

“Why is Your apparel red / And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?”

(Isa 63:2): Rewriting Mythology

*Earlier versions of this paper were presented in a 2011 conference in the University of Haifa, “Prophecy and Politics in Ancient Near Eastern Cultures – 2012 International Meeting,” and in a book-launching evening for David Cohen-Zemach’s *War and Peace in Isaiah’s Vision and in the Stories of the Creation*, December 2019. I am grateful to all my colleagues for their helpful comments during the preparation of this paper.

The image of the divine warrior, as appears in Isa 63:1-6, is familiar from other biblical texts. In our pericope the poet succeeds, within the span of a few sentences, to paint a picture of cruel and bloody warfare, while differentiating the image of the divine warrior in his poetry from other texts which present the same mythological image. Many scholars have dealt with this text, though not enough attention was given to its unique design. Specifically, suggestions for the formation of the image of the divine warrior were insufficient.¹

This paper aims to present the unique poetic design of the text in Isa 63:1-6, to discuss the unique description of the divine warrior and its meaning. In addition, it aims to explain the affinity between the unique form of the verses and the theological message which emerges from the image of God within them. The image of the divine warrior in our section is closely related to the image of the divine warrior in Isa 59:16-17, with these two sections mirroring each other in the symmetric framework of chapters 56-66. In this paper I will first examine the image and construction of the divine warrior in Isa 63. I will discuss this image in relation to ch. 59, as well as to mythological texts from the ancient Near East. Throughout the discussion I will also refer to the metaphors incorporated in Isa 63:1-6. It will be more difficult to determine...

¹ The section in Isa 63:1-6 has received wide attention. For example, Harding, “The Oracle Against Edom;” Gross, “D’*étournement*;” Sawyer, “Radical Images;” ...