Summary

This study of Isaiah 44:21-46:13 combines text-critical, linguistic and literary analysis. The text has been studied in a tripartite way: first through text-critical analysis. We focus on texts whose meaning is ambiguous or has proved to be difficult. A sound analysis of these texts – comparing M with the Qumran codices (if available), the old witnesses of these texts and with G, V, S – is in many cases a great help to understand the meaning of a pericope in the second stage of research: the linguistic analysis. Through linguistic analysis, we make observations which only later, in the third stage of research – literary analysis – can be valued as indications of compositional activity or a redactional process.

We summarize here the most important conclusions about the pericopes in Is. 44:21-46:13, that answer the following three research questions of this study:

I. The answer to the first question is: Is. 44:21-46:13 is made into a unity by the insertion of Is. 44:24-28 as an ‘adapter’ in order to create this unity by integrating its framing pericopes, Is. 44:21-23, Is. 45:1-13 and Is. 45:14-46:13. The assumption here is that we are entitled to see a major role for the stage manager, who wrote Is. 44:24-28, and, working with diverse material, in discussion with his audience, organized the text of Is 44:21-46:13 in the style of the trial speech.

II. Is. 44-46 represent one line of argumentation. My discussion here is mainly with the tradition of form critical analysis. The solution to this second
research question is the result of a discourse analysis of the sequential pericopes.

III. Is. 44-46 present a debate by authors in Judah with their reading public in Babylonia about arguments concerning Cyrus´decisions in favour of Yhwh´s people, known as the Cyrus edict, dated at least one generation after Cyrus.

_I. Is. 44:21-46:13 is a literary unity by the insertion of Is. 44:24-28 as an ´adapter´ that creates this unity with the framing pericopes._

_Is. 44:21-23 is the first pericope. It completes the previous chapters, which contain an evaluation of the relation between Yhwh and his people. With his speech, vs. 21-22, Yhwh makes a new beginning in this relation as well. Its start, ´you must think of these things´ aims at two goals. a. the formation of Jakob/Israel as Yhwh´s servant and b. the erasion of his sins, vs. 21b-22. These performative utterances prepare a request to return to Yhwh, vs. 22b. Syntactically vs. 23, with a third person communication, is different. Here, a comment from the stage manager follows about Jakob/Israel´s formation by Yhwh as his servant. When cosmic powers are invited to jubilee, this request provides the exact liturgical stage for the meaning of the interaction between Yhwh and Jakob/Israel. The imperfects in Hebrew: ´you, Israel will not be forgotten by Me´, and ´Yhwh will demonstrate his glory in Israel´ are promises and therefore remarkable. Besides, the item ´glorify´ will return in Is. 46:13._

_Is. 44:24-28. By using the same addressee and by the repetition of the themes of (release) and formation from Jakob/Israel (servant) as Yhwh´s servant, vs. 24-28 is closely connected with vs. 21-23. This unit consists of one complex nominal sentence which is carefully structured. Its essential aspects are closely related to the meaning of the entire section Is. 44:21-46:13. The_
pericope functions as an `adapter` for integrating the different parts in Is. 44-46. Its serious syntactical challenges (Elliger, Kratz) can be solved by assuming that also here the stage manager created a line of argumentation by using a word of Yhwh, vs. 24b. The imperfect forms of the third person from vs. 25 onwards reveals: this is not direct discourse by Yhwh, but here it is the stage manager, who is speaking. The nominal sentence of vs. 24-28 consists of a sequence of participles, used in the subject part, vs. 25a-26a without, and used with the article in the predicate part, vs. 26b-28. This is a report for the addressee Jakob/Israel. It reveals Yhwh´s plan, by preserving his orders to his partners (Jerusalem and Cyrus) and to the `depth and its streams´ about impending events. This plan forms with Yhwh’s claim in vs. 24b the beginning of a trial speech: Thus speaks Yhwh...: `I am Yhwh-who brings-about-everything´ (52). But the special role of this unit in Is. 44 to 46 appears when we see that these partners Jerusalem/Zion and Cyrus in Is. 44:24-28 also play a major role in the framing pericopes that describe the same actions as the ones mentioned in Is. 44:24-28. These two facts, the imperfects with the meaning of their impending realisation and the players we meet in Is. 44:24-28 but also in the rest of Is. 44-46, characterise the meaning of this pericope for Is. 44 to 46 as an adapter, creating the unity in these chapters.

