Creation in Collision? Isaiah 40-48 and Zoroastrianism, Babylonian Religion and Genesis 1

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Isaiah 40–48 emphasizes not only that Yahweh is a creator-god, but also that Yahweh is unique. What prompted this? Did the author(s) adopt, adapt, or refute ideas found elsewhere? The question of influences on Isaiah 40–48 is an intriguing one, but also demanding, as the texts of these chapters show affinities to a wide range of other texts and traditions, both biblical and extra-biblical. The question may be approached in two different ways: either by a series of individual studies on Isaiah 40–48 and each possible source of influence; or by one broad wide-ranging discussion on a selection of what seem to be the most likely sources. The first has the advantage of exhibiting details, but risks lapsing into isolated studies. The second lacks the precision of the former, but has the advantage of presenting a unified overview. An example of the latter is provided by Blenkinsopp's recent article, which discusses the relations that Isaiah 40–48 may or may not have to Genesis 1 and Deuteronomy 4, as well as to Zoroastrianism and Babylonian religion, especially in terms of its cosmological and protological language.[1] The present article follows the same approach; while the focus is strictly limited to what may have influenced the idea of a unique creator in Isaiah 40–48, a broad range of texts and traditions are discussed in the search for an answer. The structure of this article follows that of Blenkinsopp's in topics, if not in order: relations between Isaiah 40–48 and Zoroastrianism; Isaiah 40–48 and Babylonian religion; Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1.[2]

Let me begin by stating, by way of introduction, that I agree with many others that there is a break between chapters 48 and 49 in the book of Isaiah. I also agree that at least

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[1] J. Blenkinsopp, "The Cosmological and Protological Language of Deutero-Isaiah," *CBQ* 73 (2011), 493–510.

[2] I will not deal with relations to Deuteronomy 4. However, a discussion on parallels between Deuteronomy 4 and Isaiah 40–55 is found in K. Holter, *Deuteronomy 4 and the Second Commandment* (Studies in Biblical Literature, 60; New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 111–112.

chapters 40–48 must derive from sometime after the beginning of Cyrus' campaigns in the west, but before his victory over Babylon, i.e., during the period 550–539 B.C.E., allowing for later redactional processes and interpolations. Whether the author(s) lived in Babylon or not is, in my opinion, an interesting question, but not crucial; what *is* important, however, is that the author(s) had at least some knowledge of the religious situation of that area, as I shall discuss below.

ISAIAH 40–48 AND ZOROASTRIANISM

Blenkinsopp gives an excellent summary of the previous discussion on Zoroastrianism and its relations to the Hebrew Bible, particularly Isaiah 40–48.[3] He agrees with others that the author of Isaiah 40–48 "may have come in contact with Zoroastrian ideas"[4] through Persian agents spreading propaganda in Babylon before Cyrus' arrival, yet he also cautions his readers by drawing attention to the fact that there is no "evidence for Zoroastrian influence on the Persian court prior to Darius I [ruling 522—486 B.C.E.]" but rather a "plurality of deities, cults and religious practices," as well as there being a "language problem" since the *Gathas*, i.e., Zoroastrian sacred texts, are written in the language Avestan.[5] This somewhat ambiguous view is symptomatic of the present state of the scholarly discussion, the apparent confusion being related to our ignorance of the development of Zoroastrianism —including the question of Cyrus' own religious adherence— as well as to speculations about contact between the Isaian author(s) and representatives or ideas of Zoroastrianism.

Indeed, it is not at all clear when Zoroastrianism began having an impact on Iranian religion. The very historicity of Zoroaster (Zarathustra) is disputed, and those who claim that he did exist admit that the place and time of his birth cannot be known for certain; suggestions of date range from about 6500 to 500 B.C.E., the majority of scholars seeming to favour sometime between 1400 and 500 B.C.E.; the history of the spread of the religion is also unknown.[6]

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[3] Blenkinsopp, "Cosmological and Protological," 501–506.

[4] Blenkinsopp, "Cosmological and Protological," 505.

[5] Blenkinsopp, "Cosmological and Protological," 505–506

[6] H. Koch, "Teil 1: Iran," in V. Haas and H. Koch (eds.), *Religionen des Alten Orients. Hethiter und Iran* (GAT, 1,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 17–146 (82–83); M. Stausberg, *Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism* (London: Equinox, 2008), 13–24; G. Gnoli, "Le religioni dell'Iran antico e Zoroastro," in G. Filoramo (ed.), *Storie delle religioni. 1. Le religioni antiche* (Roma/Bari: Editori Laterza, 1994), 455–498 (472–474); M. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism. Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, Calif./New York: Mazda, 1992), 1–31; M. Boyce (ed.), *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Textual Sources for the Study of Religion; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984; reprint University of Chicago Press, 1990), 11–12; G. Gnoli, "Problems and Prospects of the Studies on Persian Religion," in U. Bianchi, C. J. Bleeker, and A.

This brings us to the question of Cyrus' own religion, which is much disputed. Is it probable that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian, or that he at least shared some of the traditions on which Zoroastrianism draws?

Some scholars argue for an early introduction of Zoroastrianism since names of the Achemaenian family-members reflect Zoroastrian concepts.[7] But how much of a religion's development can we reconstruct on such a basis? Indeed, many scholars are skeptical about using the names as proof, and prefer to rely on epigraphic evidence.[8] In this context, the Bisitun (Behistun) inscription stands at the centre of the discussion.

The Bisitun inscription by Darius I, dated 520–519 B.C.E. and reflecting Darius' conflicts with opponents, may, at first sight, be taken as the earliest evidence of Zoroastrianism in West Asia,[9] for two reasons: firstly, because of the text, and, secondly, because of the image carved partly above the text and partly in its centre. The image shows Darius' victory, above which is a winged sundisk with a human figure in it. This figure in disk appears also at the top of other reliefs from Darius onwards, but is also found on seals and monumental works from before the Achaemenids.[10] The figure is sometimes thought to be a god giving a blessing.[11] The god may be the supreme state deity, and the exact identity would thus vary

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Bausani (eds.), *Problems and Methods of the History of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 67–101; M. N. Dhella, *Zoroastrian Civilization. From the Earliest Times to the Downfall of the Last Zoroastrian Empire 651 A.D.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922); J. P. De Menasce, "Persian Religion, Ancient," *NCE* 11:162–66. An insider's viewpoint on the difficulties surrounding his person is found in J. Rose, *Zoroastrianism. An Introduction* (London: Tauris, 2011), 233–242.

