# Faithful Exiles

## Reading the Exilic theology of Isaiah 40-55 in the context of post-church Australia

by

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## Abstract

Deutero-Isaiah's theology of exile is contextualised in this thesis in the light of post-Christendom Australia, with a focus on post-church people. The secular, post-modern environment of broader Australian society is experiencing a decreasing of the 'church-in-power' model. To suggest that the church is in crisis in this era is an understatement, but the interpretation of that crisis as 'end' rather than opportunity may be false. An exploration of the reframing of faith that is observed in a study of Deutero-Isaiah, via the lens of exilic theology, is pertinent to Australian evangelical Christians who are leaving the church, but generally retaining faith. The methodological approaches to Deutero-Isaiah that I utilise include: historical-criticism, rhetorical criticism, and sociological insights, particularly trauma studies. Feminist and postcolonial studies provide useful conversation partners to the topic. After establishing the literary and social context of Deutero-Isaiah in general, the key chapter for the thesis is Isaiah 49:14-26, focussing on personified Zion's accusations to YHWH regarding her abandonment (forsaken/ forgotten terminology). I explore the concepts of hope, doubt, the nature of the salvation offered by redeemer God, gathering and return in contrast to exile and dispersal. This chapter is followed by shorter comparative chapters looking at Isaiah 50:1-3 (imagery of divorce, reconciliation and forgiveness); 51:17-52:6 (a polyphonic text imaging Zion's rape, comfort and consolation); and, 54:1-17 (barren woman imagery, confession of abandonment by YHWH). Each of these passages is linked in tone and theme by strong feminine imagery, and provides useful connections to broader themes relating to the marginalised outsider. We journey with Zion's transformation alongside YHWH's admissions of forsaking her. Hopeful possibilities for new communities of post-church people informed by ancient texts are explored at the end of thesis.

## Declaration of originality

I, Angela Sue Sawyer, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other purposes.

Signed

_____

Angela Sawyer

Date

# Acknowledgements

In many ways completing this thesis has been my way of trying to figure out some pressing personal questions about faith, church, and life. At times the distance from the topic was wide and analytical. At times the themes were close and personal. I began to see 'my' topic everywhere - people struggling with faith questions, issues of theodicy, church fallout, issues of war and sexual violence, symbolism to give hope, survival literature, metaphor, personification of cities and exile.

To get to the end of this thesis has required much support from my husband Jay. On many occasions he had no idea what I was going on about in regards to Daughter Zion and her devastated state but he kept me facing the mountain of study and thought that I could do it more than I. My son Josh has grown up with this thesis (from my tummy to school!) and whenever I studied the lost children of Zion I saw his face, and the many faces of invisible children never forgotten by their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, from the exile thousands of years ago, the gas chambers all too recently and the beaches of Turkey today. I hope my daughter Sienna will have the courage of Daughter Zion to speak up to God and to a world that sometimes still thinks a girl cannot have a voice. May her voice also bring healing.

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AB | Anchor Bible |
| ABS | Archaeology and Biblical Studies |
| AIL | Ancient Israel and its Literature |
| *AJMS* | *Australian Journal of Mission Studies* |
| AnBib | Analecta Biblica |
| ANE | Ancient Near East |
| ANETS | Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies |
| *AThR* | *Anglican Theological Review* |
| *BBR* | *Bulletin for Biblical Research* |
| BDB | Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford, 1907. |
| *BHS* | *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* |
| *BibInt* | *Biblical Interpretation* |
| BibOr | Biblica et orientalia |
| BJS | Brown Judaic Studies |
| *BSac* | *Bibliotheca Sacra* |
| BZAW | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft |
| *CBQ* | *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* |
| ConBOT | Coniectanea biblica Old Testament series |
| *CTJ* | *Calvin Theological Journal* |
| DI | Deutero-Isaiah |
| DSS | Dead Sea Scrolls |
| FAT | Forschungen Zum Alten Testament |
| HB | Hebrew Bible |
| HCOT | Historical Commentary on the Old Testament |
| *HTR* | *Harvard Theological Review* |
| IBC | Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for teaching and preaching |
| ICC | International Critical Commentary |
| *Int* | *Interpretation* |
| *JBL* | *Journal of Biblical Literature* |
| *JR* | *Journal of Religion* |
| JSJS | Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism |

| | |
|---|---|
| *JSOT* | *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* |
| JSOTSup | Journal for the Study of Old Testament: Supplement Series |
| *JTS* | *Journal of Theological Studies* |
| *JTSA* | *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* |
| LHBOTS | Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies |
| LXX | Septuagint |
| MT | Masoretic Text |
| NCBC | New Century Bible Commentary |
| NIB | New Interpreter's Bible |
| NICOT | New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| NIVAC | New International Version Application Commentary |
| OBT | Overtures to Biblical Theology |
| OTL | Old Testament Library |
| OTM | Oxford Theological Monographs |
| OtSt | Oudtestamentische Studiën |
| *PRSt* | *Perspectives in Religious Studies* |
| *PSB* | *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* |
| *RB* | *Revue Biblique* |
| SBL | Society of Biblical Literature |
| SBLDS | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series |
| SBLStBL | Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature |
| SBLSymS | Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series |
| SemeiaSt | Semeia Studies |
| SSN | Studia Semitica Neerlandica |
| *TDOT* | *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* |
| *ThTo* | *Theology Today* |
| *TWOT* | *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* |
| *TynBul* | *Tyndale Bulletin* |
| *VT* | *Vetus Testamentum* |
| VTSup | Vetus Testamentum Supplements |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| *ZAW* | *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* |

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# 1. Introduction

**Eschaton**

Here is the time, and in the midst of our
Exilic life we sense the call to leave,
New, nothing like what we have heard before.
Does anyone possess the strength to go?

Rhyme is the voice that tries to wake us up:
In metre and in syntax we surmise
Keys of a code, a figure drawing near.
Let us observe: Who'll travel home through him?

Ere long, see: he is here. A servant, weak,
Evoked as image, word, is teaching life.
Now who will follow? Who will be inspired,
Evolved into his offspring and his kin?
Escaped from text, a voice is calling out,
Marked, written in the heart of you who reads.[1]

## 1. Outline and rationale for study

The aim of this thesis is to contextualize Deutero-Isaiah's theology of exile, both in relation to the ancient world and in the light of Australian church leavers. I will argue that specific passages from Deutero-Isaiah (DI) that can offer new possibilities to this social space include various Proclamations of Salvation and lament that share common themes of familial (masculine and feminine) portrayals of YHWH, and a rhetoric of restoration and return for an exiled community represented by the personified city Zion.[2] The sub-themes in DI of abandonment, hope, and emerging self-understanding may have particular relevance to the Australian context. My methodological approach to the biblical material is primarily a rhetorical critical reading with acknowledgement of the socio-historical context. Further conversation partners that will provide insights at particular points of the thesis include literary-feminist criticism, postcolonial studies, and sociological approaches regarding both

1. H.J. Bosman, quoted in Annemarieke van der Woude, "Can Zion Do Without the Servant in Isaiah 40-55?" *CTJ* 39, no. 1 (2004): 116. This poem depicts the Servant as the mechanism for movement. My own reading will emphasise Daughter Zion's call, but my perspective is that Zion's call is more about identifying *with* the people, rather than calling to them as a separate entity. Bosman's poem connects the power of the written word, the rhetorical devices used and the evocative nature of the message of Deutero-Isaiah, even for exilic readers today.
2. From here on, I will use the typical scholarly convention of DI for Deutero-Isaiah where appropriate.

the ancient and contemporary contexts. My contention is that the poetry of DI is an example of survival literature that has enabled communities through time, initially Judean exiles, to rebuild fractured identities in new spaces, therefore trauma studies may prove useful throughout the analysis. Exilic theology is appropriated as a mechanism to allow a conversation between the text of DI and the context of Australian church leavers today.

This exploration of the reframing of faith in DI, via the lens of exilic theology, is pertinent to Australian evangelical Christians who are leaving the church, whilst generally retaining faith. For the purposes of this thesis, these people will be defined as "post-church." I will begin the thesis with a chapter exploring the Australian post-church context from a sociological perspective with a theological analysis of the relevance of the exilic motif to this context. To suggest that the church is in decline in an increasingly secular Australian context is an understatement, but the interpretation of this as a crisis or an "end" rather than an opportunity may be false.[3] I will explore the works of Tom Frame and Gary Bouma on the changing landscape of Christian faith in Australia, as well as the work of Alan Jamieson and Dave Tomlinson on the journeys out of mainstream church towards new models of faith and practice. As a study that values the context of the reader, I am suggesting that there are possible alternative readings of DI in the context of a post-church community; that people who have been disenfranchised from a form of faith expression to which they were previously highly committed and in which they were deeply invested, will read the words of DI with new perspectives than were previously held about these texts by themselves and in theological studies; and that these interpretations will be useful to that community and beyond, in terms of bringing hope, and emerging self-understanding (two subthemes in the

3. I will focus on secularisation in ch. 2. Briefly here I acknowledge a number of earlier theorists who contributed significantly to studies on secularisation: David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Religion in the Modern World (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967). The theory has undergone significant critique, leading to contrasting positions such as those presented by José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). With an altered perspective from his original stance, see Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-18. More recently in continued support of the theory, Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The most significant recent scholarly contribution belongs to Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2007).

text itself).

The next chapter will explore exilic theology and argue for a reading of DI through this lens. Trauma studies throw light on the range of sub-themes listed above, all of which may be considered parts of the concept of exile, or the experience of exile, for both refugees and remainees following the destruction of Jerusalem. The most relevant scholarly contributions to this topic come from Walter Brueggemann, Kathleen M. O'Connor, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, and Daniel Boyarin. In particular, the biblical scholar Daniel Smith-Christopher has managed to successfully blend multiple methodologies in his analysis of exilic theology, appreciating the contemporary potential for Christians in analysing biblical texts written in the context of disaster.[4] Australian approaches to the theological theme of exile will also be explored and assessed in light of the biblical scholarship, notably the work of Michael Goonan.

After establishing the literary and social context of DI in general, the pivotal chapter for the thesis will focus on Isaiah 49:14-26. Of particular interest in this section is Zion's complaint that YHWH has abandoned her, with the use of feminine terminology in YHWH's reassurance that Zion's exiled children will return to mother Zion. I will explore concepts of hope, doubt, the nature of the salvation offered, gathering and return in contrast to exile and dispersal, that can be uncovered in this passage. This analysis will be followed by shorter comparative chapters of the following Oracles / Proclamations of Salvation: 50:1-3 (a follow-on from chapter 49 that includes YHWH depicted as faithful father and husband engaging in monologue with Zion's children, imagery of divorce, reconciliation and forgiveness); 51:17-52:6 (Zion depicted as drunken bereaved mother, led to comfort and consolation by deliverer YHWH); and 54:1-17 (unnamed Zion liberated to bridal status; YHWH as husband admits abandonment). Each of these passages is linked in tone and theme by strong feminine imagery, providing rich metaphorical representations of the exiled people and their self-perceptions, as well as their relationship with YHWH, and may make available useful connections to broader themes relating to the marginalised outsider. Following the textual

4. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 6.

analysis, the application section will develop the relevant themes for a post-church reading of DI and draw some conclusions that link exilic studies, the Australian post-church context and the reading of DI, and the implications of these findings.

This exploration of DI and its significance for Australian post-church communities is an original contribution to biblical hermeneutics. Various authors have explored the theme of exile in an Australian context, at times even explicitly linking this with the experience of marginalised people. However, few have attempted to do so via an in-depth exploration of a specific biblical text. My hypothesis is that a close analysis of DI can facilitate growth in self-understanding among the post-church community. This thesis may also help to shape a sense of community among a generally voiceless people who no longer attend or feel they belong to mainstream churches. While not an immediate focus of concern, the thesis might be considered a preliminary contribution to a broader understanding of ecclesiology, and thus part of a wider theological conversation.

In thinking about how the Proclamations of Salvation may inform the exilic experience of post-church Australians, the overarching questions will be:

- What are the particular areas of resonance?
- Are there any new contributions to our reading of DI that may arise from the context of a post-church community?
- What lessons can be learned from DI about the survival of faith in new forms?

# 2. Assumptions of Study

My assumptions for this study include:

- DI offers many possibilities for the study of the theme of exile, including the reframing and survival of faith in times of crisis and change. This study of exile in DI may in turn lead to identification of particular related issues for the post-church community of faith in Australia and inform paradigms for future directions.
- In relation to the Australian context, my observation is that there is a growing trend of church leavers who still identify as people of faith outside the traditional walls of the

church.

- The biblical theme of exile, as uncovered through the lens of DI, is particularly relevant as an informing metaphor for post-church Australians.

My ultimate assumption is that this conversation is not only necessary but may be fruitful on a number of levels: that it will produce a way through biblical study for a community that is in transition; that it can bring a new sense of self-understanding and awareness for a community with a belief that this ancient text holds some informing as well as transforming stories that link to a new story; and, that it will bring to the fore the promising metaphor of exile for a generation that is wrestling with postcolonial challenges, post-modernity and increasing secularity in connection with faith journeys.

# 3. Delimitations of study

The delimitations that I expect to encounter in this study relate to the boundaries of the exilic metaphor, the textual restrictions of DI, as well as the nature of the post-church context being difficult to define with limited research available.[5] As a contribution to biblical hermeneutics, the thesis does not engage broadly with hermeneutical theory of doctrines of ecclesiology. It focuses on particular chapters in the Isaiah tradition and does not attempt to provide an account of the book as a whole, or compare DI with all the other literature said to derive from the same period. The contemporary focus is on a particular sector of Australian society, and there will be no attempt to provide a comprehensive sociology or history of secularity.

# 4. Personal Context

I recognize from the outset of this thesis that my own social location intersects with the topic that I am choosing to investigate. All the spheres that I am attempting to bring into conversation with one another have personal resonance: exile, DI and post-church Australia. This provides not only the motivation for the study but the potential to produce bias. However, this thesis aims not only to investigate some 'hunches' and bring my initial questions to the table, but also to generate further questions and be open to unexpected

5. At this point it is worth noting that more detailed empirical research on post-church Australians is a necessity in furthering our understanding of this phenomenon, but that is not the primary concern of my study, which is first and foremost textual. This study will be utilising existing research about church leavers.

findings.

Contributions to my worldview include becoming a Christian as a teenager from a working class, secular and strongly atheistic background in industrial regional semi-outback Australia. Subsequently settling in a Christian environment in Melbourne that was quite different from my other Australian experiences, as well as travelling to other parts of the world, along with a mixture of secular education and theological training have continued to shape my self-understanding. I was consumed with and committed to mainstream evangelical Christianity and church life (as pastor, teacher) for many years. In particular I held a deep interest in biblical literacy that combined with my interest in language, faith, history, reading and community. I desired intently to 'catch up' on the biblical text and history to which I had not been exposed as a child. I am a product in immediate ways of these smaller worlds, both individual church and Christian communities as well as the larger cultural context of Australia but I also recognise many elements of resistance I have had to those contexts. The church became a family to me, replacing the socio-economically dysfunctional and deprived situation in which I grew up. This was in many ways positive, but also exploitative. I endured a period of deconstruction of my simplistic faith in early adulthood that involved a time of exile that I would signify as being predominantly about re-imagining church; an exilic experience of loss related to church community, a geographic shift, as well as physical illness and the faith challenges that this exposes. My reading of James Fowler's work on Faith Stages has influenced my own self-understanding of the transitory nature of this season of my life.[6]

During this time of looking backwards to re-understand/ re-interpret my past I was able to look forward to what my faith could become. Of great consolation during this era were the words of DI and the exilic background to Israel's history. As part of my reconstruction of faith I also experienced a great brokenness regarding the justice thread throughout Scripture, and in my identity as a female in ministry, more specifically in leadership and teaching roles in places where this was challenged, often on biblical grounds. These experiences led me to

6. A major portion of my work on the context of church leavers relates to James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) and Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith: Journeys Beyond Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches* (Wellington: Phillip Garside, 2000), who picks up on Fowler's model.

explore early forms of emergent churches in Melbourne and I found a resonance with the dialogue available in this community, as well as the possibility of raising difficult questions that had been 'un-askable' in my prior context.[7] Armed with questions, anxieties and a great level of pain, I journeyed with many people who had left, or were in the long process of leaving churches they had been committed to for long periods of time. For many people, I observed that the leaving process also brought a new stage of maturity to their faith journey rather than a loss of faith.

A further trigger for me in this study has been the fact that there have been very few Australian works that have taken an approach to the exilic theme by using an exegetical study within our context. I saw some links between studies undertaken in other contexts, particularly in North America, but then asked the inevitable question of how much these writings could apply to the context in Australia, where the history, culture, and church world shares some similarities but many unique characteristics that do not correlate so neatly. There seemed to be a rising tide of popular works that explored the social possibilities of an exilic metaphor in the Australian church but with a relatively light focus on biblical exegesis, particularly (and ironically) the Hebrew Bible (HB).[8] There are relevant correlations between the exilic motif and postcolonial readings of Scripture.

My own faith journey produced a seed of intrigue in me as to the future of Christianity in general in this country. The exilic motif may prove increasingly instructive, not only in regard to scriptural contexts but in a reinterpretation of our own context. In a nutshell, I consider that there may be clues or insights for us in the text of DI as to why, when for all intents and purposes the faith of the people of Judah should have been destroyed, it was reframed to survive the disaster. Not only may DI provide clues, but also its formation may have been the key in that survival. These insights might provide a different context (contemporary post-church Australian Christians) with new possibilities of faith survival and expression. I recognise that other people may find similar experiences of faith transitions beyond the

7. The terms Emergent, or Emerging Missional Church, were common in Melbourne through the early 2000's. My original church context included Baptist and Churches of Christ denominations, and mega church, influenced by Charismatic and Pentecostal theology and leadership structure.
8. From here on Hebrew Bible will be referred to as HB.

church and arrive at different conclusions to mine in a study of biblical texts.[9] My own journey, although providing the inquisitive questions that drive the study, will not necessarily determine the outcomes of the thesis. I anticipate that in the process of this study many of my questions will be reshaped and many surprises will arise.

## 5. Multiple methodologies in conversation

The interplay of various critical methodologies in this study of DI will seek to bring to the fore valuable insights, connecting vastly different contexts in terms of time, place and function.[10] Placing the work of DI into its exilic historical-cultural context is necessary to better understand the rhetorical purpose and potential impact on the original recipients. The passages I have elected to study include feminine representations of the exiles and YHWH, and are dominated by the use of metaphor, thus inviting an analysis that includes literary-feminist approaches to the text. Rhetorical criticism is an appropriate method for dealing with the kind of speech that DI employs. From here it is beneficial to branch into an area of sociological study that recognises that the text is not cemented on the page, but occurred in a social process where crisis led to its need. The Babylonian exilic and early post-exilic situations will be assessed, and more recent research into refugee studies, post-traumatic stress and postcolonialism may prove to give greater insight into the historical situation, as well as providing greater empathy with contemporary situations of exile.[11] Each passage portrays multilayered texts, reflecting a story of pain and corporate trauma (childbirth,

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9. The social location and context of the author is noted by many to be not only influential but also significant. See Mark G. Brett, "Reading the Bible in the Context of Methodological Pluralism: The Undermining of Ethnic Exclusivism in Genesis," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions of the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation,* ed. M. Daniel Carroll R, JSOTSup 299 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 49. Duane Watson urges commentary authors to be more honest about their own backgrounds and ideologies. Duane Frederick Watson and Alan J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography With Notes on History and Method*, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 137.

10. On the value of interdisciplinary studies see M. Daniel Carroll R, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions From the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation,* ed. M. Daniel Carroll R, JSOTSup 299 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 21. Note also Segovia who argues for the relationship between the main paradigms of biblical study: historical critical, literary and cultural criticism. He assesses the limitations and biases of each emphasis. Fernando F. Segovia, ""And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues": Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism" in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 9.

11. Rainer Albertz, "Introduction," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, AIL 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 1. Albertz in particular notes the plight of modern refugees or migrants. At a time in history where we are seeing the mass movements of millions of people in crisis (due to conflict, war and famine) this is a poignant point.

divorce, sexual violence, death of children). Having understood the context of the historical situation of the Babylonian exile, and the development of exile as a metaphor for suffering, I then wish to make relevant links with post-church readers. I read DI with an awareness of the conflicted space that the writing evidences, and that untangling imperial ideologies from resistance or survival literature is a complex task made clearer with the aid of postcolonial theory.

The investigative rigour of the historical critical method will form the framework for my textual analysis. However as my study is seeking to be sensitive to the alternate voices in the text, traditional Euro-centric and male-dominated concerns of historical criticism may not always be relevant to my study of DI.[12] The historical critical consensus during the 19th and 20th century regarding the original context and construction of the text of DI focussed on the backdrop being the end of the crisis of the Babylonian exile. My study leaves open the question of where these chapters were first authored. In determining some initial structural boundaries in the texts I am investigating, form critical studies of DI have proven fruitful in being able to identify various speech types in the text.[13] However, I will seek not to be inhibited by the restrictions that form criticism imposes. The division of speech types into small components can mean that the overall meaning may be lost or the connection of one speech type to another dismissed. Rhetorical critical approaches to DI enable an exploration of the literary features of each pericope as well as the possible intended impact on the implied reader/ hearer, considering the persuasive intent. Rhetorical critical approaches to the biblical text have endeavoured to deal with the text in its final form rather than at its source. As Hauser suggests, it is not that the work of source or form critics is rejected, but that the literary approach asks different questions and finds different answers.[14] Patricia Tull's

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12. See Segovia on the argument that the historical-critical emphasis ignored other perspectives. Segovia, ""And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues"," 1-32. Also Fernando F. Segovia, "Cultural Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism," in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 5. On the dominance of male perspectives in the historical critical method see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 42. I am interested to explore some of the feminist studies in relation to the work in DI as the passages I have chosen to investigate have strong feminine imagery that is often downplayed in critical work.

13. For an overview of form critical approaches to DI see: Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. 40-55* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

14. On the different interests of form and rhetorical criticism, see Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism,* 5-8. On the shift from form to rhetorical criticism, see Roy Frank Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55*

approach to rhetorical criticism, which incorporates intertextuality, is especially useful in relation to reading the text of DI.[15] This method appreciates the original audience and final form of the text and also acknowledges readers beyond the original intent, "...readers who ask - and see answered - questions that the original writer may never have imagined. Rhetorical criticism helps interpreters attend to the persuasive intents and effects of biblical texts..."[16]

Sociological insights appreciate that our understanding of the texts that arose in times of crisis, displacement, war and resettling can be further expanded by acknowledging the psychological, social and cultural impact of those events. By incorporating sociological insights we may be able to make some more accurate hermeneutical links today. It will be useful not only in increasing our understanding in similar situations but even in understanding more accurately the contexts that gave rise to such rhetoric and texts, designed to inspire a despairing people. This is significant work in order to recover what West calls the 'grain' of the text to better inform our contemporary readings.[17] The words of DI are not limited to history, to paper or to literature, but they relate to people. Particularly relevant sociological perspectives in the reading of DI include: the place of women in society; the nature of warfare and exile in the ANE world; as well as studies of change.

There are a number of challenges inherent in merging disciplines. As Albertz observes in his introduction to *Interpreting Exile*, "cross-cultural comparisons between ancient and modern societies always need some critical reflection about whether phenomena are truly comparable or can only be compared at an abstract or metaphorical level, if at all."[18] This highlights the problem of anachronism. In my work in DI, it is the metaphorical link that is important, due

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(Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 5-7.

15. Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS 161 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997). (I note the use of Tull and Tull Willey, and will reference accordingly).

16. Patricia K. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application,* ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, Ky.: Westminister John Knox, 1999), 156-182, esp. 175-176.

17. Gerald O West, "Gauging the Grain in a More Nuanced and Literary Manner: A Cautionary Tale Concerning the Contribution of the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions From the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation,* ed. M. Daniel Carroll R (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75-109, 88.

18. Albertz, "Introduction," *Interpreting exile,* 2.

to the fact that I am linking the context of the Australian post-church community, not a refugee or displaced community as such. There are aspects that work and aspects that do not. The post-church person is not necessarily exiled by force and their suffering may be different, in both the extent and the nature of the experience of loss, compared to those who are exiles due to war, political circumstances, disasters and so on. Perhaps the situations are incomparable at points.[19] Other areas of challenge in relation to sociological approaches to ancient contexts are that they rely on historical work. This issue will be discussed in the section on exile as there is much scholarly debate regarding the historicity of the exile, including the myth of the empty land. Rhetorical critical approaches are important, as a failure to understand the nature of the text will lead to misinterpretations about the society to which it relates.

In the light of these various methodologies and amidst the challenges of relating their insights to specific texts of DI, I embark upon the journey by outlining the context of the study as post-church Australian Christians. The appropriateness of the exilic metaphor as derived from DI for this contemporary context is assessed. I will then provide the basis of my approach to DI, derived from an understanding of Isaiah studies in general. This will lay the groundwork for my exegetical analysis of Isaiah 49:14-26; 50:1-3; 51:17-52:6; and 54. From this analysis conclusions will be drawn as to the applicability of these texts to post-church people today.

19. On the challenges of using different methodologies in his study, see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *Text & Experience: Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible*, The Biblical Seminar (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 13-14. Wilson warns that contemporary theories of sociology or anthropology face many challenges when dealing with ancient contexts, and argues for prioritising the text not the method. He outlines six methodological concerns that I would suggest are now being challenged by cultural critical or reader-response approaches. Robert Wilson, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 28-29.

# 2. Believing leavers: Post-church context

*For simplicity on this side of complexity,*
*I would not give you a fig*
*But for simplicity on the other side of complexity,*
*for that I would give you anything I have.*[1]
Oliver Wendall Holmes

"These people who have found God in the wilderness feel that the walls of the existing temples are too narrow for them and should be expanded."[2] Mikhaïl Epstein

## 1. The context of the study

The socio-rhetorical context of DI and the emerging context of the 'post-church' Australian are brought together in this study via a careful exegesis of particular texts in DI and reflections from sociological analysis. Both are contexts of displacement, loss and possibility that provide interesting parallels, particularly when DI is understood in the light of exilic theology. DI displays evidence of trauma, a profound sense of dislocation, loss and the hope for a future beyond desolation. The exiles represented in DI are treated as witnesses to, as well as victims of, the might of Empire. The imagination and collective memory of exilic survivors are preserved in DI. DI's framing of the exilic crisis and new social imaginaries may speak to post-church people who experience dislocation, anxiety and loss.[3] There are limits to the parallel, but the development of the exilic motif and the creative work of the prophet of hope in DI allows a conversation between these otherwise disparate worlds.

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1. Oliver Wendall Holmes, quoted in Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith: Journeys Beyond Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches* (Wellington: Phillip Garside, 2000), 138. Jamieson uses this quote to describe the painful journey of a post-church person, with the understanding that the journey is not a loss but a necessity.
2. Mikhaïl Epstein, a researcher into religion in the Russia post-Soviet era, quoted in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2007), 534.
3. Taylor uses the term 'social imaginaries' to describe "...the ways (people) imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations." Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 171.

In this chapter I seek to identify the contemporary context of "post-church Australia" and in particular evangelical Christians who are increasingly leaving churches whilst generally retaining faith. I consider influences on Australian identity, in particular church and spiritual identity, namely postmodernity, postcolonialism, pluralism, consumerism and increasing secularity. Alan Jamieson and Dave Tomlinson have informed my work.[4] In their findings leaving church does not correlate with a loss of faith, and there may be other interpretations of this emerging situation. I will make some preliminary observations of the possible relationship between DI and the Australian post-church community, with the place of exile as a metaphor offering new ecclesial alternatives in this context.

### (a) Post-church Australian Christians

In the broader narrative of Australian life and faith is a smaller but important story of Christians who no longer find a home within the established church. These 'churchless' Christians, and those who exist on fringes of the evangelical church, retaining faith in God but losing trust in church as it is conducted, known and experienced, are the contextual focus of my thesis. My presuppositions are that the dynamic of people leaving church is increasing, and that the individuals amongst this change feel significantly disenfranchised, finding they no longer fit into the mainstream evangelical churches.[5] They are unsure of how to form new communities, and may experience grief, bewilderment and self-questioning in the initial phases of the leaving process. This church leaving process may be defined as traumatic.[6]

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4. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*; Alan Jamieson, Jenny McIntosh, and Adrienne Thompson, *Five Years on - Continuing Faith Journeys of Those Who Left the Church* (Wellington: The Portland Trust, 2006); Alan Jamieson, "Leaving and Believing: A Longitudinal Study of the Faith of Church Leavers," *AJMS* 5, no. 1 (June 2011): 53-60; Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
5. The social phenomenon and effect of the departure from faith communities is not limited to evangelical communities. It is occurring across the spectrum of Christian churches and away from traditional religions (although not necessarily spirituality) in general. The focus of my thesis will be on evangelical churches (defined later). For broader study of religious expression in Australia in general, see Gary D. Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Pr, 2006), chapter 3-5.
6. In no way am I suggesting that church leavers experience the *same* levels of trauma as people who are emerging from situations of war or displacement, but that learnings from these contexts may be useful to the study of church leavers. Church leaving may have elements of trauma that have not been fully appreciated. Helen Ebaugh's studies focussing on former nuns and developmental psychology studies have been used to investigate and explain faith transition. Jamieson particularly uses James Fowler's approach to faith stages on which to base his categories of study. See Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 32-40, and ch. 8. James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). Psychologist Marlene Winnell has written on the process of leaving fundamentalist religious beliefs, and suggests a condition she now calls Religious Trauma Syndrome (RTS), sharing many features of

Although maintaining faith, the form of faith has been questioned and deconstructed, with confusion over what will help re-form a clearer faith identity. A reading of DI that appreciates the reframing of faith offers hope, and may suggest an alternative approach to those available that lead to isolation, agitation, confusion or dislocation. I also contend that the construction of the post-church by the established church is inherently false and serves to benefit and reassert established evangelical theology.

Post-church people may offer the Christian community new readings of DI. My initial sense is that the major themes that will emerge from the reading will include doubt, abandonment, questions of faith and the activity of God, being an outsider and finding a way through change. Contextual study will particularly inform my analysis of DI, with the implication being that the reading will go both ways - ancient and modern.[7] Contemporary exiles will have unique perspectives of the text coming from their own contexts, and particular readings of DI may make sense to other communities who are experiencing the position and pain of being "outsiders." These new insights may offer established churches a process of reform at one extreme, or at least opportunities to read with the outsider. This may lead to new forms of church, new styles of leadership, and new interpretations of the situations we are in as a broader faith community.

Throughout this thesis I utilise the term 'post-church.' This identifies people who may have left the mainstream church, who are in the process of leaving or on the fringes of church but

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PTSD. Her earlier work outlines the leaving process, along with her personal experience. Marlene Winell, *Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving Their Religion* (Berkeley: Apocryphile, 2007). She defines RTS as "...the condition experienced by people who are struggling with leaving an authoritarian, dogmatic religion and coping with the damage of indoctrination." Marlene Winell, "Religious Trauma Syndrome: It's Time to Recognize it," *CBT Today*, http://www.babcp.com/Review/RTS-Its-Time-to-Recognize-it.aspx. My thesis will not give a psychological analysis of the church leaving process but there are aspects of the psychology and sociology of religious transition that my topic will overlap at times.

7. Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Dorpspruit: Cluster Publications, 1993); Gerald O. West, ed, *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading With Their Local Communities* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Gerald O. West, "Do Two Walk Together? Walking With the Other Through Contextual Bible Study," *AThR* 93, no. 3 (2011): 431-449; Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Fernando F. Segovia, "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement," in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 57-74.

no longer identify it as their home.[8] They are not necessarily 'churchless' in the sense that churches still exist in our society, but their experience of church does not hold the same meaning as it previously occupied. Taylor uses terms such as 'believing without belonging' (coined by Grace Davie) or 'diffusive Christianity' (coined by Jeffrey Cox).[9] My contention is that the church in post-Christendom Australia exists in a liminal time and space, which raises specific challenges and questions. I think 'post-church' also connects to a broader phenomenon of Australian culture where institutional church is not the centre. There are some challenges with using the term 'post-church Christian.' For some the term itself is an oxymoron, as how can someone be a Christian without connection to the church? These are people trying to find expression for their faith *outside* the established setting of church, even if they meet in groups that some would identify as ecclesial.[10] It is the processing of this changed situation and its difficulties that can be assisted by a contextual study of DI's exilic theology.

The growing movement of Christians away from the institutional church, in particular the mainstream evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic movements (EPC as referenced by Jamieson), is a phenomenon directly influenced by and part of the wider social changes that are occurring in Australia and beyond – postmodernity, pluralism, and consumerism.[11] These are people who are not apostate; they still maintain faith but the boundaries are increasingly

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8. At times I will use the term 'church leavers' but for some people who remain within the church or on the fringes of the church, the issues this study raises are also relevant.
9. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 514, 518-519. See also Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
10. This can be somewhat related to the concept of finding the sacred in the secular. It also links with ideas of finding 'God' in unexpected places, a feature of exilic theology. There may be something to be learned for example from the experience of the Latin Base Christian Communities that emerged particularly in Brazil and spread to other nations, as a reaction to the mainstream dominance of the Catholic church, whilst still identifying with it. These groups (also known as CEBs - *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*) met regularly in homes to discuss scripture and its impact on their daily life, a reaction to ritualism in the church as well as the authoritarian governments they emerged under. See Paulo Fernando Carneiro de Andrade, "Reading the Bible in Ecclesial Base Communities of Latin America: The Meaning of Social Context," in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 237-249. On the influence of the groups in the process of democracy see James C. Cavendish, "Christian Base Communities and the Building of Democracy: Brazil and Chile.," *Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 179. The home church model is advocated by many as a direction for the future church, Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship, and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014).
11. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 11. Many of the studies on social influences on people leaving church consider post-modernity to be a major influencer. Taylor places the secular shift in the age of modernity. Taylor, *A Secular Age.*

porous. Many of the reasons for EPC church-leaving are relevant to other denominations and expressions of Christian faith, and to a broader sociological shift away from religious affiliation in general as secularism exerts greater influence. However, the context of this study will relate specifically to the EPC post-church community.

Writers such as Brian McLaren and Rob Bell in North America, and Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost in the Australian context have identified, articulated and perhaps encouraged some of the disenchantment and noted the key questions of the EPC church attender and leaver.[12] However, it is on the work of Alan Jamieson and his colleagues, and Dave Tomlinson that I wish to focus. Not only are the experiences of post-church people specifically outlined, and described in the work of Jamieson and Tomlinson, but the post-church people themselves are given a voice. Their studies also provide potential church models with which these communities may wish to experiment. It is to the contemporary post-church people that I think DI's theology of exile offers hope and possibly future direction.

### (i) Alan Jamieson: A churchless faith

Alan Jamieson, New Zealand sociologist and pastor, completed a sociological PhD study on why people left the church, producing two books on the topic.[13] He includes a number of Australians in his study and there are many similarities between the Australian and NZ contexts that are beneficial for this study. Due to Jamieson's influence on my work, I will give an outline of the research he conducted.

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12. Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves in: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003); Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post-Protestant, Liberal/conservative, Mystical/poetical, Biblical, Charismatic/contemplative, Fundamentalist/ Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-Yet-hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003); Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006); Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Rob Bell *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (HarperCollins, 2011). These writers have particularly found a voice in the Emerging church movement.

13. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*; Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on.* Jamieson notes that "At the time of submission (January 1998) this was, and remains to my knowledge, the most extensive qualitative research on the faith of church leavers from the evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic streams of the church." Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 6. This is despite the acknowledged growing nature of the phenomenon. In fact, a quick survey of the bulk of related Christian material in this area is about getting people back into church or changing strategy, not a deep analysis of why they are leaving and the nature of their faith outside of the church.

**Who**: Jamieson interviewed 108 evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic church leavers and 54 church leaders.[14] The later book that incorporates this study includes many anecdotal accounts as well. Interestingly, the EPC churches are typically identified as the fastest growing churches in NZ and Australia. As he notes:

> ...while EPC churches are growing rapidly it appears, at least in the West, that these same churches also have a wide-open back door through which the disgruntled, disillusioned and disaffiliated leave. In the wake of rising pluralism and growing societal scepticism toward the Christian faith such leave-taking appears to be increasing…(but) there appears to be little understanding of who leaves, when they leave, why they leave, and what happens to them and their faith after they leave.[15]

Jamieson observed that the subjects of his study were adults, many had children[16] and were typically highly involved in their churches (at least 15 years) prior to leaving. Many previously held positions of leadership in their church, were involved in Christian workplaces or theological study environments.[17] In other words, these were not new converts or low commitment attendees; they were core participants, which perhaps already challenges some of the perceptions about church leavers.

## Categories of church leavers

Jamieson categorises the church leavers in his study in different groups, and connects this categorisation to James Fowler's work on Stages of Faith as a mechanism for understanding faith transition.[18] He also acknowledges that people who remain in EPC churches also

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14. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 6.
15. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 11. Hughes et al explores the Pentecostal movement, and according to their research Pentecostal churches in Australia have been growing with a strong migrant influence in their growth. However, their research also indicates that more are leaving that tradition than joining. Philip J Hughes, Margaret Fraser, and Stephen Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities: Facts and Figures* (Nunawading: Christian Research Association, 2012), 7, 82-85.
16. This is a significant point, as an assumption of church leavers may be that they are young and will return to church when they have children - this is not the pattern that Jamieson finds.
17. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 11-15. They are invested financially, socially, theologically and sometimes professionally. For example, a church leaver may have previously given income to the church or even derived an income from the church, have married (with such a decision even shaped by the church), started a family within the church, grown up in the church, chosen a career/ vocation based on faith leanings, and have had a social life that centred around church life. Social, economic, relational, theological, work, leisure, time - all of these spheres may have been influenced, or dominated by church life.
18. See Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* ch. 8. Jamieson acknowledges that EPC churches have typically neglected the concept of faith as a journey, instead emphasising conversion. Jamieson outlines James Fowler's 6

transition through the stages of faith. These are considered not only normal, but necessary. In Jamieson's study only a very small percentage actually leave their faith entirely. The other reality for the experience of the church leaver is that they cannot see forward to where their processing journey will take them. It is very helpful that Jamieson undertook a follow up study five years later to see how their faith journeys were proceeding. His analysis showed:

1. The findings of this research indicate that having left, previously committed key leaders of EPC churches are very unlikely to return. Those that do will be in the minority. Most will continue to develop and strengthen their faith without participating in established churches.
2. There are increasing numbers of groups and personal supports for continued Christian faith beyond the church.[19]

This would suggest that it is an important group to whom the established church should be listening.

The categories of church leavers that Jamieson utilises includes descriptions of the types of faith they were expressing in their post-church state, as depicted below in Table 1. As Jamieson explains, the problem with using a category system is that it can appear

> ... to make a very fluid and dynamic process into an ordered and sequential movement from one box to another. This is certainly not what it feels like for the people involved. For them the process is anything but a neat jump from box to box. It is, as one person described it, like being 'adrift on the sea,' tossed by the ocean waves, blown by the changing winds and pulled by different currents.[20]

Exilic theology is one helpful way of exploring issues of faith transition and loss of community. Church leavers may find language available to them via exilic theology that helps describe their experiences. Jamieson's study uses such terms as: displacement, alienation, exile, explorers, transition, and wayfinders. These relate to concepts of liminality and marginality that are examined in his study.[21]

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stages of faith clearly and explains why this particular model was useful to his analysis of church leavers. Fowler is a theologian and human development specialist who saw faith development as comparable to stages of maturity. See Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*.

19. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 108.
20. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 21.
21. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 158-166.

| Categories of church leavers | Features of category |
|---|---|
| **Displaced followers** | • Left or leaving churches primarily due to church leadership and management issues.[22]<br>• Initially called disillusioned followers, the displaced followers group is characterised as hurt, and/or angry.<br>• Faith practices similar to the EPC church; still reliant in some ways on the EPC community. Nevertheless, they experience estrangement from church.[23] |
| **Reflective exiles** | • Left or leaving church due to a sense of disconnection between the life of the leaver and the life of the church, an issue of irrelevancy.[24]<br>• Deconstruction phase.[25] Question key foundations of their faith as received and expressed in the EPC church. Resistant and reactive to the EPC church, perhaps not wanting anything to do with some of the things that were previously crucial to their faith formation (e.g. Christian radio and worship, reading particular devotional books, prayer styles).<br>• Jamieson uses the term exile here as descriptive of a wandering, uncertain people who leave all that they know, a nomadic kind of existence, "the feeling of being an outsider from one's homeland, one's place of belonging."[26] Outside of their previously valued community.[27]<br>• They do not have resolution in their faith. |
| **Transitional explorers** | • Many in this category originally left church as 'reflective exiles' with questions regarding faith. Some had been involved in rigorous debate around theological and philosophical issues.<br>• Evidenced a progressive move towards reconstruction of their faith.[28] Although they continued to test elements of the 'old' faith, they kept some aspects and have been able to come to a place of increasing confidence in what they felt 'held together.'<br>• They do not settle comfortably in the EPC traditions anymore.[29] |
| **Integrated wayfinders** | • Completed faith reconstruction, in contrast to the previous category which is largely transitional.<br>• Confidently seeking to integrate faith into all aspects of their lives, having taken on wider views than their previous EPC belief systems. Keenly aware of own personal issues.<br>• Characterised by openness to new communities of faith. |

Table 1: Alan Jamieson's categories of church leavers

Jamieson's work shows that church leavers experience great angst in their journeys, much personal pain, loss of community, many areas of doubt and questions, and may include long seasons of being in-between. There can be dissonance between what they were taught to believe and what they feel is an authentic form of faith expression. Many experience pressure

22. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 14.
23. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 15
24. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 18.
25. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 18.
26. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 66.
27. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 18
28. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 77.
29. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 89.

to remain, but feel that doing so becomes destructive to their faith. They may have theological questions, and philosophical doubts that are not granted a hearing or if they are, they may be shut down. For many the leaving process involves loss of positions that previously gave them identity, or even an income. Quoting Helen Ebaugh, who has studied the leaving process from deep commitments (such as church belonging), the experience may include a period of "feeling anxious, scared, at loose ends, that they didn't belong. The experience is best described as a vacuum in that the people felt 'in midair', 'ungrounded', 'neither here nor there', 'nowhere'."[30] These experiences all sound familiar in exilic theology and may especially be understood in the light of trauma studies. As Jamieson has shown, what takes place for many on this journey is not a dismissing of the faith but a reframing.[31]

### (ii) Dave Tomlinson: The Post Evangelical

Dave Tomlinson, a UK pastor, wrote the provocatively titled book *The Post-Evangelical,* a book resonant for church leavers (or those who contemplate leaving) as it has validated many of the issues and questions that they hold about church, faith and culture (and the chasm between them). It also includes many side-comments from a broad range of thinkers who engage with his ideas (and from some who disagree). Where Jamieson's work is statistical and comparative, Tomlinson's book is more anecdotal and intuitive, interacting with the societal changes of post-modernity. In many ways it captures some of the language of the post-church experience that is difficult to articulate and may be useful in making connections with a contemporary context that is lacking a clear voice. It advocates for people struggling with evangelicalism but also provides some conceptual frameworks to understand that

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30. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 38. Quoting Helen Ebaugh, an ex-Catholic nun and sociologist who examined the leaving process.

31. There are numerous other works worth mentioning that have looked at the growing phenomenon of the post-Christian generation and the increasing number of church leavers. The Barna Group released: David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011). This research looks at this phenomenon in North America but in relation to Christian young people in particular. This book is similar to Jamieson's work using categories for the groups of church leavers, including nomads, prodigals and exiles. [A helpful diagram on Len Hjalmarson's website *NextReformation* compares Jamieson's and Kinnaman's categories for church leavers: See http://nextreformation.com/wp-admin/images/fowler_Kinnaman_stages2.jpg.] Kinnaman appropriates the exilic metaphor and Babylon imagery to explain the shift, but in a different manner from which I am attempting to do. The major notable difference in reading Kinnaman's work is the more Christianised American cultural context. There is an underlying drive to continue to see the best outcome being the return of these exiles to the church and for the church to improve 'disciple making techniques.' The study has not reached a place of seeing the exile as a possible place of finding a better expression of faith.

struggle. Tomlinson's work incorporates the value of poetry, story and questions and may provide ideas of how these approaches can helpfully relate with the text of DI whilst being aware of the complexities of the contemporary context.

Tomlinson argues that those moving down a post-evangelical pathway are not rejecting faith but taking into account enormous societal changes.[32] He suggests that transition to synthesise traditional theologies with current values creates tension and pain in the attempt.[33] This dissonance exists in viewpoints on marriage and family, scriptural authority and interpretation. The liminality of no longer being able to identify with inherited evangelicalism but not yet having clarity on post-evangelicalism lends so well to the exilic metaphor and there may be a connection here to readings of DI.

Tomlinson's premises can be related to Jamieson's work on Fowler's stages of faith.[34] Tomlinson chooses to use psychotherapist M. Scott Peck's model of spiritual (not limited to Christian) growth which Tomlinson summarises as four main stages: self-obsessed, conformist, individualist and integrated.[35] The transition between the stages may be traumatic, and Tomlinson suggests that many post-evangelicals identify as shifting between the conformist and individualist stages.[36] Tomlinson considers postmodernity to be the major influence for the movement and summarises that the rigid morality and theological perspectives of evangelicalism do not facilitate healthy progression between the stages.[37] Evangelicalism can sometimes not provide favourable environments for a deeply questioning faith, as it may consider this to be rebellious or even worse, liberal and does not necessarily encourage mature discipleship.[38] If the only options available to the evangelical seem to be fundamentalism or liberalism they remain stuck, and it can make the process of church

32. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 16
33. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 24.
34. Jamieson acknowledges the influence of Tomlinson's work. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 9.
35. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 60. Tomlinson acknowledges the limitations of M. Scott Peck's model. He closes the chapter by using transactional analysis (Parent, Adult and Child). This model is helpful for looking at the issues of compliance and authority (church leadership, choices, blame, voice of God) that arise for the post-evangelical Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,*, 63-67.
36. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 62.
37. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 62.
38. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 24 and see also ch. 5 "Liberals in sheep's clothing." He devotes a chapter to this topic, as this is considered the key issue people have with the post-evangelical movement - that it is essentially liberal.

leaving the only possibility if they want to deepen their faith. I would suggest that this dynamic is still in play with the rising influence of the neo-conservative movement. When evangelicals are able to express doubt or ask questions, and pass the barriers of guilt, they find relief.[39]

### (iii) EPC Churches

As the particular focus of my thesis will be looking at church leavers from the Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (EPC), I will give a brief outline here of the makeup of these churches. Jamieson devotes one chapter to analysing the nature of the EPC churches from which his interviewees were departing.[40] This includes looking at key facets of evangelicalism, with the predominant form being influenced by fundamentalism, and conservative in nature.[41] He particularly identifies the lack of critical readings of the Bible in these forms of churches (with a preference for literal readings); a focus on evangelism that seeks conversions (expressed via commitment to the church) and a low focus on social justice or political action as a key component of faith. He also notes the lack of attention to faith development beyond the initial conversion stages. These factors all contribute significantly to the reasons why EPC Christians are leaving their churches and the particular issues that they face. These churches culturally form strong communities, utilise contemporary worship styles that emphasise personal experience, and assert authoritarian and charismatic leadership styles. The EPC churches find cultural associations across denominational differences and relate to many para-church groups. Jamieson lists the key aspects of the church growth movement that have influenced EPC churches, incorporating business models of church structure that focus on numbers (such as the mega-church model). All of these components are important factors for the reasons why people leave church, but also the problems that they may encounter in the leaving process.[42]

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39. Tomlinson, *Post Evangelical,* 25.
40. Although the major context that Jamieson is referring to is NZ, there are only few differences between what he has to say about the EPC church in NZ and in Australia, such as the size of the Australian church in contrast. There may be more variability for Australians, thus if they choose to leave a church they may find other churches more easily. Despite this, statistically speaking, the departure from churches is just as significant in Australia as in NZ, and the reasons similar. See for example Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities*.
41. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 23.
42. This thesis is not specifically focussed on what may be termed 'spiritually abusive' churches or faith communities. For studies on this see Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton, *Toxic Faith: Experiencing Healing*

Despite the internal issues that the EPC churches are facing, they are not an 'enemy' but part of a bigger picture of why people are leaving church in general. It is not that the post-church person is right and everything the established church does is wrong; this binary approach overlooks the complexity of the leaving process and the issues that the church leavers themselves carry. There is the dangerous temptation for church exiles to seek a scapegoat for their anxiety, and although a significant contributing factor to their situation, the established church is not the only one.[43]

Whilst the focus of my study is EPC churches, an interesting contrast can be made with the changes in Catholicism, the members of which form the dominant percentage of Christians in Australia. Catholicism in general has seen an increase in Australia between 1947 and 1971, surpassing numbers of Anglicans and influenced by migration rates.[44] However as Hughes et al explain, despite the overall number growth in numbers "the rate of growth has slowed. Between 2006 and 2011, they grew by 6.1 percent, somewhat slower than the rate of growth as a whole. This means that while the number of Catholics continued to increase...the proportion of the population identifying as Catholic decreased."[45] Bouma notes that although the core reasons why people attend church in the first place are similar (shared worship and to learn about their faith), the major focus between Catholics and the EPC churches was different, with Catholic churches meeting around the Eucharist whereas the EPC churches concentrated on "reaching the unchurched."[46] In terms of attending mass, the rates are 14%.[47] It remains to be seen how the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic church will affect identification with and church attendance in that tradition in particular, let alone in all church institutions.

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*From Painful Spiritual Abuse* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2001).

43. See L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 13-14, where she discusses the problem of scapegoating. She also notes the major issue exiles face of hostility to outsiders.
44. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 68.
45. Hughes, Fraser, Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities,* 34. They also make mention of the positive influence of immigration on Catholic rates.
46. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 81-83.
47. Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities,* 35, using Catholic Church figures.

## (b) The Australian story: who we are and how we got here

To better interpret the post-church condition in an Australian context, it is helpful to briefly explore the relevant interrelated religious, spiritual, social and historical factors that influence the Australian story.[48] Understanding this broader social background reveals that some of the dissonant experiences of the post-church person are part of being Australian. Broadly speaking, 21st century Australia is an increasingly secular, capitalist, consumerist and wealthy industrialised nation, often peaking in world liveability standards.[49] Christianity has had a strong but mixed historical influence on Australian society.[50] In the 1911 ABS statistics 96% of people identified as Christian, but we see a decline by 2011 where 61% identified as Christian.[51] Christianity is no longer the dominant public shaper of society, politics and morality in Australia but this does not mean it has no influence at all, for e.g., in education, and welfare.

Many factors have shaped Australia's unique social and perhaps spiritual identity. There is probably more than 'one' Australia but some important formative events include an ancient Indigenous heritage, colonisation with an assumption of *terra nullius* in the post-Enlightenment era, British deportation of convicts to Australia, European free settlement, a Gold Rush that prompted an immigration influx and included the Eureka Stockade; Federation; Two World Wars fought on foreign fields; the Great Depression of the 1930s; the post-war era and emergence of the consumerist society, and the impact of the Cold,

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48. Bouma argues for a distinctively Australian form of religious and spiritual life. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 31. It may follow that the influences as to why people leave church in Australia are different to the stories of other Western nations, even if there are some broader societal factors that are global.

49. This is one reality. Within the dominant broader story is interwoven the stories of many more who are invisible. Australia has a very high suicide rate, low levels of Indigenous health, living standards and life span.

50. Mark G. Brett includes the work of Australian historian Graeme Davison on the biblical narratives that have contributed to Australian colonial identity. As Brett observes: "It is customary to distinguish between the secular character of Australian culture and the more explicitly religious foundation of the narratives in the U.S.A….(but) the Australian colonies were shaped by very similar convictions about the superiority of white Christian civilizations." See Mark G. Brett, "Feeling for Country: Interpreting the Old Testament in the Australian Context," *Pacifica* 23, no. 2 (2010 June): 137-156, 138.

51. One way the religious and spiritual identity has commonly been measured is in the ABS Census where people are asked to identify their religious affiliation. "Cultural Diversity in Australia," *Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013*, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/2071.0Main%20Features902012%E2%80%932013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2071.0&issue=2012%E2%80%932013&num=&view= (accessed December 6, 2013). Note also Frame "In the past decade, the proportion of the population reporting an affiliation to a Christian religion decreased from 68% in 2001 to 61% in 2011." Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Pr, 2009), 272.

Korean and Vietnam Wars. The 1960s sexual revolution had particular ramifications for the place of the church in speaking to sexual ethics, family and morality.[52] Until the 1950s/1960s, the Australian church landscape was characterised by the Catholic and Protestant (mainly Anglican, Methodist) sectarian divide. This is not the conversation that dominates Australia's religious life today and perhaps is illustrative of the speed at which things have changed and the new possibilities that can break into the discussion. The White Australia policy of immigration endured from the time of the gold rushes of the 1850s until the late 1960s, after which came the rise of multi-cultural immigration to Australia. Consecutive Australian governments also cooperated for generations in the Stolen Generations policies and forced child migration programmes which were not acknowledged as a wound on the soul of the country until the first decade of the 21st century. These are two particularly painful experiences affecting hundreds of thousands of Australians, with many having existed in denial or even ignorance of their past and knowledge of their families.[53] This brief review of Australia's social and religious heritage shows that the exilic motif can connect with much of this story.

The Christian Research Association (CRA) analysed the 2011 Census Statistics and what its data tells us about Religious Communities in Australia. The overall conclusion was that:

> Religion in Australia is not disappearing. Indeed, overall, the numbers identifying with a religious group are continuing to grow. The numbers identifying with a Christian denomination have grown from 12.8 to 13.1 million between 2001 and 2011. Migration has had a very considerable impact on that growth. However, almost all religious groups are losing more people than they are gaining. Most are not keeping all the children born into them.[54]

In relation to Christianity, the CRA analysis asserts that between 2001 and 2011, given

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52. Taylor particularly refers to the 1960s as the time when the "tight interweaving of family, religion, and state...was about to suffer simultaneous blows to each of its constituent parts." This included the feminist movement. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 506.

53. I am intrigued by the impact of these events on the national psyche. Many forced child migrants did not know their parents or why they were sent to a foreign land, and then experienced abuse in orphanages. Many Indigenous Australians who were part of the Stolen Generation either never knew of their heritage or had to keep it hidden. Many refugees had to assimilate to a new culture by implicitly rejecting their former culture, some doing so out of fear (e.g., Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Australia and did not tell their children they were Jewish out of fear of the Nazi experience recurring here). The exilic motif may provide a way through this extremely painful journey towards self-understanding. Although not the focus of this thesis, these factors may provide a clue as to the particularly Australian expressions of the post-church experience.

54. Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities,* 9.

population growth, over 580,000 people who had previously identified with a Christian religious group no longer did so.[55] Overall, nearly all Christian religious denominational categories are seeing a decline. Any attempt to understand the shifts in faith contexts cannot underestimate the massive societal change that is occurring in the Australian religious landscape.

This brief overview has served to highlight some of the key political, economic, and social transitions that the nation of Australia and her people have experienced. There are some key threads: racism, exclusion, deportation, conflict, deception and emerging self-expression in the wider world, and a re-evaluation of past events with new perspectives. There have been more recently apologies, and changes to laws with an ongoing attempt to redress past mistakes, as well as reinterpretation of previously held views on historic events. There is much opportunity in this space to talk of exile. In his chapter titled "The most godless place under heaven?" Tom Frame suggests that the reasons for unbelief in Australia are not necessarily unique in contrast with those found in Britain, America and Europe, but notes, "I would contend that Australian unbelief is more practical than philosophical, and more personal than ideological, in terms of its motivations and imperatives."[56] In contrast to this notion that Australian's are essentially apathetic or disinterested in theory Michael Goonan postulates that the colonial Australian exilic experience is related acutely to a sense of abandonment. Combined with rising secularism the response "...was silence. They decided not to talk about God, to live and act as if God does not exist, or at least that God does not matter… I suspect that at the base of this apathy is a wail, a great overwhelming grief in a God who seems to have abandoned them."[57] The silence therefore indicates not disinterest as many of the studies would suggest, but rather deep pain, trauma and dislocation. The story of the post-church is important to help understand this new reality. The church is increasingly on

55. Hughes, Fraser, and Reid, *Australia's Religious Communities,* 7.
56. Frame, *Losing My Religion,* 187. Frame earlier quotes Hugh Mackay who considers Australians as apathetic about religion. Frame suggests Australia is closer to Canada than the US or UK, but not as secular as NZ or Europe. Frame, *Losing My Religion,* 103. Also see Bouma on the characteristics of a particularly Australian approach to faith or the personality of Australian spirituality. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 35. Many of these categories are in stark contrast to the forms of Christian religious expression and practice as found in North America, and to the Australian churches' (particularly the EPC church) self-perception of spirituality and the expectations of the place of the church in society.
57. Michael. G. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles: Exploring Australian Spirituality* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1996), 103.

the margins of society. Being a church leaver is not rare. In fact, it is becoming the new faith norm.

### (i) Societal influences

There is a strong interrelationship between various broader social forces that are impacting on the nature and future of church life and faith in Australia and throughout the Western industrialised world and beyond. Christendom, post-Christendom, post-modernity, pluralism, consumerism and secularism are the key influences that I will discuss here.

