Isaiah 40–66

An Interpretation Bible Commentary

JULIA M. O'BRIEN

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"O'Brien recognizes the perennial challenges of interpreting Second and Third Isaiah (for example, a longstanding tradition of Christian anti-Judaism) and guides us down a more fruitful path of honest reflection on these profound passages. Thankfully, she is not interested in telling us what the text 'really says' as if biblical interpretation strives for an impartial single meaning. Instead, we are invited to explore! And O'Brien serves as a worthy guide for such a rich journey."

—Tyler Mayfield, A. B. Rhodes Professor of Old Testament
and Director of the Grawemeyer Award in Religion,
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"Julia O'Brien offers a critical, thought-provoking reading of Second and Third Isaiah that invites readers to hear in Isaiah both comfort and critique and to engage these sacred texts in ways that are faithful, self-aware, and responsive to the challenges of our present times. She provides a straightforward assessment of the harmful uses of Isaiah in Christian tradition, especially readings that have marginalized Jewish interpretations, while offering a constructive path forward marked by critical insight, attention to social justice concerns, and pastoral sensitivity. For those preaching and teaching on Isaiah, this volume is a welcomed addition, adding breadth and depth to contemporary interpretations and thereby equipping readers to engage these texts with greater historical awareness, ethical responsibility, and theological care."

—Terry Ann Smith, Associate Dean of Certificate Studies
and Associate Professor of Biblical Studies,
New Brunswick Theological Seminary

"This volume offers a clear, elegant explication of the prophetic words in Isaiah 40–66. Julia O'Brien's commentary—enriched by insightful excursuses—responsibly illuminates the text's early meaning while demonstrating its enduring contemporary relevance. Throughout the work,

O'Brien intentionally applies constructive interpretive frameworks to challenge and counteract the harmful biases of past scholarship."

—Marc Zvi Brettler, Bernice and Morton Lerner Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Judaic Studies, Duke University

"It is a great joy to see Julia O'Brien joining the small cadre of feminist scholars singled out to comment on Isaiah, the prophetic book that stands out not only for its complexity and popularity but also for its moments of attention to women's experience. In Westminster John Knox's new Interpretation commentary series, O'Brien brings her literary acuity and ethical sensibilities to bear on one of the Bible's most misunderstood books. Succinctly slicing through centuries of layered misinterpretation, O'Brien employs close poetic reading to reveal what was at stake for a small community of ancient Judeans in a region dominated by Babylonian and Persian power. At the same time, she scans the contemporary horizon, articulating human and environmental crises threatening a very different society today. Thus she finds wisdom through ancient poetry for shaping contemporary theological reflection."

—Patricia K. Tull, A. B. Rhodes Professor Emerita of Old Testament, Louisville Seminary

"Julia O'Brien's beautifully written commentary on Isaiah 40–66 is a gift to preachers and scholars alike! O'Brien weaves together the historical realities that produced the texts with their continued relevance in the contemporary world. The commentary provides a sustained awareness of the legacy of anti-Semitism in Christian engagements with the book. In its place, the commentary listens to the Isaiah traditions through the voices of those marginalized by gender and racial politics, as well as maintaining a sustained engagement with Earth-centered hermeneutics."

—Corrine L. Carvalho, Professor Emerita of Theology, University of St. Thomas

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SERIES FOREWORD

The work of biblical interpretation is ever-changing because the art of reading and understanding is profoundly shaped by the lives of interpreters and their communities. The original Interpretation series was designed to meet the needs of clergy, teachers, and students as a resource that integrates literary, historical, theological, and pastoral insights. The decision to extend and reframe that series as the Interpretation Bible Commentary reflects awareness of the vast historical, cultural, and ecclesial changes that have occurred since the last volume of the previous series was published in 2005. These new volumes reflect the major changes in interpretative strategies as well as a keen awareness of a dramatically changing contemporary context.

Prominent among the significant changes in the interpretive landscape is the expanded range of voices in biblical scholarship. Biblical interpretation has always been a diverse, vibrant undertaking, but that breadth has not been reflected in publications. The diversity of contributors in this renewed series reflects respect and appreciation for a broad array of witnesses.

The primary focus of the Interpretation Bible Commentary series remains unchanged from its predecessor: to invite its readers into the lively work of careful biblical interpretation for the purpose of faithful exposition. Preachers and teachers seeking reflective guidance from the biblical texts will find these volumes an illuminating and highly accessible resource. This Interpretation Bible Commentary series will tend to the needs of its twenty-first-century audience while maintaining the priorities of its creators. The words of the original editors—James Mays, Patrick Miller, and Paul Achtemeier—still ring true: "What is in mind is the work of an interpreter who brings theological and pastoral sensitivity to the task and creates an interpretation which does not stop short with judgments about the text but is engaged in a dialogue of seeing and hearing with it as a contemporary believer."

