



June 2016

## On the Unified Authorship of the Oracle to Ariel (Isaiah 29:1–8)

Wilson C. Parson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studiaantiqua>

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Parson, Wilson C. "On the Unified Authorship of the Oracle to Ariel (Isaiah 29:1–8)." *Studia Antiqua* 15, no. 1 (2016): 1-12. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studiaantiqua/vol15/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studia Antiqua* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

## ON THE UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL (ISAIAH 29:1–8)

WILSON C PARSON

*Wilson C Parson* recently graduated from Brigham Young University with a degree in ancient Near Eastern studies and an emphasis in Hebrew Bible. He will begin a Master of Science in Information at the University of Michigan this fall.

The oracle to Ariel in Isaiah 29:1–8 is a poetic prophecy that describes a **T**iege upon Jerusalem followed by a miraculous deliverance from her enemies at the hand of Yahweh. Nearly all scholars agree that this prophecy refers to Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE, the prose versions of which are recorded in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37.<sup>1</sup> What scholars do not agree upon, however, is whether to attribute the pericope to the work of a single author. This disagreement has arisen partly because the prophecy contains an abrupt shift in rhetoric between its first and second halves. In verses 1–4, Yahweh describes his designs to lay siege to Jerusalem (Ariel), which will result in her mourning, lamentation, and abasement to the point of near death. After verse 4, however, the tone suddenly shifts, and verses 5–8 describe Ariel's deliverance amid destructive cosmic forces sent by Yahweh himself to annihilate her attackers. As a result of Yahweh's intervention, Ariel's enemies become like fine dust and chaff that blows away in the wind, and the threat of their attack becomes merely a

---

1. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 398–402; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (London: SCM, 1967), 53–57; Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in *Proverbs ~ Isaiah*, vol. 6 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 654–57; Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah with Emphasis on the Messianic Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 238–42; Joseph Jensen, *Isaiah 1–39* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), 233–235; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 263–68; John Mauchline, *Isaiah 1–39: Confidence in God* (London: SCM, 1966), 202–4; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 524–29; Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 212–15; Gene M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah*, NIB 6 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 447–51; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC 24 (Colombia: Nelson, 2005), 447–51; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 63–79; and Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:304–13.

## 2 PARSON: UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL

bad dream. This striking shift in rhetoric regarding Ariel's fate has raised questions among scholars about the textual history of the pericope.

One approach, operating under the assumption that the second half of the prophecy could not have possibly been written before the siege, is to attribute part or all of the second half of the prophecy to a later redactor. For example, Clements argues for a Josianic redaction, suggesting that the redactor added verses 5–7 to report the siege's outcome in light of the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion.<sup>2</sup> Childs, on the other hand, argues that verses 1–4, 5c–6 were part of the original prophecy, all of which prescribed punishments upon Judah, and that verses 5a, 5b, and 8 were added later to change the unfortunate recipient of the destructive cosmic phenomena from Jerusalem to her assailants.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Clements and Childs both argue that an earlier or "original" portion of the prophecy was recorded before the siege, and attribute the deliverance portion to a retrospective redactor.

There are also proponents for the unified authorship of the passage. Early form critics, including von Rad, suggested that the two differing halves of the oracle are consistent with an earlier Zion tradition that included elements of both judgment and salvation. Routledge approaches the problem from a canonical perspective, concluding that all strands within the passage are consistent with the larger message and theology of Isaiah.<sup>4</sup> Seitz and Wildberger both argue against a later redaction on the premise that a redactor would be unlikely to inadvertently leave a blatant seam in the passage, and that the seam exists as a conscious rhetorical decision of the author's.<sup>5</sup> While scholars on both sides of the argument present valuable points of view, none has approached the problem by analyzing the passage's literary elements, including word choice and thematic structure.