**Christendom**, which Yoder refers to as Constantinianism, is linked to the concept of "being in charge."[58] Australian Christians are still grappling with what the loss of this power means. Despite European settlement of Australia (1788 onward) occurring in the post-Christendom era, the Christendom worldview continued to have influence. As Hauerwas insightfully observes, "the demise of the Constantinian world view, the gradual decline of the notion that the church needs some sort of surrounding 'Christian' culture to prop it up and mold its young, is not a death to lament. It is an opportunity to celebrate...(But) Constantinianism is a hard habit to break."[59] Great injustices that characterised this era, particularly for Indigenous people, were often committed in the name of God. Despite these moves against a Christendom model, the church in Australia still benefits in some ways from this era and there is a challenge as to how far the church is willing to let go of its power.[60] The spread of Christianity and its enmeshment with colonialism is difficult to unravel. Postcolonial studies will be particularly informing to the understanding of some of the struggles that we face today in relation to Australian spirituality. What will also be useful here is the link to exilic studies of diasporic identity, and it is particularly the Indigenous experience that may give greater insight to exile in an Australian context.

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58. See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 12, for a summary of Yoder's views.
59. Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1991), 18-19.
60. I am thinking here of financial and tax privileges, land holdings, and business models from which many churches and Christian organisations benefit. The dominance of Christian teaching in CRE (Christian Religious Education) is another area of current debate.

The influence of **post-modernity** on Australian society, Christian culture, and biblical studies is hard to overestimate.[61] Post-modernity challenges ideas of the certainty and objective nature of knowledge and reason, individuality and freedom, truth and authority (its sources and outcomes). As Grenz suggests, although philosophical rationales for post-modernity dominate intellectual conversations, postmodernity has influenced the whole societal 'mood.'[62] Experience, relativism and pluralism typify the post-modern mindset. The motif of exile may provide a particular way of interpreting the context of postmodernity in which we find ourselves.

Australia is increasingly **pluralist**; more than one faith exists in the society. Immigration has certainly provided Australia with a tapestry of faith expressions. This is a feature of both secular and postmodern societies.[63] Pluralism can present Christians with challenges about notions of truth and doubt, belief and dogma.[64] Taylor notes that increased pluralism leads to a situation where "many forms of belief and unbelief jostle, and hence fragilize each other...The outcome...will often be a retreat of religion from the public square."[65] The context of DI seems to indicate pressure to follow the Babylonian or Persian gods, combined with great doubt over aspects of the traditions of Israelite faith. Whilst there are some significant differences between this context and the Australian contemporary context, there may also be some lessons for us in DI.

**Consumerism** exerts a powerful influence on Australian, let alone Western (and increasingly, Eastern) society.[66] The influence of consumerism post-Second World War brought enormous

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61. As Brueggemann observes "It is now clear to many of us, in the academy and in the church, that we are in quite a new situation that constitutes something of an emergency." Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1.
62. Stanley J Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Oct 1988), 7.
63. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1; Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 5.
64. Newbigin, *Gospel in Pluralist Society.* See ch. 1 for a good overview of the intersection of doubt and faith. For those in EPC churches, if the teaching follows a more dogmatic line there will be a clash within a pluralistic society about how to coexist with opposing belief systems.
65. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 531-532.
66. The incredible consumer boom in China and India in the 21st century will impact on the Western world as well. Consumerism does not just affect economics, but philosophies of living. It is worth noting here Ferguson's work on the fall of the American empire, and its own self-destruction due to over-indulgence. Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

social changes in Australian society, which Taylor describes as the increasing focus on private space, with the combination of suburbanisation, and individualism.[67] There is a strong connection between the growth of consumerism and advancing secularism.[68] The questions for this study include: how may DI speak to issues of consumerism and how does a consumerist, materialistic hyper-real worldview associate with those in pain or loss or grief for whom DI seems to advocate? As Engel and Dyrness note, "Without realising what we have done, the gospel has too often been reduced to something analogous to a consumer product that can be mass marketed to demonstrate competitive superiority over alternative belief systems."[69] These are certainly issues that the post-church people identify as problematic, where the church growth model has appropriated consumerist concepts. Consumerism does not meet the great longings of the soul.

One of the contentions of my study is that Australia, being an increasingly **secular** society, may provide further links to the exilic theme than occurs in other less secular countries (i.e.: Christians already exist in an outsider position).[70] Christians may find that living in a secular society provides many challenges and temptations. Sociological theories of secularisation are varied. The classic theorists, such as Bryan Wilson, Steve Bruce, David Martin and Peter L. Berger, based on the earlier contentions of Weber and Durkheim, argued for a connection between religious decline and the growth of modernity, and increased scientific knowledge.[71]

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67. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 474. Taylor sees a direct connection between increased secularism and consumerism.
68. See Taylor on growing prosperity in France in the post-war period and decreasing ritualism. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 491. Clive Hamilton has also written extensively on the topic of consumerism and its effect on identity, something I would extend to the effect on our soul. Clive Hamilton, *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 5.
69. James F Engel and William A Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 69. They particularly address the issue of control (taking the place of the Holy Spirit) and the issue of being preoccupied with numerical success (to do so we must reduce the gospel to being measurable in results/ success).
70. I think that we will continue to see an increasing form of secularity in Australian society along with the critique of Christendom, and colonialism. The unfolding Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has potential for impacting on the church, Christian participation in secular education, financial implications and many as yet unknown ramifications.
71. For discussion on the classic theories of secularisation see: David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*, Religion in the Modern World (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967). The relationship between secularisation and modernity has been well explored, but see Taylor on the effect of what he terms the 'unthought' aspects of secularisation theoretical study. This relates to the biases of the researchers towards declining religion. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 428. Berger

Stemming from Enlightenment rationalism and individualism this religious decline would be the normative pattern in Western society in general, as patterned on the decline of Christendom in Western Europe.[72] This presumption has consistently been challenged on empirical grounds.[73] Critics of secularisation theories argue that the evidence beyond Western Europe reveals a far more complex story, with religious adherence exhibited in different ways in other societies.[74] José Casanova suggests that the term secularisation encompasses at least another two theories relating to differentiation and privatisation. He examines both, arguing for "better theories of the intermeshing of public and private spheres."[75] These critiques highlight problems with the direct association of modernity and religious decline. Some theorists now contend for adaptations to the original secularisation theories based on the evidence of religious growth throughout the world, whilst others have referred to desecularisation. Correctives in secularisation theories have not overthrown the notion of secularisation but brought necessary nuances to the study of secularisation and its implications,[76] for example, studies challenging the myth that the direct cause of empty

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has changed his evaluation of secularisation, as seen in Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-18. See Cox on the importance of differentiating between the ideology of secularism and the historical process of secularisation. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), xx.

72. For an outline of the study of Christendom's decline in Western Europe, including an analysis of secularisation theory, see Hugh McLeod, "Introduction," in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000,* ed. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-26.

73. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7.

74. A common contrast on the decline of religion in the West is made with the rise of public Evangelical Protestantism in the United States. See Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 27, and in focus chp. 6. In relation to the political impact of evangelicalism, with a particular focus on South America, Asia and Europe, see David Martin, "The Evangelical Upsurge and Its Political Implications," in *The Desecularization of the World*, 37-49. Even Europe evidences diverse responses to the decline of Christendom and rise of secularity. See further in Grace Davie, "Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?," in *The Desecularization of the World*, 65-83; McLeod, "Introduction." See also Berger's comment that even if Europe demonstrates the closest alignment to the older theories of secularisation and modernity, that more recent studies show a growth in religious adherence outside of the mainstream churches. "A shift in the institutional location of religion, then, rather than secularization, would be a more accurate description of the European situation." Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," 10. The historic journeys of individual European countries and their relationship to Protestant and Catholic faith expressions have led to differing outcomes. More recent experiences related to the huge migration movements through Europe as a result of the end of the Cold War, work migration, and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and northern African states, will have further ramifications for the religious makeup, reaction to, resistance to, or acceptance of pluralism. To a small extent Bruce looks at this question in his chapter, "Will conflict reverse secularization?" in Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory,* ch. 10, with reference to the migration of Muslims.

75. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World,* 7.

76. This is Cox's main point, suggesting that there are other possible narratives about the story of religion and the decline of Christendom in Europe and beyond. These alternative areas of focus refine rather than discount theories of secularisation, asking different questions. Jeffrey Cox, "Master Narratives of Long-Term Religious Change," in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000,* ed. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf

churches is related to increased secularisation.[77]

Secularisation is perhaps wrongly seen as a threat, rather than a possibility. Charles Taylor's seminal work on secularism, although focussing on the situation in North America and Europe, provides insight relevant to the Australian context.[78] He explains three main features of secularism:

1) Public spaces are emptied of God or references to ultimate reality.

2) Falling off of religious belief and practice.

3) A society "in which faith... is one human possibility among others."[79]

In an increasingly secular world it may be difficult to continue faith, although it may prove to be a far better option than being forced to believe.[80]

Secularism certainly does not presuppose a lack of interest in spirituality.[81] I have found that the term *ignostic,* coined by George G. Hunter III, goes some way to describe how many Australians would identify themselves today. It defines secular people who "have no Christian memory…they don't know what Christians are talking about…their lives are not significantly influenced by the Christian faith. Their assumptions, vocabularies, decision

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 201-217.

77. Gill's analysis of empty churches in the UK (as representative of declining Christian belief and practice) challenges many presumptions in studies of this topic. These include the idea that churches were full prior to World War 1 and the emphasis on secularisation and urbanisation as major causes for decline. Systematically exploring a broad range of data, Gill concludes that: "The empty church appears less a product of twentieth-century disillusionment and secularization than of structural problems endemic in the Church of England and the Free Churches facing huge shifts of population in the nineteenth century. It was exacerbated, among other things, by their long struggle for predominance. The empty church characterized most denominations in Britain throughout the twentieth century and continues now into the twenty-first century. And it may well have contributed to the gradual, but much later, decline in distinctively Christian belief." Robin Gill, *The 'Empty Church' Revisited*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 137.

78. Taylor, *A Secular Age.*

79. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 3. He particularly identifies the enormous change that has occurred between Western society between 1500 to 2000 AD, as well as looking at earlier non-Western societies.

80. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 3.

81. Hauerwas, *After Christendom,* 26. Note Tom Frame's identification of the shift of many areas of social and political life from religious sectors to the state or private sector. Frame, *Losing My Religion,* 270. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 5. I note the intense interest given to Julia Gillard's atheism when she became Australian Prime Minister in June 2010, which in a secular society seemed an unusual fascination but played as a key factor in the public and media mind.

making, and life-styles reflect no Christian agenda."[82] Or, as Charles Taylor explains, the "rising generations have often lost touch with traditional religious languages."[83] This is a more reliable descriptor than terms such as atheism or agnosticism. Such terms assume that secular non-Christian Australians even consider issues related to church and faith, whereas *ignosticism* more accurately typifies the growing experience of Australians who are not born into church life. This is part of the very roots of Australian history, which Bouma suggests the base of which is "religiously inarticulate."[84]

It is no wonder, given the history of this nation, and the context of the enormous social changes occurring in this and the previous century, that the church in Australia finds itself in a time and state of flux. As the church decreases in size and influence as an *institution* (the declining of numbers of attendees and members, influence and place in society) it may be seen as either a crisis or an opportunity for renewed self-understanding.[85] Church needs to know the times it is in, be aware of its internal state as well as the direction it wants to head into in a new age. Church leavers hold important perspectives in this space in addition to facing difficult challenges.

Any serious study of the topic of *why* people are leaving churches comes to the conclusion that there is a plethora of reasons.[86] We have already explored some of the wider societal influences such as post-modernity, post-Christendom, pluralism, and secularism that in differ-

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82. George G. Hunter, III, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1992), 41. Taylor explores a similar phenomenon in post-Soviet Russia, describing Mikhaïl Epstein's work on "minimal religion." For Russians emerging from state enforced atheism, there may have been an ignorance of church life and faith but "those concerned have reacted against their training; they have acquired in some fashion a sense of God, which, however ill-defined, places them outside the space of their upbringing." Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 534.
83. Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 533. Taylor goes on to suggest that this does not necessarily mean decline is the only story as "the very intensity of the search for adequate forms of spiritual life that this loss occasions may be full of promise."
84. Bouma, *Australian Soul,* 39.
85. On the topic of the different responses to decreasing church attendance in the West, see Darren Cronshaw, Rowan Lewis, and Stacey Wilson, "Hemorrhaging Faith: An Australian Response in Exile," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 23.1 (April 2016): 14-31.
86. In the words of Kinnaman of the Barna group in their study of why in particular young people are leaving the church in North America, "We were looking for a single 'smoking gun.' Instead we found many...instead of one or two 'biggies,' we discovered a wide range of perspectives, frustrations, and disillusionments that compel twentysomethings to disconnect." Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith,* 91. There are studies that focus on faith stages, psychological developmental theories, theological perspectives and sociological / cultural analysis of religious commitment.

ent ways contribute to reasons for church leaving. Some reasons that Frame suggests include beliefs that church is dull, irrelevant, out of sync with their personal values or not a priority.[87] However, I would suggest these are not the dominant explanations for Christians leaving the church, or at least not the articulated reasons. Jamieson's research acknowledges from the outset that the reasons why people leave church are varied, saying "The argument that will be presented here is that the cause of leaving is rooted in the church, in society and in the individual leavers."[88] Thus it is not only a complex process; it has complex causes.

### (c) The faith of the post-church person

Post-church people can find great challenge in re-framing their faith in a new context. Jamieson's follow up study looked at how the leavers described their own faith in terms of approaches to the Bible, human nature, evangelism, mission, prayer and personal faith experiences, images of mature faith and personal growth, church and leadership, and the role of faith groups. It is impossible to briefly summarise the findings, but Jamieson's overarching conclusion is that "the stability of these faith positions across the five-year period challenges prevailing views about the faith of church leavers. Many, perhaps especially those in church leadership, would draw a connection between leaving church and a loss of faith. The results of this study would not support this view."[89] In fact, many broad features of the faith of church leavers remained consistent with key aspects of orthodox Christian theology and evangelical practices of faith (but not as narrowly defined by the EPC churches). The place of groups that enhance the faith development of the church leavers is affirmed in the studies. How these are constituted and what they will become remains unknown. The question of why the church leavers no longer feel able to participate in the EPC churches to express their faith is also an important challenge.[90]

The church exile has the opportunity to not only reframe their identity but also see it as a positive reclaiming and chance for self-understanding and movement forward rather than

87. See Frame, *Losing My Religion,* 100-104, on the views of Australians towards church attendance.
88. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* 11.
89. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 81.
90. Lewis argues for the possibility of people remaining in church but this is contingent on the church changing its perspective and treatment of church leavers. Rowan Lewis, "The State of Faith in Australian Youth: Haemorrhaging, Exodus or Exile," *Equip* 25 (May 2015): 4-6.

dwelling in a place of lost-ness. This awareness of otherness may find that church exiles relate more closely to the cries of Daughter Zion of centuries ago, or refugees of today, than to the mainstream churches that were previously their home. It may be that they have acknowledged their exile whereas the church is struggling to do so.[91] One key finding is clear to me - faith in exile does not mean the end of faith but interpreting the nature of this exile is crucial.

91. See Bouma, *Australian Soul,* ch. 6-7, for discussion around the increasing marginality of the church in Australia, the various reasons why and then the reaction to this marginalisation. This has led to a decrease in church monopoly, the church taking on new forms (such as non-denominational independent mega-church) or fundamentalism or irrelevancy or revitalisation.

# 3. Exile: Lost or found?

*Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.* Edward Said.[1]

A focus on exile has become an increasingly promising direction for study in HB hermeneutics. Exile is an important key for interpreting biblical texts relevant to the historical period ranging from the Assyrian threat to the region of Israel and Judah in the 8th century BCE, through to the Babylonian conquest of Judah in the 6th century BCE, and the period of the diaspora that followed.[2] The overall focus of this thesis is the exploration of particular passages in DI, with a recognition of the exilic emergency that gave rise to these texts and to explore what possible lessons and links may arise that speak to the context of modern exiles. Of particular interest here is how the Babylonian exile, which had the potential to destroy the faith of the people of Judah, led instead to a re-framing of an ancient faith towards longer term reinvention, survival and adaptability. The biblical texts that arose in this period were the key to that process of re-framing, as well as bearing witness to the disaster. There is a well-established scholarly conversation regarding the Babylonian Exile that has explored it as historical event, as well as a theological and ideological concept. Interwoven with this investigation has been an increasing interest in comparable situations of deportation, diaspora or liminal existence that have brought far deeper appreciation and understanding for possible parallel situations in the biblical narrative. This section of the thesis will include an exploration of the definitions and terminology of exile to set the limits of the study. I will investigate the biblical uses of the exilic trope as well as the historical situation of the Babylonian exile which is the background disaster that frames the rhetoric of DI.[3] My

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1. Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), np.
2. Dividing the story of the people of Israel and even biblical texts themselves into classifications of pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic is neat but historically problematic. See Lester L. Grabbe, "Introduction," in *Leading Captivity Captive: 'the Exile' as History and Ideology,* ed. Lester L. Grabbe, JSOTSup 278 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 11.
3. Scholars who have sought to minimize the disaster of exile as an historical event include: C. C. Torrey, "The Exile and the Restoration," in *Ezra Studies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970, repr. 1910 ed.), 285-340; Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the "exilic" Period*, Symbolae Osloenses Fasc Supplet (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996). For an alternative perspective see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587-539 BCE)," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions*, ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7-36; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT

analysis will be aware of the sense of exile as a traumatic experience and specifically the impact upon the writing and reading of DI. The exile in contemporary study, including the works of major scholars in this area, and the various approaches to exilic study will be surveyed to ascertain which are most available for the context that is the focus of my thesis.

# 1. Terminology

The starting place for this section of the study is to define what I mean by 'the Exile' forming a basic reference point, a task that is trickier than first impressions may indicate. I will also seek to make some initial assessments as to DI's particular references to exile. There are biblical and theological interpretations of exile, as well as contemporary definitions of exile, some which seek to expand, some which seek to confine who is an exile and what situation constitutes exile. We need to depart from the myths surrounding the term 'exile', and correct use of terminology can help clarify what this thesis is and is not talking about. Reading biblical texts regarding exile requires a hermeneutic of suspicion, including interrogating passages or studies that idealise the experience.[4]

There is available to us a body of terms relating to exile that will be used in various ways during this thesis, depending on the context of the discussion. They include: the Exile (implying the Babylonian exile of Judah in the 6th century BCE), deportation, diaspora, forced displacement and forced migration. Further to these expressions I will also refer to related concepts of liminality and marginality. Each of these words contain specific nuances and domains.

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(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). For an overview of the different perspectives in scholarship over time see Brad E. Kelle, "An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Exile," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, AIL 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 5-38. I will discuss these contrasting positions later in the chapter.

4. Davies notes "a certain romanticism should perhaps not be excluded as a factor in the scholarly reconstruction of 'the Exile'. The idea that in the punishment of exile a chastened 'Israel' reflected on its own past sins and prepared itself for restoration is an example of one of the powerful mythical *topoi* of Western Christian culture." Philip R. Davies, "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?," in *Leading Captivity Captive*, 132. I note Daniel Smith-Christopher's direction that "Part of the way forward, I would argue, is to reread texts associated with the Babylonian exile with the *presumption of resistance* but not necessarily a resistance based on *nationalist* aspiration, even if this was not entirely absent." Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 24.

In the realm of biblical studies, references to 'exile' contain theological implications. Jill Middlemas has elected to use the term (and title of her book) *The Templeless Age* to describe the biblical historical period generally known as the Exile.[5] Her rationale is that exilic terminology can be confusing in terms of dates (i.e., there was not just one 'exile') and not all people in Judah were exiled as such but some elected to leave.[6] There were those who also remained within the land as internally displaced yet were part of the overall disaster so the term exile may not be suitable to include their experience. There is a concept of loss regardless, particularly loss of the traditional space of worship, the temple.[7]

In relation to the biblical story, Carroll prefers the term deportation to emphasise the severity and seriousness of the experience.[8] John Ahn's work on exile has further sharpened the discussion around the terminology.[9] His argument against using the term 'templeless' over and above other terms such as 'forced displacement' to describe the situation for the exiles includes the reasoning that there is too great a conflation of the deportations of 597, 586, and 582 BCE, and that "templeless" denotes a situation around worship, not the entirety of the life of those in exile. He expresses a deliberate hesitation to use the term "deportation" for the displacement of the Judeans in 598/586 BCE as in contemporary usage deportation implies illegal immigration, an intensely politically loaded term used for the expulsion of people seeking refuge in countries such as the USA or Australia today.[10] This is a reminder of the sensitive nature of the issue of exile and the classification of displaced people even today.

The historical period of the forced displacement of portions of Judah's population to Babylon (post 586 but with reference to the earlier forced migrations) is my focus in terms of the

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5. Jill Anne Middlemas, *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the "exile"* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2007).
6. Middlemas, *The Templeless Age,* 4. She refers to this as "forced relocation."
7. Middlemas, *The Templeless Age,* 5-6.
8. Robert P. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse in the Prophetic Literature," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions,* ed. James M. Scott, JSJS 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 64.
9. John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah* BZAW 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 28-29.
10. Ahn explains his sensitivity to terminology suggesting an inappropriate term may "generate unwanted hermeneutics." Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations*, fn 3, p. 2

community and situation that inspired the words of DI. This does not necessarily mean that DI was composed in Babylon, but with an awareness of the issues raised in exile.[11] However, for the purposes of this thesis I will not be limited to this historical era. After the Babylonian exile into the Second Temple era, the term "exile" expanded to include notions of dispossession and loss beyond geographical or political categories to theological understandings.[12] This developing concept of exile may open parallels to contemporary situations, (possibly) contributing to my contextualisation of DI's theology of exile in the light of post-church communities. The large scope in which scholars are now variously defining and exploring the issue of exile provides new doorways to investigate. As Segovia notes "Diasporas are not all the same: they are highly complex and multidimensional realities."[13]

### (a) Hebrew definitions of terms for "exile"

The main Hebrew verb גלה has two main meanings: "to depart, go into exile, go into captivity" and "to uncover, reveal."[14] It is not clear which usage came first, and there may be some relationship between these meanings in that "emigration or exile can be understood as an uncovering of the land."[15] Landy notes ironically (in relation to Isaiah) that the "Revelation would be the opposite of exile; what is revealed in 40:5, for instance, is the 'glory of YHWH' … manifested in the return to Zion."[16] The feminine noun form is גלות and can refer to an exile(s) or to the event of exile (see Isa 45:13) and the גולה came to represent

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11. The question of DI's composition location will be discussed later in this chapter and in ch. 4. In short, the views range from considering the message and composition to be located in: Babylon; to 40-48 located in Babylon and 49-55 in Judah; to the entirety located in Judah. For the various rationales for each argument see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 102-104. He ends by noting that the case for a Babylonian location is 'marginally preferable'. More recently Tiemeyer has argued for a Judahite location. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Geography and Textual Allusions: Interpreting Isaiah Xl-LV and Lamentations as Judahite Texts," *VT* 57, no. 3 (2007): 367-385; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

12. Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.

13. Fernando F. Segovia, "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement," in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 60. Segovia discusses various types of diaspora, focussing on a geographic or political situation. His own personal experience as an Hispanic American informs his work.

14. Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "גָּלָה *gālāh*; גּוֹלָה *gôlāh*; גָּלוּת *gālûth*," in *TDOT,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 478.

15. Zobel, " גָּלָה *gālāh*," 478.

16. Francis Landy, "Exile in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts,* ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, BZAW (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 252.

the community of exiles (eg: Isa 49:21, Ezek 1:1).[17] Gray argues that conceptually גלה "intersects with several domains, including 'divine punishment' and 'covenant'"[18] and that it came to have theological meaning despite initially being a secular term. Gray takes Brueggemann's suggestion that for the exiles from Judah "…their change in life situation necessitated a new vocabulary, as well as a new theology."[19] In DI the main usage of גלה is in the sense of "reveal" or being uncovered (e.g., Babylon in 47:3), in contrast to Jeremiah and Ezekiel where both concepts are used.[20] In relation to the use of the "uncover" concept there may be important links made with the use of uncovering imagery used extensively in Ezekiel in particular in relation to the shame of Israel and her uncovering (as in her sexual humiliation or assault) as well as in relation to Babylon in DI.[21] Also note גלה in Isa 5:13 translates as "go into exile." Landy notes that in DI the use of the Hebrew for "return" or "repent" שוב is more frequently used than גלה to refer to exile.[22] It is the ambiguity in these terms that Landy highlights and this may have proven useful in reframing identity, and theological interpretations of exile, as well as encouraging the people to embrace a return. Its use may also be indicative of perspective as the exile is being framed as over in DI.

There are other terms or images that are used to depict exile such as: שבי "captivity" (used in DI in 46:2 in reference to the gods of Babylon, 49:24-25, a rhetorical question where the exiles are the probable subject, and 52:2 captive Daughter Zion); פוץ "to scatter" (used in the Torah and particularly in Deuteronomy in reference to exile but in DI used only in 41:16 in reference to the mountains scattering); and, סור "to remove". DI captures the concept of exile by also referring frequently to its antonyms: gathering, return, home, as well as extending concepts such as being taken or carried away, leaving, departing, and removal.[23] Carroll

17. See Zobel, " גָּלָה *gālāh*," 488. Zobel links the use of *the gôlâh* with the use of the term for *remnant* in Ezra 9-10.
18. David K. H. Gray, "A New Analysis of a Key Hebrew Term: The Semantics of Galah ('to Go Into Exile')," *TynBul* 58, no. 1 (2007): 55.
19. Gray, "Galah," 55. See Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 435-47.
20. The following references are all translated to refer directly to exile or captivity: Jer 1:3; 13:19; 20:4; 24:1; Ezek 12:3; 39:23.
21. Gray makes a direct paradigmatic connection with בוש shame and exile, noting Isa 49:21-23 as one example among others Gray, "Galah," 58.
22. Landy, "Exile," 242.
23. Gray looks beyond DI, establishing that a concept of exile extends beyond the use of the specific term גלה, with many synonyms. Gray also explains related terms such as the land, covenant and shame. Gray, "Galah," 55, 52-58.

refers to Jeremiah's use of the word "hurling" (טוּל) as a synonym for exile which has quite a violent connotation.[24] This term encapsulates the image of God hurling the people into an alien land and Carroll recounts the significant influence of diasporic identity on the biblical text.[25] This raises questions about the nature of a God who abandons the people, and a discussion in the light of the exilic theology may enable us to find a way through this difficult terrain.

What is clear from this exploration is that the HB uses many terms to describe exile, from which DI chooses to take some but not necessarily the ones we would expect. Exile seems somewhat obfuscated in DI, perhaps becoming the unmentionable elephant in the room.[26] Sometimes it is by what is missing that we can see the pointers to exile.[27] Rather than historical descriptions of exile, or explicit lamentation, DI depicts exile mainly in metaphor.[28]

### (b) Exile in the Bible

Biblical perspectives on exile are diverse, complex and compromised. Exile looms large in the biblical text, such as the warnings in Deuteronomy 28:36-37 of exile as the ultimate punishment for law breaking (a possible exilic redaction) and is theologically understood as YHWH driving the people out as a curse. Exile is part and parcel of a wider disaster that includes invasion, siege, rape, war, famine, illness, drought, slavery, and destruction of property. Recovery from exile is also a significant theme of the HB. However, the events of the Babylonian exile, despite being formative to the faith practice of the Israelites, are somewhat repressed in the biblical text. We do not read reams of descriptive outlines of exilic life. It is particularly notable that in the Deuteronomistic history, the exile (and associated traumatic events) is only briefly mentioned. It is increasingly understood that this "gap" or downplaying in the text is a classic sign of trauma.[29]

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24. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse," 65. Also found in Isa 22:17 in reference to exiling the head of the palace, Shebna.
25. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse," 65.
26. Landy, "Exile," 248.
27. On a comparison of Isaiah 6 and 40 where the latter omits the temple vision, see Landy, "Exile," 249
28. See Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 107. Landy also comments on the poetic nature of DI that will use wordplay, puns and attempt to work through disaster via language. Landy, "Exile," 247-248.
29. David Janzen, *The Violent Gift: Trauma's Subversion of the Deuteronomistic History's Narrative*, LHBOTS 561 (New York: T & T Clark International, 2012); David M. Carr, "Reading Into the Gap: Refractions of

In contrast to the silence we find in the HB on describing the trauma of exile, it is clear that the study of exile is a pivotal part of understanding the biblical narrative and Jewish history.[30]

Gertz suggests that the concept of exile actually came later than the Assyrian invasions (even though part of their process was to deport), developing more in the Babylonian era.[31] This possibly explains why "the Exile" is understood, by implication, to mean the Babylonian exile. The story of exile shapes the narrative of the HB.[32]

# 2. Exile in the ANE

It is important to look at the historical contexts of exile that relate to the rhetoric found in DI. We enter here into the worlds of historical debate, archaeological investigation and interpretation of ancient literature. I will first explore the basic features and outline of the Assyrian and Babylonian imperial practices of exile as pertinent to Israel and Judah from the 8th to the 6th century BCE. I will then assess the key debates around the historicity of these events as they relate to the biblical descriptions and concepts of exile.

### (a) The Assyrians

There is a long history of exile being used in the warfare of ancient Mesopotamia, but as Gertz asserts in tracking the history of exile "...it was neither conducted systematically nor extensively until the middle-Assyrian Period."[33] The Assyrians provided a model for future empires (including the Babylonians) by using exile as one of many weapons of conquest in the region.[34] Ancient artefacts such as the Sennacherib and Taylor Prisms, the Lachish reliefs,

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Trauma in Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting Exile,* 295-308.

30. Christoph Levin, "Introduction," in *The Concept of Exile*, 1. Levin uses the term "watershed" to describe the impact of the exile in Israel's history, a term that is used again and again, by scholars who are suspicious of the descriptions as well as those who accept the biblical descriptions. See for example Grabbe, "Introduction," 11 and John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 1981), 343.
31. Gertz, "Military Threat," 13.
32. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse," 64.
33. Gertz, "Military Threat," 13. See also Thomas L. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth: A Response to Hans Barstad," in *Leading Captivity Captive,* 103, on Egyptian use of exile in war and Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 61, on the Hittite and Egyptian practice. For a general outline of Assyrian practices of exile see Busteny Oded, *Mass Deportation and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979).
34. Note Petersen's point that Assyria was not the first or the only one to use exile, just that the manner in which they used it was so extensive. David L. Petersen, "Prophetic Rhetoric and Exile," in *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Frank Ritchel Ames, John J. Ahn, and Mark Leuchter, AIL 21 (Atlanta:

and royal inscriptions such as the Annals of Sargon II describe or depict the forced migration of large populations, as well as the associated violence of the events.[35] Exile as a weapon of war has a double-edged efficiency. First, it reduces national uprisings by removing dissenters and depleting the population, typically of its most skilled, the leadership and thinkers. Second, it ensures the deportees' input into the empire, by utilising their skills as forced labourers in consolidating the centre rather than the imperial fringes.[36] There was also an economic advantage obtained for the empire by exploiting the resources of the invaded locations.[37] Thus, they removed the original populace to weed out nationalism but replaced them with those loyal to the empire to provide resources to the centre. The enforcement of the imperial policy of exile was a fraught exercise with paradoxical tensions created by seeking the pacification of the people by diminishing their identity, whilst generating some level of loyalty.[38]

Under the rule of Tiglath-Pilesar III and Shalmaneser V during the eighth century BCE, Israel experienced constant pressure. The capital Samaria was captured by Shalmaneser and eventually overwhelmed by Sargon II. Large portions of the population were deported by 722BCE, never to return to the land in significant numbers.[39] Groups of deportees were resettled in family/ kinship groupings, probably assimilating into the Assyrian culture and therefore absorbed into history.[40] For all intents and purposes in the tale of history, if not the

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SBL, 2015), 9-18.

35. As well as the violence of an invasion to cause death, it also created terror. See Mordechai Cogan, "Ripping Open Pregnant Women' in Light of an Assyrian Analogue," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, no. 4 (1983/10): 755-757, for an outline of this practice in Assyrian warfare and use of the term in biblical texts. On the way that the Assyrians portrayed their sieges and their acquisitions derived from invasion and deportations as a method of imperial depiction of otherness as lesser, and to represent them through an Assyrian lens to emphasise dominance, see Marian H. Feldman, "Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as Self-Portrayal in Empire," in *Interpreting Exile,* 135-150.

36. See Levin on the rationale for the use of exile to stabilise the Assyrian empire. Levin, "Introduction," 3.

37. Petersen, "Prophetic Rhetoric and Exile," 10-11.

38. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth: A Response to Hans Barstad," 102-103. See also Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study,* ch. 4, on the rationale for exile, and the treatment and roles of the Israelites in exile with evidence of some joining the Assyrian army.

39. See Thompson on the 2 Kings 17 reference which describes the exile as moving people to "Halah on the Babur, the valley of Gozan and to the cities of the Medes" as well the movement of people into Israel from Hamath and Babylon. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth: A Response to Hans Barstad," 105. See Gertz on the fact that the entire population was not exiled. Gertz, "Military Threat," 17. This is an issue to be picked up after outlining the Babylonian exile, as biblical depictions of a total exile are contested on archaeological grounds.

40. There are many theories about the missing tribes of Israel that are very interesting but not relevant to this study.

reality, the northern kingdom of Israel and her people disappeared off the map.[41] The Assyrians perfected their style of war, with techniques which included conducting a siege of the important cities to create psychological stress, starving the people into submission, using violent abuse and often murder.[42] Faust describes the excavations of Lachish and Ashdod which uncovered mass burial sites dating from the 8th century BCE, including those of victims under the age of 15, many of whom were beheaded.[43] One of the tools of invasion and war was the use of rape to bring shame not only on the women but also on the men.[44]

Sennacherib continued to apply pressure to Judah, invading her towns and besieging her capital by 701 BCE. Lachish was destroyed, and Judah was required to pay oppressive tributes to Assyria, leading to ongoing political and social intrusion.[45] The siege of Jerusalem was lifted and it appeared that Judah had a miraculous historic reprieve, in contrast to 'rebellious' Israel. Assyria's attentions were drawn elsewhere as great shifts of power were occurring between the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, and Judah faced threats from Egypt.

The Assyrian Exile of Israel had a significant impact on the psyche of the kingdom of Judah. Although not the direct focus of DI, the Assyrian dominance is the primary issue in First Isaiah. The HB depicts and understood this event variously as a punishment for sin particularly of the kings, which included idolatry, injustice towards the poor and neglect of

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41. See Bob Becking for further on the evidence for the Israelite exiles in Assyria, "A Fragmented History of the Exile," in *Interpreting Exile*, 151-169, esp. 151-152. For a detailed historical and archaeological outline of Samaria's shift from being an independent state to a vassal of Assyria through to the deportations, see Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study*. Note also Grabbe's summary of the assimilation of the Israelite exiles. Lester L. Grabbe, "'The Exile' Under the Theodolite," in *Leading Captivity Captive*, 80-100, particularly 82.

42. Of interest here is the paper by Walid Khalid Abdul-Hamid and Hughes Hacker, Jamie, "Nothing New Under the Sun: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders in the Ancient World," *Early Science & Medicine* 19, no. 6 (2014/12): 549-557, that looks at the depictions of PTSD for Assyrian soldiers during the dynasty (1300-609 BCE). The trauma involved the soldiers seeing visions of people whom they had killed in war. Trauma inflicted on the exiles or the invaded also affected the invaders.

43. Avraham Faust, "Deportation and Demography in Sixth-Century B.C.E. Judah," in *Interpreting Exile*, 91-103, esp. 97-98.

44. The issue of rape in warfare will be particularly addressed in the chapter on Isaiah 51:17-52:6. See Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 88. See also Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "'You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies': Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 59-75 , 64 on the notion of shame of the male property owner.

45. Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 12.

the law.[46] Foreign alliances formed by Israel were seen by some prophets as evidence of failure to trust in YHWH.

### (b) The Babylonians

The dark shadow of the exile of Israel to Assyria hung over the Southern kingdom of Judah, looming large in their wider imagination as well as in some ways falsely inoculating the people of Judah against their own threat of Exile. Judah had the temple, the dynastic heir to the Davidic throne (Hezekiah) and was home to the true faith, as they believed. If YHWH delivered the people of Judah from the terrible threat of Assyria, they surely could survive any imperial challenge. This is not to suggest that Jerusalem's siege was not traumatic. It was literally too close to home. This season saw Judah buffeted by the tides of Empire, whether it was Assyria, their ancient adversary Egypt or the growing force of the Babylonians.

Assyria increasingly faced internal crises which meant a reprieve for Judah from their gaze, although Judah was basically still a vassal. The Neo-Babylonians were on the rise with Nabopolassar leading with an expansionist vision and imitating Assyria with their practices of warfare.[47] After the long rule of Manasseh (687-642 BCE), Judah was led by Amon for a brief 2 years (642-640 BCE), then Josiah (640-609 BCE) who undertook large social reforms during his long reign. Josiah was killed in a battle against the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco, with his son Jehoahaz ruling for only 3 months. This era demonstrates Egyptian influence in Judah, with the Egyptians replacing Jehoahaz with his brother Jehoiakim (previously named Eliakim). Following the Babylonian conquest of the Assyrian cities of Ashur and Ninevah between 614-612 BCE, and the 605 BCE Battle of Carchemish which saw the Babylonians overpower the Egyptians, the Babylonians then advanced to Jerusalem. The dangers that had menaced Judah had begun to escalate, with increasing situations of political pressure, threats to social stability and increased violence. By 597 BCE Nebuchadnezzar, as king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem, and the first major forced displacement of the population occurred, which included Ezekiel, and the King Jehoiakin. The temple treasures were taken and Judah

46. The works of the historians in Kings and Chronicles (with different objectives and focus), and the prophets Proto Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea.
47. Faust takes up Marc Van De Mieroops suggestion that the Babylonians were possibly "'more oppressive' than the Assyrians." Faust, "Deportation and Demography in Sixth-Century B.C.E. Judah," 98.

experienced imperial domination. Ahn suggests that this exile lacks focus in scholarship which emphasises the temple destruction to come.[48] Judah's puppet king, King Zedekiah, was disloyal to Babylon by not paying tribute. This directly led to a further repression of Judah and in 586BCE Babylon besieged and then destroyed Jerusalem. Zedekiah watched his sons slaughtered before having his eyes removed. The leaders were executed, the palace, temple and city set on fire, and the survivors, except for the poorest, exiled.[49]

A Judean governor named Gedaliah was set up to lead the region from Mizpah, leading to an insurgency resulting in his murder.[50] The Babylonians responded with a further invasion and exile. Many surviving Judahites, including Jeremiah, fled to Egypt. Others remained in the land under extremely difficult circumstances. As Ahn explains, in contrast to the single mass deportation that the Assyrians practiced, the Babylonians in this case were practicing multiple forced migrations and that this process may have resulted from considered economic policies in the regions, in particular for canal irrigation projects.[51] The historical story that follows includes the release of Jehoichin from prison in 562 BCE, and the rule of Babylon by Nabonidus from 555-539 BCE. Persia became the new imperial power with the rule of Cyrus from 539BCE, signified by his decree to return deportees to their homelands in 538BCE. This began the first of a number of returns of exiles to the land of Judah.[52]

Ultimately, it was the Babylonian exile and the enormous upheaval associated with it that shaped the faith of Ancient Israel as we perceive it today.[53] It is towards the historical debates that we now turn, since every facet of the claims about the impact of the Babylonian exile has been examined and pulled apart.

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48. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations,* 31. Ahn sees the 597 BCE event as the first real exile of Judeans, as the deportations that follow are after Judah has been made a part of the Babylonian kingdom so they are better described as forced migration.
49. 2 Kgs 25, 2 Chr 36 and Jer 39. See Table 2 for outline of the discrepancies in these references.
50. O'Connor, *Jeremiah,* 13.
51. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations,* 32.
52. It is at this point that many scholars believe the message of DI begins to be proclaimed.
53. Bright, *A History,* 343.

### (i) The historical debate

Focus on the events surrounding the Babylonian exile has surged over the past thirty years.[54] This increased analysis has benefited us by having more detail about what the Babylonian exilic event may have actually been like as well as the impact. Scholars earlier last century such as Torrey argued that the exile and return was insignificant and falsely overemphasised, or even that it is a largely fabricated story, a perspective that influenced scholarship throughout the 20th century.[55] The growing trend that developed towards scepticism of the story of the Babylonian exile relates to ambiguities in the biblical texts, the limited external records and varied archaeological evidence.[56] There is detail in Assyrian records of the forcible displacement of the people of Israel but little comparative evidence from the Babylonians of their removal of the population of Judah, which was such a significant event in the biblical narrative.[57] Added to this is debate around the difference between issues of historicity and historiography, and the place of the Bible as an historical source.[58]

Establishing clearly the historical situation of the exile is a complex task. There is much debate about the nature of the deportations (levels of captivity), who it involved (numbers, class status), where the diaspora was located, the remaining population in the land of Judah (numbers, social, religious, economic situation), the duration of the exile, and the return (dating,

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54. On the development of focus on exile since the 1960s, see Kelle's summary. Brad E. Kelle, "An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Exile," in *Interpreting Exile*, 5-38, esp. 6. This raises another major debate that dominated 20th century studies in HB – the nature of ancient Israel (pre-exilic), the sources of the text and the dating. It is beyond the realms of this discussion. See further on this John Day, ed. *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

55. See Torrey, *Ezra Studies*. For a discussion on Torrey's influence see Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 30. Barstad, whilst noting Torrey's extreme stance on the insignificance of the exile, defends Torrey's general position regarding the inhabitation of Judah during the exile and the ideological formation of the exile over its historicity. Hans M. Barstad, *History and the Hebrew Bible: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography*, FAT 61 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), ch. 6, esp. pp. 96-97; Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*.

56. See Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* ch. 2 and Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* Introduction.

57. Petersen, "Prophetic Rhetoric and Exile," 12-13. He notes the Sargon II Display Inscription and the Sargon II Nimrud Prism regarding the Neo-Assyrian deportations. Albertz also notes the lack of archaeological record, and explores the use of the myth concept. Rainer Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth: Reality and Significance of Exile for the Political, Social and Religious History of Judah," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile,* ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Anne Middlemas (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 20-33, 20.

58. Hans M. Barstad, "The Strange Fear of the Bible: Some Reflections on the 'Bibliophobia' in Recent Ancient Israelite Historiography," in *Leading Captivity Captive*, 120-127.

numbers).[59] Despite these complexities, numerous contributions to our understanding of the history of the Babylonian exile have been significant in placing it in biblical scholarly focus.[60] Of particular interest more recently has been the sociological and psychological impact of exile.[61] Given the space for disparate views, Smith-Christopher highlights the ambiguous approaches of historians, such as Norman Gottwald, John Bright and Peter Ackroyd - some suggesting it was a massive crisis for Israel's development, then downplaying the extent of the exile.[62] A clear example is observable when Becking concludes in his study: "I will not deny that the conquest of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the end of the Davidic dynasty caused pain and sorrow. The general picture of the exilic period, however, is not as dramatic as has often been assumed."[63] In the light of work such as Smith-Christopher's, I find Becking's conclusion a stunning example of trivialising the very trauma he has just summarised, even when seeking to dispel the myth of the empty land and the mass deportation of "all" the population. Ahn outlines the viewpoints of many scholars that the exile was destructive and unconstructive, despite the evidence of the development of the synagogue, the HB, and the priesthood.[64] A general scholarly scepticism towards the biblical text has led to a reduction in the importance of the exile both historically as well as theologically, but I consider the exile as formative for Israel, the biblical text and particularly DI.[65]

The biblical records of the Babylonian exile are suggestive of a mass population displacement, although they give varied numbers which is possibly evidence of different strains of thinking. Albertz concludes that Jeremiah's figures are more accurate based on their dating, specific numbers and parallel use of the terms for Jews as the Babylonian ration list.[66] These figures probably reflect only the male exiles and when adjusted to account for entire

59. Oded Lipschits, "Shedding New Light on the Dark Years of the "exilic Period": New Studies, Further Elucidation, and Some Questions Regarding the Archaeology of Judah as an "Empty Land"," in *Interpreting Exile*, 57-90, 85.
60. Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.*, OTL (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968); Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E*, SBLStBl (Atlanta: SBL, 2003).
61. Kelle, "An Interdisciplinary Approach," 14.
62. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 30-33.
63. Becking, "A Fragmented History," 166-167.
64. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations,* ch. 1.
65. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 33.
66. Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 85.

families, result in a total of 20,000-30,000 people.[67] As to the percentage of the overall population of Judah either exiled, or displaced to Egypt by choice, or killed in the upheaval of war, Albertz considers up to a fifty percent decline.[68] See Table 2 below regarding the biblical account of the numbers exiled.

| | Year (BCE) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Text** | **597** | **587** | **582** |
| 2 Kgs 24:14 | 10,000 | | |
| 2 Kgs 24:16 | 8,000 | | |
| 2 Kings 25:11, 21 | | Rest of people taken | |
| Jer 52:28 | 3,023 | | |
| Jer 52:15, 29 | | 832 | |
| Jer 52:30 | | | 745 |

Table 2: Number of people exiled to Babylon as per biblical texts[69]

A major area of scholarly consideration has focussed on the ongoing effect of the exile on the religion, politics and daily life of the people from Judah who were deported to Babylon as well as those who remained behind in the land. Hans Barstad wrote his best known work *The Myth of the Empty Land* taking the view that the land was not left empty, and ultimately concluding that much of the exilic story was a myth.[70] This is to contest the hyperbolic references in Scripture (2 Kgs 25:11) to the idea that 'all' in the city of Jerusalem were exiled and that the land basically lay empty, unfallowed, and that all political, religious, social and public life ceased within the land. The empty land theory corresponds with the theological notion of exile serving as a disaster, as represented by the Deuteronomic historian.[71] Exile was understood as a kind of Jubilee or Sabbath period of rest and restitution for the land as well as the purifi-

67. Middlemas, *The Templeless Age,* 22.
68. Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 90.
69. Middlemas, *The Templeless Age,* 22. For comprehensive discussion on the numbers of people exiled see Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 81-90; Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 57-61.
70. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*. Note also Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz, eds. *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007). See Lipschits, "Shedding New Light," who argues for a greater level of continuity regarding Judah's rural life during the 'empty land' phase, despite Jerusalem's destruction.
71. Gertz, "Military Threat," 11. Gertz summarises the DtrH message that the rebellion of the kings of Israel and Judah resulted in exile from the land. See 2 Kgs 17:23; 25:21. Gertz's main argument is that the concept of exile did not develop until later in the Babylonian period.

cation of the land.[72] This also served the theological purpose that the true inheritors of the land and the ancient promises were the Judean exiles to Babylon (the *golah*)– the displaced community. Archaeological records show that despite the destruction that did occur, (the extent and location are debated), the land was not entirely unpopulated but that there is evidence of a decrease in population and a displaced population living in the north of the land.[73] The biblical accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah reveal tensions between those who returned from exile and those who pre-inhabited the land.[74] There are different theories about the makeup of the remaining community, how this community functioned, and the level of religion, and organisation. Smith-Christopher challenges Barstad's comments on Lamentations that demonstrate criticism of and scepticism towards the impact of the exile, asking "how can we laud the *quality* of the poetry and ignore the *subject* of that poetry?"[75] He then raises Schniedewind's archaeological studies that reveal a decline in Judah's administration and the damage done to Judean towns (80%) during the 6th century BCE.[76] This evidence reveals breaks in continuity. I would add Avraham Faust's examination of how the four roomed house that was standard in Judah for centuries declined after the exile, as well as Judahite tombs, evidence of a traumatic event.[77] Faust explores Judah's archaeology in this 'post-collapse' society, concluding that physical damage was extensive, let alone high depopulation rates.[78]

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72. On the theme of a seventy year exile, and the development of the concept of sin, see Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009). See also Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 12-15; Carroll, "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora," 65, on the *"sabbathization* of the deportation" concept in Chronicles.
73. Levin, "Introduction," 1-2. This book is a compilation of responses to the issue of why the exile then features so heavily in forming Second Temple Jewish identity.
74. See further on this topic Dalit Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th and 5th Centuries BCE)*, LHBOTS 543 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), esp. ch. 5 on DI.
75. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 47.
76. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 47.
77. Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, "The Four Room House," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 1/2 (Mar-June 2004): 22-31; Avraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2012); Avraham Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Destruction,* Tammi Schneider, ed, ABS 18 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012). I note here Lipschits' critique of what he calls Faust's 'ultra-conservative' method and criteria for his conclusions. Lipschits, "Shedding New Light," 84-85 FN 101. We see archaeology debates as well as history debates in this topic.
78. Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Destruction,* ch. 7. See also Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah Under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), esp. 258-271 on the decline in population under Babylonian and early Persian rule.

There are further complications in assessing how the exiles portrayed in biblical texts actually perceived their own situation. It may be the case that some previously displaced people viewed exile as going home.[79] Generational differences may exist in the representations. Ahn's work on the different kinds of deportations that the people endured gives helpful insights for our understanding of the circumstances of exile. He suggests "In contrast to a single punctuated mass 'deportation' system of the Neo-Assyrians (who used 'displacement' to punish rebellions), the Neo-Babylonians most likely implemented a gradual repeated system of displacement to maintain and then expand their center-economy."[80] This would have led to a state of continual disruption to the social situation for the Judahites. Ahn outlines the three major types of forced migration that were occuring in the Neo-Babylonian era: *Derivative Forced Migration:* changes in the boundaries and maps due to imperial policies cause migration with the example being the exile of 597 BCE[81]; *Purposive Forced migration:* driven by profits, race, religion, security, punishment, revenge, of which the 587 BCE exile is an example, and; *Responsive Forced Migration*: voluntary movement between countries, but due to changed circumstances caused by war, climate change and political pressure, of which the exile of 582 BCE represents.[82] Ahn also suggests that the victims of each successive exile were viewed differently. These repeated invasions and displacements created enormous pressure on the psychological health of the population and left a profound sense of dislocation.[83] Despite challenges to Ahn's use of modern categorical terminology for ancient contexts, his approach broadly speaking is helpful for appreciating contributions of social-scientific readings of migration patterns in the ancient world.[84] In relation to DI, questions regarding whose voice we

79. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth: A Response to Hans Barstad," 110. Thompson raises excellent questions such as whether those who were displaced from the Assyrian empire during the 8th -7th century BCE campaigns of deportation to Samaria and then generations later were displaced to Babylon were going 'home' not to exile. In the same volume Carroll challenges even the use of the term exile as representing all those in diaspora. Carroll, "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora," 67.

80. John J. Ahn, "Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile: Demarcating 597, 587, and 582 B.C.E.," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile,* ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Anne Middlemas (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 173-189.

81. Ahn, "By the Irrigation Canals," 185.

82. Ahn, "By the Irrigation Canals," 185.

83. Carolyn J. Sharp, "Sites of Conflict: Textual Engagement of Dislocation and Diaspora in the Hebrew Bible," in *Interpreting Exile*, 365-376.

84. Becking critiques Ahn's categorisation of internally displaced persons as anachronistic. Bob Becking, review of *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah*," by John Ahn, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12 (2012), http://www.jhsonline.org/reviews/reviews_new/review588.htm. I agree with Becking's general warnings in relation to the placement of contemporary theories onto ancient contexts where there may be little evidence to support the ideas. However, the intended nuance that Ahn's theories bring to the discussion are necessary in

are hearing in relation to exile may be considered in reference to Ahn's classifications. Forced migration was conducted in different ways and had different effects for each generation.

## 3. Aspects of Exile

There are many different aspects of exile that expand our understanding of this theme and may positively contribute to a post-church reading of DI. These include concepts of: geography and land; exile and liminality; self-imposed exile; and, exile and the reshaping of identity.

The discussion about the relationship between exile, geography and land is exhaustive. The issue of connection to nation, country, home or people cannot be ignored. The relationship of Ancient Israel to land is linked with ideas of identity, fertility, and blessing.[85] In fact the terms are often so closely connected that in the popular imagination the concept of a person being exiled invokes images of banishment to another geographical location. Land in the Bible is understood as the literal ground as well as the symbolic significance to the life of the people.[86] The characteristic of wellbeing via peace in the land is threatened by exile, and so often in Israel's history they are landless. In contemporary analysis of exile, the topic of geography acutely frames Said's experiences, and his memories of location are inextricably linked with his struggle to understand his own self-identity.[87] When exile is connected to nationalism (a modern concept but related to geographical notions of statehood) there are further challenges in untangling issues of identity.[88] This is particularly relevant in a globalised era where economies, communication and populations are no longer easily

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providing a fuller picture of the exilic situation left unexplained in biblical texts, that social scientific study may contribute. It is a reminder of the ongoing importance of historical discovery and interpretation of this period, as Becking outlines in "A Fragmented History."

85. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), ch. 3. Wright considers the land to be the crucial economic angle in his triangular depiction of HB ethics (the other two being the theological and social angles); not limited to a location or property, it is linked to identity. It was essentially understood as gift, but also allowed for security and care for all citizens on a real economic basis. See also Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

86. Brueggemann, *The Land,* 2.

87. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir*. Interestingly, before Said discusses the nature of the geographic exile he experienced, he shares deeply about his own family background and the distance he felt at times from his own parents, already experiencing an exile of sorts.

88. On this topic see Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 17.

contained in borders, and where interconnections are a part of everyday life. One possibility is to take a hybrid approach, such as using the nomad metaphor which sees mobility as a norm, and where an "exilic, hybrid, nomadic or diasporic position enables a critique of the (anthropological) categories (i.e., homeland, nation-states, territories and sedentary identities) that people fit into."[89] Again this is an attempt to take the exilic experience as a positive opportunity, but also to challenge some of the potentially limiting and damaging geographic issues related to exile.[90] Brueggemann differentiates between notions of space and place, with place being linked strongly to history and relationship with God.[91] But it is clear in the biblical story that YHWH is to be found not only in the land with borders and titles, but in the wilderness when the people are reliant on a promise. The exile produced a particular challenge as it brought with it questions about loss of land, perhaps meaning loss of covenant, an idea which the exilic and post-exilic prophets challenge.[92]

In the study of DI I will explore this movement in relation to the development of Zion ideology, where Zion became more than a physical location. These understandings offer helpful possibilities for contemporary situations of exile that are not defined by geography. I would also note the work of Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer who has convincingly argued for the Judahite context of the writing and reading of DI.[93] How much it matters to my reading of the text as survival literature will be ascertained throughout the study. I would posit at this point that geography matters significantly to the first generations of Judahite exiles, and in the imagination of the second and third generation diaspora. However, what that geography meant in reality and in the imagination may have been vastly different. The other important factor in reading DI is that geographic features play a role in envisioning YHWH as creator-redeemer, creatively or destructively showing power, with DI mentioning mountains, islands, deserts, cities, towns, and nations. In DI restoration of the land was the indication of YHWH's work of bringing salvation with a new exodus to take the captive to a land of freedom. When references to land in DI are about YHWH's restoration, it makes sense that

89. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 18.
90. Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home*; *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Pr, 1998), 2.
91. Brueggemann, *The Land,* 4-5.
92. Brueggemann, *The Land,* 130.
93. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2.

this is a universal picture in order to relate to all who have been dispossessed by Babylonian expansionist military actions.[94] The focus after 49:8 becomes the land of Israel. This is related to the sense of doubt that the people held - how could YHWH demonstrate power if unable to redeem their land?

For an Australian reading of DI, land is significant in our own growing self-awareness regarding sacred spaces.[95] European convict policies and settlement has included a story of wrestling with the land.[96] The early battle with the harshness of the land is something that Goonan suggests is retained in the heart of Australians and "they remain strangers and aliens. After two hundred years they still do not belong to the land."[97] This identity is despite the reality that people are no longer forced to live here in exile, they can freely choose to stay or go. I would contend that the understanding of exile for the post-church does not need to be primarily about geographical location, but sense of home and place is part of the story, and to understand the biblical story we need to understand the place of land in that story as well as in ours.

Liminality is a helpful concept when using the exilic theme as a mode of interpreting the current context of those who sense a state of limbo, such as the post-church person. Weaver describes the relationship between liminality and exile, using Said's terms of being constantly "out of place."[98] Liminality allows a space in which emerging self-awareness can occur. It is also suggestive of a possible way forward that means although coming from a previous space of meaning and structure, and being in the "stairwell" as such, there is movement towards a new space.[99] Another related concept is what Bill Ashcroft calls "Threshold Theology" where

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94. John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 2 vols., ICC, vol. 2 (London: T&T Clark, 2006),174.
95. Gary D. Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Pr, 2006), 2.
96. Michael. G. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles: Exploring Australian Spirituality* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1996), 56.
97. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 57.
98. Alain Epp Weaver, *States of Exile: Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return*, Polyglossia: Radical Reformation Theologies (Scottdale, Pa: Herald Pr, 2008), 15.
99. For a brief definition of liminality in the postcolonial studies context see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 106-107. This description describes the stairwell analogy. It also makes a link between liminality and hybridity, which is

theology can be practiced in a third space between cultures.

