

THE NATURE OF THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH IN ISAIAH 66:22

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The history of the literary critical analysis of Isaiah is complex and the views of individual scholars are frequently contradictory, both on Isaiah as a whole¹ and on chapters 65-66.² Isaiah 66:22 has also been seen as a later addition to the text, repeating 65:17.³ In contradiction to this, 65:17

¹For details of the scholarship on the historical/literary unity/disunity of Isaiah cf. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888); R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1948); O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966 (trans. P. Ackroyd from the 3rd German edition)).

²Isa 65 and 66 themselves have been compared with Isa 1 or 1-2:4 and seen to be similar in themes and vocabulary. For similarities in vocabulary cf. L. Liebreich, "The Composition of the Book of Isaiah" *JQR* 46 (1955-56) 259-77 and *JQR* 47 (1956-57) 114-38. For parallels in themes cf. R. Lack, *La Symbolique du livre d'Isaïe* (AnBib 59; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973) 139-41 and M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Biblical Understanding of the Isaiah Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988) 21-24. A. J. Tomasino, "Isaiah 1:1-2:4 and 63-66 and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus," *JSOT* 57 (1993) 81-98 sees structural similarities between 1:1-2:4 and 63-66. As such, Isa 65 and 66 have been adduced to have been written by a later redactor. H. G. Jefferson, "Notes on the Authorship of Isaiah 65 and 66" *JBL* 68 (1949) 225-30 uses three stylistic traits to show that Isaiah 65-66 are not likely to have come from the same hand as Second Isaiah.

C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; OTL; London: SCM, 1969) 307 sees four sources in Isa 65-66; S. Sekine, *Die Tritojesajische Sammlung (Jes 56-66) redaktionsgeschichtliche untersucht* (BZAW 175; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989, 43-65 and 165-78) sees three. W. A. M. Beuken, "Isaiah Chapters LXV-LXVI: Trito-Isaiah and the Closure of the Book of Isaiah" *Congress Volume, Leuven 1989* (J. A. Emerton [ed.]; VTSup 43; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 204-221 also argues for three. P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 135 sees the chapters as a unity, as does O. H. Steck "Beobachtungen zur Anlage von Jes 65-66," *BN* 38/39 (1987) 103-116; idem, *Studien zu Tritojesaja* (BZAW 203; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991) 217-28, although he argues for two units 65:1-66:4 and 66:5-24); P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56-66* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 132 sees Isa 65:1-66:17 as a coherent section, with 66:18-24 having been added at a later date. J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1987) 338 sees Isa 65-66 as a unity, but with four sections.

has been seen as an imitation of 66:22!⁴ For these reasons a synchronic approach to the text will be pursued in the present paper. This does not mean that it will be totally uncritical for as Williamson so cogently remarked, “To be post-critical implies that we have first been critical; in the scholarly world there is no short cut to modernity.”⁵ It is apparent that in the verse concerned and in those of its immediate context, allusions are made to preceding chapters in Isaiah itself.⁶ Isa 66:22 reads,

³P. A. Smith, (1995) 132, is a proponent of this view as are W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1998) 259 and E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah, Vol. II* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1943) 326. Isa 65:17 is thought by Westermann (1969) 306 to have been a later addition to the text as the verses which follow it are deemed not to be cosmic in character. He thinks Isa 66:22 has been influenced by 65:16 (which mentions the earth), 428.

⁴Isa 65 has been seen by A. J. Tomasino, (1993) 81 to disrupt the thought sequence of 65:16 and 66:1. He claims that 65:17f. was inserted into the text, in conscious imitation of 66:22, after the rebuilding of the Second Temple with the purpose of shifting attention away from an anti-cultic theme apparent in the original text.

⁵H. G. M. Williamson, “‘From One Degree of Glory to Another’: Themes and Theology in Isaiah” in E. Ball, (ed.), *In Search of True Wisdom. Essays in Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 177.

⁶Such an idea is not new: R. E. Clements, “Beyond Tradition History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah’s Themes” *JSOT* 3 1(1985) 95-113 and R. Rendtorff, “Zur Komposition des Buches Jesaja” *VT* 34 (1984) 295-322, who claim a redactional unity for Isaiah, have both asserted that there are close links between the various parts of Isaiah, with Isaiah 40-55 being pivotal. E. W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 30 treats Isaiah as a whole, recognizing repetition in the various parts of the book. As he points out though, “repetition is always repetition with a difference. Variation in the recurrence of repeated elements in the text suggests movement and progression”. Such movement has been seen by Williamson “From One Degree of Glory” (1999) 177 and 194 to yield information concerning the relative dates of the passages studied. The question of dating aside, the approach approximates to the way in which the ancient listener/reader would have understood Isa. 66:22 (cf. D. M. Carr, “Reading Isaiah from Beginning (Isaiah 1) to End (Isaiah 65-66): Multiple Modern Possibilities” in R. F. Melugin & M. A. Sweeney, (eds.), *New Visions of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 193-197 for an excellent summary of the differences between ancient and modern readers of texts. Further, connections have been made by some scholars between Isaiah and other biblical works: Somner’s approach (B. D. Somner, “Allusions and Illusions: The unity of the Book of Isaiah in Light of Deutero-Isaiah’s Use of Prophetic Tradition” in Melugin and Sweeney, *New Visions of Isaiah* [above]) 156-186 in his thematic analysis of Isaiah 40-66 showed the presence of themes and vocabulary from Jeremiah in greater quantity than those from Isaiah 1-39; R. D. Wells, “‘Isaiah’ as an Exponent of Torah: Isaiah 56:1-8” in Melugin and Sweeney, *New Visions of Isaiah* (above) 140-55 shows links between Isa 56-66 and legal texts in “P” implicitly positing that “P” or its forerunner was in existence at the time of the writing of these Isaianic chapters. As such, the creation story of Gen 1-2:4a, or much of it, would also have been available to our writer—a story which tells of

For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make will stand before me, says Yahweh, thus will your seed and your name stand.

