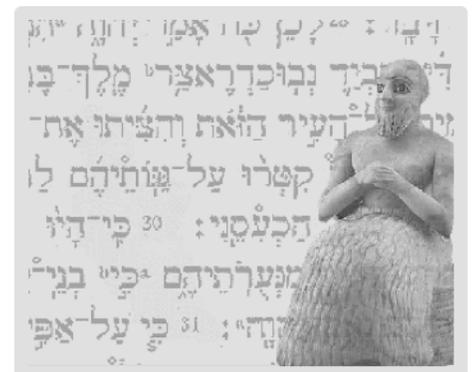


# Prophetic Imagination in the Light of Narratology and Disability Studies in Isaiah 40-48

SIMEON CHAVEL



## PROPHETIC IMAGINATION IN THE LIGHT OF NARRATOLOGY AND DISABILITY STUDIES IN ISAIAH 40–48<sup>1</sup>

SIMEON CHAVEL  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the view favored by so many ancient Mesopotamian and Levantine kings, crafted by their artisans, articulated by their scribes, and evidently affirmed by significant constituencies, gods gloriously embodied and animated in art, architecture, drama, and song, and attended to around the clock by a permanent professional staff, control geopolitical events, and they do so in the guise of powerful humans, those excellent persons whose names they call, whose arms they brace—and who sponsor the gods' glorious earthly presence. Biblical literature makes it clear—in the Psalms, in the prophetic collections, and in the historiographical works—that Israelian and Judean kings and their constituencies did not substantially differ in their conceptualization, projection, and vivification of divine imma-

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<sup>1</sup> This study first took shape as a presentation at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting, Amsterdam, 22–26 July 2012; I am grateful to Joel Baden and Candida Moss for having invited me to present in the “Healthcare and Disability in the Ancient World” section. It has benefited from comments by my students Sun Bok Bae, Marshall Cunningham, Sarah Glynn, Jordan Skornik, Joseph Cross, Jessie DeGrado, and Benjamin Thomas, by my colleagues Joel Baden, Shalom Holtz, Richard Rosengarten, Seth Sanders, Jeremy Schipper, Michael Sells, and Jeffrey Stackert, and by the insightful blind-reviewers of *JHS*. For the Masoretic text (= MT), the Septuagint (= LXX), manuscripts of biblical literature found at Qumran, and Medieval Jewish commentaries, the following editions were consulted: A. Dotan, *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), compared at points with the Aleppo Codex. Cited 3/26/14. Online: <http://www.aleppocodex.org/newsite/index.html>; J. Ziegler, *Isaias* (3d ed.; Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, 14; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); E. Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010); M. Cohen (ed.), *Mikra'ot Gedolot Haketer: Isaiab* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1996). All translations are mine except where indicated otherwise.

nence and efficacy. Moreover, to judge by biblical literature, in the time of the two kingdoms, from the tenth century B.C.E. to early in the sixth, critics never did succeed to imagine a true alternative to the core of the royal construction.<sup>2</sup> The author(s) of the Priestly history reconfigured it by sidelining kings and replacing them with a deity who maintains a direct relationship with the nation that willingly and generously supplies the needs of his earthly home,<sup>3</sup> but continued to promote centers of marshaled human and material resources, the structures of hierarchy, and concentrated divine presence, which in practice require great men. The author of an early version of the text in 2 Sam 7 (without v. 13) asserted the independence of divine space from royal control, but continued to promote the idea of a perpetual kingship granted by the deity and defining nationhood.<sup>4</sup> Other authors, who pronounced the dissolution of the nexus of king and temple, perforce also consigned the nation to destruction, in Amos and Hosea.<sup>5</sup>

Of the population of Judeans forcibly relocated to Babylonia in waves in the early decades of the sixth century B.C.E. through a sequence of geopolitical developments that led to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, that portion that continued to identify with Judea and perhaps nourished a belief beyond a mere wish they would return to their homeland faced the challenge of conceptualizing Yahweh's continued attention and ability. Several decades later,

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<sup>2</sup> An exception may exist within Exod 19–24, according to S. Chavel, “Altars and Priests in Exodus 20” (paper presented at the international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, St. Andrews, July 7–11, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> See Exod 25:1–9; 27:20–21; 28:12, 29; 29:38–46; 30:16; 35:4–36:7; Num 7. Compare the self-portrayal of Neo-Babylonian kings: C. Waerzeggers, “The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples,” in K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 725–51 (726–32).

<sup>4</sup> Enough indications converge to identify v. 13 as an addition meant to reorient the text towards the tradition of Solomon's having built the temple in Jerusalem. First of all, it directly contradicts vv. 5–7, in which Yahweh plainly and categorically rules out the idea of a temple. Secondly, the content of v. 13 is unknown to vv. 18–29 and to Ps 89, both of which reprise Yahweh's promises to David in 2 Sam 7:4–16. Thirdly, v. 13b repeats v. 12b to resume the prior discourse, a classic device for integrating secondary text. See L. Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (trans. M.D. Rutter and D.M. Gunn; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1982), 42; also P.K. McCarter Jr., *II Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 197–98. Text-critical considerations recommend against identifying the addition of v. 13 as Deuteronomistic; see I.L. Seeligmann, *Studies in Biblical Literature* (ed. A. Hurvitz *et al.*; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 129 n. 61 (Hebrew). The nature of the correspondences between 2 Sam 7:1–16 and 1 Kgs 5:15–20 suggests multiple stages of reciprocal impact.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Amos 7:1–8:3; Hos 3:3–5; 10:1–8; also S. Talmon, “The ‘Desert Motif’ in the Bible and in Qumran Literature,” in *idem, Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible—Form and Content: Collected Studies* (1st ed. 1966; Jerusalem: Magnes/Leiden: Brill, 1993), 216–54 (244–45).

through the 540s, as the mantle of empire steadily shifted from Babylonian to Persian shoulders and the command-center of power moved further east, the case grew all the more pressing.<sup>6</sup> In 539, Cyrus II took control of Babylon from its king Nabonidus with the result—however it came about precisely<sup>7</sup>—that Babylon’s significant religious activities could resume, above all the new year festival at the temple of the Babylonian chief god Marduk, which celebrated Marduk’s creation of the world. Time-honored logic dictated that Marduk had touched Cyrus to restore order in Babylon. Cyrus and other interested parties duly went about articulating this view so their respective publics fully grasp and accept it, in works of such varied tone and register as the (affectedly?) dispassionate Babylonian chronicle of Nabonidus, the self-congratulating Cyrus cylinder, and the verse burlesque of Nabonidus.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On Cyrus’ capital in Persia, see P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (trans. P.T. Daniels; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 84–91.

<sup>7</sup> On the variety of historiographical traditions about Cyrus’ taking of Babylon in 539 B.C.E., see D.S. Vanderhooft, “Cyrus II, Liberator or Conqueror? Ancient Historiography Concerning Cyrus in Babylon,” in O. Lipschits and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 351–72. The presence of two seemingly opposed views of it in Isa 40–48, one peaceful (42:1–9) and one destructive (47:1–15), may indicate that the process of Babylon’s taking was of a complex kind that could lend itself to different understandings, emphases, and responses—not unlike the way Jerusalem’s escape from Sennacherib’s campaign in 701 B.C.E. could yield responses as opposed as Isa 1 and 2 Sam 24. One need not connect Isa 47 to Darius’ conquest of Babylon in 522 B.C.E. as does R. Albertz, “How Radical Must the New Beginning Be? The Discussion Between the Deutero-Isaiah and the Ezekiel School,” in J. Middlemas *et al.* (eds.), *The Centre and the Periphery: A European Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 7–21 (14), especially given the unknown extent of the revolt and its suppression, on which see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 114–28.

<sup>8</sup> For the texts and historical analysis of Nabonidus’ last years, see P.-A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* (Yale Near Eastern Researches, 10; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), 203–32 (esp. 219–32); A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (2 vols.; London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 1:47–49, 70–82; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 40–44. Recent discussion of the genres, composition families, and historical contexts of the Babylonian chronicles opens room to reconsider the neutrality of the Nabonidus text; see C. Waerzeggers, “The Babylonian Chronicles: Classification and Provenance,” *JNES* 71 (2012), 285–98. For the scholarly background of Nabonidus’ theological program, see P.-A. Beaulieu, “Nabonidus the Mad King: A Reconsideration of His Steles from Harran and Babylon,” in M. Heinz and M.H. Feldman (eds.), *Representations of Political Power: Case Histories from Times of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 137–66. Notably, the portrayal of Nabonidus in these texts as neglecting Marduk and his temple in Babylon and the portrayal of Cyrus as restoring them correspond to the declaration made by

This study aims to illustrate how, in this general setting, galvanized and inspired by specific circumstances and forces still opaque to modern historians, an expatriate Judean resisted the party line, broke the mold, and constructed a fundamentally new composition of divinity. In a text of a completely different order, the author of Isa 40–48 launched the bold counterclaim that, though Yahweh have no palace (a temple), no dedicated staff (priests), no popular homage (pilgrimage), and no powerful patron (a king) by which self-evidently to manifest his mastery, Yahweh dominates and manipulates Cyrus and the geopolitics of the day, and he does so for Judea and for the Judeans of Babylonia, whom imminently he will restore (section II).<sup>9</sup>

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Babylonian kings during the new year's festival that they did not neglect the worship of Marduk or the support of his temple. For the text of the declaration, see "Temple Program for the New Year," translated by A. Sachs (*ANET* 331–34); for provocative thoughts on its origins and meaning, see J.Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978; repr. Chicago, Ill./London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 67–74, and compare the materials gathered in Waerzeggers, "The Pious King," 738–40. For a description of Babylonian royal ideology and political practice during this period, see D.S. Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs, 59; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 9–114, 203–9; for specific points of contact in Isa 40ff., see idem, 169–88. For a reassessment of Cyrus' political program and treatment of subjugated populations, see A. Kuhrt, "Cyrus the Great of Persia: Images and Realities," in Heinz and Feldman, *Representations of Political Power*, 169–91; also idem, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy," *JOT* 25 (1983), 83–97. The portrayal in 2 Chr 36:22–23; Ezra 1–6, from deep in the Persian period, reveals more about later political wrangling and historical debate within Judea than they do about earliest Persian policy towards Judea; in this direction see R.P. Carroll, "The Myth of the Empty Land," in D. Jobling and T. Pippin (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia, 59; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 79–93 (88).

<sup>9</sup> For analysis of the earlier connection to military victory and how the author handles the challenge of its irrelevance for Judeans in Babylonia, see C.L. Crouch, "Adapting the Cosmological Tradition in Isaiah 40–45," *SJOT* 25 (2011), 260–75. Ps 137, an elegy for the hymns of Yahweh, represents well the inversions of mood and mode called for when composing song in the absence of the deity, divine deeds, the divine abode, and all sign of their return—at the sneering behest of one's enemies to boot; see A. Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Ps 137, 44, 69, and 78," in P.W. Flint and P.D. Miller, Jr. (eds.), *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (VTSup, 99/FIOTL, 4; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 65–86 (66–71, with literature cited 67 n. 3). C. Ehrling goes so far as to infer from the lack of a description of Yahweh's appearance that the author of Isa 40ff. melds Babylonian conceptions and motifs with the old aniconic tradition of the Jerusalem temple; see "YHWH's Return in Isaiah 40:1–11\* and 52:7–10: Pre-Exilic Cultic Traditions of Jerusalem and Babylonian Influence," in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds.), *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 91–104 (esp. 102–3). However, the historical circumstances of an uninstantiated and unsubstantiated Yahweh suffice to explain the rhetoric and ideas of the author and make it

To make its case, the study draws on narratology (section III) and disability studies (section IV). It draws on narratology for two sets of insights. One recognizes the power of narrative as an explanatory and subordinating medium: it explains the past and in doing so advances normative claims about the present; the other recognizes that textual verbal expression creates separate worlds of discourse, “levels” of communication and control. These sets of insights help clarify the grounds of the author’s argument that Cyrus fulfills the will not of the absurdly embodied Marduk but of the irreducible Yahweh. The study draws on disability studies for its insight into the cultural construction of what counts as human properties and what is devalued as imperfection, which insight the study applies both to storytelling centered on god and king and to the figuration of prophets. The insight helps clarify the author’s argument for authority and reliability as a paradoxical function of his acknowledgment of incapacity and ignorance. A central segment of the analysis closely traces the discourse of the opening scene in 40:1–6, which heavily nuances the much-heralded monotheistic thrust of the text.

Extending Yehoshua Gitay’s focus on rhetoric<sup>10</sup> and prioritizing the lines and levels of discourse rather than the isolation of essential themes, the analysis traces the different speakers of the text and coordinates them with respect to each other. The analysis makes it evident that reducing the character of the text to a transcription of oral speeches,<sup>11</sup> viewing it as a series of relatively small, mainly repetitious prophecies put into sequence,<sup>12</sup> replacing authorship with redaction,<sup>13</sup> or leveling the different speakers and taking the

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unnecessary to invoke positions about the specific Jerusalem traditions of Yahweh’s representation, which in any case are themselves a matter of debate; conveniently, see the articles by H. Niehr, C. Uehlinger, B. Becking, T.N.D. Mettinger, and R.S. Hendel in K. van der Toorn (ed.), *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Y. Gitay, “Deutero-Isaiah: Oral or Written?” *JBL* 99 (1980), 185–97; idem, *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40–48* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981), 26–27, 229–35.

<sup>11</sup> H. Barstad, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah: “Exilic” Judah and the Provenance of Isaiah 40–55* (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1997), 66–67 (though he cited Gitay, “Deutero-Isaiah,” approvingly in idem, *A Way in the Wilderness: The “Second Exodus” in the Message of Second Isaiah* [JSS Monographs, 12; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1989], 11 n. 19, 42 n. 108).

<sup>12</sup> M. Haran, “The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies in Is. XL–XLVIII,” in *Congress Volume: Bonn, 1962* (VTSup, 9; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 127–55 (esp. 127–29, 131–37, 143); idem, *Between Rīshonôt (Former Prophecies) and Ḥadashôt (New Prophecies): A Literary-Historical Study in the Group of Prophecies Isaiah XL–XLVIII* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1963), 11–17, 22–23 (Hebrew).

<sup>13</sup> R. Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (trans. D. Green; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), 376–433 (esp. 380–81, 393–404).

text as the script of a drama<sup>14</sup> do not do justice to the frame and discourse of the text and the thoroughly textualized nature of the material.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the analysis adds a wholly new dimension to the minority view, argued in particular by Menahem Haran (mainly on the basis of theme), that Isa 40–48 is a complete text written in Babylon, that 49:1–6 marks the beginning of a different text written later in Judea, and that the same author wrote both (section V).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (trans. M. Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7–23.

<sup>15</sup> For the earlier book of Ezekiel—in Babylonia just several decades earlier—as written prophecy, literature, and self-aware, see J.L. Kugel and R.A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1986), 17–19; J.Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago, Ill./London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47–73; E.F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989); M. Haran, "Observations on Ezekiel as a Book Prophet," in R.L. Troxel *et al.* (eds.), *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 3–19; idem, *The Biblical Collection—Its Consolidation to the End of Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik/Magnes, 1996–2008), 3:334–55 (Hebrew). The Persian-period shift toward what M. Halbertal calls text-centeredness (*The People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority* [Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1997], 1–10) seems to have begun as far back as the original Deuteronomistic works in the seventh century B.C.E. (Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 1:95–96; 2:170–84), but one should not over-schematize it, exaggerate its extent, or, for that matter, overlook the evidence from subsequent prophetic material that forms of prophetic composition (and other activity) less informed and shaped by textuality continued to have purchase at least in the early part of the Persian period; compare J. Schaper, "The Death of the Prophet: The Transition from the Spoken to the Written Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel," in M.H. Floyd and R.D. Haak (eds.), *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 63–79.