Emphasizing both sound critical exegesis and strong theological sensibilities, these new volumes employ innovative approaches that allow for fresh readings of biblical texts, including difficult passages.

The series empowers readers to engage God's creation and our place in it with fresh eyes. Through their engagement with Scripture, the commentaries illumine our relationship with God, each other, and creation so that readers are propelled with new understanding and energy for fulfilling God's claims upon us in our rapidly changing global context.

Using several interpretive methodologies that are appropriate for the varying biblical texts, these volumes promise a compelling interpretation for the church and world today. Each exposition will situate the respective biblical books historically, theologically, literarily, and socially, providing a rich resource for unleashing the homiletical and formational potential of the text.

The text on which the commentary is based is the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVue). Because this translation is widely available, the printing of a text in the commentary itself is unnecessary. Each commentary is divided into sections appropriate to the particular book. Instead of offering a verse-by-verse interpretation, the commentary deals with passages as a whole. Thematic topics that are especially pertinent or have great bearing on the biblical book are addressed in excursuses. A "For Further Reading" section provides resources that are instructive for broadening the reader's hermeneutical horizons and diversifying the reader's understanding of how to approach the text.

The writers and editors hope these volumes will explain and apply the meaning and significance of the biblical texts while addressing key contemporary issues. The Interpretation Bible Commentary series is intended to draw the reader into an interpretative community where, collegially, reader and interpreter can more fruitfully engage these ancient texts for present living.

The Editors

Introduction

In seeking to forge the future, every generation must come to terms with the past. Children sort through the messy legacies inherited from their parents and grandparents. Institutions navigate the contours of their founders' visions and prior choices. Citizens construct meaning from their nation's stated ideals, achievements, and atrocities. Faith communities wrestle with the texts and practices of their traditions and the aspirations, failures, and physical spaces inherited from the ancestors.

This sifting of the past is ongoing work because the present is ever-changing. New characters take center stage, new anxieties occupy our attention, and new threats to life on Earth come into view. Preachers and teachers are keenly aware of this dynamic, of how the ever-changing present continually reframes our understanding of the past. Christians who read the same texts every three years in the Revised Common Lectionary, as well as Jews who recite the same Torah portions every year, know that a sermon or lesson plan crafted for one context falls flat if simply rehashed in another. The state of the community and the world into which a passage is spoken give it new resonance. How does a biblical text resonate when yet another Black man or woman is killed in police custody? When a congregation of twenty aging persons gathers in a church structure built for three hundred? When global climate change unleashes local flooding and wildfires? When politics polarize a nation and a congregation? In these and

myriad other contexts, how do we honor the past yet also attend to the crises of the present?

The material now found in Isaiah 40–66 provides a fascinating case study of writers reconfiguring religious traditions to address the concerns of their present. Two separate collections of texts, each emerging from a different historical and sociological context, were added to and integrated with one from a previous time period in a process of continuous meaning-making. The compilations we call Second Isaiah and Third Isaiah recast the words of First Isaiah and other ancient texts in ways that helped the "old, old story" speak a new word. To trace these dynamics in Isaiah 40–66, this commentary will imagine how these materials might have resonated in their ancient historical contexts. It will consider how their rhetorical aims, strategies, and style might have been heard in the past. It also will pay close attention to the ways that Second and Third Isaiah modified the texts they quote. Tracing intertextual connections and allusions, it will show that these authors asserted a new message while speaking the language of an earlier one.

Historical and literary analysis of biblical texts, however, is never done in a vacuum. Interpreters and their readers also are situated in specific times and places. We approach texts influenced not only by our personal histories but also by the histories of those who have interpreted the Bible before us and to us. Our ears and eyes have been trained to perceive and value certain things, both explicitly by religious traditions and also implicitly by art, music, and even printings of the text itself. As we enter a conversation already in progress, it is therefore important to understand what has already been said and what new voices need to be heard.