[7] E.g., Rose, *Zoroastrianism*, 34–36; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism 2. Under the Achaemenians* (HO, 1. Abteilung, 8. Band, 1. Abschnitt, Lieferung 2; Leiden/Köln: Brill 1982), 41–43 and 49–69.

[8] E.g., Koch, "Iran," 98; G. Gnoli, "La religione zoroastriana," in G. Filorano (ed.), *Storie delle religioni. 1. Le religioni antiche* (Roma/Bari: Editori Laterza, 1994), 499–565, esp. 534–535.

[9] Text and notes found as "Darius' account of his seizure of the throne," (A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire. A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* [Abingdon: Routledge, 2007], 141–158 [no. 5.1]). Useful comments to the inscription are Koch, "Iran," 98–102; Gnoli, "La religione zoroastriana," 534–535; Menasce, "Persian Religion," 165. Particularly interesting because it discusses different versions of the inscription, as well as its reception among Judahites in Elephantine and Yehud in the Persian period, is G. Granerød, "By the Favour of Ahuramazda," *JSJ* 44 (2013), DOI 10.1163/15700631-12340387.

[10] J. Curtis, *Ancient Persia* (2nd ed.; London: British Museum, 2000), 41–42; O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of Gods in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); D. Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (London: University of California Press, 1995), 183–184; Keel and Uehlinger also draw attention to Ezek 1:26–27, which seems to be a literary description analogous to the figure in sundisk.

[11] Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses*, 296.

from country to country. For example, in Assyria the figure would represent the state god Ashur, whereas in Achaemenian carvings it would be Ahura Mazda. The presence of the figure on the Bisitun-relief would thus seem to provide evidence for Zoroastrianism in some form at least from the time of Darius I. However, this interpretation of the figure in the winged sundisk is not undisputed.[12] Rival explanations identify it as the sun god "as a hypostasis of the kingdom or as the personal protective deity of the ruler."[13] Alternatively, the figure may represent divine glory being bestowed on the king, or it may depict the spirit of a dead king;[14] lately, an increasing number of scholars believe the Achemenian version represents the glory of Iran.[15] In other words, it is far from clear that the figure is evidence of Zoroastrianism.

Concerning the text, Ahura Mazda is given a prominent role *par excellence*, however, the text also twice mentions "other gods who are," and who have helped Darius alongside with Ahura Mazda. Boyce claims that that these "gods" refer to Zoroastrian benevolent spirits,[16] while Gnoli argues that the reference to other gods reflects the "religious tolerance" of the Persian rulers, as well as the political need for such universalism in the supranational state that the Persian Empire was, including within it several peoples with their own religions.[17] However, one could also argue that "the other gods" reflect prevailing polytheism, so that Zoroastrianism either was not yet fully developed or not yet fully implemented. Indeed, several texts from the period of Darius I found at Persepolis explicitly betray the cult of other gods.[18] As Granerød puts it, "none of the Achaemenid kings were monotheists or even monolatrists."[19]

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[12] For a useful discussion, see Koch, "Iran," 105–107; A. Soudavar, "The Formation of Achaemenid Imperial Ideology and Its Impact on the Avesta," in J. Curtis and S. J. Simpson (eds.), *The World of Achaemenid Persia:History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East* (London/New York: Tauris, 2010), 111–138 (119–120); Rose, *Zoroastrianism*, 45–46.

[13] Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses*, 296, referring to Calmeyer.

[14] Curtis, *Ancient Persia*, 47–58.

[15] Rose, *Zoroastrianism*, 46.

[16] Boyce, *Zoroastrianism. Its Antiquity*, 126.

[17] Gnoli, "La religione zoroastriana," 535.

[18] For examples of such texts with notes, see Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 556–559 [no. 11.39–44]; introduction 473–474. Koch, "Iran," 102–137, esp. 136–137, suggests that the cult of Ahura Mazda was official state religion, while tolerance allowed people to worship many other gods. A discussion of the discrepancy between royal inscriptions and administrative texts is also provided by Granerød, "Favour," 9–11.

[19] Granerød, "Favour," 9. Granerød also draws attention to the fact that a Babylonian version of the Bisitun-inscription features what is probably a triad of Babylonian gods instead of the winged sundisk, and that the text substitutes Bel (=Marduk) for Ahura Mazda; however, Granerød argues that this is an adaptation to local traditions, so that Ahura Mazda here is identified with Bel; "Favour,"

In my opinion, it remains unclear whether or not Darius and the subsequent Achaemenid rulers were "pure" Zoroastrians, polytheists, or syncretists. But *even if* Darius were some sort of a Zoroastrian (which we do not know), that does not imply that Cyrus was one too. Indeed, no evidence has been put forth that demonstrates or indicates clearly that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian.

If Cyrus was not a Zoroastrian—and nothing indicates that he was—then it seems unclear what he was. There is little knowledge about Iranian religion prior to Zoroaster, due to the lack of sources.[20] It is true, of course, that Cyrus on his Cylinder claims to have Marduk as his patron god, having been chosen by him to restore his cult after Nabonidus' neglect of it.[21] However, in my opinion, it is not thereby to be taken for granted that Cyrus was a follower of Babylonian religion; the emphasis on Marduk's role in his campaign and subsequent politics (including cult) may simply have been the most efficient public relations in the former Babylonian Empire, and especially pleasing to the powerful Marduk-priests who had been outraged by Nabonidus.

Where does this leave us with regard to Isaiah 40–48? Blenkinsopp, Rose, and Boyce argue that, prior to the conquest of Babylon, Cyrus sent Zoroastrian representatives to the city to do propagation for himself.[22] While Blenkinsopp is open to the possibility, Boyce is convinced that one of these was in contact with the author (in the singular) of Isaiah 40–55. Both she and Rose claim that the author was familiar with Zoroastrian thinking; indeed, his work is so closely related to Zoroastrian literature such as *Yasna* 44 and other parts of the *Gathas* that, according to Boyce, he may be said to have re-interpreted this, substituting Yahweh for Ahura Mazda. An example is *Yasna* 44.5.1–3: "What craftsman made light and darkness?" which supposedly is answered in Isa 45:7, a view supported by Rose, but which Nilsen demonstrates must be

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[20] See Gnoli, "La religione zoroastriana," 533; Gnoli, "Le religioni dell'Iran," 455–469; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. The Early Period* (HO, 1; Abteilung, 8; Band, 1; Abschnitt, Lieferung 2; Leiden/Köln: Brill, 1975), 3–177; Boyce, *Textual Sources,* 8–11; Menasce, "Persian Religion," 165; Dhella, *Zoroastrian Civilization*, 3–23.