In this paper I will examine the literary elements of Isaiah's oracle to Ariel in support of the argument for the unified authorship of the passage's first and second halves. In so doing, I will not necessarily argue for the unity of the entire oracle in its current form, as it does indeed contain indicators of secondary expansion. Rather, I will argue that verses 1–4a and 5–7 may be attributed to a single author, while verses 4b and 8 may be attributed to a redactor who sought to expand upon unclear aspects of the original text. It should also be noted that although I will argue for a unified reading of verses 1–4a and 5–7

---

2. R. E. Clements, "Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem," *JSOT Supplement* 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 84–85.

3. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 57.

4. Robin L. Routledge, "The Siege and Deliverance of the City of David in Isaiah 29:1–8," *TynBul* 43.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1992), 182.

5. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 212 and Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 69.

(which I will henceforth refer to as the first and second halves of the passage), I will not suggest that the oracle is authentic to Isaiah, or that it was even composed before Sennacherib's siege in 701 BCE. I will, however, argue that the two halves contain similar literary elements, and that when they are read together they result in a cohesive, symmetrical, and rhetorically powerful oracle.

To pursue this end, I will first provide a fresh translation of the oracle with text-critical notes,<sup>6</sup> after which I will demonstrate how the two halves of the oracle (verses 1–4a and verses 5–7) bear an element of symmetry with respect to word choice as well as to thematic literary structure, resulting in a self-consistent chiasm. Lastly, I will propose an explanation for the additions of verses 4b and 8.

### Critical Text and Translation

1 Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city (where) David camped,  
Add<sup>7</sup> year upon year, let the feasts go round.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel,  
and there shall be mourning and lamentation,  
and she will become to me like Ariel.

3 And I will camp like David<sup>8</sup> against you,  
and I will lay siege against you (with) a garrison,  
and I will raise siege-works against you.

4 And you will be abased; from the earth you will speak,  
and your utterance will be low from the dust,  
And your voice will be like a necromancer from the earth,  
and from the dust your speaking will chirp.

5 But the multitude of your foes<sup>9</sup> will be as fine dust,

6. Rather than including an exhaustive apparatus, I have included text-critical notes only on significant issues that are relevant to the present argument.

7. MT ספו (2mp imperative); 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> ספי (2fs imperative), which seems more appropriate, considering other 2fs references to Ariel in the passage. The change from *yôd* to *šûreq* may be attributed to graphic similarity.

8. MT כדור, which could be rendered “as a circle” or perhaps “all around.” While such a rendering technically fits the given context (i.e. a siege surrounding the city as a circle), LXX renders the phrase “as David” (ὡς Δαυδ), and כדור seems more appropriate considering the mention of David in v. 1. The change from *dālet* to *rēš* may be attributed to graphic similarity.

9. MT זרין “your strangers”; 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> זדין “your insolent ones”; LXX τῶν ἀσεβῶν “(of) the/your godly men.” However, זרים “strangers/foreigners” and זדים “insolent ones” do

#### 4 PARSON: UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL

and the multitude of the ruthless as flying chaff,  
and suddenly in an instant,

6 From with the Lord of hosts you will be visited,  
with thunder, and earthquake and great noise,  
whirlwind and storm, and the flame of a devouring fire.

7 And it will be as a dream, a vision of the night,  
the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel,  
and all that fight her and her stronghold, and who distress her.

8 And it will be as when the hungry man dreams, and behold, he eats,  
but when he awakens his soul is empty;  
or as when the thirsty man dreams, and behold, he drinks,  
but when he awakens, and behold he is thirsty, and his soul runs about,  
so will be the multitude of all the nations that war against Mount Zion.

#### Word Choice in Both Halves of the Prophecy

There are two instances of the author's word choice in the first and second halves of the prophecy that link the two halves together: the use of the rare verb "to distress" (צוּק), and the use of "dust" (עפר) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) as a comparative pair. As I will demonstrate below, both of these instances contribute significantly to the literary symmetry and overall rhetorical effect of the oracle, supporting the argument that a single author employed them consciously and purposefully.