THE PREVIOUS CONVERSATION

Throughout much of Christian history, the book of Isaiah has been Christianized—interpreted as a series of prophetic predictions of Jesus's birth, death, and resurrection. New Testament writers and early church leaders heard echoes of their own testimony about Jesus in First Isaiah's description of Immanuel (7:14), a Prince of Peace (9:6), a shoot growing from the stump of Jesse (11:1), and a

peaceable kingdom led by a little child (11:6). They turned to Second Isaiah's moving portrayals of a Servant suffering on behalf of others (52:13–53:12) to explain the necessity and purpose of Jesus's crucifixion (Matt 8:17; Acts 8:31–35; 1 Cor 15:3). According to Luke, Jesus himself framed his own ministry on Third Isaiah's poem about a servant sent to proclaim good news to the poor and freedom to the oppressed (61:1; Luke 4:18). Also, the book of Revelation turned to its language of a new heaven and new Earth to craft its vision of future glory for the righteous (65:17; 66:22; Rev 21:1). As John Sawyer helpfully documents, early Christians deemed Isaiah not only an evangelist of the gospel but also the source of all truth: according to Jerome, "Whatever there is in Sacred Scripture, whatever the human tongue can express and the minds of mortals understand, is contained in that book" (Sawyer 1996, 2). By the Middle Ages, passages from Isaiah were cited to support beliefs about the Trinity, Mary's Immaculate Conception, and a wide range of Christian doctrines.

Over the centuries, various media taught Christians that Isaiah pointed to Jesus. In paintings, sculptures, and illustrated Bibles, Isaiah and other prophets stand beneath a seated holy mother and child, lifting up scrolls bearing their predictions. At Advent and Lent, lectionaries pair the most famous passages of Isaiah with key stories from Jesus's life. Isaiah's words are sung in Advent hymns such as "O Come, O Come, Immanuel" and "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," as well as Lenten hymns such as "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded." Community-wide events invite everyone to sing along with Handel's *Messiah*, harmonizing a christological understanding of Isaiah's proclamation of good tidings to Zion about a virgin bearing a son who is Wonderful, Counsellor, and Mighty God. It is little wonder that most Christians struggle to hear Isaiah as speaking about anything or anyone else than Jesus.

And yet, from the very beginning of this interpretive history, Christian appropriation of Isaiah has gone hand in hand with polemic against Jews. Those who could not or would not acknowledge the clarity of Isaiah's references to Jesus were deemed to have forfeited their right to the promises once made to Abraham. Christians lobbed Isaiah's words of judgment not against themselves but against the Jews: *they* became the stubborn people who had rejected the Holy One's overtures (65:2), who were blind and deaf (6:10),

and who walk in darkness (9:2). Paintings and sculpture within Christian churches and on their public-facing facades posed a triumphant female *Ecclesia* (Church) beside a blindfolded and downcast *Synagoga* (Synagogue). Nativity scenes depicted an ox and donkey bowing before the Christ child, imagery drawn from Isaiah's criticism of his people as more ignorant and willful than these "dumb" animals (1:3). In illustrated Bibles, Jews wearing the distinctive clothing legislated by Christian rulers tormented Jesus while he hung on the cross, and the cross itself became a winepress (63:3) pressing Jesus's blood into a communion chalice. Public disputations between Christian and Jewish scholars about the true meaning of Isaiah and other biblical passages became public spectacles, events orchestrated not for a respectful exchange of views but for humiliation of the Jewish population.

Although many contemporary Christians explicitly disavow such anti-Judaism, the continued practice of reading Isaiah as only or primarily about Jesus perpetuates this painful legacy. It reinforces the view that Isaiah's meaning is clear and clearly christological, and it leaves Christians puzzled about why everyone does not recognize Jesus as Messiah. If Isaiah only means what the history of Christianity has taught, nothing is to be learned from Jewish interpretations or our own fresh reading of the text itself. We would have no need to read Isaiah because we already know what it means. Accepting our responsibility to disrupt anti-Jewish interpretation of Isaiah challenges Christians to question their preaching practices, their beloved musical pieces, and the art that adorns their spaces—challenges that can feel like opposition to the Christian message itself. And yet, thoughtful teachers and preachers can suggest new ways of finding meaning in these ancient texts and in the complexities of our history. One way of doing so is to explore how past and present Jewish interpreters have understood Isaiah's resonances in their own contexts.