Exile does not only describe mass population displacement, but also individual experiences of banishment, or life as a fugitive. Westbrook identifies many historical and biblical examples of exile of individuals in the ANE, such as those who had to escape from dangerous situations, slaves who had run away from home, or those who may have committed crimes. The latter cases were frowned upon and would lead to ostracism in the longer term. Dislocation from the social network in the ancient world was a serious situation for an individual in terms of their physical and emotional survival.[100] Aware of this threat the biblical record accounts for procedures of asylum.[101] Although exile was a serious form of punishment for a serious crime, it was better than execution. The concept was linked with the whole ritual of cleansing in the bible.[102] There may be parallels between concepts of exile and concepts of ultimate places of loss such as death and the underworld.[103] These exiles of punishment are somewhat different from exiles of choice. The concept of self-imposed exile may be quite relevant for the context of the post-church person who feels they were not necessarily forced out of church; it was a personal choice to leave. Goonan differentiates between what he calls "exiles" and "questers", with the former characterized by experiences of loss and the latter characterized by more of an inward journey.[104] The pain that post-church exiles experience is deep and profound, which suggests that they are possibly better identified as exiles than as questers. However, the reality for post-church exiles in Australia today is that they generally do have a choice about their church associations. By leaving their church they may lose close community relationships, have their identity affected, and perhaps have their careers affected, not to mention their personal theological and faith development. These are all significant. They leave not just for personal pilgrimage or spiritual exploration - but they do not leave in chains - they make a personal choice, which is a luxury not to be

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another concept of "third space" in postcolonial dialogue. Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), ch. 2. Roxburgh uses the concepts of marginality to describe the situation for the church in North America, and liminality as a "model for engagement."

100. Raymond Westbrook, "Personal Exile in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 2 (2008): 317-323, 318.

101. Westbrook, "Personal Exile," 319.

102. Westbrook, "Personal Exile," 322.

103. See Westbrook's discussion of the Sumerian myth *Enlil and Ninlil.* Westbrook, "Personal Exile," 322-333.

104. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 103.

overlooked.

The question of what constitutes home in the context of the exile is significant.[105] The challenge of DI was to remind the exiles that their home was not the Babylonian or Persian Empire, imaginatively or in reality. It is interesting to note that the term "home" is not referred to in DI, and perhaps previous ideas about making a home in exile need to be undone in DI.[106] To some extent DI was asking the questions of the exiles "where do you want to live? A home built on truth or an imperial construction of home built on a lie?" They needed to be reminded of who they truly were, and of the story that shaped who they were. There is a deeper narrative going on regarding return as DI deals with the complex reality that a return to land does not necessarily mend the relationship with God.[107] What constitutes home to a post-church person is a challenging notion. Many post-church people experienced church as a home, but that home has become an unsafe, hostile environment for them. Perhaps the experience of the post-church resonates with a wider cultural displacement.[108]

Any discussion of exile cannot ignore the important connected theme of return. In fact this is a dominant theme in DI, and even more so in Trito-Isaiah. It is inextricably linked with the issue of hope. The problem lies in the maintenance of a memory that relies on return to a place for identity, rather than on the formation of a new identity in a new location. The issue of return is laden with many philosophical hurdles and questions:

- Does return mean going back?
- Does return mean embracing the very past which led to the exile in the first place?
- What lessons have been learned?
- What if return is never a possibility – i.e.: those towns no longer exist? The temple no longer exists? The kingdom and the kingship do not exist? The way of faith has changed?

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105. Carolyn J. Sharp, "The Trope of "exile" and the Displacement of Old Testament Theology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 2 (2004): 153-169, particularly 154.
106. This is in contrast to Jer 29:5-7.
107. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 119.
108. This is certainly one of Brueggemann's perspectives regarding contemporary society. See for example Brueggemann, *The Land,* 1.

• Can return mean re-creation?

# 4. Survival literature

One approach that I have taken in this study is to consider DI as an example of survival literature. That is, the biblical writings emerged as a result of the disaster of the exile and its associated situations of trauma: displacement, war, and the removal of national institutions of political, theological and social realms. As Gale Yee notes, "Narrativizing trauma imposes some order upon the experience, making terrifying memories of it more bearable."[109] One of the responses to trauma that has received increased attention since the Vietnam War but also existed in previous war settings, and occurs in other situations of trauma is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Morrow defines it as "a set of chronic symptoms and coping mechanisms that cause clinically significant distress and impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning."[110] It can occur in individuals as well as collectively. Recent studies suggest that disorders caused by situations of war were recognized as early as during the Neo-Assyrian era, where signs of trauma were explained by Mesopotamians "in terms of spirit affliction; the spirit of those enemies whom the patient had killed during battle causing the symptoms."[111] This assertion is taken from studies of Neo-Assyrian texts that describe diagnosis, and depiction of roles similar to that of a physician and a pharmacist seemed to indi-

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109.Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 119-120. There have been many fruitful contributions in this area particularly in relation to readings of Lamentations, Job, Ezekiel and Jeremiah (many of these with an acknowledgement of their exilic context). See for example Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Reading Exile Then,"; "Ezekiel on Fanon's Couch: A Postcolonialist Critique in Dialogue With David Halperin's 'Seeking Ezekiel'," in *Peace and Justice Shall Embrace: Power and Theopolitics in the Bible: Essays in Honor of Millard Lind,* ed. Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns (Telford, Pa.: Pandora, 1999), 108-144; "Reading War and Trauma: Suggestions Toward a Social-Psychological Exegesis of Exile and War in Biblical Texts," in *Interpreting Exile*, 253-274; O'Connor, *Jeremiah*; Janzen, *The Violent Gift*; Jill Anne Middlemas, "Speaking of Speaking: The Form of Zion's Suffering in Lamentations," in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response,* ed. Mark. Boda, Carol J. Dempsey, and Leann Snow Flesher, AIL 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 39-54; Samuel E. Balentine, "Traumatizing Job," *Review & Expositor* 105, no. 2 (Mar 2008): 213-228.

110. William Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 168.

111. Walid Khalid Abdul-Hamid and Hughes Hacker, "Nothing New Under the Sun: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders in the Ancient World," 549. The paper is significant in its claim that trauma in war was accounted for far earlier than most current thinking has suggested. Common reference is made to the ancient Greeks being the first to describe and treat trauma, understood as an issue of the imbalance in the humours. The paper's authors agree with JoAnn Scurlock's assertion that modern medical understandings of disease (germ theory) more closely align with the Mesopotamian's viewpoint that illness relates to the invisible gods, rather than to the Greeks' ideas.

cate an awareness by the Assyrians that war had a psychological impact on soldiers. The signs of trauma noted in the ancient texts include many of the features that are used to diagnose PTSD today, such as nightmares, fear, reliving of events and flashbacks (particularly where death is involved), changes to normal mental conditions, slurring of speech, forgetfulness and depression.[112] Understanding aspects of ancient warfare will be important to this study not only in terms of the forms of trauma that we see demonstrated in the text directly and indirectly, but as part of the historical critical background to the text. As Matthews outlines, there are multiple considerations when researching war in the Bible: methods, rhetoric, physical aspects, ideological aspects, objects of warfare and the results of warfare, including the impact on the oppressors and the oppressed.[113]

An approach that pays attention to features of trauma literature will be sensitive to:

- Gaps in the text - the 'unsaid';[114]
- Hidden transcripts - accounts of exile that may be layered in the text, sometimes for subversive reasons, particularly when written in a position of subjugation;[115]
- Memory - the keeping or reframing of the past, interruptions to memory-keeping or the narrative, flashbacks, distortion of memories.[116]
- The use of metaphor to describe images of trauma.
- Signs of trauma - depictions of war, exile, power, deportation, or the events that accompany these such as death, imprisonment and captivity, abuse, rape, threats to safety, and evidence of social breakdown. Language around shame, humiliation, self-loathing, despair, loss, and violence will be noted, along with language of hostility, anger or blame (particularly to-

112. Abdul-Hamid and Hacker, "Nothing New Under the Sun", 557. The ancient texts referred to in the paper include a letter written by the royal physician Urad-Nana to King Esarhaddon with discussion on diagnosis. 551.
113. Victor H. Matthews, "Introduction," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E. Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 1-15, 3-4.
114. Carr, "Reading Into the Gap," 295-308. Carr notes Richard J. McNally's work on the issue of memory of trauma and not talking about the events. 297n3.
115. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
116. See for example Janet L. Rumfelt, "Reversing Fortune: War, Psychic Trauma, and the Promise of Narrative Repair," in *Interpreting Exile*, 323-342, who discusses the process of narrative repair for those who experience trauma. Part of this process is the retrieval of memories and giving voice to the trauma, followed by a process of re-narration where the trauma can be reversed and a new story emerge.

wards perceived enemies, institutions or even YHWH). Evidence of learned helplessness, inability to socialise functionally, inability to reconcile traumatic experiences with previous belief systems, dissociation or "splitting". Evidence of boredom or loss of hope.[117]

- Signs of reframing. In contrast to trauma language, reframing displays language around resilience, rebuilding, and reformation of identity; evidence for mechanisms that may have been used to cope in new situations; ability to deal with ambiguity; new visions of society.
- Indications of the ruptures to society caused by disaster in relationships, the economic and political spheres.

Viewing DI as survival literature entails the possibility of seeing the recipients as people who are deemed to have survived a crisis. They are not the generation that endured the initial deportation, but possibly the second or third generation of survivors - the offspring generations who received the stories of the traumatic event of exile and the associated escalations in crisis and instability. Morrow argues that DI presents the trauma of exile via the vicarious suffering servant.[118] This approach considers that the writer or speaker (the prophet-poet/s) was an empathiser of the trauma to some extent and possibly experienced trauma personally, as what Morrow refers an "enlightened witness."[119] This allowed the prophet-poet to gain the trust of the people in the message of salvation that was being given, as well as be a tool to assist them beyond paralysis towards resilience.

There are some challenges to seeing DI as survival literature. Some critics would suggest that it is an attempt to remove the prophetic aspect of the writing, and therefore some of the power. Another critique of the psychological approach is that it is an entirely Western construct,

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117. I am aware that this list has many features that could be evident in any writing, but they are particular features of either survival literature, PTSD, or even life in situations of forced deportation (such as refugee camps). See Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah,"; Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology*; O'Connor, *Jeremiah,* ch. 2.

118. Whether the text offers therapeutic benefit is a discussion for those in the field of psychology. Morrow gives some outlines of how this may work in particular with a reading of Isaiah 53. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah." Claassens also considers DI to be a case of survival literature. L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 43. See also Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations,* whose argument looks at the effect of forced deportations in consideration of the second and third generations.

119. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," 168.

therefore application to non-Western societies in general let alone ancient Near Eastern societies is questioned. This is a growing assertion that will be interesting to watch, but for the time being social scientific and psychological readings of the Bible are making such unique contributions that we need to acknowledge their insights. There are differences between the contexts to be acknowledged but ancient people have suffered in war and the associated traumas, and this ought not to be downplayed with historical approaches that ignore issues of psychology.[120] Appreciating some of the conditions of the warfare, deportations and life in the land can bring greater sensitivity to our reading of the biblical texts formed in the crisis.[121] For the post-church reader today, such approaches can illuminate the realities of pain and loss that exiles experienced, providing deeper self-awareness and empathy. They may relate to the language and situations to some extent and find great hope that DI's text survived and has been utilised by many who identify with a situation of altered reality.

A historical survey indicates that a simplistic narrative of sin - exile - restoration is problematic on many levels.[122] We see through the work of historians and historiographers, that the stories of exile and the realities can be distorted. Yet dismissing the exile completely is not an option. Understanding the complexities around recovering historical Israel during the exilic period and reading exilic texts with an awareness of their possible mixed agendas and purposes does not reduce the quality of the poetry or the possibility of the text. As O'Connor notes "...because the text speaks to people who lived in the thick of the struggles in question, it was not necessary to report the historical conditions in which they lived and breathed. The audience of the biblical text needed interpretation and explanation, inspiration and hope."[123] The exilic experience offered an opportunity for re-invention. It is with this lens that I seek to read the rhetoric of DI, as a depiction of a life interrupted, a rupture that led to the necessity for a new vision of society.

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120. Smith-Christopher argues this point convincingly. Smith-Christopher, "Reading War and Trauma," 269. See also Morrow who gives a clear outline of the value of psychological readings of scripture from contexts of trauma. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah." See O'Connor's rationale for her approach that is sensitive to the terror of the exiles in the Jeremiah stories. O'Connor, *Jeremiah,* 7.
121. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 33.
122. This is Davies' point in "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?," 132.
123. O'Connor, *Jeremiah,* 14.

Post-church people may be considered exiles in a symbolic and ideological sense. The historical studies of the fall of Jerusalem are not specifically the focus for this context, even if the different theories are important to acknowledge and understand as informing the text of DI.[124] Outlining and appreciating the historical background of exile and the complexities raised is valuable to being able to accurately appropriate the exilic motif to contemporary contexts.

# 5. Exile beyond event

A concept of exile developed beyond the historical events of the Babylonian exile. The term "exile" is used in the HB as well as in Jewish history, not just to designate a period of time but also to symbolise an experience. The recognition of the importance of exile in HB scholarship is part of the revisioning of the concept of loss as not being an end but a crucible of faith. There is a difference between the history and the ideology of exile, and although not denying a relationship between them, discussion around exile needs to be cognisant of what is being talked about.[125] Exile as a metaphor is central to the biblical story of the Israelites.[126] The development in thinking about exile as more than an event, expressing experiences of alienation beyond forced displacement, is the focus of Halvorson-Taylor's extensive study.[127] She demonstrates the extension of the term to include all forms of distress.[128] The wound

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124. In this sense I do not intend to contribute to historical or archaeological discussions on exile. My study is a textual and contextual analysis. Appreciating the historical context for the rhetoric and the sociological environment of exile contributes to the study. See on this relationship between historical reconstructions and rhetorical criticism, Patricia K. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application,* ed. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, Ky.: Westminister John Knox, 1999), 175-176. I also note here Green's proposal about the value of incorporating Bakhtin in biblical studies precisely because of the "severe challenges to recovery of adequate, clear information for understanding well the referents of production and setting." Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction*, SBL Semeia Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 28. See also p. 61. She emphasises the study of language without ignoring the historical setting.

125. On the topic of exile as ideology and the history debates see *Leading Captivity Captive*, and note Jeppesen in this volume "we cannot know whether the Judaeans were saved because they knew a myth, or whether they invented a myth themselves or applied a well-known myth to their situation because and after they were saved." Knud Jeppesen, "Exile a Period - Exile a Myth," 139-144, 143.

126. Carroll, "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora," 64.

127. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*.

128. Halvorson-Taylor cites Daniel 9, the Animal Apocalypse, and the Damascus document which all give longer durations for the exile than the traditional Jeremianic 70 years. Also the work of 4 Ezra which was possibly written after the Second Temple destruction of 70AD but uses the Babylonian exile image as a shaping metaphor for their experience. As she notes, the significance of all these documents is the concept that even post-Cyrus, the consideration of the authors is that the exile continued, even if they were back in the land. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 8-10.

inflicted by exile was so deep and the questions it raised so big that a mere return to land could not deal with the theological havoc wrought by the exile.[129] Exile came to be associated in Judaism with "...death, sterility, bodily and emotional pain, and servitude. Exile would thus come to be understood as a paradigm for human suffering and a separation from God."[130] These extended theological concepts of exile may seem to be in contrast to other HB notions of a limited exile. Halvorson-Taylor argues that they are actually based in the treaty curses of Deut 28 and Lev 26, and she explores their ANE links to Assyrian treaty curses.[131] In these pre-exilic forms exile was already associated with rejection by a deity, and related to a concept of punishment and death.[132] In Isaiah, Halvorson-Taylor sees the use of the exilic metaphor in connection with economic debt, marriage dissolution, punishment for sin, links to the Exodus situation and slavery, and that the position of YHWH in response included the image of גאל: redeemer, of husband, and liberator.[133] The exilic motif influenced apocalyptic writing, which saw it as: a historical event; an ongoing condition, and explored it as a theme related to God's justice.[134]

There are different nuances to the theological interpretations around the causes of exile and we will see these variations in the study of just one section of text - DI. The ongoing development of the consideration of exile as an enduring state and metaphorical representation of suffering or separation from God, rather than as a fixed historical event, is of interest to leaders in the field of diasporic studies. The metaphorisation of the concept of exile is also what makes biblical texts regarding the exile accessible to contemporary readers beyond being a historical study. Halvorson-Taylor terms this exile's "elastic" or "flexible" meaning.[135] Contemporary scholarship relating to exile has sought not to be confined to debates surrounding the extent of the Babylonian exile that tended to dominate the

129. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 201.
130. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 203.
131. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 9, 16.
132. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 16.
133. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 126.
134. James C. VanderKam, "Exile in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions,* ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 89-109, 91. Vander Kam focusses on exile in the apocalyptic writings during the Greco-Roman era. The book also covers issues of Jewish diaspora, understandings of exile in the Midrash and rabbinic literature, and NT expressions of exile. See also James M. Scott, ed. *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions"* JSJS (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
135. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile,* 201-202 for example.

conversation in previous decades. Benefiting from the acknowledgement of the importance of the exile in biblical studies, many scholars today have connected their study of this theme to contemporary research into areas such as PTSD. Fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology all contribute to the understanding of the trauma that displacement can lead to, and the impact that war, crisis and loss of home can have on identity.[136] The situations that communities find themselves in today may provide some helpful parallels that provide a deeper appreciation of and insight into the psychological impacts of the Babylonian exile, consequently influencing the writings of exilic and post-exilic biblical texts. Therefore, I believe that rhetorical and sociological approaches to DI will contribute positively to post-church exiles today.

## (1) Exile in contemporary context

There is an increasing popularity of appropriating an exilic metaphor as a motif to interpret theologically the position of the Western church post-Christendom. Exilic theology holds much promise in contextual biblical studies and has long been overlooked so the attention it has more recently received is something for which I am grateful. However, this focus requires scrutiny and the challenges or strong criticism that is given by some in this field of study are important to assess. I will broadly consider the basis for the growing use of the exilic motif in contextual studies, the warnings and boundaries of its use and its applicability to an Australian context, but more specifically I will argue for its relevance to the church leaver.

Ralph Klein as a scholar of the theological implications of the Babylonian exile foresaw the parallels of the exilic theme in contemporary settings by suggesting:

> Israel's experience of and reaction to exile greatly illuminate our own situation in faith and culture. For us too the old answers no longer hold; our optimistic expectations are contradicted by our increasingly depressing experiences. One can be in exile without ever leaving the land.[137]

Given this understanding, Walter Brueggemann stands large as a significant scholar establishing the use of the exilic metaphor as applied to a post-Christendom context, especially the

136. Kelle, "An Interdisciplinary Approach," 7.
137. Klein, *Israel in Exile,* 149. This sentiment about understanding exile beyond geographical interpretations will be further explored in the exile chapter.

Western church, as well as proposing new models of church.[138] His writing on the topic is prolific, ranging from commentaries that use the concept to whole works on prophetic imagination, hermeneutics and homiletics.[139] Brueggemann's contribution to this study is particularly useful because of his writing across disciplines, and in particular, with regards to DI. Brueggemann encourages Christians in America to see their faith as diametrically opposed to the consumerist culture around them and interprets the growing dislocation between church and power as a positive change. He suggests that there are Christians who would not see a difference between their faith and church life and the wider society, who are so enculturated that there is no sense of being on the "outside" as such, a situation that he critiques. If the focus of the mainstream church has shifted towards a popularist or business model, it may not be in exile as such but in a worse position than exile - as it would not be being faithful to the core of the ethics of the Kingdom of God. Brueggemann's work brings exile into a possible conversation with the context of the church in Australia. I find particularly useful for the post-church context the idea that exilic biblical texts are helpful for informing new notions of community.

John Howard Yoder's work sought to bridge the gap that has existed between Judaism and Christianity, a signature of the relationship since the time of Constantine.[140] Bringing a deeper theological consideration of the theme of diaspora, he expressed "*galut* as vocation." As Peter Ochs, in his Forward to one of Yoder's works, observes:

> The texture of Rabbinic Judaism is through and through, the texture of a faith that knows how to affirm the life of a biblical people away from home, deep in exile, and deeply wounded by loss and dislocation. It is also the texture of a life lived apart:

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138. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 92. Brueggemann outlines the use of the exilic motif by Protestants in the time of Luther to explain the view that the Roman Catholic Church exiled the gospel. Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 41. On his point regarding new forms of church see p. 1; Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination,* 92.

139. To name a few more relevant texts: Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*; "Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture," *Theology Today* 48, no. 2 (1991): 128-138; *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); *A Mandate to Difference: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2007); *Out of Babylon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010).

140. Note also in regard to assessing the work of Yoder, the corresponding views of Daniel Boyarin, an anti-Zionist Jewish scholar who has sought to encourage peaceable relationships with Palestinians in modern day Israel. Boyarin tends to define diasporism in political terms. Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). See also Weaver, *States of Exile*, 39.

> apart from other traditions, other communities, as well as apart from dimensions of human life that threaten rather than serve as a vehicle for a life lived in imitation of God.[141]

Yoder noted the failure of Constantinianism, problems in Western civilisation and particularly the issue of colonialism, all as pointers towards a time to look at new models and new visions of community. Known as the "Free Church Vision", Yoder saw the Jeremianic model as a framework which is possible to use today to show how the faith can be reframed. Yoder argued that the history of Christianity has been strongly influenced by the story of the kings, to disastrous ends. A revisionist viewpoint would place more emphasis on the exilic and post exilic formation of the faith. Even upon the return it was the exile that shaped the people, as the lack of temple forced a reliance on smaller group worship (synagogue) and formation of community around Scripture.[142] Yoder suggests that Christianity during Christendom fell into rites and rituals, neglecting Scripture. Acceptance of diaspora as the norm rather than fighting it was seen by Yoder as a core part of his vision of free-church.[143]

The theological understanding of exile is informed by the text as well as by tradition. Weaver, picking up on Yoder's concept of "not being in charge" argues for an embracing of exilic theology that is sensitive to the marginalised.[144] Aligned with this tradition of moving away from a model of the church in power, Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon have explored the theme of exile within a post-Christendom context, with works such as *Resident Aliens* and the use of the *Watership Down* story as a metaphor which appropriates exile as useful for the church.[145] They emphasise that the best space of church is in the margins, not as the centre of power.[146]

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141. Peter Ochs, preface to John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs, eds, Radical Traditions Series (Grand Rapids; London: Eerdmans; SCM, 2003), 2.
142. Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* 78. Yoder goes on (p. 79) to argue that exilic and diasporic existence and thinking permeated Judaism and Jewish identity beyond the historic events of 70AD, noting particularly the place of Scripture - particularly Jeremiah and Ezekiel - in forming that ideology.
143. Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* 183.
144. Weaver, *States of Exile,* 160. 'Not being in charge' is a term also favoured by Daniel Boyarin.
145. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989); *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1991).
146. Hauerwas, *After Christendom,* 18.

The study of exile overlaps and benefits from fields of study that look at broader issues of diaspora, forced migration, and internal displacement that are from a political, sociological, historical, and anthropological as well as theological angle. As Segovia suggests "We are thus always strangers or aliens, the permanent 'others' both where we came from and where we find ourselves. As such, we find ourselves always defined by somebody else."[147] These works of diasporic theorists are increasingly significant to exilic biblical studies.

### (2) Michael Goonan

Michael Goonan's exploration of the theme of exile in an Australian context is strikingly ahead of its time in his analysis, in finding the exilic theme so resonant to a particularly Australian spirituality.[148] His literary reflection relates two Australian novels (*Cloudstreet* by Tim Winton and *Woman of the Inner Sea* by Thomas Keneally) to the stories of Esther and Tobit.[149] Using the novel *Cloudstreet* Goonan asks "a crucial question underlying the text…: is it possible for non-Aboriginal Australians to belong to this land? The inference is that they do not belong, that they remain aliens and exiles."[150] The implication is that this exile will continue until non-Indigenous Australians accept the experience and wisdom of the original inhabitants.[151] He identifies a few key uniquely Australian experiences of exile that are part of our national heritage and story: the First Fleet; the exilic experience (or internal displacement) of the Aboriginal people from their own home; and the waves of immigrants and refugees, that span from the era of the Gold-rush and throughout the post-war periods in Australia.[152] Goonan relates this sense of exile in Australia directly to the Babylonian exile as portrayed in the Bible, and connects this to questions regarding God's presence and issues of suffering.[153] One of the crucial questions faced by those on the fringes of church is: Will God abandon me if I abandon the church? This apprehension perhaps keeps many from leaving. Goonan explores notions of exile that go beyond the historical experience of the Judahites, proposing exile as a season that can be a time of great self-honesty, forcing a deeper reliance

147. Segovia, "Hermeneutics of Diaspora," 64.
148. Michael. G. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles: Exploring Australian Spirituality* (Homebush: St Pauls Publications, 1996).
149. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles.*
150. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 58.
151. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 85.
152. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 58.
153. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 25.

on one's own inner resources as well as transitioning to new frameworks of faith.[154] Goonan affirms the more positive associations with exile without underestimating the pain that may come with such a move. He highlights the contrasts between the Babylonian exile and elements such as the convict experience where in the former the educated were transported, whereas the convicts sent to Australia were generally the British underclass.[155] Goonan's exploration of the exilic theme in an Australian context articulates many significant features that are relevant for the post-church, such as marginalisation, and may also provide some key insights helpful to a reading of DI.

### (3) Critique

I see the use of the exilic theme and diasporic theology in contemporary contexts as a positive move. However, there are challenges with the association if false analogies of ancient and contemporary parallels are made, particularly when the present context is privileged, wealthy and part of the powerful in the world.[156] There is also the poignant warning against the idealisation of the exilic theme. In her article on the 'trope of exile' Sharp assesses the development and appropriation of the theme in theological study by scholars such as Ackroyd, Klein, Brueggemann and Smith-Christopher. For example, she suggests that Klein's analysis can be read too simplistically if the questions in the time of the exile (she particularly notes the issue of God's silence) are directly related to today without appreciation for the vastly different cultural, economic and political contexts.[157]

Smith-Christopher reminds us of the importance of listening to exiles who are seeking to find identity beyond diaspora. In outlining Sze-Kar Wan's challenge to scholars such as Daniel Boyarin regarding the positive appropriation of diaspora for those who experience positions of powerlessness, we are reminded of the issue of ambivalence in postcolonial contexts.[158] Wan talks about exiles needing a place in the academy, and about being allowed some sense of power before being told to give it up again. Smith-Christopher also engages the warning by Caren Kaplan against theology taking on language of marginality such as "*borderlands*

154. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 47.
155. Goonan, *A Community of Exiles,* 56.
156. See particularly Sharp, "The Trope of "exile"," 153.
157. Sharp, "The Trope of "exile"," 156-158.
158. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 196.

and *hybridity*" (to which I might include threshold and liminality) because it is the latest thing.[159] The holocaust has had a profound effect on the conversation around idealistic exile, as potentially a means of trying to find meaning or reason in the complete meaninglessness and insanity of mass genocide and expulsion.

Edward Said was a Palestinian American secularist writer who viewed the position of exile as primarily political. His description of exile is heartbreaking:

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.[160]

Weaver explores Said's opposition to the "romanticisation" of exile due to its intense pain and harmful impact.[161] Said strongly critiqued "attempts to find a moral within exile" and maintained that "literature and religion run the risk of downplaying the horrors of exile in the interests of extracting new insights from exile itself."[162] These are important observations and I think that this is where Smith-Christopher's (and now others') carefully nuanced work on the background to the issues of PTSD and the link to exile is significant.[163] Just because it is in the Bible and the people did certain things in the crisis of their situation, we do not have to emulate those examples; some were not even examples, they were events.[164]

A little closer to home is Mark G. Brett's critique of the use of the exilic motif to describe the situation of the Australian church as marginal. Brett's contention is that Australian Christians

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159. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 196.
160. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, ch. 17.
161. Weaver, *States of Exile,* 44-45.
162. Weaver, *States of Exile,* 45.
163. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology*; "Reading Exile Then: Reconsidering the Methodological Debates for Biblical Analysis in Dialogue With Sociological and Literary Analysis," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of Exile,* ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Anne Middlemas, LHBOTS (New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), 139-157.
164. As Smith-Christopher also notes, "not all the biblical responses to exile are positive models for contemporary faith and practice." Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 22.

are still the dominant majority and churches are highly resourced.[165] This is a sharp reminder to be careful in assessing the context of the one claiming exilic status. Brett takes heed of Said's discomfort with the popularity of the exilic motif in falsely legitimizing painful exilic experiences and suggests that there may be poor appropriations of the models born out of the diaspora.[166]

### (4) Despite the critique

Given these warnings, I have found some troubling readings around the appropriation of the exilic theme in the Australian context, and I do not wish to repeat this mistake.[167] However, it would be a false approach to suggest that the exilic theme holds *no* insights for a contemporary context such as Australia or for those leaving church. There are in fact some helpful correlations with new studies on exile and biblical texts that appreciate trauma and loss that may correlate with the post-church experience. Our analysis must be a critically thorough approach that appreciates the sensitivity of the topic.

Taking heed of the important warnings of the limitations of the exilic theme, I consider a theological response to be appropriate and valuable. Exile exists beyond geographical displacement to other forms of displacement encountered due to oppression.[168] Postcolonial studies of exile also offer helpful parameters for understanding experiences of loss and change.[169] There are many lessons to learn about the problems of alienation as well as the potential.[170] Exile was in the biblical sense a crisis, something forced and not ideal, yet the power of prophet writings turned diaspora into a world of possibility. Exile provides a different lens that forces us to view pain and loss, to associate with the suffering, and to identify with the outsider.

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165. Mark G. Brett, "Feeling for Country: Interpreting the Old Testament in the Australian Context," *Pacifica* 23, no. 2 (2010 June): 137-156, particularly 153.
166. Brett, "Feeling for Country," 154.
167. In popularist literature, I would include Frost's attempt to use the exile as a metaphor for the church in Australia with limited exegesis of the biblical texts he appropriates to support his case. Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006).
168. Weaver, *States of Exile,* 47.
169. See further Segovia, "Hermeneutics of Diaspora," 64.
170. Segovia, "Hermeneutics of Diaspora," 65.

# 4. Deutero-Isaiah: Proclamations of Comfort, Oracles of Pain

"Isaiah 40-55 shouts very loud, and we have laid down and surrendered. Yet a work that shouts loud may be suspected of susceptibility to deconstruction."[1]

## 1. The alternative narrative of Deutero-Isaiah

The rhetoric of DI presented an alternative reality for the hearer/ reader in the context of the Babylonian exile. The dominant story that surrounded the exiles was that the Empire was all-powerful and beyond defeat. The existence of the Judahite exiles in Babylon was evidence enough of the end of their history, and appeared to confirm the imperial story. Via the words of poetic prophecy, DI dismantles both false and misunderstood narratives by selectively reconstructing the ancient stories of faith for new times. This reframed story includes the truth of YHWH's care, compassion and comfort for the exiles, the implication being that they are still YHWH's people, a threatened concept. This chapter will begin with a brief exploration of developments in critical scholarship around DI in order to situate my own focus. I will argue for an exilic context of the rhetoric of DI followed by an outline of DI's literary structure. Having established my approach to these matters the chapter will then explore DI's rhetorical agenda, particularly its persuasive intent, via an overview of the major rhetorical features of metaphor, simile, personification and story. The analysis aims to frame the rhetoric of DI in the light of post-church considerations.

One of the major literary tools that DI mobilised towards this aim of reconstruction of the story was the Proclamations of Salvation. It looked like Babylon was in control. DI had the task of establishing that YHWH was actually in control. The rhetorical poetry of DI is relevant to exiles regardless of whether they are in diaspora or displaced in the land. I will explore the personification of Zion and YHWH's depiction as mother and how these

1. John Goldingay, "Isaiah 40-55 in the 1990s: Among Other Things, Deconstructing, Mystifying, Intertextual, Socio-Critical, and Hearer-Involving," *BibInt* 5, no. 3 (July 1997): 225-246.

presentations interact in the text. My analysis will use metaphor theory, in particular the nature of relational metaphors employed, with relevant gender representations. The interrelating themes that I am looking for include hope against abandonment, the place of questions in faith, transition and change, subversion against empire, and power relationships.

The words of DI are powerful for all readers but have a potentially deeper meaning to those who are experiencing exile. This text helped give the people a mechanism to navigate through a possibly faith-destroying situation towards a renewed and authentic form of being the people of God in the world.[2] The people of DI were at the end of an exile, but until the announcement of Isa 40:1-11 it is possible they did not realise it was the end. The text is about imminent, as well as eschatological, hope. The language causes disturbance as well as comfort. The frequent use in DI of repeated phrases such "Comfort, Comfort" or *"*Awake, Awake" show that the intention of the text was almost to shout alertness, to drag the hearer out of their complacency. It uses vivid metaphors to bring the message to life and the God of the text close to the hearer and reader. Written in dramatic terms of a magnificent return, DI raises people's hope beyond and despite their circumstances, in ancient and contemporary contexts.[3]

## 2. Isaiah scholarship

Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to contribute principally to debates around composition history of Isaiah, a brief excursus will aim to situate my own thesis within the rich heritage of Isaiah scholarship. There are diverse approaches to the analyses of the text as well as its interpretation in various communities of faith and scholarship.[4] Prior to the 1800s both

2. On the power of texts (in this case DI) to form and transform see Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 69.

3. Melugin argues for the contemporary possibility of DI's message, giving examples of how communities may reinterpret it in ways that give meaning in their post-modern contexts. Roy F. Melugin, "The Book of Isaiah and the Construction of Meaning," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition, V 1,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 39-55, esp. 51-52.

4. Sawyer comprehensively outlines the appreciation and interpretation of Isaiah in Christian history, both positive and negative. John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4. See also Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004). Note that Jewish and Christian interpretations have varied particularly on the points of claims about Christ and the church. Jewish readers consider Isaiah a book of comfort. Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville:

Jews and Christians read Isaiah as one book and the author was considered to be the 8th century prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, identified in the opening verse of the book and situated in a particular historical time. This is not to suggest that there were not questions raised about authorship, particularly given the transition in the literary scene (style and content) apparent from chapters 39 to 40. The Jewish scholar Abraham Ibn Ezra noted this shift in his writings in the 12th century AD. However, it took until 1775 when J. C. Döderlein considered Isaiah to be in two parts; then Eichhorn argued for separate authors of 1-39 and 40-66.[5] This viewpoint was to dominate the scholarly focus of Isaiah studies for the next 200 years. Although not the first proponent of the theory of multiple authors, dating and settings for Isaiah, it was the work of Bernhard Duhm that became definitive in this era of Isaiah scholarship.[6] Duhm's 1892 Isaiah commentary argued that Proto Isaiah was predominantly pre-exilic, written by Isaiah of Jerusalem; Deutero-Isaiah was exilic and written in Phoenicia viewing the emergence of Cyrus' empire of Persia and the fall of Babylon; and Trito-Isaiah was post-exilic (around the time of Nehemiah) and composed in Judah.[7] In relation to DI, Duhm viewed the Servant Songs and the anti-idol polemics as interpolations, and saw Trito Isaiah as a particularly corrupted text. Duhm's move set in motion a critical approach to Isaiah studies that assumed the tripartite division.[8] This direction led to more intensive debates on issues of au-

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Abingdon, 2005), 45. Also helpful towards understanding the various contexts that gave rise to particular interpretations of Isaiah throughout Jewish and Chrisitan history is Claire Matthews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull, eds. *"As Those Who Are Taught": The Interpretation of Isaiah From the LXX to the SBL,* SBLSymS 27 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006). See also the Preface to *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition, V 1*, in Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans eds, VTSup 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), ix.

5. John Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 33. Gesenius produced a commentary of Isaiah 40-66 in 1821, placing it after the exile. See also B. H. Lim, "Isaiah: History of Interpretation," in *Dictionary of Old Testament Prophets,* ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon. McConville (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 387, on Robert Lowth's contribution to Isaiah studies via his translation in 1778, dividing Isaiah into poetic forms and the subsequent influence this had on later scholars such as the form critics.

6. See Childs who places Isaiah studies as key (after the Pentateuch) to the historical critical approach that dominated 19th century biblical scholarship. Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979), 316-317. Clifford outlines the past 200 years of critical scholarship in biblical studies that have particularly influenced the study of DI. He divides the study into four major stages, which he analyzes in terms of their deficiencies. Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York: Paulist, 1984).

7. Marvin A. Sweeney, "On the Road to Duhm: Isaiah in Nineteenth Century Scholarship," in *As Those Who Are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah From the LXX to the SBL,* ed. Claire Matthews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 243-261, esp. 243-244. See also Seitz on the effect of Duhm's focus on providing a clear focus for studies of DI. Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 1-2.

8. See Oswalt, *Isaiah,* 33-34, on scholars such as Stier, Delitzsch, Alexander who continued to argue for single authorship prior to Duhm's commentary. Following Duhm's work, only conservative scholars such as Alexander and Young took a traditional approach to authorship and composition. Lim, "Isaiah: History of Interpretation," 388.

thorship and location. However, the authorship question remained unresolved as, despite the convincing nature of other proposals, no other author is personally identified in 40-66 and the practice of reading Isaiah as one is evident up to the Great Isaiah scroll found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. In relation to DI in particular, suggestions of authorship range from an Isaianic school of prophets, the Servant, a female prophet who had to remain anonymous due to her gender, or multiple authors.[9]

Gunkel's form criticism arose in the same era as Duhm's work, and this approach influenced the study of Isaiah considerably, raising the suspicion of consistent authorship of many sections, particularly of Trito-Isaiah.[10] Gressman and Kohler viewed the genres as separate speeches compiled with no particular structure; Mowinckel saw DI's speeches to be compiled based on shared themes and key words;[11] Elliger affirmed a theological basis for the organisation of the speeches;[12] Begrich considered DI to be highly structured and based in oral origins.[13] Essentially, these approaches saw independent oracles sewn together in a written form, with each scholar arriving at different conclusions as to where the seams fell let alone where they were derived. Clifford's assertion is that form critical approaches have ultimately led to fragmentation in the study of DI's oracles by shortening them significantly.[14]

As problems emerged with excesses of form criticism, James Muilenburg's groundbreaking commentary, speech and article on Isaiah 40-66 proposed an approach beyond form criticism

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9. On the suggestion that there is a female voice behind DI see, Bebb Wheeler Stone, "Second Isaiah: Prophet to Patriarchy," *JSOT* 56 (1992): 85-99. She challenges the idea that the author of DI has to be male, raising the possibility that the anonymous prophet was female. Her argument is based particularly on the portrayal of sexual assault in Isaiah 51 and the positive representation of women as a whole in DI.
10. The reasons for this were largely influenced by Duhm's concept that Trito-Isaiah "was a more corrupt text, full of glosses and additions, less poetically refined, and degenerated into a prosaic nature. In addition, his romanticism and bias against the law influenced his decision to separate out Isaiah 56-66, which contained numerous cultic references." Lim, "Isaiah: History of Interpretation," 388.
11. Roy Frank Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 3. This is a helpful overview of the different stages of scholarly approaches to Isaiah. Also see Eugene H. Merrill, "The Literary Character of Isaiah 40-55, Pt 1: Survey of a Century of Studies on Isaiah 40-55," *BSac* 144, no. 573 (1987): 24-43; "The Literary Character of Isaiah 40-55, Pt 2: Literary Genres in Isaiah 40-55," *BSac* 144, no. 574 (1987): 144-156.
12. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 3.
13. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 4.
14. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading,* 34.

which was able to appreciate the longer sections of text in DI.[15] He is generally regarded as the father of rhetorical criticism after delivering the Presidential Address at the Society for Biblical Literature conference in 1968 titled "Form criticism and beyond."[16] This address initiated the focus on rhetorical criticism in relation to Biblical Studies, but this has since morphed into a much wider field. Muilenburg's move took the smaller components of texts and linked them into a wider section than was previously held in form critical approaches. His argument was that the shorter form oracle was notable in the pre-exilic prophets but that "in the seventh century...a literary revolution took place in Israel – perhaps in the entire Near East – in which the ancient oral patterns disintegrated and gave way to a new process of composition."[17] The scholarly focus became the literary context of the oracles.[18] It is this work that influenced Claus Westermann who argued that "genres long used in oral tradition were quite decisive…they are complex interweaving of various genres with the structure of one genre serving as the formal model for the organization of the poem."[19] The suggestion included the possibility that the oracles were linked, and that a progression of thought may be evidenced.[20] It is a rhetorical approach that will primarily influence my study.

In more recent decades, Isaiah scholarship has turned towards issues of the final form of the text. This does not assume one author, or redactor, but a unity of message, individual terms, or structure.[21] Provoked especially by Brevard Childs and canonical criticism, this unity approach has sought to find an inner coherence to the work, as well as move away from some of the presumptions that led to the views of the divisions in the first place.[22] For example, an

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15. Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88, no. 1 (Mr 1969): 19.
16. Muilenburg's standing as the President of SBL at the time may have contributed to the wide acceptance of the value of rhetorical criticism.
17. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 5.
18. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading,* 35. Lim, "Isaiah: History of Interpretation," 388.
19. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 6-7.
20. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 322.
21. See for example the discussion by H. G. M. Williamson, "Recent Issues in the Study of Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches,* ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 21-39, esp. 29. As one of the proponents of an approach looking for unity in the text, Clements asserts that the issue of unity is not about authorship as such but about themes, content and redaction. Ronald E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," *Int* 36, no. 2 (1982): 117-129, esp. 121.
22. Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (London, UK: SCM, 1985); Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

understanding of the message of DI requires a reading of Proto Isaiah, or vice versa.[23] Childs' canonical approach challenges the view that the historical situation is of prime importance, as he asserts that the word is living.[24] Generally speaking, contemporary studies appreciate Isaiah's complex composition but are no longer limited to historical or form critical readings with strict delineations.[25] Given that the scholarly focus has moved towards final form approaches to the text of Isaiah, some scholars propose that the term Deutero-Isaiah is now defunct but I take Sweeney's acknowledgement of Duhm's significant influence throughout the previous century in shaping Isaiah studies even today.[26] The different scholarly interpretations about the structure of Isaiah also relates to various reading agendas, despite them having access to the same texts and archaeological records.[27] This is not to devalue the legitimacy of the historical reconstructions that are undertaken to situate DI, as these all add value to its interpretation. It is, however, a recognition that even historical-critical study is not exempt from biases and agendas.

# 3. My approach to Deutero-Isaiah

## (a) Exilic context

My study of DI is predominantly a rhetorical critical reading through the lens of the Babylonian exile. DI's literary themes, focus and style can be differentiated from Proto and Trito Isaiah. Thus for the purposes of clarity I will retain the term DI to refer to chapters 40-55. Issues of composition or redaction will be regarded as they emerge as relevant to the study of particular passages. My study will consider that chapters 40-55 are generally exilic or post-exilic in

23. On different redaction theories see Mark E Biddle, "Teaching Isaiah Today," *PRSt* 36, no. 3 (2009/9): 257-272 , esp. 262-264.
24. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 337.
25. Edgar W. Conrad, "Reading Isaiah and the Twelve as Prophetic Books," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 4. Williamson outlines the difference between English and German scholarly focus on Isaiah, with the former reading it as a unity and the latter finding disparate views on literary grounds. Williamson, "Recent Issues," 35. See further on modern approaches to Isaiah, John Barton, "Ethics in the Book of Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, 67-77, esp. 68.
26. For a broad discussion on the notion that the divisions are no longer primary considerations in Isaiah studies see Richard J. Coggins, "Do We Still Need Deutero-Isaiah," *JSOT* no. 81 (1998): 77-92. Although the implication of the article is that we no longer need DI, there are still problems associated with any division and the implications of issues such as location of author and identity of author. Barton, "Ethics in the Book of Isaiah," 67. Sweeney, "On the Road to Duhm," 244.
27. What Melugin considers "different visions" of the text. Melugin, "The Book of Isaiah," 39-41.

their rhetorical perspective, regardless of the actual location of their formation or reception.[28] This position is based on: the mention of Cyrus (44:28-45:4), Babylonian religious customs, Babylon's fall (47), and the thematic emphasis on return to the land using the Exodus motif, the leading of the blind through the desert and redemption, and the use of terms for captivity. There is also an argument for the author's anonymity based on the subversive nature of the content of DI in a Babylonian/ Persian context.[29] Whether or not it first took expression in that context, exile is the theme.

One of the common reasons given for the possible later date or non-exilic location of DI are the few direct references to exile. In fact, there are very few biblical texts that are truly exilic in content and focus.[30] Landy observes that despite being a dominant 'underlying' theme in the book, the term for 'exiles' does not come up frequently in Isaiah (only once in DI in 45:13 as "the exiles" - וגלותי from the root גלות ). Exile is a major focus in terms of threat in Isaiah 1-39, followed by what seems to be a great silence, then the rhetorical context of 40 is post-exilic (the exile is about to be or is over).[31] It may be that the trauma that is observed is the Babylonian exile but may be written in the context of the new Persian empire, possibly back in the land. The lack of references to Babylon, and exile, makes DI more authentically a product of the exile but does not necessarily clarify where it was written. Carroll suggests that the exilic theme brackets Isaiah as a whole, commencing with the focus of Isaiah 2 on Jerusalem (the home) and then concluding when the nations come freely to Jerusalem in 66:20, ultimately with the new heavens and the new earth.[32] The overarching view of Isaiah is that the diaspora is temporary.[33] The inability to articulate pain may correspond to the experience of many post-church who are still wrestling with feelings of anger, confusion, loss

28. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 92.
29. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 102.
30. Even if DI is seen as written in Babylon, it is considered to be at the end of the exile upon the rise of Cyrus and the Persian rule. Thus there is deemed to be a gap between the pre-exilic world of Isaiah 39, the descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem in Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the end of the exile in Isaiah 40-55.
31. Francis Landy, "Exile in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts,* ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, BZAW (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 241-256, esp. 242. As Berlin in her Lamentations commentary notes, "trauma...takes time to find literary expression." Adele Berlin, *Lamentations*, OTL (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 33. Also on trauma in Scripture see Samuel E. Balentine, "Traumatizing Job," *Review & Expositor* 105, no. 2 (Mar 2008): 213-228. These observations of giving expression to trauma in writing particularly note lessons learnt from Holocaust accounts.
32. Robert P. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse in the Prophetic Literature," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions,* ed. James M. Scott, JSJS (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 63-88.
33. Carroll, "Deportation and Diasporic Discourse," 77.

and doubt that do not necessarily lead to clear self-representations of their situation.

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer proposes that the provenance of DI is Judah.[34] She argues for similarity in the Judahite language of Lamentations and DI, suggesting that DI includes very few mentions of Babylon (outside of 47), and that the return is depicted as a return *from* diaspora (in many different places) rather than a going from Babylon *to* Judah. She also analyses the mentions of flora that suggest a geographic location of Judah rather than Babylon, and the intense focus on the city of Jerusalem. References of Babylonian customs in DI could be argued to not require a Babylonian location, although the same could be said of Judahite references. Along with this proposal is the suggestion that the empty land was not so empty and devoid of culture.[35] The implications of this for reading and interpreting DI are significant and challenge many 20th century scholarly assumptions about a Babylonian location. Location features as an issue in determining structure, a topic I will turn to now.

### (b) Literary structure

One of the key challenges to any study of DI is that the writing itself comprises a variety of generally poetic forms. Despite the beautiful writing and memorable images created, there is debate as to whether there is an obvious narrative flow or sequence to chapters 40-55. Some consider DI to be composed of series after series of disconnected oracles and speeches with no beginning, middle and end.[36] I would suggest that perhaps in a post-modern era DI's creative arrangement may actually be attractive to readers for all the same reasons that in a modern age it proved frustrating as it allows for more open possibilities, even if a clear narrative cannot be pinned down so easily.

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34. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Geography and Textual Allusions: Interpreting Isaiah Xl-LV and Lamentations as Judahite Texts," *VT* 57, no. 3 (2007): 367-385; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Isaiah 40-55: A Judahite Reading Drama," in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Carol J. Dempsey, and Leann Snow Flesher, AIL 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 55-75.
35. See more on this in ch. 3 on Exile. Of relevance here is the idea that there was enough of a literary culture and intellectual life left in the land to produce the kind of writing we find in DI.
36. See for example John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, ICC, vol. 1 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 19.

Given the subtle direction of DI, a literary structural analysis that determines demarcations in the text can be helpful to interpretation.[37] The predominant structural outline divides DI into two major sections: 40-48 and 49-55, or three if chapter 40 is considered separately.[38] These divisions have been based on a form critical approach (different genres), or noting different themes (king, Zion, Jacob/ Israel), focus or audience, or attempts at identifying varying locations of the author and/or recipients (Babylon or Jerusalem).[39] This structural outline is summarised in Table 3 below:

| **Chapters** | **Themes and key references** | **Dominant genres** |
|---|---|---|
| 40 | Includes key themes relevant to all of DI: comfort, salvation, a messenger, Zion, YHWH as creator. | Prologue, disputation, enthronement hymn |
| 41-48 | Jacob-Israel, Cyrus, anti-idol polemics and YHWH's sole rule. Fall of Babylon. Contrast between former and new things.[40] Possible Babylonian context, finishing with the call to depart in 48:20.[41] | Trial scenes, Oracles of Salvation, Anti-idol polemics |
| 49-55 | Absence of some themes from 41-48. Instead, focus on the initial stages of the return from exile and gathering of the people; Zion/ Jerusalem (but note not the Temple) alternating with the Servant. Not so much about historical concerns indicating a possible Judahite context.[42] | Servant Songs, Proclamations of Salvation |

Table 3: Structure of Isaiah 40-55

37. For example, Melugin's approach to the material as structured in the form of hymns. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55*. See O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah,* 152, onwards for a helpful outline of structure. The argument for the division of DI into these major sections is not entirely accepted. See for example Spykerboer's overview of the various scholarly views on structure. He concludes that a form critical analysis demonstrates DI's literary creativity as "one continuous message." Hendrik Carel Spykerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah With Special Reference to the Polemics Against Idolatry* (Groningen: Krips Repro B. V. Meppel, 1976), 188.

38. The discussion on the place of 40 relates to its connection to the previous chapters, relationship to Isaiah 6 and 28. See Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 58-59.

39. See for example, Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," *CBQ* 42, no. 1 (Jan 1980): 1-29 ; Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 19. Jill Anne Middlemas, *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the "exile"* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 99.

40. Stuhlmueller contends that chapters "41-48 were written over a longer and more secure span of time." Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, AnBib 43 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 8.

41. Roy F. Melugin, "Form Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism and Beyond in Isaiah," in *"As Those Who Are Taught": The Interpretation of Isaiah From the LXX to the SBL,* ed. Claire Matthews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 263-278, esp. 275. He also suggests a further division between both sections by a hymn in 44:23 and 52:9-10.

42. Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 321. See also Richtsje Abma, "Travelling From Babylon to Zion: Location and Its Function in Isaiah 49-55," *JSOT* 22, no. 74 (1997): 3-28, who argues for an interchanging dramatic focus between Zion and Babylon, and the inhabitants thereof, in 49-55.

The passages that I am studying are derived from 49-55 which sees a thematic dominance of the Zion theme.

My approach to the issue of authorship is basically to leave the question open whilst acknowledging that within DI we are interacting with a variety of voices : the unknown but implied author; the narrator whom I will call the Prophet; the Servant; YHWH; Daughter Zion; and the exiles. Rhetorical addresses also indicate the implied but unvoiced accusers or taunters (possibly Babylonians, Persians or the exiles) as well as the tool of YHWH's work of liberation of the exiles - Cyrus. My investigations into the metaphorisation of both exile and Zion would suggest that the experience of exile for refugees and remainees was deep and damaging, and that the oracles go beyond historical location and time. The rhetorical emphasis is encouragement and comfort and that the exile will soon end. Whether the recipients of the oracles viewed the shattered land of Judah and saw its crumbled walls as evidence of defeat or sat beside the Babylonian riversides or irrigation channels which were a reminder of how far away home was, the words of DI evidence trauma, fractured memory and a sense of being "out of place." That sense of being "out of place" can be equally as real within the homeland as outside it, as many people on the fringes of church can testify. In some ways this exile at home proves even more alienating as routines, structures and symbols that previously brought comfort may now prove painful or distorted.

# 4. The Rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah

Our knowledge of how Hebrew rhetoric emerged and functions is limited, as no textbook outline has survived history. Despite this we are able to explore DI's persuasive intention via the methodological tool of rhetorical criticism.[43] I will first explore how DI uses particular rhetorical devices to persuade, then I will focus on metaphor. The role of parallelism in the HB to emphasise key themes to the reader is well established. Hebrew poetry demonstrates terse-

43. Richard J. Clifford and Yehoshua Gitay both consider the text of DI as poetry with a purpose of persuasion. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*; Yehoshua Gitay, "Why Metaphors: A Study of the Texture of Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* ed. Craid C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 57-65, esp. 57. On innovation in prophetic poetry see Thomas Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 53.

ness and relates to memory; the impact and the inclusion and exclusion of words may tell us much about the emphasis that is given.[44] Raising an awareness of the damaging exilic context and the need to depart and return to Zion underlies the message of DI.[45] There may be more than one intended audience, or even a deliberately concealed audience due to political complexities of the age, or an expunged setting in later redactions.[46]

There seem to be mixed agendas in DI's rhetoric with strong comfort messages but also forms of argument and angst with perhaps an overall emphasis upon restoring trust in YHWH.[47] We are often faced with passages in DI that are not sweetly persuasive and Gitay suggests they can be downright disagreeable, even if the aim is to alter the perspectives of the recipients.[48] I will be particularly attentive to where this format of argumentation takes place. DI extensively utilises a specific literary tool of rhetorical questions, possibly to control a conversation, challenge distrust and restore confidence as well as provide its own answers.[49] It may have an intention of putting the reader in agreement with the speaker.[50] In the readings of DI that I will be analysing, there are many uses of rhetorical questions where expected responses are overturned or affirmed. Rhetorical questions allow for some ambiguity in

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44. For further discussion on the development and features of parallelism and terseness in Hebrew poetry see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 7; Tremper Longman III, "Poetry: In the Old Testament," in *New Bible Dictionary,* ed. I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman (Leicester: IVP, 1996), 938-939; Adele Berlin, "Introduction to Hebrew Poetry," in *NIB Vol IV: 1 & 2 Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, Job, Psalms,* ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 301-315.

45. Gregory Lee Cuéllar, *Voices of Marginality: Exile and Return in Second Isaiah 40-55 and the Mexican Immigrant Experience*, American University Studies (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 64. Petersen argues that a rhetoric regarding exile developed in the Neo-Assyrian period and influenced the later exilic and post-exilic prophets, even though the circumstances of exile in the Babylonian period were different. David L. Petersen, "Prophetic Rhetoric and Exile," in *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Frank Ritchel Ames, John J. Ahn, and Mark Leuchter, AIL 21 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 9-18.

46. See Harner on the notion of the two audiences of DI, a direct and indirect audience, using the trial scenes to the nations as an example with Israel being the real target. Philip B. Harner, *Grace and Law in Second Isaiah: I Am the Lord*, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 2 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 160.

47. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah,* 149.

48. Gitay, "Why Metaphors," 58, 64-65. Gitay suggests that metaphors are particularly used to frame the argument. The use of trial scenes and disputations set the case before the exiles that they are in need of rescue by carefully interweaving their current state as well as wooing them. Gitay also asserts that this argumentative discourse is the primary reason why the text seems to be disjointed. He notes the various views of redaction, that perhaps it was compiled as separate speeches in a historical order but not in a thematic order or a storyline.

49. It is not a form unique to DI, as Kuntz explains. J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function of Rhetorical Questions in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 121-141, 121.

50. Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 125.

reading. Does the lack of voice that Daughter Zion or the children of Zion have in the passages I am investigating indicate a manipulation of the subject matter?[51] The ambiguity of rhetorical questions does not necessarily mean that they have no agenda, and some may actually have implied condemnation.[52]

### (a) Metaphor, Simile and Personification

DI's innovative form of poetic rhetoric frequently uses the literary devices of metaphor, simile and personification to evoke visual imagery, and the study of metaphor in DI has emerged from rhetorical criticism.[53] Utilising commonplace imagery and familial metaphors, the wounded and scarred exiles are wooed by familiar images but these are sometimes overturned to challenge them towards new thinking.[54] A topic that can be described in more practical terms may achieve rational results but a metaphor enables greater ideas to be encapsulated with a deeper emotional and psychological impact. [55]

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51. See Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function," 122 on this feature of the speaker holding the attention by using rhetorical questions.
52. Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function," 123.
53. On the power and purpose of the poetry by prophets in general, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry,* 137-140; Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination,* 96. Regarding the poetic style of DI, influenced by Psalms, see Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E*, Studies in Biblical Literature (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 379. The resources available on the nature of metaphor in the HB and specifically in Isaiah are plentiful. Of particular relevance to this study are: Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Pr, 1985); John F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 89-107; Nelly Stienstra, *Yhwh is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993); Gitay, "Why Metaphors,"; Richtsje Abma, *Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts With Marriage Imagery (Isaiah 50:1-3 and 54:1-10, Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2-3)*, SSN (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999); Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem': Second Isaiah's Reception and Use of Daughter Zion," *PSB* 20, no. 3 (1999): 281-294; Gerlinde Baumann, "Prophetic Objections to Yhwh as the Violent Husband of Israel: Reinterpretations of the Prophetic Marriage Metaphor in Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55)," in *A Feminist Companion to Prophets and Daniel,* ed. Atalya Brenner (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 88-120; Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship Between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2003); Ehud Ben Zvi, "Observations on the Marital Metaphor of YHWH and Israel in Its Ancient Israelite Context: General Considerations and Particular Images in Hosea 1.2," *JSOT* 28, no. 3 (2004): 363-384; Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis: Evidence From the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and IQH XI, 1-18*, BZAW 382 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2008); Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors*; John J Schmitt, "The Motherhood of God and Zion as Mother," *RB* 92, no. 4 (Oct 1985): 557-569. Dille makes the observation regarding the place of metaphor analysis in the rhetorical school in her study of familial metaphors in DI. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 3.
54. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 11.
55. Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1990), 2. Macky gives an overview of the study of metaphor, with the main scholars represented, 5-8.