#### "To Distress" (צוּק)

After addressing Jerusalem in verse 1, Yahweh immediately announces his plans to "distress" (והציקוּתִי) her, which results in her mourning and lamentation (v. 2). The verb that Yahweh uses here (צוּק) is a rare one, appearing only 12 times in the entire Hebrew Bible, five of which are in Isaiah, and two of

---

not appear elsewhere with pronominal suffixes, making both options *hapax legomena*. Blenkinsopp and Childs suggest צריך "your foes," emending *zayin* to *šādē*. צרים "foes" appears more commonly with pronominal suffixes (cf. Ps 3:2, Ezek 39:23, Deut 32:27, etc.) than זרים "strangers/foreigners" and זדים "insolent ones," and fits more comfortably in the verse as a reference to Assyria. (That this verse refers to Assyria is made nearly certain by the comparison Assyria to chaff, a motif which also appears in Isa 17:13).

which are in this oracle.<sup>10</sup> The second instance of the verb appears in verse 7 and complements the first.

After describing the destruction of Ariel's enemies, Yahweh closes the oracle with a general prophecy about the fate of all nations that seek to fight against Ariel: "And it will be as a dream, a vision of the night, the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel, and all that fight her and her stronghold, and that distress (והמציקים) her" (v. 7). In this closing prophecy, Yahweh has used the same verb (צוּק) to describe the actions of Ariel's enemies that he used in the first half of the passage to refer to his own actions against Ariel. By using the same verb in both halves of the passage—once in reference to Yahweh and once in reference to Ariel's enemies—the author has effectively equated the actions of both parties. In other words, Yahweh and Ariel's enemies become essentially interchangeable characters in the first half of the oracle because Yahweh uses Ariel's enemies as a means by which to punish her. Such theology is reflected elsewhere in First Isaiah, where, for example, Yahweh describes Assyria as "the rod of [his] anger," chosen by him to punish his people (Isa 10:5).

Even more compelling than the mere usage of "to distress" (צוּק) in both halves of the passage is its placement within the oracle. If verse 1 is set aside as a prelude to the prophecy and verse 2 is considered the beginning of a chiasm (which I will discuss at length below), the chiasm begins with Yahweh's words, "Yet I will distress Ariel" (והציקוּתִי לאֲרִיאֵל), and ends with the words, "and those who distress her" (והמציקים לה, v. 7). Thus, "to distress" (צוּק) not only appears in both halves of the passage, but also serves as the oracle's opening and closing bookends.

*"Dust" (עפר) and "Fine Dust" (אבק דק)*

Another instance of complementary word choice between the two halves of the passage appears in the use of the words "dust" (עפר) and "fine dust" (אבק דק) in verses 4a and 5. After providing the details of his siege upon Ariel, Yahweh describes her resulting degradation: "And you will be abased; from the earth you will speak, and your utterance will be low from the dust" (v. 4a). While the verbs in this verse ("to be low" [שפל] and "to bow down" [שחה]) elicit an image of Ariel's abasement, it is the inclusion of the phrases "from

10. In Deuteronomy 28:53, 55, 57; Isaiah 51:13; and Jeremiah 19:19, צוּק is used in reference to one's enemies, similar to the usage in the Ariel oracle. Other appearances of צוּק include Judges 14:17, 16:16, where Delilah "presses/urges" Samson; and Job 32:18, where the spirit "constrains" Job.

## 6 PARSON: UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL

the earth” (מארץ) and “from the dust” (מעפר) that intensify the image, placing Ariel’s situation in comparison to Sheol, the dark and dusty underworld.<sup>11</sup>

It is after this verse that the turning point in the oracle takes place—and the author uses the image of dust to facilitate the transition. After having described Ariel as speaking “from the dust” (מעפר), Yahweh refers to Ariel’s enemies as “fine dust” (אבק דק): “But the multitude of your foes will be as fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless as flying chaff” (v. 5a, b).<sup>12</sup> The resulting image is one of Ariel’s deliverance from death: although Ariel had been brought low, being figuratively enshrouded with the dusts of the underworld, that dust—as the personification of Ariel’s enemies—would soon be blown away like chaff in the wind.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the author has carefully chosen words both to open and close the prophecy (with the verb “to distress” [צוק]) as well as to transition between the two halves of the prophecy (with the words “dust” [עפר] and “fine dust” [אבק דק]). This conscious use of words in the two halves of the passage may suggest that both halves were composed by the same author.