[21] Text with notes found as "Marduk leads Cyrus into Babylon," (*The Persian Empire,* 70–74 [no. 3.21]). Other translations are "Cyrus Cylinder," trans. M. Cogan (W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger Jr. [eds.], *The Context of Scripture* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 2.124:314–316); "Cyrus (557–529)," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (Pritchard [ed.], *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [3rd edition [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969], 315–316. A translation which also includes transliteration of the Akkadian with notes is found as "K2.1 Kyros-Zylinder," in H. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Grossen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften. Textausgabe und Grammatik* (AOAT 256; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 550–556.

[22] Blenkinsopp, "Cosmological and Protological," 505; Rose, *Zoroastrianism*, 42; Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism 2*, 43–47.

refuted.[23] Boyce admits, though, that these similarities indicate a sharing of traditions rather than literary dependence. I add that literary dependence would be difficult, since the first Zoroastrian compositions, being orally transmitted, were committed to writing only in 1278 C.E., and the rest even later, in the 16th–17th centuries C.E.,[24] i.e., about 2000 years later than the period which concerns us here. There are thus many more difficulties than just the language problem pointed out by Blenkinsopp.

I believe that the situation as imagined by Blenkinsopp, Rose, and Boyce probably never took place. Cyrus might very well have ensured propagation for himself in Babylon prior to the conquest. But I believe that *even if*, and that is a big "if," he were a Zoroastrian, this propagation would not be some kind of a Zoroastrian mission, which seems implied at least by Boyce's statements. On the contrary, Cyrus would have gone for the best possible public relations he could get: to have himself presented as a servant of Marduk, the god of the great city Babylon. And this is indeed what we find on the Cyrus Cylinder, as stated above: Cyrus as a servant of Marduk, with no reference whatsoever, whether directly or indirectly, to Zoroastrian beliefs. Any kind of promotion of Zoroastrianism would probably have worked against Cyrus' interests, making the Babylonian priests even more outraged than Nabonidus had already made them by his neglect of the cult of Marduk (see below). Thus if the author(s) of Isaiah 40–48 at all knew Zoroastrianism, it would not have been in connection with Cyrus' campaigns. Indeed, throughout Isaiah 40–48 there are no statements that can be taken as arguments for or against Zoroastrianism, in spite of some superficial parallels to Zoroastrian literature (which was not yet written); parallels that may be more or less co-incidental or stemming from some more or less universal religious formulations. The author(s) of Isaiah 40–48 was/were neither Zoroastrian nor anti-Zoroastrian; Persian religion was simply irrelevant to him/them.[25]

ISAIAH 40–48 AND BABYLONIAN RELIGION

Indeed, the context of Isaiah 40–48 is that of Babylonian religion; the deportees from Judah were settled in Nippur, not Pasargadae, and the adversaries of Yahweh were the

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[23] T. D. Nilsen, "The Creation of Darkness and Evil (Isaiah 45:6c–7)," *RB* 115 (2008), 5–25.

[24] H. Koch, "Iran," 82; Rose, *Zoroastrianism*, 243, indicates that some texts were written down in the sixth/seventh century C.E., while the majority of texts were written down in the ninth century C.E.

[25] This does not exclude the possibility of Persian (whether Zoroastrian or not) influence on later Hebrew texts. See, for example, a discussion on the possible identification of Ahura Mazda and YHW in the Elephantine community, as well as questions concerning Yehud, in Granerød, "Favour," 17–26.

Babylonian gods and their servants, not Ahura Mazda and the Zoroastrians or their religious predecessors.[26]

There are several superficial affinities between Akkadian oracles and prophecies and Hebrew prophecy, such as the command "fear not," exhortations to believe in the oracle, promises of the enemy being delivered into one's hands, portrayals of a god caring for the person like a mother for a child, glorification of the god, etc.[27] However, some texts are peculiarly similar to Isaiah 40–48 in particular.

A hymn to Shamash from 668–633 B.C.E. speaks of this sun-god not only in the common imagery of the shepherd (also found in the Hebrew Bible), but it even says "Thou dost stand by the traveller whose road is difficult; To the seafarer who fears the waters thou dost give [courage]. (Over) roads which are not proven thou dost [guide] the hunter; He follows along the high places just like the sun. [The merchant with his] pouch thou dost save from the flood."[28] This brings to mind passages like Isa 40:3–5; 42:15–16; 43:2; 45:2; also 49:9–11; 52:12. Shamash further holds everyone by the hand; cf. Isa 41:13; 42:6; 45:1.

A hymn to the moon-god Sin, also dated 668–633 B.C.E. and written in Sumerian and Akkadian, speaks of the power of the word of the god and what it achieves: " . . . whose word no one alters . . . Thou alone art exalted"; "Thy word which is far away in heaven, which is hidden in the earth is something no one sees. Thou! Who can comprehend thy word, who can equal it? O Lord, in heaven as to dominion, on earth as to valor, among the gods thy brothers, thou hast no rival"[29]; cf. for example Isa 40:8.18.25; 42:8; 43:11–13; 44:6–8.25–26; 45:21; 46:9–11; also 55:10–11. In Isaiah 40–48, though, the word is not far away and hidden; quite on the contrary, Yahweh has spoken clearly, cf., e.g., Isa 45:19.

Shurpu, a series of incantation rituals found on seventh-century tablets, but possibly composed 1600–1300 B.C.E., contains a list of questions of potential sins. Apparently it is aimed at finding the reason why a person is being afflicted, or punished, with suffering. Has he oppressed anyone, alienated people from each other, used false scales, etc., or has "he failed

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[26] Also Blenkinsopp, with many others, points to a Babylonian background; "Cosmological and Protological," 506–510.

[27] For example *ANET*, 449–452; 604–607 (not found in *COS*). Discussions on comparisons may be found in, e.g., J. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 56; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012); M. Nissinen (ed.), *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context. Mesopotamian, Biblical and Arabian Perspectives* (SBLSymS, 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000).

