

The Absence of $\text{YHWH } \text{š}^{\text{e}}\text{bā}'\delta\text{t}$ in Isaiah 56-66

Christopher T. Begg - Washington

Some three decades ago W. KESSLER published an article titled "Aus welchen Gründen wird die Bezeichnung 'Jahwe Zebaoth' in der späteren Zeit gemieden?"¹. KESSLER's study focusses on the peculiarities in the distribution of the divine designation $\text{YHWH } \text{š}^{\text{e}}\text{bā}'\delta\text{t}$ (hereafter YS)² and its variants in the OT, i.e. the fact that while some documents employ the title with great frequency (e.g., Isaiah 1-39; MT Jeremiah³; Haggai; Zechariah 1-8 and Malachi), others lack it completely (e.g., all strata of the Tetrateuch, Deuteronomy, Isaiah 56-66 and Daniel)⁴. Responding to his title question KESSLER proffers a generalizing hypothesis to account for the avoidance of YS by Hosea⁵, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel and "Trito Isaiah", namely the polytheistic suggestions implicit in that title militated against the characteristic monolatric/monotheistic emphases of those works.

Of course, KESSLER was not the first to note the phenomenon in question or to attempt to account for it⁶. Particularly the title's absence in the

-
- 1 Gottes ist der Orient (Festschrift O. EISSFELDT), Berlin, 1959, 79-83.
 - 2 On the various problems posed by this title, see e.g.: B.N. WAMBACQ, L' épithète divine Jahwē Šeba'ōt, Tournai, 1947; O. EISSFELDT, Jahwe Zebaoth, Kleine Schriften III (ed. R. SELLHEIM - F. MAASS), Tübingen, 1966; 103-123; A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, מַלְאָכֵי שָׁבָא' Heer, THAT II, 1979, 498-507; V. MAAG, Jahwās Heerscharen, in: Kultur, Kulturkontakt und Religion (ed. H.H. SCHMID - O.H. STECK), Göttingen, 1980, 1-28; H. CAZELLES, Sabaot, DBS Fasc.58, Paris, 1984, 1123-1127; M. GÖRG, $\text{šb}'\text{wt}$ - ein Gottestitel, BN 30 (1985) 15-18.
 - 3 On the divergence between the MT and LXX versions of the Book of Jeremiah in their use of YS , see J.G. JANZEN, Studies in the Text of Jeremiah (HSM 6), Cambridge, MA, 1973, 75-86, 162-172.
 - 4 For statistics concerning the use of the title in the various books of the MT, see VAN DER WOUDE, $\text{š}^{\text{e}}\text{bā}'$, 498-499.
 - 5 KESSLER, Gründen, 81 regards the occurrence of the title in Hos 12,6 as a gloss.
 - 6 Thus already R. SMEND, Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte, Freiburg, 1893, 188 suggests that Ezekiel and various post-Exilic authors avoided the title because it seemed "a little polytheistic" vis-à-vis their own "proper monotheism".

Book of Ezekiel has evoked a whole series of explanatory suggestions: Ezekiel avoids it so as not to offend the Babylonian worshippers of the stars (= the "hosts" of the title)⁷, or because its traditional associations with one or other Israelite institution which had come under question in the crisis years of Ezekiel's ministry, i.e. the monarchy⁸, the ark/Temple⁹, or the "holy war"¹⁰.

Conversely, there are those who declare that the phenomenon, both in the particular case of Ezekiel and more widely, has not received a convincing explanation or is indeed inexplicable¹¹.

In this study I wish to consider the case of another OT document, i.e. Isaiah 56-66, the so-called Trito Isaiah (hereafter TI)¹² whose non-use of YS is, in its own way, just as remarkable as Ezekiel's, but which has not received nearly the same degree of attention as his¹³. In order to highlight the interest of this question, I begin by noting that, on several grounds,