Of course, it is also possible that a later Isaianic author or redactor crafted the second half of the prophecy and deliberately included the words “to distress” (צוק) and “fine dust” (אבק דק) in order to elicit a sense of unity between the two strands. In fact, some may argue that the complementary word choice between the two halves of the passage is *evidence* of a redactor’s hand. Such an assertion runs into the problem of what John Barton has called “The Disappearing Redactor,” which is that as a critic makes the work of the redactor appear more coherent and impressive, he or she in turn weakens the very argument for redaction, eventually causing the redactor to disappear entirely.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the passage at hand, the complementary word choice between the passage’s two halves is much more supportive of a unified author than

---

11. For treatment on the symbolic connection of the underworld with darkness and dust, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 63–69 and Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 374–375.

12. While עפר and אבק both refer generally to dust, and are even used as a pair in Deuteronomy 28:24, they appear to refer to two different types of dust. עפר refers to the dust or dry earth of the ground, while אבק generally refers to dust in the air. For example, in Nahum 1:3 אבק is used to describe the clouds of the sky as the dust under Yahweh’s feet, and in Song of Songs 3:6 the *hapax legomenon* אבקה (“powder”) is used in the phrase אבקות רוכל (“powders of the merchant”). With the addition of the adjective דק (“small” or “fine”) to אבק, and the comparison of the fine dust to “flying chaff” (מוץ עבר), the author has further accentuated the floating, airy nature of אבק.

13. Cf. Isa 17:13, where Assyria is compared to chaff blowing in the wind.

14. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (rev. ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 56–58.

of a redactor. The passage's unified authorship is further corroborated by the passage's thematic literary structure, to which I will now turn my discussion.

### **Thematic Literary Structure of the Passage**

Aside from bearing elements of symmetry in word choice, the two halves of the oracle to Ariel (vv. 1–4a and 5–7) work together in a larger sense to form a thematic chiasm (diagrammed below).

Prelude (v.1)

- A. Yahweh's distress of Ariel, resulting in mourning and lamentation (v. 2)
  - B. Yahweh provides details of his siege (v. 3)
    - C. Ariel, abased, speaks from the dust (v. 4a)
    - C. Ariel's enemies will become like fine dust (v. 5)
  - B. Yahweh provides details of his cosmic forces (v. 6)
- A. Ariel's distress has become merely a dream (v. 7)

As I alluded to in the previous section, I have dismissed verse 1 as a prelude to the prophecy, and have therefore not considered it part of the chiasm. However, verse 1 still plays an important role in setting the scene for the prophecy. It establishes Jerusalem as the addressee and prepares the reader to be jarred by Yahweh's sudden decision to bring distress upon Jerusalem. By qualifying Ariel as "the city (where) David camped," Yahweh makes it clear that the oracle is addressed to Jerusalem. With the words "add year upon year, let the feasts go round," he paints a picture of Jerusalem's seemingly everlasting nature: each coming year will continue to bring fruitful harvests and prosperity, symbolized by the regular feasts. Yet according to the verses immediately following, Ariel's prosperity will soon be replaced by mourning and lamentation.

