

- **How can the shift in historical context be explained if Isaiah is the sole author?**

- If Isaiah is the author of the entire book, the shift in historical context can be explained as prophetic foresight. Isaiah, inspired by the Spirit of God, could have written words of comfort and hope to his people regarding their future exile and eventual deliverance.

- **If Isaiah wrote about events in the distant future, would that have been relevant to his contemporaries?**

- While not all prophecy has direct and immediate application, Isaiah 40-66 could have served a purpose for Isaiah's contemporaries. It would have given the godly remnant – those who listened to Isaiah – hope that the coming exile would not be the end of the nation. This message of eventual deliverance would have been especially comforting during dark times, such as the reign of Manasseh, when the exile seemed inevitable.

- **Is there conclusive evidence for either one or two authors of Isaiah?**

- According to the source, no. The lecture suggests that neither linguistic nor historical arguments conclusively prove either the unity or disunity of the Book of Isaiah. While differences exist, they can be interpreted in multiple ways. Further, there is no manuscript evidence for two Isaiahs.