Most interpreters—Jewish, Christian, and secular—have also inherited the legacy of two centuries of biblical scholarship on the book of Isaiah. Current commentaries, curricula, and Internet resources respond to this legacy in various ways, but few remain untouched by claims advanced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarding the authorship of the book. In the late 1880s, the German scholar Bernhard Duhm argued that chapters 1–39 of Isaiah were written in the 700s BCE, during the lifetime of the Jerusalem

prophet Isaiah, but that the remaining chapters reflect the work of anonymous authors writing in later time periods. According to Duhm, chapters 40–55 were written in the sixth century BCE by an anonymous prophet of the Babylonian exile, and 56–66 were written in the fifth century BCE by those who had returned from exile. These three collections—First Isaiah, Second (or Deutero-) Isaiah, and Third (or Trito-) Isaiah—were subsequently joined by an editor into a single book (for an accessible overview of Duhm's significance, see Becker 2020).

As a result of this legacy, many interpreters today treat the book of Isaiah as a three-part anthology. Commentary series, for example, typically devote separate volumes to First, Second, and Third Isaiah, each assigned to a different commentator. Volumes that cover all of 40–66 are typically still organized into two parts. For example, in the 1995 Interpretation commentary on Isaiah 40–66, Paul Hanson discusses Second Isaiah and Third Isaiah as discrete "books," without mentioning their connection with one another or with First Isaiah.

Within the past few decades, an increasing number of scholars have contested this consensus. Some (including me) have offered slight modifications, such as beginning Third Isaiah at chapter 55 rather than 56. Posing more a substantive challenge, numerous redaction critics (who specialize in discerning clues to the stages of composition of a text) have traced in Isaiah many more than three layers of material; often technical in nature, their studies trace a long and complex history of the book's composition. Taking a quite different approach, other interpreters argue that the book of Isaiah is a single unit composed in the Persian period. Benjamin Sommer (1998), the author of the commentary on Isaiah 1–39 in this series, maintains that Isaiah 40–66 is a single collection closely associated with the book of Jeremiah.

Recent interpreters also have explored at length the explicit and implicit biases that shaped formative biblical scholarship on Isaiah. For example, dividing Isaiah into three parts is grounded in certain views about prophecy. By the nineteenth century, European academics argued that prophets were not foretellers of the future but instead forthtellers of ethical teaching (O'Brien 2022). Only the superstitious (or at least uneducated) could believe that the description of the Persian king Cyrus (Isa 45) was penned by a prophet living three hundred years earlier.

The hierarchy of value placed on First, Second, and Third Isaiah reflected the biases of these scholars as well. Influenced by cultural trends such as Enlightenment thought and Romanticism, they preferred the original genius of individual prophets over later imitators; and, shaped by the largely Lutheran contexts in which they worked, they disdained any writer interested in religious ritual. They praised First Isaiah as among the great "classical prophets" who preached ethics and lauded Second Isaiah as preparing the way for Christian teachings on universalism, monotheism, and vicarious atonement. Third Isaiah was instead criticized as proof of the decline of the once-vibrant Israelite faith into "Judaism," in which prophets were replaced by scribes obsessed with the Law, and despair fed dire apocalyptic visions. Especially in the story told by Protestant scholars, prophecy died in the postexilic period only to be rekindled with the coming of John the Baptist and the prophetic Jesus. In this way, the parts of Isaiah that resonate with Christian theology could be embraced while the rest was dismissed as Jewish.

Other biases run through Isaiah scholarship, which has long been dominated by White, heterosexual, and normatively bodied males. As I will explore, common treatments of the image of Mother Zion perpetuate damaging scripts about women, motherhood, divorce, and the death of children. Also, few explorations of the Suffering Servant have considered its resonance with the legacy of slavery or the lives of the disabled. "Teachings" gleaned from this book (about physical suffering, bereavement, and immigration, etc.) have been expounded as universal truths, with no consideration of how they affect real lives shaped by the myriad intersections of race, gender, physical and mental ability, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other dynamics of power. Clearly, what we have been taught about Isaiah is not the full story.

JOINING THE CONVERSATION

My treatment of the book of Isaiah attempts to wrestle with this complicated interpretive inheritance, taking responsibility for what I carry forward into the future. Here I explain my own perspective on the book, the way I as a biblical scholar understand its past, and the assumptions and goals that I bring to my work as a theological interpreter.

Historical Frameworks

Although I speak in opposition to the cultural and theological biases in which the distinctions between First, Second, and Third Isaiah were first formulated, my analysis nonetheless supports the division of Isaiah into three interconnected parts. Even though themes and vocabulary run through the whole book, each of the three sections is characterized by a different rhetorical aim, literary style, and implied historical context.

