

The Structure of the Book of Isaiah

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Adapted from Webb, Barry G. W. "Zion in Transformation: a Literary Approach to Isaiah." Pages 65-84 in *The Bible in three dimensions: essays in celebration of forty years of Biblical studies in the University of Sheffield*. Edited by David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.

Section of book	Key date	Key historical crisis	Bible references to key historical crisis	Choice created by key historical crisis
Chs 1-12	734 BC	Alliance of Ephraim* and Syria against Judah**	Isaiah 7 2 Kings 16	Ask Assyria for help OR Rely on the Lord?
Chs 13-27	713-711 BC	Philistine revolt against Assyria, backed by Egypt	Isaiah 20	Join the nations OR Rely on the Lord?
Chs 28-35	~ 704 BC	Judah's revolt against Assyria led by Hezekiah and aided by Egypt	Isaiah 31:1 2 Kings 18:7-8	Rely on Egypt for help OR Rely on the Lord?
Chs 36-37 (Historical pivot, pointing back)	701 BC	Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 36-39 2 Kings 18:13-19:37	Give in to Assyria OR Rely on the Lord?
Chs 38-39 (Historical pivot, pointing forward)	587 BC	Babylonian exile foreshadowed by arrival of Babylonian envoys	2 Kings 20:1-19 2 Kings 25	Make alliance with Babylon OR Rely on the Lord?
Ch 40 – 51:11	537 BC	Persian king Cyrus conquers Babylon and issues decree for Judah to return home	Isaiah 45:1-4 Ezra 1:1-4	Stay in exile (with Babylonian idols) OR Return home to the Lord?
51:12 – Ch 55	537-516 BC	Initial return of Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 52:7-12 Ezra 1:5-11	Wake up and receive God's salvation!
Chs 56-66	516 BC	Rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 64:11-12 Ezra Ch. 3, 5:1-2, Ch. 6	Back to the old days OR Live in the light of the final glory?

*Ephraim is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel, because it was the major tribe

**Judah is the southern kingdom of Israel