<sup>16</sup> See Haran, "The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework"; idem, *Between Ri'shonôt and Hadashôt*; also S.M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 1–17, 43–63. For a review of the opinions on the extent and layers of material under the Deutero-Isaiah rubric, see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 373–93. Scholars have noted the affinity of Isa 34–35 to 40–66; see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (1st ed. 2002; The Anchor Yale Bible, 19A; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009), 42–46; compare B.D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 192–93. Barstad's view that scholarship backed its way into the thesis of the Babylonian provenance of the so-called "Second Isaiah" (*The Babylonian Captivity*) does not give sufficient weight to the direct arguments articulated for the thesis, and his arguments denying influence of Babylonian literature and language on the biblical text (H. Barstad, "On the So-Called Babylonian Literary Influence in Second Isaiah," *SJOT* 2 [1987], 90–110; idem, "Akkadian 'Loanwords' in Isaiah 40–55 and the Question of the Babylonian Origin of Deutero-Isaiah," in K.A. Tångberg and M. Sæbø [eds.], *Text and Theology: Studies in Honour of Professor Dr. Theol. Magne Sabo*

## II. THE FRAME AND ARGUMENT

The author of Isa 40–48 expresses his view of matters with great clarity at Isa 44:24–45:7, about two-thirds of the way into the text:<sup>17</sup>

So says Yahweh who redeems you and has formed you already  
in the womb:

“I am Yahweh, who does all,

Who holds taut the heavens by myself; who keeps the earth  
compact—is there anyone beside me!<sup>18</sup>—

Who defies the omens of the diviners and mocks the charmers,

Who foils the learned and frustrates their knowledge,

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*Presented on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* [Oslo: Verbum, 1994], 36–48) are beside the point, given the more telling influence of Babylonian culture and historical circumstances (P. Machinist, “Mesopotamian Imperialism and Israelite Religion: A Case Study from the Second Isaiah,” in W.G. Dever and S. Gitin [eds.], *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palästina—Proceedings of the Centennial Symposium, W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and American Schools of Oriental Research* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 237–64 [244–45, 252–53]); H. Schaudig, “‘Bel Bows, Nabû Stoops!’ The Prophecy of Isaiah xlv 1–2 as a Reflection of Babylonian ‘Processional Omens,’” *VT* 58 [2008], 557–72). The most direct argument advanced by Barstad (*A Way in the Wilderness*), his reinterpretation of Isa 40–55 so that it refers not to a move from Babylonia to Judea but to the rebirth of Jerusalem and Judea, takes a questionable approach to metaphor (and to previous scholars’ appreciation of it) and ignores or explains away too many converging signals.

<sup>17</sup> For this unit as the climax of Isa 40–48, see C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1969), 10, 153–54; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 62–63; Crouch, “Adapting the Cosmological Tradition,” 265–69. The corresponding headline **לֹא אֶנְכִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל** in 44:24 and conclusion **אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל-אֲלֹהִים** in 45:7b form the unit’s frame (K. Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja* [Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 10; Tübingen: Freiburg and Leipzig, 1900], 310), and the first topic after the headline, the paired elements of creation and controlling the future in 44:25–26a, recurs in 45:7a directly before the conclusion. Together, the framing repetitions set off the centerpiece, Yahweh’s plan for the specific people Israel and his cosmic power to realize it. The frame does not extend to 44:23 and 45:8 and to 44:21–22 and 45:9–10; rhetorically and formally 44:21–23 follow what precedes them rather than introduce what follows them, and 45:8 responds to what precedes it while 45:9–10 introduces what follows it.

<sup>18</sup> Following the written tradition (*ketib*) of MT, **מִי אֲחֵי** inflected rhetorically, rather than the performative tradition (*qere*), **מִי אֲחֵי** in declarative tone. Note 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> **מִי אֲחֵי**; 4QIsa<sup>b</sup> **מִי אֲחֵי**; LXX **τίς ἕτερος** (“who else!?”). Contra P. Volz, *Jesaja II übersetzt und erklärt* (KAT; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932), 56–57; E.J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah* (2 vols.; Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1943), 2:78; J. Goldingay and D. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (2 vols.; ICC; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 2:9–10.

Who realizes the word of his servant and brings about the counsel of his agents,

Who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be repopulated,’ and of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and (of) its ruins, ‘I will restore,’

Who says to the Deep, ‘Dry up!’ and ‘Your rivers I will make arid,’

Who says of Cyrus, ‘My shepherd’ and ‘He will fulfill all my will,<sup>19</sup> and declare<sup>20</sup> of Jerusalem, *It shall be rebuilt*, and (of) the temple, *You shall be founded again.*’<sup>21</sup>

So says Yahweh to his anointed:

“To Cyrus,<sup>22</sup> whose right hand I have braced,

<sup>19</sup> For כִּפּ”ץ as “impulse, will, plan, endeavor,” see J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah Chapters XL–LXVI* (The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 63; C.R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 147–48.

<sup>20</sup> More specifically, “by (eventually) declaring”; see A.B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901), §96 rem. 4; compare P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (1st ed. 1990; 2 vols.; Subsidia Biblica, 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996), §124p; *GKC* §114p. MT וְלֵאמֹר appears in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> וְלֵאמֹר; 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> וְלֵאמֹר; 4QIsa<sup>b</sup> וְלֵאמֹר, and the comparable instance in 51:16 (compare Kissane, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:79; Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:16). Many scholars take LXX ὁ λέγων (“who says”) to reflect the original Hebrew—Marti thinks an editor changed the האמר to ולאמר to have Cyrus do the declaring, as in Ezra 1:1–4; 6:1–5 (*Jesaja*, 307)—but LXX looks like an interpretation that assimilates the phrase to the one at the beginning of the quote; note its struggle with the syntax of 51:16. More drastic restorations (Skinner, *Isaiah XL–LXVI*, 62–63; Volz, *Jesaja II*, 56; K. Elliger, *Deuterjesaja in seinem Verhältnis zu Tritojesaja* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1933], 177–79; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 413) are unsupported and unwarranted, including removal of the clause with the temple on the circular grounds that the author does not otherwise refer to it; see also Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:16.

<sup>21</sup> To level the line-internal parallelism and affirm the suffix in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, N.H. Tur-Sinai restores ולהיכלי “and of my temple” (*Peshuto Shel Mikra. Vol. 3, Pt. 1: Jeremiah and Isaiah* [Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1967], 120 [Hebrew]).

<sup>22</sup> The repetition of preposition ל before consecutive nouns suggests apposition: לְמִשְׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ “to his anointed one Cyrus” (see Gen 32:5; Num 12:8; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §131i; Rashi; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 243–45, 248–49). In this reading, the voice shifts abruptly to the first person in the subordinate clauses that follow. The utterly unique Masoretic cantillation signals a strong disjunction here: the repetition of *zarqa* at יְהוָה לְמִשְׁיחוֹ (only twenty-nine more instances in the Hebrew Bible, including a triple at 2 Kgs 1:16) followed by *munah munah revica* (rather than *munah munah segol*) at לְכוֹרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־הִחְזַקְתִּי בִּימִינוֹ. Rashi comments that the cantillation supports R. Naḥman b. R. Hiṣda (fourth century C.E. Babylonia), who resisted the appositive reading and stated that Yahweh speaks to the Messiah regarding Cyrus (*b. Meg.* 12a). To establish this syntax, though, the standard phrasing of one *zarqa* followed immediately by

felling before him nations, and the girded loins of kings I exposed,  
 opening before him doors, and gates that they not be closed:  
 ¶ before you will go, and mountains<sup>23</sup> I will level;<sup>24</sup> bronzed  
 doors I will smash, and iron bars I will hack,

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*segol* at יהוה לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ would suffice. The unusual phrasing with its emphatic disjunction suggests the Masoretes recognized a new level of speech—the direct quote—to begin at לְכוּרֶשׁ “To Cyrus” (contra S. Kogut, *Correlations Between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis: Linguistic and Contextual Studies* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994], 52, 150 [Hebrew]). See also J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 152 (he cites J.L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* [AB 20; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968], 75, but McKenzie does not interpret this way); Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:19–20. LXX may signal a similar shift in speaker: Οὗτος λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῷ χριστῷ μου Κύρῳ (“So says the Lord God: ‘To my anointed one, Cyrus . . .’”). Written messages often contained multiple levels of introduction, instruction, and address, in part due to changes in the role and practices of messengers, in part due to the artistry of the medium and format. For a range of examples, see P. Michalowski, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), §§1, 153; N.M. Brisch, *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation: Sumerian Court Literature of the Larsa Dynasty 9c. 2003–1763 B.C.E.* (AOAT, 339; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 76, 83; A. Kleinerman, *Education in Early 2nd Millennium BC Babylonia: The Sumerian Epistolary Miscellany* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), “Sumerian Epistolary Miscellany,” esp. §18, also §§1, 6–8, 19, as well as “Additional Nippur Letters” §8; W.L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), §232, also §§367, 369, 370; A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA, 3; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), §§28, 47. On letters and messengers, see D. Elgavish, *The Diplomatic Service in the Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Sources* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998), chaps. 1–3, 8–9 (Hebrew); also S.A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 163–201; T. Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 57–75; J. Mynářová, *Language of Amarna—Language of Diplomacy: Perspectives on the Amarna Letters* (Czech Institute of Egyptology: Prague, 2007), 53–164. For relevant remarks, see D. Charpin, “The Writing, Sending and Reading of Letters in the Amorite World,” in G. Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 400–17; S.L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 80–83; J.M. Lindenberger and K.H. Richards, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (Writings from the Ancient World, 4; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 6–7. Some identify לְכוּרֶשׁ as an insertion because it does not fit their idea about the provenance of the text or on various subjective grounds (C.C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* [New York: Scribner’s, 1928], 38–52; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 209–31 (223); Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 413).

<sup>23</sup> Following 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> הררים; 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> הרורים; LXX ὄρη against MT הַדְּוּרִים. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars debated the priority of MT and LXX, and afterwards too. See Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 152; Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 253–54. Resolving the matter, one can trace 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> הררים (construct הררי is well attested) leading phonologically to 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>

And I will give you treasures of the dark and secret hoards.  
 That you know that<sup>25</sup> I Yahweh am he who calls your name,  
 The god of Israel—for the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel  
 my chosen,<sup>26</sup>  
 And I called you by your name, I named you, though you did not  
 know me,

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הַרְוִיִּים (*shewa* before *reš* becomes short *o(u)*; see E.Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>)* [Leiden: Brill, 1974], 497–98), which exegetically or graphically led to MT הַרְוִיִּים. Medieval Jewish commentators explained הַרְוִיִּים as winding roads on the basis of Aramaic הַרְוִיִּים “to return, go around, go back and forth” (Jonah Ibn Janah, *The Book of Roots (Sefer Hasborashim)* [ed. W. Bacher; trans. Judah ibn Tibbon; Berlin: M’Kize Nirdamim, 1896], 117 [Hebrew]; Rashi; Joseph Kara; Ibn Ezra; David Kimḥi); so too E. Ben Yehuda, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* (eds. H. Ben Yehuda, M.Z. Segal, and N.H. Tur-Sinai; 17 vols.; Tel Aviv: La’am Publishing House, 1948–1959), 2:1042 (Hebrew); and along these lines, Volz, *Jesaja II*, 59. But the word may have come about in deliberate or intuitive reaction to the anomalous הַרְוִיִּים.

<sup>24</sup> MT *qere* אִישׁ־ר (seconded by 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> אִישׁ־ר) matches the form of the parallel verbs אִשְׁבֵּר and אִגְדַּע in the immediately following clauses, also אִפְתַּח in v. 1. MT *ketib* אוֹשֵׁר probably represents the *hipʿil* of the same root יִשׁ־ר on the model of אוֹבִישׁ in 44:27 and וְאוֹרְשָׁנוּ (Num 14:12); הַאֹסֵף (Judg 20:28); וְאוֹצֵא (Ezek 28:18; see also Ezra 8:17). Both readings have the vertical sense of leveling and flattening, not the horizontal sense of straightening the crooked; note the noun מִישׁוֹר “level terrain, plain” and see especially Isa 40:3–4, in which the call to “straighten” the desert plain (יִשְׁרוּ בְּעֶרְבָה) does not imagine a flat surface with twisty paths, but an uneven topography hard to navigate without a beaten path (מִסְלָה), and v. 4 makes this image abundantly clear. Contra B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 341.

<sup>25</sup> Many see the words “That you know that” (לְמַעַן תִּדְעֵ בִי) as a copyist error, because gaining treasure does not lead to knowledge of Yahweh (Duhm, *Jesaja*, 341); others try to salvage it as a deliberate insertion (Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 413 n. 822). But the words may elliptically refer to the choice to transmit the prediction to Cyrus, as in v. 1, so that when the prediction comes to pass Cyrus will know that Yahweh willed it and that he did so for Jacob-Israel (in this direction: Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:23–24; Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 255).

<sup>26</sup> This rendering, which departs from the verse division and punctuation of MT, syntactically maintains the topical stress and offers a more balanced parallelism. Bear in mind that Hebrew manuscripts before the first century C.E. do not indicate verse division, (see e.g. the Great Isaiah Scroll [1QIsa<sup>a</sup>]. Cited 03/28/14. Online: <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>), which is not attested before the ninth century C.E. (so far). The Greek rendering too is not unequivocal, and the oldest existing manuscripts, from the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., likewise do not—or originally did not—indicate verse division (see H.B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* [2d ed.; rev. R.R. Ottley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914], 122–48 (esp. 342–50); see Codex Sinaiticus. Cited 03/28/14. Online: <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx>).

I Yahweh—there is no other, besides me no other god!—I gird  
 you, though you did not know me,  
 That it be known<sup>27</sup> east and west<sup>28</sup> that there is none aside from  
 me,  
 It is I Yahweh—there is no other! —  
 Who makes light and creates dark,  
 Who produces wellbeing and creates misfortune,<sup>29</sup>  
 I Yahweh do all these.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Literally, “That they know.” This clause may pick up the thread of v. 3b: Yahweh pronounces to Cyrus so that he know and so that all know, on the premise that, like his Mesopotamian predecessors, what Cyrus knows about divine support he publishes. Contra Kissane, *Book of Isaiah*, 2:80; compare Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:26.

<sup>28</sup> Both the Leningrad and Aleppo codices have *מִמְזֶרְחֵי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמִמְעֲרֵבָהּ*, which poses several grammatical ambiguities. Most scholars emend *וּמִמְעֲרֵבָהּ*, with final *mater lectionis*, to *וּמִמְעֲרֵבָה*, with final consonant indicating a feminine pronominal suffix that refers to the sun of the preceding clause, and they understand the repetition of prepositions *מִ* . . . *וּמִ* to trace a range: “from where the sun rises to where it sets,” on the model of the expression *מִמְזֶרְחֵי שֶׁמֶשׁ (וְ)עַד מְבוֹאוֹ* in Mal 1:11; Ps 50:1; 113:3. Enough examples of the unmarked pronominal suffix exist especially before the letters *bgdkpt* to make emendation unnecessary for this reading (see *GKC* §91e). A.B. Ehrlich (*Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches* [7 vols.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1908–1913; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1968], 4:164–65) resists the reading on combined grounds: first, Mal 1:11; Ps 50:1; 113:3 show that when the sun serves to indicate direction it is gendered masculine, and second, *מִמְעֲרֵב* elsewhere neither occurs in construct nor takes a suffix; he views the prefixed preposition *מִ* repeated here as indicating location (Gen 12:8, *וְהָעִי מִקְדֵם*; see *IBHS* §11.2.11b) and the suffix of *וּמִמְעֲרֵבָהּ* as directional (Deut 4:41, *אֶז יְבַדִּיל, אֶז יְבַדִּיל*, and the suffix of *וּמִמְעֲרֵבָהּ* as directional (Deut 4:41, *אֶז יְבַדִּיל, אֶז יְבַדִּיל*; also 1 Chr 26:30; 2 Chr 33:14; see *IBHS* §10.5b, also §8.2d). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> *וּמִמְעֲרֵב* and LXX *οἱ ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν ἤλιου καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν* (“they from where the sun rises and they from where it sets”) support this approach to MT. Compare Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:26.

<sup>29</sup> The statement concerns quality of life, wellbeing and misfortune, success and failure, not the ethical concepts of good and evil (Skinner, *Isaiah XL–LXVI*, 67; North, *The Second Isaiah*, 151; Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:27–28; contra Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 162). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> *טוב* in place of MT *שלום* probably reflects a copyist’s expectation for a more standard opposition; the anticipatory change may have occurred instinctively rather than consciously.

<sup>30</sup> For Cyrus as Yahweh’s vehicle of Judean restoration, see also: 45:13; 48:14; foreshadowed, in my opinion, in 41:2–3; 42:1–9 (compare 41:2, *צֶדֶק . . . הָעִיר*; 42:6, *הָעִיר הַצֶּדֶק*; 45:13, *הָעִיר הַצֶּדֶק*; also 41:2–3 with 45:1–2); compare Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 195–98, 208–212. Note also the correlation between 44:28 and 40:11. On Isa 46:1–2, see Schaudig, “‘Bēl Bows, Nabû Stoops!’” and on 43:16–21, F. Hartenstein, “YHWH’s Ways and New Creation in Deutero-Isaiah,” in Ben Zvi and Levin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah*, 73–89 (esp. 83–89).

In as direct a punchline as one could hope for, at 48:20–21, the author concludes by urging the Judeans of Babylonia to leave and on their way to sing a song that tells their story of salvation by Yahweh:<sup>31</sup>

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Haran emphasizes the focus on the return from Babylonia and restoration in Jerusalem, and based on the contents and rhetoric of the text throughout, he dates Isa 40–48 soon after Cyrus' taking of Babylon ("The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework," 138–44; *Between Ri'shonôt and Hadashôt*, 26, 29). The full range of angles and slants in Isa 40–48 makes much sense soon after Cyrus' public display of Persian control of Babylonian Marduk in 538 (for which see Kuhrt, "Cyrus the Great of Persia," 177–78). At the other end, Isa 43:3–4 reflects the expectation that Cyrus will subjugate Egypt, but Cyrus seems never to have done so; he waylaid any plans for a campaign, turned his attention to Central Asia, and died in 530, leaving it for Cambyses (see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 48–50; Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 1:48–49, 104–6). Arguments against this scenario of authorship based on what else the author of the text would, should, or could have done or what a prophet would, should, or could know and do about it, which basis then leads to the promotion of an alternative scenario and the excision of various inconvenient clauses and passages, do not recommend themselves; see Torrey, *The Second Isaiah*, 20–52, who decries such procedure—then repeats it with respect not only to content but to prosody too.