Commentators are divided as to what is implied by the notion of newness. The two views are as follows:

1) *that the old heavens and old earth are to be physically destroyed and new ones created in their place.* Skinner for example, followed this view.⁷ It has also been adopted by Whybray who thinks that Isa 65:17 was added at a later time to the non-cosmic vision of 65:18f by someone who was inspired by 51:6 where the cosmic order is transitory.⁸ He makes no comment on the cosmic order in 66:22. Biddle appears to endorse the view that the heavens and earth will be replaced.⁹

2) *that the old heavens and old earth are to be renewed in a metaphorical or figurative sense.* Westermann explicitly rejects the first view, saying that it belongs to apocalyptic literature. Instead, the created order “is to be miraculously renewed”.¹⁰ Kissane is more specific, seeing “the restoration of Sion” as “a new world order in which piety and justice will prevail”.¹¹ Watts also takes the new heavens as indicative of a new world order and like Kissane, links it to the events of history: “the Persian Empire has Yahweh’s salvation and Israel is called to be a worshipping and pilgrim people with Jerusalem as its focus”.¹²

Re-creation then or renewal? We could go even further: re-creation or renewal of the heavens and the earth or re-creation/renewal of Zion and God’s community? Or both? Why are new heavens and the earth cited in Isa 66:22 as well as in 65:17? An exploration of Isa 65:17 has already been undertaken.¹³ An enquiry was made into the vocabulary used in it

the original creation of the heavens and the earth—as would the tale of the destruction of the earth at the time of the Flood, stories to which Isaiah may well have been alluding with his mention of new heavens and a new earth; E. Sehmsdorf, “Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Jesaja 56-66” Teil 1 ZAW 84 (1972) 526-7 and, to a lesser extent, P. A. Smith (1995) 143 and 146 show that Deuteronomy is the background to a number of Isaianic verses. The Psalms have long been seen as an influence on Isaiah cf. P. T. Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBLDS 161; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

⁷Cf. Kissane, (1943) 311.

⁸R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1975) 275-76.

⁹M. E. Biddle, “Lady Zion’s Alter-Egos: Isaiah 47:1-15 and 57:6-13 as Structural Components,” in Melugin and Sweeney, *New Visions of Isaiah* (above) 139.

¹⁰Westermann, (1969) 408.

¹¹Kissane, (1943) 311.

¹²Watts, (1987) 353-4.

¹³“Ecojustice or Anthropological Justice: A Study of the New Heavens and New Earth in Isaiah 65:17” in N. Habel, (ed.), *The Earth Bible, Vol. 4* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) 204-18.

and what connections the verse had with previous Isaianic and other biblical passages, in terms of both theme and vocabulary. It was found that the new heavens and new earth would be modified versions of the old ones. Changes that would occur were:

- 1) the sinners themselves would have their lives circumscribed (Isa 65:13-15) and would die cursed at a hundred years old.
- 2) no longer would sinners bring upon the land the curses of Deut 28 because of disobedience to God,
- 3) the righteous by contrast, would enjoy all the bounties of a close communion with God:

Jerusalem would be a place of joy (Isa 65:18-19);
 there would be no more premature death (65:20), indeed each person's life would be as long as that of a tree (65:22);
 there would be no more fear of the devastation of the land as a punishment for sin therefore the righteous would live long enough to benefit from the work of their hands (65:22);
 God would always be attentive to his people (65:24) and as a result, there would be harmony in nature, with even dangerous animals and reptiles living in peace with all other creatures.

In other words, there would be justice both for people and for the earth. Isa 45:8, where the heavens drop down and righteousness is poured from the skies to the earth which opens to receive it and which in turn produces righteousness and salvation, was seen to symbolize the cooperation of the heavens and the earth in the future. It was also suggested that Isa 34:4 may lie behind the notion of the new heavens. There the imagery is of the heavens rolled together like a scroll until the heavenly bodies (which were often worshipped in place of Yahweh) withered and dropped off like leaves from a tree. This would prevent false worship in the future. There was no allusion anywhere in the context of Isa 65:17 to the *destruction* of the existing heavens and earth.¹⁴

Isaiah 66:22 reads,

For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make will stand before me, says Yahweh, thus will your seed and your name stand.

It is noticeable immediately that Isa 66:22 talks about the seed and the name of God's people which Isa 65:17 did not. Before considering this difference, an exploration of the context of Isa 66:22 will be undertaken.

¹⁴Isa 51:6 suggests the destruction of both the heavens and the earth. Isa 24:29-30 the earth only.

THE CONTEXT OF ISAIAH 66:22

It is important to note that the whole of Isa 66:15-24 is addressed to “you who tremble at (God’s) word” (v. 5).¹⁵ These people are once again directly addressed in 66:10-14 where they are assured that, like a contented baby, they will be given sustenance by Jerusalem, pictured as a nursing mother. God too will comfort them. In verse 14 they are assured,

You will see and your heart will rejoice,
 your bones will flourish like the tender grass.
 The hand of Yahweh will be known toward his servants
 And he will have indignation against his enemies.