[28] "Hymn to the Sun-God," trans. F. J. Stephens (*ANET,* 387–389). A different and considerably shorter translation, which lacks these lines, is found as "The Shamash Hymn," trans. B. R. Foster (*COS* 1.117:418–419).

[29] "Hymn to the Moon-God," trans. F. J. Stephens (*ANET*, 385–386) (not found in *COS*).

to set free one in confinement, release one in fetters? Has he refused a prisoner to see the light of the day?"[30] Isaiah 42:7 springs to mind.

The parallels between the Cyrus Cylinder from ca. 538 and Isaiah 40–48 must also be mentioned.[31] Just as in Isaiah 40–48, the Cylinder attributes to a non-Persian god Cyrus' success in taking Babylon. However, in this text the god is Marduk, not Yahweh. In the background of the Cylinder stands Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king (ruling 556–539 B.C.E.). Nabonidus claimed to restore the forgotten cult of the moon-god Sin; according to his critics, though, it was not a restoration, but a new invention.[32] Be that as it may; the situation led to a neglect of the cult of other gods, including that of Marduk, who was Babylon's city-god, and the highest god of the pantheon. Supposedly even the *akitu* (New Year) festival, thought to be vital for ensuring peace and fertility for both land and people, was abolished by Nabonidus.[33]

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[30] "Shurpu," trans. I. Mendelsohn (I. Mendelsohn [ed.], *Religions of the Ancient Near East. Sumero-Akkadian Religious Texts and Ugaritic Epics* [Library of Religion, 4; New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955], 211–214).

[31] For text editions, see footnote 21. For a recent and classic discussions on the parallels, see for example J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 199–200; K. Koch, *Die Profeten 2. Babylonisch-persiche Zeit* (Kohlhammer Urban-Taschenbücher, 281; Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1980), 134–135; P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe. Son disciple et leurs éditeurs: Isaïe 40–66* (Études bibliques; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre/J. Gabalda, 1972), 171; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969), 158–160; G. A. F. Knight, *Deutero-Isaiah. A Theological Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 131; C. R. North, *The Second Isaiah. Introduction, Translation and Commentary to Chapters 40–55* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 149.

[32] Nabonidus' view is found in "Nabonidus and His God," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (*ANET*, 562–563) ("3.1. Ḫarrān-Stele" in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 486–499; not in *COS*). This praise of Sin and his cult is also to be found in "Nabonidus (555–539): (b) The Family of Nabonidus," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (*ANET*, 311–312) (not in *COS*); a version of this is "The Mother of Nabonidus," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (*ANET*, 560–562) ("3.2. Adad-guppi-Stele" in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 500–513); compare with "The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus," trans. P.-A. Beaulieu (*COS* 2.123A:310–313) ("2.12 Eḫulḫul-Zylinder" in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 409–440), as well as "Nabonidus' Rebuilding of E-Lugal-Galga-Sisa, the Ziggurat of Ur," trans. P.-A. Beaulieu (*COS* 2.123B:313–314) ("2.2 Elulgalmalgasisa-Zylinder," in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 350–353; not in *ANET*). The critics' voice is heard in "Nabonidus (555–539): (c) Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (*ANET*, 312–315) ("P1. Strophengedicht," in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 563–578; not in *COS*).

[33] For a description of the festival, see T. J. Schneider, *An Introduction to Ancient Mesopotamian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 104–108; J. Bidmead, *The* Akītu *Festival. Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Gorgias Dissertations

During this festival, Marduk and his son Nebo (the god of the Babylonian Empire) visited each other. This in practice meant that the image of the one god was carried in procession to the temple of the other.[34] However, year after year of Nabonidus' reign the "king did not come to Babylon for the month of Nisanu, the god Nebo did not come to Babylon, the god Bel [that is, Marduk] did not go out, the festival of the New Year was omitted."[35] The priests of Marduk were outraged. Then came Cyrus, who declared peace, restored images to their temples, abolished (literally "burnt") the creations of Nabonidus, and restored the proper cult.[36]

The Cyrus Cylinder celebrates Cyrus' victory over Babylon and his reign. The Cylinder states that Marduk, being angry because of cultic distortion (cf. Isa 54:7–8), searches for someone who can take his hand (contrast Isa 45:1), that is, carry his image in the procession of the *akitu* festival. According to the Cylinder, Marduk calls Cyrus (par. Isa 44:28–45:1), names him (par. Isa 45:3–4), declares him to be ruler (par. Isa 44:28–45:5), makes countries subject to him (par. Isa 41:2–3.25; 45:1–2), orders him to march against Babylon (par. Isa 43:14), going at his side like a friend (cf. Isa 45:2–3), and delivers Nabonidus into his hands (par. Isaiah 47; 48:14–15). Cyrus brings justice and peace (par. Isa 42:1 [of the Servant]; 45:13). He resettles all the gods (that is, their images) whom Nabonidus had removed back to their proper cities and temples, and lets people return to their homelands (par. Isa

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Near Eastern Series, 2; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2002); B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina šulmi īrub. Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Baghdader Forschungen, 16; Mainz: Verlag Phillip von Zabern, 1994); H. Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* (London: SPCK, 1973), 83–88. See also C. Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (AnBib, 43; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 75–82.

[34] For an exposition of the role of cultic images of deities, see C. Walker and M. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian Mīs Pî Ritual* (State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts, 1; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2001), 4–31; C. Walker and M. B. Dick, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mīs pî* Ritual," in M. D. Dick (ed.), *Born in Heaven Made on Earth. The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55–121; A. Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder. Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (OBO, 162; Freiburg/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 20–283; A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia. Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (rev. ed. E. Reiner) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 183–198; Ringgren, *Religions*, 77–89.

[35] "Text from the Accession Year of Nabonidus to the Fall of Babylon," trans. A. L. Oppenheim (*ANET*, 306–307) (not in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*; not in *COS*).

[36] "Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon," (*ANET*, 312–315; "P1. Strophengedicht," in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 563–578); "Text from the Accession Year of Nabonidus to the Fall of Babylon," (*ANET*, 306–307).

44:26.28; 45:13; cf. also the edict in 2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4).