DI utilises a powerful set of images and metaphors for exile: deserts, wastelands, divorce, barrenness, captivity, desolation, death[56]; for the exiles themselves: as children, as a woman, as a bride, as a scorned lover, as a barren raped mother, like eagles, as blind and deaf; for the city of Jerusalem as Mother or Daughter Zion; for the rebuilding of the city: as a bride preparing for a wedding, as a tent being enlarged; for their oppressors: as harlot Daughter Babylon, as invading tormentors; and for the one who is to herald comfort: as a servant. There are metaphors within metaphors.

Multiple metaphors representing YHWH permeate DI in order to prevent reducing God to one image.[57] Relational depictions of YHWH as mother, father, husband, shepherd and kinsman-redeemer are paralleled with YHWH as Divine Warrior, King and Destructive-Creator. As Dille observes "The literal meaning of God is an unknown, apart from metaphor or analogy."[58] This relates not just to ancient texts but to the way that people of faith communicate about the divine, particularly about a relationship with the divine. Relational metaphors of marriage, birth, and parenthood evoke images of intimacy, love, compassion and comfort. If the aim of DI is persuasion, presenting YHWH as appealing in relational images is particularly useful.

Traditionally the focus on metaphor study has been literary, assessing how the metaphor functions in the text. Soskice defines metaphor as "that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another."[59] Macky's definition suggests "Metaphor is that figurative way of speaking (and meaning) in which one reality, the

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56. For my exploration of the use of 'exile' as a metaphor, refer to the ch. 3. See Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Carolyn J. Sharp, "The Trope of "exile" and the Displacement of Old Testament Theology," *PRSt* 31, no. 2 (2004): 153-169. Note that these were also actual situations of exile as well as metaphorical representations of exile. The challenge for the contemporary scholar is to ascertain just how metaphorical are some of these depictions. See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587-539 BCE)," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions,* ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7-36, particularly 28-31 on Hebrew terms used related to exile, many are found in DI, with historical connections.
57. L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 60.
58. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 18. This is also a sentiment expressed by Soskice. Soskice, *Metaphor,* x.
59. Soskice, *Metaphor,* 15.

Subject, is depicted in terms that are more commonly associated with a different reality, the Symbol, which is related to it by Analogy."[60] At the simplest level, most metaphor theorists accept I. A Richards' notion of the **tenor** and the **vehicle.** The tenor relates to the underlying idea or principal subject of the metaphor whereas the vehicle is the mechanism used in the metaphor to represent the tenor. It is the interaction or connection of the tenor and the vehicle that gives meaning to the metaphor. Metaphors overlap and interact with one another to provide a sense of coherence and consistency, or when inconsistent still provide a coherent depiction.[61] Richard's concept may provide a useful framework when investigating the vehicles in DI that either resonate with or seem disparate from the tenor. For example, the concept of YHWH as Shepherd resonates in DI, as a calming, comforting God (40:11) who is speaking to shattered exiles. However, the vehicle of a divine warrior giving birth in Isaiah 42 and the tenor of a powerful, loving YHWH initially creates a disparity or tension in our reading that forces us to investigate further. We are further challenged by the vehicle of a breastfeeding mother in Isa 49:15 with the tenor of a caring YHWH, but this is later juxtaposed with the warrior vehicle again, with the tenor of a powerful but caring YHWH.

Metaphors are selective, in that they can emphasise and highlight, or suppress, hide or downplay aspects of the tenor. The interesting questions for our look at DI include: where are the voices of Daughter Zion, and her children? They are mostly silent. Why are their voices not present and if they were present what might they say in response? What is being highlighted, downplayed or hidden in the depiction of Daughter Zion or YHWH and why might this have been the case given the exilic context? Following this analysis will be the discussion of whether these devices are helpful to a post-church reading or whether they raise further issues. For example, emphasising YHWH's feminine characteristics may be productive to a reader who has found patriarchal authoritarian styles of leadership detrimental, whereas not providing space for a voice of response to an experience of Daughter Zion's abandonment may unhelpful.

Over the past 30 years, feminist and postcolonial responses to DI's relational metaphors

60. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors,* 49.
61. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* ch. 3.

(usually in combination with other prophetic texts) have expanded the conversation to investigating relevant contemporary issues.[62] Some have sought to understand the socio-historical context, historical and literary concerns, as well as the *effect* the metaphors have when read in a contemporary context, whereas other scholars may only be interested in the latter part of the study - the effect. These studies have particularly sought to interpret the disturbing depictions of women as evil or punishable, or use imagery accompanied by violence, especially sexual violence, that characterises many of the relational metaphors. Connecting to justice themes may provide an avenue of scriptural connection for post-church readers as relationship is a key feature of post-modern discourse if read with a keen awareness of the sense of incongruity generated in DI's metaphors. These challenges shall be explored as they arise.

I am particularly interested in cognitive approaches which consider metaphor as conceptual structures.[63] More than language and speech, metaphor can encapsulate thought and experience as well as *create* these components.[64] This explains why metaphor is effective as a tool of persuasion in DI as well as the potential for metaphors to impact today by drawing word pictures in our imagination. They cause us to see both a vivid ancient world and our contemporary context with new possibilities. Cognitive metaphor theories connect with Brueggemann's contention that prophets create a new rhetorical reality (alternative worlds or social realities), or what Charles Taylor may call the "social imaginary."[65] Going further than the original intention and conceptual structuring function, DI's use of metaphors is particularly linked to the experience of exile which in turn connects with universal human experiences of grief, loss and pain.[66] The probability that DI is representative of writing

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62. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 1. Dille's outline of metaphor theory is useful for my approach to DI as survival literature. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors,* Introduction. Moughtin-Mumby helpfully traces the two main ways that metaphor study of the prophets has been undertaken, what she calls the traditional approach and the feminist approach.

63. On the presence of metaphors in life see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors,* 3. See Moughtin-Mumby on the influence of cognitive theories in studies of metaphor in the Bible.

64. See Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 16.

65. See Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination,* x. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2007), 171.

66. See Hyun Chul Paul Kim and Louis Stulman, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abindgon, 2010), 58-65. See Morrow on the importance of new narratives, giving language to pain, for restoration. William Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins

emerging from disaster leads me to a reading that incorporates trauma studies. This offers opportunities to empathise, relate, and in our own worlds of transition and at times chaos, find new directions towards understandings of God.[67] There needs to be a level of explanation of the original context to aid contemporary understanding as some features of the metaphors used are not as commonplace today and the role of the interpreter and reader is to open the window towards understanding.[68]

Personification is an aspect of metaphor study key to my analysis of Zion. This is defined by Lakoff and Johnson as "where the physical object is further specified as being a person. This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities."[69] DI also uses specific figures of speech such as synecdoche and metonymy when referencing Zion.[70] When synecdoche is the literary device used we can understand references to Zion as representing the people of Israel in exile, not necessarily only the physical city or those from Jerusalem. Thus Zion the city is only part of Judah but the use of the term stands for the whole of the people in exile. Whereas with metonymy references to Zion as the people in exile are associated with the conceptual connection. Poetic devices such as synecdoche and metonymy rather than using literal references allow for subversive intent.

In DI the city of Zion personified as a broken woman replaces references to Jacob-Israel, but can represent exiles, Judah, a city - multiple and flexible interpretations. The "city as the

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(Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 167-184, esp. 171.

67. Kim and Stulman, *You Are My People,* 65.

68. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors,* 22. Macky refers to this process as having a speaker (who uses the metaphor) and a receiver.

69. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors,* 33.

70. Synecdoche is "the trope in which one uses a species term to stand in for a genus, or a genus term for a species, or a more comprehensive term for a less and vice versa; so one says 'the ships opened fire' when one means the guns opened fire..." Soskice, *Metaphor,* 57.

Metonymy is closely related to synecdoche and is where:

> ...one uses an adjunct to stand for the whole, so we say 'the White House said yesterday' when we mean that 'the presidential authority of the United States made public yesterday'. A distinction between these two and metaphor can be made like this: metonym and synecdoche seem superficially similar to metaphor but they are functionally (that is, semantically) different. In metonymy and synecdoche, one word or phrase stands in for a more straightforward reference and this 'standing in' is of a different nature from that which charactersises metaphor...instances of metonymy and synecdoche point one directly to the absent term...

Soskice, *Metaphor,* 57.

wife of a deity" includes both a marriage metaphor and the personification of Zion depicting a covenant relationship (with fidelity and infidelity displayed). The HB prophetic use of metaphor depicts a wife (Judah/ Jerusalem/ Samaria) being unfaithful to her husband YHWH, thereby bringing shame upon him.[71] This unfaithfulness may be depicted as reliance on foreign alliances or idolatry and related issues. A marriage metaphor enabled the prophet to tap into the mindset of the patriarchal worldview, serving a polemical purpose.[72] These depictions incorporate images that constitute in contemporary readings as portrayals of sexual violation.[73] In Ezekiel it is extended to give an entailment of uncleanness and defilement.[74] In Jeremiah (wife Judah) and Lamentations the marriage metaphor depicted damaged relationships that affected whole families, their sense of a safe home and their futures - a reality for exiles.[75] DI picks up on these extensions but creatively develops a picture of restoration. This unexpected reading of the conventional metaphor encourages us to explore further. Yee suggests that just as the covenant is about relationship on a deep level, if the trust and requirements of that covenant are violated, punishment ensued.[76] There are different readings of these punishment motifs that attempt to look at the cause of the punishment, if they imply that Israel/ Judah/ Babylon deserve the punishment. DI takes a different perspective on the issue of the use of rape as a metaphor for punishment, which draws us to read a relational metaphor in new ways.[77]

The broader tone of the HB is generally dominated by patriarchal language and imagery (including of YHWH) which is indicative of the times and culture in which it was developed. However, narratives in the HB that involve women are rarely one-dimensional; they display multiple layers. Some are culturally defined and limited whereas others are more subversive

71. Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.
72. Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 29.
73. Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 227.
74. See further Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). Dille explores this idea in her study of metaphor. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 13.
75. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem," 282.
76. Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 81. It is important to observe that rape metaphors are used to describe the punishment on foreign cities as well as on Jerusalem. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp and Tod Linafelt, "The Rape of Zion in Thr 1,10," *ZAW* 113, no. 1 (2001): 77-81 , remind us that in cases, such as Isaiah 47 (Babylon), the punishment is not about a betrayal of YHWH as they are not in a covenantal relationship with YHWH, but the rape imagery serves to denigrate the foreign power.
77. Stone, "Second Isaiah: Prophet to Patriarchy," 224.

or even overtly shocking.[78] Due to the distance between contemporary and ancient understandings of sexual relationships, post-church people would benefit from study of the background context of the use of sexual metaphors in the HB. Otherwise they will lie dormant as interesting but weird and misunderstood depictions. This includes developing an understanding regarding how sexual relations, their violation, punishment and recourse as were understood in the *Torah*, (cf. Deut 22:13-30); divorce; the socio-economic protection and vulnerability of women in Ancient Israel; laws relating to marriage to a captive woman and intermarriage (spoils of war - Deut 21:10-14; Deut 7:3-4); and notions of woman as the sexual property of her father or husband.[79] Contradictory viewpoints towards the sexuality of women co-existed, including that it was dangerous, deceptive and suspect, or familial, nurturing and necessary (keeping up the lineage).

The depiction of enemy soldiers as women is a rhetorical tool not uncommon in the ANE world in general, in military propaganda. However, the key move that the literary prophets seem to take is to depict their own elite, particularly priestly leadership, as feminine, with the associations of weakness and vulnerability attached. Along with this idea is that feminine sexuality is evil or untrustworthy, thus the populace can be depicted as a whole as a personified adulterous woman.[80] This is a unique move. Remembering that the leadership were possibly the most comfortable and considered the most religious in society, one can only imagine the level of discomfort for those listening. Kaiser argues that even if the authors

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78. Weems suggests that women in the HB are portrayed either as virgins (holy) or whores (sinners). Weems, *Battered Love,* 45. There are more layered approaches to reading the stories of women such as Sarah and Hagar, Ruth and Naomi, Hannah, Deborah, or Tamar. The feminine imagery of DI does not fit Weems' binary and reductive approach. As an example of reading differently by giving voice to the marginalised see Tania Mara Vieira Sampaio, "Hosea," in *Global Bible Commentary,* ed. Daniel Patte (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 262-271. This reading of Hosea amongst prostitutes in Sao Paulo, Brazil, led to a recognition that some prostitutes used their work to gain economic survival and resist violence in patriarchal settings. This led the author to approach Hosea with a different lens regarding the behaviour of Gomer. Gomer no longer easily fits the 'prostitute'= 'evil' portrayal.

79. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "'You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies': Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 59-75, 63. See Yee on the different domains of formal male power (external jural-political sphere) and informal female power (internal domestic) in the HB. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve,* 30.

80. Yee's work on Hosea and Ezekiel suggests that the hearers, mostly men, will be put in the position of being the woman - the sinful wife - in this imagery. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve,* 98. See also Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, "Rape as Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets,* ed. Atalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 308-325. They ask who the reader is when the HB Prophets write about rape metaphorically to represent the punishment of the exiles, and conclude that the audience is male.

of the literary prophets may be males speaking to a male world, they can also use a female voice.[81] This has a far more intense dramatic effect but may also be a form of narrativising and representing communal trauma in a lament form, not just condemning the hearers but at times YHWH too. Kelle asserts that the prophetic metaphorization of the city as female was primarily used in contexts of war.[82] Although I agree that the metaphor of Zion's rape and her blameless situation and restoration would have worked to adjust false thinking in the male audience, as well as to persuade them towards movement, I do not necessarily think this means it was only for them. Sexual assault imagery would profoundly reflect the experience of the female audience who had personal memories or have heard stories of actual rape during the invasion of Jerusalem. The use of such metaphors may have given their experience a vicarious voice and provided therapeutic benefit towards healing. With my concern directly being DI, I would suggest that the exiles were the elite of the Judean society (second or third generation), but how we read elite or even leadership is challenged. War and exile may lead to new situations that women confront in terms of their roles in society. Traditional roles of management of the home and bearing and rearing children are challenged. This may give opportunity for innovation and re-creation as well as being a source of great anxiety and despair. In times of crisis, many of the female exiles may have taken on quasi-leadership positions.[83] Daughter Zion may have been a particularly important feminine portrayal for the female exiles, *as well as* a polemic against the ineffectual patriarchal leadership. The affirmation of the feminine domains of childbearing and childrearing are particularly emphasised in DI in the passages already studied. The prophetic feminizing of the male audience to humiliate them or depict their emasculation does not seem to fit with all that DI is doing, as the feminine is elevated not diminished.

### (b) Story and Drama

Despite the fact that DI does not follow a straightforward narrative, rhetorical analysis suggests an underlying story with hints of a sense of continuity with an older story but also a

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81. Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Poet as "female Impersonator": The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering," *JR* 67, no. 2 (Ap 1987): 164-182. Jeremiah takes on the persona of a woman in childbirth to represent the fear of military invasion. In Lamentations Zion is spoken about by the poet, then Zion is personified and speaks for herself through the poet.
82. Brad E Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric Prophetic Metaphorization of Cities as Female," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 95-112, particularly 96.
83. Even children are depicted in leadership positions in Isaiah: positively 11:6; negatively 3:4-6, 12.

progression. The persuasive task of DI was to establish that the exiles were still YHWH's people by placing them within a story that had not yet finished. The people of God are reminded of where they came from and where they would be going. The 'story' of the exile is re-invented by DI, by taking a disaster and linking it to ancient stories such as Abraham and Sarah (51:1, Patriarchal tradition), Exodus (48:20-21; 52:11-12), Creation (51:3,13), and Noah (54:9), reinterpreting them in a new situation to develop a sense of purpose and identity. The story woven throughout DI is that the exile is over; the people need persuading that they are forgiven and redeemed. The exile played a purpose but is now over and it is time to return. The heroes of the overarching story of incredible deliverance out of an impossible situation are variously YHWH, and the servant, as well as Cyrus, surprisingly; a mechanism of displaying YHWH's magnificent power. Tragedy is overturned, Zion is restored.[84]

It is through the reframing of the story that things could make sense and that there could be a way forward – in other words, the exile was never the end of the story.[85] This notion suggests that DI is not composed of fragmentary sections put together without a coherent purpose. Not only was the story crucial for exiles as a mechanism for retaining memory and identity it also countered the other dominant, competing and soul-destroying story of empire. For this reason, it still resonates today for contemporary exiles. The story is never as simple as that though; there are clearly layers. An approach to reading DI that appreciates Bakhtin's ideas on polyphony in texts may also be a helpful way of understanding why the story resists closure, and invites us to read beyond the authorial intent and to consider it a dialogical text.[86]

There are a number of scholars, such as Watts and Baltzer, who read DI as a drama, due to the presence of various characters, and shifting scenes.[87] These approaches may be useful to

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84. On the power of telling a story in order to overcome fear and present an otherwise incomprehensible God, see Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 54-55.
85. See Clifford on DI functioning as the national orator. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading,* 5.
86. On polyphony and the biblical text see Carol A Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *JR* 76, no. 2 (April 1996): 290-306 , particularly 296.
87. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* Peter Machinist, ed, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Rev. ed., WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005); John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Rev. ed., WBC 25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005). See also the outline that Tiemeyer, "A Judahite Reading Drama," 56-58, gives to such approaches.

various chapters under analysis for this thesis. Van der Woude identifies four different approaches to Isaiah that see it as a drama by categorising it as either: a liturgical drama, a theological drama, a script of a play and a text that displays dramatic features.[88] She incorporates literary theory to conclude that the form of DI is a reading drama that was not primarily for performance.[89] I will be particularly interested in how an approach considering the story aspects of DI's message may contribute to contemporary post-church interpretations.

### (c) Proclamations and Oracles of Salvation

DI creatively employs various styles of speech, understood by exiles yet different enough from previous forms to invoke interest and shock. Salvation is a preeminent theme of DI and this theme is expressed via different genres.[90] Salvation Oracles are dominated by assurances of the power and presence of YHWH, and offer a hopeful response to the judgments and laments expressed in their time of disaster and loss.[91] Of the passages for study in this thesis, I would loosely classify the following as Oracles or Proclamations of Salvation: Isaiah 49:14-26; 51:17-52:6; and, 54; whereas 50:1-3 is possibly a trial scene or disputation.

According to the form critics, the Salvation Oracles held a long history in the Hebrew faith. Begrich argued Priestly Salvation oracles were based on a lament liturgy in the cult, including a 'Fear Not' invocation.[92] Conrad critiques Begrich's *Sitz im Leben* category,

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88. Annemarieke van der Woude, "'Hearing Voices While Reading': Isaiah 40-55 as a Drama," in *One Text, a Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjef Van Tilborg,* ed. Patrick Chatelion Counet and Ulrich Berges, Biblical Interpretation Series (Boston: Brill, 2005), 149-173.
89. Woude, "'Hearing Voices While Reading': Isaiah 40-55 as a Drama," 170-171.
90. Westermann considers the entirety of DI to be in the form of a Proclamation of Salvation responding to the exile and promising return. Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 39.
91. There has been much influential form critical work on the classification and setting of Salvation Oracles in DI by scholars such as Hugo Gressmann, Joachim Begrich, Antoon Schoors and most significantly by Claus Westermann. See Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. 40-55* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation,*
92. Eugene H. Merrill, "The Literary Character of Isaiah 40-55," 36. As Conrad observes, Begrich relied on Gunkel's categorisations, but Conrad acknowledges Küchler's use of the form. Edgar W Conrad, "Second Isaiah and the Priestly Oracle of Salvation," *ZAW* 93, no. 2 (1981): 234-246 , 236 fn 6. See also Conrad's argument that compares Isa 41's 'fear not' oracles to those found in Deut 3:2; Num 21:34; Josh 8:1-2, 8, 6, mostly within a war context. Conrad's case for the use of a war oracle when the war has passed is that Jacob-Israel is to herald YHWH's victory and not to engage in fighting themselves. Conrad then goes on to compare the fear not oracles of Isa 43 and 44 with four in Genesis to the Patriarchs, a different type to the war oracle and that both occur in DI. Edgar W. Conrad, "The "fear Not" Oracles in Second Isaiah," *VT* 34, no. 2 (1984): 129-152 , esp. 133, 151.

comparing Psalms of Lament that do not contain supposedly critical elements of the Priestly Oracle of Salvation or at least follow a different structure as well as exploring other biblical texts where similar forms occur.[93] Conrad argues that it is the community that is addressed as king via the use of royal war oracle language.[94] Harner compares extra-biblical oracles from Assyria and Babylon which conform to the general pattern of the DI Oracles of Salvation.[95] This demonstrates the geographical provenance of these oracular forms as well as dating their use by Israel's neighbours between the 9th and 7th century BCE, and locates them in a royal context.[96] Harner does not suggest that this means the DI's Salvation Oracles are necessarily royal rather than liturgical, but are adapted for use in various settings. Neither does it imply that the dating of other ANE forms applies to DI. Oracles of Judgment dominated the lead up to the exile whereas Westermann argues that Oracles of Salvation typify God's response to the people in their history.[97] The creative acts would be new in DI (e.g., the use of Cyrus) even if the form of the oracle was familiar.

Following the identification of the generic Salvation Oracles, there have been various approaches to further classifications of these forms. Westermann made a distinction between oracles to individuals that were to be fulfilled in a short period of time, and oracles to a community of exiles written in a future tense and having a long time before fulfilment. He also differentiated oracles as to their definition of salvation – whether it was an act of deliverance or a state of wellbeing – arguing that these need to be read differently. The state of wellbeing oracles may particularly be prevalent for a post-church context characterised by being in a state of angst. Westermann categorised these variously as a promise or Oracle of Salvation and a Proclamation of Salvation, and other scholars have contributed to these

93. Edgar W Conrad, "Second Isaiah and the Priestly Oracle of Salvation," 238-239. Melugin also compares DI's language to Psalms rather than the *Torah* setting of Ezekiel. Melugin, "Form Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism," 271.
94. See his work on this topic Edgar W. Conrad, "The Community as King in Second Isaiah," in *Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W Anderson,* ed. James T. Butler, Edgar W Conrad, and Ben C. Ollenburger (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 99-111. Conrad further argues that the 'fear not' oracles are significant to understanding Isaiah's structure. Edgar W. Conrad, "The Royal Narratives and the Structure of the Book of Isaiah," *JSOT* no. 41 (June 1988): 67-81 , 67.
95. Philip B. Harner, "Salvation Oracle in Second Isaiah," *JBL* 88, no. 4 (1969): 418-434. Harner argues that Begrich's formula is essentially correct but that Begrich arrived at it without a comparison of other literature from the ANE, let alone inner biblical comparisons. Harner goes on to do this in his article.
96. See Eugene H. Merrill, "The Literary Character of Isaiah 40-55," 153.
97. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation,* 13.

classifications.[98] I will outline the various features of each category, but am mindful that these are not fully agreed upon, and as is noted in various commentaries, each section of DI may be classified differently to the tradition Westermann establishes. They are often mixed. My aim is to use the broad outline of the Salvation Oracle and Proclamation of Salvation in this study, but not to be limited by this.

***The Promise/ Assurance or Oracle of Salvation[99]***

The structure of the Oracle of Salvation generally includes the following features:

- Call of reassurance (*Fear Not*).
- Basis of reassurance – in perfect tense or nominal form, future oriented basis, identical to the Proclamation of Salvation. This suggests that YHWH has completed the actions.
- Promise of imminent help
- Self predication of deity as the author of oracle (I am Yahweh).[100]

***The Proclamation or Announcement of Salvation[101]***

Westermann argues that the Proclamation of Salvation is unique to DI, following the form used for the individual, but addressing Israel.[102] This message answered a communal lament, displaying YHWH's intervention as an act of deliverance.

- Deliverance YHWH will bring to Israel
- Imminent future deliverance (I will)
- No "Fear Not"
- Plural not singular (you) perhaps in response to a communal lament
- Conclusion – offering praise to God.

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98. A helpful outline of the various form critical categories that scholars have given to the various passages in DI is found in O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah,* 156-161. Also Eugene H. Merrill, "The Literary Character of Isaiah 40-55 Part 1 and 2."

99. Westermann includes the following passages of DI as Oracles of Salvation (any passages that are the focus of my study I have highlighted in bold): 41:8-13, 14-16; 43:1-7; 44:1-5. He suggests there are echoes in **54:4-6**; 51:12-13. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation.*

100. Philip B. Harner, "Salvation Oracle," 423. Harner notes that the divine introduction may be left out if the context makes it clear.

101. Westermann characterises the following as Proclamations of Salvation: 41:17-20; 42:14-17; 43:16-21; 44:24-45:7; 45:9-13; 45:14-17; 45:18-46:13; 48:1-17; 49:7-12; **49:14-26**, 14-20, 21-23, 24-26; **51:9-52:3.**

102. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation,* 42.

# 5. The relevance of DI's rhetoric for post-church people

A study of DI's rhetorical devices is useful to post-church readers in order to:

- enable them to more accurately interpret the persuasive intent of the text;
- make clearer analogies regarding the exilic theme relevant to contemporary contexts of exile;
- positively inform them on matters of faith transition, including issues of doubt, and a sense of abandonment by God.

The passages I have elected to study are familiar but not over-familiar. The Proclamations of Salvation in DI voice a response to the accusation of abandonment in Isa 49:14 that does not leave the lament unanswered. Rhetorical criticism invites Christians to meet lesser known characters of the text, and ones that present with particular issues of alienation, and loss. Dialogical readings of these texts can highlight these otherwise silenced voices, including that of the reader. Post-church people may find resonance with personified Daughter Zion's expressions of lament. The familial metaphors provide a surprisingly gentler approach to YHWH for people struggling with damaging representations of God. The dialogical nature of the passages may also be a contrast to the experience of many post-church whose traditions have promoted more propositional presentations of faith. The Proclamations of Salvation speak to the deep anxiety within in our collective Australian conscience that we have somehow been abandoned.

A study of the rhetoric of DI can offer some interpretative navigation tools to enable a growth in self-understanding for post-church people. It may also help shape a sense of community amongst a generally voiceless people, enabling them to articulate their theology in new ways. I acknowledge that along with the positive reasons for using DI in a contextual reading with church leavers there are also significant problems with using the biblical text. Some church leavers express issues with using the Bible due to previous ways in which it may have been used to limit, condemn or even abuse. The text of DI raises many exegetical and

hermeneutical issues that can be difficult for a post-church reading such as the glorious but unrealised references to the future, militaristic or imperialistic passages set in more universalist contexts, and even the very assertive message of comfort may not be read as comforting. Differentiating the historical limitations of exilic references and knowing how far to stretch a metaphor in contemporary parallels can be a challenge. I am not suggesting that post-church people will not struggle with some of what they read in DI but that the struggle is intensely constructive. A close rhetorical reading of DI can challenge or encourage assumptions regarding exile, community, or faith transition that post-church readers bring to the text.

# 5. Isaiah 49:14-26: A tale of two mothers

*But Zion said ,*
*"YHWH has forsaken me,*
*my Lord has forgotten me."*
Isaiah 49:14

## 1. Introduction to the passage

Zion's lament of Isaiah 49:14 provides the springboard for this thesis, a statement that has potential resonance for a post-church community. Isa 49:14-26 will be read in the light of 49:1-13, in order to set the literary context of the major focus of this study. There are many thematic, linguistic and structural parallels between these two major sections. In particular, the lament of the Servant in 49:4 shares a level of despair comparable to Zion's lament in 49:14. The statement of Isa 49:14 "But Zion said, 'YHWH has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me'" outlines the reality as Zion saw herself, and we sense the influence of life under subjugation. This is one of the few times that Zion speaks, and she articulates abandonment. The dominant voice in Isa 49:15-26 is YHWH who seeks to address Zion and her issues of loss. The overarching concern of Isa 49:14-26 is YHWH's comfort, presence, and the evidence of this via the re-population of the people, return to the land and reversal of the positions of power. The powerless become victorious and the powerful are initially ruled over but ultimately destroyed. This passage is designed to reframe an otherwise threatened cultural identity and to move the exiles forward. The writer uses a variety of persuasive literary mechanisms to identify with their issues, to propose an inverted situation to the one presented and to build confidence in the recipients to see new possibilities. These include using commonplace metaphors and characterisations, with the oracles comprising a conversation between the major characters of Zion and YHWH.

The voiced agitation of an exilic community which experiences separation from traditional faith settings is spoken by the personified Zion expressing a sense of abandonment (being

forsaken/ forgotten) by YHWH. The passage provides an alternative view of the future for these exiles, offering the miraculous, the opportunity for rebuilding from the rubble, for continuation where there only seemed to be an end. The inviting feminine language is interwoven with promises, and consolation – all within the framework of hope. DI interacts powerfully with the social realities of oppression, doubt, fear and loss and counteracts these with the social imaginaries of a society of freedom, faith, hope, and restoration. The God of this passage is not distant despite the accusation of v. 14; in fact, this YHWH is intimately involved and closely identifies with the exiles' pain. An alternative reading may find YHWH dominant in the dialogue so as to see it become a monologue, with Zion's voice muted. Both possible readings will be assessed.

My approach in this section of the study will be to look at the text of Isa 49:14-26 in detail, to give a background understanding of the structure and form of the passage, the literary context and content, with an eye to how these may help the reader interpret the rhetorical emphasis and focus that the text presents. The close analysis will pay particular attention to the themes, images and metaphors that emerge and investigate significant words that arise in the reading, such as *comfort, compassion, forgotten, forsaken* and *redeemer*. At points where the themes have clear and important overlap with other sections of the thesis, special attention will be given. For example, the feminine allusions and direct representations of women that dominate this text invite specific focus at relevant stages of the verse analysis, as well as the references to Zion as place and personified figure. This raises a question as to which is more relevant to the reading of this passage - Zion as place or person - and then how this may affect the ongoing reading of Zion in DI. I will explore the question of whether or not the depiction of Zion in this passage resembles the depiction of Zion elsewhere in Scripture. I will then seek to draw these findings together towards the end of the chapter with some potential new readings that may be relevant in the post-church context. By understanding the persuasive intent in the rhetoric, we may better interpret the meaning in the text in order to make contemporary connections. Of particular challenge to a post-church reading of this passage are the counter-imperial sentiments expressed in Isa 49:23 and 26. This study will benefit from an approach to exilic texts that see the inner conflicts within DI as examples of literature arising out of trauma, and I will incorporate contemporary scholarly developments from this field.

# 2. Literary context of Isaiah 49

Isaiah 49 sits towards the centre of the work of DI, and signifies a shift in the focus of the content that seems to involve an easy division of DI into 40-48 and 49-55.[1] The first section (40-48) closes with a rationale for the punishment of Israel (their disobedience), and the exhortation to leave Babylon, because they are redeemed by the Lord, written in the form of a disputation in Isaiah 48. Isaiah 49-55 develops a greater focus on Zion and the Servant, rather than on Jacob-Israel, and we see a complete absence of the anti-idol polemics. Although the main focus of this chapter will be Isa 49:14-26, the surrounding verses (49:1-13 and 50:1-3) will be briefly investigated where they contribute towards the language and imagery of vv. 14-26. The statement of lament found in v. 14, filled with desperation and doubt, is followed in vv. 15-26 by a powerful example of rhetorical persuasion. The section is saturated in metaphor, vivid imagery and clues that need to be unravelled. Important literary tools such as alliteration, chiasm, assonance, parallelism, and frequent repetition of key words, common to DI, are noted in this chapter. Where relevant to the meaning these will be explored throughout the study, as they are particularly essential to the spoken word and the power of the rhetoric. The specific use of these tools may be indicative of the style of the poet-prophet.[2] The central metaphor of Isa 49:14-26 is that of a mother who has lost a lot of children via exile and its related disasters, and death. She is offered a vision of an alternative reality where there are so many children that there is no space for them all.

## (a) Structure and form

A broad overview of the structure of Isaiah 49 (as depicted in Table 4) shows that it commences with a Servant Song and a Proclamation of Salvation, and is followed by a short

1. See my chapter on DI on this matter in detail but for this point there are numerous approaches to the structure of DI. See Hendrik Carel Spykerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah With Special Reference to the Polemics Against Idolatry* (Groningen: Krips Repro B. V. Meppel, 1976), ch. 1, for an overview of the different scholarly approaches to the structure of DI. The works of the following scholars are particularly helpful: Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1969); Philip B. Harner, "Salvation Oracle in Second Isaiah," *JBL* 88, no. 4 (1969): 418-434; Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 154-160.
2. Discussing rhetorical critical analysis, see Lawrence Boadt, "Intentional Alliteration in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 45, no. 3 (1983): 354-355. Boadt emphasises that such usage of particular styles may give weight to the authenticity of oracles and their placement together.

hymn.[3] Verse 14 breaks into the passage with a lament, responded to with a long Proclamation of Salvation that delves into major overlapping themes of the exile – loss, covenant, land, gathering, and progeny. The issue of salvation and deliverance is the key due to the situation being addressed – exile.

| Verse | Form | Major themes |
|---|---|---|
| 49:1-6 | Second Servant Song | Servant's call and doubt<br>Call to nations |
| 49:7-12 | Proclamation of Salvation | Restoration of Israel as evidenced by nations |
| 49:13 | Hymn | Comfort and compassion of YHWH |
| 49:14 | Lament or disputation | Zion forgotten and forsaken |
| 49:15-26 | Proclamation of Salvation | Response to lament<br>Restoration<br>Children<br>Return to the Land<br>Reversal |

Table 4: Structure of Isaiah 49:1-26

The short but significant lament against YHWH in 49:14 acts as the uncomfortable cry that reverberates throughout the whole of DI. YHWH's response in 49:15-26 (sometimes up to 50:3 is included) is generally classified as a Proclamation of Salvation, with the emphasis being on a future orientation. It would be fair to say that it has features of lament, Proclamations of Salvation and Disputations.[4] The passage also utilises the literary device of argument in the rhetoric, which contributes to the structure.[5] However, I would particularly

3. Note that there are many different ideas of the structural breakdown between vv. 5, 6 and 7 due to the different speakers and themes, as well as debate over the identity of the Servant. For example, Blenkinsopp outlines the structure as follows - 49:1-6 Servant's address to the nation, 49:7-13 comments on the Servant. Although my primary focus is on Isa 49:14-26 there are so many correlations found in these verses with 49:1-13 that the structural outline is a general guideline for bracketing out a particular rhetorical situation. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 298-302.

4. See for example D. F. Murray, "The Rhetoric of Disputation: Re-Examination of a Prophetic Genre," *JSOT* no. 38 (1987): 95-121. Murray clearly outlines a case that the form of 49:14-26 is a disputation but acknowledges that one cannot be restricted by such limited terms as forms were merged and that it is generally seen as a Proclamation of Salvation. On oracles of salvation see Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), Ch. 2. There is a clear link between laments and Proclamations of Salvation forms which seem to go hand in hand in many texts. Melugin suggests that the responses to the questions of 49:14-26 follow the pattern of a lament psalm. Roy Frank Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 7.

5. For a discussion of argument and its structure see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), Ch. 13-16. Reading Isa 49:14-26 with an understanding of argument as a journey (a metaphor in itself that is used to describe the process) is helpful. This passage takes

support Childs' observation regarding the wisdom tone in the passage and that it does not share the usual features of a disputation.[6] There is no 'Thus says the Lord' or 'Fear Not' formula found in v. 15 in contrast to v. 22. This is not a 'typical' passage in many ways and this should act as a literary clue to the reader of a unique approach to the themes.

| **Category** | **Verse** | **Text** |
|---|---|---|
| Lament statement | 49:14 | *But Zion says **"YHWH** has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me*." |
| Proclamation response | 49:15-20 | Followed by YHWH's response, initially in the form of a rhetorical question. *"Can a mother forget...? Even though she may..."* |
| Question | 49:21 | In the voice of the speaker (YHWH), the question put in the mouths of the exiles/ Zion (double-voicing)[7]<br>*"And then you will say in your heart, "Who has born me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and turned away, who has raised them up? Behold, I was left all alone, then where have they all come from?"* |
| Proclamation response | 49:22-23 | Followed by YHWH's response (Thus says Sovereign **YHWH**) |
| Question | 49:24 | May be in the voice of Zion as with v. 21.<br>*"Can prey be taken from warriors or captives of a tyrant be rescued?"* |
| Proclamation response | 49:25-26 | Followed by YHWH's response (Thus says YHWH). |

Table 5: Genre types and structure Isaiah 49:14-26 with questions as pivot points

The meta-plan of 49:14-26 can be summarised as: blame, hope, and redemption. The clearest structure that I can ascertain centres around a three part system based on the initial statement of lament, and the two questions that follow in the Proclamation of Salvation (see Table 5). This structure is helpful as it uses the questions as pivot points, literary vehicles for the building of the case for confidence in YHWH's work in the face of doubt.[8] My focus will be on

readers on a journey towards new understandings of their situation.

6. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, Ky.; London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 391.

7. 'Double voicing' or 'represented speech' are terms used in Mikhail Bakhtin's approach to discourse analysis. It is defined by Green as "the intentional and specific use by one (author, narrator, character) of another's speech." Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction*, SBL SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 47.

8. See John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 2 vols., ICC, vol. 1 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 181-183. Their appraisal of the different structures concludes with the breakdown of three main sections. Following the question format would also take the reader into 50:1 but this takes on more similarities to 49:15 with YHWH as the questioner. This question format also seems similar to the structure of 40:12-31, with 40:27 a clear parallel to 49:14 (although the question is presented to Jacob/ Israel as to why they lament). See also Richtsje Abma, "Travelling From Babylon to Zion: Location and Its Function in Isaiah 49-55," *JSOT* 22, no. 74 (1997): 3-28. Westermann outlines the correlation between lament and salvation. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation*, 43. Whybray on the other hand uses the linguistic markers of vv.

the images but I note that a structural delineation is helpful in seeing how these images develop in order to enhance meaning.

# 3. Isaiah 49 verse analysis

Although I am reading Isa 49:1-13 and 14-26 as independent units, the Servant Song vv. 1-6, the presentation of YHWH as Redeemer and Saviour in vv. 7-12 and the hymn of v. 13 provide an insightful counterpoint to Zion's lament in v. 14, and YHWH's response to the lament in vv. 15-26. Significantly the alternating characters of the Servant and Zion both appear in this chapter. Assessing shared themes and terms will establish important groundwork for my more detailed analysis of vv. 14-26. Therefore, I will commence this section with a brief evaluation of the first 13 verses of ch. 49.

## (a) 49:1-6: The second Servant Song

Isaiah 49:1-6 is identified in traditional scholarship as the second Servant Song in DI, spoken to the nations. It commences with an incredible reversal of fortune, with the very nations who took Israel into exile, being part of and an audience to their liberation. We note the call to 'Listen' שמעו or 'hear' that begins this section, a common refrain in DI and the HB in general, to a variety of audiences.[9] This passage reinforces the role of the Servant that is alluded to in 40:2, 3, 6 and expounded on in the first Servant Song of 42:1-9. The focal point of 49:1-6 is on the pre-birth calling of the Servant (vv. 1 and 5 the womb מבטן ), and mention of the Servant's mother (v. 1 אמי), imagery that will be taken further in 49:15-26 in relation to Zion and YHWH.[10] The nature of the Servant's calling is to act as a spokesperson and one through whom God's purposes would be evidenced to all people for God's own glory (v. 6). There is a literary interplay between the predominantly masculine Servant Songs and the feminine Zion passages in this latter section of DI (49-55).[11] The Second Servant Song of

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23 and 26 'you will know' and 'all flesh will know,' which clearly shows a parallel emphasis, but I think the case for the breakdown into three sections is stronger. Roger N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, New Century Bible Commentary (Eerdmans, 1981), 143. I take Childs' point regarding the problems associated with trying to delineate the structure of the passage into micro-sections that dilute the overall meaning, when the important emphasis relates to the relationship of the images with one another and how this interweaving responds to the lament. Childs, *Isaiah*, 391.

9. Isa 46:3; 48:1; 48:16; 51:1; 51:7; 55:2, 3.

10. There are links here to the call of Isaiah in ch. 6 as well as Jer 1:5. There may also be reference to the idea of YHWH's ability to see even in the unseen places (e.g. the womb), see 40:27 where the concern of the people was that their "way was hidden from the LORD." (cf. Ps 139).

11. Also note that the first Servant Song of 42:1-13 is followed by a Proclamation of Salvation that uses a strong feminine image of childbirth, where YHWH appears to be the one giving birth (42:14).

49:1-6 is followed by the Zion passage of 49:14-26 (Zion as a bereft mother restored, YHWH in mothering metaphors), and 50:1-3 (YHWH as husband addressing the offspring of the mother figure Zion).[12] In terms of the relationship between the Servant and the Daughter of Zion some scholars, although noting their alternating pattern, consider them to be separate. [13] A different reading may suggest otherwise when noting the language surrounding the call of the Servant includes birth imagery that seems to parallel the language around Zion and birth/ mothering. A focus on doubt is noted with the Servant expressing self-doubt in v. 4 ("I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity" NRSV), an idea contested by YHWH in 49:6-7. This is further emphasised with the repetitious use of ל and ך consonants in words describing wasted effort. This is in contrast to the faithfulness of YHWH, which is affirmed in v. 5 as the source of strength in contrast to weariness. In comparison, doubt is expressed emphatically by Zion but directed towards YHWH in 49:14 and contested by YHWH in 49:15-26. The Servant's mouth is depicted as a weapon in v. 2, common imagery in a prophetic call, but also as emphasising protection.[14]

The remainder of the Servant Song has YHWH responding with affirmation of the role of the Servant (49:5ff) in participating in the restoration of Israel (the 'preserved' ones of Israel, or 'survivors' in NRSV). Verses 5 and 6 tap into significant themes that will be opened up further on in the passage: to bring (Jacob back) לשובב from the root שׁוּב to turn back/ return, gathering יאסף, to restore להשיב and return, as these acts are the evidence of Israel's redemption. These are all crucial tasks involving the Servant.[15] The return is not just to the land but to YHWH. This restoration would include the Servant being a "light to the Gentiles"

12. Isa 50:4-11 is the third Servant Song, followed in Isa 51-52 by a Proclamation of Salvation to the Captive Daughter Zion. This is then followed by 52:13-53:12 with the fourth Servant Song (Suffering Servant). 54:1-17 seems to be the Barren woman (with references again to deserted wife, again using city imagery). This alternation of the Servant and Zion in 49-55 is noted by John F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 89-107; Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 153.

13. Van der Woude points out that the Servant and Daughter Zion do not act together, or even dialogue with one another. I think this underestimates the rhetorical impact of the positioning of the characters. They do not have to directly interact to play a part in the imagination together. The passages share common themes and language, possibly from different perspectives. Annemarieke van der Woude, "Can Zion Do Without the Servant in Isaiah 40-55?," *CTJ* 39, no. 1 (2004): 112.

14. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, rev. ed., WBC 25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 729.

15. Note even when Cyrus is identified as Shepherd (44:28) and anointed (45:1) it is in relation to the return of the people and the rebuilding of the temple and city.

or "nations" גוים and the "salvation for all of the earth" (v. 6).[16] This is presented positively in relation to salvation, but contrasts with v. 7, vv. 22-23 and v. 26 where the Gentiles appear to be subjugated. This shall be explored in detail in v. 23 as it presents one of the major hermeneutical challenges of the passage. Jacob-Israel is reaffirmed in their identity and promised restoration, but salvation will not be limited to them as the universal aspects of Isaiah's prophecy are emphasised. The Servant acts as a tool of persuasion, heralding salvation, which initially in ch. 40 seems to be targeted towards Zion (cf. 40:1 "Comfort, comfort my people…" an imperative) which again suggests a connection between these 'characters.' The relationship seems to be implied rather than made explicit via these parallel images where the Servant is to bring comfort to the nations but Zion by 49:14 is clearly not comforted.

For the purposes of this thesis I would contend that there is significance in the fluidity of the identity of the Servant.[17] Just as the 'character' of Daughter Zion oscillates between being forlorn and victorious, protected or abandoned, and the metaphors employed for YHWH as mother, husband, kinsman-redeemer all seek to serve the rhetorical situation, so the Servant's role and identity can appear ambiguous or at least not fixed. However, for this particular passage the Servant is once again a voice of reassurance and motivation, mirroring the voice of ch. 40. In some ways even though the voice is individual 'Israel' speaking to community (exiled) Israel, this sole voice becomes absorbed into the people as a whole, and the speaker becomes YHWH.[18]

### (b) 49:7-12

A Proclamation of Salvation follows the second Servant Song. Verse 7 foreshadows the enigmatic concept of the victory of the suffering Servant that is made explicit in Isa 53. We

16. J. Watts asserts that the Servant of v. 6 is different to the Servant of vv. 1-4 based on the use of personal pronouns in vv. 1-4 in the first and third person, whereas in vv. 6-8 the use is of second person masculine singular pronouns. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,* 736. This may be evidence of the fluidity of identity in the passage, but I would tend to read this case as a literary mechanism used to show movement in character focus rather than different identity.
Discussion on the meaning of the "nations" will be reserved for the analysis of v. 23.
17. The focus on identity of the Servant is understandable in Christian scholarship due to the emphasis on the parallels to the Jesus Servant figure in the NT. This is not the focus of my discussion.
18. This personification of the people may equate to the manner in which Israel is referred to in the HB, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - individuals and community - where the representatives actually come to be designations for the whole people. This is the literary device of metonymy.

see an interplay of major figures (nation, Servant, rulers, kings, princes, YHWH) and the reversal motif. The powerful will rise up in respect and bow down in service to the one who is despised and abhorred by the (singular) nation. Note the parallelism of nation גוי with Servant (לעבד) of rulers (משלים emphasised with alliterative effect in the following reference to kings מלכים).[19] This identifies the Servant as one who has been chosen by the Holy One of Israel. The orchestration of these movements is entirely by YHWH who has chosen, favored, will bring salvation to all and will be served by all. This counter-imperialistic tone is echoed in v. 23 and v. 26.

From v. 8 onward the Servant's role moves to the background as God seems to take on the task of redeeming the exiles (although YHWH is already the speaker in v. 6, responding to the doubting Servant). I would suggest though that rather than the Servant disappearing, the links between the language and imagery of Isa 49:1-7 and 8 onwards suggest a strong relationship between the passages, particularly with the emergence of Zion in v. 14. YHWH's role is emphasised in vv. 7 and 8 with the messenger formula refrain "Thus says the LORD" (and again in v. 25).[20] YHWH is identified as גאל the personal kinsman-redeemer, in v. 7. Linked to the term גאל is the divine designation 'Holy One of Israel' גאל ישראל קדשו which also appears near the end of the verse קדש ישראל, forming an *inclusio*.[21] The task of this גאל is primarily of restoration, in this case evidenced by return to the land (via a reassignment), a return from exile (v. 12 - a reversal of the diaspora) and an overturning of the powerful in favour of the captives.[22] The theme of answering and help appears in v. 8, with restoration

19. On the word pair of nations and kings, found also in 45:1 and 52:15 see Jan Leunis Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, trans. Anthony P. Runia, HCOT (Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 35.
20. On the use of "Thus says the LORD" in DI note Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 61. It is not necessarily a signifier of a new section.
21. A frequent designation in Isaiah, particularly Proto Isaiah and DI, but not so common in the rest of the HB. In Isaiah it can be found in Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:23; 30:11f, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 60:14. The significance of this designation is the holiness aspect, particularly for a people in exile.
22. Verse 12 indicates that the return of the people is from far away, north and the west, the land of Syene/ Sinim which is variously translated as Egypt. The 'reassignment of desolate land' (v. 8) phrase להנחיל נחלות שממות introduces all kinds of complexities in a contemporary reading. This was clearly an issue in the post-exilic community, involving the tensions we read in Ezra / Nehemiah. As Ames explores, one of the major effects of exile is the loss of resources and economic protection by losing land. Frank Ritchel Ames, "The Cascading Effects of Exile: From Diminished Resources to New Identities," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L Wright, AIL 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 175. Isa 49:1-26 sees land repatriation as an important

linked to the phrase 'covenant to the people' לברית עם.[23]

Verse 9 identifies the recipients of favor as captives לאסורים (those who are bound, prisoners) and calls a reversal of this situation with the imperatives: "Be free!" and "Come out."[24] The gathering of the people will come from all over the diaspora (north, west, Egypt).[25] They are personally shepherded in "compassion" מרחמם by YHWH, a theme found throughout DI, and it becomes an important word for our study of 49:14-26.[26] Note also the reference to the desolate (from the root שמם) that is referred to again in v. 19. The references to the exiles being fed (by the Shepherd), not being affected by the desert heat, and springs of water are all common images in DI that represent freedom and security.[27] The return would not be without obstacles, which are depicted in Isaiah as mountains (Isa 40:4; 45:2; 49:11), but the obstacles are within as much as they are outward.[28] The rhetoric encourages movement, despite the hurdles, with the affirmation that YHWH would remove the obstacles.

### (i) Redeemer and Saviour

Exploring the use of the term גאל in DI, specifically in Isa 49:7-8, is important for understanding some of the emerging themes of this thesis, their significance in the rhetorical context of DI of exile and their possible relevance for the contemporary context. Redeemer (גאל) is a frequent designation for YHWH appropriated in DI in a unique manner, closely associated to the title and role as Saviour, Creator and in reference to a covenantal

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dynamic in cultural restoration.

23. The translation of the phrase is not clear (*covenant of people/ to the people*) but seems to indicate the Servant himself is a covenant to the people. See Norbert Lohfink and Everett Kalin, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000), 47. Note the connection of this 49:6 and 8 to Isa 42:6, which demonstrates a parallelism with the "covenant of people*"* and "light to the nations." John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 377.

24. Note the Exodus language with "Come out" or "Go". Brueggemann links this with Isa 52:11 with the use of commands to "depart, depart, go out from there!" as an act of purity. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Pr, 1998), 114. Cf. Isa 48:20 and the command to "go out" and leave Babylon. The Servant in 42:7 frees captives. This concept is extended in 61:1.

25. This gathering also occurs in 43:5-6 (east, west, north and south).

26. See section on "compassion" רחם.

27. 40:11 YHWH as Shepherd, 41:17-18 - the poor and needy are thirsty and YHWH provides rivers in the desert, depicting YHWH's care. See L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 52.

28. John Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant: A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55*, Biblical Classics Library (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 85.

relationship (49:8; 54:9-10). Isaiah 1-39 uses גאל to affirm YHWH's transcendent power and glory, and DI affirms YHWH acting as protector as well as rescuer, helping the needy and little Jacob/ Israel and seeking the people to return to trust.[29] YHWH's role as kinsman-redeemer is not for an individual (especially a King) but for the whole nation, a role that will be fulfilled with lovingkindness, or as Sakenfeld argues in her translation of הסד - loyalty.[30] Stuhlmueller contrasts the use of גאל in the HB with פדה which is somewhat interchangeable in terms of meaning "redeem." However, in DI the use of גאל seems deliberately preferred, which Stuhlmueller argues relates to YHWH being Israel's kinsman as their redeemer from slavery, and in the very personal image of a spouse (e.g., Isaiah 54), using frequent addresses such as "*your* redeemer." YHWH's acts are in relation to this role as kinsman-redeemer. There are also important connections made with YHWH as גאל and as עבד servant in DI.[31] These are all significant developments in the use of גאל and its application to the rhetorical situation of exile, and also explain why the familial image is so important.

There is particular reference in DI to the exodus delivery.[32] In fact, a New Exodus is envisioned in DI as an act of "creative redemption," a unique connection with the use of גאל here.[33] As well as looking backwards to where YHWH acted in the life of the people, the use of kinsman-redeemer in DI has the eschatological dimension expanding beyond the

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29. John Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 460.

30. Mary E. Mills, *Images of God in the Old Testament* (London: Cassell, 1998), 60; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Ḥesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1978); Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective*, OBT 16 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), particularly 64-70.

31. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, AnBib 43 (Rome: Biblical institute press, 1970), 108.

32. The kinsman-redeemer role is noted in Lev 25:25-49, particularly in relation to family law. The גאל would have responsibility to redeem the forfeited property of kin. Numbers 35 relates to the role of the Kinsman to avenge the death of a family member. We also see the theme of גאל arise in the book of Job (YHWH as גאל) , and in Ruth (Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer, YHWH the implied kinsman-redeemer). On the use of גאל in the HB, see Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*; Rikki E. Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation: Isaiah 40-55 and the Delay of the New Exodus," *TynBul* 41, no. 1 (1990): 31-59; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 640-641; Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 109.

33. Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*; Rikki E. Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation"; Stephen Lee, *Creation and Redemption in Isaiah 40-55* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1995). Note Harner's point that when creation is referred to in DI it refers to YHWH's role as YHWH as the original creator, creator of Israel (particularly in reference to YHWH's role in the Exodus, the forming of the people, acting as a redeemer), and the new creation event of taking exiles out of Babylon. Philip B. Harner, *Grace and Law in Second Isaiah: I Am the Lord*, ANETS 2 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 81. Creator language is also seen in this passage in terms of the womb language.

rebuilding of the city of Zion, and their return, towards salvation to the Gentiles. Israel would serve a new master, freed from slavery (to Babylon) as well as from general desolation, and the image employs connections to husband imagery as well as release from debt, which Isa 40:2 suggests has been doubly paid.[34] The exile is portrayed as the crisis where a relationship between גאל and ישע saviour is pertinent - related to the need for survival - with YHWH meeting the very real crisis, via practical liberation as well as social and spiritual redemption.[35] Halvorson-Taylor suggests that the imagery in DI extended the traditional use of גאל in the HB, initially in the crisis of exile which meant individuals requiring real deliverance and also came to include those who were socially marginalised.[36] DI shows that YHWH would bring restoration from captivity but also relationally in terms of the covenant, YHWH acts as one who shows חסד loving-kindness. This would suggest that the imagery lends itself to situations beyond the historical situation of the Babylonian exile.

### (c) 49: 13

Verse 13 is linked closely to the section of focus in Isa 49:14-26.[37] It is an affirmation of the call in 40:1 ("Comfort, comfort my people") but it is YHWH in 49:13 who comforts (not the Servant) and also has compassion.[38] Verse 13 is written in the form of a short hymn; reminiscent of a psalm (particularly Ps 98) calling for praise by the creation based on the work of YHWH to comfort (a link to 40:1; cf. 51:3, 51:19 and 52:9).[39] This whole verse is rich with short, almost staccato-like imperatives (shout, rejoice, burst into song) followed by references to natural elements (heavens, earth, mountains). This follows the pattern of a typical hymn where the first two lines form a summons and are then followed by the reason for the summons – the comfort and compassion of YHWH to the people of Israel (the afflicted ones).[40] There is a strong use of alliteration in the hymn, where the word for 'his

34. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 109. For an overview of the use of Exodus theme in DI see Rikki E. Watts, "Consolation or Confrontation."
35. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 641.
36. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 118.
37. Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 138. Compare with Isa 51:3 and 52:9.
38. Much has been made of the role of the Servant in these passages transitioning to YHWH. Perhaps this differentiation of the roles is too explicit. The stunning part of the Servant role is that YHWH has commissioned it, and that the Servant is atypical - suffering, at times questioning. In the overturning of the expectations of military power and strength, there is something powerful in the role of the Servant being about speech, regathering, restoration, and bringing hope. The power language rests in YHWH's role.
39. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 138.
40. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 115.

people' עמו and 'his afflicted ones' ועניו include the *'ayin* sound, emphasised when the chiasm is noted. These terms are meant to be connected (this is how the people of Israel referred to themselves in Lamentations); their dire situation as sufferers is emphasised, and hence the need for comfort and compassion.[41] Due to their emphasis in DI I will now turn to a deeper word analysis of the related terms: *Comfort* and *compassion*.

### (i) Comfort

In contrast to the harsh truths of judgement in First Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, DI is considered to be the book of consolation.[42] Comfort will be demonstrated by the rescuing of the people, regathering them back in the land, which is an act as גאל. Some scholars have linked the use of נחם in v. 13 with the Arabic root *nḥm* meaning to "breathe heavily." This would give some greater depth to references in the passage to singing, shouting and bursting into song, and to the emphasis on the physicality and emotion of these verbs.[43] Whatever the associations, the significance of this notion of comfort is a cornerstone to understanding DI, with the book opening with this call in 40:1. "Comfort, comfort my people" says your God. נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלהיכם. The theme of comfort is found consistently in Isaiah 49-55.[44] The necessity for YHWH's comfort relates to the sense of forsakenness and abandonment that the people (represented by the voice of Zion) experience in exile. Comfort is required due to the fear generated by YHWH's actions of destruction that were believed to be done in anger, even righteous anger. [45] YHWH's comfort needs to be active, not limited to words, and a real change in their circumstances is necessary.[46] DI's comfort texts are a counteraction to Lam 1

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41. Lawrence Boadt, "Intentional Alliteration," 362. He also suggests the *yodh* in the last two words aims to "echo the *yodh* in *yhwh* of the first colon." See further Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS 161 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 188.
42. Note that Jer 30-31 is considered a book of consolation; seeds of hope are found in Lam 3:22, 4:22.
43. Wilson states "the origin of the root seems to reflect the idea of 'breathing deeply', hence the physical display of one's feelings, usually sorrow, compassion or comfort." Marvin R. Wilson, "נָחַם (*Nāḥam*)," in *TWOT 2,* ed. Gleason L. Archer, R. Laird Harris, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 570-571, 570. However, despite the appealing nature of these links, I would agree with Simian-Yofre who contests it by suggesting that "most experts no longer accept an original semantic identification of Heb. *nḥm* with Arab. *nḥm* 'breathe heavily' both because of critical objections to deriving the meaning of a word from its etymology and because the concrete semantic field associated with *nhm* in the OT clearly differs in form from that associated with Arab. *nḥm*." H. Simian-Yofre, "נחם (*nḥm*)," in *TDOT,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340-355, 341.
44. Isa 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9, 54:11.
45. For discussion of divine anger and the interconnection with abandonment see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, BibOr 44 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), 45-51.
46. God's comfort is derived from God's actions. The words themselves are not enough; they are based on what YHWH has done and will do. Simian-Yofre, "נחם (*nḥm*)," 351.