Verses 15-17 then give some indication of God’s action against his enemies, announcing in general terms a universal judgement (for God will plead with all flesh)¹⁶ taking place in Jerusalem (cf. verse 6), but detailing those in Israel who would be targeted.¹⁷ The latter are the people whose misdeeds are outlined also in Isa 66:3 where they are juxtaposed to those who “tremble at my word” (66:2). It would have been of primary importance to the addressees of Isaiah 66 that their enemies, who were fellow Israelites, be overcome for the latter are described by God, in verse 5, as “your brothers who hate you, who cast you out for my name’s sake” (cf. Isa 56:8 where God will gather the outcasts of Israel as well as foreigners and eunuchs who keep the covenant). Once Jerusalem and its inhabitants,

¹⁵Carr, “Reading Isaiah,” (1996) 211 emphasizes that Isa 66:5-24 is an address to the righteous.

¹⁶Fire (which foreshadows Isa 66:24) and the sword (vv. 15-16) are the instruments of destruction which will be wreaked upon “all flesh” (v.16) who have proved themselves to be enemies of God (v.14). “All flesh” is likely to refer to humanity as a whole. It is an expression which appears in Isa 40:5, 6; 49:26. In 40:6 it is clear that all animate creatures, particularly humanity is involved in the expression, for it states that “all flesh is grass” contrasting its transitory nature with the word of God which is eternal. Isa 40:5 “the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh will see it together” and Isa 49:26 “all flesh will know that I, Yahweh, am your Saviour and Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob” have contacts with Isaiah 66: God’s “glory” appears three times in verses 18-19 and God in his role as saviour and redeemer is portrayed in verses 13-14 (where the bones of the righteous “flourish like tender grass”) and in verses 20-23 (verse 23 says, “all flesh will come to worship before me”).

¹⁷People come to an end, people who have sanctified themselves in gardens and eaten unclean foods. Such actions are more likely to be regarded as sin when they are carried out by Jews. P. A. Smith (1995) 166 comes to the conclusion that within the context of a world-wide judgement is the judgement of Israel, saying “there is now no protection to be gained through membership of the Jewish community”. Smith’s notion accords with the general tenor of Isaiah 65-66 where the Jewish community is divided into the righteous and wicked, or, to put it another way, into those who are servants of God and those who break his covenant. This will be seen clearly in the later discussion of the “seed” and the “name”.

which would have included foreigners, (Isa 56:3, 6-7 hinted at the judgement of foreigners according to their acceptance of God's covenant) had been purged, the time had come for attention to be paid to the rest of the world, who had not previously encountered Yahweh.¹⁸ This is foreshadowed in the second part of Isa 66:18,

it [the time] comes to gather all nations and tongues
they will come and they will see my glory,

which points forward to 66:23 when "all flesh will come to worship before me". Verses 19-21, where God will "set a sign among them" and "send those of them who escape" on a mission to far off nations, with the purpose of bringing of "your brethren" to Jerusalem, have caused problems of comprehension for commentators:

- 1) What is the antecedent for "them" amongst whom a sign is set?¹⁹
- 2) What is the antecedent for "them" in the phrase "those who escape of them"?²⁰
- 3) What is the nature of the sign?²¹
- 4) Does "your brethren" indicate fellow Jews or Gentiles or both?²²

The usual way of answering these kinds of questions is to look closely at the immediate context, but in the present case, the immediate context is misleading, resulting in quite different interpretations. The wider context of the chapter and the whole of Isaiah need to be considered, particularly how expressions which occur in 66:19-21 have been used elsewhere.²³

¹⁸Jerusalem was under foreign domination in the post-exilic period and, as such, foreigners would have been present in the city.

¹⁹Most commentators think that "them" refers to the nations.

²⁰Three viewpoints are evident: 1) Jews who have survived e.g. Brueggemann, (1998) 258; 2) Gentiles e.g. Westermann (1969) 425 and Whybray (1975) 290 and J. Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982) 209; 3) Jerusalemite survivors i.e. a mixed ethnic group e.g. Conrad (1990) 94.

²¹Most commentators agree that the sign is not clear. Suggestions include: 1) the sending of messengers e.g. Westermann (1969) 425 and Scullion (1982) 209; 2) Survivors among the nations or among the Jews e.g. Watts (1987) 365; 3) Conrad (1990) 93 thinks the sign is linked to Isa 37:30-32 which indicates an increase of survivors cf. Isa 66:7-9.

²²Some scholars think the brethren are Gentiles e.g. Brueggemann (1998) 259, while others think they are Diaspora Jews e.g. Kissane (1943) 327 and B. Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* (JSOTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press) 172; 3) still others think the group is a mixture of Jews and Gentiles e.g. J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: Introduction and Commentary* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993) 540.

²³Conrad, (1990) 95 stresses the importance of the wider context.

1) “**Those who escape**” who “go to the nations” ... “who have not heard my fame nor seen my glory” (v.19) has to indicate those who had survived the slaughter in Jerusalem. The question must be posed though as to why they are designated in the third person plural, rather than the second person plural as one would expect, if they were identical with the addressees. The answer to this question will unfold below in connection with the sign.

2) Verse 19 opens with the statement “I will set a sign among **them**”. The immediate antecedent is “the nations and the tongues” in verse 18, which is the likely referent of “them”.

3) The **sign** appears not to be specified, as most commentators note. However, in every other occurrence of “sign” (אֵימָה) in Isaiah it is outlined what the sign is to be and so it would be out of character for it not to be intimated here. It may be that commentators have overlooked the significance of verse 14b, addressed to those who “tremble at God’s word”

The hand of Yahweh will be known toward his servants
And he will have indignation against his enemies.