Yet, the similarities mentioned here do not necessarily imply any literary dependence of Isaiah 40–48 on the Cylinder; in fact, the Cyrus Cylinder is probably even written shortly after Isaiah 40–48. The parallels rather indicate that there were common idioms. But even if the author(s) of Isaiah 40–48 did not use pre-existing Mesopotamian texts, he/they were familiar with Babylonian traditions. This is clear from the allusions to the Babylonian *akitu*-festival and its proceedings (46:1–7), to cosmic deities (40:26; 46:13), to cultic images (40:19; 44:9–20; 45:20; 46:1–7; 48:5), and to the widespread practice of divination (see, e.g., 41:21–27; 43:9; 44:7–8; 47:9.12–13; 48:14); aspects of Babylonian religion that are all being refuted and ridiculed in Isaiah 40–48.[37]

Whether Isaiah 40–48 also alludes to or echoes the *Chaoskampf*-motif in Akkadian and/or West-Semitic texts is an issue that would deserve an article on its own; merely a few general observations may be made here. After Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*,[38] scholars looked for biblical parallels to the Akkadian and Ugaritic texts where gods were portrayed as fighting each other or the forces of chaos, be they waters, darkness, or primeval monsters.[39] Such parallels

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[37] Many scholars discuss anti-Babylonian polemics in Isaiah 40–55; for two recent examples, see Nilsen, "Darkness and Evil"; U. Berges, *Jesaja 40–48* (HTKAT; Freiburg: 2008). Two studies focusing on the polemics concerning cult images are M. D. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," *Born in Heaven*, 1–54; K. Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages* (BET, 28; Frankfurt: Herder, 1995). A somewhat old but still good overview of Babylonian divination is Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 206–227. Clifford points to further similarities between Isaiah 40–55 and Akkadian literature in R. J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (CBQMS, 26; Washington: CBA, 1994), 169–176.

[38] Available in English as H. Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton. A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006; German original from 1895).

[39] On the issue of the *Chaoskampf*, see R. S. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated. A Reassessment of the Theme of "Chaos" in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW, 341; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); D. T. Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction. A Reappraisal of the* Chaoskampf *Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005); K. Löning and E. Zenger, *To Begin With God Created. Biblical Theologies of Creation* (Collegeville, Minn: Michael Glazier, 2000), 9–31; N. Wyatt, "Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the *Chaoskampf* Motif and Their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions," in M. Dietrich and I. Kottsieper (eds.), *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf". Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient* (AOAT, 250; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1998), 833–882 esp. 861–872; R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura (eds.), *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood. Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994); B. F. Batto, "Creation Theology in Genesis," in R. J. Clifford and J. J. Collins (eds.), *Creation in the Biblical*

were found in, e.g., Genesis 1; Isa 27:1; 50:3; 51:9–10; Job 9:13; 26:5–14; 38:8–11; Pss 74:13–14; 89:10–11 (9–10); 93:1–5; 104:26 and in the pseudepigraphal 2 Esd 6:49–52. However, Tsumura's etymological studies, which has led him to refute any influence of the Akkadian and Ugaritic *Chaoskampf*-traditions on Genesis 1–2,[40] has inaugurated a period of greater caution.[41] In my view, Tsumura has convincingly demonstrated that the biblical texts (and particularly Genesis) *need not* have been influenced by these traditions, however, he has not shown that there *cannot* have been such an influence; hence, the question remains open (see also below, on Genesis 1). In my view, it is impossible to establish whether or not Isaiah 40–48 somehow alludes to or echoes the *Chaoskampf*-motif, but if we look beyond to the next few chapters, I do not think one can dismiss such a motif in Isa 51:9–10. Furthermore, in this text the slaughtering of the dragon in a context of cosmogony is more closely related to Marduks' destruction of Tiamat and his subsequent creation of the world in *Enuma Elish* than to the events in the Baal-cycle,[42] so here, once again, we find Babylon hovering in the background of the Isaian texts.

Traditions (CBQMS 24; Washington: CBA, 1992), 16–38 (32–34); D. T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2. A Linguistic Investigation* (JSOTSup, 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); W. G. Lambert, "Old Testament Mythology in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," in J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume Jerusalem 1986* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 124–143; C. Kloos, *Yahweh's Combat with the Sea. A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Amsterdam/Leiden: G.A. van Oorschot/Brill, 1986), 70–86; 127–212; J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea. Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publication, 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7–18; 88–140; B. W. Anderson, "Introduction: Mythopoeic and Theological Dimensions of Biblical Creation Faith," in B. W. Anderson (ed.), *Creation in the Old Testament* (IRT, 6; Philadelphia/London: Fortress/SPCK, 1984), 1–24; G. M. Landes, "Creation and Liberation," *USQR* 33 (1978), 79–89; S. I. L. Norin, *Er spaltete das Meer. Die Auszugsüberlieferung in Psalmen und Kult das alten Israel* (ConBOT, 9; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1977), esp. 117–119; Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 82–94; D. J. McCarthy, "'Creation' Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," *CBQ* 29 (1967), 87–100; North, *The Second Isaiah*, 14–15; A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis. The Story of Creation* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 102–114.

[40] Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*; as well as his *Earth and Waters*.

[41] Examples may be J. H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011); J. H. Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after Chaoskampf," *CTJ* 43 (2008), 48–63. Clifford discusses both similarities and dissimilarities between Genesis 1 and *Enuma Elish*; he further points to other Akkadian texts which seem closer to Genesis 1 than what *Enuma Elish* is, yet emphasises the difficulties of demonstrating literary dependency; Clifford, *Creation Accounts,* 138–144.

[42] *Enuma Elish* is found as "The Epic of Creation," trans. B. R. Foster (*COS* 1.111:390–402) and as "The Creation Epic," trans. E. A.

ISAIAH 40–48 AND GENESIS 1

A Babylonian background to Isaiah 40–48 does not exclude the possibility that other texts and traditions also come into play. The most prominent biblical text in this regard is undoubtedly the first creation account. However, a discussion on possible relations between Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 (shorthand for Gen 1:1–2:3[4a]) is complicated, and no consensus exists in the matter. To give but some examples from the debate: Sommer and Fishbane, who both follow Weinfeld, look at large text-units, and claim that Isaiah 40–55/66 argues against Genesis 1.[43] Blenkinsopp, however, states that there is no direct relation between Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1, as shown by their different vocabulary, different order of creation, and somewhat different theology.[44] Other scholars focus on smaller units of the texts, particularly Isa 45:18 and Isa 45:7. Childs, for instance, believes that Isa 45:18 does not differ from Genesis 1, but simply gives the same message in a polemical form.[45] Holter is more cautious; having offered an analysis of creation verbs in Isa 45:18 and Genesis 1, he concludes that there is no direct relationship between the two texts, but that the similarities may be explained due to the common milieu in which the texts were composed; for example, Isa 40:18.25; 46:5, and Gen 1:26 share common ideas.[46] McKenzie believes

Speiser and A. K. Grayson (*ANET*, 60–72; 501–503). The Baʼal-cycle is found as "The Baʻlu Myth," trans. D. Pardee (*COS* 1.86:241–274); cf. "Poems about Baal and Anath," trans. H. L. Ginsberg (*ANET*, 129–142).