The chiasm begins in verse 2, which contains Yahweh's plan to distress Ariel. The chiasm closes with Yahweh's promise that the nations who seek to distress Ariel will become like a dream. Thus, the outermost level of the chiasm (vv. 2 and 7) addresses the changing fate of Ariel. The second level (vv. 3 and 6) provides details of Yahweh's works of destruction first against Ariel, and then against her enemies. In verse 3 he mentions that he will lay siege to Ariel with a garrison and with siege works; in verse 7 he lists the cosmic forces with which he will visit Ariel to destroy her enemies. The third and deepest level (vv. 4a and 5) highlights the helpless state that both Ariel and her enemies enter as a result of Yahweh's works. Verse 4a portrays Ariel's response to the siege that Yahweh has brought upon her; she grovels on the ground, her voice

## 8 PARSON: UNIFIED AUTHORSHIP OF THE ORACLE TO ARIEL

coming low from the dusts of the underworld. Verse 5 presents Ariel's enemies as weak and transient: they will blow away like fine dust and chaff in the wind.

This deepest level contains the key to the overarching theme of the chiasm and of the prophecy as a whole. While the prophecy does describe the abasement and subsequent deliverance of Ariel, its central theme is that Yahweh is omnipotent and arbitrary in his dealings with man. Yahweh is able to remove Ariel from a state of happiness and flourishing to one of lamentation and sadness at his own will. It is he who decides to distress Ariel. It is he who lays siege against her. It is he who brings her down to the depths of humility and degradation.

At the same time, Yahweh has the power to reverse Ariel's calamity and turn the destruction onto her enemies. It is "from with the Lord of hosts" (מֵעִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) that Ariel and her enemies will be visited by thunder, earthquake, great noise, whirlwind, storm, and fire (v. 5). Yahweh is entirely responsible both for distressing Ariel, as well as for removing the distress brought by her enemies.

Aside from the prominent thematic chiasm, the prophecy also exhibits a less obvious chiasmic structure in the way that Yahweh refers to Ariel. At the beginning and end of the prophecy, he refers to Ariel in the third-person feminine (vv. 2 and 7); however, towards the center of the prophecy he speaks to her directly in the second-person feminine (vv. 3-4a, 5-6). This subtle rhetorical decision results in the sense that the prophecy opens and closes with general statements about Ariel's fate, while the inner section contains the specific and intimate details of Ariel's struggle and triumph against her enemies. One might posit that this shift in grammar may be indicative of multiple authorship. However, if such is the case, we are left to choose between verses 2 and 7 or verses 3-4a and 5-6 as the material for the original prophecy, and either strand would result in a severely disjointed text.

In the foregoing discussion I have demonstrated that the oracle to Ariel contains unifying literary elements (word choice and thematic chiasmic structure) in its first and second halves that support the argument for its unified authorship. However, by using the term unified authorship I refer not to the entirety of the passage as it currently stands, but to verses 1-4a and 5-7, attributing verses 4b and 8 to the work of a later redactor. I will now discuss verses 4b and 8, providing an explanation of why the redactor chose to add these two verses.

## The Additions of Verses 4b and 8

Both of the later expansions to the oracle to Ariel appear to have been inserted for the sake of providing clarity to enigmatic parts of the text. The parts that the redactor appears to have sought to clarify are (1) the meaning of the word Ariel, and (2) the comparison of Ariel's enemies to a dream (v. 7). I will now discuss the possible reasons why the redactor saw these two parts of the text as difficult for the reader to grasp without further explanation.

### *The Meaning of Ariel*

Perhaps the greatest enigma in the oracle to Ariel is the word Ariel itself. Scholars are still largely uncertain as to the meaning of the word, and most commentators provide several possible translations before hesitantly choosing one.<sup>15</sup> The recent trend, however, is to translate Ariel as “altar hearth” or “hearth of El.” This rendering is based on a nearly identical word that appears twice in the book of Ezekiel to refer to the 12 x 12 cubit surface of the altar in Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 43:15–16).<sup>16</sup> This association of Jerusalem with an altar hearth fits well. The Temple in Jerusalem was known as a center for cultic sacrifice, and Yahweh's statement that Jerusalem would become to him “like an Ariel/altar hearth” (v. 2) invokes the imagery of slaughter and burning characteristic not only of ritual sacrifice, but also of a siege experience.