This had come into being by verse 19 and, as such, is likely to constitute the sign which is personified by those who had escaped from the judgement. Conrad sees Isa 37:30-32 lying behind the mention of the sign and in this he is likely to be partially correct.²⁴ Isa 37:30-32, part of an oracle delivered to Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian threat, contains both the word “sign” (אֵימָה) and “escape” (פְּלִיטָה). The sign is an agricultural one: Hezekiah is assured that his people will not starve and by the third year they will be able to sow, reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit (the planting of vineyards and consumption of their fruits is reminiscent of the picture of the coming bliss for God’s servants in Isa 65:21). Likewise, “the escaped (פְּלִיטָה) of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For a remnant will go forth out of Jerusalem and the escaped (פְּלִיטָה) from Mount Zion.” This passage suggests that the escaped ones in Isa 66:19 should be regarded as Judaeans. However another biblical passage, in addition to Isa 37:30-32, is likely to lie behind Isa 66:19. This is Isa 45:20 which reads, “Gather yourselves (הִקְבְּצוּ) and come (בֹּאוּ), draw near together escaped ones (פְּלִיטֵי) of the nations (גוֹיִם): they have no knowledge, they who carry the wood of their graven image and pray to a god who does not save.”²⁵ It is immediately noticeable that this verse uses four words (indicated by the inclusion of the Hebrew) which appear in Isa 66:18-19. Furthermore the word for “escaped” is from the same masculine nominal root, whereas Isa 37:31-32 employs the

²⁴Conrad, (1990) 93.

²⁵A number of scholars have made reference to this verse, in passing, without investigating it closely.

feminine form. Commentators are divided as to whether the “escaped of the nations” in 45:20 refers to Israelites alone or to Gentiles.²⁶ However, the context of the passage which includes

- a) God’s announcement to Cyrus of his glorious role in world politics so that Cyrus may know that Yahweh is God alone (45:1-7,13),
- b) an assertion by Egyptians, Ethiopians and Sabeans who go over to Cyrus that God is in him (45:14),
- c) an emphasis that God is creator of heaven, earth and (all) people (45:12, 18) and that there is no other God (45: 5,18),
- d) an appeal to “the ends of the earth” to look to God and be saved (45: 22),

suggests the view that Gentiles are those indicated by the expression the “escaped of the nations”. Indeed Israel’s role in the chapter is marginal.²⁷

In summary, two quite different passages, Isa 37:30-32 and Isa 45:20, lie behind “those who escape of them”. One posits that people from Judah are the referents and the other, Gentiles. The double identity links with “all flesh” being subject to God’s judgement which took place in Jerusalem in 66:16. Nevertheless, as noted above, the word used in Isa 66:19 for “those who escape” is the same as the word used in 45:20 where it indicated Gentiles, suggesting that Isa 45:20 is more important as a background to 66:19 than Isa 37:30-32. If Isa 66:19, like Isa 45:20, is indicating Gentiles, it explains why, in a direct (second person) address to Israelites who “tremble at God’s word”, those who have escaped and are being sent to the nations are denoted by the third person plural i.e. they are **not** identical with the addressees.

The righteous Gentiles who have escaped then go to the far off nations (Isa 66:19), linking with God’s appeal to “the ends of the earth” to be saved in 45:22.²⁸ They then bring “all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering unto Yahweh ... to my holy mountain Jerusalem, as the

²⁶Westermann (1969) 175 thinks that Isaiah has the Babylonians in mind primarily. Brueggemann (1998) 84 agrees with Westermann. Kissane (1943) 87, thinks that the nations referred to are those listed in 45:14f. Whybray (1975) 112 disagrees entirely, positing that the Jewish exiles are in mind.

²⁷Cyrus is called “for Jacob, my servant’s sake and Israel my chosen” (v. 4), God is identified by his association with Israel (vv. 3, 11, 15), and Israel or its seed will be saved/justified (vv. 17, 25). These verses read as though they are afterthoughts, but in reality suggest that Israel’s salvation should be viewed as part of Cyrus’s mission.

²⁸The nations indicated include Tarshish (Spain) Pul and Lud (Africa) etc. The list of nations is usually thought to have been taken from Ezek 27:10-13. It may well be that the mention of “the isles far off” is an allusion to Isa 41:5 (5) “The isles saw and trembled (חרדו), they drew near and came” repeating a key word from Isa 66:2, 5. The isles are also mentioned in 41:1; 42:4, 10; 49:1; 60:9. Tarshish is mentioned in 60:9.

people of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh.” (66:20)

4) It is noteworthy that the second plural possessive pronoun appears with “**brethren**”. The “brethren” then are linked with the addressees. Does this indicate that the brethren, like the addressees, are Israelites?²⁹ Every other occurrence of אֶחָיוֹם in Isaiah refers to people of the same nationality³⁰ so the likelihood is that Israelites are denoted by Isa 66:20.³¹ The return of the brethren to Jerusalem through the agency of Gentiles is likened to offerings made in a clean vessel by Israelites and, therefore, just as praiseworthy.³² Verse 21 says that God will make some of these returnees priests and levites, in other words they are to have the same status as native born Israelites who have escaped the judgement.³³ This may suggest that non-native born Israelites were regarded as inferior, in some circles, at the time of the writing of Isaiah 66.³⁴

The key verse for the present paper, verse 22, then appears:

For as the new heavens and the earth, which I will make, will stand before me ... so will your seed and your name stand.

²⁹Cf. footnote 22 for the views of commentators.