[43] B. D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture. Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 142–145; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 322–326; M. Weinfeld, "The Creator God in Genesis 1 and in Second Isaiah," [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 37 (1967–1968), 105–132 [this I have read only in English abstract]. A comparison between P and Isaiah 40–55 is also found in A. Fitz, *Studien zum Verhältnis von Priesterschrift und Deuterojesaja* (Heidelberg 1969, PhD dissertation), esp. 39–61. A similar view is that Isaiah 40–55, being older than Genesis 1, polemicizes against the P-tradition behind Genesis 1; see J. Day, "Inner-Biblical Interpretation in the Prophets," in R. P. Gordon (ed.), *The Place Is too Small for Us. Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, 5; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 230–246 (232–233). An excellent study of reuse of older texts is P. T. Willey, *Remember the Former Things. The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBLDS, 161; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997), however, that study primarily considers texts from Isaiah 49–54.

[44] Blenkinsopp, "Cosmological and Protological," 496–499.

[45] B. S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 355.

[46] K. Holter, *Idol-Fabrication Passages*, 79–89. A similar view is taken by Carr, and is discussed below.

that the author of Isa 45:18 may have known the use of *tōhû* as the earth before Yahweh's creative word is spoken,[47] whereas Baltzer points out that while *tōhû* is reminiscent of Gen 1:2, it is used within these Isaian chapters to refer to devastation as a result of human acts (cf. Isa 54:3; cf. Isa 24:10); thus God did not create the world for it to be destroyed by human warfare.[48] The status of darkness in Isa 45:7 and Genesis 1 has also been discussed; Nilsen, Berges, DeRoche, Elliger, Stuhlmueller, and McKenzie are all skeptical to a comparison, either because "darkness" refers to different entities in the two texts, and/or because the texts belong to different genres.[49] Gross and Westermann, however, do draw the comparison, and believe that Isa 45:7 is in direct opposition to Genesis 1.[50]

As I see it, the relationship between Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 touches upon the following main questions:[51] a. What is the relative and absolute dating of these texts? b. What is the function of Gen 1:1? c. How should one understand *tōhû* in Isa 45:18 and Gen 1:2? d. How should one understand darkness in Isa 45:7 and Genesis 1? e. What are the views on divine images in Isaiah 40–48 and in Gen 1:26–27? f. What is the role of the divine word in Isaiah 40–48 and in Genesis 1? g. What can be said of God's (lack of) rest in Isa 40:28 and Gen 2:2? h. What can we conclude concerning Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 from the answers to the first seven questions?

Concerning the first question (a. relative and absolute dating), a majority holds that Isaiah 40–48 comes from sometime between 550 and 539 B.C.E., though the chapters may also include later redactions.[52] The dating of Genesis 1 is more complicated. Among those who agree that there is a P-source or a P-tradition, there is consensus that Genesis 1

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[47] J. L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB, 20; New York: Doubleday, 1968), 82–83.

[48] K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 246.

[49] Nilsen, "Darkness and Evil"; Berges, *Jesaja 40–48,* 404–405; M. DeRoche, "Isaiah 45:7 and the creation of chaos?," *VT* 42 (1992), 11–21; K. Elliger, *Deuterojesaja 40,1–45,7* (BKAT, 11/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 499–503; Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 156–57; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 77–78. However, Berges also claims that there are clear links between Genesis 1–2 and Isa 42:5, and, though it is not entirely clear to me, he seems to regard the latter as being influenced by the former (*Jesaja 40–48*, 235).

[50] W. Gross, "Das Negative in Schöpfung und Geschichte: Yahweh hat auch Finsternis und Unheil erschaffen (Jes 45,7)," in W. Gross (ed.), *Studien zur Priesterschrift und zu alttestamentlichen Gottesbildern* (SBAB, 30; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999), 145–158; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 162.

[51] More could be asked, of course, but space demands limitation. Answers to the questions posed here must also remain brief.

[52] Two prominent exceptions from the majority view are Baltzer and Levin, who claim, respectively, that Isaiah 40–55 comes from 450–400 B.C.E. or, more generally, from a "postexilic" era; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 30; C. Levin, *The Old Testament: A Brief Introduction* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 118.

belongs to this. A considerable number of scholars argue that P has undergone a compositional process that may have begun slightly earlier than the sixth century, but that at least took place in the mid-sixth century, as well as into the fifth century and perhaps even beyond.[53] That Genesis 1, as the rest of P, also has undergone development seems clear when we consider its complicated literary features. To name but a few examples, there are eight acts of creation comprised into six days, there are variances in terminology applied, there is an absence of land animals in the blessing of sea- and sky creatures as well as human beings, and the pattern of "God spoke, it was so, God saw, it was good, God named, day counted" is broken.[54] Unless we postulate that the authors of the story did not care about these inconsistencies, the examples indicate a complex literary development.[55] Probably this process took place at the same time(s) as that of the rest of P.

However, Genesis 1 gives us even further indications for dating two of its stages.[56] One stage seems to fit well in the mid-sixth century, both because Genesis 1 has similarities to other texts from this period, notably Isaiah 40–48 (discussed

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[53] There is not space in this article to present all the arguments; readers are referred to the summary in M. S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 171–187. For contributions to the discussion, see for example D. M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible. A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 297–298, as well as his more detailed account in *Reading the Fractures of Genesis. Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996). Classic contributions include G. von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch. Literarisch Untersuch und Theologisch Gewertet* (BWANT, 4/13; Stuttgart/Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1934), 11–18, 167–171, 190–191; C. Westermann, *Genesis. 1 Teilband, Genesis 1–11* (BKAT, 1/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 111–123; O. H. Steck, *Der Schöpfungsbericht der Priesterschrift. Studien zur literarkritischen und überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Problematik von Genesis 1,1–2,4a* (FRLANT, 115; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); M. Haran, "Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source," *JBL* 100 (1981), 321–333; A. Hurvitz, "Dating the Priestly Source in Light of the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew: A Century After Wellhausen," *ZAW* 100 Supplement (1988), 88–100; Z. Zevit, "Converging Lines of Evidence Bearing on the Date of P," *ZAW* 94 (1982), 481–511; E. Zenger, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken. Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte* (SBS, 112; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 71–80.