-
- 7 Thus L. KÖHLER, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Tübingen, 41966, 33.
- 8 Thus J. MAIER, *Das altisraelitische Ladeheiligtum* (BZAW 93), Berlin, 1965, 52, n. 87.
- 9 Thus F. BAUMGÄRTEL, *Zu den Gottesnamen in den Büchern Jeremia und Ezechiel, Verbannung und Heimkehr* (Festschrift W. RUDOLPH), Tübingen, 1961, 1-29, p. 28; T.N.D. METTINGER, *YHWH SABAOth - The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne, Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and other Essays* (ed. T. ISHIDA), Winona Lake, IN, 1982, 109-138, p. 138; idem, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CB OTS 18), Lund, 1982, 109, 115.
- 10 Thus CAZELLES, *Sabaoth*, 1127 (Alternatively, he suggests that the title's associations with star worship caused Ezekiel to avoid it).
- 11 Thus e.g.: O. BORCHERT, *Der Gottesname Jahwe Zebaoth*, TSK 69 (1896) 619-642, p. 623; VAN DER WOUDE, *šābā'*, 506.
- 12 In this study, I follow the view of DUHM et al. for whom Isaiah 56-66 is not, in any case, from the author of Isaiah 40-55. I abstract here from the further question of whether the former segment derives from one or several hands since, even if Isaiah 56-66 is not a unitary work, all those responsible for its formation have, in contrast to the various authors/editors behind both Isaiah 1-39 and 40-55, refrained from employing YS.
- 13 To my knowledge, the only author (apart from KESSLER) who tries to account specifically for the title's absence from Isaiah 56-66 is A. MURTONEN, *Third Isaiah-Yes or No?*, *Abr-Nahrain* 19 (1980-1981) 20-42, pp. 26, 36. Against the background of his general thesis that "Deutero Isaiah" also wrote Isaiah 56-66, MURTONEN attempts to explain the title's absence in the latter by noting that in Isaiah 40-55 itself YS is used "only in very solemn contexts where the immense superiority of Yahweh's might is emphasized", whereas in Isaiah 56-66 "there is not much occasion for this". Alternatively, he suggests that the form *šābā'tiw* in the phrase *'āmar yhwš šābā'tiw* in Isa 57,19 could be an error for *šābā'ōt* so that, in

one might well expect TI to have used the title *ys*. First of all, theologically, linguistically, etc., TI clearly does stand in the "Isaiah tradition" as preserved in Isaiah 1-55. This is e.g., particularly clear in the case of the divine names¹⁴. Thus, e.g., TI has in common with both "Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah" the designations *q'edôš yišrā'ēl*¹⁵ and *'abîr (yišrā'ēl/ya'qôb)*¹⁶. How is it then that while *ys* occurs 56x in Isaiah 1-39¹⁷ - inter alia in the (late) "Babel oracles" (13,1-14,21; 21,1-10) and the "Isaiah Apocalypse" (Isaiah 24-27) - as well as 6x in Isaiah 40-55¹⁸, it does not appear even once in the 11 chapters of TI - all Isianic Traditionszwang to the contrary¹⁹? In addition, one notes that it is precisely TI's nearest prophetic contemporaries, i.e. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi²⁰ who use *ys* with special frequency²¹. Why then should TI who, in other respects, has no lack of affinities with the figures just cited²² fail to share this feature with them?

fact, Isaiah 56-66 would have the title at least once.

- 14 On the designations for God in the Book of Isaiah, see e.g.: J. BODA, *Nomina divina in libro Isaiae*, Biblica 18 (1937) 182-196; H. WILDBERGER, *Gottesnamen und Gottesepitheta bei Jesaja*, in: *Jahwe und sein Volk* (TB 66), München, 1979, 219-248.
- 15 The occurrences of this title in the Book of Isaiah are: 1,4; 5,19.24; 10,20; 12,6; 17,7; 29,19; 30,11.12.15; 31,1; 37,23; 41,14.16.20; 43,3.14; 45,11; 47,4; 48,17; 49,7b; 54,5; 55,5; 58,13; 60,9.14, cf. 5,16; 6,3.10.17; 28,23; 40,25; 43,15; 49,7a; 57,15.
- 16 The occurrences of this title in the Book of Isaiah are: 1,24 (with "Israel"); 49,26; 60,16; (with "Jacob").
- 17 I.e. 1,9.24; 2,12; 3,1.15; 5,7.9.16.24; 6,3.5; 8,13.18; 9,6.12.18; 10,16.23.24.26.33; 13,4.13; 14,22.23.24.27; 17,3; 18,7 (bis); 19,4.12.16.17.18.20.25; 21,10; 22,5.12.14 (bis). 15.25; 23,9; 24,23; 25,6; 28,5.22.29; 29,6; 31,4.5; 37,16.32; 39,5.
- 18 I.e. 44,6; 45,13; 47,4; 48,2; 51,15; 54,5.
- 19 In this connection a comparison with the case of Deutero-Isaiah is instructive. KESSLER, *Gründen*, 82 argues that this prophet's six-fold (see n. 18) use of the designation *YS* in fact runs counter to the monotheistic thrust of his message. Accordingly, his occasional use of the title is to be attributed, at least in part, to a Traditionszwang operating on him. Against this background, TI's freedom vis-à-vis this particular item of "Isianic" Sprachgebrauch appears all the more remarkable (as well as being quite obviously a matter of conscious choice on his part).
- 20 I assume here with the majority of authors that Isaiah 56-66, along with Haggai (Proto-) Zechariah and Malachi, is to be dated in the period between the return of 538 and the work of Ezra and Nehemiah in the second half of the fifth century.
- 21 Note that their relatively short books use the epithet with the following frequencies: Haggai (14x), Zechariah 1-8 (44x, + 9 uses in Zechariah 9-14), Malachi (24x).
- 22 On the affinities between TI and Haggai-Zechariah, see E. SELLIN, *Tri-tojesaja, Deuterojesaja und das Gottesknechtsproblem*, NKZ 41 (1930)