(vv. 2b, 9c, 16b-17, 21) which emphasises that Zion is not comforted; the rhetorical setting is the aftermath of the Jerusalem siege and destruction.[47] The link is a crucial literary and contextual alert that something is changing, that the situation of the lament is being overturned. In DI it is because sin has been paid for (40:2) that comfort is now possible.[48]

The use of comfort imagery is varied in DI. For example in 40:11 the image is that of YHWH as a gentle shepherd, involving deep compassion; in 51:3 it is YHWH who comforts Zion (city, her "waste places") by making her like Eden and a garden; in 51:12, YHWH is the personal Comforter – מנחמכם - against fear of other "mortal" humans. 51:19 introduces a rhetorical question "who will comfort you?" juxtaposed against their situation of despair (grief, devastation, destruction, famine, sword). This highlights their abandonment and therefore the need for comfort, but not just by anyone. Trito-Isaiah also uses comfort imagery such as Isa 66:12-13 with triple references and YHWH as mother.

### (ii) Compassion

49:13 includes the verb ירחם referring to the compassion that YHWH will have on the afflicted ones, from the root noun רחם. The need for comfort and compassion is confirmed in the lament that follows in Isa 49:14, showing that the people are in need of not just any compassion but the compassion of YHWH, as YHWH is on whom their accusation is focussed. The use of this verb is also found in vv. 10 and 15, whereas it has not been seen from 40-48. In terms of its defintion, רחם means to "love deeply; have mercy; be compassionate...This root refers to deep love (usually of a superior for an inferior) rooted in some natural bond."[49] Thus it is fitting that the dominant images in vv. 15-26 involve parenting, specifically mothering, and we see an interweaving of familial relations as not only a sign of the outworking of YHWH's compassion (offspring, healing of relationships, re-gathering of broken families) but also a mechanism to describe YHWH's compassion in mother-like terminology. It may not be coincidental that the terms used for compassion are

47. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 130-132. This link to Lamentations will be important for our study of Isa 49:14-26 as it appears to seek a clear parallel and varied voice to the lament and downtrodden image of Zion.
48. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 156.
49. Leonard J. Coppes, "רָחַם (*rāḥam*)" in *TWOT,* ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 841.

etymologically closely related to the word for womb (רחם). Phyllis Trible initiated the work on this concept of 'womb-love' by linking the noun *raḥ$^{a}$mîm* which..

> connotes simultaneously both a mode of being and the locus of that mode. In its singular form the noun *reḥem* means 'womb' or 'uterus'. In the plural, *raḥ$^{a}$mîm*, this concrete meaning expands to the abstractions of compassion, mercy and love. Further these abstractions occur in a verb *rḥm* to show mercy and in an adjective *raḥum* merciful. Accordingly our metaphor lies in the semantic movement from the physical organ of the female body to a psychic mode of being…to the responsive imagination, this metaphor suggests the meaning of love as selfless participation in life. The womb protects and nourishes but does not possess or control. Truly it is the way of compassion.[50]

Trible examined the various biblical usages of this term, which has connotations of God acting for the deliverance and forgiveness of individuals and the people as a whole.[51] This concept of womb-love is linked to God's role as the creator (creator of new things).

Coppes links this love to YHWH's election of the people, ongoing mercy and forgiveness.[52] The references to compassion in 49:10-15 can be read together with 54:7-8 where there is a link with the concept of redeemer (as there is in 49:7). Compassion is also related closely to חסד, with YHWH's loving-kindness in Isa 54:10 directed to the wife Zion (from the Lord who has compassion on her) in the context of covenant relationship.

### (d) 49:14-26 overview

With an exploration of the significance of particular words, imagery and the overall structure of Isa 49:1-13, the landscape becomes clearer. Leaving behind the Servant, the voice of Zion breaks into the exalted language of 49:1-13 via a lament in v. 14. The rest of the chapter forms a response to this lament in the genre of a Proclamation of Salvation, with YHWH asserting that Zion is not forgotten or forsaken. Quite the opposite; YHWH is in the process of restoring Zion. Baltzer suggests that Isa 49:14-50:1 acts as a proem, a kind of secondary prologue up to ch. 55, and that it is also worthwhile comparing to ch. 40 as there are many themes that are announced in ch. 40 that do not appear again until after ch. 49.[53] The major themes of Isa 49:14-26 include the setting free and return of exiles, repopulation, and

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50. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 33.
51. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 39.
52. Coppes, "רָחַם (*rāḥam*)," 842.
53. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* Peter Machinist, ed, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 319.

rebuilding. For this study, I emphasise the continuity of these themes with 49:1-13.[54]

### (i) The language of 49:14-26

There are some specific points to note on DI's poetic forms for this section. When looking at 49:14-16 we clearly need to be aware that we are looking at a poetic structure that uses parallelism, assonance, alliteration, hyperbole, rhetoric, and metaphor that will be highlighted in the verse analyses as they arise. It is precisely the poetic form of this passage that provides its magnificence as well as its challenge.[55] The symbolism (suffering woman, mother), creates an emotional connection. This is the ability of language via metaphor in particular to transcend time, to have a powerful impact generations after the words were written down, and to take a message beyond its historical setting.[56] There are accepted (commonplace) images within the passage that are familiar to the reader (such as mother) as well as an overturning of images already known, including the Daughter Zion imagery. The symbolism that is set up in these images tends towards rebuilding relationships by using understood older images and reframing them for a new context.[57]

54. Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 152. Goldingay highlights the reference to waste or desolate places, and the kings bowing down.
55. Alter gives a prose version of Isa 49:14-26 that reads entirely differently to the poetic version, creating a different experience for the reader. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 160-161.
56. See Alter on the imaginative effect, even today, of DI. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 162.
57. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 186.

| Character | Portrayal | Descriptive terms | Passage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Zion | Daughter<br>Nursing baby[58]<br>Walls<br>Mother<br>Land | Desolate<br>Laid to waste<br>Ruined<br>Barren<br>Bereaved<br>Exiled<br>Rejected<br>Alone<br>Captive<br>Rescued | 49:14<br>49:17, 19<br>49:20-21 |
| YHWH | Mother<br>Saviour<br>Redeemer | Compassionate<br>Will not forget | 49:15<br>49:25<br>49:26 |
| Children of Zion | Actual children<br>Bridal dress | Nursing baby<br>Sons<br>Daughters<br>Saved<br>All these (plentiful) | 49:15<br>49:17-22<br>49:25 |
| The Powerful | Destroyers<br>Kings<br>Queens<br>Champion<br>Oppressors<br>Nations<br>All flesh | Patrons/ foster fathers<br>Wet nurses<br>Devourers<br>Swallowing up<br>Cannibals | 49:19<br>49:23-26 |

Table 6: Major "characters" in Isaiah 49:14-26

### (ii) Isaiah 49:14 Zion's complaint

The blunt assessment of the situation of the exiles is succinctly and powerfully expressed in Isa 49:14.[59] The problem of exile is not limited to being in a foreign land, the loss of the temple, war, death – all are presented as painful outcomes of the underlying issue. The core theological dilemma, the source of the pain and angst for the exiles, is the belief that YHWH had abandoned them. This notion of gods being in control of military outcomes was common

58. It is not necessarily Zion that is the nursing child. The image relates to Zion being the one who neglected her nursing child, unlike YHWH, and yet will be inundated with children. By implication of YHWH being mother, Zion appears to be the child also but this is not the main image for Zion here. She is depicted in more adult terms, as a mother herself.
59. See also Isa 40:27; 42:14; 51:17; 54:7-8 for accusations against God in DI.

in the ANE.[60] The *outcome* of YHWH's abandonment was the destruction of Jerusalem, the exile to Babylon, the lack of future, and the potential end of a story. The dominant story for the exiles was that Babylon (or Persia) was in control, which meant of course that YHWH was not. The evidence of this was all around them, either in the homeland (destroyed/ no temple/ no walls/ death/ the end of family) or in the exile (the prosperity and power of the enemy/ the plethora of idols/ the loss of the independence of the land and home).[61]

This lament is not new. It is expressed frequently in the Psalms and Job, and Isa 49:14 is possibly an echo of Lam 5:20.[62] This type of lament is typically countered by statements of faith, which recount the acts of YHWH within history. Within Isa 49:14 the difference is that YHWH directly responds to the lament. The statement of lament and accusation is sandwiched between the second Servant Song (that ends with a short hymn with the connecting "but"/ "and" (*but Zion said* ותאמר ציון) suggesting a connection to the previous verse, although this does not have to be the case.[63] It is followed by an extended Proclamation of Salvation. Isa 49:1-13 is dominated by incredible images of YHWH's work through the Servant, as Creator, restoring the covenant people who are captive and even beyond this to the nations.[64] Isa 49:14 raises questions for the reader about whether the lament is a rejection of that work, and whether the people will be comforted. In the Servant Song we also sense doubt (49:4) expressed in the first person but this appears to be doubt by the Servant as to the effectiveness of his mission, to which YHWH responds by reminding him of his calling from birth.[65] The doubt of 49:14 is pointed to YHWH directly and targets how Zion perceives her

60. See Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 45-51.
61. Note Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption,* 109-110, for a blunt assessment of the situation that Zion found herself in as a ruined city with her people in exile under subjugation. Stuhlmueller contrasts this situation with the images of YHWH in DI as father, spouse, redeemer and all in close relationship to the Servant and "loved ones".
62. Pss 10:1; 22:1; 42:9; 77:7-9. These take the form of typical laments, where the Psalmist expresses a sense of abandonment and despair. Note the statements that follow where God proves faithful: Ps 10:14, 16-18; 22:3-4; 42:11; 77:10-20.
63. See van der Woude where she discusses the fact that "but Zion said" is one of the few *wayyiqtol* forms found in DI. These forms are typically representative of a narrator but she suggests that here it brings the narrative to life. This is more indicative of dramatic text than narrative text. Annemarieke van der Woude, "'Hearing Voices While Reading': Isaiah 40-55 as a Drama," in *One Text, a Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjef Van Tilborg,* ed. Patrick Chatelion Counet and Ulrich Berges, Biblical Interpretation Series (Boston: Brill, 2005), 149-173, esp. 167.
64. Willey notes the effect of Zion's complaint after many chapters of speech on YHWH's deliverance. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 190.
65. See Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 554.

reality. Despite the shared sentiments of doubt expressed, the different target of the doubt (Servant of the self, Zion of YHWH) lead me to consider the voices to be different representations. Zion is encouraged to restoration, but not to see her labor as successful, unlike the Servant. The Servant quickly becomes an advocate for YHWH in 49:4b, whereas Zion takes longer to convince and we never hear her own voice proclaim confidence in DI.

The jarring impact of the accusation of 49:14 is an intentional poetic device. As Trible observes "the people speak…in a chiastic structure, to surround God with human misery and despair," a kind of mirror effect of v. 13 where the chiasm "encircles the suffering people with divine comfort and compassion."[66] What follows from vv. 15-26 is a response from YHWH headlined by rhetorical questions that overturn the sentiment of the charge, supporting v. 13. Verse 14 acts like a hinge around which the concepts of the whole book of DI are built.[67] This lament gives voice to the proverbial elephant in the room for the exiles – that deepest darkest fear that some may not have dared to declare, yet bringing it to speech gives the prophet the opportunity to formulate a response that enables the faith to rebuild.

Much has been made of the terseness of the statement by Zion, that she does not answer the questions posed to her and that other than this verse she does not speak again in the whole of DI. I would posit that this could be a result of the impact of trauma which leads to a silencing.[68] Perhaps DI represents the attempt to put the crisis into language, particularly via the mechanism of metaphor, but also represents the loss of communal language to depict the crisis via the character of Zion herself. As Morrow explains, quoting Herman, "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma."[69] We apparently see this tension in the Daughter Zion story.

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66. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 51.
67. I would argue that here, more so than in the Servant's doubt of 49:4 which represents Israel's self-doubt, we see the major issue that DI is attempting to deal with: doubt towards YHWH's faithfulness. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 186. The persuasive case of DI is built around this accusation.
68. O'Connor talks about the effect of trauma to cause a "breakdown of language." Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 24.
69. William Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 167.

### (iii) Word Studies from Isaiah 49:14

It is crucial to unpack the individual but related terms that dominate v. 14: *Zion*, *forsaken* and *forgotten,* as they set the scene for the Proclamations of Zion in 49-55 that are the dominant focus of this thesis. The term 'Zion' is loaded with historical, theological and textual connotations that will be explored, as well as Zion's personification. 'Forsaken' and 'forgotten' are important word pairs in the accusation of Isa 49:14 that have other significant intertextual comparisons which can be drawn on here. References to these terms are followed again by affirmations of comfort and compassion. The following table depicts the relationship of these three words, displaying the chiasms.

| Verse | BHS | English |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | רנו שמים | Sing for joy, heavens |
| | וגילי ארץ | rejoice, earth; |
| | יפצחו הרים רנה | break forth, mountains, into singing! |
| | כי־נחם **יהוה** עמו | For **YHWH** has comforted his people |
| | ועניו ירחם | and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. |
| 14 | ותאמר ציון | But Zion said, |
| | עזבני **יהוה** | "**YHWH** has forsaken me, |
| | **ואדני** שכחני | **my Lord** has forgotten me." |
| 15 | התשכח אשה עלוה | "Can a mother forget her nursing child |
| | מרחם בן־בטנה גם־אלה | or show no compassion for the child of her womb? |
| | תשכחנה | Though she may forget, |
| | **ואנכי** לא אשכחך | but **I** will not forget you! |

Table 7: Isaiah 49:13-15 displaying chiasm

Verse 14 follows a typical Hebrew poetic structure of synomous parallelism with YHWH and "my Lord" forming a chiasm, as do *forsaken* and *forgotten*. This emphasises the sense of the connection between the major concern (being forgotten and forsaken) as well as who is perceived to be at fault (YHWH, my Lord). The sense of repetition is deepened with *forsaken*

and *forgotten* utilising similar vowel sounds (עזבני and שכחני). It may be read as a cry or even as a ritual lament.

### (1) Zion

The fact that it is Zion who speaks in Isa 49:14 is significant in itself – Zion, the repository of YHWH's power and seat - stating bluntly that YHWH has forsaken and forgotten them. The development of the understanding of Zion goes beyond a literal reference to the physical location of a city towards an idea, a tradition, a theology, and a symbolic representation of the people of God.[70] Differentiating between literal and figurative references to Zion in DI can be complex. Zion's political, social and theological significance in Israel's historical situation from the Davidic monarchy onwards contributed to the false concept of her inviolability. Following the Babylonian exile and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the function of Zion as a symbol became crucial, and Ollenburger explores the nature of this 'symbolic relationship' where the significance rests on Yahweh's exclusive prerogative.[71] As Ollenburger points out, "when we speak of symbols we are actually referring to a symbolic relationship...(and) symbols are multivalent, or multivocal. This means that a symbol may never be reduced to simply one meaning."[72] This may provide many possibilities for our reading of Zion in a contemporary context. The imaginative voice of the prophet seeks to reposition the exiles' sense of future by challenging their previous understandings, including their perspectives on Zion. The eschatological presentation of Zion in Isaiah includes but also goes beyond the geographic location of Judah, particularly via the discussion in DI of YHWH's sovereignty of other nations.[73] The work of God in DI is not limited to the presence of a Davidic king in Jerusalem.[74]

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70. For an outline of the understanding of Zion as location and Zion theology see Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult*, JSOTSup 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987); Jon Douglas Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry Into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985). For the notion of Zion's various representations in DI see Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 319; Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 384. Despite the significance of Zion as place, I take the position that the reference is more fluid.
71. On the symbolic relationship see Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King,* pp. 19-22.
72. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King,* 19.
73. H. A. Thomas, "Zion," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets,* ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon. McConville (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 909.
74. Joy Hooker, "Zion as Theological Symbol in Isaiah: Implications for Judah, for the Nations and for Empire," in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire,* ed. Andrew T. Abernethy, Mark G. Brett, Tim Bulkeley, and Tim Meadowcroft (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 107-121, esp. 108.

## (2) Personified Zion in the text of DI

Personification is a key poetic device that DI utilises to imagine Zion not only as a place, but as the embodiment of an idea and a people. Rebellious Jacob-Israel, the dominant representation of the people in the first half of DI (Isa 40-49:13), becomes despondent Zion who needs YHWH's comfort.[75] Zion is juxtaposed with the Servant as one of the major 'characters' in DI.[76] The portrayal of the Servant is as the redemptive sufferer, whereas the suffering is complete for Zion, who has already been through great desolation. She will instead have an abundant future.[77] The reference to Zion in Isa 40:9 is loving and comforting, which is a clue to reading Isaiah 49 onwards. After being mentioned in the prologue, we do not hear from her again until 49:14 where she speaks this accusation in the form of a lament. At the end of 48:20-21 Babylon is left destroyed but the prophet in Isaiah 49 envisions Zion's restoration. This comfort would be evidenced by the provision of children, rebuilding, return and resettling. We see a dialogue between YHWH and Israel. Many of the references to the people of Israel in DI (typically indicating Zion), are in feminine forms.[78] The personification of Zion is a powerful poetic tool which invited the original as well as subsequent hearers to journey with these visual representations of the city and beyond the city. Zion becomes personal to exiles, representing them, and it is here that we may find a gateway today to relate to the text.

Zion is personified in DI as a woman who is variously a mother, wife, and daughter.[79] The

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75. Spykerboer sees this as evidence of development in DI's thinking. Spykerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah*, 166.

76. Sawyer notes that "the feminine imagery is so vividly described as to create in almost every case a story or picture every bit as consistent and convincing as that of the Servant of the Lord." Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 92. See Mark E Biddle, "Teaching Isaiah Today," *PRSt* 36, no. 3 (2009/9): 265-266, for the case that concern for Zion is actually the unifying theme of the entire book of Isaiah. See Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 105.

77. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem': Second Isaiah's Reception and Use of Daughter Zion," *PSB* 20, no. 3 (1999): 294. Morrow's work on the Servant as a victim of PTSD may also be relevant to our reading of Daughter Zion. He describes the Servant as displaying the following symptoms: frail, submissive, unable to cry out; abandonment despair, heartbreak, melancholy; dissociation - despised, cut off from human contact, silent, cut off from land, taken away; lack of affective terminology displaying emotional distance; considered accursed by God. Many of these features can be seen in the depictions of Daughter Zion who is representative of the exiles. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," 175-176.

78. John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 211-212.

79. For discussion of these various portrayals see Annemarieke van der Woude, "Can Zion Do Without the

images of Zion are built by using physical representations where the city is a female or the female is depicted in architectural forms (using images of a body, buildings, walls, clothing); emotional responses (joy, sadness, wonder, humiliation, fear); and interacting relationships (as a mother, wife, daughter, with kings, with the powerful) which all contribute to the metaphor. She can talk, she can see, she can get dressed and give birth and be drunk. All these vivid portrayals build Zion as a real character in our minds with whom we can interact. In answering the question as to why the prophets would have used such a device so prominently in their work, Dobbs-Allsopp proposes that their "presence in the Hebrew Bible would otherwise be abhorrent to orthodox Yahwists. Put simply, personification confers personality on inanimate objects."[80]

There are some key literary influences upon DI that the prophet appropriated but also developed in a new way. The relationship between Mesopotamian City Laments and the HB (specifically Lamentations) has been extensively explored.[81] Mesopotamian city laments focussed on the destruction of significant cities and shrines and the situations of disaster surrounding these events. They were written as sad poems (dirges) from various viewpoints, such as a distant but reliable narrator, subjective narrator or distraught city goddess. The event (destruction of the city, in the case of the Babylonian exile - Jerusalem) is depicted as a decision of the gods (the divine assembly) who were impossible to oppose. The city lament may have been used in cultic ceremonies when rebuilding, but this is not clear. The point of connection to this study may be the city lament portrayal of the weeping goddess and the HB portrayal of the desolate Daughter of Zion.

Dille notes the uniqueness of the HB personification of a city as wife of a god.[82] It was more commonplace that the patron goddess of the city, not the city itself, was married to the god. The Mesopotamian city laments where the goddess is portrayed contrast importantly with the HB where the personification represents the city itself, in dialogue with the Deity YHWH.[83]

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Servant," 111.
80. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 87.
81. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion.*
82. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 157.
83. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion.*

The portrayal of Zion as a mother (49; 50:1; 54) connects with an understanding of YHWH as father (and therefore husband). Zion is also referred to as captive daughter (52:2). Dille highlights that the common metaphor of desolation that has generally negative connotations is connected with another significant metaphor that we have already explored, the גאל.[84] In other words, the metaphor of Zion being the desolate woman is redeemed by connecting it with another positive image. The destruction has been overturned to redemption and the tone is comfort not condemnation.[85]

### (3) Daughter of Zion references

One of the most compelling metaphors Isaiah uses to depict Zion is specifically as Daughter, hereafter referred to interchangeably as Daughter Zion or Daughter of Zion, but only once used in DI (52:2).[86] Carr makes the observation that DI's use of the Daughter Zion personalised perspective allows the trauma experienced in exile to find expression, where the voice of Daughter Zion *is* the voice of the people in exile.[87] Acknowledging that the Daughter Zion imagery is not only influenced by the Mesopotamian city lament form, it is also significant that the Lamentations' image of the destroyed Daughter Zion is further developed but extended in DI, which presents a restored Daughter Zion.[88] Daughter Zion references are notably more common in biblical texts with an exilic and post-exilic rhetorical setting.[89] These passages not only informed the understanding of this metaphor of Daughter Zion in DI,

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84. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 162.

85. This positive perspective of the rhetorical effect of the reversal of the desolate woman imagery is not universally accepted. A note of caution is provided by Weems who suggests that negative female imagery of Israel is perpetuated, as the depiction of female cities derives from the idea that they are married to the patron god. Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 45. I take the point, but given the overwhelming redemptive tone of the passage, and the radical overturning of commonplace imagery, I will read this section in a more positive light. The text of DI seems to be far more nuanced in its portrayals of women than she has given credit. A contextual reading seeks to understand the original context as well as the reading context.

86. Isa 1:8; 3:16; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11. On the construction of בת ציון see Michael H. Floyd, "Welcome Back, Daughter of Zion!" *CBQ* 70, no. 3 (07/2008): 484-504. Daughter of Zion or Daughter Zion are both appropriate.

87. David M. Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014), 84, 89.

88. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 106. Note though Gordon and Washington's point that the use of the בת ציון personification appears in conflict settings in the HB. Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, "Rape as Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets,* ed. Atalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 315. They suggest that the only hope for restoration in the personification is by marriage, but that this understanding does not undo the portrayal of the rape for those who have experienced such violation.

89. Major HB references to Daughter Zion outside of Isaiah: Zech 2:10; 9:9 (used by gospels in reference to Jesus), Lam 1:6; 2:1, 8, 10, 18, 4:22; Mic 1:13, 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14; 2 Kgs 19:21; Jer 4:31, 6:2; Ps 9:14.

but DI also sought to overturn some of these depictions. The major references to Daughter Zion in Lamentations that build the personification of the city refer to her as despairing, weeping, and crying out to YHWH. She is depicted in other HB texts as mourning, and as a slave in exile, which have many parallels to the weeping goddess motif in Mesopotamian city laments.

The Daughter Zion images her as vulnerable captive (52:2). We see this image combined in DI with a mocking mother Zion (49:14) and restored mother Zion (54). At times Daughter Zion is explicitly named; at other times her character is alluded to.[90] We walk with her journey from great loss and desperate pain towards having children again, following a life-cycle.[91] These images of Daughter Zion contrast significantly with the fallen Daughter Babylon in Isaiah 47. Babylon is portrayed in a deserved humiliation, a contrast to the completed suffering of Zion (with whom we empathise) and the redemptive suffering of the Servant.[92] Isa 49:13-50:3 reverses these terrible predicaments and punishments demonstrated in the use of a marriage metaphor in Jeremiah and Lamentations. It is the intertextual comparisons that heighten the power of the references to Daughter Zion and this expansion continues in the references to Zion in chapter 51 and 54 where her restoration is further developed.[93]

Referring to Isaiah 54, Sawyer suggests "It is not a story about Jerusalem, any more than the Servant Songs are about Israel or Jesus or the prophet. It is a story about a woman, and to neglect this is to miss the dynamic of the passage."[94] In relation to the discussion on how we read metaphors, particularly personifications, it is noteworthy that there is strong resistance to reading Zion as representing real people. I note that this same hesitation does not seem to apply to the discussion around the servant, who scholars have spent generations seeking to

90. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 60. He lists the seven passages noted in footnote 116 but also the references to the female character, 90.
91. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 91.
92. Eidevall describes how Babylon is "pictured as Jerusalem's beautiful, successful and ruthless twin sister – both a look-alike and a rival." Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah*, ConBOT (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 128.
93. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem," 292-293.
94. John F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 94.

identify. Is the servant more 'real' than Zion? Perhaps as a reflection of trauma literature, the Servant and Zion are both representations of the conflicted survivors of exile, multiple personality projections of past, present and future suffering, meaning and purposelessness in suffering, of real and obscured understandings of suffering. Zion speaks in Isa 49:14 and I ask given what we know of her, is she otherwise passive-aggressive, or forcibly silenced, or traumatised, or all of these?

### (4) Forsaken

The word pairing of *forsaken* and *forgotten* is not common in the HB.[95] Outside Isa 49:14, we see Lam 5:20 incorporating both roots עזב and forgotten שׁכח, within an accusing question, "Why have you completely forgotten us? Why have you forsaken us for so long?" using alliteration for effect (with repeated use of *lamed* and *tav*). It is followed by the call for YHWH to restore the people (restoration seen by return) and Lamentations ends with the verse "unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure" (Lam 5:22).[96] The root עזב has the meaning "to leave, forsake or loose."[97] It is generally translated in English to mean "fail" (my strength fails me, my heart fails me). A different form of the word is used in Isa 2:6 where the people of God are forsaken (נטשתה) or abandoned by YHWH due to their evil practices. In Isa 42:16 עזבתים appears as a promise that YHWH will not leave them (the blind).

The sense of עזב is an abandonment that has consequences and in the lament form the intention is a restoration of relationship.[98] It is often used in this very personal sense of belonging, appearing as a recurring idea in exilic and post-exilic biblical texts.[99] This is generally in reference to Israel's rejection or forsaking of YHWH and thus the reason they are forsaken, but they will not be forsaken again. YHWH admits to rejecting and abandoning the

95. Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 189.
96. Counteracted reassuringly in Isa 40:2.
97. Carl Schultz, "עָזַב (*'āzab*)," in *TWOT,* ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 658.
98. E. Gerstenberger, " עָזַב (*'āzaḇ*)," in *TDOT,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 586. The same term is used in Gen 2:24 for a man *leaving* his parents but in a positive sense. In Ruth 1:16 Ruth urges her mother-in-law Naomi to not press her to *leave,* followed by a pledge to her and her God.
99. Gerstenberger, " עָזַב (*'āzaḇ*)," 590.

people in 47:6; 48:9; and 54:6-9. In ANE lament forms, abandonment relates to a god leaving a city prior to its destruction. This leaves the people vulnerable to the will of the victors. Dobbs-Allsopp suggests that this is the concept behind the Ezek 8:12 use of עזב where being forsaken is connected to rejection of the land.[100] It is especially notable in the Psalms that this experience of abandonment implies a relationship breakdown, and the language used implies a familial sense of closeness that has been lost. In relation to YHWH in particular the sense of loss and the bewilderment the loss of this relationship causes is great.[101] עזב appears in the same form found in 49:14 in Pss 22:1 (most notably); 38:10 and 40:12.

The conceptual contrasts to abandonment and being forsaken include: "retrieving" (Isa 54:7)[102]; "remembering" (Job 39:14f, Prov 2:17; Isa 65:11); "answering" (Isa 41:17) or being accepted.[103] The images convey a notion of God's presence;[104] the restoration of the people to the land or restoration of the city;[105] the reminder that they are chosen and that the covenant remains.[106] Jer 51:5 emphatically states that Israel and Judah are not forsaken, despite their guilt.

### (5) Forgotten

It is interesting to note the connection of "forsaken" and "forgotten" in the biblical text as parallel word pairs. The action of one (forsaken) assumes the other (forgotten). The word for forgotten used in Isa 49:14 is שכחני . It is the only form of this word in the HB but is very similar to Ps 42:9 "Why have you forgotten me?" The root appears three times in Isa 49:15, with YHWH suggesting the impossibility of forgetting the exiles or the covenant, which is the concept underlying this; God would in essence be forgetting God.[107] Hamilton observes the verb שכח is used in the context of the relationship between people and God.[108] We get a

100. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 49.
101. Gerstenberger, " עָזַב (*ʿāzaḇ*)," 590.
102. Gerstenberger, " עָזַב (*ʿāzaḇ*)," 589.
103. See Isa 41:9, 10; 41:17; 42:16c.
104. "I am with you": Isa 41:10,13; 43:2-5.
105. Isa 49:8; 54:11-15.
106. Covenant, hold your hand: Isa 41:8-9; 42:6; Belonging to God: Isa 43:4; 44:1-2; 44:5; Other covenantal images: Isa 49:7b (Servant); 51:16; 54:10; 55:3
107. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, 53.
108. Victor P. Hamilton, "שָׁכַח (*shākaḥ)*" in *TWOT,* ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr, and Bruce K.

fuller sense of its meaning by noting its antonyms: "to remember" (which is such an important verb in the HB, i.e., "remember these commands") or "to know" ידע. In other words "to forget God is to not know God."[109] In the HB, שכח is used to reference God in the sense that God never forgets, but it also appears quite frequently in the lament form that encapsulates the sense of abandonment and accusation felt by the lamenter where YHWH does forget.[110] It is this human tendency to forget that YHWH rebuts by implying Zion has forgotten her own children in Isa 49:15. Forgetting is represented as an act of will, not a passive behaviour.[111] The exile is seen by the prophets to be a result of the ultimate forgetfulness.[112] Corruption, fear and forgetting go hand in hand.[113] It is the prophet's task to remind the exiles of the work of YHWH to combat accusations that YHWH has forgotten.[114] YHWH asserts in 44:21 "I will not forget you" and 49:15 follows this sentiment with a rhetorical question posed and answered by YHWH. The evidence for the exiles being remembered by YHWH centres around their restoration as a people (in number, in location, in freedom).

### (iv) Isaiah 49:15-26 YHWH's response

Having established the framework for understanding Zion's personification, and the context of her complaint that forms the springboard for this thesis, we now turn to the response. We may wonder if there is a dramatic pause following the incendiary nature of the question posed by Zion? Or is the tone of the response profuse and rushed? I would classify it as a response that seeks to convey comfort to the exiles.[115] It is framed in the form of the rhetorical question "Can a mother forget her nursing child?*"* This conjures up maternal images of love

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Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 922.

109. Hamilton, " שָׁכַח (*shākaḥ)*" 922.

110. Hamilton, " שָׁכַח (*shākaḥ)*" 922. Hamilton lists Pss 13:1; 42:9; 44:24.

111. On the determined action of forgetting see Hamilton, " שָׁכַח (*shākaḥ)*" 922. See also Kathryn L. Roberts, "Isaiah 49:14-18," *Int* 57, no. 1 (2003): 59 for similar comments.

112. The people had forgotten their place with YHWH, and YHWH's promises, words, covenant, role as Creator, the act(s) of the Exodus and the redemption of the people throughout their history. The warnings of Deut 4:9-14; 6:4-25; 8 (particularly vv. 18-20) speak loudly to the exiles' situation.

113. Cf. Isa 51:12-13.

114. Isa 40:21; 43:13; 45:12; many reminders of YHWH's act of choosing them as a people Isa 41:8-9; 43:15-17; YHWH's role as creator 42:5; reminder of reason for exile due to their disobedience Isa 42:24; 43:22-28; 48:1-11; 48:17-19; 50:1.

115. There are a number of views on who the speaker of v. 15 is, with the majority of scholars considering it to be the voice of YHWH in response to the accusation and lament of v. 14. Dille however, considers the speaker of 15a to still be Zion, a continuation of the accusation of v. 14. This may show continuity with the rhetorical questions of 21 and 24 having the same speaker (doubting Zion). However, this means that the imagery of YHWH as mother, which Dille then goes on later to use, becomes diluted. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 148.

and compassion countering abandonment. Note the gentle alliterative effect of the 'sh' sound in התשכח אשה and the assonance when combining these words with nursing child עולה. There is a redemptive and intimate tone to this passage of a breastfeeding mother, with the innocence of children offering a chance for renewal.[116] In Lam 2:12 the lives of children ebbed away while they were in their mothers' arms, due to starvation. Now they will be nurtured.[117]

However, the mothering metaphor developed in Isaiah 49 is not straightforward. Just as motherhood is a complex, multifaceted relationship, this passage reminds us that surface presumptions of the image may be inaccurate. YHWH's motherhood is set up against Zion's motherhood, which seems an impossible and unequal comparison.[118] Dille suggests that the metaphor destabilises by undermining motherhood itself, with 49:15 demonstrating: "*the reversal of the normal order.* This verse reflects first of all, the city lament's theme of the breakdown of the family; second, more particularly, Lamentations' utilization of the theme of the breakdown of the family; and third, Zion's own forgetfulness as a mother…"[119] It is certainly risky to use an image which captures our imagination due to previous experiences but also challenges our assumptions.[120] The evidence surrounding the exiles in terms of their own history (which entailed loss of children, future, and breakup of family) is overturned, as is a patriarchal and domineering image of God. This is the power of a metaphor to bring new possibilities and interpretations to light. [121] The importance of relational metaphors would not have been lost on the exiled people who would have experienced extreme cases of family disruption and at times discontinuity.

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116. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 242. Sawyer notes the redemptive theme in relation to the birth narrative in Isa 66:7-14. This same observation can also be made regarding the birth / progeny story in Isaiah 49.
117. Further to the textual background to this passage, see Willey where she makes the comparison of 49:15, 18 with Jer 2:32, where the shared terms for "forgetting" and "ornaments" appear. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 198-200. See also Isa 66:13 where the image of YHWH as a comforting mother returns.
118. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 148.
119. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 145. Dille incorporates Dobbs-Allsopp's work on the role of the city lament to contrast the glorious past compared to the desolate present. Dobbs-Allsopp explores this breakdown of familial relationships in city laments; relationships that ought to be close and caring becoming broken, catagorised by abandonment, lack of recognition of one another, and pain. The Proclamation of Salvation responds to the lament. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion,* 90-92, 177
120. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 139.
121. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 144.

The implied affirmation of v. 15 is that the exiles, despite their situation, still belong to YHWH. Not only are they *not* forgotten - the exile did not result in their eternal expulsion from the relationship. This is entirely due to the trustworthiness of God who is contrasted to the loving mother who will not forget (49:15b; cf. Ps 27:10). It is not only a reality that mothers **can** neglect their children but that Zion in particular did as represented in Lam 4:2-4, with nursing being performed by the wild animals.[122] This is a reminder that the worst had already occurred *against* the exiles as well as *by* them, including possibly devouring their own children.[123] Looking forward, the mention of the child (nursing baby in this particular verse) is significant as children become a key theme of the restoration of Zion throughout Isaiah 49. For this particular verse, the child has no role other than that of being nurtured.

YHWH's compassion of v. 13 reads the action as having already occurred.[124] Isa 49:15 presents the act of "not forgetting" as propelled to the future as a promise.[125] Isa 49:16 begins to show *how* YHWH would remember Zion, firstly via the physical image of YHWH self-engraving "on the palms of my hands." What form this engraving constitutes or represents is debated: tattooing (unlikely), or drawing the walls of Jerusalem.[126] The images that follow relate to rebuilding. The emphasis is clearly about remembrance as opposed to the forgetting of v. 15.[127] This is a feature of YHWH's character of reliability, in contrast to Zion's forgetfulness and doubt. YHWH acknowledges, in the most intimate and permanent manner, a people who feel forgotten and forsaken.[128] It is the walls of Jerusalem that are before (in front of, in sight of) YHWH. (cf. Isa 44:26). For emphasis there is an alliterative effect of

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122. Kathryn L. Roberts, "Isaiah 49:14-18," 59.
123. Dille details the passages that discussed such potential realities of the siege and exile, such as Deut 28:53-57, 2 Kgs 6:24-29; Lev 26:29, Jer 19:9; Lam 2:20, 4:4 and acknowledges their possible exaggeration. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 145-146.
124. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 115.
125. Philip B. Harner, "Salvation Oracle," 424.
126. John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 113. Blenkinsopp looks to the LXX translation which reads as though preparing a blueprint of Jerusalem's walls. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 311. Also Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 144. Koole takes the eschatological emphasis by suggesting that it is not the name of Zion that is tattooed but the image of the future city. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, 49. Blythin links the physical image of a woman and the walls of Jerusalem, where not only is the engraving on the hands a reminder but the image of Jerusalem (Zion) is engraved on YHWH's mind. Islwyn Blythin, "Note on Isaiah 49:16-17," *VT* 16, no. 2 (1966): 230. See also Dobbs-Allsopp for the use of synecdoche in reference to similar passage in Lam 2:18. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion,* 90.
127. Possibly a link to Deut 6:8. Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York: Paulist, 1984), 155.
128. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 745. See also Isa 44:5.

"inscribed" חקתיך and "your walls" חומתיך. This presents a promise of the future as though it is already present, a possibility of restoration. The image of rebuilding that we see continuing throughout Isaiah 49 can be compared with the walls that were destroyed, torn down (the wall of the Daughter of Zion) in Lam 2:8, and 18 (by YHWH). Feminine metaphors continue to be used.

Isa 49:17 continues to build the rhetoric of the reversal of exile with physical movement imagery, by using verbs at the beginning and end. There is not only a return, and a promise of sons, but also a departure of the oppressors. Some translations use the words "builders" instead of "sons," and "devastators" or "destroyers" instead of "those who laid you waste" to link more clearly with the previous verse. Assonance and alliteration occurs with the strong ם *mem* sound in many of the words and the words ending in ך *kaf* on these terms (בניך - "your builders or sons," מהרסיך -"your destroyers," and ומחרביך - "your devastators") emphasises their meaning. It could be the use of paronomasia with a play on the words in the previous verse ending in *kaf* – חקתיך "inscribed" and חומתיך "your walls" – with destruction, building, walls and devastators all rolling into one another. The fluidity in the passage creates a sense of rush (hasten or hurry - מהרו) to either build or for sons to return, with the destroyers departing – a coming back and a departing. This rebuilding will occur miraculously, faster than the overwhelming destruction.[129] Themes of homecoming and return begin to dominate the passage.[130] YHWH's faithfulness was to be displayed via the return and the imagery begins to build around the themes of restoration of the people.[131] Return was not just to be a geographical reality; it was to be a spiritual possibility of returning to God.[132]

The language in Isa 49:18 is designed to amaze, with Zion being asked to look around to see an alternative and hopeful vision.[133] The evidence around is clearly that the people are

129. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 144.
130. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 94; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 115.
131. Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination*, 94.
132. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 554.
133. In a very interesting comparison, Goldingay explores Jer 3:2 where Judah is commanded in similar terms "Lift your eyes and see..." but the view is of her shameful adultery. This appalling vision is overturned in Isa 49:18 where the view is of sons gathering, the opposite of shame. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 389.

repopulating. The contrary evidence that God is acting, that forsaken עזב is no longer their state and the process of being צונקב 'gathered' is in contrast to 'scattered' and isolation.[134] Verses 18-20 demonstrate a lot of movement and the words seek to rhetorically propel the exiles forward with the use of verbs such as *gather*, *depart*, *hasten back*, *come*. This verse rings with an echo of the other passages on repopulating and building: 40:11 (gathering); 43:5-7; 44:26b, 28; 44:13; 49:17-26; 51:11; 52:8-9 (not just the people but YHWH returning to Zion); 54:11-15.

Isaiah 49:18b incorporates the metaphor of the sons being worn as ornaments for a bride, who literally binds (ותקשרים) them to herself. We see a repetition of ך words here for effect (כלם כעדי ככלה) that may form a small chiasm. The significance of the bridal metaphor for Zion is in great contrast to the use of bereavement language earlier in the passage. Weddings are times of celebration of life, and a sign of the possibility of a future generation. This will be a public display of the work of YHWH with the evidence of miraculous provision of children for all to see, including the exiles. In Isaiah brides are symbols of salvation and hope (Isa 61:10; 62:5). The imagery of the city putting on garments is found in Isa 52:1; 61:3, 10. Jewels are worn by the city in 54:11-12 in the context of restoration. Just as YHWH can clothe the sky in Isa 50:3, so Zion will be clothed with strength (51:9, 52:1 - use of same root לבש meaning to wear, put on or clothe). These images are in contrast with the desolation of Zion (again described in the next passage) where she is depicted with chains in 52:2, and are deliberately set up against the decaying image of Virgin Daughter Babylon in the dust, her skirts lifted to display nakedness (emphasis on shame) in 47:2. Thus Isa 49:18 takes on commonplace bridal imagery of riches and purity to extend the metaphor beyond Zion as mother. This possibility is entirely dependent on YHWH ("as I live"). Holladay contends that what we are witnessing in this passage is the appropriation of the imagery and language from Jer 2:32 where the rhetorical question about a girl's bridal wear is combined with a lament about the people forgetting the LORD (in contrast to Isa 49:14). Isaiah 49 overturns this imagery by turning a disputation into a Proclamation of Salvation.[135]

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134. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 744.
135. William L. Holladay, "Was Trito-Isaiah Deutero-Isaiah After All?," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition Volume One,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 197.

The significant words in v. 19 are *devastated, desolate, waste, swallowed or devoured:* dominant images of the disaster of exile. These images reinforce the physical depiction of destroyed walls as well as the metaphorical links to the desolate woman and the references in v. 8 to the restored land, and "desolate heritages."[136]

The image of the city as a bride who has been violated is appropriated in v. 19. Language of ruin and desolation, a land being laid to waste is used also in the story of Tamar, with the same word שמם *desolate* being used by Isa 49:19 and 2 Sam 13:20. The experience of rape and humiliation was compounded by Tamar's abandonment by her brother, just as Zion experiences abandonment from YHWH.[137] Depicting Zion's violation invokes a sense of her powerlessness and victim state (Cf. Isa 51:23-52:2). The land depicted as desolate is represented in Isa 1:7 and 6:11, as well as Ezek 33:28.[138] Lack of physical security and sexual violence are real risks in war and exile, leading to a lack of self-worth, marred identity, and social shame.[139]

By positioning these events as part of Zion's past identity in the passage, the metaphor alters the perception of reality to provide a new (perhaps unexpected) opportunity, which includes children (blessing) and security (those who swallowed her up or devoured her being far away). Desolation is reversed, restoration corresponds to safety. This verse speaks to the very real anxiety and pain of exiles, but uses these words that identify with all that has been lost and turns them around towards a language of hope.[140] The prophet speaks with images exiles

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136. On the theme of reversal see Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 117.
137. See Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 95 for further discussion surrounding this comparison. A feminist exegesis of the story of Tamar is found in Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 37-63. An interesting correlation to the story of Tamar as Trible explores is the language of departure that occurs in the passage, where she "went away". This concept of expulsion, but of having nowhere to go in a desolate state, depicts the predicament for exiles. It also incorporates language of purity versus contamination. See p. 50.
138. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 389. As he notes, the two Isaiah passages are well known, which I think displays an intentional contrast in 49.
139. For example, see the stories describing girls used as wives to multiple soldiers in the war in Sudan. Hugo Kamya, "The Impact of War on Children: the Psychology of Displacement and Exile," in *Interpreting Exile*, 239. Sexual violence as a weapon of war is a noted phenomenon.
140. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 143. In his commentary on this passage, Goldingay chooses to compare it to the bride in Jer 2:32 who forgets her jewellery. This comparison draws on the themes of forgetting, as well as noting that the Jeremiah 2 passage depicts the forsaking of YHWH by the people. There are many parallels between these two passages, and Lamentations. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 389.

can connect with, but takes the images further than their reality.[141]

Zion will be too small to hold the children that appear in vv. 17-18, a result of YHWH's grace that continues in the next verse.[142] The imagery is of a city vibrant with life, contrasted with the distance of the former victors, those whom they feared being far away.[143] In fact, the word מבלעיך that is variously translated as devoured, or swallowed concludes the verse, as though the people themselves were "eaten up" and consumed, which as well as being a dramatic image is quite absolute in terms of destruction (see Lam 2:16). The growth of the people reverses this imagery, and is a contrast to the enemy self-devouring as depicted in 49:26. This notion of population growth harkens back to the Abrahamic promise of Gen 15:5 and even counters the words of Isa 48:19 where they are admonished for disobedience with the result being loss of population. The land being laid to waste depicts purging and emptiness which is contrasted with being filled with life again.

The language of desolation that in 19a had links to sexual violence imagery, and moved towards the imagery of being swallowed up, in v. 20 takes on the direct terminology of death. שכליך translated as "bereavement" has the sentiment of displaying an enormous loss of children.[144] The translation may mean "the children born during your exile" or as Blenkinsopp translates "the children conceived or born after the loss of earlier children."[145] The connection between exilic imagery and death terminology may be related to the early treaty curses, which equate exile with death (Deuteronomy 28).[146] We need to ask if the verse implies that the dead children are returning.[147] Even if replaced, this does not erase the

141. The place of narrative to move people beyond traumatic situations is noted in Kamya's chapter on this topic. Kamya, "The Impact of War on Children, 235-249. See also Janet L. Rumfelt, "Reversing Fortune: War, Psychic Trauma, and the Promise of Narrative Repair," in *Interpreting Exile*, 323-342.
142. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 744.
143. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 145.
144. Ames explores the significant impact of exile, including increased death rates of children in contemporary conflict and post-conflict settings. This may not have been dissimilar in the Judean diaspora, a real anxiety the prophet seeks to address. Ames, "The Cascading Effects of Exile," 177.
145. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 312.
146. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 128.
147. Perhaps this is an example of PTSD experienced by the survivors thinking they have seen their dead children.

tragedy of the already dead children.[148] New births cannot undo the deaths of previous children. However, it was those replacement children who kept the literature alive, passed it on, perhaps along with survivor guilt and with genuine questions about their own mortality.

Continuing (from v. 19) the notion of the place being too small and the need for more space, which harkens back to the dilemma in Egypt, some translations suggest it should be translated as "this place is too crowded/ cramped" (such as NLT/ NASB) and that the sense is the need for more room to live. This connects with the birth of children and increase in population. Verses 19-20 seem to reverse the words of Isa 6:11-12 where the warning was of a ruined שאו deserted and empty land (cities without inhabitants) that has been forsaken העזובה.[149] The emphasis is towards the need to resettle, and just as the land had vomited them out, now they would be drawn back to the land. The concept of lost space is significant to exiled peoples. Growing subjugated populations are always a threat to an imperial power. It is one thing to have a large but minority labour force to build the empire, it is another to have a growing and discontented population. It is then that they must be heard. What is also significant here is that it is the only time in DI that we hear the voice of the children, even if it is via a third person statement, "The children...will say."

Isa 49:21 echoes the sentiments of the preceding verses on death, loss, exile, rejection and offspring – all within the context of absolute bewilderment - by tying them all together as a powerful image of Zion as mother asking the amazed question. By juxtaposing the reality (exile and loss) with the new situation (return and offspring), Zion's condition is even more astounding. It is presented as a response (not Zion's own, but words put into her mouth, just as the children in v. 20 are given voice by a third party) to the display of YHWH's provision found in vv. 15-20, and in particular to the images of 17-18 (regathering sons), 19 (re-population beyond limits of boundaries), and 20 (children born and growth of population). Verse 21 is written in the form of a personal lament, again with questions of wonder and

148. Mandolfo is particularly scathing of John Sawyer's positive reading of Daughter Zion on this issue. Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, SemeiaSt 58 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 105.
149. See Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 390 on the reversal of the emptying of the land. See also Lev 18:25 on the "vomiting" of the inhabitants from the land due to the defilement. This is connected with the exilic theology of the empty land.

disbelief, incredulous at the change in their circumstance. Despite the external evidence (v. 16 - see, v.18 - lift your eyes and see, v. 20 - children speaking - the senses are seeing and hearing), the heart (internal being) will ask the questions.[150] The evidence of YHWH's faithfulness to the exiles counteracts the argument of v. 14. It links again with the theme of God doing the impossible. It was impossible for good to come out of their situation, let alone offspring. The exiles were meant to be wiped out. YHWH is intimately aware of their situation as evidenced by the nature of the questions littered through this section of text.[151] The response to the presentation of the children would be: "Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and rejected". The rhetoric is meant to be answered with "Yes, you were bereaved, you deserved it, there is no way out of this situation you are in." Zion displays hints of lingering doubt. This is the place where only grace can occur and where only the miraculous can overturn the inevitable end. One can only imagine in that rhetoric a spark, in the midst of disbelief, of possibility.[152] In one of the only times that 'exile' is explicitly used as a self-description in DI (גלה), we see the identity of Zion include notions of rejection, which link to the accusation of v. 14. Along with rejection is the real isolation – aloneness - that is part of the great existential abandonment of exile.[153] Despite the gloomy designation, the questions display a literary movement towards a gradual and growing understanding as the evidence mounts before the people of the offspring surrounding them and what this would mean.

Isa 49:22 shares a similar concept in 60:4 with many other echoes found in the rest of chapter 60 (gathering, rebuilding, foreigners rebuilding). Beginning with the messenger formula, the emphasis is on the spoken word of YHWH, contrasting with "But Zion says*"* of v. 14, and her silent questions in v. 21. YHWH says "see" (הנה *Behold* - not referenced in NRSV) pointing them towards the evidence. It is a direct response to Zion's question and personal lament of v. 21, in the form of a salvation statement towards her using two chiasms: *lift up/*

150. Note the contrast with the arrogance of self-security Daughter Babylon shows by saying in her own heart in 47:8 "I am and there is no one besides me. I will never be a widow, or suffer the loss of children.*"*
151. J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function of Rhetorical Questions in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 123.
152. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 63.
153. Goldingagy suggests this is where the metaphor fades and the literal exilic experience is highlighted. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 390.

*signal, nations/ peoples; sons/ daughters, in their bosom/ on their shoulders*.[154] The depiction is of the journey back from Babylon to Zion.

The language becomes more and more aggressive from this point, recalling battle-call language.[155] The focus has developed beyond images of newborns to the exiles themselves returning to the land, on the shoulders of the victors (whilst continuing the idea of progeny and future). At first the imperial powers seem to be willing for the exiles to leave then they vacillate with the language becoming more violent.[156] This is not dissimilar to the response of Pharaoh to the Exodus, regretting the decision to release the Hebrew slaves because of the loss of face and economic cost. There are two images that need to be dealt with in the passage that seem to be in tension: the lifting a hand to the nations גוים and the raising of the signal to the peoples. The lifting up of the signal or banner of God is an indication of a victorious procession. Is the image meant to be YHWH *against* the nations in support of Israel (militaristic) or to cover the nations? This seems to be a point on which the verse turns. The latter sentiments in vv. 23 and 26 would suggest the former, but note Van Winkle who suggests that other references in Isaiah to raising a banner are more about the nations bringing gifts to Zion.[157] In this context the idea is that to deal with the incredible provision of offspring, the highest in the land would help out.[158] The reference to nations is connected to the eschatological emphasis found broadly in Isaiah. Isaiah 2:2-3 depicts "many people" coming to the mountain and Isaiah 60-66 expands this vision further.[159] In 49:22 the mention of the nations גוים (some translate as Gentiles) extends the v. 6 reference where the Servant was to be a light to the nations, but in v. 22 it would be YHWH who would be drawing the nations. There are some difficulties with this transition, as the following verse highlights that it is not necessarily a positive image of the Gentiles so much as a victorious shaming.[160]

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154. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 747.
155. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 221.
156. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 118.
157. See D. W. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah 40-55," *VT* 35, no. 4 (Oct 1985): 451. See also Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 748.
158. See Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 391.
159. John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 310.
160. See Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations," 452, on the various interpretations of these passages which attempt to soften the element of submission, which seem to be forced. On the debate around the meaning of "nations" see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah - Prophet of Universalism," *JSOT* no. 41 (1988): 83-103 ; Rikki E. Watts, "Echoes From the Past: Israel's Ancient Traditions and the Destiny of the Nations in Isaiah 40-55," *JSOT* 28, no. 4 (2004): 481-508; J. Severino Croatto, "The "nations" in the Salvific Oracles of Isaiah,"

Much of the scholarship on Isaiah has tended towards a reading where either universalism outweighs nationalism or vice versa. The "nations" are a central motif in the salvation oracles and yet their place is ambiguous.

Isa 49:23 continues to use familial and nursing mother imagery, but the powerful are doing works of service as wet-nurses to the children of the exiles.[161] As a mirror of v. 7 (just as v. 6 is reflected in v. 22) we see a complete power reversal. The images are of supplication, of the foreign powers serving, in humiliation and subjugation.[162] This picture of the overturning of power was possibly entirely unimaginable from where the exiles sat and it cannot be overemphasised how subversive this passage would have been in the Persian period.[163] In the ANE, conquered people commonly endured their own cultural depictions being portrayed in negative imagery as a way of distinguishing between the powerful and the 'other.'[164] Part of the rhetorical response to this may have been an attempt to reverse, to see the 'other' as the defeated. Isa 49:22 seems to focus on power as a reversal of shame, encouraging pride by using the same language of power that enslaved them. There is definitely no glamorisation of

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*VT* 55, no. 2 (2005): 143-161; Bernard Gosse, "Sabbath, Identity and Universalism Go Together After the Return From Exile," *JSOT* 29, no. 3 (2005): 359-370; Richard L. Schultz, "Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and approaches,* ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Leicester: IVP Academic, 2009), 122-144; Joel S. Kaminsky and Anne Stewart, "God of All the World: Universalism and Developing Monotheism in Isaiah 40-66," *HTR* 99, no. 2 (Ap 2006): 139-163; Julian Morgenstern, "Deutero-Isaiah's Terminology for "universal God"," *JBL* 62, no. 4 (Dec 1943): 269-280; D. E. Hollenberg, "Nationalism and the Nations in Isaiah 40-55," *VT* 19, no. 1 (Jan 1969): 23-36; John N. Oswalt, "The Nations in Isaiah: Friend or Foe; Servant or Partner," *BBR* 16, no. 1 (Jan 2006): 41-51; Elmer A. Martens, "Impulses to Mission in Isaiah: An Intertextual Exploration," *BBR* 17, no. 2 (Jan 2007): 215-239; Charles H H. Scobie, "Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 43, no. 2 (Nov 1992): 283-305; Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations,"; Anthony Gelston, "Universalism in Second Isaiah.," *JTS* 43, no. 2 (Oct 1992): 377-398. The presentation of the nations becomes more hostile in v. 23.

161. The nursing mother imagery not only picks up on v. 15 in a different way, but is also comparable to Isa 60:16. On the comparison of Isa 49:23 and 60:16 in relation to the familial images see Mayer I. Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 105-106. Note his work on wet-nurses and their roles variously in history in positions of service, particularly of those in more privileged social classes. אמניך from the root אמן (Strongs 539) which means "to confirm, support" and is translated in this passage to mean "your guardians" or your "foster fathers" (Watts uses "patrons") or to imply that the kings and queens will serve and care. This may link with the comfort motif.

162. Whybray gives the example of the famous image of Jehu, King of Israel bowed before Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III as the kind of supplication that the passage envisages. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 147.

163. Cf. Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire*, The Bible in the Modern World (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 109.