These players (partners) are:
- *Jakob/Israel*, formed to be Yhwh´s servant, vs. 21-22, must therefore, in vs. 26a, be identified as `his (Yhwh´s) servant´. As such he is invited to speak Yhwh´s word; this word is: `about Jerusalem: `it must be inhabited´´. Earlier we mentioned already in Is. 44:23 the verb `glorify´, an item which will return in Is. 46:13, both in relation to Israel.
- *Jerusalem*: vs. 26ba: `about Jerusalem: `it must be inhabited´´; 26bc: `I will elevate her walls´; vs. 28ab-b: `(Cyrus) because he completes my whole will
by saying about Jerusalem: `it must be built and the temple founded´. In the retrograde of vs. 24-28 Jerusalem´s inhabitation is the far reaching goal. These expressions match with statements about Jerusalem/Zion in Is. 45:14-46:13. A movement towards Zion is sketched from vs. 14 onwards. The attitudes of Israel and the nations with respect to this movement are sketched by various elements:

- with the preposition א, `in´ (the place, 45:14, 19; 46:13: `in Zion´);
- with the verb `to come/to go´ (45:14, 20, 24);
- with the expression `to be far from righteousness´ (i.e. from Zion, 46:12-13).

Especially Is. 46:13 is important: `I herewith bring near my right order - she is not far - and my liberation - she will not stay behind - I give liberation in Zion, equip Israel with my glory´. The place `in Zion´, as well as in `in you´ (Is. 45:14), and `not in a place in darkness´ (Is. 45:19) must indicate the temple. In all cases the preposition א is used. This means that the movement which began in Is. 45:14 ends in Is. 46:13. The performative in 46:13 underlines that the restoration of the temple is near. This was also the conclusion about the imperfect in Is. 44:28: `and the temple will be founded´, with which Cyrus `completes Yhwh´s whole wish´. The restoration of the temple in 46:13 is also the last action in the structure of Is. 44:21-46:13, thus `completes´ it. This conclusion refers back to the imperfect in the central line in Is. 44:26b-28, the order to the depth and her streams: `Dry up and I shall wither your streams´ (vs. 27). Here, in vs. 27, Yhwh rebukes the depth and its streams (a `Chaoskampfvorstellung´). With Ps. 93 it has in common that the temple and the silenced floods of chaos are linked together, and the latter is held in custody when the former is functioning.

- Cyrus: he is the last player with a role in the pericope as well. In vs. 28 he is called `my shepherd, because he completes my whole (ם) will by saying
about Jerusalem: `it will be built and the temple founded’.
Completing Yhwh’s whole (םי) will is with the word `whole’ related to vs. 24b: `Yhwh, who brings about the whole (םי)´. The restoration of the temple completes indeed Yhwh´s `whole (םי) will´ (46:10b), see Is. 46:12-13.

But Cyrus is also Yhwh´s player in Is. 45:1-13. The two imperfects in 45:13 (`he is the one who shall build my city and sets my exiles free´) are the climax of 45:1-13, dedicated to Cyrus.

One can conclude that all players appearing in Is. 44:24-28 are also a topic in the related pericopes, Is. 44:21-23 (Jakob/Israel); 45:14-46:13 (Jerusalem/Zion); Cyrus (45:1-13). All imperfects in 44:24-28 are related to imperfects in Is. 44:21-46:13: The glorification of Israel in Is. 44:23 is related to Is. 46:13b. The inhabitation, Is. 44:26b is related to Is. 45:13, especially to the release of the exiles, but also to 46:13 (the equipment of Israel with Yhwh´s glory). The elevation of Jerusalem´s walls, Is. 44:26b is related to Is. 45:13, especially to the word about the restoration of the city. The same applies to Cyrus´ word about the restoration of the city. The words about the foundation of the temple are related to the words that He gives liberation in Zion and equips Israel with his glory.