However, it is important to note that the orthography of Ezekiel's Ariel is different from that of Isaiah's (אֲרִיאֵל vs. אֲרִיאֵל). Albright and Feigin, both writing nearly a century ago, affirmed that the variance in spelling exposes Ariel as a loan word from the Akkadian *arallu*, which appears as a poetic name for the netherworld in Assyrian texts.<sup>17</sup> In particular, *arallu* is described as a mountainous abode of the dead, frequented by the gods and filled with stores of gold.<sup>18</sup> As Albright noted, the ideographical meanings of the *arallu*—“House of the mountain of the dead” and “House of the great mountain of the lands”—were two of the most popular names for Mesopotamian ziggurats.<sup>19</sup> Albright furthermore argued that because Ezekiel's three-tiered altar resembles a

15. See the commentaries cited in footnote 1.

16. Aside from this oracle and the verses in Ezekiel, the word Ariel also appears in Ezra 8:16 as a personal name and in 2 Sam 23:20 // 1 Chr 11:26, where the meaning is obscure.

17. William F. Albright, “The Babylonian Temple-Tower and the Altar of Burnt Offering,” *JBL* 39 (1920): 137 and Samuel Feigin, “The Meaning of Ariel,” *JBL* 39 (1920): 133.

18. “*arallu*,” *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago*, 1:2:226–227.

19. Albright, “Temple-Tower,” 137.

ziggurat in shape, the name for the top level of Ezekiel's altar—Ariel—refers to *arallu*, the mountainous abode of the gods.<sup>20</sup>

Interestingly, a textual problem in the Ezekiel passage about the Ariel altar appears to support Albright's conclusion that the altar was associated with a mountain. In the description of the altar, the author first calls it "the mountain of God" (ההראל), and then, only a few words later, calls it "the Ariel" (הארל). This apparent confusion of terms may suggest that Ezekiel's altar was commonly referred to both by the name "mountain of God" (הראל) as well as by the name "the Ariel/netherworld" (הארל), each of which refers to a mountain associated with divinity. In light of these facts, I disagree with the current trend among scholars of rendering the word "altar hearth" in the context of the oracle. It seems more likely that both Ezekiel's Ariel and Isaiah's Ariel refer either to "netherworld" (*arallu*) or to "mountain of God" (הראל)—or both.

Blenkinsopp notes the possibility that the author (of the oracle to Ariel) used a "deliberately cryptic and polyvalent" term that would allow Ariel to carry several meanings within the passage.<sup>21</sup> This suggestion may shed light on verse 2 of the oracle, in which Yahweh says, "Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation, and she will become to me like Ariel." In this verse it appears that Ariel is undergoing some kind of transformation. She starts out with Ariel as her name, but it is after her mourning and lamentation that she actually *becomes* like Ariel. This transformation may suggest that the two Ariels in the verse, despite being spelled identically, refer to two different ideas. For example, the first Ariel could be a reference to the mountain of God, while the second could be a reference to *arallu*, the netherworld. Regardless of what the original author intended, the redactor's additions of verses 4b and 8 suggest that he interpreted the word Ariel as both "mountain of God" and as the netherworld.

Verse 4b, which at first appears to be merely the second half of a parallelism from 4a, is likely an addition to the oracle to clarify the meaning of Ariel as the netherworld. After verse 4a, which says "and you will be abased; from the earth you will speak, and your utterance will be low from the dust," verse 4b repeats the image yet a third and fourth time, only with more specificity: "And your voice will be like a necromancer from the earth, and from the dust your speaking will chirp." This extra couplet betrays the flow and balance of the rest of the poetic prophecy, which, as has been demonstrated, follows a fairly strict system of chiasmic symmetry. Furthermore, the images of necromancy, dust, and earth in verse 4b appear to merely expand upon the images of abasement,

20. Ibid., 139.

21. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 401.

dust, and earth in the previous couplet (v. 4a). It is possible that the knowledge of the meaning of the word Ariel had already begun to deteriorate in society by the time of the redactor, and that he provided the extra couplet to confirm to the reader that Jerusalem, under siege, truly had become “like Ariel” (netherworld) (v. 2).