The foregoing considerations make at least one thing clear: given the usage both of his particular tradition and of the prophets of his time, TI could hardly have been unfamiliar with the designation *ys*. In other words, the title's absence from his work is a matter, not of ignorance, but of conscious avoidance. In what follows I wish, accordingly, to offer several suggestions as to what might have motivated such a decision on TI's part. These suggestions are not, I would emphasize, envisaged as either mutually exclusive or exhaustive—undoubtedly there were, just as in the case of Ezekiel (vide supra), a wide range of factors influencing the prophet's option not to employ *ys*²³.

My first suggestion relates to a characteristic feature of TI's overall message, i.e. his portrayal of how Yahweh operates in history. In the majority of the prophetic writings, Yahweh is represented as effecting his purpose in the world through the agency of various sorts of intermediaries, be these individuals or groups, mundane or transcendent, who are named by name. E.g., Assyria in Proto Isaiah, Babylon in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Cyrus in Deutero Isaiah, Zerubbabel and Jeshua in Haggai and Zechariah, the "messenger of the covenant" in Malachi and the locust plague in Joel all come to mind here. By contrast such divine agents play virtually no role²⁴ in the announcements concerning the future destinies of the nations and of Israel which comprise so large a portion of TI's work²⁵. Conversely, in several contexts TI makes emphatic and explicit reference to Yahweh's acting comple-

73-93, 141-173, pp. 80-93; on those between TI and Malachi, see A. VAN BULMERINCQ, *Der Prophet Maleachi I*, Dorpat, 1926, 344-347.

23 Thus e.g., I do not wish to exclude KESSLER's suggestion that his "monotheistic" concerns influenced TI's avoidance of the title.

24 The segment Isa 63,7-64,12 might seem to constitute a certain exception in this regard given its mention of "the angel of his presence" (*mal'ak pānāw*, 63,9), Yahweh's "(holy) spirit" (*rūaḥ*, 63,10.11.14) and Moses (63,11.12). It should, however, be pointed out that throughout this segment, Yahweh's own direct action in history is consistently affirmed, see e.g., 63,7-8.10.11b and especially the parallelism between "the Spirit of the Lord" and "thou" (= Yahweh) in 63,14. This suggests that the unit's mentions of the "angel of the presence" and the "(holy) Spirit" are, finally, paraphrastic equivalents for Yahweh himself. As for Moses' role in this segment, note that his activity relates, not to the coming events which are the focus of TI's message, but to the distant past. In the former, as opposed to the latter period, action by Yahweh alone is anticipated by TI—also in 63,7-64,12, see 63,15-64,12.

25 On this aspect of TI's overall message, see P.D. HANSON, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia, 1979 (rev. ed.), 439-440.

tely on his own in overthrowing those opposed to him, there being "no one" else to do this (Isa 59,16; 63,3). Against the background of this feature of TI's overall message, however, the problematic of the title *YS* for him coming into focus. Whatever the more precise identification one may give to the "hosts" cited in that title (human armies, the heavenly bodies, angels, demons, the powers of nature, creatures in general, etc.), *YS* inevitably suggests the idea of other beings alongside Yahweh who stand at his disposition as his appointed instruments²⁶. And thereby, the title cannot but militate against TI's insistence on Yahweh as the sole active agent in the events he announces. His recognition of that fact was, I suggest, one factor prompting TI to avoid our title²⁷.