The core of chapters 1–39 reflects the geopolitical crises of the eighth century BCE, also described in the book of Kings, during which small states such as Israel and Judah faced the overwhelming might of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Especially in chapters 6–9, Isaiah insists that Judah should not mount military opposition against the advances of the Assyrian armies but instead trust YHWH to protect the city. Judah's failure to heed this warning results in the closing of people's eyes and ears until the Assyrians have destroyed the land. Only afterward might a remnant flourish, led by a Davidic king who will rule in righteousness. This dialectic of present punishment and future salvation runs throughout these chapters: scathing criticism of idolatry and arrogance appears alongside moving promises of light shining in darkness and the coming of a Prince of Peace. The core of First Isaiah was likely composed soon after the Assyrian period, with other blocks of material added later. Likely at the same time as the composition of Third Isaiah, chapters 1 and 2 were added as an introduction to the book as a whole, further imprinting upon the book of Isaiah the affirmation that YHWH will both judge the wicked and redeem Jerusalem.

Chapters 40–54 address the Judean community living in Babylon almost two hundred years later. The single rhetorical goal of this composition is to convince these second- and third-generation exiles to repatriate to Jerusalem, a directive stated explicitly at the center of the collection: "Go out from Babylon; flee from Chaldea; declare this with a shout of joy; proclaim it; send it forth to the end of the earth; say, 'The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!'" (48:20). After an introduction in 40:1–11, chapters 40–48 argue logically for relocation to Jerusalem by insisting on YHWH's favor, love, and comfort; mock the inferiority of Babylon and its gods; portray YHWH as the incomparable creator of all things; and insist that YHWH

has anointed the Persian king Cyrus to enact this return. Chapters 49–54 follow with an emotional appeal, portraying Jerusalem as a mother grieving for her exiled children and the community itself as a servant who once suffered but now is vindicated and exalted. Second Isaiah consistently alludes to texts from First Isaiah and a variety of other texts in a concerted effort to convince its audience that the terms of their deserved punishment have been completed and that the once-promised salvation has come. They can leave a familiar location, embark on a difficult journey, and return to their true home in full confidence of divine favor and protection. This material was likely written in Babylon itself not long after Cyrus's occupation of Babylon in 539 BCE.

Chapters 55–65 differ sufficiently from Second Isaiah to be best understood as a separate unit known as Third Isaiah. In terms of topic, it does not appeal for repatriation or mention Cyrus but instead discusses fasting, Sabbath observance, proper worship, and the role of foreigners in the community. In terms of tone, its words do not issue comfort but drip with complaint and lament. In terms of structure, it is organized not as a linear argument but in rings of discourse that progressively move outward from a core found in chapters 60–62. Most distinctively, it sharply decries divisions within the community between the righteous servants of YHWH and the wicked, who practice injustice and idolatry; only the former will inherit the promises made to all of Jacob in Second Isaiah, while the latter are subject to enduring punishment. Its modifications of earlier texts make punishment and salvation contingent on the doing of justice and the purity of worship. I join a minority of scholars in discerning the beginning of Third Isaiah not at chapter 56 but at 55, with the reclaiming of Second Isaiah's promises for the righteous. Although determining its historical setting is difficult, Third Isaiah's concerns resonate strongly with other texts emerging from the late fifth century BCE, when a small Judean community lived in Jerusalem under the control of the Persian Empire. Identifying the groups deemed righteous and wicked is similarly complicated, though the conflict clearly involves the priesthood in Jerusalem and specific criteria for membership in the Judean community.

These three blocks of material, each emerging from a distinctive moment in a community's history, come to us joined in an anthology known as the book of Isaiah. Reading them separately but alongside

one another helpfully reminds us of the contextual nature of theology, the ways in which different needs, pressures, and questions give rise to different understandings of the past and of the Divine. The dual theme of judgment and salvation introduced in chapters 1–2 carries throughout the whole, but in each context the emphasis differs. Second Isaiah challenges its community to believe that salvation is actually possible, despite the disappointments of the present; accommodation to the status quo is not the only option. Third Isaiah instead critiques the behaviors and attitudes that preclude abundant life and calls the community to face the consequences of its actions. In the past as in the present, the art of theological reflection requires discerning when it is a time for judgment and when it is a time for comfort; when it is time to remember the former things (46:8–9) and when it is time to anticipate a new creation (43:18; 65:17).