[54] For discussions, see, e.g., T. Krüger, "Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Development of the Pentateuch," in T. B. Dozeman, K. Schmid, and B. J. Schwartz (eds.), *The Pentateuch. International Perspectives on Current Research* (FAT 78; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2011), 125–138; Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 175–176; von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift*, 11–18, 167–171, 190–191; Steck, *Der Schöpfungsbericht*; Zenger, *Gottes Bogen*, 71–80.

[55] We know that other creation stories in the ancient Near East, for example *Enuma Elish*, also underwent stages of development.

[56] Though I will not attempt to reconstruct what the text or the traditions looked like at each stage; such reconstructions may be found in, e.g., Krüger, "Genesis 1:1–2:3."

below) and Ezekiel, and because of Mesopotamian influence on its cosmology and also its anti-Babylonian polemics. This latter point needs further elaboration. While scholars have found such polemics in the text ever since Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos*, recent years have seen a growing skepticism; an example is Tsumura's study, discussed above. Another example is Gertz,[57] who argues that Genesis 1 is part of an Eastern Mediterranean trend that aimed at explaining the world's beginnings scientifically, and that was influenced by Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian thinking as exemplified by *Enuma Elish*. Gertz argues that while "Deutero-Isaiah" is polemical, Genesis 1 is not, as it merely constitutes an adaptation of Assyrian and Babylonian material. This is evidenced, he claims, by the correspondence of the roles of Marduk and Yahweh respectively, especially in how they both are superior to the stars. Gertz also points out the etymological difficulties of identifying *tĕhŏm* with Tiamat.

I agree that *tĕhŏm* and Tiamat probably do not derive from the same lexeme, but the sounds are still similar, as is the splitting of *tĕhŏm*/Tiamat. Furthermore, while both Marduk and Yahweh rule the stars, the celestial bodies are still gods in Babylonian thinking, but they are not in Genesis 1. These two observations, together with the emphasis of Genesis 1 on the powerful word and on the centrality of the divine images—these latter two points are not considered by Gertz—make it seem reasonable to me that Genesis 1 not only adapts Babylonian material, but also, in the way it reshapes it, refutes it. The fact that Babylonian religion was a rival to Yahwism among Judahites (see below) supports this view, as it is difficult to imagine that the authors of Genesis 1 would ignore this situation rather than address it. Of course, whether Genesis 1 is a mere adaptation of Babylonian material, or whether it also argues against Babylonian religion may, in either case, be used as a support for a mid-sixth century date of this stage of its development.

However, Genesis 1 also puts emphasis on Sabbath and on the calendar function of the heavenly bodies. These are matters that come to the fore in the late sixth to early fifth centuries; the issues are discussed also in other P-material that may be dated to this period. One further point must be considered: Several scholars, such as Walton and Smith,[58] claim that in Genesis 1 the universe plays the role as temple. If they are right, this alternative "temple" may well fit into the debates of the late sixth and early fifth century, when disagreements over the Jerusalem temple's function arose. The similarities to the possibly contemporary Isa 66:1–2, which also describes the universe as a temple/throne, are compelling. However, it could also be argued that this alternative and cosmological "temple"

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[57] J. C. Gertz, "Antibabylonische Polemik im priesterlichen Schöpfungsbericht?," *ZTK* 106 (2009), 137–155.

[58] Walton, *Ancient Cosmology*, e.g., 178–192; Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3"; Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 69–70; 108–112.

in Genesis 1 belongs to the mid-sixth century, when, according to collective and ideological memory, there was no temple (even though in reality several temples were in use, such as in Jerusalem, Mizpah, Cassiphia, and Elephantine).

To summarize the above: P has undergone a process of development taking place at least during the mid-sixth century as well as in the late sixth to the early or mid-fifth centuries. Genesis 1, which is part of P, has undergone the same process at the same periods, showing evidence of a mid-sixth century stage as well as a late sixth to early fifth century stage; the text at the latter stage was probably more or less identical to Genesis 1 as we know it. This means that an earlier stage of Genesis 1 predates Isaiah 40–48 with a few years, perhaps even less than a decade. However, a later stage of the text (more or less identical to the present version) postdates Isaiah 40–48.

Returning now to the other questions, the function of Gen 1:1 (question b.) may be either to describe God's first creative act (God begins by creating heaven and earth), or else it serves as a "title" ("this is the story of how God created heaven and earth"). On structural grounds, the second solution is more probable; the scheme followed in the subsequent verses (God speaks, it happens, God sees, names, and the day is counted) means that the first creative act takes place in v. 3. Furthermore, Gen 2:4a may either serve as a conclusion to this story, in which case we have an inclusion with Gen 1:1; or else it may be read with 2:4b as a title to the next story, so both stories are introduced with a title; in either case, it supports the reading of Gen 1:1 as a title. This means that Gen 1:2 is a description of the not-yet created world.

Isaiah 45:18 states that God did not create the world *tōhû* (question c.), but to be inhabited.[59] If God had begun creating in Gen 1:1, then *tōhû* would have been created and the two texts would be in collision. However, we have seen that God begins to create in Gen 1:3. A consequence of this is that *tōhû* in Gen 1:2 is uncreated; when God begins to create, *tōhû* vanishes, and so there is no opposition to Isa 45:18.

For the same reason, darkness in Gen 1:2 is uncreated (question d.). However, in vv. 3–4, God separates light and darkness and names both. This clearly means that darkness now is under God's control and has received a function. As a tamed chaos-force, it is now, in the thinking of the ancient Near East, created.[60] Isaiah 45:7 also states that God created darkness, and on a superficial level the text thus seems to support Genesis 1; however, a comparison is difficult, as Isa 45:7 uses the creation of cosmological phenomena as imagery of historical circumstances.[61]

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[59] Cf. Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 9–35; *Earth and Waters*, 41–43.