164. See Marian H. Feldman, "Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as Self-Portrayal in Empire," in *Interpreting Exile,* 135-150. I note particularly the Assyrian relief depictions of the "other" that were predominantly negative. Thus the contrast we read in 49:23 takes this commonplace image of power vs subservience to indicate reversal.

the powerful who led to their imprisonment: Kings/ Queens are tyrants personified as the city of Babylon. The suffering becomes meaningful. The exiles need to hear that YHWH would have justice. There seems to be an implicit threat in the verses, made explicit in v. 26, and this passage presents a contemporary reader with many challenges. It has been appropriated in history as a justification for empire building.[165]

The point of the salvation is not for Israel's glory or power, but for Zion to know YHWH's sovereignty. YHWH establishes the case of victory and the hope theme is raised explicitly, linked with the concept of waiting, and having expectation. The word קוי may mean wait, some versions have trust and it has the sense of enduring. A similar sentiment is found in Isa 51:6 and 60:9 where the same root קוה is used in relating to the coastlands (islands).[166] There is debate about whether waiting is in expectation or in dread. The argument is stronger for the sense of a positive waiting, an eager anticipation, based on the preceding verses in Isa 49:15-22. Those who do wait will not be shamed לא יבשו. This is in contrast to those who will be put to shame in Isa 41:11 (the ones who oppose); and 42:17, 44:9 (the ones who trust in idols rather than YHWH). This is an encouragement to faithfulness, which is not an easy call for those who feel they have already waited a long time. Isa 49:23 is a challenging affirmation of the core problem that the exiles face: loss of hope, and deep and real disappointment in YHWH. The divine recognition formula "Then you will know that I am the Lord" is a key to focus on in this passage.[167] Emphasising YHWH's creative redemption that enfolds the nations is an important rhetorical focal point in passages that aim to address confidence in YHWH's power and ability, as well as the extent of YHWH's capacity, to *save*, particularly in a context where that is in question. Passages that seek to demonstrate the end of the oppressor's power with an intention of building confidence in YHWH's *justice* use images that can appear narrow. The retributive nature of these verses, similar to that in

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165. For example, for over 400 years (16th to 19th century) English and American colonists interpreted this verse to be a slogan for the role of government to act as a "nursing father" towards the church. See James H. Hutson, *Forgotten Features of the Founding: The Recovery of Religious Themes in the Early American Republic* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2003), for further discussion. Hutson's main argument is that the nursing father's metaphor framed the relationship between church and state in America in the forming years (founding fathers age), but that it is a forgotten religious theme. See also Benjamin Lewis Price, *Nursing Fathers: American Colonists' Conception of English Protestant Kingship, 1688-1776* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 1999).
166. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations."
167. Schultz, "Nationalism and Universalism in Isaiah," 138.

imprecatory psalms, may be unpalatable to readers in the 21st century.[168]

In the format of another rhetorical question from Zion, Isa 49:24 uses language that is somewhat of a reminder of the situation, that they are captives, that their rulers are powerful. "Warrior" or "the mighty" may also be translated as "strong", as a parallel to "tyrant". More interesting is the translation of שבי צדיק as "lawful captives."[169] The issue at hand in these passages is deliverance, in contrast to a similar passage in Isa 5:29, where this deliverance seemed impossible.[170] The answer to the question of 49:24 is given in the following verse and it seems obvious to us when we can read the passage as a whole. However, the brutal reality for the exiles is portrayed with fierce warriors in control, in contrast to their situation as captives who need to be rescued. The overwhelming depiction of the enemy Babylon is of their power and supremacy.[171] The evidence is all against the answer being obvious. This really gets to the crux of the central issues DI seeks to address: YHWH is **willing** and **able** to save them.[172] Eidevall notes the tension within the text of Isaiah that sees both Babylon as a tool of YHWH, yet acknowledges the unjust excesses employed by that tool that YHWH allows.[173] This question resonates throughout biblical history: is YHWH truly the one in power when all around the evidence suggests otherwise? The wicked appear to prosper, the evil have control.

The question of v. 24 is restated as an affirmation in v. 25, with some slight changes to words. Some translations refer to the fierce as a "tyrant" or "the terrible," relating to Babylon.[174] The

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168. Childs reminds us of the futility of setting justice passages up against one another, as they have different literary intentions as well as varying contexts. Childs, *Isaiah*, 393.

169. There are issues regarding the translation of the MT צדיק as tyrant or fierce. 1QIsa[a], Vg. and Syr. all have עריץ. The v. 25 parallel uses עריץ tyrant. Most commentators go with tyrant. Watts refers to 'legitimate' captivity Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,* 747. The emphasis of the parallelism is the inverse power situation and the great feat of YHWH to overcome.

170. See Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 25. Eidevall notes the reformation and reversal in Isa 5:26-30, looking particularly at the use of hyperbole to describe the enemy.

171. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 106-132. Eidevall discusses the imagery of Babylon as enemy. As he notes "What the Babylonians actually did – capture Jerusalem, destroy the temple and deport parts of the population – remains an almost unspeakable and utterly inexplicable trauma within the literary world of Isaiah 1-66", 127. He lists Babylon as Judah's and YHWH's ultimate archenemy. 132.

172. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 147; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 304.

173. Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda*, 128.

174. Goldingay observes that it can also relate to YHWH (Jer 20:11) but the context seems to prefer the enemy.Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 393.

main point is that despite the hurdles, it will be YHWH who is the warrior who will see their release in emphatic terms "I will save" אנכי אושיע. Boadt suggests that the repetition of אנכי in this section is important, standing as a reinforcement, by repeating the ך *kaf* sound at end of the words similar to v. 17, as well as the use of assonance.[175] Children imagery returns, and it is YHWH who will save them. The children left destitute in Lam 1:16 are saved. There is a sense of personal protection. The point is reversal, and restoration.[176]

The language of v. 26 is characterised by its use of hyperbole and becomes particularly gruesome.[177] The eating of flesh is perhaps a reminder of the terrible situation for those in the siege of Jerusalem, and the cannibalism that is mentioned in Lam 2: 20 (as well as Deut 28:53-57; Jer 19:9; Ezek 5:10). YHWH judges, feeding the oppressors/tyrants מוניך their own flesh; in other words they will eat one another.[178] The violence would implode. As Dahood bluntly assesses, the issue is not one of translation but interpretation.[179] Is this justice? Not only would they return but their oppressors would not get off lightly. A postcolonial reading of Isaiah 49 needs to wrestle in the space of vv. 23 and 26. Brett suggests that "Isaiah's utopian peace is fractured" by passages such as this one specifically.[180] The retributive nature of this passage cannot be used as a justification for the exiles towards violence themselves, as it is clear it will be YHWH who metes out the justice. These sets of images may imply that the concept of the greed of empire that has devoured lands and peoples ultimately leads to self-destruction, that within their own being (structure or DNA) they hold a key to their own extinction. Understanding a community under stress can give us a way forward in our approach to reading the layers of overt subversion of nations as well as accommodation to imperial pressures, but it is difficult to reconcile these points of view. I think a different approach to these texts is necessary, one that incorporates the findings in trauma studies and exilic literature. Literature that emerges from dislocation, imperial subjugation and diaspora

175. Boadt, "Intentional Alliteration," , 362.
176. Blenkinsopp links the passage to Ps 35:1. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 315.
177. This has led Graffy to suggest that the section ends at v. 25. He also sees the passage as a disputation. He does not connect the tone of v. 26 with v. 23 and sees the structure of vv. 15 and 25 as parallel. Adrian Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, AnBib 104 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984), 91.
178. Blenkinsopp suggests that Babylon will self-destruct, devouring itself. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 315.
179. Dahood lists other HB verses which use similar phrases. Mitchell Joseph Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaia," *CBQ* 22, no. 4 (Oct 1960): 404.
180. Brett, *Decolonizing God,* 110.

will produce ambiguities. The presentation in Isaiah 49:26 is metaphorical and may be an example of mimicry.[181]

The tensions within the texts may also reflect the different models that are at work in Isaiah - the Deuteronomic and the Priestly. In a stage of transition it is not abnormal to see conflict representative of what is occurring in the society. The prophet has the task of challenging the people (and the community leadership) towards movement without alienating them. This requires particularly nuanced language that helps retain areas of cultural identity as well as challenging aspects of it, and this is a precarious balance for a people existing in dislocation. An area that is particularly fraught here is expressing the sovereignty of God in images and language that are clearly understood, whilst challenging some of the notions of how that is working out in their society.[182]

The purpose, not only of the destruction of the enemy but of the whole preceding passage of the restoration of Zion, is so that "all flesh shall know that I am YHWH, your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob*"*. The word "flesh" בשרם is echoed here with כל־בשר or "all flesh" and is probably a word-play with blood (דמם), with connotations of guilt and death, and the sentiment of justice by YHWH. The justice is not only evidence to the exiles of the faithfulness of God, but for the world who will be witnesses of God's faithfulness and divinity.[183] We see the imagery of the גאל kinsman redeemer again. The reference to the "mighty one of Jacob" or "strong one" is a unique reference in this part of

181. Shaul Bar explores various Assyrian treaty curses which depict the eating the flesh of children, such as between Assyrian Ashurnirari V and Mati'lu of Arpad, as well as one of Esarhaddon's treaties. Shaul Bar, "The Curse of Death in War," *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (Dec 2012): 231-237, esp. 233-234. Mimicry sees language reminiscent of violent imperial dominance turned subversively against the powerful, even if it is not explicitly clarified who the powerful are beyond general terms such as 'oppressors'. Cf. Jer 50:16 where Babylon is identified as the enemy and the wielder of the 'sword of the oppressor' is inferred to be Persia. There are a variety of ways of reading violence in the HB explored in Trible, *Texts of Terror*; Eric A Seibert, *The Violence of Scripture: Overcoming the Old Testament's Troubling Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). Violence in DI is frequently depicted, whether in reflection of the violence the exiles have experienced or the violence towards the Servant (even at the instigation of YHWH, cf. Isa 53:10). Note Goldingay who observes the two threads in Isaiah, and that the overthrow of violence takes violence. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 171.

182. For example, it is the **strength** and **decision** of YHWH that both orchestrated the situation of exile in DI (Isa 40:2; 42:24-25; 48:10-11), and the restoration (Is 41:2-4, 11-14; 46:8-11) with similar power.

183. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 222.

DI.[184] This forms the closure of the case for this passage, with a response to Zion's doubts and for all of humanity to be aware of the display of YHWH's redemption.

# 4. Feminine Imagery in Deutero-Isaiah

The passages that I have elected to study from DI have one major thread in common: they are texts that include many feminine images, metaphors and allusions. This is the space to investigate the purpose, power and problems relating to the use of feminine language and imagery within the broader text of DI, and to see what effect it has here in Isa 49:14-26.[185] Understanding the significance of these images, how they are used in the text, how they represent the people in exile as well as situations of loss, pain and restoration are vital hermeneutical keys to reading DI. References to women in the text of DI include direct representations of women, the people as a whole (Zion), as well as the use of metaphorical appropriation of feminine images to represent characteristics of YHWH. Reading from the place of alienation and exile provides particular resonance for some of these feminine texts and many interpretations along these lines will be helpful for this study.

The disaster of the exile may have provided the opportunity to reframe the language of prophecy in more feminine imagery for a number of reasons:

1) The graphic nature of the violence towards women during the exilic period may have been visually and socially disturbing. Rape and sexual violence used as a tool of power in war to break down the will of the people, victimise them and leave long term damage on identity are known throughout history and we know they were used by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

2) The breakdown of the family structure and its impact particularly on the vulnerable (such as women and children) during exile, is also known. With the death of children, husbands and fathers, and the separation of living families, there was great stress and grief in the remaining

184. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 394-395.
185. The discussion on the use of feminine imagery and metaphor in the Prophets is plentiful. In particular here and of note for Second Isaiah: Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*; Trible, *Texts of Terror*; Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion,"; Bebb Wheeler Stone, "Second Isaiah: Prophet to Patriarchy," *JSOT* 56 (1992): 85-99; Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel;* Weems, *Battered Love*. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel,* also has a chapter "Women and Isaiah" which looks at the various viewpoints of women in the text.

society.

3) The challenge for women in exile also related to their role in society, which traditionally involved the bearing of children and management of the home. With this severely disrupted, there was requirement for all members of society to function in new contexts. This would have been a source of great anxiety and despair, as well as of innovation and re-creation.[186]

Given the normative depiction of women in the HB, one does not have to read very far through the words of DI to notice a comparatively constructive feminine voice.[187] Many of the situations that are depicted in the text relate to the domain predominantly inhabited by women, whether they are about marriage, beauty, barrenness or plentiful offspring, birth, rape and abuse, or the creation of life.[188] There is meaning in the fact that the language is redeemed as well; language that had been used for judgement is turned to be used for redemption, a powerful rhetorical device.

Isa 49:14-26 interweaves a particular set of feminine metaphors: Zion – the female city; YHWH's love depicted in terms related to motherhood; images of birth, breastfeeding, wombs, loss of children, and barrenness contrasted with plentiful offspring. There is a question as to whether a focus on feminine imagery, particularly relating to Zion, in DI has been sufficiently assessed. Sawyer concludes that not enough critical attention has been given to feminine themes in the past, mainly due to patriarchal tendencies in scholarship, but that feminist perspectives are increasingly leading to these passages gaining the spotlight.[189] The prevalence of the relational metaphors and the role of women within these give the reader an

186. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 85-87. One of the challenges is the misreading of classifying ANE gender roles. For one thing, these roles may have changed over time and varying circumstances. See also Leo G. Perdue, *Families in Ancient Israel*, 1st ed., The Family, Religion, and Culture (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 29.

187. Bebb Wheeler Stone, "Second Isaiah." On DI's welcome focus on feminine spaces, especially Zion, see Kathryn L. Roberts, "Isaiah 49:14-18," 58. See also Halvorson-Taylor for a comparison of the destitute woman image which is frequent in DI. Referring to Isaiah 49 and 54, rather than waywardness, Zion's character is more comparable to Rachel or Ruth. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 117.

188. See Darr, *Isaiah's Vision,* 85-123, for associations with females in the text. She covers areas such as roles of subordination and dependence, weakness and vulnerability, haughtiness, submissiveness, limited knowledge and competence as well as relationships such as motherhood, marriage, daughters; issues of fertility and labour; and sex.

189. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion," 89-90.

invitation to engage, to be persuaded, to be moved.

Not all the voices of women in the text are liberating, there are disturbing voices and messages in the text at times that seem to give a message about the place and position of women in ancient societies that possibly jar with a modern reader's sensibility.[190] The reader needs to explore the reason for using images of women raped or desolate, what is the relevance, what may it be trying to say and what issues does it raise for us reading it today? There are clear challenges and hurdles for a 21st century reading of the text of DI and the depiction of women. Perhaps their neglect over time allows us to make fresh readings today that endeavour to elevate their visibility.

### (a) Motherhood, children and barrenness

Progeny, birth, and barrenness are common HB themes, and are especially prominent in Isaiah.[191] DI presents a case of two mothers - YHWH and Zion. The use of mother images in the text of DI is a further extension of the feminine imagery and has many interconnections, including direct associations with women as mothers, and offspring versus situations of barrenness with children being a sign of covenantal blessing and prosperity as outlined in Deut 28:4 where obedience to YHWH means "the fruit of your womb will be blessed."[192] YHWH is depicted via feminine anthropomorphic images of motherhood, built with comparative images or even juxtaposed with disjunctive metaphors (Isa 40:11 shepherd; 42:13-14 YHWH as divine warrior and giving birth; 46:3; 49:15.)[193] Gruber acknowledges

190. Weems, *Battered Love*, 1. Weems is not looking particularly at DI, in fact it is specifically focussing on Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

191. Note Genesis and the multiplication blessing; Eve's curse but implied blessing of continued procreation; Abrahamic promise and story of Isaac; Hannah; foundational links here with the theme of blessing and renewal. Interesting link also to the birth narratives of Jesus. In Isaiah note Isa 7 and 66:7-13 where the nation is born in a day. See also Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 304. Hauerwas and Willimon explore the idea of children being important in passing on a story in society. "We have children as a witness that the future is not left up to us and that life, even in a threatening world, is worth living – and not because 'Children are the hope of the future' but because God is the hope of the future." Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 60.

192. Contrast with the curse mentioned in Deut 28:41 where barrenness is associated with disobedience and exile.

193. See Nelly Stienstra, *Yhwh is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993), 55. Note the difference between anthropomorphic metaphor and literal anthropomorphic representations. See also Dille, *Mixing Metaphors;* Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife*. On the fascinating case of the overlap of the similes of YHWH as Divine Warrior and birthing woman see Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Like Warrior, Like Woman: Destruction and Deliverance in Isaiah 42:10-17," *CBQ* 49, no. 4 (1987): 560-571 ; Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a*

the unique focus Isa 40-66 gives to maternal images of YHWH, in contrast to the dominance in the HB of patriarchal images of YHWH.[194]

There may be more disturbing readings of the mothering and female imagery that we need to explore. As Sawyer observes, a more cynical view of some feminist scholars has been to take these maternal passages as further examples of male domination, asking if "the male God of Christian tradition remains male while taking over female tasks and qualities as well?"[195] A more positive approach has looked at the use of feminine terminology such as terms for "womb-love" that Trible has investigated, as discussed.[196] In these passages, God is far from distant; in fact the terminology used aims to show God involved in the most intimate of female experiences such as nursing and giving birth.

A lack of offspring was part of the cost of the exile that related to their future as a people; this represented an end to their future in many ways. "The children born in the time of your bereavement …" (49:20) immediately offers a sense of hope and the potential of things to come in the midst of the disaster. This juxtaposes birth and death, the best with the worst. YHWH is able to perform the miraculous, and is able to do the impossible and to do what they cannot do for themselves. Only YHWH can counteract the curse of Deut 28:41 in the rhetoric of DI.[197]

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*Metaphor for Crisis: Evidence From the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and IQH XI, 1-18*, BZAW 382 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2008); Tarja Philip, "Woman in Travail as a Simile to Men in Distress in the Hebrew Bible," in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East Part II,* ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting, 47th Recontre Assyriologique Internationale (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 499-505.

194. Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies*, 7-8. Note also ch. 4. The cultic affirmation of children included them in the reading of the law. Gruber investigates the notion of whether the Ancient Israelites had a lot of children, suggesting they had 4 on average due to the breast-feeding practices. Helen Schüngel-Straumann, "God as Mother in Hosea 11," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets,* ed. Atalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark Int, 2004), 194-218. Schüngel-Straumann suggests a translation of Hosea 11 that depicts YHWH in mothering terms (Ephraim). Her translation includes YHWH nursing, having a womb and displaying other feminine characteristics but never overtly called mother due to the struggle against Canaanite idolatry of feminine gods.

195. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel*, 204.

196. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality,* 33.

197. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 27.

I note that within most of the studies of Isaiah 49 that I have come across, there has been only incidental attention paid to the children. In the conversation about the limited voice of Zion in contrast to the dominant voices of YHWH, the prophet and the Servant in DI, I have not come across the observation that children are given no direct voice in the text. Yet it is their experience of exile that is considered in many ways the most indicative of the trauma. Putting children as central to the reading and giving them a voice may be an interesting new reading possibility.[198] The extended focus on children acts as a symbol of future and blessing as well as giving literal references to loss.[199]

The common HB trope of barrenness and God's provision of fertility in a situation of absolute impossibility is found in Isa 49:21.[200] Barrenness is associated with the theme of children being a blessing as well as being necessary for socio-economic security. The assumption was that it was YHWH who enabled a woman to conceive and that conception and birth were a blessing. The opposite then also held true: that to be unable to conceive or give birth denoted curse.[201] In a different contrast we find in 47:8-9 that Daughter Babylon would experience the loss of children, despite the smug comfortableness of her self-belief. This demonstrates a disturbing revenge motif, the desire for the destruction of Babylon's future via the death of her children.

Isaiah 49 deals with metaphorical and literal losses: Zion as the mother city losing her children, its inhabitants, and the literal losses of the exiled people of their own children, and therefore their future.[202] Isaiah 49 deals not only with barrenness but also with the death of children which possibly counteracts Lam 2:20-22, Jerusalem in siege, which contains images of children being eaten (contrast with v. 26 where "I will make your oppressors eat their own

198. A model for a positive approach to reading children in biblical texts can be found in Julie Faith Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle*, BJS 355 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013).
199. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, 159.
200. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 26.
201. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 117. See the Creation narrative Gen 1:28 where offspring were considered a blessing, and the story of Abraham and Sarah's desire to conceive. Cf. Isa 54:1.
202. I note here Vermeulen's point that Zion's children serve as a metonym in the prophets for the future generation. Karolien Vermeulen. "The Dashed Children of Mother City." *Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting*, Seoul, South Korea, July 7, 2016.

flesh"), and the concept that no one escaped or survived. Isaiah 49 builds images of new life (birth, baby at the breast, the life-giving mother) compared to images of great loss, causing the losses to seem greater and the new life even more incredible. In fact the new life seems miraculous, in contrast with the surrounding death. There are few images more horrific than the grief of a parent over a lost child, but they are more deplorable when the loss of the child may have come via the hand of the parent. War diminishes and dehumanises all so that the very worst of us emerges at times. What is incredible here is the possibility of redemption. YHWH contends with the enemies precisely by saving the children (Isa 49:25).[203]

## 5. Initial hermeneutical observations

From the analysis of Isa 49:14-26 (within the context of ch. 49 as a whole) I am now able to begin evaluating some of the emerging themes from the passage. The initial appeal of a study of this passage as potentially resonating with post-church readers holds strong validity after a thorough exegesis but also raises further questions. The underlying question of whether YHWH will act with loving-kindness and trustworthiness is relevant to the post-church context today. However, despite the presence of words of comfort, the reading experience may not necessarily be straightforward for the church leaver. Post-church people need to wrestle with painful questions about God's presence, as well as their own place and sense of home in changed circumstances.

A study of Isa 49:14-26 has led me to find value in feminist insights. As the only space in DI that gives Zion her own voice, a reading that goes against the grain where typically YHWH's voice dominates, may provide resonance for the voice of the churchless. I advocate that Zion's voice is a powerful protest, self-assertive and holding truth for survivor generations. Her story may resonate with ours in particular spaces. This is the first in a series of depictions of Zion in DI that seek to build her metaphorical restoration. Weaving one's way through the structure of the dialogue, the language is saturated with multilayered images of children, sorrow, rebuilding and restoration. Church leavers may identify with the words and deep senti-

203. Blenkinsopp makes the inter-textual link to Job here, that just as Job would have a new family out of nothing, so also would YHWH provide for Zion as a whole. But note that Job's dead children never returned. Replacement doesn't remove grief. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 309.

ment of Zion's loss, and rhetorical connections made across centuries may have resonance, but the source of the claims is different. This passage aims to give hope, not condemnation, by first articulating deep-seated anxieties. Zion seems captive to powerful, devouring oppressors with no hope of a way out. However, not only will she be delivered, by a remembering, compassionate YHWH who is like a mother - thus identifying with her core predicament personally - and who will never forget them as responsible גאל, but the powerful will be overthrown, treating the children like royalty. Via the eventual self-destruction of the powerful all the world will know that YHWH is saviour. Death will become life. Barrenness will become fertility. Defeat will become victory.

A significant obstacle post-church people may confront in reading DI relates to the presentation of YHWH's vengeance. Postcolonial approaches to DI can aid in navigating this difficult topic.[204] We see aspects of the colonising and imperial mindset as well as reactions to the trauma of exile. [205] Mixed messages are not uncommon in survival literature. Thus, at times we read in DI of the rejection of power structures and visions of a utopic society devoid of division, whereas at others there seems to be an appropriation of the domination language in a counter-imperial backlash, examples of "double-mindedness" and "hybridity."[206] We need to be careful to not take words of violence as justification for participating in oppression of the "other." Other significant findings in trauma/ refugee studies suggest a reading that recognises some of the following:

- What is not recorded may be just as important as what is recorded. The hidden transcripts have been shown to be just as significant as the overt transcripts.[207]
- Refugee studies indicate that nationalism is at risk of increasing in diasporic communities under threat of cultural assimilation.[208] We can definitely see uncomfortable in-

204. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife,* 2.
205. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," 181. Carolyn J. Sharp, "Sites of Conflict: Textual Engagement of Dislocation and Diaspora in the Hebrew Bible," in *Interpreting Exile*, 365-366.
206. Unlike Lamentations and Ezekiel which certainly display signs of immediate and extreme trauma, DI depicts more a longer term experience of diaspora and separation. See Carr for a discussion around the focus of DI in diaspora. David M. Carr, "Reading Into the Gap: Refractions of Trauma in Israelite Prophecy," in *Interpreting Exile*, 295-308 301-302.
207. See Carr on this in relation to the place of the anti-idol polemics in DI - Carr, "Reading Into the Gap," 304-305.
208. Carr, "Reading Into the Gap," 302-303. Carr particularly notes that the situation of the Babylonian exile

dications of this in the text of DI. Just as the exiles are treated as the "other" so they use similar language to separate themselves from the powers over them (tyrants, oppressors, warriors).

- The consequences of painful texts may be disturbing to us. Isa 49:23 and particularly 26 are examples of how a text of exile appropriates power language to see a bloody end.[209]

Isaiah 49 challenges those who are at risk of isolation to continue to move towards community. Gathering as a reversal of scattering, is depicted in vv. 6 -11 as evidence of YHWH's provision and redemption. We see this become a focal point of vv. 17-26. The overturning of the isolation of exile is a particularly interesting and challenging notion for a post-church community to consider, with preliminary questions raised such as:

- How does DI reframe gathering?
- What may gathering look like for the post-church, in what mode, and what context? The gathered community may have been part of the source of pain. What does gathering have to say in a culture of individualism?
- A deeper question is: what does belonging look like in DI? How is belonging presented for the children of Zion? Or for the ambiguous "nations" in 49:6?

YHWH is interested in the marginalised outsider in DI. First, the Servant, who experiences doubt and suffering, especially in the lament of 49:4, is a tool of YHWH from birth. The desolate Zion is a picture of social rejection but is restored to relationship. Children are valued in Isaiah 49 and are given a third person voice via YHWH. The nations' place as insiders or outsiders is more unclear throughout the chapter.

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may have helpful comparisons with refugee studies and looks at the presentation of purity. These observations may be fruitful in trying to understand the emphasis on the Babylonian exile returnees as the "real" Judahites, the push towards purity that the Ezra/ Nehemiah generation expressed. See also Smith-Christopher Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), Ch. 6 "Purity as nonconformity: Community solidarity as diaspora ethics," 137-162.

209. See Sharp on examples of splitting from Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "a polarizing move that is an adaptive and potentially pathological defense against trauma." She goes on to remind us that "...Subaltern speech can replicate dynamics of marginalization and generate terrible new disenfranchisements. 'History from below' can be ugly." Sharp, "Sites of Conflict," 372-373.

One of the interesting factors in reading the lament of v. 14 is that it is permitted to stand in the text. We see doubt expressed in the rhetorical questions of vv. 21 and 24 (perhaps even pre-empted by YHWH). There is a deep issue related to trust. There is a different kind of doubt expressed by the Servant in v. 4. When the assumptions of the frameworks of faith and life are challenged by exile, giving voice to the anxiety it causes is essential. It seems that DI is forming a narrative that enables the hidden doubt to be given voice and by doing so, the proclamation facilitates a mechanism for a counter-narrative to be constructed. This does not deny the pain. Similarly, post-church people tend to lose a sense of trust, and they need a Proclamation of Salvation that leaves space for an expression of doubt.

# 6. Isaiah 50:1-3: Faithful father, banished mother, silent children

## 1. Introduction to passage

In Isa 50:1-3 we encounter a continuation or even a persistence of the theme of abandonment evident in Isa 49:14-26.[1] YHWH combats the doubt with rhetorical questions, extending the pattern and ideas seen in the previous chapter via a familial metaphor. Therefore my analysis parallels that of Isaiah 49, but I consider this to be a separate oracle.[2] The shift in the metaphor is significant enough to examine it as distinct but related to 49, with the addressees being the children of Zion (second person masculine plural), not Zion herself (in contrast to 49:14-26 where references to 'you' are second person feminine singular referring to Zion). In 50:1-3 YHWH is talking with the unvoiced children of Zion about the perceived divorce of their mother, presumably addressing muted or implicit accusations towards YHWH. Other motifs include the issue of departing, being exiled (forgotten, divorced), the possibility of God's redemption, and the deserted wife. Despite the brevity of this section, we see a significant development in the metaphorical relational dynamic between YHWH and the situation for exiled Zion, but with a shift in the imagery and perspective.

1. Spykerboer discusses the conceptual connections via the use of repetition and contrasts of images as well as words/ lines/ ideas. Hendrik Carel Spykerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah With Special Reference to the Polemics Against Idolatry* (Groningen: Krips Repro B. V. Meppel, 1976), 189. This may also tie in with Lakoff and Johnson's concept of the overlapping metaphors that can work together to produce a cohesive argument. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 97.

2. Contra Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 313-314. Blenkinsopp considers Isa 50:1-3 to be linked with the previous section, seeing 49:24-50:3 as one composite section due to the shared themes. I agree with the similarities in theme but consider it to be a distinct oracle; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Rev. ed., WBC 25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 746-747, includes it in a section comprising 49:22-50:3. The use of the two setumot in the MT is a tool of structuring the Hebrew, and may be one reason to see 50:1-3 as separate from 49. This is noted by Richtsje Abma, *Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts With Marriage Imagery (Isaiah 50:1-3 and 54:1-10, Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2-3)*, SSN (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999), 63.

### (a) Structure, genre and language

I read this passage as a combination of a disputation and a trial scene. The repetition with a pattern of rhetorical questioning forms the structure and is key to interpreting the passage. 50:1-3 is sandwiched between the second Servant Song, the Proclamation of Salvation of 49:14-26 and the third Servant Song. There is a strong judgement tone in the passage which may be indicative of a disputation (Begrich, Brueggemann) or a trial scene (Schoors, Westermann).[3] There are connections to the complaint in 40:27 regarding YHWH's disregard and hiddenness, as well as the disputations of 42:18-25 and 43:22-28 and the trial scenes of 41:26-28.[4] Melugin highlights that the questions are certainly reminiscent of the trial scene with YHWH as the prosecutor and the accused as the exiles of Judah: "...The repeated occurrence in the Hebrew scriptures of *bô', qara',* and *'anā* as technical terms from trial language is reflected here."[5] However, Melugin hesitates at strictly limiting the form to the trial at the city gate, as it demonstrates more flexibility.[6] Most of DI's trial scenes address the false idols, not Israel.[7] DI takes the known form and uses it in new ways for a new situation. Given these categorisations, I note that although the form is quite different to the other passages explored for this thesis, it is an important development of Zion's depiction as even if she seems the absent character in the passage, she is the focus. The disputation resembles Job, in that it highlights the perceived imbalance of power: i.e., YHWH seems to have the power, Zion and her children in exile are at the mercy of this power.[8]

The main features of 50:1-3 are repetition with a pattern of rhetorical questioning, suggesting the remains of a trial scene. Double interrogatives begin vv. 1 and 2 which serves to not only

3. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1969), 223-224; Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 50; Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Pr, 1998), 119-120; Jan Leunis Koole, *Isaiah III* vol. 2, trans. Anthony P. Runia, HCOT (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997), 85.
4. Spykerboer, *The Structure and Composition of Deutero-Isaiah,* 166. Westermann also notes the connection to 40:27. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation,* 50. Cf. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 119; Roy Frank Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 51.
5. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 51.
6. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 52.
7. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 120; R. N. Whybray, *The Second Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 35-36.
8. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 315. Blenkinsopp goes so far as to suggest the issues of power and powerlessness are perhaps key themes in the whole of DI.

identify the exiles' assumptions but to overturn them. I have found Abma's structural outline (see Table 8) to be the most helpful in depicting Isa 50:1-3 as it emphasises the rhetorical questions.[9] By highlighting the chiasm in v. 1 we can immediately see that the main focus is restoration of the relationship, which is YHWH's prerogative.

| | **Verse** | **Question or response** | **Terms demonstrating chiasm** |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 1b-c | question | send away |
| | 1c-d | question | sell |
| | 1f-g | response - introduced by הן *hen.*[10] | sell<br>send away[11] |
| B | 2a-b | double question | |
| | 2c-d | double question | |
| | 2e-3b | response -introduced by הן | |

Table 8: Structure of Isa 50:1-3 following Abma

# 2. Verse analysis

Isaiah 50 commences with the messenger formula "This is what the LORD says" or "Thus says the LORD" clearly presenting the speaker as YHWH, and connecting the passage to the preceding verse which also uses the messenger formula (49:22). Zion is conspicuous in her absence, with her children being addressed.[12] There may be some parallel between Isa 50:1 and the trial scene in Hos 2:2 where the children are told to rebuke their mother for her sins.[13] The extension of the metaphors of YHWH as husband and Zion as wife and mother may have been derived from the Hosea scene. Yet in the case of Isa 50:1-3, despite the sin that is described, there is no certificate of divorce described.

Whether the questions are rhetorical or not is a moot point. Their ambiguity provides space to interpret them in various ways but it is clear their presence indicates that an argument

9. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 70.
10. See Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55,* 53.
11. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 70.
12. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 64.
13. There is a possible implied bill of divorce in the formula "She is not my wife and I am not her husband." Hos 2:2.

existed.[14] We are immediately made aware of the key issues behind the passage by the first set of double questions - whether the exile equalled a broken covenant between YHWH and the people forever, and YHWH's culpability.[15] The first question addresses a core fear and the massive hurdle the exiles were facing in regards to how they could understand their position with YHWH into the future. In the expulsion account of Gen 3:23-24 where Adam and Eve are sent from the garden, the Hebrew root שלח is used to indicate being sent away; a term which appears in Isa 50:1, referring to the mother being sent or put away (cf. Jer 3:8). The calling motif and lack of answering YHWH in the garden in Genesis 3 may also be alluded to in the rhetorical questions of Isa 50:2. The second rhetorical question "to which of my creditors did I sell you?*"* is unusual, as the implication is that YHWH has creditors, but surely YHWH owes no one (cf. 45:13 regarding freeing the exiles *"*not for a price or a reward," NRSV).[16] The associations are that they (as exiles) are dominated by an imperial power.[17] As Abma suggests, the language is of trade and commerce.[18]

The blame here appears to be placed on the children ("Because of your iniquities/ infractions/ guilt you were sold") and this is highlighted by the chiasm. This contrasts to the positivity of language about the children in 49:14-26, but does align with the rationale of blame found in 42:18-25, 43:22-28, and 48:1-11.[19] These children are the descendants of the initial exiles.[20] The hope that can be found in the passage is that they are not permanently separated and that the punishment has been enacted so as to see a restoration of the relationship. The fact that

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14. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 120.
15. J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function of Rhetorical Questions in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, VTSup 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 137.
16. Abma emphasies that YHWH is presented in 40:1-11 as a creditor not a debtor. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 73. Also cf. Ps 44:12, a national lament for military loss that contains many parallels to the crisis of Job, with the crisis or the challenges to a covenantal relationship, sent by God, when there seems to be no obvious cause. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50,* WBC 19 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 331-335.
17. Note Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, 85. Cf. Deut 32:30.
18. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 72-73.
19. Cf. 40:2 where Jerusalem's debt has been paid, and she has received double for her sins.
20. John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah,* BZAW 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 216-217. Ahn's analysis of the successive generations of exiles and their reinterpretation of the causes and faults of exile may be of use here. He considers the generation of DI to be the Second Generation, and uses a study of Isaiah 43 to defend his case. The section referenced outlines the sociological concerns of the second generation, including tensions between the first, 1.5 generation, second and third generation, anxiety for the children of the exiles regarding further displacement, and other issues related more to the rise of Cyrus and idols. This analysis does not deal with the issue of punishment.

this is framed in a relational metaphor (as an act of discipline) suggests the desire of YHWH to maintain the relationship, not end it.

Following the pattern of v. 1, v. 2 commences with two double rhetorical questions.[21] The content is completely different from the preceding verse even if the pattern is the same. Whereas 50:1 is dealing with the punishment of exile and YHWH's role in the expulsion, v. 2 deals with an accusation about whether the exiles respond to YHWH and whether YHWH is powerful. We find repetition of ואין for "no one" (or "no man") implying no response, which Brueggemann suggests is possibly a comparison to the idols who do not respond.[22] YHWH came, and called (God has acted) and there is no response.[23] Zion is the implied non-responder in this passage.[24] This is similar to 41:26-28 where there was no one to respond to YHWH's message to Zion or offer wisdom. When reading this passage in the light of 42:14 where YHWH admits to silence, or the accusation of abandonment in 49:14, perhaps the hearers may have had a right to feel somewhat indignant: this is precisely their issue, that YHWH was silent to them for too long, inactive and inattentive.[25] We can also read this passage alongside 50:4-5 where the Servant does listen and pay attention to YHWH, where the Servant also acts and cannot be accused (50:6-8). YHWH's presence is being emphasised here.

The feminine abstract noun פדות means "ransom, redemption." It is a word rarely used in the HB (4 times, only once in this form) but there are possibly links to the Exodus motif with the concepts of sacrifice of the firstborn (as a ransom to redeem). This is juxtaposed with the

21. Motyer makes a link with the double rhetorical questions of Isa 5:4, the Song of the Vineyard. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1993), 397.
22. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 120.
23. See Blenkinsopp who connects the themes of coming and calling with no response, or YHWH's faithful response to 58:9; 65:1, 12; 66:4. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 316. Also note Mandolfo who suggests that this "is reminiscent of YHWH's calling Adam and Eve in the garden after they have eaten the apple, or his question to Cain after he has slain his brother. In Genesis the rhetorical questions are calling attention to human sin." Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, SemeiaSt 58 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 110. She reads it therefore as a negative but that there is ambiguity in the response that can lead us to see YHWH is to blame for their absence as they are in an exile YHWH has generated.
24. See also Isa 47:15 where there is no one to save the fallen city of Babylon and 51:18 where there is no one to guide drunken Jerusalem, suffering God's wrath. This depiction of no response, no help, no one else to suffer with is an ultimate image of isolation. Is YHWH in this passage isolated and alone?
25. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 120.

supposed shortness (הקצור) of YHWH's arm (depicting lack of power). The question is about whether YHWH lacks the strength or power (כח) to rescue/ deliver - להציל - with the root נצל. YHWH can deliver which serves as a contrast to the one (idol worshiper) in 44:20 who cannot save himself. These are important corrections about the notions of YHWH. There is a similarity of theme between Isa 42:15-16, 49:25 and 50:2, where YHWH's power is emphasised. Enslavement, which seems dominating, is overcome by YHWH.

The imagery from 50:2b turns towards depictions of YHWH's destructive power (again delivered via word). The use of הן calls the listeners to pay attention, just as they were called to attention in the previous verse to their own sinfulness. It is in the context of doubt that the terribleness of YHWH's power will be unleashed.[26] This is very similar to 42:15 where the power of YHWH is destructive, by laying waste to mountains and hills and drying up the vegetation and the water. It is the opposite of 41:17-20 where the poor and needy receive water and trees grow due to the creative power of YHWH.[27] Brueggemann notes the use of the verbs "I dry up", followed in v. 3 by "I make" and "I clothe". YHWH is active as evidenced by the proliferation of verbs.[28] Verse 3 incorporates judgement imagery which may be linked with the plague of darkness in Exodus (Exod 10:21–29). The destruction imagery is possibly reminiscent of the scenes of invasion that the earlier exiles experienced upon the burning of Jerusalem.

The passage ends abruptly on the destruction imagery which seems rather fragmentary, being followed by a Servant Song. Despite its brevity the passage corrects many fallacies about Judah's exiled status, their relationship with YHWH, and the character of YHWH. It is another layer in the rebuilding of identity and confidence. However, it may also be doubly disturbing. The reassertion of YHWH's destructive power may not seem reliable to the exile as it was this power unleashed on themselves that led them to the place of exile. How are they to trust this power?

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26. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, 86.
27. Cf. Isa 42:14-16 on this concept of drying up and destructive/ creative power.
28. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 121.

# 3. Metaphors in Isaiah 50:1-3

Isa 50:1-3 does not extensively build its metaphors, but this brief section of text effectively uses assumptions that rely on previous metaphorical associations for coherence. Within the first verse we encounter three different interrelating characters: YHWH with implied roles of father and husband, children, and absent mother (Zion). This metaphorical representation of familial relationship includes a suspected divorce and slavery. The metaphors work by drawing on associated commonplaces.[29] To understand we are required to draw on information beyond the actual text.

### (a) YHWH as divine father and husband

I have focussed specifically on feminine metaphors in DI during this thesis, such as YHWH as mother. This is due to the unique voice these metaphors make available to us, as a departure from more stereotypical imagery for YHWH. However, overlapping with these feminine metaphors are many masculine metaphors, either explicit or implicit in the text. Two particular masculine metaphors for YHWH include father and husband. Today we are possibly more familiar with depictions of YHWH as father than mother, but perhaps surprisingly the HB does not typically represent YHWH as father.[30] Parental metaphors contain many associations such as care and safeguarding, as well as correcting, that are helpful to an understanding of God's role with the people of Israel.[31]

Isa 50:1-3 depicts an accusatory conversation (one way) with the children (undeclared) of Zion ("your mother"). The metaphor of YHWH's role as father and husband emphasises destructive patriarchal power and action, associated with the Exodus history (cf. 43:1-7).[32] The rhetorical question highlights the anxiety of the children about where their mother is, but suggests that their assumptions about a divorce are wrong. This implies that the exiles'

29. Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1.
30. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 35. Dille quotes Anderson to explain that during the monarchical period parental metaphors were probably avoided to distance the pagan notions of physical/ natural relationships between god and people.
31. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 36.
32. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 175.

assumptions about YHWH's neglect are incorrect or that it was just the action of YHWH that sent them away and sold them into slavery. The implication is that the children's actions caused the situation, an entirely different tone than we saw in the previous chapter when the children of Zion were referenced and gathered. We are left to wonder if it is the first generation of exiles that is being addressed, which seems unlikely. So much effort in the rhetoric of DI is about the payment of the debt, the restoration of Zion and her children (cf. 40:2; 49:14-26; 54:1). There is a breakdown in the parental metaphor here because the expectation is that a parent protects the child, which connects with the assumption of Isa 49:15 that YHWH as mother would not forget the baby at her breast.

The way marital metaphors function in the HB to communicate a relationship between YHWH and YHWH's people is generally that YHWH = faithful husband and Israel = faithful or unfaithful wife, but sometimes the representation is not straightforward. The metaphors are built via relational language describing roles and feelings (love, betrayal, intimacy, actions), personification, and allusions. They use, change and add to meanings that were commonplace.[33] As the literary context changes, so also the meaning may adapt. One of the key images of marriage is covenant.[34] This can be found particularly in Hos 1:9 and Ezek 16:8 but only briefly in DI (54). They are not directly linked concepts in other prophets but they are alternated as a mechanism of expressing the relationship between YHWH and the people.

### (b) Zion as wife of YHWH

As we have seen, Isaiah 49 builds the imagery of Zion as a mother who has lost her children. Isa 50:1-3 assumes her motherhood by talking directly to the children with references to "your mother" אמכם but has the added implication of Zion as wife of YHWH.[35] The position of wife in 50:1-3 is a threatened one, a wife who has been punished due to sin. Even if she is

33. T. C. Parker, "Marriage and Divorce," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets,* ed. Mark. J. Boda and J. Gordon. McConville, Black Dictionary (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 535.
34. Cf. G. P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed From the Perspective of Malachi*, VTSup 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).
35. It is interesting to note Dille's point that the depiction of Zion as a wife of YHWH is missing from Lamentations, a book which otherwise shares many similarities to DI. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors,* 136. In fact, DI is seen by some, ie: Patricia Tull Willey, to be so similar that it is a response to the lament. Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

not being divorced, she has been sent away. It is this assertion that appears to depict Zion (unnamed) as more than the city, because the physical city, destroyed as it was, remained in Judah. Whereas the desolate people identified with Zion were sent away. In this metaphor the children seem separated from their mother and are sold. So both are sent away, and experience a separation from one another. These multiple presentations make it difficult to clearly pin down the addressees. This is a potential example of where we see the metaphor being stretched and the problem of trying to limit the metaphor to only a place or a time.[36]

Zion's situation being a result of YHWH divorcing her is contested in the passage. A divorced wife in ancient Israel was economically and socially vulnerable. As a mother, Zion is silent in this passage and she is only depicted as the addressee via the words of YHWH (thus says the LORD). She has no opportunity to frame her own story. She is signified by her absence. Actions have happened to her; she has been sent away. We also note that in this passage the absent mother/ wife is juxtaposed with the depiction of YHWH as present father and husband.

### (c) Marriage and Divorce

The shaping of the marriage and divorce metaphor that is used in 50:1-3 is an extension of its use in other parts of the HB. In 50:1-3 the imagery assumes that YHWH is the faithful husband and Zion the unnamed but implied unfaithful wife. The words for "severance document" ספר כריתת and being sent away שלחתיה referred to in 50:1 are found in Jer 3:8 where faithless Israel receives the certificate of divorce *"*I had sent her away שלחתיה with a decree of divorce ספר כריתת; yet her false sister Judah did not fear, but she too went out and played the whore." (NRSV). The cause of the divorce is Israel's adultery which is a metaphor for idolatry. This understanding of the divorce process possibly derives from Deut 24:1 *"*Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, ספר כריתת puts it in her hand, and sends her (root שלח) out of his house" (NRSV). The "cutting" (severance) of the document is related to the covenantal language (to "cut" a covenant), authoris-

36. Contra Maggie Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah: A Metaphor for Zion Theology*, Studies in Biblical Literature 155 (New York: Peter Lang, 2013). Low's main argument is that Zion is a place, not representative of the people in exile.

ing the divorce.[37] It is interesting to note that the Jeremiah section begins with a rhetorical question about whether *"*If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not such a land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you now return to me?" says the LORD*"* (Jer 3:1, NRSV).[38] 50:1 recalls the imagery of these verses but overturns the assumption. It appears that there is no evidence of the divorce document. Baumann suggests two reasons for this: first, that the divorce is metaphorical anyway, and second, that the situation between Israel and Judah is different.[39] The mother was sent away but not in an irreversible situation, and thus separation (geographic) does not mean an end to the relationship. This is intended to bring a sense of hope.

The use of otherwise similar terms, ideas and rhetorical questions recalling Jeremiah and Deuteronomy - the language of divorce and the language of exile (sent away) - is appropriated for different purposes. The reason for employing the marriage and divorce metaphors is clear when divorce was considered a major social disruption, just as exile was a major rupture for the Judeans. Divorce was also understood negatively in the HB (cf. Mal 2:16 but also note the hatred of violence). Being "sent away" is the exilic metaphor and being "sold" even more clearly relates to enslavement. Blenkinsopp sees the underlying issue of the passage being "theodicy with regard to the fall of Jerusalem and attendant disasters, an issue that haunted the writer's generation."[40]

### (d) Children of Zion

The children of YHWH are the unnamed recipients of this oracle, although we do not hear their voices. In fact, they do not even respond to the questions, from the text we have before us. They are depicted as being in a situation of slavery (having been sold), without their mother who was sent away, and the blame is squarely put on their own shoulders. These are exilic images as well as strong representations of a true subaltern. The children appear to have no agency and only YHWH is depicted as having any power. From the passage itself we

37. Abma, *Bonds of Love,* 71.
38. Hosea 1-3 provides a significant foundation to the use of marriage and divorce metaphors in the HB.
39. Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship Between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical, 2003), 184.
40. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 315.

can take a few clues but we may also build the picture by looking at other passages that refer to children of Zion.

Children are referred to throughout DI, and the references are used for various purposes. It is probable that this passage recalls imagery of the children referred to in Lamentations but also significantly here in relation to the divorce imagery, the children of Gomer, particularly as they appear in a divorce court proceeding in Hosea 2. The children of Isaiah 49 are also very much in mind in the placement of the passage. In Isaiah 49 the focus is on the mother, who we have seen presented as desolate, bereaved, exiled and rejected, but the passage slowly overturns these self-understandings. The children in 49 (15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25) include babies, sons and daughters, the children born replacing the dead, the diaspora returning from afar to inhabit the land again. They are portrayed as part of the restoration for the mother, as multiplying despite the circumstances of exile, and asking for more space to live in. The children are carried on the shoulders of Gentiles and saved by YHWH. The reference to children in 50:1 may be indicative of the actual exiles. The use of the figurative is a literary device employed to speak to real people in crisis in more palatable and even subversive ways.

# 4. Hermeneutical reflections

The relevance of this passage to post-church people may begin in the space of abandonment that Isa 49:14-26 initially raises, with 50:1-3 addressing the doubt the exiles have towards YHWH's care. YHWH's response to the lament of Zion in 49 has not alleviated the anxiety of her children in 50:1-3. Clearly one of the issues being addressed here is the concern that the exile, banishment, and punishment (all aspects of it) was not only excessive but would be permanent - that the people would be forever in a disconnected state from YHWH and that there would never be an opportunity to go home. The dislocation a post-church person can experience leaving a close community, the challenge to a sense of home, and their previous theological understandings of God, may resonate with this reframing message.

In Isaiah 49 the children seemed to play a role of participating in the healing of their broken mother. In 50:1-3 the children seem to be the unfortunate mediators between conflicted parents, acted upon. This is a distressing representation, but a reality for so many children in situations of crisis. Dealing with metaphors of marriage, parenthood and divorce provides some challenging hurdles. The reader benefits from understanding the backgrounds to these metaphors, but there may be significantly different experiences of these today. There may be a breakdown in the commonplace associations and post-church people may also find framing the love and forgiveness of YHWH in the image of a disciplining and punishing parent or husband prohibitive. I note here the work of Julie O'Brien who looks at the use of the father metaphor for YHWH as accompanying the idea of the father as authoritarian.[41] Following an ideological critique, O'Brien suggests that such metaphors can be read via a lens of our own experiences of childhood, parents and parenting (positive and negative) and "shows the way in which holding onto parental models infantilizes the believer before God and before the world. Rather than trying to heal by making God into a new parent, the wounded might find value in understanding God as the 'enlightened witness,' the one who stands apart from dysfunctional family systems and names them for what they are."[42] O'Brien talks about the move to reading the Bible as adults, rather than as children. In the context of parenting metaphors of YHWH, we may find this a particular navigational challenge, due to our own comparative experiences.[43]

Hearing the voices of children who have suffered war and exile may enable us to understand some of the pain we find in this passage.[44] For the post-church person the challenge is to take their empathy for the experience of marginalisation and look towards the 'other' in the world. By humanising this passage we avoid taking it too far away from its traumatic roots of exile

41. Julia M. O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2008), ch. 5.
42. O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor,* 99.
43. This may also relate to other uses of a parenting metaphor such as Zion as mother. I do not assume problems may only relate to imaging God as father.
44. For example, *Save the Children Australia* has uploaded several short animated films made by Syrian refugee children describing their situation in their own words/ images. One of these is the story of 13 year old Inaam who describes her house being bombed whilst her mother was singing her to sleep, and the escape and fear she now lives in. "Inaam's Animation, Syria," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v7X58K8Mrc (accessed Nov 1, 2013). These depictions are not only informative for the wider world, they are transformative opportunities for the children to use art as a therapeutic mechanism.

and crisis. Using the resources of current studies of PTSD suffered by those affected by war and displacement, it is clear that one of the acute sources of anxiety for children is the status and safety of their parents, particularly their mothers. If the children addressed in this passage are exiles, it may be assumed that they are separated from their mother. This is commonplace in times of war. Children need to navigate through reasons why they are displaced, why their worlds have changed.[45] Perhaps Isa 50:1-3 is a particular response in crisis to explaining to children the cause of their suffering; it is a rationale for their suffering with hope embedded that the suffering would end. It is a terrifying read (YHWH destroying, drying up earth, fish rotting, dark sky), hardly the stuff of children's bedtime stories, but when the context of the exiles' doubt is understood it is clear that it is meant to be inspiring. They feared their God was no longer powerful, thus this imagery needed to be emphasised. Children of war experience a break of trust, demonstrated in Isa 50:1-3 with the broken trust between YHWH and the children of Zion. The children are silent in their response. A resistant reading may ask: How would the children respond? And why didn't they? I propose that 50:1-3 presents us with a gap, where in the silence of the children's response we can read into the space and see the children speak back to YHWH. Likewise a post-church person may wish to speak back to YHWH with their ongoing doubts or questions.

The shift from the mother metaphor for YHWH in ch. 49 to the father metaphor in 50:1-3 should be seen as a hermeneutical opportunity. The audience's presumptions about YHWH are being dismantled. A post-church person who is attempting to recover broader understandings of God and deal with personal guilt that may arise from their abandonment of church, may find such readings that re-position notions about YHWH's faithfulness helpful. A post-church person may find great comfort in the expression of YHWH's power and strength, and the metaphorical overturning of the divorce expectations. The underlying self-perception of the exiles that YHWH does not love them, has rejected them and that there is no way back is challenged in this reading and for a post-church person that may offer hope of restorative relationships with YHWH and broken communities.

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45. Kollontai's paper explains the brutal effects on children's sense of self during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, focussing on the use of art as a tool of healing. Pauline Kollontai, "Healing the Heart in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Art, Children and Peacemaking," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 15, no. 3 (Aug 2010): 261-271.

# 7. Isaiah 51:17-52:6: Captive Daughter Freed

"Turning a human being into a thing, is almost always the first step in justifying violence against them." Jean Kilbourne.[1]

## 1. Introduction to the passage

The journey of personified Zion continues to develop in Isa 51:3 and 12 where we see her appear again requiring comfort. Jerusalem/ Zion is personally addressed in 51:17-52:6, as a mother of absent children, in a section closely connected to the preceding and following passages.[2] Identified as Captive Daughter in 52:2, Zion is then re-imagined as free. The passage is a Proclamation of Salvation incorporating a lament and response, whereby the prophet and YHWH continue to argue the case for the restoration of Zion, by speaking directly to her or about her, although Zion has no personal voice.[3] Zion's desolation remains the backdrop for the proclamation, and she is exhorted to free *herself* from her oppression. The unique features of Zion's characterisation in 51:17-52:6 include her imaging as a drunken mother and possibly a rape victim, with an emphasis on the desperation of her state. She is then re-described as strong and wearing garments of splendour.

### (a) Structural Outline

1. **A call for Drunken Jerusalem to awaken herself (51:17-23)**
*Rouse yourself, rouse yourself* (17a)

A. **Lament - Problem identified** (vv 17b-20b)
Punishment from hand of YHWH has devastated Zion (v17b-21b)
She is alone, there is no help from her children

B**. Response - solution outlined - what YHWH will do** (vv. 21a-23b)
*Hear ... afflicted one* (21a)

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1. Jean Kilbourne, *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image Of Women,* Documentary, directed by Sut Jhally, The Media Education Foundation, 2010.
2. Childs argues for the connection of 52:1-6 with the previous chapter as due to the personification. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, Ky.; London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 405.
3. Westermann classifies 51:9-52:3 as a Proclamation of Salvation due to the call for liberation, and a response to the cry for help of 51:9. Claus Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation in the Old Testament*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 43-44.

Although devastated by YHWH, the punishment is over and YHWH will pass on the punishment to those who tormented Zion

2. **A call for Captive Daughter Zion to awaken** (52:1-6)
*Awake Awake*

**A. Proclamation Commission - what Zion must do** (vv 1-2)
Zion to be restored and freed
**B. Historical interlude - Cause of the suffering** (vv 3a-5b)
*For no reason*;*First...Egypt; Then...Assyria; Now...* [Unnamed] *oppressor*
Blasphemy
**C. Climax - YHWH's name known** (6)

**Detailed structural outline**

1. **A call for Jerusalem to awaken herself (51:17-23)** *Rouse yourself, rouse yourself* (17a)
A. **Lament - Problem identified** (vv 17b-20b)
*Drunk* from *hand of YHWH* (v17b)
the *cup of his wrath* (v 17b)
*Drunk the dregs of cup of staggering* (v 17c)
No *guidance* by *hand* (v 18a)
no children - who were brought up (v 18a-b)
calamity (19a)
*Who will console?* (v 19a)
Devastation/ destruction (v 19b)
Famine/ Sword
*Who will comfort*?
no children - fainted (*streets*) (v 20a)
Trapped antelope
Filled with *wrath of YHWH* (v 20b)
*rebuke of God*

B**. Response - solution outlined - what YHWH will do** (vv. 21a-23b)
*Therefore, hear afflicted one* (21a)
*Drunk* not with wine
Thus says Lord YHWH (v 22a)
cup of wrath *taken* from *hand* (v 22b)
*cup of trembling*
*cup of wrath*
You will not *drink* (v 22c)
*put into hands* of *oppressors*/ *tormentors* (v 23a)
who made you *lie down*
*body like a street* (23b)

**2. A call for Captive Daughter Zion to awaken** (52:1-6) *Awake Awake*
**A. Proclamation Commission - what Zion must do** (vv 1-2)
*Put on strength Zion* (v 1a)
*Jerusalem put on beautiful clothes* (v 1b)
*No longer uncircumcised enter* (v 1 c)

*unclean*
*Shake off dust* (v 2a)
*Arise, sit up, Jerusalem*
*Loose cords, Captive Daughter Zion* (v 2b)

**B. Historical interlude - Cause of the suffering** (vv 3a-5b)

For thus says YHWH (v 3a)
For no reason
For thus says Lord YHWH (4a)
First...Egypt
Then...Assyria
Now... unnamed oppressor
Those who rule, *howl* (4b)
Blasphemy

**C. Climax - YHWH's name known** (v 52:6)

Therefore, *my people know my name*
Therefore, in that day
I am speaking, behold!

## (b) Language and structure

If we read DI canonically, we leave Isa 50:1-3 with an assumption of Zion's divorce challenged and YHWH's position as faithful husband and father reasserted (but not beyond question). Chapter 50:4-11 comprises a Servant Song, and it seems that the story of Zion is again alternated with the story of the Servant. Chapter 50 depicts resistance to the Servant, ending with those who do not respond lying down in torment. Chapter 51 is comprised of multiple Proclamations of Salvation, with terms, themes and structure being important to outline as the pattern is repeated in the section 51:17-52:6, a section which further extends our interpretation of Zion's personification.

Chapter 51 is typically divided in its first section into vv. 1-3, 4-6 and 7-8, the latter including אל־תיראו which may be indicative of a "fear not" oracle.[4] I will consider the imperatives, parallelisms, interrelated terms and major themes as structural indicators. Each subsection commences with "summoning"[5] and "anaphoric imperatives"[6] such as: "Listen" שמעו, repeated in

4. John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 418. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/ John Knox Pr, 1998); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 323-324.
5. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 125
6. Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 357.

51:7; 51:4 uses קשב , also translated as "listen" (cf. 46:3 where the house of Jacob is called to listen), and directed to those who pursue righteousness (51:1, 7); 51:9 and 52:1 use a double imperative עור עור "Awake awake"; 51:17 begins with a double imperative in an intensive reflexive (hitpolel) form of עור meaning to awaken, in a feminine singular form התעוררי התעוררי "Rouse yourself, rouse yourself", also translated as "Awake", or "Wake yourself".[7] The use and theme of these terms are clearly related, providing structural clues up to 52:12 which concludes the segment, with 52:11 calling the exiles to סורו סורו "Depart, depart". Each imperative is followed by an identification of Zion's pitiful state, and the assertions of the end to that state via YHWH's imminent deliverance.[8] The following themes are repeated as the chapter continues: righteousness, deliverance and salvation, joy and comfort (x 2) of Zion, as well as of her waste places.

