

God is not a Mother – a Study of the Family Imagery in Second and Third Isaiah

Gili Kugler

The article discusses aspects of the Israelite theology at the beginning of the Persian period through an examination of images of kinship in the depiction of God and Israel's relations in Isaiah 40–66. Biblical scholars of the last fifty years have maintained that the authors of these chapters deliberately attributed to God feminine qualities and maternal roles, undermining the classical view of god as a male deity. This supposedly novel theological perception emerged in a time of changes and out of hope for restoration. A recent scholarly polemic disputed this interpretation and related it to scholars' projections and aspirations regarding the scriptures. The present article re-examines the images within their literary contexts and suggests that the scribes indeed visualized a mother figure involved in the restoration of Israel from exile. The mother figure, however, was not God, but rather Zion, who stood apart from the people, constituting the main target of the divine concern and compassion, delivered by God, a male deity.

[**Key words:** Biblical Theology, Second Isaiah, Third Isaiah, The Persian Period, Gendered Language, Familial Imagery, God as a Mother, Femininity and Masculinity in God]

The Image of God in Isaiah 63:1–6

Shirly Nathan-Yulazri

The article discusses the prophecy of Isaiah 63:1-6 which deals with the redemption of

Israel and vengeance on the nations. In this prophecy, several metaphors fuse together into a "metaphorical cluster". Each represents God in a different image: he is presented as a warrior, as a harvester of grapes, a person in the winepress, and finally, he is a host holding a banquet. These metaphors illustrate the concepts of God as a ruler, king, and judge. The coalescence of numerous metaphors in a cluster creates conceptual complexity and semantic density. The article aims to map the metaphors in the prophecy, explain how they interact with each other, and provide a more precise interpretation of the metaphorical presentation of God. The cognitive approach and the concept that metaphors are understood in light of metaphorical networks will be used as methodology. The analysis shows that the images are partial. Their precise explanation requires expansion of the metaphorical pictures, reference to metaphorical networks and consideration of the ancient Near Eastern literary and cultural background. One innovation of this article is the conclusion that the metaphors in this prophecy are shaped in a uniquely meaningful way, different from their other acquaintances in the Bible. The article also illustrates various mechanisms through which the metaphorical images are formed. The article also establishes the claim that the Masoretic Text should be retained.

[**Key words:** Metaphor, Cognitive Approach, Divine Warrior, Clothes, Wine, God's Cup of Wrath]

On the Location and Context of Ezekiel's Life in Babylon

Yuval Levavi

This paper examines the Babylonian context in which Ezekiel, an exiled Judean intellectual, lived and worked, considering and incorporating recent Assyriological scholarship. Contrary to the prevailing view, I argue against Ezekiel's residence in the rural Babylonian village of Tel-Aviv, located in the agricultural outskirts of southeast Babylonia. Instead, I posit that Ezekiel likely inhabited an urban setting, such as Babylon or Sippar, which housed a significant population of non-natives, including Judeans, who maintained a patron-client relationship with the Babylonian court.

[**Key words:** Ezekiel, Exile, Babylon, Judeans, Cuneiform Records, Neo-Babylonian, Patron-Client Model]

“The Poor is Honored for His Wisdom”:

Regarding the Status of The Poor Who is Wise in Qoheleth 9:13-10:1 and Ben

Sira 10:30-11:3

Tova Forti

Comparative studies of Ecclesiastes and Sirach have focused mainly on linguistic and stylistic affinities as indicators of the extent to which the former composition influenced the latter. This article offers a thematic comparative analysis of Qoh 9:13–10:1 and Sir 10:30–11:3, both of which address the wisdom of the poor. A comparison between the teaching rhetoric of Qoheleth and Ben Sira within the pericope under discussion indicates not only the lack of any linguistic familiarity of the latter with the former, but

also the difference in their self-perception as sages. Although both sages empathize with the social injustice and discrimination shown towards the poor sage, the lesson implied by their teaching clearly illustrates a pedagogic gap between didactic approaches; Qoheleth is driven by a realistic and skeptical outlook and Ben Sira by an educational sense of mission. The discussion offers a textual and literary analysis, which puts special emphasis on the rhetorical use of images drawn from the realm of insects as a concretizing device.

[**Key Words:** Ecclesiastes/Qohelet, Sirach/Ben Sira, Teacher-sage, Wisdom of The Poor, Deconstructive Rhetoric, Animal Imagery as a Concretizing Device, Skeptical Wisdom, Didactic Approach/Educational Mission]

Triple or Quadruple Polemic: Rav Sa'adya Gaon's Commentary of the God's Servant Story (Isaiah 52: 13–53: 12)

Nahem Ilan

Isaiah's prophecy about God's Servant (52:13-53:12) was used as a fertile ground for many polemics, both open and hidden, since ancient history. Rav Sa'adya Gaon in his commentary to this citation included both hidden and open polemics with his rivals. The Jewish polemic literature in Islamic culture was inspired by the Majlis, a debate club that 10th and 11th century Baghdad rulers instated. Various religious groups participated in those, including Rav Shmuel Ben Hofni Gaon and the Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr. In his commentary to the God's Servant citation, Sa'adya argued with Rabbinic Jews, Karaite Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. His commentary reveals interpretative and ideological consistency, along the lines he expressed in his

introduction to the Isaiah Commentary. According to that, prophecies are not supposed to ever be realized, but are serving as an educational catalyst for self as well as social improvement. It is possible for prophecies to be realized. In that case the prophet's words here match events of many other prophets, not just Isaiah. The congruence is impressive in its language, scope and intensity, when comparing God's Servant to Jeremiah's events. Any effort to identify God's Servant in a future distant from the prophet's days is wrong, since all prophets – Isaiah is included – strived to affect their immediate surroundings, in time and place, and not outline an abstract future, lacking concrete context, which may only be realized centuries later. Therefore, the Christian, Muslim and some Jewish perceptions (the Karaite and the one embedded in the Aramaic translation) are all fundamentally wrong, reflecting a misunderstanding of the purpose of prophecy in the Bible.

[**Key Words:** Saadia, The Aramaic Translation of Isaiah, The Servant of God, Yefet b. 'Eli, Salmon b. Yeruḥim, Polemics, 'Alī b. Rabbān al-Ṭabari, Karaites, Christians, Muslims, The Majlis]