<sup>31</sup> The fact that a Babylonian town near Nippur was referred to in a legal document from 572 B.C.E. as "City of Judeans" (*ālu šá lûYāhūdāia*) and subsequently in legal documents from 561 B.C.E. and afterwards as "Judea" (*URUia-a-ḥu-du = āl-Yāhūdu*) and that Judeans continued to use Judean names makes it reasonable to imagine the author of Isa 40–48 in the early 530s B.C.E. thinking he could appeal to such a community as expatriates and persuade them to return. The degree to which Judeans settled, acculturated, and struck roots, including marrying Babylonians, will have played a role in just how receptive to the idea of returning they were likely to have been. For recent partial and provisional reconstruction of the Judean communities in Nippur on the basis of Babylonian sources, the earliest of which date to 572 and 561 B.C.E., see K. Abraham, "West Semitic and Judean Brides in Cuneiform Sources from the Sixth Century B.C.E.: New Evidence from a Marriage Contract from Āl-Yahūdu," *A/O* 51 (2005–2006), 198–219; idem, "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communities in the Persian Period: The Āl-Yahūdu Clay Tablets," in H. Segev and A. Schor (eds.), *Light and Shadows—The Catalogue—The Story of Iran and the Jews* (Tel Aviv: Beit Hatfutsot, 2011), 261–64; P.-A. Beaulieu, "Yahwistic Names in Light of Late Babylonian Onomastics," in O. Lipschits *et al.* (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns: 2011), 245–66; F.R. Magdalene and C. Wunsch, "Slavery between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience," in L. Culbertson (ed.), *Slaves and Households in the Near East* (Oriental Institute Seminars 7; Chicago, Ill.: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2011), 113–34; L.E. Pearce, "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia," in Lipschits and Oeming, *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, 399–411; idem, "Judean?: A Special Status in Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Babylonia?" in Lipschits *et al.*, *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period*, 267–78; also B. Oded, "The Settlements of the Israelite and Judean Exiles in

Leave Babylonia! Flee the Chaldeans!  
 In loud song recount! Sound it!  
 Blare it to the end of the earth! Belt out!  
 “Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob!  
 And they did not thirst! Through drylands he led them!<sup>32</sup>  
 Water from boulders he streamed them!  
 He split boulders and water flowed!”<sup>33</sup>

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Mesopotamia in the 8th–6th Centuries B.C.E.,” in G. Galil and M. Weinfeld (eds.), *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zechariah Kallai* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 91–103 (esp. 98–99, 101); R. Zadok, *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), 27–36; idem, “Israelites and Judeans in Assyria in Ancient Times” and “Judeans in Babylonia in Ancient Times,” in M.A. Ehrlich (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 754–62. The flourishing of Jewish communities well over half a millennium later in Sippar some one-hundred miles north of Nippur can give no indication whatsoever as to the quality of life in Nippur; contra H.M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah in the “Exilic” Period* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 41, 76.

<sup>32</sup> Or: “And they did not thirst in the drylands through which he led them!” Behind the theme of Yahweh’s wondrous ability to convey Israel across uncrossable lands in this and the next lines—indeed throughout the text—may stand another royal project, the roadwork for which the Persian emperors were famous (Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 357–87), if indeed it had already begun and made an impression in the time of Cyrus. Documentary and expressive texts do not go back early enough to substantiate the conjecture.

<sup>33</sup> The song seems to comprise four four-word units (either lines or half-lines): vv. 20b, 21a $\alpha$ , 21a $\beta$ , and 21b. The first and third units each contain a single clause, the fourth unit contains two independent clauses, and the second unit is ambiguous. Namely, the song may have three single-clause units followed by a conclusive dual-clause unit, or else it alternates between single-clause and dual-clause units. For longer, fuller examples of the form such a song might take, which also demonstrate that rhythm may override syntax, see Ps 136; 107. Strikingly, though the opening call to leave Babylonia, at the beginning of Isa 48:20, also takes the form of a neat (line-internal?) parallelism of two clauses in four words, the intervening string of exhortations to sing along the way, in the middle of v. 20, is persistently uneven and ambiguous. It comprises either four clauses of three words, two words, four words, and one word, or three clauses of five words (with two asyndetically linked verbs), four words, and one word. (Compare LXX and MT respectively.) Possibly, the formulation of the instructions means to comprise two lines of five words each. In any case, this uneven formulation of the exhortations to sing right before the song itself has two effects. First of all, it conveys Yahweh’s thrill at this point, that initial nearly uncontrollable joy that precedes and generates song. Secondly, it offsets the song as a song all the more distinctly.



For she has received from Yahweh's hand  
twofold for all her sins.' ”

A voice is calling: “In the desert clear the path of Yahweh!  
Level through the dunes a road for our  
God!  
Every gully be raised and every mount  
and mound be flattened!  
Let the hilly become flatland and the crags  
a broad valley!<sup>37</sup>  
And the glory of Yahweh will appear,  
And all flesh will see together that the  
mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”<sup>38</sup>

A voice is saying: “Call!”  
And [it is saying]:<sup>39</sup> “What shall I call?”

The author constructs the message, its source, and its veracity over the course of the entire text, through a number of characters and levels of communication, which complexity makes this biblical text unusually ripe for extended literary analysis of its message and of its means of conveying it. The analysis of this piece of biblical literature will maintain the theoretical and practical distinction between the author of a text, on the one hand, and the voice that speaks from the text, frames it, and constitutes it, on the other; and the analysis will persistently resist the urge—traditional, Romantic or other—to collapse them, as so often occurs in particular when it comes to the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The jussive mood of v. 4 matches the imperatives of v. 3, but v. 4 could also be indicative (future) as in v. 5. On the significance of the ambiguity see below.

<sup>38</sup> Behind the description may stand the preparations made for the arrival of Cyrus, who traveled regularly through the empire with his court; see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 183–91; also Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 38–39.

<sup>39</sup> MT has here וַאֲמַר “and it said”; LXX καὶ εἶπα and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> וְאוֹמְרָה “and I said.” The participles of the preceding verses suggest that originally the text was to be read וַאֲמַר “and it is saying.” See further below.

<sup>40</sup> As a matter of definition, theoretical precision, and practice, authors of written works simply do not have direct audiences. Authors do not speak to auditors. They write, and others read what is written or have it read to them. The readers or hearers of the written words (must) distinguish between who is physically reading the words (they themselves or a third party) and who means to speak to them (the author). Moreover, the author is not in fact there speaking through the text; who, or what, is speaking is a persona perceived by the hearer of the text (in the case of narrative, a narrator), from which, moreover, the hearer then infers an author—again, not the author him- or herself but at best an approximation (the implied author). Compare G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. J.E. Lewin; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 25–32, 212–27; S.

In Isa 40–48, an anonymous speaker of minimal personhood conveys that he has heard, or hears, a voice making a proclamation and that he repeats it completely. The voice repeated by the speaker does not express its own thoughts, but rather itself proclaims the message of a separate source, Yahweh. Within the framework of recounting the voice’s proclamation, then, the speaker of the text in fact repeats Yahweh’s speeches and acts as Yahweh’s messenger, as his herald.<sup>41</sup> In short, the author has created a text with three figures:

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Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 146–51; S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1st ed. 1983; London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 87–89; M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (3d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 15–31; also M. Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (trans. L. Asher; revised edition; New York: HarperPerennial, 2000), 143–48, entries “novel” through “pseudonym,” also 33–39, with remarks about the significance of the phenomenon of the pseudonym that are relevant to ancient pseudepigraphic attribution. In certain genres authors may in effect penetrate the multiple mediums involved in textual communication, like letter-writing, but enough examples exist to illustrate the exploitable artifice of this kind of textual communication too (e.g., C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, [New York: HarperCollins, 2001])—even as early as ancient Sumer at the very dawn of literature (see Brisch, *Sumerian Court Literature*, 75–89; Kleinerman, *Sumerian Epistolary Miscellany*, 95–106). Importantly, B.H. Smith argues for the presumption of direct communication between author and audience as a matter controlled by external factors, the broader context, convention (*On The Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature to Language* [Chicago, Ill./London: University of Chicago Press, 1978], 3–75; already idem, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* [Chicago, Ill./London: University of Chicago Press, 1968], 14–20).

<sup>41</sup> For the prophet as messenger and herald, see J.F. Ross, “The Prophet as Yahweh’s Messenger,” in B.W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (eds.), *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 98–107; N. Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” *ZAW* 77 (1965), 297–323; J.S. Holladay, Jr. “Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel,” *HTR* 63 (1970), 29–51, even if many aspects need to be updated. S. Holtz adds to the prophetic figure the distinct role of summoner (“The Prophet as Summoner,” in G. Frame et al. [eds.], *A Common Cultural Heritage: Studies on Mesopotamia and the Biblical World in Honor of Barry L. Eichler* [Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 2011], 19–34). Yahweh may explicitly refer to the speaker of the text as his herald, in 42:19; see below. The herald interjects in the middle of his quotation at a few points, such as 42:24, **זו חֲטָאנוּ לוֹ**; 47:4, **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ קְדוֹשׁ**; and 48:16b, **וְעַתָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֲדַנְי יְהוָה וְרוּחוֹ יִשְׁרָאֵל**. Such interjections actualize the implied real-time moment of the speaker and the speaker’s audience (a construct like the speaker, and not the author’s [indirect] audience). Compare such well-known points of coordination by third-person narrators as Gen 2:24; 12:6; 13:7; 28:19; 32:33; Deut 34:6, 10; 1 Sam 9:9; Ruth 4:7, and the ubiquitous expression **עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה**.

Yahweh, a voice that articulates Yahweh's will, and a herald who hears the voice and repeats its speech to his implied audience.<sup>42</sup>

The speech repeated by the herald of Isa 40–48 does not unfold in linear fashion, smoothly and simply. Yahweh addresses Jacob-Israel as whole, different segments and factions within it, and various other audiences, at times directly, at times indirectly, sometimes alternating between the two forms of address or even between different audiences mid-speech.<sup>43</sup> Yahweh wields favored tropes relentlessly, first for one subject then for another, with one nuance then another, again, even pivoting mid-speech. The agitated, highly impassioned discourse need not lead to complex views of the compositional history of the text, even as the work of a single editor stringing together snippets of the orator's cue cards or the student's crib notes along a mix of thematic and formal lines. The text can and therefore should generate a complex view of its art of persuasion, namely, its aims and its poetics, as a characteristic of a literary composition in which the same single mind plans its many features all as part of a single complex articulation.

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<sup>42</sup> Narratologists refer to the comparable phenomenon in narrative as embedding; for a discussion with an example of seven levels of quotation, see Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 255–56. Multiple levels of narration (“diegetic levels”) rather than quotation is a related but separate issue; see on it Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 91–96.

<sup>43</sup> Recent arguments that stress the reference to Jacob and Israel in this text suggest a broader audience than Judeans of Babylonia (G.N. Knoppers, “Did Jacob Become Judah? The Configuration of Israel's Restoration in Second Isaiah,” in J. Zsengellér (ed.), *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics* [Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2011], 39–67) rests ultimately on the absence of a good explanation why the author would trope the Judeans of Babylonia this way. But suggestions do exist. The tropes may activate any of several associations of rhetorical worth: the exodus of the nation from Egypt (Num 23:18–22; 24:5–8; Ps 77:12–21; 114:1–2, 7; Ezek 20:5–6; also Exod 19:3–4; Josh 24:4–5; 1 Sam 12:8; 2 Kgs 17:34–39; Jer 2:4–7), the special relationship with Yahweh unmediated by and independent of human kingship (Ps 135:4; 20; 44:1–9; 46; 47; 146; 147; also 59:14), the overcoming of difficulties (Gen 32:23–30; compare Isa 40:4 וְהָיָה הַעֲקֹב לְמִישׁוֹר (Gen 27–35), and the direct vision of the deity (Gen 32:31; Ps 24). Also, it may connote that just as Jacob became the nation, so will the Judeans of Babylonia reconstitute it—an idea expressed explicitly in 49:5–6 and, in its own way and for its own context, in Ruth 4:11. Surely, the text does not claim that those exiled to Assyria and Egypt have returned along with the Judeans in Babylonia. Notably, already the book of Ezekiel refers to Judea and to the Judeans in Babylonia as Israel, indeed, predominantly so; see T. Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup, 76; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 210–27 (esp. 218–22). (Thanks to Tova Ganzel for pointing me to this work.) In the other direction, Jacob-Israel should not be taken as a monolithic entity of one mind either, but a group with a variety of ideas and feelings about Yahweh.

Specifically, in place of and countering the linear explanatory medium of narrative favored by royalty and aligned institutions (whether in first- or third-person voice),<sup>44</sup> the text of Isa 40–48 lodges its central claim unevenly, in an emotionally charged voice not unlike that of the aggrieved plaintiff bringing suit,<sup>45</sup> progressing in fits and starts, circling back upon itself before moving forward, in the kind of sequence in which the parts all depend upon each other for full comprehensibility. It suggests a plan that presupposes the end, encompasses the whole, and requires a holistic view. Any sources, prior bits of prophetic text, bites of royal propaganda, and bytes of cultural data—including any earlier pronouncements by the author of the text—have undergone cannibalization, optimization and systematization.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> On Mesopotamian royal narrative, see M. Liverani, “The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings,” in J.M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (1st ed. 1995; 4 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 4:2353–66 (esp. 2359–63). On Levantine royal narrative monuments, against the backdrop of Mesopotamian royal narrative and Neo-Assyrian in particular, see D.J. Green, “‘I Undertook Great Works’: The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions (FAT II, 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 33–86, 285–319; also Sanders’ focus on the self-conscious construction of Levantine nationhood in the Neo-Assyrian imperial context, in *The Invention of Hebrew*, 113–22.

<sup>45</sup> Biblical idiom tropes the legal appeal to the king for redress as a cry and crying out (צעק, צעקה); see 2 Sam 19:26–29; 1 Kgs 20:35–40; 2 Kgs 6:25–30; 8:1–6; figuratively Gen 4:10; also HALOT 3:1042b–1043a, s.v. צעק Qal §3; 3:1043a, s.v. צעקה §2; G. Hasel, “עק,” in TDOT 4:112–22. For other examples of Yahweh bringing suit, see Isa 3:13–15, in which Yahweh brings suit against human leaders, and Ps 82, in which Yahweh charges the lot of deities before El, who strips them of their immortality and transfers maintenance of the entire world to Yahweh. The use of Elohim for Yahweh in Ps 82:1a, 8 belongs to a broader phenomenon in the book of Psalms, on which see L. Joffe, “The Elohist Psalter: What, How and Why?” *SJOT* 15 (2001), 142–69; J. Ben-Dov, “The Elohist Psalter and the Writing of Divine Names at Qumran,” in A.D. Roitman *et al.* (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 79–104. For extensive discussion of the problems interpreting Ps 82, see P. Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” in B. Pongretz-Leisten (ed.), *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189–240.

<sup>46</sup> “A worthy poet is first and foremost a sensitive reader, a person of sense and of recall, who read often in the works of his predecessors and internalized them and made them the stuff of his very soul, and these peek through allusively, whether explicitly or implicitly, in his works” (Y. Zakovitch, *Who Proclaims Peace, Who Brings Good Tidings: Seven Visions of Jerusalem’s Peace* [Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2004], 19 [Hebrew]). See especially U. Cassuto, “On the Formal and Stylistic Relationship between Deutero-Isaiah and Other Biblical Writers,” in *idem*, *Biblical and Oriental Studies, Volume 1* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), 141–77; Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 104–7, 130–31; also Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*,

Accordingly, it misses the mark to categorize the author of Isa 40–48 under the neat and tidy rubric of the so-called “prophet of comfort”—and then to jettison what does not appear to fit. Rather than affect feelings, specifically, induce a mood of relief and calm, this author seeks above all to move his intended audience to very real action, to undertake voluntarily, without the oversight of the forces that conveyed them, their parents, or their grandparents to Babylonia, a hazardous journey back across the world. What people, entire communities of young and old, so traversed the world other than forcibly?<sup>47</sup> His is a mission of urgency and the argument he makes is not primarily of divine forgiveness but of divine will, attentiveness, and power.<sup>48</sup>

### III. FIRST, NEXT AND LAST:

#### YAHWEH THE AUTHOR OF HISTORY

Throughout the text of Isa 40–48, Yahweh speaks about knowing first things and last things, about being first and last, and about his singularity (41:4; 42:8; 43:10; 44:6; 46:9; 48:11, 12). He knows the beginnings, because he is the cause of things; he determines consequences, laying plans and bringing them about (41:27; 42:9; 48:3). No one else knows (41:22–23, 26–29; 43:9; 44:7). As creator of the world, Yahweh holds the world in his hands like putty, and none can determine the limits of what he can do with it. Those who know of former wondrous feats should know also that further feats, never before seen and even more impressive, cannot be beyond him (40:21–31; 42:14–16; 43:16–20; 44:24–28; 46:8–11).<sup>49</sup>

In the context of a debate about who can interpret history best, who can tell the right story, a narratological sensibility may perceive in this defining strand of Yahweh’s discourse an argument about

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44–63. “The immense knowledge of Scripture” presents a “continual problem” for Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 25).