My second consideration builds on suggestions recently put forward by T. D.N. METTINGER regarding the *šēm* and *kābōd* theologies of divine presence characteristic, respectively, of the Deuteronomistic²⁸ and Ezekiel- Priestly²⁹ traditions. In METTINGER's view, the two currents- both of which avoid the appellation *YS*³⁰- stimulated by the first threatened and then actual destruction of the Temple, developed their theologies in reaction to an earlier "Zion-Sabaoth tradition", exemplified by texts like 2 Samuel 6-7, the "Zion-Songs", the "Yahweh Enthronement" and "royal" psalms as well as Isaiah 6, which celebrated Yahweh's presence/dwelling in the Temple as a once-for-all given³¹. In his discussion METTINGER does not treat the case of TI and the nature of its "presence theology" as such. I believe, however, that his proposals do have a bearing on the question of why TI, like the Deuteronomist

26 Note in this connection that TI likewise avoids the singular *šābā'* which, as employed elsewhere in the Book of Isaiah, whether of an earthly or a heavenly "host", naturally prompts use of the title *YS* in the immediate context, see Isa 24,21 (*YS* in 24,23); 45,12 (*YS* in 45,13), cf. also 34,4, 40,25-26.

27 It is along the same lines that one might also explain the absence in Isaiah 56-66 of another divine designation found in both Isaiah 1-39 and 40-55, several times in conjunction with *YS*, i.e. *melek*, see 6,5; 33,22; 41,21; 43,15; 44,6. Just as does *YS* the designation "king" naturally calls to mind the subjects through whom a king acts in realizing his purposes.

28 On this, see METTINGER, *Dethronement*, 38-79.

29 See *ibid.*, 80-115.

30 In the case of Ezekiel and P this avoidance is an absolute one. In the Deuteronomistic History, *YS* is absent in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges; in Samuel and Kings its use is confined to passages which are likely pre-Deuteronomistic, i.e. 1 Sam 1,3.11; 4,4; 15,2; 17,45; 2 Sam 5,10; 6,2.18; 7,8.26.27; 1 Kgs 18,15; 19,10.14; 2 Kgs 3,14; 19,31 (Q).

31 On this tradition, see METTINGER, *Dethronement*, 19-37.

(hereafter Dtr) and Ezekiel-P, avoids the title *ys*. At the same time, the relevant data on the point are somewhat complicated and so will require a fairly extended discussion here.

In the first place, it should be noted that TI evidences no systematic or comprehensive tendency, à la Dtr and Ezekiel-P, to dissociate that which the Zion-Sabaoth tradition (with its characteristic title *ys*) so strongly links, i.e. Yahweh and the Temple (and everything associated with this, e.g., the ark³², the altar, Mt. Zion, etc). Rather, one finds TI repeatedly using the possessive pronoun "my" (= Yahweh's) to underscore God's identification of himself with Zion, the Temple, etc., see: "my holy mountain" (56,6; 57,13; 65,11.26; 66,20), "my house (of prayer)" (56,5.7), "my altar" (56,7), "my sanctuary" // "the place of my feet" (60,13), cf. "the city of the Lord"// "the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (60,14); "thy sanctuary" (63,18). Likewise in contrast to Ezekiel who never uses the term, TI shows no hesitation in using another key word of the Zion-Sabaoth tradition, i.e. "Zion" (see 59,20; 60,14; 62,2.10; 64,10; 66,8). Also to be mentioned in this connection is TI's use of the two key terms of the Deuteronomistic and Ezekiel-P theologies respectively, i.e. *šēm* and *kābōd*. TI, one notes, does employ both terms in reference to Yahweh with some frequency: *šēm* 12x: 56,6; 57,15; 59,19; 60,9; 63,12.14.16.19; 64,1.6; 65,1) and *kābōd* (7x: 58,8; 59,19; 60,1.2; 66,18.19, bis). On the other hand, however, it is not at all clear that TI uses either term with a polemic intent vis à vis the Zion-Sabaoth tradition as do the Deuteronomistic and Ezekiel-P traditions for whom it is only Yahweh's *šēm* or *kābōd*, not Yahweh himself which one encounters in the Temple (or its equivalent, the Tabernacle). On the contrary, the fact that TI used both *šēm* (see e.g., 56,6; 60,9; 65,1) and *kābōd* (see e.g., 60,2; 66,18) in parallelism with mentions of Yahweh himself suggests that he was not concerned to play off the former against the latter. Rather, for him "the glory of the Lord" and "the name of the Lord" are (more or less) simply paraphrastic equivalents of "the Lord". Thus far then it would appear that, in contrast to both Dtr and Ezekiel-P, TI had little quarrel with the old Zion-Sa-

32 Of course, there would no question of TI's associating Yahweh with the ark as had the earlier Zion-Sabaoth tradition since that object was not part of the furnishings of the second Temple.