We find in 51:1-16 allusions to Eden, Abraham, Sarah, law and David, effectively re-framing Israel's story.[9] The emphasis on the creation and Abrahamic traditions may be further evidence of the downplaying of the Davidic monarchy.[10] The *Torah* (law/ teaching) of YHWH will go out from YHWH and the משפט (justice) of YHWH for all people.[11] The frailty and impermanency of the earth and humans is viewed in contrast with the deliverance of YHWH. The double imperative עור in 51:9 which then appears in singular form is a call to awaken directed towards the arm of YHWH (cf. 50:2). This section draws on Rahab and chaos water

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7. J. Schreiner, "*'Wr* עור," in *TDOT,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 571. Cf. Isa 50:4 where the servant is *awoken* by the Lord each morning to listen.

8. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 125. J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Contribution of Rhetorical Criticism to Understanding Isaiah 51:1-16," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature,* ed. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1982), 140-171, 147. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 418.

9. That Sarah is not mentioned outside of Genesis in the HB other than in 51:2, is a significant observation made by commentators. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 326. These are signs again of the relationship between Genesis and Isaiah. Blenkinsopp acknowledges the clear comparisons between the journey of Abraham from Mesopotamia and the journey of the exiles, the theme of land and nationhood. Perhaps there is also something here of the imagery of the garden of Eden for a community experiencing loss where the city lay in ruins.

10. Willey notes that even though Isa 52:8-10 uses Psalm 98 in the background, the emphasis is on YHWH's reign, not on the earthly king as the future of the Davidic monarchy. Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS 161 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 125.

11. Cf. 42:1-4. Blenkinsopp sees the references in ch. 51 where YHWH is the establisher of *torah* and משפט as evidence of Cyrus' failure to live up to the hopes expressed in Isaiah 40-48. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 327-328. This may be a subversive reminder that the people are not to become seduced by Babylonian or Persian law or governance. There seems to be an extension of Isa 2:3 - Zion is the place where YHWH's *torah* comes from Zion; whereas in 51:3 Zion is comforted by YHWH and her ruins looked on with compassion and in 51:4 the law goes out from YHWH.

mythology, as well as exodus imagery, calling on ancient traditions for new purposes. A return to the city Zion, by those identified as "my people," is celebrated in v. 11. Alongside these positive images, we also read of fearful oppressors, destruction and the theme of devastation, which becomes the dominant focus of Zion's state in 51:17-52:5.[12] The oppressed are released and YHWH is in control. Zion's redemption and comfort seems to be integral to this vision of YHWH's salvation.

There are a number of intertextual relationships reflected in Isa 51-52. Willey observes direct quotes in Isa 52:7-12 from Nah 2:1, Ps 98:3, and Lam 4:15, which are further expanded thematically in this passage as well as throughout DI.[13] DI takes the texts and traditions of the past and reframes them for new circumstances. With regard to Isaiah 51-52 this is particularly to re-affirm the notion that the exiles are no longer unclean, rather that the Babylonian city is unclean in contrast to Lamentations where the religious leaders are humiliated and unclean. Babylon will certainly fall just as Nineveh fell (recalling Nahum); YHWH's rule is asserted in a new space by the use of enthronement psalm terminology and Zion will be comforted (reversing Lamentations). YHWH's power over the sea and laws of nature in Isa 51:15 connect to Jeremiah's references (Jeremiah 5; 31:35-36) as well as to the overt link to the exodus tradition. We will continue to see how DI overturns expectations from previous texts in the verse analysis and Willey's use of Bakhtin may prove useful for my own analysis.[14]

The lament and response form of Isa 51:17-52:6 raises interesting ideas as to the possible theatrical element to the text as it seems to invite more than a narrative conversation. Watts' and Baltzer's approaches to reading Isaiah as a literary drama seem particularly appropriate

12. See Blenkinsopp on the use of terms such as salvation, torah and being consumed and devoured, where they form parallelisms to reinforce the concepts. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 325.
13. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* ch. 3.
14. Willey outlines the usefulness of Bakhtin's theories for an intertextual reading of DI. As she notes, "If Bakhtin was correct in stating that rhetorical context crucially shapes discursive decisions, then a key to understanding Second Isaiah is recognizing what other voices in its milieu it reflects, and in what ways the text exhibits merging with some, recoiling from others, and intersecting with still others - that is, how Second Isaiah, by recollecting the voices of others, organizes and manages the variety of viewpoints present at the end of the exile." Willey, *Remember the former things,* 3. See also p. 55 and ch. 2. Isa 51:17-52:6 not only demonstrates allusions or explicit links to Psalms, Lamentations, Jeremiah and Nahum, but also internally evidences a plurivocal conversation representing multiple positions.

here.[15] The speaker of the call alternates between the prophet speaking on YHWH's behalf, or YHWH speaking in first person, the divine voice in 51:22-52:6. There initially seem to be assorted audiences (51:1) but this is likely to be multiple representations of one dominant audience: the people in exile, variously identified as "you that pursue righteousness" (the inheritors of Abraham's promise), "my people", "my nation", "Jerusalem/ Zion". My exegesis will consider how Isa 51:17-52:6 may expand or limit Zion's response, which is unrecorded, implied, hidden or assumed. Despite the voice of YHWH being dominant in this passage, I will explore the hypothesis that we see in this text a re-presentation of Zion's own words of lament, which are all too familiar and are reframed towards a new vision.

# 2. Verse Analysis

### (a) Awaken Drunken Jerusalem - 51:17-23

In this analysis of Isa 51:17-52:6 I will draw attention to 'point of view' perspectives in the passage, as a dialogical approach may prove helpful in exploring a complex conversation that initially seems to be monological.[16] The whole section appears to be voiced by the anonymous prophet but internal to the oracle is a multi-layered discourse presenting different viewpoints even verse by verse. We see examples of double-voicing where the voice of the prophet and the voice of YHWH merge, giving space for the destabilising of some of the presented ideas.[17]

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15. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66;* Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* Peter Machinist, ed, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

16. Many have used Mikhail Bakhtin's approach for analysing biblical texts and reading texts as dialogue, particularly in Job or Lamentations. See Carol A Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *JR* 76, no. 2 (April 1996): 290-306. For an overview of the approach see Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction*, SBL SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). Green suggests that Isaiah 51-52 in particular evidences multiple voices, including voices that may represent the non-exilic community, see p. 151. Elizabeth Boase employs a useful framework in her reading of Lamentations. Elizabeth Boase, *The Fulfilment of Doom?: The Dialogic Interaction Between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-Exilic / Early Exilic Prophetic Literature*, LHBOTS 437 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006). See particularly 23-27 on her use of the methodology focussing on double-voicing.

17. On double-voicing see Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 35-43, 47-53. This idea is central to Bakhtin's literary criticism and has appeal for postcolonial approaches to biblical texts because of notions of discourses of power and resistance. As a polyphonic text, DI presents many opportunities for dialogical engagement. Isaiah 51 presents a somewhat spaghetti-like complexity in terms of the entwined discourse. If we are seeking what Green terms the 'linguistic fingerprint' that may give clues to the social situation of the speech, occasions such as double-voicing may represent other perspectives in the community.

We begin v. 17 with the voice of the prophet speaking directly to personified Jerusalem about the cup of wrath from God. Zion is referred to by YHWH in the immediately previous verse (16) as "you are my people." Jerusalem's double call to "Awaken yourself" or as some translators use "Rouse yourself," builds on the urgency of 51:9 and 52:1 to awaken. Jerusalem is directly commanded or exhorted not only to wake but to stand up (קומי).[18] We must ask if the tone is of frustration, impatience or excitement towards her. Although earlier the focus has been on the awakening of YHWH's arm to action (51:9, to comfort) now the focus is towards Zion's action. An initial assumption of the call to awaken is that Zion may be asleep but the content reveals she is in a drunken stupor. This state is not self-inflicted, with YHWH's cup of wrath being the cause of Jerusalem's state of weakness; a context explained immediately to avoid any confusion, and repeated (51:17, 20, 22). YHWH's hand can indicate strength, protection, creativity or punishment.[19] In Isa 49:2 and 51:16 the shadow of YHWH's hand is a place of refuge first for the servant, then for Zion, but now in v. 17 it is a weapon of pain, having delivered the cup of wrath.[20] In Lam 1:17 Zion stretches her hands for comfort but no one is there for her. Isa 51:17 clearly recalls many passages on the cup of wrath coming from YHWH's hand: Jer 25:14-17, 28; 49:12; Ezek 23:28-35; Lam 4:21.[21] Drunkenness is a common biblical image for judgment due to sin.[22] In terms of the cup of wrath, Paul suggests that המה may also have connotations of venom or poison.[23] The draining to the dregs indicates every last drop is taken, perhaps implying obedience. The wrath of the oppressors is mentioned in 51:13 and now it is clearer that the wrath is from YHWH. The focus moves from the giver of the cup and onto the state of the one to whom it has been given, Zion, who is imaged as vulnerable. The idea behind this image is that Zion has suffered the punishment of exile due to sin, but the implication of the verse is that the time of punishment is over and it is time

18. Jan Leunis Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, trans. Anthony P. Runia, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 197. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Volume III Chapters 40 Through 66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 319.
19. It is also interesting that the arm of the Lord is called to awaken in strength in 51:9, but it is the strength the Lord's hand *against* Zion in v. 17 that is at issue.
20. Cf. 50:11.
21. Willey's analysis of this section is titled "Defusing Lamentations 4". Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 159.
22. On drunkenness depicted as punishment see Isa 19:14; 29:9; especially compare Lam 4:21 where Edom is given the cup of judgment and shall "become drunk and strip yourself bare" (NRSV) or "you will be drunk and stripped naked" (NIV). The *hithpael* form would suggest Edom strips herself bare and thus the NRSV version is preferred. The imagery of stripping bare is not present in Isa 51:17 but we shall return to this theme in v. 23 and the implication of redressing in 52:1.
23. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 377.

to move on, a message of comfort.[24] The imagery can lead to ambiguous readings - one which implies Zion is blamed for her own weakness and another where the cause of Zion's devastation is outlined as the wrath of YHWH, thus the emphasis is not blame but restoration. The previous ideas of punishment recalled in the imagery are contested here when we read with an understanding of those viewpoints (from Lamentations, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and incorporate Bakhtin's approach to "double-voicing."

By v. 18, rather than talking directly to her, Zion is now being portrayed in the third person as a mother and her children are talked about. Perhaps the portrayal of Zion rather than directly addressing her is a form of identification with her pain and loss by the prophet, or perhaps she no longer listens. As a reader we are invited to 'view' her condition and 'hear' about her children. Her utter aloneness is depicted. The issue of lack of children to guide her re-emerges, a theme noted in Isaiah 49. The sons are mentioned again in v. 20 as having fainted, sons that Zion not only birthed but raised. This is emphasised in the progressive parallelism of the verse. The drunken mother expects to be led to safety by her sons who are unable to do this and therefore she is totally alone in her drunken (and therefore dangerously vulnerable) state. The rhetorical impact of the imagery is disturbing, designed to engender pity. There are implications not only of abandonment but of public shame. Paul highlights the link with the Ugaritic literature (*Aqhat* epic) wherein, "a list of commands regarding the respect due to one's father, the son is obligated 'to hold his hand when he is drunk, to support him when he is sated with wine' (*CAT* 1.7.I:30-31)."[25] This support is modelled on the same expectations of El's sons. The real tragedy here is the fainted sons lying on the street in v. 20, an antonym of the call for Jerusalem to stand up in v. 17 and of Zion shaking off the dust (52:2). It seems that by ch. 51 the restoration of the children in Isaiah 49 is not yet understood or experienced.

Zion's lack of guidance from her children is seen by Watts and Brueggemann as being about a lack of leadership, and Goldingay highlights the role of the prophets, priests and sages in

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24. Motyer sees wrath as the linking theme from v. 17 to v. 23, with the restoration of Zion also connected to the restoration of Eden. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah,* 414.
25. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 376. See also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 337 and Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 442.

guiding the people.[26] This emphasises a vacuum of leadership in exile. The creator still wishes to enact creativity in human history with human cooperation. The sense of the participle מנהל is of being led to a safe place, like a watering place for rest.[27] This is a necessity for devastated Zion.

Jerusalem is directly addressed again in v. 19 with her suffering being described with two sets of double disasters of devastation and destruction, famine and sword, which recall the double suffering inflicted in Isa 40:2. The issue of comfort is raised again with Jerusalem as comfortless even in her grief.[28] The accumulation of nouns are word pairs as well as homonyms in Hebrew - devastation שד and destruction שבר, famine רעב and sword חרב - images of war and calamity. These terms linguistically surround Zion. Against the Zion theology of being impenetrable and indestructible, Zion is instead surrounded by a devastation she cannot escape. There are many biblical references to the situations of havoc and chaotic ruin that Jerusalem has seen.[29] Koole suggests that the first word pair relates to destruction of the land and the city, whereas the second word pair relates to the physical suffering of hunger and wounding or death that war and exile bring.[30] Surrounding this desolate situation are the rhetorical questions that recall the trauma: "Who can console/ grieve with you?"/ "Who can comfort you?" The same use of מי ינוד לך is found in Nah 3:7 and Jer 15:5.[31] The questions are not answered until vv. 22-23 with an assumption that there is no one to comfort Zion, but that YHWH is trustworthy. There is debate regarding the translation of the comfort reference in v. 19 due to the shift from third to first person. The HB version reads מי אנחמך (first person, feminine singular form) translated by the NRSV as "who will comfort you?" but due to the first person form may also be translated as "who will I send to comfort you?"[32] Some translate the מי as

26. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,* 772. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 132. Brueggemann suggests the city is in anarchy due to the lack of leadership. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 442. See 42:16 where YHWH will lead the blind.
27. Other forms of the verb are found in 40:11 and 49:10 with shepherding imagery.
28. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 378. Paul links this passage to Jer 15:2-5 where similar punishment is inflicted on Jerusalem, and these punishments are followed by lack of pity for her.
29. See for example Lam 2:11, 13; 3:47, 48; 4:9, 10; 5:9; Jer 14:12, 13, 15, 16, 18; Ezek 14:21. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 378
30. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 201.
31. See Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 378.
32. See Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 379. "Symmachus, LXX, Vulgate, Peshitta, Targum: דְּנַחֲמִנִיךְ" The DSS (1QIsa) has the form of "Who can comfort you?" See also Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 202, on the various efforts to translate the form by emendation.

'How' but Koole argues that this does not fit when the clear function of DI is to comfort, i.e.. that is exactly what the words seek to do.[33] It is clear in 51:3 (x 2), 51:12, and 52:9 it is YHWH who comforts the people by redeeming Jerusalem (mentioned twice in 52:9) / Zion (51:3) and her "waste places" (also mentioned in 49:19) so we can assume this implication in this verse, as it is clear that everyone else has gone. The context of the whole verse is about Jerusalem's aloneness.

Verse 20 opens with the imagery of powerlessness, with children having fainted on the street (imagery of thirst, exhaustion, probably indicating near death).[34] The reference to children lying 'at the head of every street' is found with the same terminology בראש כל־חוצות in Lam 2:19 and 4:1-2 and Nah 3:10 in reference to the children of exile and these links are assumed in DI.[35] This death of children is the reason why there seems to be no one to comfort or help Zion in the previous two verses.[36] The imagery of streets links to the city and is a tool in personification of where the city imagery becomes more "concrete" so to speak.[37] This reference to streets חוץ reappears in v. 23. Various translations have struggled to understand the meaning of "at the head of every street" (NRSV) by seeing this as referring to the public nature of their situation, that the devastation is happening in the open.

Terian argues that archaeological discoveries have uncovered 'kites' - structures used to capture and kill animals (domestic and wild) in the ANE.[38] As Terian summarises, "There can be

33. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 202.
34. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 337, sees that the children are dead, not just fainted.
35. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 337. See the renderings that Terian notes in the Isaiah Targum which reads "Your sons will be dashed to pieces, thrown at the head of all the streets like those cast in nets" and "the curiously strange reading of the LXX ('Your sons are the perplexed ones, that sleep at the top of every street as a half-boiled beet.')" Abraham Terian, "The Hunting Imagery in Isaiah 51:20a," *VT* 41, no. 4 (Oct 1991): 463. Terian argues for the MT version. See also Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 203 and Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 379.
36. Watts' point on the passivity of the children seems to miss the point of the violence inflicted on them, blaming the victim, and this does not suit the context of the passage. Death and damage are different to laziness. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,* 772.
37. Koole suggests the personification becomes weaker here due to such literal references to streets. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 203. I disagree as I think both images are strong; one does not diminish the other but rather further enhances the other. Taken in context of the whole passage, and the use of the metaphor in the other passages cited from Lamentations and Nahum, the personification of Jerusalem as a woman is strong throughout the pericope.
38. Terian, "The Hunting Imagery in Isaiah 51:20a," 462-471. On the length of the tristich and distich as a normal combination at the end of a pericope see Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 203.

no doubt that in the time of Isaiah they were a well-known feature of life in the more arid regions, and would have constituted a vivid representation of hopeless captivity, suffering and death."[39] The concept of capture, of entrapment and of powerlessness coalesces here with the result being the loss of freedom, whether the imagery is about 'kites' or narrowed streets with no way out.[40] This again highlights a death of future, with children being killed. The hunted imagery is reminiscent of the siege of Jerusalem and perhaps a recollection of trauma. Reference to the trapped antelope is not clearly understood, and even the identity of the animal is debated.[41] It is also variously identified as a gazelle, or oryx. The reasons for the terrible imagery are to make clear once again that it is the wrath of YHWH that has caused their situation, and just to ensure that the reader understands, this is re-emphasised as God's rebuke.[42] This forms a closure of the chiasm. If the passage were left here it would be a depressing but accurate portrayal of Zion in exile: trapped, bewildered, alone.

After a dispiriting picture of desolation and suffering, we start to see the reimagining of Jerusalem from this point on with v. 21 acting as an important pivot in the response to a lament form. The use of "therefore" followed by "listen" is rhetorically significant, with the hearer being caused to stop after a devastating presentation of the state of Zion. Goldingay highlights its rare use in DI and in this context it is seen to be a redirection of Zion's attention towards YHWH.[43] The noun עניה can be translated as "afflicted", "humbled", "wounded" or "miserable one."[44] It gives a sense of being in a position of submission, lowly and powerless, one of oppression.[45] Zion is שכר drunk with suffering not with wine, a clarification that intoxication holds no joy (cf. 29:9).

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39. Terian, "The Hunting Imagery in Isaiah 51:20a," 468.
40. Terian, "The Hunting Imagery in Isaiah 51:20a," 470.
41. Paul notes that this is a clean animal. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 379. Terian, "The Hunting Imagery in Isaiah 51:20a," 471. Terian argues that it is clearly an antelope based on archaeological records which demonstrate not only the fact that antelope were captured in desert areas but the manner in which they were caught which follows the possible use of a net to trap the antelope in the kite pits.
42. Note the comparison Brueggemann makes between the word used here for YHWH's wrath and the wrath of the oppressor who causes terror and destruction. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,*134. How is Jerusalem supposed to know the difference in terms of being terrified?
43. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 444.
44. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 205.
45. This notion is overturned in the Servant Song of 53:7, where suffering becomes victory. We know from 49:13 that YHWH will comfort the afflicted ones.

The messenger formula commencing v. 22 indicates the importance of this oracle. There are multiple references to the name of God (אדניך your *ʾăḏōnāy*, יהוה YHWH and אלהיך your *ʾĕlōhîm*) as this is where the help will come from, emphasised finally in 52:6. Goldingay suggests that the use of אדניך here is parallel to the reference in Isa 49:14 and is unusual, similar to the wording used in Ps 45:11 and the language of marital affection.[46] In contrast to the language of v. 19 where calamity surrounds Zion, now the language is all about YHWH encompassing and defending the people that are accepted as a part of a reconciling community, thus the emphasis on *your* God and *my* people (עמי).[47] Legal language is used to plead the case of Zion. The suffering is evidence of being God's people, not an indication that they are forsaken.[48] We also see the point of view become YHWH's directly, speaking in first person. First we are given the mechanism for the reversal of the suffering in a chiasm: YHWH *takes the cup out* (v. 22) of Zion's hand (note that YHWH put it there in the first place) and *puts* it in the hand of the enemy (v. 23). This is a reversal of power motif. YHWH promises that they will not drink of this suffering again; a promise that in itself raises many questions for subsequent suffering but that is not the focus here. The hearer is reminded in vv. 22-23 of YHWH's character of action, as defender, and of the justice inherent in the wrath Zion has experienced. After our study of Zion's personal defence, it is an interesting contrast here to see that it is YHWH pleading her case.

There is a case of triple-voicing in v. 23 where the voice of the prophet using the first person voice of YHWH speaks the accusatory words of the tormentors in first person by taking on their persona, all speaking directly to Zion. This may lead to contradictory readings. Zion is asked to bow down so that the tormentors may walk on her. We see parallels to the imagery found in 49:23-26, where the powerful are imaged as subjected to YHWH in 49:7 (princes prostrate before YHWH; cf. 45:14). There may also be connotations of worship here. In terms of the identity of the tormentor, they are implied to be Babylonian but the "afflictor" in

46. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 445.
47. Koole suggests that the fourfold usage of the name for God is related to v. 19 to counteract the word pairs that are used there to depict the destruction, desolation, famine and sword. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 206.
48. Quote by Yiddish poet Kadya Molodowsky "God of mercy" ... "O God of mercy, choose another people. We are tired of death, tired of corpses, we have no more prayers." Blumenthal's theology of protest suggests that there is not an excuse for suffering but a way through the misery. David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

Lamentations is YHWH.[49] We cannot ignore the issue of YHWH's culpability (Lam 4:11). The root is also used in Isa 51:11 to denote sorrow which will flee away to be replaced with joy and gladness. Most versions translate the parallel use of עבר in 51:23 to mean, "walk on you" (NRSV/ NIV) or "walk over you" (NASB), and it more closely translates as "pass over." The verb is so common that it can mean a variety of things - moving from one *place* to another, something threatening going over (like the waters of Noah in Isa 54:9), or crossing a river.[50] The image may be reminiscent of militaristic images of an invading army marching over the people, a common interpretation particularly as the implication is that Zion is lying on her stomach, and armies practiced this form of intimidation.[51] Walking on the back is figurative of "extreme humiliation."[52] "Back" גֵּו is used rarely (6 times) in the HB, 3 times in Isaiah. The translation "you have *made* your *back* like the ground" takes the same verb for the earlier "put" that YHWH will do (*putting* the cup of wrath in the *hand* of the tormentors) and now applies it to Zion who "put" or "made" her body like the ground. With the tormentors identified as God's enemies who will be the next recipients of the cup of wrath, the insinuation is that Zion's willingness to offer her back to be walked on is negative. The verse uses synonymous parallelism to reinforce the actions of both YHWH (righteous, salvific) and Zion (submissive, weak). The servant offers his back in Isa 50:6 to those who would strike him but this was a submissive act that is generally presented as humble and sacrificial. The overall image depicts the final shaming of drunken Zion in sexualised imagery.[53]

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49. Lam 1:5, 12; 3:32. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 337. See also Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 445, who emphasises the case that this passage is a response to the lament. The phrase may be rendered "those who cause you torment/ grief." Note Job 19:2 also uses the term to describe a state of mental anguish. See the TWOT definition of יָגָה (*yāgâ*) that suggests "the primary meaning is mental troubling resulting from affliction." Ralph H. Alexander, "יָגָה (*Yāgâ*)," in *TWOT,* ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr, and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 361.

50. H. F. Fuhs, "עָבַר *'āḇar*," in *TDOT,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 408-425.

51. Other possibilities behind the imagery: YHWH crossing over before the people in Holy War cf. Deut 9:3, as well as a violation of covenant: as YHWH commands "crossing over" of the Jordan (note not the Exodus). Fuhs, "עָבַר *'āḇar*," 418-419.

52. **"גֵּו",** BDB, 156. BDB directly references the example in Isa 51:23.

53. Bebb Wheeler Stone, "Second Isaiah: Prophet to Patriarchy," *JSOT* 56 (1992): 85-99 , 86. Stone suggests עבר in Job 21:10 and בוא 'come into' in many other references (she notes Judg 15:1; 16:1; Gen 38:8-9; Deut 22:13; Ezek 23:44; 2 Sam 12:24) are clearly sexualised.

Sexual assault is implied but downplayed in the imagery of Isa 51:23-52:2.[54] Willey establishes a clear argument for the literary relationship between Isa 51-52 and Nahum.[55] The term used in Nah 1:15 for invade is עבר "to pass over" (regarding Zion) and the wrath of God directed to Nineveh is depicted as sexual humiliation with YHWH as the perpetrator and these sexual overtones are made more explicit in ch. 3.[56] Kelle describes the efficacy of combining the personification of cities as female and their rape as metaphors to describe siege warfare in particular: "certainly the violation of women as a metaphor fits the destruction of capital cities, for the stripping, penetration, exposure and humiliation of the women is analogous to siege warfare, with its breaching of the wall, entrance through the gate, and so forth."[57] Isaiah 51:23-52:1 does not detail a wall being breached, but entrance into the city by tormentors may assume this imagery. There is a clear influence of Lam 1:8-10's depiction of Zion's humiliation in sexual terms in Isa 51:23.[58] The case of Oholah and Oholibah in Ezekiel 23 correlates closely with Isa 51:17-23, with imagery of nakedness, sexual activity, drinking a cup of horror and desolation, sorrow and drunkenness.[59] There are many parallels with other pas-

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54. Note that Isa 51:17-52:6 does not use a Hebrew term typically translated as rape. In fact, Gravatt outlines the complexities of using a term such as "rape" when "no Hebrew verb or phrase precisely corresponds to contemporary understandings of rape." Sandie Gravett, "Reading 'Rape' in the Hebrew Bible: A Consideration of Language," *JSOT* 28, no. 3 (2004): 279. Thus a reading that suggests it is implied is based on intertextual comparisons reflected in the passage, the metaphorical representation of rape and the associations involved, such as shaming, nakedness, and invasion language. For a discussion on the terms for rape and those associated with rape in a military context in the Bible, see Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, "Rape as Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets,* ed. Atalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 308-325.

55. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 117. Willey is particularly focussed on the parallels between Isa 52:7 and Nah 2:1. Interestingly Nahum means 'Comfort', a key theme of DI. Nahum's children are also dashed at the head of the street (Nah 3:10), a parallel with Isa 51:20. See also Baumann who notes the parallels between Nineveh's destruction in Nahum 3 and Babylon's in Isaiah 47. Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship Between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical, 2003), 192-193.

56. Baumann explores the notion of YHWH as rapist. Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 195-196. For commentary on Nahum and feminist approaches particularly to Nineveh's rape see Julia M. O'Brien, *Nahum*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), "Nahum and (Wo)men," 80-99.

57. Brad E Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric Prophetic Metaphorization of Cities as Female," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 104. See also Jeremy D. Smoak, "Assyrian Siege Warfare Imagery and the Background of a Biblical Curse," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames (Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 83-94. The use of a rape metaphor to describe the invasion or siege of a city is a phenomenon not limited to the ancient world, and may include actual cases of rape. A common example is "the rape of Nanjing" regarding the massacre of over 40,000 up to 300,000 people in the Chinese city in 1937, an atrocity that included widespread rape. Gordon and Washington assess the widespread use of sexualised gendered language in the US military in training and activities of war. War is described via rape terminology and rape described using war terminology. Gordon and Washington, "Rape as Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," 308-325, esp. 310.

58. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 166-171. Willey also compares to Babylon's depiction in Isa 47.

sages that, once noticed, make a case of Zion's rape in Isaiah 51 even more convincing. However, DI treats Zion differently regarding the parallel sexual violation passages described, focussing on a restoration theme. The street references relate back to v. 20, where the fainted children of Zion lie, and the passage resolves the larger chiasm, along with the cup/bowl returning as the theme (v. 17, v. 22) and finishing the chapter.

### (b) Awaken Captive Daughter Zion - 52:1-6

The tone of the next pericope 52:1-6 is decidedly more optimistic than the previous passage. Zion's rising in 52:1-2 is contrasted to her falling in Lam 1:9.[60] Following the same pattern as 51:9 which invoked the awakening of the arm of YHWH to put on (dress) strength (cf. the response in 52:10 where YHWH "bares his holy arm"), in 52:1 Zion is called to awaken herself in order to also put on (as in dressing) strength (עזך *your* strength). The image is not calling Zion to a militaristic response but is more about recovery and protection. "Put on" contrasts with the action in the previous verse of YHWH putting the cup of wrath into the hands of the tormentors. Zion has strength although she does not seem to realise it, i.e. she has inner resources. It is a common therapeutic tool to re-imagine oneself, not only seeing the truth of who one is but who one could be. There is a reversal of the imagery of desolation. The garments that Zion is to put on are beautiful garments, possibly bridal but here marriage is more implied than in 54 where it becomes fully realised.[61] Dressing imagery in relation to Zion is found in 49:18 and more fully in 54:11-12 as jewellery (cf. 61:10); this contrasts with Babylon's experience in ch. 47 (loss of throne, commanded to unveil and strip naked).[62] Isa 52:1 demonstrates one example where we see both Zion and Jerusalem mentioned together and note that in 52:2 it is reversed to "Jerusalem...Zion" forming a chiasm.[63] There is ambiguity

59. YHWH as rapist is explained by F. Rachel Magdalene, "Ancient Near Eastern Treaty Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of the Language of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets,* ed. Athalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 326-352 on the basis of the treaty curses. In Ezek 23:33-34 "the sorrow" וְיָגוֹן of Oholibah is coupled with drunkenness and the cup of "horror and desolation is the cup of your sister Samaria; you shall drink it and drain it out." (NRSV) Surely these passages are related but the metaphor is used to different effect: Ezekiel for judgement, DI for salvation. To a lesser extent the presentation of Gomer in Hosea may also be in mind in Isa 51:17-52:6.
60. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 171.
61. I will explore the metaphor of Zion as bride and YHWH as husband in the analysis of ch. 54.
62. Oswalt, *Isaiah,*, 575. See also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 340.
63. Maggie Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah: A Metaphor for Zion Theology*, Studies in Biblical Literature 155 (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 48.

as to whether this passage is about the actual city, her awakening being a preparation for others who would return or the exiles being roused to return, and both readings are possible.

The clothing of Zion in 52:1 may imply her previous nakedness and Zion is reassured that, the uncircumcised and the ritually unclean or polluted shall no longer enter her, intensifying the sexual nature of the invasion portrayed in 51:23. The sexual imagery is not as graphic as Ezekiel or Lamentations, but this downplaying does not eliminate the conclusion that the passage ultimately depicts Zion as a victim of rape during war. Zion's former violation is emphasised in purity language, perhaps indicative of post-exilic priestly considerations regarding YHWH's presence being able to dwell in the purified community.[64] The imagery is feminine and bridal in tone, to fit with previous allusions and with what is to become clearer in ch. 54, linking it to a marriage metaphor.[65]

In 52:2 the imperative moves to telling Jerusalem to shake the dust off herself and arise, recalling v. 17 (cf. 60:1). The arising is from lying on the ground, with Zion moving from a lying to a sitting position. The dust may represent the impurity alluded to in v.1, with an implication of worthlessness.[66] The call to arise is immediately followed by the word שבי which has been variously translated as "sit down" (same form as 47:1) or as "captive" as it appears in parallel at the end of the verse as שביה (captive).[67] By translating it as "sit" we see an

64. Stephen L. Cook, "Second Isaiah and the Aaronide Response to Judah's Forced Migrations," in *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Frank Ritchel Ames, John J. Ahn, and Mark Leuchter, AIL 21 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 47-61, 48. Cook asks whether the major influence is the Zadokite, Levite or Aaronide priestly house, arguing for the latter. See also Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 136. The Ezekiel depiction of YHWH's presence leaving and then returning to the city may be reflected here. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 340. Motyer links the garments of beauty and the robes of the priests outlined in Exod 28:2. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah,* 416. See also Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 212 who rejects nationalistic interpretations.

65. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 213.

66. Cf. 1 Sam 2:8 where YHWH raises the poor and needy from the dust.

67. Note Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 386. The MT reads as "sit". Paul notes Kimchi who reads the term as Captive, in the form of a masculine substantive with Captive Jerusalem paralleling feminine Captive Daughter Zion. DSS (1QIsa[a] adds a *vav* to "sit", so it will read "Arise and sit").

oxymoron with "Arise, sit, Jerusalem..." which some consider to be imagery of enthronement.[68] It is not the Davidic throne.[69]

Captivity is emphasised here in Isa 52:2, and in this verse we find the only reference to Zion as a "daughter" in DI.[70] By emphasising Zion's position as Daughter, the commonplace associations of her sexual vulnerability are highlighted as well as raising a disjunctive reading of Zion as wife and daughter.[71] References to captivity denote victims of war, and the imagery of Zion loosening her own cords/ binds that are around her neck emphasises slave imagery, but challenges the presumption that it is inescapable. Just as Zion previously had put on clothes, she could loose her own cords.[72] Clothes replace binding. Freedom seems to be on offer and the claiming of a new identity. A major part of DI's role here seems to be the persuasion of the exiles to see themselves differently. DI does this by first presenting Zion as she is - desolate, destroyed, victimised by violence. Zion evidences a type of learned helplessness that trauma victims can suffer.[73]

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68. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah,* 416. FN 1. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 218 references the Targum for the enthronement connection. [Targum Jonathan Ben Uziel - "Arise, and sit upon the throne of glory, O Jerusalem."]

69. 55:3 mentions the Davidic covenant but as part of a broadening picture of the covenant for the people, DI's perspective. See H. G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East,* ed. J. Day (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 238-270, esp. 239 and Joseph Blenkinsopp, *David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 60-62. Davidic kingship is not seen as an option for governance in the returning exilic community according to DI, thus the emphasis on Cyrus' role in their liberation in 40-48.

70. Cf. captives mentioned in Jer 15:2 which parallels the Isa 51:19 references; the freeing of the captives in Isa 61:1.

71. Baumann observes that marriage imagery does not usually incorporate Daughter Zion. Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 177. Despite not being the dominant metaphor used in Isa 51:17-52:6, the marriage metaphor is in the background here alongside the Daughter reference of 52:2.

72. However, note Marjo C. A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, OtSt 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 494 "Although it is tempting to follow the Qere, making Zion responsible for taking part in her own liberation - an idea very important to Second Isaiah, illustrated by v. 2a - the Ketiv must be regarded as the more difficult reading which in the end we prefer." This would then read as "The bonds of your neck were loosed", see Paul, *Isaiah 40-66,* 386. On Zion holding herself back or Babylon's lies holding her see Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 124-125.

73. William Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 167-184, 171.

Isa 52:3-5 continues to unravel the perception of Zion's slavery as a permanent state. There is no consensus as to whether there is a literary style shift from poetry to prose in 52:3.[74] Considering a style shift at this point in the text has led many scholars to consider the section 52:3-6 as a later gloss.[75] Childs argues for poetic coherence based on form-critical analysis.[76] Whether the content is later or not, the style of historical commentary on imperial subjugation fits with prose, with vv. 3 and 4 connected thematically as well as with the repetitions of the messenger formula. This emphatic assertion seeks to give an account of the desolation presented in the prior verses, and will end with the ultimate rationale for the overturning of that state. YHWH's role as גאל may be implied in 52:3.[77]

In Isa 52:3 the reference to being Zion being sold חנם "for no reason"/ "for nothing" is said in the context of a broader argument for her redemption, and worthiness. It is not necessarily literally money or debt language.[78] The allusion here is to being sold into slavery in Egypt for nothing.[79] This notion is repeated in 52:5.[80] Literarily it provides drama to the announcement of freedom, but also an overturning of the common theological refrain of deserved punishment.[81] The redemption comes with no money being exchanged. This may echo somewhat the view of 50:1 where there were no creditors, as YHWH had no debt to pay; the people paid it with their slavery (cf. 40:2). Whatever the case, it appears there is more than one perspective and this issue of blame assignment is again ambiguous. The anti-imperial rhetoric of vv. 4-5 outlines a historical journey connecting the exiles to an older narrative, going back to

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74. See John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 2 vols., ICC, vol. 2 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 255, where they argue for a prose form definitely from 4-6. Childs, *Isaiah,* 405. NRSV and NEB consider 3-6 prose, NIV and NJPS consider it poetic.
75. Including Muilenburg, see Childs, *Isaiah,* 405; Note Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1969), 248 who considers this section "a marginal gloss in prose linking on the word 'for nothing' in v. 3." He considers vv. 4-6 corrupt beyond the original meaning. See Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 219; Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 115.
76. Childs, *Isaiah,* 405.
77. Blenkinsopp sees it as an analogy that limps. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 341.
78. Samuel E Balentine, "'For No Reason'," *Int* 57, no. 4 (Oct 2003): 349-369, 360. Balentine's analysis of the use of חנם in Job 1-2, may be relevant to the claim in Isa 52:3 that Captive Daughter Zion was "sold for nothing." He suggests that out of the 32 times the adverb is used it relates to commercial transactions, including Isa 52:3 in this category, whereas I think the context of its use here is intensely theological.
79. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 137. Joseph was sold for money, twenty pieces of silver, Gen 37:28, cf. Gen 50:20.
80. Cf. Lam 3:52 where the enemies had no cause to hunt them, but note Ezek 6:10 and 14:23 where punishments are not in vain/ no without cause.
81. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 341.

the initial Egypt story (forced migration due to famine), then Assyrian oppression, now the unnamed, but assumed to be Babylon (but it could also be Persia).[82] These are all different layers of oppression, not the same type.[83] The pairing of Assyria and Egypt as past tormentors is common in the HB.[84] By noting the previous oppressors who are no longer the threat, there is an implicit suggestion that Babylon (or Persia) too would one day be in the past, as all empires will be, in contrast to YHWH's greatness. Thus DI's continual reminders of the frailty of humans, cf. 50:9; 51:8, 12, 20. Again in 52:5 we note that the people are taken away for nothing, for no cause. Goldingay cites the Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52B "where it uses this text to justify its statement that the exile was one of the things the Holy One regretted creating (along with the Babylonians, the Ishmaelites, and the evil inclination)."[85] Verse five emphasises the distress of the exile and introduces the notion of the name of YHWH being despised or blasphemed. The "howl" יהילילו (MT) of the rulers to verbally humiliate the exiles has an onomatopoeic quality.[86]

The name that was derided in v. 5 is now known in v. 6, emphasised with לכן "therefore" twice in parallel. Significantly it is עמי "my people" who will know the name of YHWH even though the rulers implied in the previous verse despise the name. The significance is that YHWH is speaking and we have the appearance of the divine self-predication found in Salvation Oracles אני־הוא "I am he."[87] The verse ends with a forceful הנני translated variously as "Here I am!" or "Here am I" or "Behold!", which could be translated in an Australian vernacular as "Look at me!" and turns the attention of Zion from herself, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, towards YHWH. Blenkinsopp picks up the contrast with Isa 65:1 where the term appears twice in relation to YHWH's availability to a people

82. The reference to Assyria is seen as problematic by some commentators, note Koole who outlines how Kissane removes the mention of Assyria altogether. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 222. The problem seems to lie with why Babylon is not mentioned by name but that the past empire of Assyria is named for the only time in DI, even though the empire no longer exists. Given the depiction of fallen Babylon in 47 it may not be an omission due to trauma as such but rather an outline of historical oppression.
83. See John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah,* BZAW 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), ch. 2, which outlines different "types" and causes of forced migration.
84. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 449. Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 258, calls Egypt and Assyria possible *merisms* meaning south and north.
85. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55,* 449.
86. The DSS and the Vulgate translate this as *mock* but *howl* better fits the form of the word. See Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,* 774 note 5c, for discussion on translation. Watts goes with "boasted" to fit with the DSS.
87. Philip B. Harner, "Salvation Oracle in Second Isaiah," *JBL* 88, no. 4 (1969): 421.

who did not want to acknowledge or even respond.[88] This recalls the lack of response to the questions in 50:2 (a passage about false creditors) as well as the countless occasions throughout DI where YHWH is the only reliable witness and the one who will act (cf. Isa 41:17, 26-28; 4:16; 43:11-13, 25; 44:6-7; 46:9; 48:12). Ultimately 52:6 is an emphatic response to the accusation of divine absence and a climactic resolution to the crisis of exile - YHWH's *name* is present and known, *YHWH* is present.

The pericope of 51:17-52:6 is bracketed in v. 7 by one of the loveliest passages in Isaiah immortalised in hymns: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (NRSV). This must be read in the light of the terrible suffering that precedes it to give it context. For those who suffer the feet of the one bringing good news (the liberators) are truly beautiful. As Willey reminds us, by this stage of the poem, the various allusions in the text leave out one major feature found in the Psalms: "YHWH's reign as king. This element - which would have been anticipated by audiences familiar with the motif - is deferred until the dramatic moment in Isa 52:7 when YHWH is seen returning in victory to Jerusalem."[89] Imagery of watchmen lifting up eyes follows in v. 8, giving emphasis to the city itself. Singing, rejoicing, redemption and comfort are emphasised with a recall in v. 10 of YHWH's arm and military might. Verse 11 seems to call impatiently (double imperative) for a departure, recalling purity language again, but the departure will not be in haste (v. 12) which contrasts with the exodus. This final section of the Zion song is followed by the song of the suffering servant. The comfort of Zion is seen as a given, prophetically achieved.

## 3. Zion's characterisation

Isa 51:17-52:6 provides one of DI's clearest portrayals of Zion's self-perception as a slave.[90] The saturation of images of Zion's drunken, isolated and violated state, and the emphasis on death and violence, is juxtaposed with her potentiality of freedom and restoration, beauty and

88. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 341.
89. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 173.
90. Elsewhere the references are somewhat scattered or brief. See in relation to Jacob/ Israel or Zion depicted as captive: Isa 42:22; Cyrus freeing exiles, not for a price or bribe 45:13; 49:9, 21, 25.

strength. Zion's ongoing slavery seems to be self-inflicted and freedom is apparently her own choice. Personification, metonymy, and metaphor are the literary devices used to bring Zion to life. The rhetoric is for the benefit of the survivors but also represents the dead. This imagery works rhetorically only as far as it is accepted to create movement and revisioning. Zion is depicted as pitiable but on a trajectory of restoration that we see commence from Isa 40:1 with words of comfort and consolation, and progress to this point with Zion being envisioned as enthroned.[91] The lines between the literal and the figurative are fluid, with the rhetoric aimed at people, or their offspring, who are victims of war and the ensuing violence accompanying exile. This context provides the imagery with particular pathos as well as with traction in our reading and response.

DI draws on prior understandings of the use of a marriage metaphor to depict a covenantal relationship between Israel and YHWH. My analysis takes the perspective that Zion in Isa 51:17-52:6 is assumed to be the wife of YHWH, but that this is backgrounded with allusions to: bridal imagery with the re-clothing in beautiful garments in 52:1; Zion ascending a throne as per a queen in 52:2 with YHWH the presumptive king (52:7); the preceding imagery of Zion as mother in 49; the wife who has not been divorced in 50:1-3; and a clue in YHWH's charge of 51:13 "You have forgotten YHWH, your Maker...", which is more explicitly expressed in 54:5-6 "For your Maker is your husband... For like a wife forsaken and suffering in spirit YHWH has called you." Zion initially appears as a true subaltern, who has no voice. The rhetoric seeks to convince her otherwise. Is she passive? Is she inscribed with meaning by an-other (YHWH or the prophet)? Is she self-determined? These are all questions raised by the use of the metaphors of Zion as daughter, mother, wife, queen and sexual assault victim, as well as by the polyphonic nature of the text.

The aspect of Zion's sexual assault, implied most strongly in 51:23-52:1, and merged with war imagery, is frequently ignored by commentators. The passage itself downplays the sexual violence when read intertextually in order to highlight Zion's restoration. This could also be understood as a trauma response (not ready to face it) and/ or a survival response (it hap-

91. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 136.

pened but we are moving forward). The use of a metaphor of sexual violence to depict the invasion of a city does not dismiss the reality of the violence.[92] Sexual violence during times of upheaval and war, is a widespread phenomenon, rarely indicted as a criminal offence, even in modern times. The HB depicts many cases of actual and metaphorical rape, but Isaiah more frequently uses rape in the context of metaphor.[93] Rape and sexual violence can be used as a tool of power to break down the will and identity of the people, victimizing them and leaving long-term damage, and societal breakdown.[94] We know that sexual violence occurred in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel and Judah, but also that the Israelites themselves used rape in warfare.[95] The associations of rape and war go beyond actual situations to language, one being used to describe the other.[96] The associations include notions of female sexuality as being suspect.[97] Many feminist scholars have explored the problems with the use of sexually explicit metaphors that further enhance negative portrayals of women, and of violence perpetrated against women.[98] Uncritically perpetuating images of YHWH as a military warrior involved in authorising or committing sexual violence as an act of punishment, espe-

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92. See Thistlethwaite referring to Ricoeur on this point. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "'You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies': Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 60. Other works particularly relevant to this topic include: Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors.*

93. Gravett, "Reading 'Rape' in the Hebrew Bible," 279-299, describes accounts of rape in the HB, including direct and indirect references, with an analysis of the language and imagery used. See also Thistlethwaite, "You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies'." Trible's analysis of the rape of Tamar and the unnamed woman is also essential reading on the topic: Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 191, on Isaiah's depiction of sexual violence, typically in military contexts and only twice as literal examples (13:13-18 and 20:4). She lists 22:4, 23:12, 47 as metaphorical representations of sexual violence.

94. Darr explores how rape was used to shame both females and males in the Bible. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 88. See also Thistlethwaite, "You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies'," 64. Yee explores the use of feminine imagery to represent lands and nations, and therefore the poignancy in using rape to invade national boundaries. Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 118.

95. See Thistlethwaite, "You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies'," 64-65. Thistlethwaite argues that the term rape is not used for warfare in the *Torah*.

96. Gordon and Washington, "Rape as Military Metaphor," 309.

97. Thistlethwaite, "You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies'," 66. See also Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve*.

98. See Moughtin-Mumby on the harmful interpretations of the marriage metaphor that justify violence against women as well as reinforcing negative views of Israel/ Judah. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors,* 5. Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 24-25. For a general analysis of rape in warfare see also Claudia Card, "Rape as a Weapon of War," *Hypatia* 11, no. 4 (November 1996): 5-18. She explains that "martial rape" which she argues is a tool of domination, is to make a subservient tame instrument, and is an example of terrorism. See also Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Open Road, 2013), for what is considered a classic analysis of the nature of rape in war.

cially of foreigners, is also highly problematic.[99] The rape of Zion is not legitimized in the rendering of Isa 51:17-52:6, as YHWH is the advocate for Zion, but the challenge in relation to reading across Isa 47 is: do we read Daughter Zion's violation differently from Daughter Babylon's and does the contrast let YHWH off the hook in 51 because the tormentor is other? No, we should be outraged by both.

# 4. Hermeneutical reflections

The restoration of dignity can lead a person through a process of healing after the worst possible occurrences, and remind them that their circumstances are not necessarily the end. The immobilising effect of Zion's fear is confronted in Isa 51:17-52:6 with an impetus to movement. The exiles need to face their fear of God's judgement by addressing who they are and what has happened to them, to enable them to move forward.[100] The identification of loss and the possibility of an alternative future is a necessary step for those in faith transition. The prophetic imagination seeks to awaken people beyond their circumstances to another possibility. Whether the passage works rhetorically towards encouragement or over-emphasises condemnation is a core issue.[101] The possibility that the people suffered too much or without cause is still present. A challenge for a post-church reading of this passage is to move beyond a focus on blame and shame and read the restorative tone. There is a recognition that to move forward one needs to look back but not *remain* focussed on the past. It is clear from trauma studies that painful experiences, although often buried, do not disappear. They can affect our function in new communities if not dealt with appropriately.

Zion's identity is re-framed with strong images of hope, images which can also sustain subsequent generations of readers. The rhetoric of DI can function therapeutically to give voice to narrate the trauma, but from the other side of it, thus leading the traumatised through the painful loss and effectively re-transcribing a message of loss into one of deliverance.[102] In Isa

99. Baumann, *Love and Violence,* 196. Baumann's analysis is particularly in relation to Daughter Babylon's violation as a foreign woman in Isaiah 47. In relation to 51:17-52:6 it is the perpetrators who are depicted as the criminal 'other' due to their violation of Zion. On YHWH depicted as rapist in biblical texts see Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 54.
100. Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings,* J. A. Motyer, ed, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: IVP, 1996), 205. Webb's portrayal of Zion's paralysing fear is insightful.
101. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 159-160.
102. On the importance of narrativising trauma see Janet L. Rumfelt, "Reversing Fortune: War, Psychic Trauma,

51:19 Zion is surrounded literarily and figuratively by devastation, and then her sexual violation in 51:23-52:1 portrays her in the rubble, alone and afraid.[103] No one seems to be there to help her, not even her sons. Triumphalist evangelical theology collapses at the feet of those who leave churches. The institutions that previously held a sense of home, security and identity become alien. An analysis of Isaiah 51-52 sensitive to loss provides a way of articulating that sense of devastation. Yet it may also highlight a more nuanced theology of loss, and exile, enabling a way through the rubble, not just an identification of its existence. A radically honest approach allows a navigation of change with a sense of wanting to hold faith, but recognising it has changed due to the leaving. Zion's self-image likewise is upended via trauma, yet due to DI's words it is re-envisioned and old ideas are reframed.

Trible's literary feminist response to "texts of terror" has long provided a model of reading the narrative of HB texts that present examples such as sexualised violence.[104] Having exegetically explored the passage we are more attuned to these issues in the ancient context and better equipped for reading them in a contemporary context. Siebert's work on reading the HB non-violently offers a helpful methodology, commencing with naming the violence.[105] Impatience for Zion to be restored or at least be willing to be restored, or dismissing the significance of the rape portrayal in contrast to more graphically presented cases in other HB prophets means we may miss a crucial step in her journey. Zion's rape is not all of her story, although it is a significant part of the story of her past devastation. In the case of Isa 51:23 the ongoing persuasion of Zion to movement would suggest a delayed response, but in contrast to other prophetic treatments she is not to blame. Seibert's final stage of responding to violent texts suggests reading *with* the victims in the text, that is reading "from the perspective of the victims."[106]

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and the Promise of Narrative Repair," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts,* ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, AIL 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 323-342.

103. Cf. 'Beth's psalm.' Beth was raped at 16 and she writes an evocative response to Psalm 27, expressing how her notion of God's protection (the Lord is the fortress of my life whom do I fear?) has been challenged. She says "I have no walls, no protection, no structure, I am just standing in the midst of rubble. What do you mean, 'Whom do I fear?' Everyone." Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God,* 227-232, particularly 228.

104. Trible, *Texts of Terror.*

105. Eric A Seibert, *The Violence of Scripture: Overcoming the Old Testament's Troubling Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 74-75.

106. Seibert, *The Violence of Scripture*, 81.

For a modern context, a reading that is sensitive to issues of sexual abuse and rape, particularly the issue of rape in war, and giving a voice to these situations, is a possibility.[107] This becomes particularly relevant for people who may have left churches as a result of the sexual abuse crisis that is an issue for the church globally.[108] Reconsidering church attitudes towards sexuality, particularly female sexuality and the need to advocate verbally or practically regarding these issues is necessary. The evocative rhetoric puts us in a position of being a witness to the violations of Zion which, unfortunately, are not only figurative or unimaginable but all too real in a contemporary setting. It seeks to ensure that these injustices are not forgotten. The gendered characterisation of the exilic situation raises particular issues for our reading today that can positively highlight areas of loss and devastation as well as pathways forward.[109] A re-constructive reading of Isa 51:17-52:6 would give Zion a voice. What responses may Zion give regarding her situation, depiction, future? This then leads me to ask what a church leaver may speak back to God or the church.

Church leavers may need to reject the identity that the church may seek to impose upon them because of their departure, just as Zion needs to shake off the identity of slavery that Babylon imposes. Perhaps this is more about reframing what exile can mean than accepting a space of rejection in shaping identity. Re-clothing may be envisioned as a theme of reimagining. Re-clothing for the post-church may include reimagining a new communal space. There may also be a possibility in the journey of restoration that YHWH has changed as well as Zion. We see in 51:17-52:6 a delivering, restoring, welcoming, and strong YHWH. There may also be a possibly unusual connection made in a post-church reading where the identification is made not with desolate Zion directly, or with the restored Zion, but with the hunted antelope (the

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107. This text raises the issues of sexual abuse and violence, occurrences that are not limited to the past, but are all too common features of contemporary life. This is why these passages must be explored, not because they do not offend or cause pain, but precisely because they may, and they represent situations of pain. I resonate with Gerlinde Baumann's personal honesty on the effect of studying this topic in her book, *Love and Violence,* ix-x. A detailed analysis of reading rape in biblical studies or reading with sexual assault victims is beyond the scope of this thesis, and would need to include professional and specialised responses.

108. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia has highlighted the damaging effects of sexual abuse in the church. For some people who leave the church today, this may be a reason for growing distrust towards the institution of the church.

109. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp and Tod Linafelt, "The Rape of Zion in Thr 1,10," *ZAW* 113, no. 1 (2001): 77-81, esp. 81.

children). Perhaps the post-church feel that their journey out of church involves negotiating traps. DI is encouraging a return to a physical home that in many ways is no longer home, but that also is not the same place as the past. Diaspora theology provides various lenses with which we can read the multiple responses to the loss of home and does not assume that the 'home' is preferred but acknowledges a change in the circumstances and social situation of the exile.[110] The church leaver is offered new possibilities of home. Ideas of home are varied and post-church people may feel that leaving their church implies never returning, whereas it could mean re-formulating new communities of faith.

110. Fernando F. Segovia, "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Diaspora: A Hermeneutics of Otherness and Engagement," in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 57-74.

# 8. Isaiah 54: Barren and bearing; widow and wife

## 1. Introduction to passage

Isaiah 54 brings to a climax the images of the restoration of personified Zion in DI as well as the surprising development in the portrayal of YHWH as a husband who momentarily abandons a young wife but is wooing her back. The chapter utilises many of the feminine and familial metaphors developed in DI, with an emphasis on pregnancy, childbirth, children, and marriage, broadening these images and bringing in new and more comprehensive perspectives. Zion is not directly named in Isaiah 54 but I take the position that this passage is clearly an extension of her personification which is developed throughout Isaiah.[1] The recipient of the oracle is referred to as "barren one," "one who has not been in labour," "desolate woman," and "O afflicted one," with many of the references derived from other depictions of Zion or HB motifs of desolation. In Isaiah 54 Zion is portrayed as both a widow, and a wife of YHWH. The rhetoric is taken to soaring heights with language of restoration, beauty, חסד loyalty, compassion and comfort. Within the centre of the proclamation we find the bluntest confession in DI of YHWH's forsaking of Zion — not just inactivity (silence, lack of defence) but actual abandonment due to a surge of anger. This confirms Zion's statement of 49:14. This chapter forms the culmination of Zion's journey in DI, which is expressed through the bridal metaphor in chapters 61-62, but not her resolution in Isaiah as a whole.

My view is that DI presents a drama of Zion's transformation, but this is not universally accepted.[2] Alternative views would suggest that DI defends only YHWH's position.[3] DI's

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1. Koole warns against assuming it is directed to Zion. Jan Leunis Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55*, trans. Anthony P. Runia, HCOT (Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 347. I think this caution is unnecessary. Koole goes on to provide the literary reasons for the connection with the prior Servant Song, but a strong literary case can be made that this oracle is to Zion. See John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, 2 vols., ICC, vol. 2 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 337, which references the Targum "Sing, Jerusalem, you who were like an infertile woman...". The Targum identifies the second woman as Rome.
2. See Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, SemeiaSt 58 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), ch. 5 "God 'speaks tenderly' to Jerusalem?"
3. Mandolfo, *Daughter of Zion Talks Back,* 113. In relation to the point on Zion's development, Tiemeyer

Zion takes on the complaints of Lamentations but without the vehemence that Lamentations demonstrates.[4] YHWH responds to Zion's speech, restoring the metaphor of marriage which will take yet another turn in Isaiah 62. The transformation of Zion's personification in Isaiah 54 invites us to read the chapter more hopefully.

### (a) Literary context, form and structure

Following on from DI's final Servant Song in 52:13-53:12, ch. 54 is the last Zion song in DI.[5] It picks up themes from preceding Zion songs as well as the peace motif of the Servant Song. A number of the Servant Songs are followed by comments and often by praise (such as 42:10-13; 49:13), a pattern to which Isaiah 54 conforms.[6] Zion's future is presented as glorious, an idea extended in ch. 55.[7] The barren woman is referred to in the feminine singular which seems to separate the focus in ch. 54 enough for us to treat it as separate from 53 and 55, even if we appreciate the connected terms, themes and focus.[8] There are clear intertextual links between Isaiah 54 and Hosea (via the use of a marriage metaphor), Lamentations (particularly Lam 5:20 with the theme of forsaken/ abandonment) and Psalms.

Isaiah 54 is comprised of a number of literary genres, including a hymn in verses 1-3; an Oracle of Salvation 4-6, indicated by the "Fear not" invocation (v. 4); and a Proclamation of Salvation in vv. 7-17. Reading the chapter as a continuance in the story of Zion allows the reader to see a clear flow, despite the mixture of forms.