<sup>47</sup> According to its lore, Israel did it once before, but through the defeat of its captor, not by his exaltation, and it then traversed the wilderness loaded with the riches of a despoiled Egypt and blessedly attended by Yahweh. The tradition of the exodus from Egypt only serves to highlight just how different the circumstances of the current community are and how risky and unprecedented the author’s plan is, which explains why the author barely invokes it.

<sup>48</sup> This view builds upon and also goes a bit beyond that of Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 215–16. Importantly, the text of Isa 40–48 does not invoke or echo language of a royal edict allowing the Judeans to leave Babylonia and return to Judea, and it does not indicate knowledge of royal sponsorship of such a move. Knowledge of either would have profoundly served the argument that Yahweh stands behind the opportunity.

<sup>49</sup> Haran interprets this last as referring consistently to Babylon’s recent fall; Yahweh who foretold it (e.g., Isa 13:1–14, 23; 21:1–10; Jer 50–51; Hab 1–2) and brought it about can and will also foretell and bring about something else—the people’s imminent return and restoration (*Between Rī’shonôt and Ḥadashôt*, 23–29).

storytelling and authorship.<sup>50</sup> A storyteller determines a story's beginning, its ending, and the route it takes in between. No one within the world of the story can do so; none has the requisite perspective. Characters do not know whether what happens to them or around them at any given moment marks a beginning, an end, or a means.<sup>51</sup> In the real world, the myriad moments and events that defy

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<sup>50</sup> On narrative and historiography, see H. White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 5–27, and the rich collection of essays in G. Roberts (ed.), *The History and Narrative Reader* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001). On narrative and the construction of reality, see S. Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *JAAAR* 39 (1971), 291–311; J. Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991), 1–21. D. Duperreault also has applied considerations of narrative and its relationship to historical thought to the analysis of Isa 40–55, but with respect to how the prophet revises Israel's history, not to the nature of Yahweh's argument; see "The Poetics of History and the Prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah," in M.J. Boda and L.M. Wray Beal (eds.), *Prophets, Prophecy, and Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 255–74. This study diverges from that of Duperreault in many particulars.

<sup>51</sup> This distinction holds equally true for a first-person narrator, who speaks retrospectively. The fact that such a voice identifies itself as that of a character in the story it tells should not mislead the reader to overlook the retrospective stance: the voice still decides, as it were, where to begin the story, where to end it, what contents to include, their sequence, and how and when to explain causes and effects. Its former self, the character about which it tells, could not do all these things at the time (compare, with a different thrust, Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 198–99; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 71–74, 78–79, 94–96; Bal, *Narratology*, 9–10, 20–29). M. Sternberg devotes much thought to the situation in biblical narrative, the authors of which generally draw the deity as an omniscient character (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Narrative and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987], 84–128). It remains something of a challenge to define the deity's omniscience in biblical narrative, since authors of biblical narrative do not tend to highlight it and, moreover, are not uniformly consistent or maximally comprehensive about it. For example, the authors of both J and P imagine Yahweh learning about his creation and adapting himself to it, most clearly in both their respective flood stories (Gen 6–9), and other sources imagine Yahweh probing internal organs like Mesopotamian divination experts (Jer 11:20; 17:10; Ps 7:10; Prov 17:3). It may be the case, for some biblical authors at any rate, that Yahweh can know anything, say, should he choose to turn his attention to it, but it does not seem to be the case that at any given moment he knows everything or is consciously aware of all facts at one and the same moment. Therefore, cries reach his ears (Gen 18:20–21; Exod 3:9), he resolves to investigate a matter closely (Gen 11:5), and so on. As far as the author of Isa 40–48 seems to go, Yahweh's knowledge is a function of his power: He can manipulate people, events, and processes, as well as the forces of nature, and does so to carry out his plans. For recent useful and particularly relevant discussions and definitions of divine omnipotence, see K.L. Pearce and A.R. Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence," *Religious Studies* 48 (2012), 403–14; M. Lembke, "Omnipotence and Other Possibilities," *Religious Studies* 48 (2012), 425–43.

any given storyline, the accidents and the tangents, segments perhaps in other, intersecting stories, make the task that much harder. Accordingly, characters and real people alike who see events as unfolding around their own fate are typically judged self-centered, while characters and real people who predict how events will unfold without reference to themselves are typically professionals, people to consult, like clairvoyants, political pundits, or market watchers. In Isa 40–48, Yahweh avers that no one can achieve his point of view as the world’s creator, to know the beginning, end, and means of anything. He alone exists outside all moments and events to see their sequence and plot their trajectory, indeed, to chart their course. Only he has the viewpoint to graph history, to narrate the story; indeed, he authored it. He alone was there back when it all began and he alone made it all happen.<sup>52</sup> Woe to the creature, he warns at one point (45:8–12), who presumes to know and dares assert otherwise.

In 41:1–5, 21–29; 43:9; and 45:18–46:2, Yahweh summons other would-be storytellers, namely, political pundits, royal propagandists, and religious specialists—idols too—from all across the world to a town-hall showdown. He speaks of it as a courtroom contest, because the court of law is the quintessential venue for a competition of stories, a competition that issues in normative results, in a call to action—a competition of stories most compelling.<sup>53</sup> Yahweh challenges the others to present their version of events of, say, the past fifty to sixty years, what they know and how they came to know it, any cogent version that can account for Yahweh’s whereabouts and doings (41:21–24). Living inside the world Yahweh created, subordinate to the story-level of a superior character, they

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<sup>52</sup> For this reason Yahweh can refer to so many different characters and addressees as his servants, chosen ones, those who carry out his plans, or those who vindicate and proclaim him. A similar sentiment appears in Qoh 11:5: Just as one does not know the way of the wind, which arises as mysteriously as the bones of a fetus in a woman’s womb, so does one not know how the deity initiates the realization of his plans.

<sup>53</sup> F.M. Cross: “Yahweh addresses the pagan nations calling upon them (and Israel) to hear his case. The real lawsuit, however, is between Yahweh, lord of history, and the idol-gods” (“The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *JNES* 12 [1953], 274–77 [275 n. 3]); compare Machinist, “Mesopotamian Imperialism and Israelite Religion,” 246–58. Holtz shows the terminological links to legal practice (“The Prophet as Summoner”). For the dimensions of narrative and narrativity at work in the legal system, see D.R. Papke (ed.), *Narrative and the Legal Discourse: A Reader in Storytelling and the Law* (Legal Semiotics Monographs, 2; Liverpool: Deborah Charles Publications, 1991); P. Brooks and P. Gewirtz (eds.), *Law’s Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); and the all but explicit indictment of the “adversary system” for turning on stereotypes and canned plots: K. Halttunen, “‘Domestic Differences’: Competing Narratives of Womanhood in the Murder Trial of Lucretia Chapman,” in S. Samuels (ed.), *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 39–57.

have not the standing or perspective to claim to have seen, heard, or understood (41:26–29). Unable to grasp all the facts, connect the dots, and plot the course, their story must fail. Worse, they all paradoxically and impossibly attribute their story to a character within it, statues, the work of their own hands, a subordinate in the world of their own fashioning. Such would-be storytellers prove themselves mechanically fully functional, but cognitively oblivious and religiously absurd; they suffer a fatal disconnection between their hands and their minds. By contrast, Yahweh can and does swear by his own name and Jacob-Israel attests him: he wills, commits, and brings about, and what befalls them bespeaks him (41:17–20; 43:1–10, 12, 21; 44:5, 22–23; 45:3–6, 18–25; 48:8–11, 20–21).

A second critical lens, that of disability studies, affords a fuller appreciation of the argument about the failure of all storytellers save Yahweh, about the perspective that differentiates them qualitatively as an inviolable matter of story-level. Disability studies (specifically the social model) has established a distinction between physical impairment, a matter of the body, and the status of disability, a manner of valuation.<sup>54</sup> Further refinement distinguishes between

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<sup>54</sup> See the original formulation by a British advocacy group in 1976, cited in J. Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 17; the powerful remark in H.-J. Stiker, *A History of Disability* (trans. W. Sayers; based on the revised version from 1997; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 12–13; also: L.J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London/New York: Verso, 1995), 1–22; R.G. Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5–9, 12–15. In the categorical terms of some, impairment is a “medically classified condition” whereas disability is a “generic term used to denote the social disadvantage experience by people with an accredited impairment;” so I. Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–37 (3, 20–37). But physical impairment too is measured, or constructed, against an ideal or average as a deviation, an abnormality, and that ideal or average is perceived, constructed, and reinforced. In this direction, see Metzler herself, *idem*, 21, 32–35; more forcefully, Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 6–7, also 13–14, who notes the subjectivity and typological construction of impairment recognized by the Disabilities Act of 1990. Thomson argues that the revolution in forms and philosophies of government and society from monarchy to democracy led to a transformation in the ideal individual from exceptional man to average man (*idem*, 63–70). Hence the cultural model of disability studies; see further Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible*, 17–20; C.R. Moss and J. Schipper, “Introduction,” in C.R. Moss and J. Schipper (eds.), *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–11; N. Junior and J. Schipper, “Disability Studies and the Bible,” in S.L. McKenzie and J. Kaltner (eds.), *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticism and Their Applications* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 21–38. Still, the distinction between impairment and devaluation should not collapse, because a culture may perceive and utilize

impairment in form, “malformation,” and impairment in functionality, “malfunction.”<sup>55</sup> Any malfunction may be a result of form (external shape), build (internal parts), or mind (thought and control). All these can be devalued as deformity, physical disability, mental disability, or psychological disorder in ways that can deny the dignity of selfhood and full membership in society.<sup>56</sup>

Malformation and deformity feature in the text or texts after Isa 48. Within Isa 40–48, Yahweh makes frequent reference to malfunctions—lameness, blindness, deafness, muteness, and mental infirmity. He means disability when it comes to storytelling: he dismisses the narrative composed and told by so many others. In 40:19–20; 41:6–7; 46:6–7; and above all 44:6–20, Yahweh depicts people fully able to care for themselves, to sustain themselves, to give themselves life. They plant trees, wait for rain to bring the trees to proper size and strength, then fell the trees, chop firewood, fuel a fire, warm themselves, boil foodstuffs, and nourish themselves. These people exert full control over their faculties to identify ends, join forces, shape plans, and cultivate means. They proceed from cultivation to culture, crafting expressive objects, works of art, with all due care for their categorical fragility. And yet, in a moment of shocking cognitive dissonance, they dissociatively consider their product, their very own handiwork, the creator of those self-same trees and grant their artwork the right to taxing, laborious obeisance as gods. They attribute maximal vitality to the inert, impotent wood.

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such a distinction and this perception and utilization can come under valuable critical scrutiny, as attempted below.

<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 11–15. Compare Metzler (*Disability in Medieval Europe*, 4–5, 261 n. 15), who pegs the degree of disability to that of the visibility of the impairment and employs a specific categorization of impairments; subsequently, she notes the criterion of work, namely, productivity, in modern Western countries (7–8).

<sup>56</sup> Think of the old stereotypical cast of circus performers and freak shows, on which see Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 55–80. People of super-formation or super-function may be treated in ways not entirely different from freaks and the disabled (as in some comic books). Soldiers impaired in the line of duty represent an important, complex situation; see D.A. Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History* (revised and enlarged edition; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), xi–xxiii (see n. 6). On disability and the Hebrew Bible, see Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible* (with prior works by non-biblicists, 9), who, in analyzing primarily the figuration of a single character, makes an argument that biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources do categorize, conceptualize, and apply disability and ability (4–99); R. Raphael, *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2008), whose broad survey richly illustrates the unique power of disability studies in the reconstruction of social concepts in biblical texts; and S.M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), who puts disability studies analysis into a critical framework of classification broadly.

They accord personhood to non-persons.<sup>57</sup> Such artisans, physically unimpaired and technically capable, malfunction cognitively and religiously as society's storytellers. At the formative level of society, the level at which society constructs itself by naming its locus of power, the level of storytelling and religious explication—which god did what with what aim?—their minds are dysfunctional. They cut themselves off from the storytelling level above them and entrap themselves in their own story. In the courtroom contest of historiography, they tell incoherent tales. So does Yahweh diagnose their mental disability. So does he declare them disabled.<sup>58</sup>

Jacob-Israel misreads its own story too. Trapped in the tale of embodied and constructed potency, the people of Jacob-Israel take the absence of Yahweh's earthly self, the destruction of his home, and their own dislocation to indicate Yahweh's disjunction from earthly efficacy, from human history. They assume his total impairment and infer his complete disablement. They do not call his name and offer him gifts: Why would he come and act? How could he (Isa 40:27; 42:22–25; 43:22–24)? Those who do invoke Yahweh—so Yahweh charges with scathing penetration in an amazing moment in the text—do so emptily, with neither understanding nor integrity (48:1).<sup>59</sup> Yahweh supersedes human faculties altogether. Humans know not his beginning or end, his substance or dimensions, his location and movement. There is no taking his measure, there are no grounds for presuming his impairment, and there can be no possibility of his disablement. Temples of wood and heaps of sacrificial meat are completely beside the point; so too the might of nations (40:12–18). Signs and diviners can neither manipulate him nor disclose his mind (41:21–29; 43:9–13; 44:6–8, 24–25; 45:11–12). On the contrary, he daily decrees the fate of the celestial bodies, calling the stars by name, bringing them out (40:26; compare Ps 147:4). Absent a perceptible body, beyond impairment or manipulation, utterly incomparable—so Yahweh says time and again—he is fully and irreducibly able, the ultimate in ability (Isa 40:17–18, 25, 28; 45:7; 46:5).<sup>60</sup> Though it be imperceptible, he continues to keep accounts

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<sup>57</sup> For the ways in which biblical texts denigrate idols, see S. Olyan, "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics," *JHS* 9 (2003), 1–15.

<sup>58</sup> Compare the strikingly similar thoughts expressed in Ps 115.

<sup>59</sup> "Scathing" and "amazing," because through this text the real-life author appears to level a brazen and alienating accusation that though some real-life people do continue to ascribe vitality, attentiveness, and potency to Yahweh, they do so either disingenuously or incomprehendingly. Perhaps the mix of names with Yahweh and other deities found among the Judean community in documents from Nippur offers a clue to the kind of ideas and practices that the author had in mind. See the sources and studies in n. 31 above.

<sup>60</sup> For the constructed opposition between divine ability and human disability, see M.S. Smith, "Like Deities, Like Temples (Like People)," in J. Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (London/New York: T&T

until full accounting be given (40:1–2; 43:25–28) and the right account of events then vindicate him (41:16, 20; 42:10–13; 48:3–16). Then all will speak his name, call upon him for vindication, swear by him for truth and justice (44:5; 45:23–25). Such naming, penetrating to the next story-level, gives proper account of authorship, beyond the incoherent, paradoxical drama of constructed props (42:8, 17; 48:5, 11).

Yahweh justifies Jacob-Israel's current inability to perceive and tell the right story as the result of its own total impairment in exile, so very far from any perceptible form of salvation and vindication (Isa 46:12). Bound in darkness, the people cannot do or see.<sup>61</sup> Famished and parched, they cannot speak. Alternately put, they stand in a desolate wilderness, fully formed but wholly helpless, unable to get themselves the most elemental nourishment, water; hence their profound thirst. They do not apprehend the real story, that their impairment does not reflect Yahweh's isolation and irrelevance, but his will and choice, the choice to punish them (42:22–25; 43:25–28; 48:3–11). Such punishment betokens involvement and testifies that the story has not ended but continues, for punishment will conclude and restoration ensue. Once the people experience the continued unfolding of the story, they will perceive its contours and tell it properly: *Yahweh* frees them from captivity, *Yahweh* renews their limbs, lights their path, firms their steps, refreshes them on their way, and leads them home (40:9–11, 27–30; 41:17–20; 42:5–9, 14–17; 43:1–8, 14; see also 35:3–10). They will be the story, and others will be able to tell it too (42:10–13; 43:9–13, 21; 44:4, 8; 45:1–7). Such storytelling will do Yahweh justice, vindicating his authorship of events. In this manner will Yahweh re-enable Jacob-Israel and all others. Until that time, Yahweh stands on the demand that they recognize the incoherence of other stories and the need for a new one, one that points towards him.