baath theology. This state of affairs is understandable given the fact that he is writing, subsequent to the Exilic authors, Dtr, Ezekiel and P, at a moment when the Temple has been (is about to be) rebuilt. At the same time, the observations made hitherto do leave one wondering why TI should then avoid the characteristic Zion-Sabaoth title *vs*, seeing that in other respects he appears receptive to the conceptions and terminology of that tradition. Notwithstanding all of the above, however, there is a further consideration which suggests that, in his own way, TI as well was concerned to attenuate too close a linkage of Yahweh and Temple. That concern comes to expression in a series of passages where TI refers to the "place" of Yahweh's "residence", i.e. 57,15 "thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity (*šōkēn 'ad*): I dwell (*'eškōn*) in the high and holy place..."; 63,15 "look down from heaven... from thy holy and glorious habitation (*mizzēbul*)"; 64,1 "O that thou wouldst bend the heavens and come down", and above all 66,1 "Thus says the Lord, 'heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest (*mēnūḥātī*)?"³³. The foregoing passages stand in contrast to various texts exemplifying the Zion-Sabaoth tradition in which Zion/the Temple/the ark is spoken of as Yahweh's "dwelling place" (*miškan*, see e.g., Isa 8,18; Ps 46,5; 84,2; 132,5.7) or his "resting place" (*mēnūḥāh*, Ps 132,8). Conversely, the TI passages are strongly reminiscent of Dtr's key affirmation concerning Yahweh's "residence" in 1 Kgs 8,27.30, "But will God indeed dwell (*yāšab*) on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! ... hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place (*'al mēqōm šibtēkā*)..." (cf. too 8,32.36.39.43.45.49). Accordingly, it does seem that, ultimately, TI has been influenced to some extent, by Dtr's reaction against the Zion-Sabaoth tradition; like the former, he insists that "heaven" is Yahweh's only true "residence". In terms of the question of this study, I would propose then that TI's avoidance of the characteristic title *vs* of the Zion-Sabaoth tradition is another reflection of that same influence—just as does Dtr before him, TI refrains from utilizing a designation which, given its earlier usage, would evoke in readers' minds the (inappro-

33 On this text, see A. ROFE, Isaiah 66,1-4: Judean Sects in the Persian Period as Viewed by Trito-Isaiah, *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (ed. A. KORT and S. MORSCHAUSER), Winona Lake, IN, 1985, 205-217.

private) notion of Yahweh indissolubly linked to Zion and its Temple as his place of residence³⁴.

My final suggestion might be termed a specification of my first proposal. Above, the virtual absence of divine agent/intermediaries in TI was noted. Here, I would note that particularly conspicuous in its absence from TI's announcements concerning the future of Yahweh's people is the figure of a Davidic "viceroy" whom Yahweh will raise up. In this, TI's future hopes contrast with those of Isaiah 1-39 (see 9,1-7; 11,1-9), the Books of Jeremiah (23,5-6; 33,19-22) and Ezekiel (34,22-23; 37,24-25) as well as Haggai's and Zechariah's words concerning the Davidid Zerubabel (whereas they do cohere with Deutero-Isaiah's "democratization" of the promises to David, see Isa 55,3-5)³⁵. But then, in examining the (most likely earlier) texts of 1 Samuel and Psalms employing the *ys* designation, one notes the frequency with which those texts bring that title into connection with David and his line (see 1 Sam 17,45; 2 Sam 5,10; 6,2.18; 7,8.26.27; Psalms 84,89)³⁶. Given that association, however, it is understandable that TI would have avoided a title likely to put readers in mind of the past and future claims of the Davidids which he had no interest in promoting.

In concluding, I am conscious of the irreducibly hypothetical character of the above suggestions, considered either separately or in combination. At the same time those suggestions do I believe, at least indicate that one ought not too readily relegate the phenomenon in question to the realm of the simply "inexplicable".

34 Note in this connection that TI likewise avoids applying to Yahweh two other key terms of the Zion-Sabaoth tradition, i.e. *yāsāb* (of the divine "dwelling, sitting-enthroned", see METTINGER, *Dethronement*, 26 and nn. 26-27) and *melek* (see *ibid.*, 24 and n. 20 and cf. n. 27 *supra*).

35 On this text, see O. EISSFELDT, *Die Gnadenerheissungen an David* in *Jes* 55,1-5, *Kleine Schriften IV* (ed. R. SELLHEIM - F. MAASS), Tübingen, 1968, 44-52.

36 On these (and related) texts, see J.P. ROSS, *Jahweh šehā'ōt* in *Samuel and Psalms*, VT 17 (1967) 76-92.