Naming Commitments

Commentators seeking to show the relevance of ancient texts for modern lives of faith and service try to make texts sound contemporary, to explain what they mean for the present. This search for connection is vitally important as those within faith traditions seek to hear a word for their own time, and yet this eagerness to hear a divine word for today often comes at the expense of downplaying or fully collapsing the gap between ancient authors and modern readers. Second Isaiah's words of comfort become direct words to us, and Third Isaiah's enemies become ours. This simple contemporizing of the text ignores the very real sociopolitical dimensions of ancient testimonies and the specific traumas of the communities for which they were composed. Few readers of this commentary are "exiles" in the sense Second Isaiah intends, nor do they practice "idolatry" in the technical way that Third Isaiah describes. We can draw analogies between the past and present, of course, but it is important to recognize our own agency in doing so. These texts can enrich our faith and lives if we read them not as clear windows into our own lives but instead hear their testimonies to how communities can navigate their challenges in conversation with their past.

The authors of these collections spoke anonymously, leaving us to infer their personalities, interests, and commitments. They did not call attention to their acts of reinterpretation or name their purposes.

My own approach differs. As much as I hope to honor ancient texts, I do not pretend to speak for them or make definitive claims about what their words mean for the present. I aim to avoid what I call "biblical ventriloquism," using the Bible and its imputed authority as a vehicle for amplifying my own perspectives. I believe it is ethically important to speak in my own voice, explaining how I read and why, as well as to challenge my own perceptions by engaging with the interpretations of others.

Various convictions inform this commentary and my work as a scholar. Here I identify a few chief ones.

It is imperative to confront and reject the anti-Judaism of earlier generations and contemporary Christianity. Addressing anti-Judaism is especially important in interpretation of the book of Isaiah, which has been so consistently molded to support Christian superiority over Jews. Not only will I call out examples of this violent interpretive legacy, but also I will repeatedly remind readers that Isaiah holds deep meaning for Jewish readers. For this reason, I discuss both Christian liturgical uses of Isaiah (such as in hymns or the Revised Common Lectionary) and also how Isaiah functions in the Jewish liturgical practice of haftarah readings (Hebrew, *haftarah*; pl., *haftarot*), in which passages from the Prophets accompany weekly Torah readings. The writings of Jewish feminists appear alongside my own. In calling attention to select Jewish interpretation, I do not presume to speak for Judaism but seek to honor the legitimacy of Jewish traditions of reading, learning from them even when my perspectives may differ. In this way, I am encouraged by the 2015 sculpture of *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia* standing outside the chapel at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, in which two figures of equal size and dignity compare their sacred writings. (For an image, see "Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time," n.d.).

Rigid scripts for gender and human sexuality inhibit human flourishing. Gender and sexuality studies underscore the problems of "essentialism," the presumption that biology determines one's personality and role in society. They stress instead the socially constructed nature of the identities and roles assigned to men and women and reveal how these constructs undergird dynamics of power such as patriarchy and heteronormativity. Rules for a "real man," a "true woman," and "the right kind of sex" do not grant authority to all males but instead those who behave in specific "approved" ways. In discussing the gendered images in Second and Third Isaiah—of women, men,

marriage, motherhood, children, eunuchs, and the Divine Warrior—I will trace the power inequities and strictures of their underlying ideologies. My own analysis as well as the insights of other feminist, womanist, and queer readers will help expose the real-life implications of these ideologies and also imagine fruitful alternative readings.

The insights of historically marginalized interpreters reveal truths overlooked or undervalued by the dominant culture. In the course of finding contemporary meaning in Isaiah, interpreters often spiritualize Isaiah's language. They appropriate its references to the blind and deaf as metaphors for their own spiritual failures and its depiction of imprisoned exiles as poetic reflections of their own psychic estrangements. Rarely considered are the physical specificities of blindness, deafness, incarceration, and involuntary migration or the implications of Isaiah's theological formulations for specific socially located human bodies: how the valorization of vicarious suffering affects already-suffering Black women, how the insistence that people only belong in their ancestral homes precludes welcome of refugees and immigrants, or how the Suffering Servant may speak about and for people with disabilities. Disability studies, Black theology, the voices of the voluntarily and involuntarily displaced, and other less-heard perspectives help us consider the lived impact of seemingly universal truths.

Every human endeavor must address the realities of the human-caused planetary devastation. Nothing, including biblical interpretation, can be conducted apart from the realities of the ecological upheavals with which we live. In this time of crisis, we must name the human selfishness that has taken Earth for granted and face a judgment of our own making rather than naively awaiting divine intervention. Our faith communities must prepare ourselves and others for the physical and psychic catastrophes ahead—the disruption of food and water supplies, the loss of homes and lives, the migrations imposed on climate refugees. While Christians prefer to repeat Isaiah's words of comfort, it is time also to reclaim its words of lament and powerful critique of arrogance. As I explain in the excursus "Second Isaiah's 'Creation Theology' and Ecological Activism" (pp. 33–34), my own engagement with current climate science leads me to critique the way Second Isaiah's "creation theology" is employed by Christian environmentalists; it also shapes my response to the book's final vision of destruction.