³⁰Cf. Isa 3:6; 9:18 (19); 19:2; 41:6; 66:5.

³¹The return of Diaspora Jews is foreshadowed in 43:5-6; 49:22.

³²Isaiah 49:20 supports the thesis that Gentiles bring back dispersed Jews.

³³Those scholars who think that “brethren” includes Gentiles, think that priests and levites are to be drawn from this group cf. footnote 22 P. A. Smith (1995) 168, although he thinks that “brethren” refers to Jews, posits that priests and levites are taken from the nations as does G. I. Davies, “The Destiny of the nations” in J. Vermeylen (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah* (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 1989) 95.

³⁴This links with the proposal by Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration*, (JSOTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 179-80 that Third Isaiah’s underlying theology emerged from Babylonian Jewry and he represented their viewpoint. Their opponents were from the national-ethnic community who practised traditional syncretistic Yahwism. Schramm’s view implies an early post-exilic background and a powerful upper class who had not been deported to Babylon. This may be supported by archaeological data which has overthrown the old picture of Judah as the domain of the poor only during the Babylonian Exile. Instead a picture is emerging of a Judah, whose administrative centre was at Mizpah and whose population included some of the wealthy cf. for example J. Zorn, “Mizpah: Newly Discovered Stratum reveals Judah’s other Capital”, *BAR* Sept/Oct. (1997); G. Barkay, “Excavations at Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem,” in H. Geva (ed.), *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 85-106. Newer attitudes to the exilic period appear in L. Grabbe, (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive: “The Exile” as History and Ideology* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). N. H. Snaith, *Studies on the Second Part of The Book of Isaiah* (Leiden, Brill, 1977) 241 thinks that Isa 66:2 which is addressed to “he who is afflicted and broken of spirit” evidences a pro-Babylonian Jewish slant.

“For” (כי)³⁵ is the corollary of all that has gone before: the righteous native Israelites, the escaped of the Gentiles and the Israelites who have returned from the diaspora will all stand before God. An exploration of the use of the עשה (make) confirms this.

MAKE (עשה)

The verb used for making the new heavens and new earth in Isa 65:17 was ברא. In Isa 66:22 it is עשה. Together they mirror, intentionally or unintentionally, the first and second stories of creation in Genesis 1-2 which also use ברא and עשה in that order.³⁶ The use of עשה in Isa 66:22 draws attention to previous Isaianic passages where the verb is used for the making of the first heavens and earth i.e. 37:16; 45:12,18.

Isaiah 37:16 appears in the context of a prayer offered by Hezekiah to God to save Judah from Sennacherib. Isa 37:16 reads,

O, Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel ...
 you are the God, even you alone,
 of all the kingdoms of the earth;
 You have made (עשית) heaven and earth.

Hezekiah continues, outlining Sennacherib’s terrible deeds. He ends his prayer by pleading, in verse 20,

Now, O Yahweh our God,
 save us from his hand
 that all the kingdoms of the earth may know
 that you are the Lord, even you only.

Hezekiah’s avowal of God as the one and only and his declared dependence upon him, link with the nature of those upon whom God looks (favorably) in Isa 66:2.³⁷ His desire that all the nations of the earth be made aware of God as the only one finds a correspondence in Isa 66:19 where God’s glory is to be declared among the nations.

At the beginning of Isaiah 45, God tells Cyrus, his anointed one, what he will do to enable him to subdue the nations. God’s purpose in so doing is that all peoples from east to west will know that he is the only God. In 45:12 God asserts,

³⁵For a discussion of ways scholars have understood כִּי, cf. P. A. Smith (1995) 170.

³⁶The second story of creation presents Adam and Eve, the parents of all humankind, thus linking with the theme of the inclusion of all mankind in Isaiah 66.

³⁷For a discussion of “poor” and contrite of spirit” cf. Anne E. Gardner, “Isaiah 66:1-4, Condemnation of Temple and Sacrifice or Contrast of the Arrogant with the Humble”, forthcoming.

I have made (עצירי) the earth
and created humankind upon it, even I.
My hands have stretched out the heavens
and all their host I have remembered.

This is linked with the mission of Cyrus, for the following verse says,

I have raised him up in righteousness
and I will make straight all his ways
He will build my city and he will let my exiles go free,
Not for price or reward, says the Lord of Hosts.³⁸

Again, there is a stress on God as creator of all humankind, which, of course, predates the election of Abraham and his line. It is noticeable that a righteous Gentile is instrumental in returning Jewish exiles to Jerusalem, thus linking with what was discovered above concerning Isa 66:19.³⁹

The last appearance of עשה prior to Isa 66 is in Isa 45:18 (six verses on from the previous occurrence). God is introduced as

Yahweh who created the heavens
He is the God who formed the earth and made (עשה) it
He established it, he did not create it a waste
He formed it to be inhabited.

As with 45:12, it is emphasized that the making of the earth and the creation of people go hand in hand; such a prominent motif underlines the outreach to Gentile nations in Isaiah 66.

Isa 66:2 specifies that the “New heavens and earth” “will stand before me (God)”. “Stand before” (עמד לפני) is a liturgical phrase, as Beuken has pointed out.⁴⁰ It links with Isa 66: 23 where “from one new moon to another, from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before me, says, Yahweh.” “All flesh” includes people from far off nations to whom the glory of God had been announced by those who had

³⁸It is interesting that two anointed, righteous figures, Hezekiah and Cyrus, avow God as the maker of heaven and earth. Hezekiah, Cyrus and David were alluded to in 66:1-3; cf. Anne E. Gardner, “Isaiah 66:1-4”. However, no individual figure who is anointed appears in a surface reading of Isaiah 66.