With these data the first research question has been answered: the role of Is. 44:24-28 in Is. 44:21-46:13 is indeed that of an adapter. The stage manager made this insertion to integrate the different pericopes building them into a unity. Confirmation of this hypothesis is found by some additional observations: the domain Is. 44:24 is adapted to the one in vs. 23 as Is. 45:1 is in the same way to 44:28. The reinterpretation of Is. 43:3-4 in Is. 45:13c-14 is made to connect the Cyrus part (Is. 45:1-13) to the Zion part (Is. 45:14-46:13). Also, Is. 46:1-2 is adapted to Is. 45 to form a unity with this chapter.

Furthermore, Is. 46:12-13 completes, as we demonstrated, the theme of the temple foundation (בֵית, `in Zion´), the theme Jakob/Israel as Yhwh´s servant
`Israel´ and the combination of Jakob/Israel and Zion (also in Is. 44:26) as the aim of the return.

II. Is. 44-46 constitutes one line of argumentation.
But in its actual form the text of Is. 44:21-46:13 is meant as a unity. Contrary to the practice of form criticism, where the literary composition often holds a second position, since this school was mainly interested in the origin of the text, we found many cross references in the text. The literary unity is also based on several characteristics in the text: the third person communication by the stage manager (1), usage of words from Yhwh (2), construction of one line of argumentation reaching from Is. 44:21 to 46:13 (3) in the style of the trial speech to Is. 45:25 (4), several discussions (5). The trial speech is a communication device to suggest a discussion platform between actors on the stage (dramatological school). Moreover, in our view, the trial speech represents a debate between the authors and their reading public with the help of a trial scenery that poses one line of argumentation with a number of argumentative steps.

After the formation of Jakob/Israel as Yhwh´s servant (Is. 44:21-23), Is. 44:24-28, with its invitation to Jakob/Israel and its presentation of Yhwh´s plan, presents the basic claim of the trial speech. Yhwh´s plan (Is. 44:24-28) is followed by his view on Cyrus´ success (Is. 45:1-8), Yhwh´s argumentation in this trial; Yhwh´s guidance provokes criticism, which is contradicted by the stage manager, who thus prepares the presentation of Yhwh´s plans (45:9-13). This is the beginning of a first debate (Is. 45:9-17), followed by the second debate (Is. 45:18-25); Is. 46 is a third debate with the house of Jakob and all the rest of the house of Israel. The different debates grow in acerbity, the longer a positive result in the discussion with his reading public is missing and so they give information about its genesis.
Is. 45:1-8. With vs. 9-13 the pericope forms the Cyrus part. Yhwh’s speech about his guidance of Cyrus has been enveloped in a speech to Jakob/Israel (just like in Is. 44:24-28), to tell Jakob/Israel the true story about Cyrus’ success. This speech is used in the trial speech of Is. 44 to 46 as Yhwh’s argumentation to demonstrate that he brings `all these things´ about, and is therefore the only God. This is realised in a `hierarchy of goals´. With the expression `these things´ vs. 6-7 show that Yhwh takes, with his Cyrus initiative, responsibility for everything in this history. Vs. 8 demonstrates with the invitation to the cosmic powers to rain `hail´ and `the right order´ that this responsibility is future centred. This concentration on the future as part of Yhwh’s responsibility is also to be found in vs. 9, because the criticism on the critics here prepares Yhwh’s request to trust him with his way of working and, future centred also, his plans follow in vs. 11b-13. From these remarks on vs. 1-13 a line of argumentation is made clear. Yhwh takes responsibility for this history, because in this history as a trial, he as the true and only God, with his actions of liberation, wants to break new ground. Vs. 8 is an invitation to cosmic powers to cooperate in this initiative, and from vs. 9 to men as well.

However, in taking responsibility for this history Yhwh confronts everyone (`all ends of the earth´) with an inevitable choice. As Is. 45:15-17 and 45:24b-25 put it, the answer can only be an acceptance of Yhwh´s invitation to come to his order, or stay with `no´ and then be left behind in shame. Thus, vs. 1-8 demonstrate how the authors used Cyrus, based on historical evidence, to persuade their audience about Yhwh´s creativity in history. The pericope is perfectly understandable without dividing it into two traditions (Elliger). Only the third line of vs. 1 about doors that will be opened is a contrast to the vocabulary of the verse and corrects the early wording with
the historic course of events later. The dual wording of vs. 7 is an integral part of Yhwh´s creative actions and does not refer to Zoroastric influence.