#### IV. PROPHETIC ABILITY AND DISABILITY

One character in the text of Isa 40–48 does have the ability to tell the right story, the speaker who constitutes the text, the one who cites and thereby declares Yahweh's words, the herald. The author of the text gives this speaker of the text only the barest of outlines, no name for any god to call, no mouth for the divine to touch or fill, almost nothing but voice itself. Such minimal personification of the herald mirrors the limited figuration of the means of the herald's

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Clark, 2005), 3–27; and esp. Raphael, *Biblical Corpora*, 29–50 (disagreement with her literary conceptions of the Deuteronomic corpus and the Priestly history and their respective theologies notwithstanding).

<sup>61</sup> A *JHS* reviewer notes the combination of blindness and captivity in Judg 16:21; 2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 52:11, their thematic comparison in Ps 146:7–9, their possible figurative correlation in Deut 28:25–29 and Isa 59:1–20 (9–10), and the discussion in K. van der Toorn, "Judges XVI 21 in the Light of Akkadian Source," *V/T* 36 (1986), 248–53.

knowledge—a voice. The herald cannot attain his knowledge of the right story through his own faculties, for he cannot take the measure of Yahweh any more than the next person—or, for that matter, encounter him. He is as impaired as anyone.

Indeed, the several voices that make up the text of Isa 40–48 differentiate themselves from each other gradually out of confused verbiage, crystallizing and taking their shape progressively, not unlike both the manner by which Yahweh creates in the stories of Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24 and also the style in 1:1–3 and 2:4b–7 by which the narrator conveys its paradoxical initiation, cycling words and wrestling with temporality until the discourse gains traction and propels itself forward.<sup>62</sup> In Isa 40–48, a regression of voices citing voices recalls the way poets poetically invoke the Muses in order to do poetry, to embark upon *poiesis*, to create worlds, to author stories.<sup>63</sup> In this manner, the author meets the double challenge in Babylonia, first, of imagining the continued potency of a deity dissociated from the classical forms of earthly manifestation in physical space, from social relations, and from his continued relevance to a dislocated people and, second, of establishing the authenticity of his communicated will.<sup>64</sup>

Analyzing the relevant text of Isa 40:1–6 in detail and following its unfolding discourse step by step reveals how the author has constructed it as a dynamic process of differentiation and crystallization of three communicating figures—Yahweh, a voice, and an amplifying herald.<sup>65</sup>

The text begins, in v. 1a, with unframed speech that simply happens, words that directly command or instruct a plural audience with some urgency: נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ (“Console, console”); next, the speaker of these words, the instructor, takes shape as an individual, one who lays seemingly uncontested claim to a people: עַמִּי (“my people”). The text presents an ambiguity in the grammatical and logical relationship between this people and consolation: they are either the object of consolation or the addressee instructed to console.<sup>66</sup> To

<sup>62</sup> For the syntax of Gen 1:1–3 in MT, see the clear, concise, and comprehensive explanation of Rashi.

<sup>63</sup> Relatedly, C. López-Ruiz, “How to Start a Cosmogony: On the Poetics of Beginnings in Greece and the Near East,” *JANER* 12 (2012), 30–48.

<sup>64</sup> This dynamic view of crystallizing voices incompletely differentiated and personified contrasts with the fixed view of Cross (“The Council of Yahweh,” 275–76), that in 40:1 Yahweh addresses the heralds in his heavenly council and the speech throughout the entire passage takes place there. See also the critical comments of J.W. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 50, and compare Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 174–79. The stability and clarity of the divine council with its pecking order of fully personified figures and agents reflect and serve the institutional hierarchies of king and temple.

<sup>65</sup> Blenkinsopp helpfully restores some distance between Isa 40:1ff. and Isa 6:1–13 (*Isaiah 40–55*, 50, 179–80).

<sup>66</sup> Most commentators see the people as the object of the consolation,

resolve the ambiguous text, one may recognize it as a complex instance of a rhetorical device often referred to as “climactic” or “staircase” parallelism, in which parallel lines begin with the same imperative verb, but the first line substitutes a vocative for the anticipated object clause, which only appears in the second line.<sup>67</sup> In the case of Isa 40:1–2: the people are the addressee of the imperative; this vocative replaces the anticipated object of the verb נַחֲמו, which appears in the parallel line v. 2a (יְרוּשָׁלַם); and because the opening verb already occurs in the repeated form נַחֲמו נַחֲמו in v. 1a the parallel line opens with a synonymous expression (דַּבְּרוּ עַל־לֵב) in v. 2a.<sup>68</sup>

The next words, יֵאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (“says your God”) in v. 1b, indicate that the instructor is the deity. They also indicate that despite initial impressions, the deity’s speech is in fact being mediated, transmitted by a quoter, who, echoing the vocative of the deity’s speech in the previous clause, directly addresses its own audience. Moreover, the quoter states that the audience belongs to the deity. Having two direct addressees follow upon each other—the people mentioned by the deity and the audience of the mediating quoter—has the effect of blending them and implies they are one and the same entity.

The text that follows, v. 2, adds specificity: דַּבְּרוּ עַל־לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם וְקִרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ כִּי מְלֵאָה צָבָאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ כִּי לָקְחָה מִיַּד יְהוָה כַּפְּלַיִם בְּכָל־חַטָּאתֶיהָ (“Speak to the heart of *Jerusalem* and call to her, for her work is complete, for her offense has been settled, for she has received from the hand of *Yahweh* twofold for all her sins”). The commanding form of the deity’s speech returns in two more clauses—וְקִרְאוּ . . . דַּבְּרוּ (“speak . . . and call”)—followed by three dependent clauses, the third of which names the commanding deity as *Yahweh*. The object of consolation is *Jerusalem* or is represented by it.<sup>69</sup> *Yahweh*’s reference to himself by name, in the third person,

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not the addressee who should do the consoling; see Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 77. Note that the ambiguity is a visual, readerly one; intonation, even in one’s head, must necessarily choose. Namely, the ambiguity probably does not feature in the process of constructing the setting, and one must make a choice without the author having provided clear signals.

<sup>67</sup> See Ps 93:3; also 92:10; 94:3; likewise Hos 2:23; 11:8; Song 4:8. The phenomenon differs syntactically from the repetition of a clause with a variation of its complement, as in Exod 15:6, 11, 16b. See S.E. Loewenstamm, “The Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse,” *JSS* 14 (1969), 176–96; E.L. Greenstein, “Two variations of Grammatical Parallelism in Canaanite Poetry and Their Psycholinguistic background,” *JANES* 6 (1974), 87–105; idem, “One More Step on the Staircase,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 9 (1977), 77–86. The song in Judg 5 features an extensive variety of syntactically productive repetitions between parallel lines.

<sup>68</sup> For the relationship between נַחֲמו and דַּבְּרוּ עַל לֵב, see Gen 50:21; Ruth 2:13; also Judg 19:3; compare Gen 34:3; Hos 2:16 (1 Sam 1:13 looks like it originally said אַל, as in Gen 24:45, or עַם, as in Qoh 1:6).

<sup>69</sup> The synonyms for fulfillment—מִלֵּא, רִצְיָה, לִקְחָה מִיַּד—may play on

rather than the first-person pronoun creates mild distortion, feedback, confusion about the source of sound, and a haunting sensation that in fact Yahweh's mediating quoter is speaking or interjecting its own point of view. This mildly jarring reverberation will recur in Yahweh's speech throughout the entire proclamation. Moreover, without the help of direct linguistic indications, the audience of the text must do the work of identifying the three figures with each other—the first-person possessor of the people in v. 1a (עַמִּי), the deity possessed by the audience of the speech in v. 1b (אֱלֹהֵיכֶם), and Yahweh of Jerusalem in v. 2 (יְהוָה מִיַּד יְהוָה . . . לְקֹהֵל מִיַּד יְהוָה).

In what follows, v. 3, it emerges that the mediating quoter of Yahweh is itself being quoted by yet a third figure, one that frames and constitutes the entire text. This framing quoter materializes and makes itself perceptible by issuing Yahweh's quoter a label and denoting it "a voice" קוֹל. The framing quoter describes the voice simply as "calling," קוֹל קוֹרֵא, which has the effect of suggesting that the framing quoter cannot locate the voice's addressees. The framing quoter then begins, or continues, its direct quote of the voice. On the one hand, the calling voice addresses a plural audience and commands it, which mimics and evokes Yahweh's form of speech: יְהוָה בְּמִדְבָּר פָּנּוּ דְרֹדֵי יְהוָה ("In the desert clear the path of Yahweh"). On the other hand, the voice differentiates itself from Yahweh and aligns itself with its audience by repeating its own earlier generic reference to the deity with a possessive pronominal suffix and counting itself this time among the possessors: יִשְׂרוּ בְּעֵרְבָה מְסֻלָּה לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ ("level through the dunes a road for our God"). What crystallization and differentiation the discourse achieves with one hand it rescinds with the other, and a measure of ambiguity or undifferentiation remains.

The voice continues to speak, in v. 4, employing verbs construable as either of two forms—as jussive, a relational language of command or exhortation that blends the voice with Yahweh, or as

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the root של"ם in the name Jerusalem; such etymological wordplay seems present in Judg 1:7 (the city of payback); 2 Sam 24:24 (the city paid for); Zeph 3:1 (the city of financial exploitation—paying and paying more). See further M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 234, also 189–92, 204–7. Any play in the internal rhyme between MT יְרוּשָׁלַם and כְּפָלִים is serendipitous, since the dual-sounding ending for Jerusalem seems not to have existed until the late Second Temple period; see the data in Y. Elitzur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land—Preservation and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes/Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 283–90; sixth-century B.C.E. cave graffiti: יהוה אלהי כל הארץ הרי יהד לו/יהדה לאלהי ירושלם (S. Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* [Jerusalem: Carta, 2008], 210); and possibly Hasmonean jar-handles stamped ירושלם (E. Bocher and O. Lipschits, "The yršlm Stamp Impressions on Jar Handles: Distribution, Chronology, Iconography and Function," *Tel Aviv* 40 [2013], 99–116 [esp. 100–4, also 107, 110–11]).

simple future, a more objective, predictive language that tends towards greater separation.

כָּל-גִּיאַ יִנְשֵׂא וְכָל-הַר וְגִבְעָה יִשְׁפָּלוּ  
וְהָיָה הָעֵקֶב לְמִישׁוֹר וְהָרְקָסִים לְבִקְעָה

*Jussive*

*Future*

Every gully be raised

Every gully will be raised,

and every mount and mound be flattened!

and every mount and mound will be flattened,

Let the hilly become flatland

The hilly will become flatland

and the crags a broad valley!

and the crags a broad valley.<sup>70</sup>

In the next clause, v. 5a, the voice gradually further disambiguates itself through several shifts in form and signals in topic. It continues the verb-initial word-order and the *waw*-initial verb-form of v. 4b, combines it with the passive verbal stem of v. 4a, and applies it to the significant topic of “appearing”: וְנִגְלָהּ. It then names the verb’s significant subject, “glory,” in the construct state: כְּבוֹד, which signals a governing topic still to come. Finally, naming the unbound noun, it makes explicit third-person reference to Yahweh and—command in such circumstance being wholly inappropriate—thereby delimits the entire clause as the prediction, or the certain knowledge, that Yahweh will appear in all his glory: וְנִגְלָהּ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה. In v. 5b, in the first instance of the voice’s own syntactical and logical complexity, specifically, a subordinate clause that expresses confident knowledge of the cognitive content of others, the voice states: וְרָאוּ כָּל-בָּשָׂר יַחְדָּו: כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר (“And all flesh will see together that the mouth of Yahweh has spoken”).<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> “Desert” in v. 3a corresponds to “dunes” in v. 3b, and also to “gully,” “mount and mound,” “the hilly,” and “the crags” in v. 4. At the same time, due to its place at the head of the clause, the audience first encounters it as if it locates the calling voice: “A voice is calling *in the desert*.” As the site of pre-creation, of chaos, it serves particularly well to trope geographically the creation-like crystallization of figures; on the motif, see Talmon, “The Desert Motif,” 226–45 (esp. 230–31, 239–41). Probably, the rhythm and intonation of the complete clause, and surely the parallel clause that follows, create a second impression that reorients the desert as the location of Yahweh’s path.

<sup>71</sup> Tur-Sinai (*Peshuto Shel Mikra*, 107) suggests reconstructing הָדוּ in place of יַחְדָּו: to help account for LXX τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (“the salvation of [i.e., by] our God”). But the adverb functions well as a motif within the theme of legal dealings that characterizes this opening passage, and it recurs with this sense in 41:1; 20, 23; 43:9; 45:16, 20, 21; also 43:26; 44:11; 45:8 and in expanded usage in 41:19; 43:17; 46:2; 48:13; also 42:14. On the legal connotation of the term, see S.E. Holtz, “The Case for Adversarial *yahad*,”

Still, even as it comes into its own, the voice inflects itself with notes of divine speech for a fleeting moment in which its most assertive clause briefly invites anticipatory conclusion with reference to itself—“that פִּי My mouth [has spoken]”—before it invokes its true author: “that פִּי יְהוָה Yahweh’s mouth has spoken.”<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, given that the herald has denoted the voice a voice, when the voice invokes the trope of a mouth, it creates an ambiguity as to whether it means to apply the trope directly to Yahweh—Yahweh is a mouth and what issues from it is the voice—or to itself as the instrument through which voicing happens. The effect keeps the complete disambiguation, personification, and crystallization of distinct full-fledged entities at bay.

The reference to the mouth elegantly rounds off the direct quote of the voice as a transition to the framing quoter. In v. 6a, the framing quoter of the mediating voice again comes forward to denote “a voice” קוֹל. In this instance, however, the framing quoter perceives the voice to direct itself with greater focus: the quoter describes the voice as “saying” rather than “calling” קוֹל אָמַר, while in the quotation, the voice commands a single addressee rather than a plurality and moreover transfers to the addressee the responsibility of calling: קוֹל אָמַר קְרָא (“A voice is saying: ‘Call!’”). This perception of focus may draw on the immediately preceding trope of the mouth, and perhaps suggests also a spatial trope of the voice having drawn closer to the quoter.

At this pivotal point the manuscript tradition diverges. According to texts that read here “And I said” (1QIsa<sup>a</sup> וְאָוֹמְרָה; LXX καὶ εἶπα), the quoter says of himself that he replied to the voice, “What shall I proclaim?” (מָה אֶקְרָא). Namely, the quoter understood the voice to have addressed him in particular and to have charged him with the responsibility to call.<sup>73</sup> According to the MT, which

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VT 59 (2009), 211–21.

<sup>72</sup> Citing Isa 1:20; 58:14; Mic 4:4, S. Luzzatto argues the final words represent the typical prophetic exclamation, “for Yahweh’s mouth has spoken,” rather than, as MT indicates, the content of what the people together will see (*Commentary to the Book of Isaiah* [Padua: Bianchi, 1855; repr. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1970], 302 [Hebrew]). In this case, the words could belong to the framing quoter.

<sup>73</sup> What the quoter says he replied to the voice, מָה אֶקְרָא, is ambiguous; how one hears it has implications for the speaker and meaning of vv. 6b–8. The question can be the simple one, “What shall I call?” In this case, the content of vv. 6b–8 represents the reply of the voice, and the reply might mean that everything on the earth and happening on it undergoes change because the earth has a manager with a plan, Yahweh (כִּי רוּחַ יְהוָה נִשְׁבְּהָ בּוֹ), whereas Yahweh’s will is invulnerable and irreversible (דְּבַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ יָקוּם). The remark aims to console, bespeaking change for the better for the nation of Jerusalem; note the empathetic echo of אֱלֹהֵינוּ from v. 1. The voice continues its reply in v. 9 through the end of chapter 48, citing Yahweh’s message. Alternatively, the question in v. 6a could be a rhetorical one, “What would I call?” In this case, vv. 6b–8 could belong to the

reads here וַאֲמַר “And *it* said,” the framing quoter does not report on himself that he replied to the voice, but rather continues reporting on the voice and conveys that the voice held counsel with itself and mused aloud, “What shall I proclaim?” In this novel understanding of MT, the author has drawn on two elements known from biblical lore and developed them in a unique manner: the idea of a divine council in which figures of different standing have voice<sup>74</sup> and the penchant in biblical narrative for representing internal thought as externalized direct speech.<sup>75</sup> The effect conveys that the quoter has overheard a message of great significance and inferred that he now has the responsibility to repeat it.<sup>76</sup>

In both versions, the framing quoter employs an unambiguous past tense form, which establishes his retrospective point of view; he recounts an event from his past. It is worthwhile to propose that originally the text had no declined verb but rather the participle again: \*וַאֲמַר (“And it is saying”). In this reading, which matches the consonantal base of MT, the text conveys more clearly that the voice deliberates with itself. In addition, the effect has the framing quoter quoting the voice in real time, as it were, as he hears it: Yahweh has articulate will, a partially personified voice gives it definition and volume (in both senses of spatiality and audibility), and a human transmitter, a herald, amplifies it for a human audience, and this communication happens not as temporally distinct events of verbalization (and repetition), but as a single process of verbalization of growing volume that happens along a continuum—with some reverberation, echo, and feedback (as can occur when one shouts across a valley or through a tunnel).