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affirms a dramatic presentation of Zion as a countervoice and gives her far more focus than Mandolfo, with an understanding that the emphasis is less on her sin and more on her bright future. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Isaiah 40-55: A Judahite Reading Drama," in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response,* ed. Mark J. Boda, Carol J. Dempsey, and Leann Snow Flesher, AIL 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 55-75.

4. Mandolfo suggests the cry of 49:14 is "pathetic, in every sense" particularly when compared to the length and tone of the Servant Song. Mandolfo, *Daughter of Zion Talks Back,* 108.

5. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 347. Koole argues for the close thematic connection of 54 with the preceding Servant Song. Paul provides extensive comment on the morphological links. Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 415.

6. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 443-444; John Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 595.

7. Oswalt, *Isaiah,* 595.

8. See on this point Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 337.

The most helpful structure is one that pivots around the dominant metaphors, and this also seems to match the various forms in the passage. Although the metaphors subtly shift in focus, they build on one another and reinforce the use of metaphors used in previous chapters. This structural delineation therefore takes account of metaphoric and thematic indicators:[9]

vv. 1-3 Barren woman

vv. 4-10 Abandoned wife

vv. 11-12 City

vv. 13-17 Children and end of fear.

Antithetic parallelisms set references to trauma opposite restoration images. The desolate state of Daughter Zion is set in the past tense and points to the future: This is who you were, and now you will be... restored.

## 2. Verse analysis

Isaiah 54 begins with the emphatic "Sing!", better translated as "Shout! Give a ringing cry!" This is in subtle but significant contrast to the urgent invocations to "Stand up" to action (51:17; 52:2), and seems rather to be a call to praise and celebrate. Yet immediately we are presented with an unlikely candidate for rejoicing and a reversal of roles, typically indicative in the HB of despair or lament - a barren woman. This direct address to one who has not been in labour (contra YHWH in 42:14), may link to the Sarah reference of 51:2. The call to sing may even be a birthing reference, linking to the cries of labour, yet these are not to be the anticipated cries of pain but of joy. Expectations are challenged in the imagery. Barrenness implies hopelessness, a situation that Brueggemann compares to exile.[10] Just as Sarah (or Rachel or Hannah) was powerless in fixing her own situation so also the exilic situation would be miraculously overturned.

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9. See for alternate structures Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 337. Blenkinsopp structures ch. 54 as a message for the woman in 1-8 and the city in 11-17. However, I see the second apostrophe to be just as much about the personified Zion as a woman not just the city. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, AB 19A (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 361.
10. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Pr, 1998), 151.

The reference to the desolate woman שוממה links to other references of "waste places" and brings to mind both the literal references to the ransacked, empty and destroyed land as well as the violated people. It invokes images of depopulation and loss. Koole makes the link to the Tamar story where after her rape she "lives 'desolate' by herself. This loneliness is not only due to her barrenness but also to the absence of a husband."[11] This connects with Zion's situation in 51–52 of the isolation, separation and disconnection that characterise exile.

We encounter multiple and contradictory metaphors of Zion's status which is also compared to the one who is married.[12] She is unable to bear children yet miraculously becomes a mother; her husband appears to be dead yet she is called a wife.[13] This reading of the metaphors means we cannot easily piece them together, but must rather have a cognitive disjuncture created. Zion is presented as she sees herself in all the fractured self-images of shame, social disenfranchisement, and economic vulnerability, but the passage also seeks to imagine a new identity. This move in survival literature dares to hope for a future.

If, as I do, we see the Barren One in 54:1 as Zion, then the identity of the "married" emerges as a question for us. An initial reading may suggest Babylon, compared to Isaiah 47 which images her variously as Virgin Daughter, or as arrogantly thinking she would never be a widow or childless (thus married with children).[14] Gal 4:21-31 treats Isa 54:1 as an allegory of Sarah and Hagar. Some have argued for a pre-exilic Zion and exilic Zion.

If the Barren One is exilic Zion, then why does v. 2 take up tent imagery? There are allusions to the tabernacle and worship, but cities can also be described using tent imagery.[15] Behind this reference is the Abraham as nomad tradition calling on the Genesis traditions, and promises to the ancestors.[16] Darr reminds us of the link between tent language in Ezekiel 23,

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11. Koole, *Isaiah III, V 2: Isaiah 49-55,* 352.
12. Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel*, OTM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127-131
13. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors,* 130.
14. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 151.
15. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 361-362.
16. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 151. Motyer's suggestion of a link between this passage and the Davidic motif in Amos 9:11 (restoration of David's fallen tent) seems tenuous. This argument is strengthened by linking 54 and 55 closely which Motyer does, but the overall trend of DI is not to focus on David. Motyer, *The Prophecy of*

the story of Oholah (Samaria - the tent woman) and Oholibah (Jerusalem - the tent is in her).[17] We have already seen in our analysis of 51:17-23 that there are clear links between these passages.

The spreading of the population is presented as a positive appropriation of the negative imagery of the dispersal of exile. However, when reading with a hermeneutic of suspicion and being aware of postcolonial concerns, Isa 54:3 presents a troubling picture. In a reversal of the situation of diasporic experience of dispossession, the expansion of their numbers speaks of counter-imperial domination. Historical analysis of the "empty land" theory has debunked the idea that the towns of Judah were left wholly desolate and we find here an uncomfortable discourse on dispossession that reminds the reader that the land is not empty, so to re-enter may require an act of removal of the inhabitants. The possession language harkens back to conquest narratives. The children of the Barren One apparently mimic the military power of old in their search for renewal. Unlike the inversion envisaged in 49:23, here the dispossessed might be the non-*golah* Judahites. Isa 54:3 may also be depicting the reversal of the "futility curses" of Deuteronomy 28 regarding the loss of children.[18]

The language around shame in v. 4 is another indication of the unique approach that DI has towards Zion's personification. Despite the imagery of barrenness, widowhood and divorce, she is not to be shamed. The usage in other prophets of a marriage metaphor is centrally about shame, so perhaps here is our clearest indication of the mammoth task of the prophet, not only in reframing the self-perception but also in presenting a theological interpretation of the events. Once again we see a return to the language of forgetting, but this time it is about forgetting shame. This continues the important motif throughout DI about the helpful and unhelpful roles in remembering and forgetting.[19] These are complex assertions when dealing

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*Isaiah,* 445.

17. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 179. Darr does not go into detail about the parallels between Ezekiel and Isaiah but makes the point that the tent imagery does not just relate to Israel's nomadic past but to exilic references to Jerusalem.

18. Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 27-28. She incorporates Delbert Hiller's references to "futility curses" and associates references to exile with futility.

19. See on this point Hyun Chul Paul Kim and Louis Stulman, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abindgon, 2010), ch. 3 discussion on memory, exile and identity.

with trauma — remembering old traditions, letting go of old traditions, remembering trauma and retelling so as not to deny the occurrences and moving beyond trauma so that memories do not distort the potential present or future. As Kim and Stulman remind us, there is a battle against what they term "communal amnesia" that can occur in exile.[20] They need to be cognisant of their pain but move beyond it. Thus the prophet balances a precarious dance between highlighting what to remember and what to forget, what is damaging and needs to be let go of and what is constructive and can be held on to.

YHWH as husband is recalled in creator redeemer language in one of the clearest appropriations of a marriage metaphor in v. 5.[21] Verse 6 continues the motif but brings up the terms "forsaken" עזב again which is here partnered with "grieved" עצב forming a homophone. I note here the use of the parallel similies "like a wife forsaken..." / "like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off [מאס]" which means to "reject." The question of whether this imagery depicts a divorce seems to be a tangent to the focus of the passage which is on restoration and YHWH's presence and greatness. The core issue is that Zion experiences a deep sense of abandonment, and the cause is finally articulated in v. 7 where YHWH admits עזבתיך*,* *"*I have abandoned you*"* followed immediately with "but*.*"

Before exploring the "but" we must pause in the momentous confession. We move from a presentation of YHWH in the third person to YHWH referenced in first person speech. The effect is striking in terms of the personal impact, especially given the content of the first person speech.[22] Willey emphasises the parallelisms in this section, with the accusations of Lamentations (and Isa 49:14) being admitted but then reversed in each subsequent (and building) line.[23] As she notes "Even alliteration encourages the perception that all events took place within an ordered, symmetrical environment of divine logic."[24] Unfortunately the wound that the words are trying to salve is not ordered, symmetrical or logical. Rather exile is chaotic, produces disjuncture and disconnection and fails to make sense. This is not to say

20. Kim and Stulman, *You Are My People,* 65-66.
21. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors,* 132-133.
22. Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55,* 337.
23. Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS 161 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 234-5.
24. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 235.

that the chasm cannot be bridged, and I think that this is the heart of the passage: that YHWH can admit abandonment of Zion, yet it is not the end. Exile is not the end of the story.

The contrast of Zion with Babylon continues when we compare the uses of the phrase "in a moment" in Isa 54:7 and 47:9. Just as "in a moment" Babylon would lose her children and experience widowhood, Zion had already experienced this, but would be restored to her marriage and children. The brief or "small" moment is contrasted with the "great" גדול compassion of YHWH (a return of the theme of 49:13, 15), an example of antithetical parallelism. In v. 8 the exiles are bestowed with "eternal/ everlasting loyalty" חסד עולם and v. 10 parallels חסד with ברית. We can compare this on the other hand to the admission of YHWH's silence in 42:14 which was for a long time (עולם). YHWH's gathering of the people is the opposite to the isolation of abandonment. YHWH's overflowing wrath seems like an uncontrollable and terrifying flood. This imagery links to the flood and storm references in v. 9 and 11. The underlying possibility of hope and redemption emerges. Reference to the ancient tradition of Noah and the chaos waters combine with the powerful assertion of YHWH's covenantal commitment of שלם peace, חסד loyalty and another reminder of YHWH's compassion. These images of power, commitment and compassion serve to literarily surround the competing images of death and destruction, isolation and abandonment.

Zion is referred to in v. 11 as afflicted one, storm tossed and not comforted. Again her identity is observed in order to be challenged. The references in vv.11-12 to jewels, walls and gates glamourise the rebuilding project but the references seem more eschatological than literal.[25] The images also feed into the bridal dress portrayal. The children return to the imagery in v. 13 to be taught not by priests or prophets but by YHWH, and they will not only be many but will have peace שלום. This is truly the resolution of the trauma of exile, the end of conflict. Given the journey of the children that we have seen throughout the exegesis that has involved death, loss, pain and separation, here we have a beautiful picture of restoration.

Before getting too utopian, vv. 14-17 have a decidedly militaristic tone. Despite the lyrical hope of Isaiah 54, the realities of war, domination, and terror are still all too present. We read

25. Blenkinsopp contrasts with the building of Solomon's temple. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55,* 365.

of oppression and fear, terror and strife, and weapons of destruction, but in the context of a promise of protection. The reference in v. 15 to the גור יגור, is variously translated as "anyone stirs up strife"/ "attacks you" and seems to revisit themes of threat and fear.[26] The exiles are to be reassured however that it is not YHWH they are to be terrified of, which is a different assertion of the source of their future fear. In other words, the exile was framed as being under YHWH's control. Future imperial attack would not be YHWH's strategy against the people. The passage ends with images that suggest that attacks against Zion would be futile. In v.17 the servant appears in reference to the recipient of this oracle (Zion), confirming the connection between these two alternating characters.[27]

# 3. Metaphor

As with all of the passages investigated, Isaiah 54 is built around several interacting metaphors which have been used previously, and in this passage certain aspects are either highlighted, extended or downplayed. The marriage metaphor, birthing and motherhood motifs and YHWH as redeemer all converge.[28] YHWH as husband and by association a father, is assumed in 50:1 but in ch. 54 is made explicit. The portrayal of Zion as both abandoned and widowed wife seems to be at odds with one another. Dille suggests "The term אלמנה *ʾalmānâ*, does not necessarily refer to a woman whose husband is deceased. It refers to a formerly married woman who has lost her male protector and provider."[29] She links this terminology to the divorce imagery of 50:1, and Lam 1. I see the connection to Lam 1:1 as particularly significant, as Zion is not only a widow but formerly a princess, and daughter, with her suffering caused by YHWH.[30] There are also strong links to Isa 47:8 where notions of widowhood and losing children are used to show Babylon's arrogance and her loss. Thus Zion can be depicted in multiple ways to express different aspects of the situation.[31]

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26. On the grammatical and translational concerns of this construct see Ellen F. Davis, "A Strategy of Delayed Comprehension: Isaiah 54:15," *VT* 40, no. 2 (Ap 1990): 217-221.
27. Willey, *Remember the Former Things,* 223.
28. Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 16; Darr, *Isaiah's Vision,* 176-177.
29. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 136.
30. See Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem': Second Isaiah's Reception and Use of Daughter Zion," *PSB* 20, no. 3 (1999): 281-294, esp. 286.
31. See further on the metaphors O'Connor, "Speak Tenderly to Jerusalem," 293-294.

A 21st century reading of this passage with the depiction of Zion as the abandoned, barren wife of YHWH will raise issues with the portrayal of a wife being dependent on her husband.[32] The imagery of a vulnerable woman whose abuser then apologises and expects to be accepted back needs to be problematised in our own context. Issues of patriarchal power and the more disturbing aspects of marriage metaphors have been raised throughout the study, and in this passage they perhaps reach their most critical stage in terms of developing a response. We need to read with the understanding that Israel, even in exile, was essentially an honour/ shame society. Yee explores how in Ancient Israel the male members of society represented the honour side, whereas the female status in society was more associated with preventing shame, particularly via her sexual behaviour.[33] It is this assumption of honor and shame that gives the potency to the words of DI with the promises that shame would be overturned, that loss of children and husband would be reversed. If, as Yee suggests, it is the male's honour that is protected via procreation and the sexual conduct of women, then is Zion's restoration more about YHWH's honour and not so much with Zion's shame?[34]

# 4. Hermeneutical reflections

There are two key perspectives in this study of DI that are important offerings to a post-church reading. One is in relation to reading the depictions of Zion in poetic form as a narrative of restoration . The personification of the city as a woman invites us to read Zion's journey on multiple levels. We see remnants of the real impact of war. We see the Zion who used to be, as well as who she could become. We see affirmations and fewer condemnations. Zion's journey in DI is starkly contrasted with her portrayal elsewhere in the HB. The other central aspect of my focus is the reframing of YHWH. These alternate presentations are necessary due to the understandably disenfranchised state of the exiles and their damaged per-

32. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* 150. John F. A. Sawyer, "Daughter of Zion and Servant of the Lord in Isaiah: A Comparison," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 89-107, esp. 95.
33. Yee discusses how measuring honor and shame in Ancient Israel only by categories of sexual purity is challenged by anthropologists, suggesting that hospitality or modesty may play a part, and that socioeconomic situations are considered. Yee reminds us that women do not necessarily see themselves or men in patriarchal categorisations. Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 41-42.
34. Cf. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve,* 46.

ception of YHWH. YHWH confesses and bestows a covenant of peace on the exiles. This journey of Zion's restoration and YHWH's reframing occurs in parallel.

In Isaiah 54 we come to the end of our journey with Daughter Zion as she leaves the stage of DI, incomplete in her own journey, yet further ahead than where we found her in 49:14. We have also travelled a fair distance with YHWH who by chapter 54 is more forthcoming than in the reticent response we found in 49:15. Those in society who are disenfranchised may identify with the triple trouble of Zion as a widow, barren, and abandoned wife. By recalling many of the terms and images raised in the previous chapters (comfort, compassion, loyalty, redeemer, desolate, barren, eternal, covenant, forsaken, forgotten), we face the full portrait of the relationship between YHWH and Zion; nothing is hidden here. All the threads are drawn together in this final Zion song.

By this point we recognize that it is not enough for Zion to accuse YHWH of abandonment; YHWH must confess the abandonment. I would like to think that church leavers who sense an abandonment by God *as a result of their departure from church* may find some sense of solace or relief in God's admission in Isa 54:7. It is worth pausing in this space for a moment rather than being swept up in the glorious imagery.[35] Whatever the justification, for which none is given in this passage other than the wrath of YHWH, it is clear in this admission that Zion's case against YHWH is finally validated. DI provides justifications elsewhere (42:18-25; 43:22-28) for the violence of the exile but also admissions that it was excessive (40:2; 54). Morrow's work on the idea of vicarious atonement in DI (particularly 53) suggests that the exiles' adversity is experienced on behalf of future generations.[36] He proposes that "The exiles' sense of excess suffering is taken seriously but reframed as an asset instead of a liability."[37] Today's church-leavers pave a pathway for future generations by negotiating the challenging questions about ecclesiology, core faith issues, leadership and authority if they face them rather than ignoring these questions in their leaving. DI's overtly positive framing

35. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 153-154.
36. William Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 167-184, esp. 177.
37. Morrow, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Vicarious Atonement in Second Isaiah," 180.

of Zion's story in ch. 54 may lead us as readers today to overlook the notes of trauma in the account. Her fractured identity is apparent in this chapter and may be explained as evidence of trauma. A church leaver's sense of identity may be likewise splintered and complicated. Who are they without the old framework to provide them with purpose and a narrative? Despite these notes of trauma, the literature is more akin to survival; despite these things occurring, we see a way forward. A community that had dispersed, and experienced collapse, is promised restoration and gathering. The interest of DI is not only in poetically recording the disaster but also in rebuilding communities of hope and compassion.

A postcolonial interpretation may cohere with the post-church resistance to being constructed by a hermeneutic of sin and punishment. Zion's story in DI counters the dominant story about her which is established in other prophets. The story of church leavers is currently being predominantly constructed by the mainstream church and by leaders that see church leavers as statistics and numbers, as rebellious or backsliding. This narrative needs to be challenged by the leavers themselves by finding their voice. Daughter Zion's journey can provide a counter-discourse. The ANE categorisation of women as shameful or disgraced if barren, divorced or widowed, is overturned in Zion's story. A woman's future socio-economic survival is made insecure via situations beyond her control such as: divorce relying on the word of a man, widowhood due to the unstoppable forces of life and death, or barrenness due to unknown causes which are not of her making. YHWH reverses the negative social categorisations and makes Zion an insider.

Peace is a dominant theme of Isaiah 54, continuing into 55. The covenant of peace mentioned in 54:10 and the promise of peace for the children in Isa 54:13 reflect the deep desire for shalom by victims of war or dislocation.[38] In Isa 48:18 the disobedience of the people is the cause of their lack of peace, leading to the punishment of the Servant in 53:5.[39] Peace is the opposite of desolation and lack of comfort, the state of the forsaken and forgotten Zion in 49:14. Peace resolves Zion's core anguish in DI.

38. Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings,* J. A. Motyer, ed, Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: IVP, 1996), 214-215.
39. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah,* 215.

Although a climax within DI, Isaiah 54 is not the final depiction of Zion in Isaiah. She reappears in Trito-Isaiah, with extended images of her married restoration (62) where she receives new names and in 66:7-8 where she gives birth to children in a short labour (a nation built in a day).[40] YHWH is again depicted in mothering terms in 66:13, rather than as husband. But this thesis will conclude with the Zion of DI. Zion is transformed in DI from a desolate, widowed, divorced mother of dead children, to being a bride miraculously endowed with many children in ch. 54.

40. Trito Isaiah is particularly concerned about the unfulfilled expectations of a rebuilt Jerusalem, and has a different agenda in Zion's glorious representation.

# 9. Conclusion

*All this pain*
*I wonder if I'll ever find my way*
*I wonder if my life could really change*
*....at all*
*All this earth*
*Could all that is lost ever be found*
*Could a garden come out from this ground*
*... at all*
*You make beautiful things*
*You make beautiful things out of the dust*
*You make beautiful things*
*You make beautiful things out of us*

*All around*
*Hope is springing up from this old ground*
*Out of chaos life is being found in You*

*You make me new, You are making me new*
*You make me new, You are making me new*

Gungor[1]

## 1. The end is just the beginning

In response to a question on how her son was coping with his imprisonment in Egypt, Lois Greste, mother of journalist Peter Greste, commented, "When it's a good day he sees the sky through the windows. On a bad day he sees the bars."[2] In a striking way DI depicts both the bars and the sky, unveiling the trauma of exile whilst elevating the potential for freedom, juxtaposing reality and hope, aiming ultimately to lift the gaze beyond the bars to the sky. This thesis has taken me down unexpected pathways into the metaphorical world of Daughter Zion as her self-narrative of chains and desolation turns towards liberation. Parallel to Zion's journey, DI reframes understandings of YHWH in surprising ways. I have considered a study of DI that is sensitive to post-church perspectives and found a "reading against the grain" ap-

1. Gungor, "Beautiful Things," in *Beautiful Things,* Brash Music, AAC Audio file, Feb 16, 2010, http://itunes.com.
2. Peter Greste is an Australian foreign correspondent arrested whilst reporting in Egypt during the upheavals following the Arab Spring. He was charged with siding with the opposition by merely interviewing them. Nearing 400 days in prison for doing his job, his mother Lois spoke in a radio interview with ABC's Mark Colvin. Peter Greste has since been released. Mark Colvin, "Peter Greste to mark 400 days in prison," *PM*, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-01-29/peter-greste-to-mark-400-days-in-prison/6055948. Jan 29, 2015.

proach is most beneficial.[3] A mere flat reading of the Proclamations of Salvation has little or no benefit other than reinforcing issues of guilt, condemnation and a one way conversation (monologue) rather than encouraging a dialogue with Scripture. A resistant reading has highlighted ancient areas of injustice and complexity that speaks to contemporary issues pertinent to church leavers, particularly as one of the reasons for leaving is the monological nature of many church belief and power systems.

Church leavers today have difficult journeys navigating areas of faith formation outside the traditional forms and understandings of church. The current research on church leaving reveals it is an ever increasing trend and needs to be better understood. The second or third generations – the waves of offspring who have not necessarily inherited their parent's form of faith as such but possibly have taken on their parent's angst towards the church – may find even greater challenges as to how forms of faith traditions may be reconstituted outside of the mainstream institution. The work that has been done by John Ahn on reading exile as forced migration and the impact on the first, 1.5, second and third generations for issues of belief and identity formation is worth considering for church leavers.[4] There may be helpful parameters available through these categories as to how we read the different presentations of exile in the biblical text as well as what the implications are for the transition out of traditional forms of church for the offspring generations. Post-church people are yet to formulate what new community looks like in any established way and may resist this entirely. Innovative interpretations of Scripture associated with exile are informative to this journey.

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3. The term "reading against the grain" is used by Gerald West as a general description about not buying into the ideologies either of the Bible or one's culture. See Gerald O. West, ed. *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading With Their Local Communities* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 41; Gerald O. West, "Disguising Defiance in Ritualisms of Subordination: Literary and Community-Based Resources for Recovering Resistance Discourse Within the Dominant Discourses of the Bible," in *Reading Communities, Reading Scripture: Essays in Honour of Daniel Patte,* ed. Daniel Patte, Gary A. Phillips, and Nicole Wilkinson Duran (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002), 194-217, esp. 194; Gerald O. West, "Gauging the Grain in a More Nuanced and Literary Manner: A Cautionary Tale Concerning the Contribution of the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation," in *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions From the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation,* ed. M. Daniel Carroll R (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75-109.

4. John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah,* BZAW 417 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010); John J. Ahn, "Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile: Demarcating 597, 587, and 582 B.C.E.," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile,* ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Anne Middlemas (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 173-189.

My thesis has demonstrated the following as valid points on the intersection of exilic theology, Deutero-Isaiah and the experience of church leavers:

1. The trajectory of the discourse by Christians around church leavers needs to be altered, towards a far more accepting, educated and understanding position appreciative of the variety of reasons why people are leaving. People do not leave for the same reasons; they are individuals with some similar features but no one "type." They cannot be treated monolithically or mono-logically. Exiles from church are misrepresented and misunderstood by the church but their experiences and their voices, as well as those of the generations of post-church to come, are worthwhile for the church to hear.

2. However, post-church people do not need the experiences associated with leaving church to be validated by the church, but perhaps they do need to find third spaces where their faith journey is affirmed as well as challenged. This thesis has therefore devoted attention to how they may find consolation regarding their exile via a study of particular exilic texts.

3. DI is a valuable and beautiful part of scripture that is rich, painful and instructive, and relevant to and resonant with those who are leaving church. My reading of DI affirms its multivocality - the space for many voices, many readings. The exegetical study has sought to locate potential readers among the post-church, which offers a unique and important contribution to our interpretation of DI, particularly the Proclamations of Salvation.

4. The conceptualisation of exile, and the contribution of diasporic studies, has affirmed that there are multiple ways of reading as well as experiencing exile. The popular appropriation of the exilic motif on behalf of the whole Western church might have some benefits, but also many limitations. In particular, this generalized appropriation does not distinguish between an ecclesial exile from the dominant culture and the post-church experience. The situation of the church leaver does not have to correlate to the historic conditions of the Babylonian exile of Judahites in 597, 587, or 582 BCE to be valuable, but findings from research into the historical situations provide insight into the texts of survival that emerged in these circumstances and better inform the boundaries of the analogy. The perspective of the post-church is not the sole or majority voice to listen to on the

exilic theme of DI, but it provides a valuable perspective on readerly resonances that have not yet been explored.

5. There are numerous conversation partners that have provided fruitful contributions to my study of DI which may be informative for the post-church person in a time of their own dislocation. Feminist readings are highlighting previously downplayed "characters" such as Daughter Zion or reframing perspectives of YHWH (as mother, in childbirth); post-colonial approaches explore the somewhat conflicted nature of DI as literature both representing and resisting imperial domination; and diasporic studies utilising social scientific understandings of trauma provide alternative perspectives and new interpretations of biblical texts as survival literature. This study of DI raises many further questions and complications that challenge or resist flat readings of Scripture which may seek to reassert church dominance, leaver submission, or narrow views of YHWH or exile itself.
6. DI has therapeutic elements. DI *demonstrates* survival in exile and recovery from the trauma caused by exile. Therefore it may have a highly practical purpose in the ongoing spiritual formation, validation and nurture of the church leaver. E.g., making use of James Fowler's work in this context has contributed towards reframing exile from church as a necessary step rather than an end of faith, just as DI's reframing of exile allows for survival of the post-exilic community of faith.[5]

I have sought through this thesis to identify some specific theological questions or issues relevant to the post-church person. Some are representative of universal questions people ask in times of transition and challenge: Is God active if there is silence? Where is God in suffering and loss? The post-church person may also come to the Bible with more specific questions than those previously asked of the text. These may include: How do I reconcile what I may have been taught about God and church and approaches to Scripture with the reality of my experience in this world (including that of rising secularism)? How may I continue to worship God in a changed situation? What is and is not church? Can I participate in a new community in a healthy and productive way? I have sought to read the passages in DI with these

5. Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith: Journeys Beyond Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches* (Wellington: Phillip Garside, 2000), ch. 8; James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

questions in mind. DI speaks to some of these questions but does not necessarily provide direct answers; in fact my study of DI with respect to a post-church reading raises new possibilities and further questions. Traditional readings are often unsatisfactory in a new situation and new situations require new language, images and stories.

Using the multiple methodologies of rhetorical criticism, historical-critical analysis, reader-response criticism and sociological insights has brought about many new and positive directions in interpreting DI. These approaches provide an invitation in DI to read Zion in numerous ways. Zion's personification is not always presented in a consistent portrayal, even if it seems to be deliberately progressive within DI. This ambiguity may be appealing to post-church people, or just frustrating. At the very least Zion's story highlights a situation of marginality and vulnerability with a focus on restoring relationship and gathering. These are significant themes for post-church people. The other major aspect of my reading of DI has been challenging and reframing depictions of YHWH.

My study of Isa 49:14-26 has formed the central part of my thesis, with the development of the character of Zion and the depiction of YHWH being of particular interest and providing a springboard to the study of other passages in DI. The rhetorical presentation of this passage as a conversation between disillusioned Zion and loving, compassionate YHWH, depicted in maternal images, invites the reader to new potentialities about a seemingly impossible restoration. Church leavers may initially identify with the words and deep sentiment of Zion's loss particularly articulated in her statement "YHWH has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me" which can be read with a tone of anger, resentment, despair, resignation or confusion. YHWH's response may prove therapeutic. The presentation of YHWH in mothering terms rather than in the patriarchal motifs more common to the HB is appealing for a post-church reading for a variety of reasons. This passage appears invitational, compassionate, wooing and restorative. A deeper reading has provided many challenges to my initial observations of a superficially simple conversation that is actually complicated and layered. An initial reading may find a monologue rather than a dialogue. Zion's voice seems to be muffled and eventually silenced with a power imbalance between YHWH and Zion. The portrayal of YHWH's restoration of Zion does not take any responsibility for her desolation (neither does 50:1-3 but

I would argue that in 42:14 and 54:7 YHWH admits to a level of culpability). The central problem of the text is the loss of Zion's children which YHWH restores to her without admitting to a role in their disappearance and death.

An alternative reading of Isa 49:14-26 may be that Zion is given a voice in the passage that is bold and assertive, counter to many other representations on her behalf throughout the HB. Not only does Zion herself identify the core issue as YHWH's abandonment and forgetfulness of her, this acknowledgement of her situation as an exile, as desolate, and alone, is what prompts the response by YHWH to bring her change. 49:21 is one of the clearest references in DI to the exile itself, and this text allows Zion to move forward by stating explicitly her dilemma. Exilic theology suggests that in a diasporic situation there can be new identities formed and life can emerge beyond trauma. It is in the gaps and uncertainties that exist in the passage that a church leaver may find courage to speak back – to God, or to the church, particularly on areas of doubt. They may be able to clearly acknowledge and articulate their changed/ changing situation as an opportunity to move beyond it rather than remain immobile. Church leavers in the West and for the focus of this thesis, Australia, may have a similar claim to Zion in the passage but with a different cause of their exile. Zion's self-understanding also has to deal with false presumptions regarding YHWH. Isa 49:14-26 is a passage of hope, and the state of being forsaken/ forgotten is juxtaposed with the comfort and compassion of the Redeemer (גאל) God. Whether Zion is comforted or not is the ongoing concern in the second half of DI.

Zion is conspicuous by her absence in Isa 50:1-3, but we gain an appreciation that her journey towards restoration is not instantaneous. This may speak to the anxiety about how long the process of leaving a church takes before there is a space of consolation. We learn that YHWH is not presented in one single way, and various reading strategies help us appreciate different perspectives in Isa 50:1-3, with YHWH depicted as the faithful husband and father. The rhetorical questions in 50:1-3 may have implied responses, but due to the lack of response in the passage (by the children or anyone) we may see an opportunity in the gap for more than one reply to "Why when I came was there no one?" 50:2 may be read as a call for

a response and can be an exhortation to post-church people not to become passive towards God or matters of faith.

A church leaver may need a response similar to Isa 50:1 “where is your mother’s bill of divorce?” which implies there is no permanent separation between themselves and God because they have left their church. Isa 50:1-3 provokes us to look beyond inward existential questions to the 'other' by speaking to the children rather than the mother. This led me in my study to investigate situations of children in times of war, an unexpected turn. Sensitivity to contemporary situations of war and exile contribute to our readings in DI once again and I found this a recurring theme in the study. Reading various relational metaphors in DI needs to be done carefully, particularly when those metaphors reinforce ideas of YHWH that produce distance or perpetuate poor practices of relationship, particularly regarding treatment towards women or children. Church leavers who investigate these texts as part of their journey may need to allow space not only for their own response but also for the necessity of re-learning exactly what they are reading. To aid understanding of the marriage and parenting metaphors found in DI, it is helpful to explore their historical background and compare to other biblical texts where they appear. We are invited to appreciate YHWH’s creative action, and the power of speech. The innovative mixture of parental and destructive imagery provides the reader with perhaps one of the most disjunctive experiences in this study. Pertinent questions about the nature of YHWH’s activity are raised that have implications for God's activity, or perceived lack of action, in our times. Perhaps post-church exiles are more in a position to appreciate this lacuna than those inside the church.

The focus on Zion is further developed in Isa 51:17-52:6 where she is directly addressed by the prophet, at times in the voice of YHWH. By the author’s personification of the city, the reader is able to connect viscerally. At issue in Isa 51:17-52:6 is the paralysing effect of fear. Damage and pain can lead to loss. Yet this loss can lead to stagnation and this is one of the real risks for the post-church person – that they are so paralysed by the loss of institution and key relationships that they fail to move on to a new stage and commitment or contribution to a new community. The identity that the church may seek to impose upon the church leaver can be rejected, just as exiles need to shake off the identity of slavery that Babylon imposes.

The church leaver is not betraying the church by leaving, and does not have a desolate future by doing so.

Isaiah 54 brings the journey of Daughter Zion to the conclusion of her development in DI, for the time being. By situating her devastation in parallel to her glorification we see Zion arrive now in her position as bride. YHWH is explicitly husband. Yet within this exalted proclamation we finally receive the confession of YHWH that Zion was forsaken, the original claim of 49:14. She did not misunderstand and the acknowledgement validates her experience. Her self-perception was real, and this is a challenging reading for us to accept. Her forsaken and grieved position is shrouded in language of redemption, compassion and love. However, Zion's story does not end here and the post-church reader may find comfort in knowing the journey is not fully articulated in this study but that some level of שלום may be found in this restoration to YHWH.

The church leaver may be able to grow in self-understanding via a reading journey of DI that focusses on the personified Daughter Zion, and YHWH's transformation. Zion's desolation and despair, her bereft state, and her slow restoration and self-realisation come alive in DI. Surprising readings of YHWH are combined to challenge our presumptions: YHWH as Divine Warrior but also one who gives birth, who engages in creative destruction, YHWH as nurturing mother juxtaposed with oppressive overlord, faithful husband and father, redeemer, compassionate, not forgetting, admitting abandonment. Post-church people reading DI with an awareness and acknowledgment of their deep loss may find hope for a new community. Just as Zion demonstrates, we find permission to speak, to question and challenge and even rage and disagree. We are also encouraged not to give up, on faith, on YHWH, on the Scripture and on hope. The core example of Daughter Zion's journey is to critique, but not to be destroyed by the potentially toxic effects of trauma, and ultimately to move forward.

Zion reappears in Trito-Isaiah, with extended images of her glorious married restoration (62) where she receives new names that feature so dominantly in DI - "You shall no more be called Forsaken and your land shall no more be called Desolate; but you shall be called Hep-

hzibah and your land Beulah; for YHWH delights in you and your land shall be married" 62:4 and again in 62:12 "you shall be called, 'Sought After, a City not Forsaken.'" In ch. 66, Zion gives birth to children in a short labour (a nation built in a day). Her story has been brought to a stunning conclusion. YHWH is again depicted in mothering terms in ch. 66:7-9.

My analysis of Deutero-Isaiah's theology of exile in the context of post-church gives rise to two final questions: what features may constitute community for church leavers, and what is the space of ancient texts in these communities? I will now turn to these considerations.

## 2. Church leavers and community

The insights of those who have advocated for an interpretation of the current situation for the Western church as being increasingly in a state of exile, of seeing church as marginal to an increasingly secular and pluralist society rather than at the centre, have contributed to my reading of exile throughout the thesis. This is essentially a positive reading regarding the decline of the "church in power" model and the potential of fringe existence in terms of a radical and uncompromised social witness. Taking this further I have argued that the church leavers' situation can be informed by some of these ideas of church on the margins or in liminal spaces.[6] Thus there are aspects of ecclesiology and diasporic theology framed by the exilic motif, proposed by scholars such as Brueggemann, Hauerwas, and Yoder, that are worth considering incorporating into post-church communities of faith.[7] However, I have emphasised the need to investigate these ideas critically to avoid further damage for a church leaver who may already be in a vulnerable position. I will now touch on some of the various options for features of church for exiles in the changing circumstances in which we find ourselves, their benefits, applicability, and possible weaknesses, rather than prescribing a model as such.

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6. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*; Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).
7. Such as Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989); Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997); John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs, eds, Radical Traditions Series (Grand Rapids; London: Eerdmans; SCM, 2003).

Those who choose to leave the mainstream church do not necessarily exit the Christian faith, but leaving a church community can have a profound effect on how that faith is understood and practiced. The church has much to consider about the causes for the increasing exile out of church. Some leavers will be reabsorbed back into the mainstream church, but Jamieson's research suggests this is not yet the case.[8] Church is not dead but the EPC forms that it has taken have some problematic elements, meaning that for a person to navigate their faith journey maturely they must decide it cannot be done within that context.[9] Some of the expressions and experiments of church that have been variously labelled as emerging, or emergent, may contribute to the discussion around communities of faith for church leavers.

The particular concern that post-church people encounter is how to constitute new communities when the old ones have fragmented. As Hoch observes, exile, by its very nature, is the "unmaking of coherence."[10] One of the challenges, and an area of potential research beyond the scope of this thesis, is that post-church people themselves may not necessarily yet want to define what church will be for them, if anything. Trauma can leave the future unimagined and unarticulated, and the leaving phenomenon may be too recent. They may still want to meet with and be around Christians as well as people who do not profess faith, and form some sense of spiritual community.

The lesson of the exile as expressed in DI is that despite great loss and challenge to the structures of faith and life there is hope, but the practice of faith may look quite different to what it has been before. The church leaver has much to consider about the meaning, function and practice of church for themselves and whether there is a church-leaving community as such, provoking questions about what would constitute worship, leadership and faith practice in a new space. Communities of faith for those who have left the institution of the church may be less formally identifiable (fewer buildings or overt symbols) but not necessarily less

8. Alan Jamieson, Jenny McIntosh, and Adrienne Thompson, *Five Years on - Continuing Faith Journeys of Those Who Left the Church* (Wellington: The Portland Trust, 2006), 79-81.
9. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* 96.
10. Robert P. Hoch, *By the Rivers of Babylon: Blueprint for a Church in Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 18.

sacramental.[11] They may become more scattered and fragmented in an official sense but have a greater online connectivity, or they may be more localised as community or household based. They will be less denominationally aligned, and therefore difficult to measure and quantify. I doubt that leadership will be as structurally formatted for post-church people as it is in the institutional church as there is a measure of understandable resistance to hierarchy.

Jamieson's work on church leavers concludes with the acknowledgement that groups remain important for the faith development of the leavers.[12] He identifies in particular the role of *liminal* and *marginal* groups.[13] *Liminal* groups offer new constructions of church communities. *Marginal* groups are a possible locus for the disenfranchised who need to "grumble," express their doubts and questions (those Jamieson categorises as Displaced Followers or Reflective Exiles may fit into this group). Liminal groups look towards the future whereas marginal groups identify with the past. Both forms of groups may prove useful to a church leaver but Jamieson suggests that those who are further along in their transitionary journey outside of church (those he categorises as Transitional Explorers and Integrated Wayfinders) are more liminal.[14]

In responding to the issues of leavers, Jamieson suggests that churches need to be leaver sensitive not just seeker sensitive in such ways as: providing a theology of journey in contrast to focussing on "coming in" (crossing a line of conversion), and emphasising the importance of proper training in exegesis and other views of theology than the narrow ones presented in their own churches.[15] In his view, churches need to provide safe places to ask questions, express doubt and encourage broad models of Christian exploration. A good outline about the work of *Spirited Exchanges* is found in Jamieson's follow up book. This is a group set up by

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11. See for example Rachel Held Evans, "Want Millennials Back in the Pews? Stop Trying to Make Church 'Cool'," *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2015. Evans' blog and book emphasises the importance of sacred rituals for those who are leaving mega churches. Rachel Held Evans, *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving and Finding the Church* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2015).
12. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith*; Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* ch. 8 "The role of faith groups."
13. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* see 158-166, for discussion of liminal and marginal groups, particularly a focus on liminal groups.
14. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,*159.
15. Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith,* ch. 10 "Leaver-sensitive churches".

a church to allow those on the fringe or who have departed, to gather and express their questions, doubts, and anxieties as they continue to transition from marginal to liminal.[16] This is one path for the development of liminal identity.

Exilic and post-exilic biblical texts provide competing visions regarding community boundaries and identity in contrast with DI's more universalistic options. The "children of the *golah*" maintained and further developed a distinctive identity in exile. Daniel Smith-Christopher has demonstrated that one possible way of interpreting Ezra-Nehemiah's post-exilic exclusivist religious expression can be understood to be a response to the pressure of empire to assimilate.[17] Thus we see in biblical texts such as Ezra-Nehemiah evidence of lexical changes in terms relating to "others," an increased self-awareness and minority consciousness characterised by purity and boundary protection language.[18] Smith-Christopher, in exploring the possibilities of a diasporic Christian theology, advocates the value in learning from those communities that have already experienced a diasporic existence and threatened identity.[19] He warns that:

> Modern Christians need not embrace an Ezra-like exclusivity, or a bigoted notion about "appropriate marriage partners," or the repression of women in the name of a regressive ideal about "restoring the family" to recognize that Christian identity does involve appropriate attention to issues of maintaining a viable gospel-informed social witness.[20]

Healthy community formation for church leavers would be badly served by merging Christianity with the colonising culture. We cannot go back to ignoring Indigenous and other spiritual expressions of faith. Exiles are in a brutal awakened state, yet can easily be caught up in the dream of the past, or the idealisation of the future that makes present community impossible. Church leavers' experiences of dislocation can prompt them towards empathy and social action as well as the parallel prospect of leading them towards an inward focus.

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16. Jamieson, McIntosh, and Thompson, *Five Years on,* ch. 11. Jenny McIntosh, the facilitator of *Spirited Exchanges*, outlines the major functions of the group as follows: validation and normalisation of the journey; supportive companionship; education; guiding voices; being a sounding board, and motivation. Ch. 12 explores the role of a spiritual director for a church leaver to navigate their journey.
17. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), ch. 6 ""Purity" as nonconformity: communal solidarity as diaspora ethics."
18. Smith-Christopher compares Ezra's policies with contemporary sociological studies of minority religious groups (such as the Anabaptists, Amish, Quakers) who have maintained strong identity via boundary policing and marriage practices. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 160-162.
19. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 197.
20. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology,* 199.

They run the risk of becoming completely absorbed into the broader society. These exiles face the real possibility of subsequent generations not continuing in faith.

On the other hand, Trito-Isaiah exhibits challenges within the community regarding insiders and outsiders, with the major themes of the restoration of Zion, the nations and salvation, what constitutes Torah obedience and ethical obedience.[21] Change can lead to multiple possibilities and intense dispute as to what will be agreed upon in terms of the shape and identity formation of a community. Trito-Isaiah may be a helpful text for a faith community to navigate the future, dealing with questions about how to embrace difference and what authentic faithfulness can look like in a new context.

My study of DI would suggest that despite the trauma involved in exile and the loss of a previously central community, new community gatherings can be healing but with some key qualifiers. Any new forms of community proposed that appropriate the exilic motif for their formation need to be critically evaluated.[22] If the encouraged actions are culturally influenced primarily from a particular political or philosophical stance, with biblical texts invoked to support the practices rather than serious exegesis undertaken to see if the analogies of exile are relevant to the context, further damage can ensue for the exile. A type of exile that may be more about a clash of culture or values needs to be acknowledged as such. Shallow proof texting that sees exile as a theological fertilizer, something to seek out and emulate in a life "on the edge," can be abusive. My contention is that in the HB, exile was not a sought after situation. It was a situation that exiles were thrown (hurled) into and then had to make the most of, even if it ultimately proved beneficial.

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21. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 164.

22. I would include here the following works of Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006). Both include some very useful and interesting ideas for the emerging church in Australia, but also some less helpful appropriations of the exilic motif.

The communal features of an exilic faith are debatable.[23] Many post-church people may find great encouragement in Yoder's Free Church vision.[24] He finds inspiration in Jewish diaspora survival that may prove applicable: forming identity and worship around the reading and practice of biblical texts, a shared story in day to day life formed in small community based groups without a hierarchical leadership structure.[25] Along with the many strengths of Yoder's work on post-Constantinian possibilities for church, based mainly on the "Jeremianic model", he failed overall to engage with biblical interpretation of other exilic or post-exilic texts.[26] Chapman reminds us that "there is never any direct reference in the Bible to the Jewish community in Babylon as exercising ongoing religious authority once Ezra and Nehemiah have returned. From the *scriptural* perspective, the normative continuation of Judaism lay exclusively in Yehud."[27] This is an important consideration for exponents of exilic or diasporic communities based on biblical texts. Chapman argues an appreciation of the exilic motif in Israel's self-narrative, despite the return of some people to the land.[28]

DI's Proclamations of Salvation address and represent a traumatized people who need reminding of who YHWH is and adjusting past views of YHWH. DI continued to find meaning beyond the exile. DI calls on older traditions such as the creation motif by linking it with salvific acts such as the Exodus. DI does not lay out a blueprint for a model of community but rather encourages the community that already exists in fragmented, devastated form to re-build, gather and move forward. They could only do so once they acknowledged their situation. This also involved a necessity of rejecting harmful practices and self-beliefs that dominated their thinking - Babylon in power, worship of idols, debilitating false self-identity. Hope and truth is the major antidote in DI, interestingly not cynicism, which is a significant message for contemporary exiles.

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23. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 227-233. Newbigin gives some helpful categories vital to a community of faith, including praise (instead of scepticism); living for others; and hope.
24. Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* 78.
25. Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* 21.
26. Stephen Chapman, "The Old Testament and Church After Christendom," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 9, no. 2 (Fall, 2015): 159-184, for attention on Yoder's model see 162-167.
27. Chapman, "The Old Testament and Church After Christendom," 163.
28. Chapman, "The Old Testament and Church After Christendom," 171-172. Chapman is particularly critical of those who sideline any attention to monarchical or Mosaic theological models of community that are part of the story of Israel in the Bible. 162.

There is a challenge in DI to learn with the marginalised, to identify with, rather than reject those on the fringes. DI exhibits a vision of community that was obviously under challenge. Zion's desolation, isolation and bereft condition is reversed via the gathering of her children. DI challenges a response that is more than a clinical and distant interest in the historical background of Jerusalem's fate, but is towards awareness of the socio-theological issues it may raise about our world today. The key issue for exiles in DI was being able to reframe their understanding of suffering, that it had a role for the whole of the community - in the form of the vicarious suffering Servant. It had meaning.

Robert Hoch asks, "What might happen if the church attempted to think and theologize alongside the bodies of the displaced, not only the figuratively 'deported' but the *actually* deported."[29] Church leavers constituting new communities can appreciate that their personal experience of exile in its particular form can inform their sensitivity, and acknowledge the differences, to broader contexts of exile in the community that may be more related to socio-economic, political, or geographic issues. There are aspects of the ancient faith traditions to take forward and that should be respected and appreciated, but in new ways. How could the Lord's Supper be celebrated with the hungry? How may baptism be significant for those who have had their identities threatened? Where is the place for hospitality for those without a home?[30] A theology of exile informed by biblical texts can positively shape the features of new communities.

## 3. Dealing with ancient texts in church leaver communities

My study leads me to conclude that Contextual Bible Study (CBS) may provide one fruitful possibility for the study of DI by post-church people.[31] Not only does it offer the benefits of

29. Hoch, *By the Rivers of Babylon,* 10.
30. These kinds of concerns drive Hoch's work as he appropriates the exilic motif to argue for communities of the marginalised. Hoch, *By the Rivers of Babylon.*
31. For an outline of the process see Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Dorpspruit: Cluster Publications, 1993); Gerald O. West, "Do Two Walk Together? Walking With the Other Through Contextual Bible Study,"

academic research regarding the text, valuing historical-critical findings, it gives a voice to post-church people.[32] As a form of reader-response criticism, CBS facilitates the study of the text in community, which is a helpful component for the post-church journey. Situating the study of DI in dialogue with a post-church context can be ultimately empowering. CBS provides immediate access to reading and interpreting biblical texts, in contrast to the often more authoritarian mediation of the Bible that is modeled in the EPC institutions.

The facilitation of a vulnerable group does, however, raise questions for CBS. Tiffany Webster's research on an ethnographic approach to using CBS with UK coal miners highlights some of the potential risks, particularly in four main areas: "1. The power of the facilitator; 2. the power of agendas; 3. the developing power dynamics of a group; 4. the power of the Bible itself."[33] Her major focus and critique in the paper is on the first area - the role of the facilitator. Webster challenges West's description of a facilitator needing to be a "normal Christian" who does not need any formal qualification, on the basis that the role of a facilitator that West then goes on to describe in his manual includes highly complex tasks that assume "managerial, practical or academic skill."[34] The issue of trauma is noted throughout her paper, with the acknowledgement that the facilitator is not necessarily qualified or capable of dealing with this.

Studying the Bible in community does not ensure that it will be "life giving." Webster considers the possibilities of CBS being facilitated by people with damaging perspectives and she notes "A contextual reading cannot be valid just because it is contextual."[35] The place of agendas is compelling in relation to post-church CBS as it would be very easy for the study to

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*AThR* 93, no. 3 (2011): 431-449.

32. See the example of Gerald O West, "Articulating, Owning and Mainstreaming Local Theologies: The Contribution of Contextual Bible Study," *JTSA* 122 (2005/7): 23-35.

33. Tiffany Webster, "The Problem of Power in Contextual Bible Study," *Track Changes* 6 (Winter 2014): 111.

34. Webster, "The Problem of Power in Contextual Bible Study," 114.

35. Webster, "The Problem of Power in Contextual Bible Study," 117. Note that Webster refers to the evaluation of the use of CBS in Scotland by Eric Anum, "Towards Intercultural Contextual Bible Study: A Review of the Adoption of Contextual Bible Study (From South Africa) in the West of Scotland," *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 361 (2002/4): 224-236, and the desire of groups for an 'expert' that somewhat conflicts with the idea of 'reading with' addressed by Sarojini Nadar, "Beyond the 'Ordinary Reader' and the 'Invisible Intellectual': Pushing the Boundaries of Contextual Bible Study Discourses," in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key,* ed. Roland Boer and Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: SBL, 2012). Both are important critiques of the CBS process and assumptions.

be construed as an open space but with a facilitator's hidden agenda of attempting to either encourage the community back towards church or out of church entirely. Either direction would be ethically problematic. The vulnerability of post-church people may leave them susceptible to manipulation and further trauma. Even the group dynamics which CBS generates may either be helpful or damaging, depending on the facilitator's skill.

I think the considerations of the problem of power in CBS raised by Webster are persuasive and instructive to a post-church community. In my own study of DI as a text of survival I am further convinced that deeper readings may not only reveal original contexts of trauma and pain, but reinforce or raise current contexts of trauma and pain. This may indicate the necessity of a re-evaluation of the level of experience required of a facilitator. However, I think we veer into concerning territory when we limit the reading of challenging Scriptures to highly regulated therapy contexts, or not at all. This may further silence these passages to professionals, stigmatize the readers or bury texts that traditionally have received little focus due to their complexities. A recognition of the limits of CBS, the role of the facilitator, the potentiality of the biblical text to be likewise a tool of healing or re-traumatizing all need to be acknowledged and further explored in academia, particularly via multi-disciplinary studies. This is one major reason why I have found a study of DI benefits enormously from the findings of social sciences, and from the conversation partners of diaspora, feminist and postcolonial studies which are inherently sensitive to the issues of power and oppression.

The traditional reasons for engaging in local Bible study still play a part in a post-church context but may need to be reframed. Issues about the authority of Scripture will arise and may need some critical thought. Litchfield's proposals on local Bible study in a post-modern era provides some useful pointers, most significantly his emphasis on the stewardship of texts of traditions, the community role in forming the canon, care about its content and finding elements of relevance and the place of the text in sponsoring ethical responsibility.[36] CBS approaches to DI and other exilic texts would accommodate these proposals by Litchfield.[37]

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36. Randy G. Litchfield, "Rethinking Local Bible Study in a Postmodern Era," in *New Paradigms for Bible Study: The Bible in the Third Millennium,* ed. Robert M. Fowler, Edith Valdvogel Blumhofer, and Fernando F. Segovia (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 227-250, esp. 229.
37. As would learning from the experiences of Ecclesial Base Communities of Latin America where "direct

As he outlines, "Bible study as a practice of faith is historical, communal, spiritually enriching, both honored and abused, and contributes to human flourishing."[38] These are all valid reasons why it benefits a faith community that exists outside of church, retained as a mechanism of self-understanding and worship. It is fascinating to consider what canon a post-church community may find valuable. It could well include biblical texts that are typically ignored or abused by the mainstream church, such as the downplayed Daughter Zion passages or feminine portrayals of YHWH.

Walter Brueggemann's perspectives on new models of church for a post-modern era have strong applicability to church leavers.[39] He suggests that the Davidic model (temple- royal-prophetic model) has dominated our thinking, and his contention is that the similarities between that context and our context today are diminishing. He highlights other models such as the Moses model that includes such characteristics as the Exodus liturgy, the Sinai encounter and law; a borrowing and adapting community; segmented and marginal.[40] His particular thesis is that there may be much to learn from the exilic and post-exilic period, which was relatively unexplored at the time of this article.[41] This is again another reason why biblical texts from this period, such as DI, are extremely valuable and may offer new insights and interpretations for believers functioning in a new world. As well as addressing notions of survival crucial for exilic and post-exilic communities of faith in the margins, and the necessity for a distinctive identity, Brueggemann highlights the essential role that textual

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access to the biblical word allows for the liberation of the different meanings of the text, making way thereby for the possibility of a plurality of interpretations; such a concept in turn, profoundly alters the existing relationships of power and authority, even allowing for the construction of new models of being church ... There is ... something essentially novel in the way the Bible is read in these communities, insofar as the different biblical programs given throughout Brazil since the late 1960s have sought to develop and promote a common reading method meant to bring faith and life together in a new way. Such a method seeks to relate the Bible to the life of the community as well as the broader social reality." Paulo Fernando Carneiro de Andrade, "Reading the Bible in Ecclesial Base Communities of Latin America: The Meaning of Social Context," in *Reading From This Place Volume 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 239. Cf. Carlos Mesters, *The Mission of the People Who Suffer: The Songs of the Servant of God* (Cape Town: Theology Exchange Project, 1990).

38. Litchfield, "Rethinking Local Bible Study," 229.

39. Walter Brueggemann, "Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture," *ThTo* 48, no. 2 (1991): 128-138.

40. See also Yoder's free church model, his theory developing around analysis of the formation of synagogue worship in the Jewish diaspora, centered around textually based communities. Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited,* 78. See also Stephen Chapman, "The Old Testament and Church After Christendom," who compares Yoder with the work of Roger Williams and N.T. Wright. Chapman makes a strong biblical case for the use of the exilic motif but without dismissing the significance of other models.

41. Brueggemann, "Rethinking Church Models," 133.

study had on the survival of the post-exilic community.[42] We are encouraged to wrestle and debate the text, thoroughly seeking its application and relevance to our context today.

For the church leaver, critically understanding the new situation in which they find themselves is necessary. This critical understanding requires approaching the biblical text and its context from numerous angles. The text may offer a critique of our own world and living. Rather than be relegated to the fringe of the experience, the biblical text needs to remain meaningful in the centre of new communities of faith albeit in a different way from the older forms of evangelical biblicism. My experience in studying the chosen Proclamations of Salvation in DI is that they raise fascinating yet sometimes disturbing issues.[43] The coalescing of the worlds of DI, Daughter Zion and feminine portrayals of YHWH, the theme of exile as now better explored and understood by theologians using skills appropriated from social sciences and sociological explorations of church leavers, have led me to some major insights but also to even further important questions.

# 4. Transformation towards hope

Daughter Zion's journey in DI depicts an arc of restoration. Deeper investigation yields problematic aspects of her trauma. Careful readings of the Proclamations of Salvation in which she is exhorted to participate in her own restoration provide fruitful correlations for Australian Christians transitioning out of mainstream churches today. There are multiple benefits of such readings – for the church leaver engaging in prophetic texts finding new self-understanding and navigating a difficult change, for the church receiving new readings of biblical texts enhancing sensitivity and shining a light on possible aspects of church life that create pain for others and for issues of trauma in ancient and modern contexts that have not necessarily been appreciated previously. This reading also values multiple visions of reading Zion: as a woman, as a city, as a people. Zion's story is essentially one of restoration and redemption. Zion is not alone; she is journeying alongside YHWH who likewise is

42. Brueggemann, "Rethinking Church Models," 135.
43. See Darr's helpful discussion about her experience of teaching Ezekiel to theology students and the complex questions this raises. As she notes, "Sometimes, we continue to embrace hurtful texts not because we affirm their answers, but rather because they force us to confront the important questions." Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel's Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts," *JSOT* 55 (9/1992): 117.

transforming.

Post-church people are at risk of stagnation or paralysis, and Zion's journey provides hope to move forward, not in denial of the shattering experience that leaving a church may be, or of the tricky and dark questions that arise in a journey of doubt, but because one cannot fruitfully stay in that place. It is possible to reconstitute new communities in a new era, and this has been done throughout the ages by people in various stages of change and liminality, with particular insight from ancient texts such as DI. To return to the quote from Lois Greste at the start of the chapter, by allowing the biblical text to speak to the situation of post-church exile, they may be able to see the sky beyond the bars that the initial space of church leaving constitutes. There may be a new freedom that DI can speak into being for a church leaver as it has done for other communities.

Church leavers can appropriate the narrative of exile demonstrated so vividly in DI's personification of Zion, and find that a home can be formed via this narrative. It may have unfamiliar boundaries and be more *uncomfortable* than the old home but they do not need to remain *uncomforted*. Exile does not leave people unscarred, and exiles need to remember that experience of alienation so as to accept the 'other' rather than giving into the temptation of exclusivism that can arise when in a marginalised situation. The daring conclusion that I arrive at is that perhaps it is YHWH who is creating this new situation, something beautiful out of mess. Exile out of church may be instigated by God. The deeper, more honest story of faith for church leavers can be about new beginnings rather than endings, and church leavers can be assured that they are neither forsaken nor forgotten.

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