Is. 45:9-17. The ultimate aim in this first debate is to criticize Israel in a cautious way. This happens in a debate consisting of the two pericopes vs. 9-13 and 14-17. These two pericopes function in the same way as is clear from the syntactic analysis of vs. 9-10 and 15-17. Also Yhwh´s policy is defended in vs. 9-10 and in 15-17. We find his words in 11b-13 and 14.

The last construction with א, `not for a bribe nor for a gift´, vs. 13c is part of the reinterpretation of Is. 43:3-4 in vs. 13c-14. It is added by the stage manager to connect the Cyrus part to the Zion part. He changed Is. 43:3-4 and thus, stressing the item יִרְאוּשֶׁ by adding vs. 13c to Yhwh´s actions, the restoration of the city and the release of the exiles, he achieved two goals: (a.) a change in the relation between the nations and (b.) a clear view into the motives for their representatives (three African nations) to come, vs. 14. From now on no one will be the price to be paid for Israel´s or any other´s release.

Henceforth, Zion, the city of Yhwh is the centre towards which everything is moving (Is. 44:22b).

In vs. 15-17, the stage manager uses the confession of the nations (`in you is God´) for the debate with `Israel´ (`you´, plural, vs. 17b). The debate is completed in the style of a pronouncement from the stage manager about the role of the three parties in this history (which is at the same time a trial):

Yhwh, the fabricators of idols, and you (plural), Israel. All other gods leave their worshippers unhelped, who are gone in shame, vs. 16, but `Israel is helped by Yhwh´. It distinguishes him from all other gods. The cautious criticism passed on Israel is different from debate no. 2 (Is. 45:18-25) and debate no. 3 (Is. 46).

Is. 45:18-25 (the second debate). This second debate is much sharper. For a start vs. 18 relates to vs. 17 by arguing how Yhwh´s liberation, vs. 17,
originates from his creation of the earth which is made to `live´ on it. Thus, the text is presented as a continuing line of argumentation. But the stage manager far more anticipates with the word `chaos´ in vs. 18 on the accusations made by `the seed of Jakob´ with the word `chaos´, vs. 19 about Yhwh´s reliability. Yhwh reacts with fierce denial and with a proclamation about his צדוק and the מושרים in general terms, for which He can be called to account. Addressees mentioned after this proclamation: `you survivors of the nations´ (vs. 20), and `you, all the ends of the earth´ (vs. 22) refer to `earth´, vs. 18. Their presence and the invitation to come to Yhwh are in favour of our understanding of this proclamation as being `creationwide´ (as is the case with the previous pericopes).

Other players such as `the survivors of the nations´ and `all you ends of the earth´ are brought to the scene to isolate Israel in the debate. The invitation to them `to come´ and the repetition of the word היו, `all´ several times (`all nations´, `all knees´, `all tongue´) puts `all the seed of Israel´ (in which these cosmic players are also addressed) in contrast with `the seed of Jakob´. As a result now also `the seed of Jakob´ in their dispute with Yhwh is requested to take sides with Him. The effect is, that `the seed of Jakob´ is more being debated, a situation different from vs. 14-17!

Vs. 18-25 represents thus a second debate and has been added later. This is the case since the trial scene in vs. 20-25 depends with its wording very much on vs. 15-17, which was complete. יהוה, `this´ means the Cyrus events, and is therefore a repetition. Moreover vs. 24b-25, for the wording leaning heavily on vs. 15-17 is a pronouncement that corrects vs. 15-17. Is. 46 (the third debate). Vs. 1-2 are meant as a transition from Is. 45, although this is not being realised very succesfully. Whereas the Babylonians are depicted here as leaving the scene in captivity, carrying the gods they once admired, this scene contrasts with Yhwh´s speech to both houses of Jakob and
of all the rest of Israel spoken to in vs. 3 vv. who were and will always be
carried by Yhwh. Vs. 1-2 are, in fact, independent material, and pasted in this
place to form one unity with previous material. This appears from several
observations: The speaker can only be identified via Is. 45:18. So are the
plural suffixes of the second and third person (Is. 45:20, 22). With the third
person communication the evaluation, Is. 45:24b-25 appears to come from the
hand of stage manager, which then, in 46:1 is abruptly followed by words of
Yhwh (suffix from the second person!). Also one of the three parties,
characteristic for the trial speech, the nations as the second addressee are
missing from Is. 46:3.