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speaker, who expresses the futility of making any pronouncements, since Yahweh is inscrutable (in this direction, see S.A. Geller, “Were the Prophets Poets?” *Prooftexts* 3 [1983], 211–21 [217])—a version of the motif of demurral at divine commissioning in other biblical texts (on which see Habel, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” and compare his own interpretation of these verses, 314–16). More or less ignoring the question, the voice begins the speech in v. 9.

<sup>74</sup> The lying spirit in 1 Kgs 22; the opposer in Job 1–2; Yahweh and El in Ps 82; also the seraphs in Isa 6.

<sup>75</sup> Gen 1:26; 2:18; 3:22; 6:3, 7. On this feature see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (revised edition; New York: Basic Books, 2011), 79–110 (esp. 84–86).

<sup>76</sup> On the motif of overhearing divine speech generally, see M. Weinfeld, “‘Partition, Partition; Wall, Wall, Listen’: ‘Leaking’ the Divine Secret to Someone Behind the Curtain,” *AJO* 44–45 (1997–1998), 222–25. For the notion of prophets overhearing divine speech, see Rashi’s comment on the Masoretic *hitpa’el* pointing of מְדַבֵּר at Num 7:89 (C.B. Chavel [ed.], *The Comments of Rashi on the Torah* [Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1983], 429 [Hebrew]). Caspi cleverly identified all the words וַאֲמַר מָה אֶקְרָא as those of the framing quoter, who reports about the voice that “it then said what I should say”—the contents of which commence in v. 6b.

After this point the manuscript traditions converge again, and in what continues (by v. 9, anyway)<sup>77</sup> the framing quoter directly quotes the mediating voice that articulates Yahweh's thought and will. This arrangement continues through the end of the entire text—along with a certain amount of blending or lack of differentiation.<sup>78</sup>

This construction of the voice as a partially personified agent of Yahweh occurs in Ps 29, another text beating with the forces and motifs of creation. In that text, the voice of Yahweh (קול יהוה) grows in agency as the text goes. First, it is the subject in prepositional clauses of states of being (v. 3, על־הַמַּיִם “is over the waters,” v. 4, בְּהַדָּר . . . בְּכֹחַ “is in power . . . is in glory”), then in participial clauses of states of action (v. 5, שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים “smashing cedars,” v. 7, חֹצֵב חֲצָב לְהַבֹּת אֵשׁ “splitting with flashes of fire”), then with transitive verbs (v. 8, יְחַלֵּל מְדָבָר “makes the wilderness quake,” v. 9, יְחַלֵּל אֵילֹת וַיַּחֲשֹׁף יַעֲרוֹת “makes the doe writhe and exposes the forests”).<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> See n. 73 above.

<sup>78</sup> Through 40:31 the text continues the process of imperfectly differentiating and arranging Yahweh's speech and the voice that articulates it. In vv. 9–24 the speech consistently refers to Yahweh in the third person. This formulation establishes the perspective of the voice. At the same time, already in v. 2 Yahweh referred to himself in the third person; additionally, in v. 25a Yahweh speaks in the first person and begins his speech with the conjunction וַ as if he has been speaking immediately beforehand. In v. 25b the voice returns to highlight Yahweh's speech as mediated (compare v. 1b), and vv. 26–31 consistently refer to Yahweh in the third person again. In 41:1 Yahweh's first-person speech returns and continues with occasional third-person (self-)references (vv. 16, 20). In v. 21 the voice returns only to frame Yahweh's speech (compare 40:1, 25), which for a brief spell alternates between first person singular and plural references (with the usual ambiguities; compare Gen 1:26). In 42:5 the voice offers its first formal introduction to a coming direct quote of Yahweh. After this point, strong ambiguities or blending of speaker-markers occur again in 42:21–43:1a and 48:1–2. In 42:21–24a Yahweh's speech consistently refers to Yahweh in the third person, which makes it sound as if the voice has taken over mid-speech. In 42:24b, the phrase זוֹ הִטָּאֲנוּ לֹ “whom we have offended” interjected by the herald, but Yahweh peppers his speech with the speaker-markers of the voice. In 48:1–2, the complete statement refers to Yahweh in the third person like the voice would, and the concluding clause sounds like it belongs to the herald (compare 47:4). The effect of Yahweh occasionally speaking in the patterns that mark a distinct voice highlights the derivative, dependent, and not fully differentiated nature of that voice.

<sup>79</sup> For analysis of the poetics of Ps 29, especially its rhythm, with

Consistent with the fuller force and character attributed to the voice in Ps 29, and along the lines of the triple conceit of wind as 1) breath, 2) an element of voice and speech, and 3) an animate manifestation of will,<sup>80</sup> the herald of Isa 40–48 seems to have the voice and mouth of 40:1–6 in mind when, at the very other end of the quotation, in 48:16b, he finally musters the courage to declare of himself with conviction—**וְעַתָּה** (“Now then!”)—that a direct commissioning has taken place: **אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי וְרוּחוֹ** (“my Lord Yahweh has sent me together with his spirit”).<sup>81</sup> The awkward deployment of **וְרוּחוֹ** (“together with his spirit”) within the statement, after a suffixed direct object **שְׁלַחְנִי** (“has-sent-me”) and without the direct object marker (**אֶת**), creates an ambiguous or double reading that in effect expresses the double role of the figure as both receiver and transmitter, as mediator. In one reading, Yahweh together with his spirit sent the herald; in the other, Yahweh sent his spirit as well as the herald.<sup>82</sup> In yet a third possibility, the conjunction functions as the explicative and “his spirit” refers to the herald himself—“Yahweh has commissioned me, namely, his spirit”—which yields a triad of Yahweh (namely, divine will), voice (the **קוֹל** of 40:3, 6), and spirit (the herald). This ambiguity regarding “his spirit”—or the ambivalence regarding the prophet—recurs in a strikingly similar passage, **זֶכַח 7:12**, **אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְאֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַח יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּרוּחוֹ בְּיַד הַנְּבִיאִים הָרְאשֹׁנִים** (“the instruction and the matters that Yahweh of Legions sent by his spirit, by way of the prophets of old”), in which “his spirit” may either mediate between Yahweh and

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particular attention to the role of **קוֹל**, see F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Biblical Poetry: “Verse, Properly So Called”* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), chapter 2.

<sup>80</sup> See the entire discussion of S. Tengström, “רוּחַ,” *TDOT* 13:372–95.

<sup>81</sup> Similar to **רוּחַ** as “breath, animated breath, spirit,” an expression of divine will, and an agent of its materialization and realization is the rumination on **דְּבָר** “speech, thing, matter” of Isa 55:10–11.

<sup>82</sup> So also Goldingay-Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:143–44; contra H.-J. Hermisson, *Deuterijosaja. 2. Teilband: Jesaja 45,8–49,13* (BKAT, XI/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 282. For **רוּחַ** as mediating entity, see 1 Kgs 22:1–28a. The root **שלח** connotes commissioning in related texts: Isa 6:8; Jer 1:7; Ezek 2:3; Hag 1:12–13; Zech 2:13, 15; 4:9; 6:15. Also relevant is the piece of discourse that appears in both Jer 10:12–16 and 51:15–19 within larger texts closely related to the message and themes of Isa 40–48. Scholars have proposed varied textual scenarios to explain the clause (see Tur-Sinai, *Peshuto Shel Mikra*, 125; Torrey, *The Second Isaiah*, 378; I.L. Seeligmann, “Indications of Alteration and Adaptation in the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint,” *VT* 11 [1961], 201–21 [213 n. 1]; K. Elliger and W. Rudolph [eds.], *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* [Stuttgart: Bibelstiftung, 1977]; and Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 294), but LXX and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> match MT (as does *Tg. Jon.*), and this kind of solution seems unnecessary. Speech may contain imperfect grammar due to heightened emotion or a sudden change in thought, and authors may deploy it in the speech of their characters for any of a variety of purposes.

the prophets of old or stand in apposition with the prophets old and define them as Yahweh's animate breath.

To summarize this detailed reading of the opening passage of Isa 40–48, the author of the text has set it up so that a set of three verbalizing figures progressively materializes and takes shape against an undefined background, and has coordinated them with respect to each other as a series of voices citing voices. The herald (in blue) cites a voice (red) that speaks for Yahweh and articulates his will (black):

[ ] : " נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי יֹאמֵר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם דַּבְּרוּ עַל־לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 וְקִרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ כִּי מְלֹאָה צָבָאָה כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ כִּי לָקְחָה  
 מִיַּד יְהוָה כַּפְּלַיִם בְּכָל־חַטָּאתֶיהָ "   
 קוֹל קוֹרֵא: "בְּמִדְבָּר פְּנוּ דֶרֶךְ יְהוָה יִשְׂרוּ בְּעֵרְבָה מְסֻלָּה לְאֵלֵהֵינוּ  
 כָּל־גֵּיא יִנְשָׂא וְכָל־הַר וְגִבְעָה יִשְׁפֹּלוּ  
 וְהָיָה הָעֵקֶב לְמִישׁוֹר וְהָרְכָסִים לְבִקְעָה  
 וְגִגְלֵה כְּבוֹד יְהוָה וְרָאוּ כָל־בָּשָׂר יַחְדָּו כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר"  
 קוֹל אָמַר: "קֵרֵא"  
 וְ[אָמַר]: "מָה אֶקְרֵא"

[ ]: " 'Console, console, my people,' says your  
 God,  
 'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call  
 to her,  
 For her work is complete,  
 For her offense has been settled,  
 For she has received from Yahweh's hand  
 twofold for all her sins.' "

A voice is calling: "In the desert clear the path of Yahweh!  
 Level through the dunes a road for our  
 God!  
 Every gully be raised and every mound  
 and mound be flattened!  
 Let the hilly become flatland and the crags  
 a broad valley!  
 And the glory of Yahweh will appear,  
 And all flesh will see together that the  
 mouth of Yahweh has spoken."

A voice is saying: "Call!"

And [it is saying]: "What shall I call?"

At the same time, the three figures do not undergo truly complete and permanent disambiguation and personification. At different points they echo each other, overlap with each other, and blend into

each other.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, as opposed to three distinct speech events, they happen as a single event in process, as a sound system. The indirect relationship between Yahweh and the herald, on the one hand, and the porous boundaries between all three figures, on the other, defy all claims to certainty based on faculties, unmediated communication, experience, and knowledge.

Comparison with prophetic materials such as Isa 6 and Ezek 1 sheds light on the kinds of conventions and conceptions that make up the background of the author of Isa 40–48 and on the level of deliberateness that went into crafting the frame and opening of the text. Like the speaker of Isa 40–48, the figures in those texts hear voices (Isa 6:3, 8; Ezek 1:28–2:2), but unlike the speaker of Isa 40–48, they can also identify the source with specificity and certainty because they can see it. Indeed, they purposefully call attention to this level of direct interaction and highlight it as a feature of their unique visionary experience.

*Isa 6:1, 6*

... וַאֲרָאָה אֶת אֲדֹנָי  
כִּי אֶת הַמַּלְאָךְ יְהוָה  
עֲבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי

*I saw the Lord . . .*

for the king Yahweh  
of Legions

did my own eyes see!

*Ezekel 1:1, 4, 27, 28*

... וַאֲרָאָה מְרֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים . . .  
וַאֲרָא . . . וַאֲרָא . . .  
רָאִיתִי . . . הוּא מְרֵאָה  
דְּמֹת קְבוֹד יְהוָה וַאֲרָאָה

*I saw visions divine . . . I  
saw . . . I saw . . . I  
saw . . .*

It was the sight of the  
figure of the glory of  
Yahweh,

*and I saw!*

The figures in Isa 6 and Ezek 1 draw their power from the temple and are locked into its notions. For both, the imagery of artwork and liturgy comes to life in fiery winged attendants and an animate chariot that harnesses, indeed is composed of, the elemental forces and figures of the cosmos. Similarly, Ezekiel receives an inscribed scroll from Yahweh's outstretched hand and eats it (2:8–3:3). In

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<sup>83</sup> It is uncertain that the phenomenon is entirely unique to textuality. See the presentation—a first-person account in a text—of an anthropologist's interaction with multiple spirits (i.e., distinct animating wills and personas) speaking from and acting with the same single body, in J. Wafer, *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). The representation for the English-speaking anthropology-reading audience takes place in a text with all due use of textual features, but the work does aim to convey the embedded place a living society can have for multiple voices and personas issuing from a single body.

another prophetic text, Jeremiah accepts from Yahweh's hand a cup filled with a potion and receives instructions where to take it, who must drink from it, and what he must pronounce at the time (25:15–29). In all these texts, the prophetic speaker displays a strong sense of self and physically interacts in the experience described.

The case of Ezekiel, just a few decades earlier, is particularly instructive. According to the frame of the book, Ezekiel had prophetic visions, messages, and experiences in Nippur<sup>84</sup> for years while the temple in Jerusalem stood (1:1–33:20) but also for well more than a decade after it fell (33:21–48:35), from 593 to 571 B.C.E., without change in his prophetic means.<sup>85</sup> A priest in exile along with his native king Jehoiachin—who seems long to have resided in Babylon and enjoyed Babylonian patronage there<sup>86</sup>—Ezekiel suffuses and inflects his conceptions and imagery of the divine with temple lore, and he envisions not only the full restoration of the temple (40:1–47:12) but also that of the royal house (34:20–31; 37).<sup>87</sup> Just a few decades later, coming of age without the grounding—the proof—provided by temple and related structures and concepts of divine locality and presence, the author of Isa 40–48 constructs a disembodied, unlocalized, non-personified, mediating voice for its message and presents the herald as accepting its truth through sheer will, through willingness and conviction alone.<sup>88</sup>

At one point in the text, Yahweh asks rhetorically, “Who is blind if not my servant? Deaf if not the messenger I send?” (42:19). If Yahweh does not allude to the main character of his story, Jacob-Israel,<sup>89</sup> and if he does not refer to the agent who carries out his plot, Cyrus,<sup>90</sup> then, in a moment when the highly mediated

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<sup>84</sup> On the location of Chebar in the vicinity of Nippur, see H.O. Thompson, “Chebar,” *ABD* 1:893.

<sup>85</sup> Compare 40:1–5 with chaps. 8–11; also see 43:1–6 and compare it with chaps. 1–3.

<sup>86</sup> See “Varia,” translated by A.L. Oppenheim (*ANET* 308) D.W. Thomas, *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper Row, 1961), 84–86; compare 2 Kgs 25:27–30 = Jer 52:31–34.

<sup>87</sup> However, manifold problems regarding the history of the work make it a tenuous source; compare W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (trans. R.E. Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1979), 1–16, 24–25, 52–74; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* (AB 22; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 3–17; R. Kasher, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Mikra Leyisra'el; Tel Aviv: Am Oved/Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004), 1:12–28 (Hebrew); Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 3:7–10, 274–383.

<sup>88</sup> Compare Volz, *Jesaja II*, 2 on 40:1.

<sup>89</sup> So Joseph Kara, Eliezer of Beaugency, Isaiah di Trani, Joseph Caspi; and almost all moderns. In favor of this view, Yahweh refers to the nation as his servant beforehand in 41:8–9 and afterwards in 43:10; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 48:20. He calls them blind immediately beforehand in 42:16. The idea that they proclaim him and his message appears in 43:10, 21; 44:5, 8; 48:20.

<sup>90</sup> In favor of this unattested view, Yahweh seems to call Cyrus his servant close beforehand in 42:1–8 (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 209–11). In this

Yahweh comes intriguingly close to the frame of the text, he may be describing the one who outlines the plot for all to comprehend, his herald.<sup>91</sup> After having challenged his addressees to enable themselves by accepting his story, his authorship (v. 18),<sup>92</sup> Yahweh remarks that if anyone is blind, deaf, and uncomprehending, it is his servant, his messenger, and yet this messenger accepts the story and heralds it. None is as impaired as he,<sup>93</sup> and if he can be made to perceive, surely so can all others. If the herald can grasp the speech of Yahweh, surely they can hear the voice of the herald.

The fully impaired herald who can hear and transmit the right story stands in marked contrast with that most excellent and able-bodied of humans, the conquering king, who misreads historical events and fails to identify their author.<sup>94</sup> The herald also stands as the antithesis to the permanent personnel in attendance on the deity at temples—Judean קרְבִי and Mesopotamian *ērib ekalli/ērib bitī*<sup>95</sup>—who must have physical wholeness.<sup>96</sup> Why, though, would Yahweh characterize his herald as *more* impaired than all others?<sup>97</sup>

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reading, Yahweh tells his blind and deaf addressees of v. 18 that there is none more oblivious to Yahweh than Cyrus (vv. 19–20), yet he still fulfills his will—all to the greater glory of Yahweh (vv. 21); by implication, the addressees, who know about Yahweh, should know better.