None of the Bible stands above respectful critique. Biblical texts are conduits for hearing the Divine, offering inspiration, challenge, comfort, and guidance to those who receive its words. As human contextual testimony to the Divine, they also reflect assumptions and values that must be questioned. When those assumptions are harmful, they must be respectfully named as such. In raising hard questions about Isaiah, I am not singling out the Hebrew Bible or the modern Jewish community for critique; I raise the same concerns about New Testament texts and diverse Christian testimonies. Instead, I join Jewish feminists in wrestling with our traditions and calling readers of the Bible to muster as much respectful honesty as possible for the sake of human flourishing and Earth itself.

Commitments in Naming

These commitments shape the names and terms I use in the commentary. My naming choices are imperfect but chosen to honor both ancient texts and their modern readers.

Most often, I use the term "Hebrew Bible" to describe the texts that Christians call the Old Testament and Jews call Tanak or Bible. Coined by scholars as a neutral, interfaith designation, the term Hebrew Bible falls short because it fails to acknowledge the different shapes of the Jewish and Christian Bibles and the different interpretative traditions through which each is read. But this term helps to move readers beyond the negative implications of the label "Old Testament," explicitly chosen by early Christian leaders to mark these texts as the "old covenant" replaced by the "new covenant" in Jesus. I have retained the name "New Testament," however, because commonly used alternatives (Second Testament, Greek Bible, Christian Bible) are also flawed.

Names for the Divine prompted a more complex decision. Ultimately, I chose to use the name "YHWH" when referring to descriptions of the Deity in the Hebrew Bible and ancient thought. Although many observant Jews do not write or speak aloud these four letters of the divine name (typically rendered LORD in modern English translations), the name is useful for maintaining some distance between ancient and modern conceptions of the Divine; to avoid biblical ventriloquism and stress the contextual nature of theological formulations, I modeled my own usage on the text itself. The same principle led me to use the term "God" when discussing New Testament texts,

which use the Greek term *theos*, despite its seeming universality. For modern theological affirmations, I use terms such as "the Divine," "the Holy One," and "the One." I recognize that using "YHWH" while interpreting the Hebrew Bible and "God" for the New Testament could reinforce common Christian misperceptions that the two Testaments speak of different Gods and that modern Christian beliefs in God simply follow the New Testament. I also recognize that voicing critique of Isaiah could be heard as a criticism of the "Jewish" Bible. But these inferences could not be farther from my intentions. Both Testaments witness to the same God to whom modern Christians pray but, importantly, in ways that differ from one another and from their contemporary readers. Both Christian and Jewish theologies do not simply replicate biblical texts but have been shaped by centuries of tradition.

Whenever possible, I have avoided gendered pronouns for ancient and modern descriptions of the Divine. Although both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament consistently employ masculine imagery for the Deity, I chose not to reinforce this characterization by referring to the Holy One as "he" or "him." I have not changed the biblical text by inserting feminine pronouns not present in the text or turned to the modern use of "they" as a singular generic. Rather, I have attempted to model a way of talking about the Divine apart from gender constructs. When masculinity is key to the meaning of a biblical image of the Deity, I have retained the masculine pronoun but placed it in quotes.

In describing the ancient audiences addressed by these texts, I have tried to balance a mirroring of the text's language with recognition of the continuity between the various groups described. For example, in order to explain Second Isaiah's rhetoric, I follow its lead in calling those living in Babylon "Jacob" even while recognizing that not all exiles were male or were of a common mind. Although the term "Israel" has signified different people and places in Jewish history, I have used the term "Israel" in a fluid way, at times replicating the usage of Second or Third Isaiah, at times referring generally to the ancient Jewish "community." I do indeed speak of the implied audiences of these texts as a community, though the degree of group cohesion in these settings cannot be assumed.

I have consistently capitalized "Earth" (without the article "the") in order to refer to our planet by name.

INVITING CONVERSATION

Second and Third Isaiah powerfully demonstrate that constructions of the past continually shape, and are shaped by, the dynamics of the present. The ways in which we tell the stories of our ancestors and cite the primary texts of our culture undergird our identities, our politics, our attitudes toward the world, and our conflicts with others. They direct us down certain paths, marking others as dangerous territory.

