This study of the theologically influential chapter 55 of the book of Isaiah grew out of an Innsbruck dissertation written by the author under the supervision of Professor Georg Fischer, S.J. She takes the Masoretic Text as her point of departure. Although she does not reject a diachronic approach out of hand, she resolutely opts for a synchronic exegesis based on the supposition that Isa 55 is a coherent composition that plays an important role in its immediate context and should be read as an indispensable part of the book of Isaiah as a whole. The tools she employs are a careful analysis of the text, its grammatical and poetical structure, as well as its communicative intentions. In many respects she stands in the line of scholars such as Wim Beuken and Ulrich Berges (8–12).

In chapter 1 Paganini offers a literal translation of Isa 55, which she subdivides in short clauses (Äusserungseinheiten) in the manner of the school of Wolfgang Richter. Her well-documented discussion of text-critical matters leads up to the conclusion that MT deserves trust. With regard to unit delimitation, Paganini pays due attention to petuhah and setumah as well as stylistic and compositional markers. She vindicates the coherence of Isa 55:1–13 as a compositional unit that
is related to the immediate context of both Isa 54 and 56, yet has its own individuality.

Chapter 2 deals with the formal characteristics of Isa 55. First Paganini tries to identify the speakers, the “communication structure” of the text. Despite her assurance at the beginning of the book that at this stage she will merely collect the objective facts (10), Paganini inevitably has to interpret the data immediately, for example, when she follows Klaus Baltzer and others with regard to the identification of the speaking “I” of Isa 55:1–3a: it is the personified city of Zion who is inviting the thirsty to come to her waters (see also 87–88). But this assumption does not satisfactorily resolve the problem that in 55:3b God appears speaking in the first person. In a careful and convincing analysis she argues that in 55:4–5 Zion is first addressed as a man, then as a woman. It might have been useful to note that also in other prophetic writings the personal suffix of second-person masculine sometimes denotes Zion/Jerusalem (cf. J. C. de Moor in Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship: [ed. M. C. A. Korpel and J. Oesch; Pericope 1; Assen, 2000], 167 n. 75). Incidentally, Paganini inadvertently mixes up my gender, so I appear to share the fate of Lady Zion (62 n. 101 and more often). Her analysis of the communication structure leads to a division of the chapter into three parts: 55:1–5, 6–7, 8–13.

This tallies more or less with her form-critical analysis, which results in the following description of genres: 55:1–5, oracle of salvation; 6–7, admonition; 8–13, disputation and hymnal promise. However, in establishing the poetical structure of the chapter Paganini repeatedly cites approvingly the study I wrote with Johannes de Moor in 1998 (62–65, with some typos on 65; see also 75), which resulted in a division into three different subunits, which, in contrast to all other proposals, including Paganini’s own, is supported by venerable ancient witnesses: 55:1–5 [1–3, 4–5], 6–9 [6–7, 8–9], 10–13 [10–11, 12–13]. One gets the impression that she learned from our work only when her own choice for the division 1–5, 6–7, 8–13 had already been made. In any case, it is definitely misleading when she states at the end of her book that also the poetic structure speaks in favor of her division (194).

The next step in her investigation is an analysis of the semantic fields touched upon in the vocabulary used in Isa 55. This is a fresh and interesting approach. Paganini discerns four semantic fields: (1) life in abundance for people in need (1–3a); (2) the covenant and its consequences (3b–5); (3) the relationship between God and humankind (6–9); (4) images of nature (10–13). Verbs and prepositions lend dynamic movement to all four semantic fields. So this stage seems to argue
in favor of a division into *four* subunits. Her own final proposal with regard to
the structure of the text (75–84) is a division into *six* parts: 1–3a, 3b–5, 6–7, 8–9,
10–11, 12–13. However, she declares again that this may be subdivided into *three*
equal larger parts: 1–5, 6–7, 8–13 (75). It seems that the author did consider
various possibilities with regard to the form of the chapter and did not wholly
succeed in forging them into a balanced presentation.

Chapter 3 offers a detailed analysis of the grammatical and poetical structure of
the smaller units: words, cola, verses. Methodically it might have been wiser to
start on this micro level instead of the macrostructural level dealt with in the
preceding chapter. Nevertheless, Paganini’s painstakingly precise dissecting of
the text leads to many interesting and acute observations, not merely from a
formal point of view, but also with regard to the exegesis. Various charts
elucidate the artful composition of every verse. Numerous intertextual links
prove that Isa 55 can and should be read as part of the book of Isaiah as a whole.

In chapter 4 Paganini discusses a selection of theological themes occurring in Isa
55. Lady Zion as personification of the city is placed in the context of other
passages in Isaiah. Here it might have been helpful if the author would have
been able to consult U. Berges, “Personifications and Prophetic Voices of Zion in
Isaiah and Beyond” (in *The Elusive Prophet* [ed. J. C. de Moor; OTS 45; Leiden,
2001], 54–82). Zion’s main interlocutor in Isa 55 is YHWH, even though neither
she nor the other speakers ever addresses him directly. He manifests himself as
the sovereign and exalted deity, master of heaven and earth, who is restoring
Zion and especially her poor, extending his mercy and love in a covenantal
relationship.

In a short chapter 5 the main results of the interesting study are recapitulated.