<sup>91</sup> In favor of this view, see the combination of servant, messenger, and fulfillment, regarding the restoration of Jerusalem, in 44:26 (while Cyrus serves as the agent of fulfillment, not its herald, in v. 28); see Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 130; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 28; Raphael, *Biblical Corpora*, 122–25. (On the basis of 44:26 one should resist emending מְשַׁלַח (י) to מְשַׁלֵּם [proposed by Ehrlich, *Mikra Kijshuto*, 3:93–94]; compare Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 1.161.) Also, the emphatic 3d masc. sing. pronoun הוּא that introduces the description of the nation in vv. 22, 24–25 suggests a shift in topic. If Yahweh in this verse does refer to the herald, then the text has the herald citing the voice that quotes Yahweh who refers to the herald as accepting his message. In this reading the text comes close to violating its frame and creating a self-contradiction, but it does not necessarily do so, for the premise may be that Yahweh formulates his speeches aware of the herald's presence and therefore takes into account the herald's frame of mind. Rimmon-Kenan illustrates and discusses the transgression of levels of narrators in narrative (*Narrative Fiction*, 95–96), namely, one can judge it as part of the deliberate artistry of the author rather than automatically and inherently a failure. Worth noting, Ibn Ezra and David Kimḥi understand Yahweh to quote in indirect speech what the people say about the prophet. For an example of a clear contradiction of the frame, note how Moses in his speech refers to the speech as a written record of his speech, in Deut 28:58, 61.

<sup>92</sup> All the Jewish Medieval commentators and almost all moderns understand Yahweh to address Israel in v. 18 (and v. 23); see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 218. Luzzatto holds that Yahweh addresses the nations (*Commentary*, 315). Watts, in his way, includes the idols (*Isaiah 34–66*, 135).

<sup>93</sup> So too Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 130–31.

<sup>94</sup> On the abled king, see Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible*, 73–87.

<sup>95</sup> See Lev 10:3; Ezek 42:13; 43:19; also 40:46; A.L. Oppenheim,

Biblical materials suggest that the author means to activate a motif prevalent in prophetic figures—impairment, whether in form or in functionality. For example, in the story of Elisha’s graduation from attending student to independent master, he demonstrates gradual mastery of the potency in Yahweh’s name by using fewer and fewer mediums or aids to effect things (2 Kgs 2).<sup>98</sup> In the final stage,

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“erēbu,” “ērib bīti,” and “ērib ekalli,” in I.J. Gelb *et al.* (eds.), *Assyrian Dictionary* (21 vols.; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Oriental Institute, 1958), 4:252, §1c 1’–3’, 290–292.

<sup>96</sup> See Lev 21:16–24; C. Waerzeggers, and M. Jursa, “On the Initiation of Babylonian Priests,” *ZABR* 14 (2008), 1–38 (4–6). Compare the notion of audience with the king (2 Sam 5:6 and 8). Along these lines one might view the disdain by god and by king for imperfect animals given as gifts (Lev 22:17–25; Mal 1:6–14; C. Waerzeggers, “The Babylonian Priesthood in the Long Sixth Century BC,” *BICS* 54 [2011], 59–70 [61–62]). The קָרִיִּים who appears alongside the foreigner בְּנֵי־הַנֶּכֶר in Isa 56:3–7 and who elsewhere holds a significant place in royal officialdom has a separate, complicated, and still-debated history; see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (2 vols.; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1:121; S. Yeivin in U. Cassuto *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (9 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1950–1989), 6:554 (Hebrew); R. North, “Palestine, Administration of: Postexilic Judean Officials,” *ABD* 5:87; S. Dalley, “Review of Mattila, *The King’s Magnates* (State Archives of Assyria Studies, Vol. XI), State Archives of Assyria Project, Helsinki, 2000,” *BibOr* 58 (2001), 197–206; idem, “The Evolution of Gender in Mesopotamian Mythology and Iconography with a Possible Explanation of ša rēšēn, ‘The Man with Two Heads,’” in S. Parpola and R.M. Whiting (eds.), *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001* (2 vols.; Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 1:117–22; L.R. Siddall, “A Re-examination of the Title ŠA-RĒŠĪ in the Neo-Assyrian Period,” in J. Azize and N. Weeks (eds.), *Gilgameš and the World of Assyria: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Mandelbaum House, the University of Sydney, 21–23 July, 2004* (Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement, 21; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 225–40; T.M. Lemos, “‘Like the eunuch who does not beget’: Gender, Mutilation, and Negotiated Status in the Ancient Near East,” in Moss and Schipper, *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, 47–66 (see especially the bibliography on p. 60 n. 5), though she does not distinguish between males born with perceptibly incomplete or ineffectual organs and castrated males; her analysis invites comparison to the slave, in particular the marked slave, and to usage of the term עֶבֶד.

<sup>97</sup> The few other instances of the motif appear in Isa 29:18; 35:5; 56:10; Jer 31:8—all, on other grounds, arguably related in one way or another to this author, as his source material, his own material, or later reuse of his material.

<sup>98</sup> As seen by Y. Zakovitch (“‘Go Up, Baldy! Go Up, Baldy!’ Exegetical Circles in Biblical Narrative,” *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 8 [1985], 7–23 [14–16], [Hebrew]), Elisha retraces the journey he had just taken with Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho, across the Jordan river—which Elijah split for them (vv. 1–8) and they conversed about Elisha’s final request (vv. 9–10)—to the place where Elijah ascended to the heavens and Elisha successfully watched (vv. 11–12). First, Elisha splits the Jordan holding Elijah’s mantle, striking the water, and pronouncing the names of both Elijah and Yahweh (vv. 13–14). Then, in Jericho, he takes a previously

as he labors up the hill from Jericho (v. 23), a city he has just saved from starvation (vv. 18–22), a pack of youths—a pre-socialized class of human beings guaranteed to zero in precisely on a person’s physically minor but culturally exaggerated imperfection and shout it out—such youths ungratefully taunt Elisha for his baldness (v. 23); Elisha casts them a glance, utters Yahweh’s name, and unleashes or rather directs at them the forces of chaos: two bears emerge from the woods and tear apart forty-two of them (v. 24). The story highlights the pairing of malformation devalued and treated as deformity, on the one hand, and ultra-ability, on the other. More pointedly, it is precisely the unwarranted, devaluing attention given to the one that excites the extreme, value-reclaiming manifestation of the other.<sup>99</sup>

In other examples, Moses demurs at his commissioning due to having a “heavy mouth and tongue”; Yahweh retorts that he who creates all forms of impairment will be “with his mouth” (Exod 4:10–12).<sup>100</sup> Jeremiah at his commissioning complains that he barely knows how to talk, but Yahweh dismisses the fact, touches his mouth, and says he has put his words into it; to actualize and demonstrate the fact, Yahweh has Jeremiah see, describe, and thereby determine—twice, as Joseph would say (Gen 41:32), so that Jeremiah know it is true and imminent (Jer 1:4–19; compare Ezek 12:21–28). Balaam, famed for perfect efficacy of speech (Num 22:1–6), describes impairment of eye and leg during prophetic activity (24:3–4, 15–16)<sup>101</sup>—a state put to use by Samuel, according to one author,

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uncharged element, salt, throws it, and pronounces only Yahweh’s name, and thereby refreshes the water (vv. 19–22). Finally, on his way up from Jericho to Bethel, he unleashes his power at the unruly youths taunting him: with no medium at all but the minimal action and contact of a glance and the pronunciation of Yahweh’s name, Elisha calls forth the bears who tear the youths apart (vv. 23–24). On Elisha’s glance, see A. Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories: Narratives about the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible—Their Literary Types and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 17; on the significance of the glance for Balaam and Ezekiel, see Haran, *The Biblical Collection*, 3:345–346. Compare Rofé’s analysis of the Elisha stories and their general character (*The Prophetic Stories*, 13–51 [esp. 13–19]).

<sup>99</sup> Zakovitch infers that Elisha huffs and puffs his way up that long, steep hill from Jericho that any author familiar with the terrain would know about, and this is what triggers the youths to taunt him (“Exegetical Circles,” 16). Schipper points out that the term for baldness, קָרַח, is formed on the noun-pattern used for characteristics generally and for impairments in particular: פֶּסַח יָד, אֵטָר יָד, גִּבּוֹן, אֵלִים, עוֹר, חֲרָשׁ, עוֹר, אֵלִים, גִּבּוֹן, אֵטָר יָד, פֶּסַח יָד (*Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible*, 65–69). Samson’s long hair (Judg 13–16) would fall under a different category than malformation; see G. Mobley, “The Wild Man in the Bible and the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 116 (1997), 217–33.

<sup>100</sup> For the argument that the expression here and the one in 6:12, 30 refer to a physical condition rather than degree of eloquence, see J.H. Tigay, “‘Heavy of Mouth’ and ‘Heavy of Tongue’ on Moses’ Speech Difficulty,” *BASOR* 231 (1978), 57–67. (Thanks to Shalom Holtz for this reference.)

<sup>101</sup> Balaam’s inability to see what his donkey sees, the divine agent brandishing a sword (22:22–35), belongs to a different phenomenon, not the

to protect David from Saul (1 Sam 19:18–24). As a class, prophets typically exhibit uncouth, unruly, and even violent behavior, allowing one to brand them demented, even if in jest or condemnatory hyperbole (2 Kgs 9:1–13; Jer 29:24–29).

In the case of Ezekiel, a visual encounter so impairs him, that a spirit must hold him up (Ezek 2:2), a voice kind of talks at him (v. 1, דב"ר אָת; v. 2, מְדַבֵּר אֵל), and a hand literally feeds him Yahweh's bitter words on a sweet scroll (2:8–3:4).<sup>102</sup> Through a regimen of bizarre activities and behavior, he will mount a relentless assault on all manner of sense and sensibility—sight, speech and sound, smell, touch, taste, and more (3:15, 24–27; 4:4–12; 5:1; 6:1–4, 11; 7:5–6; 12:2–7; 21:11–12).<sup>103</sup> Barred from replying to the Judeans in Babylonia who seek Yahweh's words (3:24–27; further: 24:25–27 and 33:21–22), shown the death of those in Jerusalem and pleading ineffectually to stop it (9:8–11), and even killing with Yahweh's words those in Jerusalem he has come to observe (11:13), Ezekiel has lost complete control over his power of communication. The prophet dragged places, directed where to look and what to note, and called derisively “human” (בְּנוֹ אָדָם) bitterly resents his degrading lack of agency and control, his persona as disabled priest: נְאֻלֵד מֵרַע (3:14)—a persona encoded already in his very name: בְּנוֹ בְּנוֹי, the son, or the embodiment, of scorn (1:3),<sup>104</sup> and יְחֻקָּאֵל, the one forced by God, because Yahweh's hand rode him hard: וַיִּדְּיָהוּהָ עָלַי חֻקָּה (3:14).

Finally, a fine line distinguishes the clever locutions, the elegant turns of phrase, the lofty tropics of prophetic discourse, from inscrutable tongue-twisters and incomprehensible babble—a line exploited more than once in biblical literature. For instance, in Isa 28:7–22, divine instruction will sound like the mindless repetition of meaning-

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styling of prophets as a class as impaired, but the cutting of a particular prophet down to size; compositionally, it belongs to an interpolation that turned the story of the efficacious foreign prophet controlled by Yahweh into a burlesque. See A. Rofé, “The Book of Balaam” (*Numbers 22:2–24:25*): *A Study in Methods of Criticism and the History of Biblical Literature and Religion* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1979), 49–57 (Hebrew), and compare 1 Sam 16:1–13, in which Yahweh tells Samuel in no uncertain terms that he will tell him what to do (v. 3; compare Num 22:30), Samuel the seer (see 1 Sam 9:19 “I am the seer!”) publicly mis-sees repeatedly (16:6–11), and the narrative turns on the keyword רָא “to see” (vv. 1, 6, 7 [4x], 12: seven instances). On the ironic portrayals of Samuel, Balaam, and prophetic figures generally in the context of the relationship between the narrator in biblical narrative and divine omniscience, see Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 84–99.

<sup>102</sup> Note the similarity and development between Ezek 3:7–9 and Jer 1:17–19; see especially Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, 50–58. Greenberg notes the similarity between Ezekiel's commission and the Priestly procedure for the suspected adulteress in Num 5:11–31, both of which involve eating a text (*Ezekiel 1–20*, 78).

<sup>103</sup> Compare Hos 1:2–9; 3:1–5; Isa 20:1–5; less dramatically, Jer 16:1–8.

<sup>104</sup> On בְּנוֹ denoting a characteristic: *BDB* 121 §8; Ben Yehuda, *Dictionary of Hebrew*, 1:561 §7; *HALOT* 1:138 §7.

less syllables, as by a child, a scribe in training, or a barbarian: צו לְצוֹ שָׁם זְעִיר שָׁם זְעִיר קוֹ לְקוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ. <sup>105</sup> And in Jer 23:9–40, the people will request divine word, מָה־מְשָׁא יְהוָה, “What be the word of Yahweh?” and their words will bounce back at them in mocking mimicry: אַת־מָה־מְשָׁא “What the word?” (v. 33). <sup>106</sup>

Prophets, then, people unusually enabled, or valued as able, often also figure as somehow impaired. <sup>107</sup> If in Isa 42:19 Yahweh

<sup>105</sup> Whether or not MT accurately preserves the original syllabification and word division, the unusual vowel pointing suggests the Masoretes understood the passage as a concatenation of senseless syllables. From the context of the running discourse, the clauses in vv. 11 and 13b confirm that the Masoretes got the thrust of the passage right, which expresses either that the drunk willfully fail to comprehend the prophecies they receive, or, like the idea in 6:9–12, that Yahweh will make prophecy completely unas-similable in order to bring about utter ruin (contra J.A. Emerton, “Some Difficult Words in Isaiah 28.10 and 13,” in A. Rapaport-Albert and G. Greenberg [eds.], *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 39–56, [39]). The sound-play and potential homonymy in the correlations with קִיא צָאָה in v.8 thicken the viciousness of the critique—all the drunks understand is vomit and waste—but do not affect the basic thrust and meaning of the statement as a whole. The presence of Assyrian barkings (A. van Selms, “Isaiah 28:9–13: An Attempt to Give a New Interpretation,” *ZAW* 85 [1973], 332–39 [333–34, 336–38]) would work in the same way for the benefit of the reader or audience of the text, by adding to the string of syllables another relevant dimension of meaning—one the drunks would not understand (scholarly ignorance about how the author and the audience of the text may have come by Assyrian is beside the point and misses the point; contra Emerton, “Isaiah 28.10 and 13,” 48). Compare the opinions surveyed in B. Halpern, “‘The Excremental Vision’: The Doomed Priests of Doom in Isaiah 28,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986), 109–21; K. van der Toorn, “Echoes of Judean Necromancy in Isaiah 28,7–22,” *ZAW* 100 (1988), 199–216, 205–12; especially Emerton, idem, 43–56. On LXX as an attempt to make sense of the text, see Emerton, idem, 40–43; R.L. Troxel, *LXX-Isaiah as Translation and Interpretation: The Strategies of the Translator of the Septuagint of Isaiah* (JSJSup, 124; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 247–86 (esp. 250–52).

<sup>106</sup> Compare the tongue-twisters in Isa 24:16–23; Nah 2; 3; Hab 1–2, in which dense syllabic alliteration and snippets of alphabetic sequences arguably border on banality. See also Hos 9:7–8.

<sup>107</sup> This kind of deliberate inversion, in which the blind sees and the deaf-mute hears and reports, has a relevant correlation, if not a development, in traditions about Jesus. In one example, his leakiness serves as the very vehicle to cure a perpetually bleeding woman; in another, the wound in the side of his body flows with healing water. See C.R. Moss, “The Man with the Flow of Power: Porous Bodies in Mark 5:25–34,” *JBL* 129 (2010), 507–19 (esp. 511–18); idem, “Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church,” *JAR* (2011), 1–27 (esp. 12–13). In another direction, the herald’s description of the kind of physical forms of chastisement he had to endure to learn to serve as Yahweh’s mouthpiece, in Isa 50:4–6, could stand behind the figure of prophetic impairment, of Moses, Jeremiah, and perhaps also Isaiah (Isa 6:5–7), and draw on the discourse of teaching a student: until learned and accom-

speaks of his herald as more impaired than anyone else, the author may intend to have Yahweh maximize this figurative dimension, push the distinction between impairment and disability to its furthest limit, and challenge his audience over history and what lay ahead, over storytelling: None is as impaired as my herald, yet he hears and transmits the truth; you, who can hear him, must accept it too.<sup>108</sup>

To encapsulate the matter, one can plot the characters drawn by the author of Isa 40–48 on a graph of two axes, faculty and (valu)ability.<sup>109</sup> When it comes to telling the only story worth telling, the story of the author of history, the peoples of the earth are unimpaired but disabled; statues, idols, are impairment itself, but absurdly valued as able. Jacob-Israel is impaired and disabled, but will be repaired and enabled. The herald is impaired but enabled. Eventually, all will come to recognize that to which the herald gives voice, that Yahweh is unimpaired, fully able, and enabling; he is ability itself.