The reasons for the creation of this unity are on the one hand to add
another debate, the third one, and on the other hand to complete several topics
of Is. 44:21-46:13. The vocation of Cyrus, his success and his commitment
with Israel, vs. 9-11, is argumentation in this debate about the return of both
houses (vs. 12-13). Yhwh does realize his promises! Realisation of this
promise is used to complete several topics in Is. 44:21-46:13. The imperfects
in vs. 4b, `I will save´, in vs. 10b, `I will realize´, vs 11b, `I will make it come´
and `I will realize´ anticipate Yhwh´s action, that is present in vs. 13 in the
performative `I herewith bring near my righteousness - it will not be far away
- and my liberation - it will not stay behind - I give in Zion liberation, I equip
Israel with my glory´. The frequent use of  in this unit (46:4b, 6b, 10a,
10b, 11b) is peculiar. Vs. 10b quote Yhwh´s own words: `I
will realise my whole wish´ where Is. 44:28a has
,
`he will complete my whole wish´, of which  refer, as we saw, to the founding of the
temple. The performative in vs. 13 means Yhwh´s act, to give `liberation in
Zion´ and `equip Israel´ with his `glory´ (תפארת), vs. 13b. The latter root, is, as we saw, also used in relation to Jakob/Israel´s formation as Yhwh´s
servant, 44:23. The only act in which both halves of vs. 13b find their
realisation is the founding of the temple. Is it not the temple which is `in Zion`? Is it not the founding of the temple that explains the equipment of Jakob/Israel, Yhwh´s servant with his glory (= `righteousness´, vs. 13a) and completes Yhwh´s whole wish, 44:28, מָלֵךְ חֲשֵׁם? 

**Conclusion:** The answer to our second research question is: the many crossreferences found in these chapters give enough evidence to state that Is. 44-46, the final text indeed has been intended as one line of argumentation. We could trace the completion of all themes in these chapters. Their main purpose is to contribute to a debate with their reading public, a debate that during a longer period of time became increasingly sharper.

**III. Is. 44-46 is a discussion from authors in Judah with their reading public in Babylonia, based on the `Cyrus edict`**.

The answer to the third research question deals with matters of location and time. Central in the message of the authors in Is. 44-46 is Jakob/Israel´s return to Zion. They considered the commitment of Cyrus, expressed in his actions for Israel (Is. 44:28; 45:4, 13), a central element in their line of argumentation, and considered these, also for their addressees, to be generally known facts. We accept this as an argument for its historicity. Also scholars like Kuhrt, Ahn and Briant take the possibility of orders like the Cyrus edict for real. Is. 44-46 was written at least one generation later and it looks back to this history, in such a way, that all events are depicted, within the scenery of the trial speech, as coming, impending events. Thus the presentation does not render the flow of events as they were, but depicts them in a way, so that it shows the theological intention of the authors.

A classical hypothesis of form criticism based on its interest in origin is the claim of the existence of a historical prophet Deutero-Isaiah. With the majority of Deutero-Isaiah scholars we concluded that such a prophet is non -
existent. Enveloped in the context of the book of Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah is an anonymous, highly literary booklet, without any indication of a prophetic calling. We know nothing about its origin. But, as we observed, in Deutero-Isaiah various chapters often have different perspectives. The debates in Isaiah 44 to 46 present different stages. They presuppose an oral discussion between two groups, one in Judah and the other in Babylon during a longer period of time. A final answer to the question who is behind these texts is the suggestion of a school of scribes, with highly elaborated theological ideas about exile and Cyrus. With their third person communication they showed themselves to be hesitant to change words of Yhwh, but free enough to create their own line of argumentation. As Leene and Berges suggest these scribes, because of the influence of Psalms in Deutero-Isaiah, must have been inspired by the temple singers.