³⁹These passages correlate remarkably well with Isaiah 66 where Isa 45:12 is alluded to as follows: in Isa 66:1 God says, “The heavens are my throne and the earth is my footstool” while in 66:2 God asserts, “For all these things my hand has made (עשיתי)”. This is followed by God discussing humankind in 66:2-4. The latter text goes beyond 45:12 in that God looks favourably upon the poor and contrite in spirit, but says that he will treat those who show little regard for him in a reciprocal way. Isa 45:13 correlates to Isa 66:7-13 as far as the building of the city/restoration of Zion is concerned and to 66:20 for the freeing/returning of the exiles. It should be noted that Isa 45:20 is the background to the “escaped” in 66:19.

⁴⁰Beuken, 214, note 15.

escaped from the previous judgement. The other part of humanity, who had transgressed against God would be visible in death “for their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched and they will be an abhorrence to all flesh” (Isa 66:24). As in Isaiah 65, the new community will centre upon Jerusalem which, according to Isa 62:2 will also “be called by a new name”.⁴¹ Like Isa 65:17, to which it appears to be referring, Isa 66:22 indicates a renewal of the heavens and the earth, not a destruction of the existing ones, followed by a second creation.

The inclusive vocabulary of Isa 66:2 is clear. However it must be noted that the verse is addressed to the people indicated by “your seed” and “your name”. Accordingly these terms will be explored in terms of their inner Isaianic meaning.

SEED

“Seed” in passages prior to Isaiah 66 can be divided into three categories:

- 1) the seed of the Patriarchs: Abraham in 41:8; Jacob in 44:3; 45:19 and Israel in 43:5; 45:25; 48:18-19;
- 2) the seed mentioned in connection with the new community: 6:13; 59:21; 61:9; 65:9, 23;
- 3) the seed of the suffering servant in 53:10.

The seed of the Patriarchs. The context of all the passages in this category is similar. They are situated close to the time of the overthrow of Babylon (41:11-12; 43:14; 44:24-26; 48:14-16); Cyrus is hailed as God’s chosen instrument (41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1-7; 48:14-16); God is the one and only God (41:4; 43:9; 44:6-20; 45:7,21; 48:12); God is with his people (Jacob/Israel/seed of Jacob/Israel/Abraham) (41:8-9, 13-14; 43:1-2; 44:1-2; 45:19); He will help/protect /nurture them on their journey home (41:17-20; 43:2,19f.; 45:20-24). He chose Cyrus /(will) overthrow Babylon /capture other countries for their sake (43:3-4,14; 45:4) and will reestablish Jerusalem (41:27; 44:26). He has blotted out the sins of Israel (43:25-26; 44:21). He calls upon Jacob/Israel to give witness to his actions (43:10; 45:20f.).

In all these passages “seed” has a collective reference i.e., it is applied to all the descendants of Abraham/Jacob. This is typified by the statement in Isa 45:25,

In Yahweh all the seed of Israel will be justified and shall glory.

However, while the “seed” is still all Israel, a note of criticism begins in chapter 43 and reaches a crescendo in chapter 48. In 43:22-24, after a

⁴¹This will happen when “her righteousness and her salvation goes forth as a lamp that burns” (62:1). This may contribute to the notion of Jesus as “light of the world” in John’s Gospel.

catalogue of the wonderful deeds that he will perform for his people, God juxtaposes the lack of attention he has received from them—they have made no sacrifices or offerings to him. He then asserts that he has blotted out their transgressions for his “own sake” (v. 25) and asks the people to plead their cause with him, they whose fathers and interpreters had transgressed against him (vv. 27-28). Chapter 48 pictures “the house of Jacob, called by the name Israel”(v.1) as people who are not faithful to God or live righteously (v. 2), as stubborn (v 4) in whom there is still dross (v. 10). In vv. 18-19 God laments,

Oh, that you had listened to my commandments,
then your peace would have been as a river
and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.
Your seed would have been as the sand
And the offspring of your loins like its grains.
His name would not be cut off or destroyed before me.

This appears to be an allusion to the promise made to Abraham and Jacob, a promise that is tempered in Isaiah by the condition of keeping the commandments.⁴² The chapter ends with God asserting, “There is no peace for the wicked” (48:22). This acknowledgement of the lack of religious and moral purity in the “seed” and the statement that the wicked will have no peace, paves the way for the division of Israel into the righteous and wicked in later chapters of Isaiah where the “seed” is the “seed” of the new community.

2) *The seed of the new community*: these are the righteous of the people (6:13; 59:21:61:9; 65:9, 23 and possibly 53:10).

Isa 6:13 will be reviewed later as its dating is contentious. Isaiah 59 is an oracle addressed to Israel/lament spoken by Israel.⁴³ It is condemnatory of their behaviour in relation to God and their fellows cf. 59:2, 6, 12-13.⁴⁴ Of significance as evidence of division in the community is “... he who departs from evil makes himself a prey ... ” (59:15).⁴⁵ God takes upon himself the task of judgement (59:16-18) dealing “fury to his adversaries” (59:18). However “a redeemer is to come to Zion⁴⁶ and unto those

⁴²Gen 22:17; 32:13(12). Isa 10:22 also makes reference to the seed as sand, but says only a remnant will return.

⁴³Westermann, (1969) 344, points to scholars who have described the chapter as a liturgy and Kessler, who called it a sermon. Westermann’s view is that the chapter contains elements of a community lament with words spoken by a prophet.