[60] Cf. DeRoche, "The Creation of Chaos."

[61] Nilsen, "Darkness and Evil," has shown that darkness and light in Isa 45:7 are images of the "exile" and its end.

In Gen 1:26–27, God creates human beings as divine images (question e.). Isaiah 40–48, on the other hand, is full of polemics against cultic images of deities. However, the images refuted and ridiculed in the Isaian chapters are images of wood and metal, not flesh and blood as in Genesis (see, for example, 40:18; 42:17; 46:5). If the author(s) of Isaiah 40–48 had been asked to comment upon the idea that human beings are divine images, we simply do not know what he/they would have answered.

In Genesis 1, God creates by speaking (question f.). In Isa 40:8, God's word is eternal, and the inclusion in 55:10–11 (if that is what it is) emphasizes the efficacy of God's word. Throughout chapters 40–48, God's word, in opposition to the words of the Babylonian gods or their diviners, is portrayed as trustworthy and/or as creative (see, e.g., 41:21–27; 42:9; 43:6–13; 44:7–8.26–28; 45:21; 48:3–8.14–16). While the contexts differ, the two texts seem to agree on the power of God's word.

In Gen 2:2–3, God rests (question g.). According to Isa 40:28, God as creator of the world does not grow weary. Apparently, the texts contradict each other. Yet, again a comparison is difficult, because the contexts differ: Gen 2:2–3 speaks about the institution of the Sabbath, while Isa 40:28 contrasts God's strength with the weariness of human beings in the wider context of what we know as chapter 40, which repeatedly speaks of God's might to a people who, according to the dominant ideology of the time, was in need of comfort.

This brings us to the final question h.: What can we conclude concerning the relationship between Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 from the above? To state that there is no relationship between the texts seems, in my view, rather far-fetched; considering what a short text Genesis 1 is, it has too many common themes with Isaiah 40–48 for it to be a coincidence. However, an account of the textual relationship must take into account both similarities and dissimilarities between the two. My suggestion is that at the time of the composition of Isaiah 40–48 and of an earlier (mid-sixth century) stage of Genesis 1, a great theological debate broke out among the elitist literati Judahites (in Jerusalem or in Babylon), a debate that was vehemently inspired by the fact that many Judahites were attracted to Babylonian religion.[62] Certain elements in

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[62] This attraction is evidenced both indirectly and directly. Indirectly, we may conclude from texts of the Hebrew Bible ridiculing Babylonian religion that the author(s) felt the need to do so because of such an attraction. Directly, we find it also in cuneiform texts; for example, Al-Yahudu and Sippar (which may be the same location?) have yielded marriage contracts where the brides, their families and the witnesses have Yahwistic or other Hebrew names, while at the same time Babylonian gods are being invoked in the contract; K. Abraham, "West Semitic and Judean Brides in Cuneiform Sources from the Sixth Century BCE: New Evidence from a Marriage Contract from Āl-Yahudu," *AfO* 51 (2005/2006), 198–219. Other tablets from the same area(s) also regard contracts where some names

Babylonian religion fuelled the discussion, particularly the role of cult images, as well as stories of creation, and the power of divine words, and words spoken by prophets and/or diviners. The authors of Isaiah 40–48 and of the mid-sixth century stage of Genesis 1 argued against this same common Babylonian rival, but employed different strategies; Isaiah 40–48 by linking creation on an ontological level to historical circumstances, and Genesis 1 by presenting a creation account.[63] This explains why they share so many common themes, yet present them from different theological perspectives and with slightly different terminology. Yet, many of the terms used are also shared; this is only to be expected, as the two different voices were raised within the same theological discourse of a small group of literati. Hence, the relationship between Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 is indirect, in that the texts grow out of the same milieu. *At the same time* it is probably *also* more direct, as, considering the small number of literati, it is unlikely that the author(s) of Isaiah 40–48 did not know the mid-sixth century stage of Genesis 1, and that the authors/redactors of the late sixth/early fifth century stage of Genesis 1 were ignorant of Isaiah 40–48. Hence, while both Genesis 1 and Isaiah 40–48 were primarily aimed against Babylonian religion, the possibility that they could also be communicating directly with each other is not excluded. In that case, they certainly lend each other much support, and any refutations of the one text of the other are so ambiguous that it is difficult to judge whether they really are refutations, or if, rather, they are just variations on a theme.

CONCLUSION

What inspired the language and theology of the one unique creator in Isaiah 40–48? I have argued that it was almost certainly not an influence from Zoroastrianism. However, the author(s) evidently had knowledge of Babylonian religion; some

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are west-Semitic whereas others are Babylonian, though it is difficult, I think, to conclude for certain anything concerning religion on this basis; cf. F. Joannès and A. Lemaire, "Trois tablettes cuneiformes à onomastique oust-sémitique," *Transeuphratène* 17 (1999), 17–34. More texts from Al-Yahudu will be published by L. E. Pearce and C. Wunsch in *Into the Midst of Many Peoples. Judeans and West Semitic Exiles in Mesopotamia* (Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 18; Bethesda: CDL Press, forthcoming) and by Wunsch in *Judeans by the Waters of Babylon. New Historical Evidence in Cuneiform Sources from Rural Babylonia* (Babylonische Archive; Dresden: ISLET, forthcoming). Tero Alstola at Leiden University also discusses the situation of the Judeans in the Nippur region in his current doctoral project *Foreign Minorities in Babylonia in the 7th–5th Centuries BCE*. Perhaps these forthcoming publications and studies will yield more information also concerning the religious situation.

[63] This view presupposes that Genesis 1 is in fact anti-Babylonian. However, even if it is not, but represents a mere adaptation as Gertz claims (see above), my main conclusions concerning the relationship between Genesis 1 and Isaiah 40–48 would not be radically different.

of its traditions could have provided inspiration in two ways: both as adaptation, and as a fierce refutation.[64] However, tackling Babylonian religion did not take place in a vacuum; Isaiah 40–48 and Genesis 1 are two distinct voices belonging to the same theological discourse, but they may also have influenced each other more directly, both by lending each other support, but perhaps also, though it is not clear, by partial refutation.

Finally, of course, we must not forget the brilliant mind(s) of the author(s) of Isaiah 40–48, who developed thinking about creation in innovative and astonishing new ways using expressions unrivalled elsewhere.

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[64] Cf. Nilsen, "Darkness and Evil."