## V. ISAIAH 40–48 AND 49:1–6

The author of Isa 40–48 highlights the two themes of narrative explication and of impairment and ability, configures them with respect to each other, and presents them through the complexly mediated voice of an impassioned orator, all with knowing intent as a series of inversions that counter the classical forms of political, social and religious propaganda. Work in recent decades has championed narrative, the modern novel in particular, for the role of spoiler it can play to professional institutions that drily manage society and abuse it. Narrative, in the view behind this endeavor, humanizes and complicates the simplistic, reductive thought-processes and approaches of policy-makers, and serves effectively as a means by which to keep authority honest.<sup>110</sup> However, ancient narrative, in the

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plished, he is blind, deaf, mute, helpless, ineffectual, foolish, etc. All these cases of anomalous, boundary-crossing characters and their figuration stand in contrast to royal self-figuring, which, at the pinnacle of society and the heart of culture, projects paradigmatic modeling and perfection.

<sup>108</sup> In this direction, see R.P. Carroll, “Blindsight and the Vision Thing: Blindness and Insight in the Book of Isaiah,” in C.C. Broyles and C.A. Evans (eds.), *Writing & Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition, Volume 1* (NTSup, 70/FIOTL, 1; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 79–93 (88).

<sup>109</sup> Compare Raphael’s schematization of communication in the entire book of Isaiah (*Biblical Corpora*, 119–29).

<sup>110</sup> R. Cover, “Nomos and Narrative,” *Harvard Law Review* 97 (1983), 4–68; R. Delgado, “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative,” *Michigan Law Review* 87 (1989), 2411–41; M. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), but see especially her sophisticated treatment on p. 53–78; B. Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Stressing the novel’s inherent lack of a fixed moral position, or rather championing inquiry as its moral position (so Michael Fox, personal communication), is Kundera, *The*

clear, booming, richly embodied, self-assured voice of royalty and its interested constituencies, argues by means of seemingly linear logic in large-scale rubrics with neat and tidy packaging and a discourse of self-evident, foregone conclusions one has no reason even to consider, let alone question. Awesome accomplishments come from excellent people appointed by the greatest of deities to carry out grand and righteous plans that climax with those very accomplishments. Nothing anchors this voice, its claim, and its logic like the concrete temples of those very deities and the activities that make manifest their presence in them.<sup>111</sup> And ancient Judeans, in Babylon as in Judea, accepted the claim.

To counter this mode of persuasion as dependent entirely on human senses and faculties and as misleading, self-deluded, self-centered, and self-asserting, the author of Isa 40–48 composes its antithesis, a speech or set of speeches that lurches and cycles forward toward its conclusion, mediated by a multiplicity of voices and addressees. The variation and layering of the voices hold confident, precise identification and authority at bay.

The author gives the speaker of the text, the herald, mere traces of a profile: possibly, a conventional expression of resistance to his commissioning (40:6–8 according to 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and LXX); an interjection of shared guilt before Yahweh (see 42:24, **זוֹ הִטָּאֲנוּ לוֹ**); an interjection of pride in Yahweh (47:4, **גִּאֲלֵנוּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שָׁמוֹ קְדוֹשׁ**, **יִשְׂרָאֵל**); and to close, a pointed declaration of commissioning (48:16, **וְעֵתָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי וְרוּחוֹ**).

The mediating entity heard and repeated by the herald has a slightly thicker profile. It knows the will of Yahweh and articulates it, gives it voice (40:1b, **יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**; v. 25, **יֹאמֶר קְדוֹשׁ**; 41:21, **יֹאמֶר**; 48:22, **יֹאמֶר יְהוָה לְרִשְׁעִים**); accordingly, the herald denotes it a voice (40:3, 6, **קוֹל**). The herald describes the voice as having volume, spatiality and movement (40:3, 6, . . . **קוֹל קוֹרֵא** . . . **קוֹל אוֹמֵר קְרֵא** . . . **פָּנָה**). It carries strains of both Yahweh and the people (e.g. 40:1, 3, **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** . . . **אֱלֹהֵיכֶם**). It may deliberate and consult with itself (40:6 according to MT **וְאָמַר** or the emendation **וְאִמַּר**). Its steadiest characterization occurs through all those points where it formally introduces Yahweh's speech (42:5; 43:14a, 16–17; 44:6a,

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*Art of the Novel*, 3–20; for his distinction between the novel and historiography, see *idem*, 42–44.

<sup>111</sup> White expressed the pliability of narrative, which can serve different ends, either in support of the state or against it, for law, norm, and authority or to challenge them (“The Value of Narrativity,” 17). More pointedly, according to B. Lincoln, myths often encode taxonomies in narrative form, taxonomies are necessarily hierarchical, and such narratives are therefore necessarily ideological (*Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* [Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1999], 147 [examples on 148–206]; moreover, the very construction of the category of myth serves ideological ends for modern scholars (*ibem.*, 44–146, also 207–16) as for ancient (3–43).

24a; 45:11a, 14, 18a; 48:17a).<sup>112</sup> The frame, formulas, and perspective of these introductions—**כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**—give the introductions the character of belonging to the voice. In many instances, the voice uses additional wording to characterize Yahweh or his addressee Jacob-Israel and this wording matches the quoted speech around it and seems to derive from it; namely, the voice patterns itself on Yahweh's speeches.<sup>113</sup> In other instances, the voice offers titles or descriptions that enrich Yahweh's persona and his argument (e.g. 45:18a). One instance stands out as particularly significant, 45:1aα **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ**. In the speeches around this introduction, Yahweh characterizes Cyrus as his servant and agent (44:26), his shepherd and (re)founder of Jerusalem and its temple (44:28), and his champion (45:1aβ–3a) and named one (45:3b–4); drawing faithfully upon this characterization, the voice takes it one step further to define Cyrus as Yahweh's anointed.<sup>114</sup>

Yahweh, the most mediated figure of all, also enjoys the richest personification of all, so robust as to press against the frame that

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<sup>112</sup> Given the centrality of the herald's profile to the text and its argument, characterizing the voice through its introductions inventively draws on conventional herald and epistolary practice in which the introduction serves to define the relationship between sender and receiver, highlighting both affinity and hierarchy. On this feature, see B. Thomas, "The Language of Politeness in Ancient Hebrew Letters," *Hebrew Studies* 50 (2009), 17–39 (21–23).

<sup>113</sup> For instance: a) compare 43:14a, **גִּאֲלֶכֶם** with vv. 1, 3b–8, and 43:14a, **קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל** with vv. 3a, 15a; b) 43:16–17 anticipates vv. 18–20; c) 44:24a, **גִּאֲלֶךָ וְיִצְרָךָ מִבְּטָן** draws upon the immediately preceding unit in inverse order, vv. 21–23, **יִצְרָתִיךָ . . . גִּאֲלֶךָ . . . יְהוָה יַעֲקֹב**, and also anticipates vv. 24b–28; d) compare 45:11, **יִצְרוּ** with the same root or synonyms in vv. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 (following J. Skornik, "Deutero-Isaiah and 'the Turn' of Isaiah 49:1–6" [seminar paper presented at the University of Chicago, 17 March 2012], 1–22 [7–8]). In 44:1–2; 45:13bβ (last three words); and perhaps 43:1a, Yahweh speaks with the phrasing and intonation of the voice, which suggests that even the formal aspects of the introductions that mark the voice as distinctive and distinct in fact take their cue from Yahweh's own speech and mimic it. The preponderance of times in biblical narrative and prophetic texts that a sender includes the words **כֹּה אָמַר** followed by a third-person self-reference as the beginning of his message (e.g., Gen 32:5; 45:4 and 9; Exod 4:21–23; 2 Sam 7:4–5, 8; Jer 2:1–2; 5:14; 18:11; Ezek 2:3–5; 6:1–3; also 2 Kgs 7:1) does not contradict the effect created by the particular staging of the expression in Isa 40–48 largely as the words of the voice; rather, it helps highlight the author's deliberateness in staging the expression this way. See n. 78 above, on the ambiguities of 40:9–31; 42:24b–43:1a; and 48:1–2.

<sup>114</sup> In terms of epistolary norms, Yahweh's own introduction to his speech to Cyrus marks a direct and innovative contrast: he begins with the clipped style "To . . ." (on which see Thomas, "The Language of Politeness," 24) and adds a characterization of their relationship, which highlights doubly Yahweh's control and Cyrus' subservience.

holds him together, straining, as it were, to reach the audience directly.<sup>115</sup>

Anything but the facile prose narrative of royally voiced or oriented texts, the spiraling poetry of urgent oratory demands questioning, just as it makes questioning an essential feature of its argument. In place of human excellence, it holds up impairment; the more one claims excellence, comprehension, and vision, the more beset by impairment and the more dismissible as disabled such a one be. Statues cannot prop up such logic and authority, for they depend on such propping up themselves. Divinity—Yahweh (there is no other!)—cannot be reduced, contained, or explained. For the author of Isa 40–48 faith in Yahweh is and must be a matter of sheer will.

With this view of the framework, discourse, and argument of Isa 40–48, one can appreciate the set of breaks that indicates a separate text to begin in 49:1–6.<sup>116</sup> First of all, the configuration of speakers changes sharply in a discontinuous, uncoordinated manner. The carefully orchestrated continuum of three real-time voices ends, and a single speaker now reports straightforwardly an unmediated conversation he held with Yahweh in the definite past, one that he initiated and that drew a direct reply. Rather than presenting a figure in the process of overhearing the verbalized, voiced divine will and

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<sup>115</sup> S. Olyan makes the case that it is a matter of selective reading and anachronistic conceptualization to describe these chapters in the book of Isaiah as making a substantive turn—advance—in monotheistic thought, as so many have done for so long; in his view, what happens in the text may not go beyond a rhetorical turn of restricting certain expressions of divinity to Yahweh (“Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?” *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 12 [2012], 190–201). Without assessing how Olyan’s inclusion of chapters 49–55 together with 40–48 affects his argument, one can agree, on the one hand, that the personification of Yahweh as passionately bringing suit does not sit well with a rigorous notion of monotheism; on the other hand, the analysis of his otherness as sole charter of history, his character as imperceptible or incomprehensible by normal human faculties, and his delineation as a literary event bespeak together more of a rhetorical *tour de force* in the text and a stronger reconceptualization of divinity than Olyan grants.

<sup>116</sup> See already Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 294 n. 21. Contra Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 393–94, whose analysis of compositional and editorial layers (393–404), like the prior analyses he reviews and engages so carefully and instructively (376–93), rests first and foremost on formal and thematic considerations, especially as applied to smaller units of text. Haran made his argument about Isa 40–48 as a distinct text from 49ff. in part on a similarly thematic basis (“The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework;” *Between Rīʾshonôt and Ḥadashôt*). The study here has taken the discursive frame of speakers as the primary consideration of literary integrity at a larger scale. Relatedly, Albertz follows others in considering the work a redacted collocation of assorted smaller texts by members of a single prophetic group (*Israel in Exile*, 380–81, 404 n. 801); the study here has approached it as a composition by a single author.

speaking it aloud, the text now presents a speaker who recounts a past event in which he engaged the deity in dialogue.

Secondly, the speaker in the text has a different character, full and bold. He introduces himself, his authenticity, and his mission directly and confidently in terms that mirror Jer 1 (and resemble Isa 6 and Ezek 1–3)—appointment in the womb, a charged mouth, a combative stance towards the nations and Israel, and resistance to the mission. He wields other, unique tropes, styling himself the blade gripped in Yahweh’s hand, the arrows kept in his quiver. Far from the effaced herald of Isa 40–48, this speaker projects himself menacingly to the nations summoned, as Yahweh’s own glistening weapons, and he summons them in terms and tones reserved for Yahweh in Isa 40–48 (compare 49:1 and 41:1). At the same time that the speaker aligns himself so overtly and deeply with Yahweh, the speaker also represents himself as having challenged Yahweh over his (the speaker’s) own failure to this point (compare 49:4 and 40:6b–8), which contrasts strikingly with the dutiful citation of the voice in Isa 40–48.

Thirdly, the speaker of the text seems to presuppose the message of chapters 40–48 as a whole and contend with the fact that its promises did not fully materialize: the speaker was to return the people in glory, but they returned and suffer.<sup>117</sup> The speaker’s report conveys to his audience that he knew their plight, wrangled with Yahweh for them, and elicited the promises for Zion that he will now relay.<sup>118</sup> From this point of view, the speaker’s self-trope as blade and arrow carries a wicked double-edge, for the pair often connotes dissembling<sup>119</sup>—again resembling Isa 6:8–13; Jer 4:10; 1 Kgs 22:19–23—which invites his audience to suspect that one can-

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<sup>117</sup> For the grim conditions in the Neo-Babylonian and early Persian periods, see the comprehensive archaeological study: A. Faust, *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); for the slow pace of recovery deep into the Persian period, see C.E. Carter, “The Province of Yehud in the Post-Exilic Period: Soundings in Site Distribution and Demography,” in T.C. Eskenazi and K.H. Richards (eds.), *Second Temple Studies: 2. Temple Community in the Persian Period* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 106–45; E. Stern, *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 307–11, 323–26, 348–50, 576–82. Contra Barstad’s view of large-scale continuity in Judea (*The Myth of the Empty Land*, 79–81; idem, *The Babylonian Captivity*, 81–82), on which see B. Oded, “Where Is the ‘Myth of the Empty Land’ To Be Found? History versus Myth,” in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 55–74.

<sup>118</sup> On the prophet as intercessor generally, see Y. Muffs, “Who Will Stand in the Breach? A Study of Prophetic Intercession,” in idem, *Love and Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York/Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 9–48.

<sup>119</sup> See Jer 9:1–15; Ps 57:5; 64:4; Prov 25:18.

not quite catch him at his word and suggests a highly defensive posture in addition to the aggressive one.

In fact, the compound trope of blade and arrow recalls a figure of Persian royalty in a variety of pictorial and verbal media: the motif of the archer and especially the archer-lancer. The image makes Yahweh a Persian-type emperor, which departs from and even undercuts the irreducible world-creator and imperceptible Persian-emperor-manipulator of Isa 40–48. Moreover, the archer motif seems to have begun with Darius I towards the end of the sixth century B.C.E., and the dual set of weapons towards the end of his reign (486 B.C.E.).<sup>120</sup>

In the light of these literary and historical disjunctures, the surprising statement in 48:22 has the look of a conclusion.<sup>121</sup> Possibly engaging Jer 29:1–7, it threatens those who would resist the message and argue for staying in Babylonia.<sup>122</sup>

Taken all together, the features of this passage indicate a new text by the same author. Earlier he composed a text that urged expatriate Judeans to move to Judea. Evidently, some of them did so (for what complex of reasons, with what sponsorship, in which year or years, and in how many waves lacks evidence) and he moved with them. In the new text, possibly as many as four decades later, he undertakes to address the harsh conditions in which they live.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See M. Alam, “The Coinage of the Persian Empire,” in W.E. Metcalf (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 61–87 (esp. 61–67); also M.C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Acta Iranica 19; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 164–69; R.P. Bonfiglio, “Archer Imagery in Zechariah 9:11–17 in Light of Achaemenid Iconography,” *JBL* 131 (2012), 507–27; R. Sacks, “Some Notes on the Depictions of the Achaemenid Great King on the Coins of Fourth-Century Judah, Samaria and Philistia,” *INR* 8 (2013), 9–16.

<sup>121</sup> Compare Hos 14:10; and the hymnic variety in Ps 41:14; 72:18–19; 89:53; 106:48.

<sup>122</sup> The recurrence of the statement in a fuller form and context, in Isa 57:14–21, need have no bearing on its role here; compare Haran, *Between Riʿshonôt and Ḥadashôt*, 71; also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 296; contra Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 394 n. 766.

<sup>123</sup> For a relevant thought-provoking discussion, see R.P. Carroll, “Second Isaiah and the Failure of Prophecy,” *Studia Theologica* 32 (1978), 119–31 (though he discusses Isa 40–55). Blenkinsopp too understands that “the speaker saw the mission assigned to Cyrus as passing to himself by default but that by this time he had lost his audience” (*Isaiah 40–55*, 63). Notably, the speaker reassigns the expression **עַם בְּרִיתָ עִם** from Cyrus in 42:6 to himself in 49:6, 8 (likewise, compare 61:1–4 with 44:24–45:8 as well as 42:1–7). The compositional history of Isa 49–66 requires its own treatment, but generally speaking the text reflects the distressed and fractious life of Jerusalem and Judea; nothing in it requires it to be read directly after 40–48 to be comprehensible; and any structural symmetries or correlations in theme, motif or language that depend on the present juxtaposition of the texts are all beside the point.