⁴⁴Westermann, (1969) 349, likens v. 12 to Psalms 51 and 90 which have confessions of sin.

⁴⁵This is one of the characteristics P. A. Smith (1995) 183 and 185-6 sees as belonging to TI2.

⁴⁶LXX reads, “from Zion”. Rom 11:26 adopts the LXX reading and interprets the passage messianically.

who turn from transgression in Jacob” (59:20),⁴⁷ giving further evidence of division between the sinners and the righteous in the community. God’s covenant with those in Jacob who turn from transgression is as follows:

My spirit is upon you (sg.) and my words which I have put in your (sg.) mouth will not depart out of the mouth of your (sg.) seed nor out of the mouth of your (sg.) seed’s seed, ... from henceforth for evermore. (59:21)⁴⁸

Isa 61:8-9 appears to continue the thought of Isaiah 59, repeating several key phrases from the latter: judgement (משפט) (cf. 59:8,9,11,14,15) truth (אמת) (59:14,15); covenant (ברית) (59:21) everlasting (עולם) (59:21) and seed (זרע) (59:21). P. A. Smith thinks that Isaiah 61 comes from an earlier time than Isaiah 59 with the latter belonging to a group of texts he labels TI (Trito-Isaiah) 2.⁴⁹ One of the hallmarks of the latter group is evidence of division within the community which he thinks is absent in Isaiah 60-63. However Isa 61:8-9 may well refer to such division: verse 8 reads,

For I, Yahweh, love judgement/justice
I hate robbery with burnt offering
And I will give them their recompense in truth
And I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

“Love” and “hate” are antithetical and form part of parallel clauses: “Hates robbery with burnt offering” requires some explanation. עולה (burnt offering) is usually rendered as “iniquity” in English translations, presumably to make a difficult phrase more comprehensible. However an עולה (burnt offering) was a gift to God (e.g. Lev 1:3): it was totally consumed on the altar and no portions were retained by the worshipper or priest. The implication of Isa 61:8b then is that God loathes gifts which are presented to him by those who are sinners. A similar conclusion is reached by an exploration of גל (robbery). It is a rare word and does not occur elsewhere in Isaiah, although the related גלה appears in Isa 3:14 in the context of a condemnation of the elders and priests of the people

... It is you who have eaten up the vineyard
the spoil of the poor (עני) is in your houses

⁴⁷ LXX has “to put away transgression from Jacob” which could suggest purifying the whole community. However 59:15 militates against this interpretation.

⁴⁸ Westermann (1969)345 says v. 21 forms no part of what precedes it and many scholars would agree with him. Kissane (1943) 251 disagrees, as does the present writer. The notion of a coming eternal covenant is present in Jer 32:40; 50:25; and Ezek 16:60; 37:26.

⁴⁹ Smith, 175.

“Robbery” in Isa 61:8 may well be alluding to this verse and branding as hypocrites those who indulge in the kind of act specified in Isa 3:14 while making burnt offerings.⁵⁰ Robbery is not something God indulges in, but an act carried out by people. It is something God hates and is contrasted in Isa 61:8 with *משפט* (judgement/justice) which God loves. *משפט* in this context refers to following the correct way. Something of the flavour of the word can be gained from Isa 1:17 to which Isa 61:8 may be alluding:

... seek judgement/right (*משפט*)
 relieve the oppressed,
 do right by the fatherless,
 plead for the widow.

Isa 61: 8 then makes a clear distinction within the community between those who sin against their fellows and those who alleviate their distress; between those who sin against his Torah and those who uphold it.

Reward for past works will be given and an eternal covenant made with the righteous

whose seed will be known among the nations
 and their offspring among the peoples
 All who see them will acknowledge them
 For they are the seed which the Lord has blessed. (61:9)

The next passage which mentions “seed” is Isa 65:9. It is part of an oracle which makes clear that there is a division between God’s servants and those who have forsaken him. The latter, God “will destine to the sword” (65:12); the former will not be destroyed—on the contrary God says, “I will bring forth from Jacob a seed and from Judah an inheritor of my mountains and my chosen ones will inherit it and my servants will dwell there.”

Isaiah 65:23, which forms part of a description of the glorious future for God’s servants, reiterates that they “are the seed of the blessed of the Lord” (cf. 61:9).

Isaiah 6:13, or at least the last phrase which says, “the holy seed is the stock thereof” is generally thought by scholars to be a later addition to the chapter whose subject is Isaiah’s call to deliver oracles of destruction to his people.⁵¹ Nowhere else in Isaiah is the seed described as “holy” although Isa 62:12, in the context of a description of the glorious future of Jerusalem, says of its inhabitants, “... they shall call them, ‘The holy

⁵⁰There is a similarity with Isa 66:3 where some people offer sacrifice while offending against God’s commandments. For a discussion of Isa 66:3 cf. Anne E. Gardner, “Isaiah 66:1-4. Condemnation of Temple and Sacrifice or Contrast of the Arrogant with the Humble?”, forthcoming.

⁵¹Cf. H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1991; trans. T. H. Trapp from the German *Jesaja, Kapitel 1-12*, 2nd ed.) 258, 274-5.

people of the redeemed of Yahweh' ... ". Isa 4:3, adduced by scholars to be a late passage,⁵² also calls those who remain in Jerusalem "holy". These links with Isa 62:12 and Isa 4:3 strengthen the scholarly conviction that the "holy seed" of 6:13 is a later addition. 6:13 posits that even a tree which had been felled and its new growth destroyed, still had life present in its stump. This double destruction links with a) the Babylonian one b) the destruction of those who had forsaken God in the post-exilic community (cf. Isaiah 65 and 66).