*Ariel's Enemies as (Having) a Dream*

The ambiguous meaning of Ariel may also shed light on the addition of verse 8, the prose section at the end of the oracle. The basic purpose of this addition appears to be an attempt to explain the fairly obscure conclusion of the oracle in verse 7, where Yahweh says that Ariel's enemies will be “as a dream, a vision of the night.” To clarify and expand upon this dream motif, the redactor uses a concrete example in verse 8: a man who dreams of food and drink, but wakes up and is hungry and thirsty. Ironically, this example appears to have only further obfuscated the original meaning of verse 7. When verse 7 is read without verse 8, the text seems to suggest that the nations that come against Ariel will become like a fleeting dream, a vision of the night that is gone the next day. In other words, *Jerusalem* is the individual having the dream, not her enemies. Verse 8, however, seems to suggest the opposite. As Ariel's enemies approach in battle, their appetite for victory begins to be satisfied, just like the hungry man who dreams of eating food. However, as a result of Yahweh's intervention, Ariel's enemies are left starving for victory, just as the hungry man awakens from his dream with an empty stomach.

The most striking indicator of the redactor's efforts to clarify the passage may be seen in the final line of verse 8, where he explains, “so will be the multitude of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.” This line is identical to verse 7b, except for the substitution of the name Mount Zion (הר ציון) for Ariel.

Isaiah 29:7 vs. 29:8

המון כלהגוים הצבאים על-אריאל	the multitude of all the nations that war against Ariel.
המון כלהגוים הצבאים על-הר ציון	the multitude of all the nations that war against Mount Zion.

By using the exact same sentence and substituting Mount Zion for Ariel, it is obvious that the redactor wanted his audience to understand that the oracle was about Jerusalem. Up until this point in the oracle, Jerusalem had been referred to by only two names: “the city where David camped” (v. 1) and Ariel. By adding the name Mount Zion in verse 8, the redactor has left no question as

to whom the oracle is about. Furthermore, his choice to use the name Mount Zion (הַר צִיּוֹן) may be that he considered the word Ariel to mean “mountain of God,” similar to the author of the Ezekiel passage (Ezek 43:15–16).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, after having examined the literary elements of the oracle to Ariel, I affirm that the first and second halves of the passage (vv. 1–4a and 5–7) may be attributed to a single author. The two halves of the oracle elicit a conscious balance in word choice with the use of the verb “to distress” (צוֹק) in verses 2 and 7, and with the use of the word pair “dust” (עֹפָר) and “fine dust” (אַבְקָה דַקָּה) in verses 4a and 5. Furthermore, verses 1–4a and 5–7 form a thematically balanced and rhetorically powerful chiasm, highlighting Yahweh’s omnipotence and participation in the reversal of Ariel’s fate. These two features of the oracle (word choice and chiasmic structure) have heretofore gone unnoticed (or at least unpublished) by biblical scholars.

In addition, I contend that verses 4b and 8 may be ascribed to a later redactor seeking to clarify the meaning(s) of the word Ariel and the obscure reference to Ariel’s enemies becoming like a dream. Since it appears that the redactor’s main goal was clarity, it would make sense to suggest that he lived long enough after Isaiah that his audience had already lost the meaning of the word Ariel and needed clarification. Therefore, it is possible that the redactor made the additions during the exilic or post-exilic period. However, it is also possible that the author’s audience did not understand the references to Ariel even at the time they were uttered or written, in which case a Josianic or even earlier redaction may be argued.

In terms of further research on the subject, it would be of value to more accurately contextualize the redactor in terms of chronology and location, as well as to examine the other Isaianic oracles for indications of literary symmetry and of similar explanatory redactional additions.