3) *The seed of the suffering servant.* The last passage which mentions "seed" is Isa 53:10. A link may be made between the servant in Isa 53:4 who is "stricken" (מכה) and one who is "stricken in spirit" (נכה רוח) in Isa 66:2.⁵³ This connects the servant with the community of those who are faithful to God, but are oppressed by the wicked. Ultimately, the servant will prosper, "he will see his seed, will prolong his days" (Isa 53:10), as will the new community in Jerusalem (Isa 66:22; 65:20, 22).⁵⁴

It is noticeable that all passages which mention "seed" refer to people from **Israel**.

NAME

It is asserted in Isa 66:22, that as well as the "seed", the "name" will remain. In parallel with the findings about "seed", the "name" in some passages applies to:

- 1) all Israel
- 2) only to the righteous in Israel.

1) There are a number of passages in Isaiah that link the name with the descendants of Jacob/Israel (Isa 43:1; 44:5; 45:3-4; 48:1). Such passages with the exception of 48:1 link the name to the relationship with God:

Jacob ... Israel ... fear not,
For I have redeemed you
I have called you by your name
You are mine. (43:1)

Jacob, my servant, Israel whom I have chosen ... (44:1)

⁵²Williamson (1999) 190-191 sees the notion of glory as a canopy and pavilion in Isa 4:6 as late in the development of the term "glory" in Isaiah. In addition, it seems to the present writer, that when Isa 4:4 refers to the purging of Jerusalem by "a spirit of judgement" and by "a spirit of burning", it is incorporating the thrust of Isaiah 65 and Isa 66:15-17, (22).

⁵³מכה is the hophal of נכה which is used in an adjectival sense in Isa 66:2.

⁵⁴The servant has been linked with one of David's line, through the description in 53:2 of him as "a root out of dry ground" (cf. the use of "root" [שרש] in Isa 11:1,10 where it is applied to one from Jesse).

One shall say, I am Yahweh's
 another shall call by the name of Jacob
 another write on his hand, to Yahweh
 or give for a title, the name Israel. (44:5)

That you may know that I am Yahweh
 who calls you by your name (45:3)
 For Jacob, my servant's sake and Israel my chosen,
 I have called you by name. (45:4)

Isa 48:18-19, a passage that was referred to in connection with "seed", introduces a discordant note:

Oh, that you had listened to my commandments,
 then your peace would have been as a river
 and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.
 Your seed would have been as the sand
 And the offspring of your loins like its grains.
 His name would not be cut off or destroyed before me.

Lack of obedience to the commandments then resulted in the overturning of previous promises.

2) From this point on, as was found with "seed", an everlasting or new name is to be given only to those who have proved themselves to be true servants of God. This includes eunuchs (Isa 56:5) who would previously have been separated from God's people (Isa 56:3).⁵⁵

Isa 65:15 is very specific that those who have forsaken God (cf. 65:11) from Jacob (cf. 65:9) will "leave their name for a curse" and God "will call his servants by another name".

As with "seed", "name" is applied **only to Israelites**, and, ultimately, only to righteous ones. This accords with Isa 66:22 being a direct address (your seed, your name) to those who tremble at God's word.

The new community then is composed of those Israelites who are loyal to God, who are truly his servants and keep his covenant. Membership is not limited to those who are physically perfect and all members are assured that their seed and name will forever be before God. The Israelite community is the solid core in Jerusalem, who are reunited with their brethren from the diaspora and, with whom, "all flesh" (66:23)—the nations—join themselves in their worship of God.

Isa 66:22 then is drawing together aspects of the new community which are addressed only in a cursory way in Isaiah 65. The latter text

⁵⁵Cf. Lev. 21:20 where eunuchs were prohibited from functioning as priests or levites. In Deut 23:2 (1) there is a general prohibition against entering the assembly of the Lord by those who are wounded by bruising (generally assumed to relate to the testicles) or who have had the penis cut off.

directs itself to justice for the earth and for people, whereas Isaiah 66 looks more closely at the composition of the new community: the righteous native Israelites, the escaped of the Gentiles and the Israelites who have returned from the diaspora will all stand before God. As in Isaiah 65, the new community will centre upon Jerusalem which, according to Isa 62:2 will also “be called by a new name”.⁵⁶ Like Isa 65:17, to which it appears to be referring, Isa 66:22 indicates a *renewal* of the heavens and the earth, not a destruction of the existing ones, followed by a second creation. Further, the new heavens and new earth are presented as well known expected events and must, therefore, be cited in imitation of 65:17, for their eventuality is used to corroborate the “seed” and “name” (the righteous of Israel) standing before God. Carr stresses that Isa 66:5-24 builds on Isaiah 65 by discussing the fate of foreigners.⁵⁷ It is clear from a study of the inner Isaianic allusions that Gentiles do figure prominently, but so do the Jews from the diaspora who are to be brought back to Jerusalem. Further the whole passage is addressed to those from Israel who tremble at God's word and whose brethren hate them and cast them out (Isa 66:5). The intensity of the enmity of the wicked among Israel to the righteous is unparalleled in Isaiah 65 and indicates a worsening religious and social situation. It is no accident that the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls, who considered themselves followers of the “way of light” and separated themselves from those who followed the “way of dark”, drew frequently upon Isaiah 65-66.

⁵⁶This will happen when “her righteousness and her salvation go forth as a lamp that burns” (62:1). This may contribute to the notion of Jesus as “light of the world” in John’s Gospel.

⁵⁷Carr, (1996) 211