This dynamic is manifestly evident in modern political movements such as Christian nationalism. When the founding of the United States is narrated as a religious project, then the nation's mission can only be fulfilled when Christianity dominates law, government, and culture. Alternative narratives about the nation's history—ones that include the economic self-interest of our slaveholding founding fathers, the strictures imposed on some Christian groups by other Christians in power, the lynchings and internments carried out by faithful churchgoers, and so on—are deemed anti-American and anti-Christian. Artists' depictions of other truths—such as Titus Kaphar's painting *Behind the Myth of Benevolence*, in which a Black woman peers from behind the portrait of Thomas Jefferson—are commonly censored as subversive.

Certain narratives about the past also inform the ways in which shrinking congregations face their decline in numbers. When the "good old days" were those in which socially prominent White nuclear families filled the pews and Sunday school rooms teemed with young children, then congregations are locked into trying to recreate a long-gone past or railing in anger at secularization or youth sports games held on Sunday mornings. Alternative narratives about the church's past—its social, racial, and economic stratification; its failure to address the needs of the mentally ill or addicted within and beyond its doors; and the like—become criticisms of the pillars of the church and one's own grandparents.

Most strikingly perhaps, coming to terms with the catastrophic nature of the changes in our planet's climate is hampered by our stories we tell about Earth. In Christian contexts, too much environmentalism calls the faithful to "stewardship" of a good creation, ignoring that Earth is already damaged, perhaps beyond repair. We have been asked to be caretakers of Eden rather than emergency responders to a devastation of our own making. Like Second and

Third Isaiah, we too need to tell new stories. Inspired by previous generations and also fully aware of their shortcomings and our own, we must act in ways that meet the challenges of our own day.

As a commentary for preachers and teachers, this one may not be as directive as expected. For reasons I have shared, I resist using the Bible to tell people what to think or feel, and I do not claim to offer a neutral explanation of what the text "really says." Instead, I invite readers to join me in exploring historical and contemporary dimensions of Second and Third Isaiah. If we hold the Bible with open hands rather than clenched fists, we may find that it surprises us with the way it mirrors our own concerns and sparks our imaginations about what it means to be faithful here and now. As we envision the future, what from our past holds yet more life? What must be critiqued and reframed if we are to have a future?

Second Isaiah: Time to Come Home

Isaiah 40–54

INTRODUCTION

The singular focus of Second Isaiah is to convince Judeans living in Babylon to (re)locate to Jerusalem. This goal is stated explicitly in the middle of the collection:

> Go out from Babylon; flee from Chaldea;
> declare this with a shout of joy; proclaim it;
> send it forth to the end of the earth;
> say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!" (48:20)

Other passages echo the call:

> Depart, depart, go out from there!
> Touch no unclean thing;
> go out from the midst of it; purify yourselves,
> you who carry the vessels of the LORD.
> For you shall not go out in haste,
> and you shall not go in flight,
> for the LORD will go before you,
> and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (52:11–12)

The ones being addressed can be inferred from surrounding verses. The reference to Cyrus the Persian as YHWH's military agent

for this pending momentous event (45:1) places it in the context of the mid-sixth century BCE, during Cyrus's campaigns throughout Asia Minor and the Aegean and before his capture of Babylon in 539 BCE. Given this dating, the appeal is being issued 40–50 years after the Babylonian deportations of many Judeans to Babylon in 597 and 586 BCE, to the second and perhaps third generation of the exiled community. They are encouraged to "return" to a place they have never seen before, to embrace Jerusalem as their true home.

To convince the exiles to undertake such a difficult and dangerous task, Second Isaiah employs a wide range of persuasive tactics. It attempts to change their perception of their current situation as well as their past. In this way, it offers us a case study in how and why groups do (or do not) change. Thinking alongside Second Isaiah allows us to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of our own attempts to effect change—with congregations resistant to leaving their historic buildings, with individuals fearful of abandoning their current lives for an undefined future, and with groups firmly holding to specific constructions of the past and their implications for the future.

The History and Rhetoric of "Exile"

Readers of the Bible often take for granted that the Babylonian deportations of Judeans began a period of "exile," from which the community longed to be delivered. Biblical books such as Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah advance this perspective, and the intense longing for Jerusalem expressed in Psalm 137 has encouraged many readers to conceptualize Judean life in Babylon as a prison from which captives longed to be released. Such a sentiment, for example, is expressed in the hymn "O Come, O Come, Immanuel," which implores the Divine to "ransom captive Israel." In turn, biblical history often has been demarcated temporarily around this event. Israel's literature, governance structures, and theological formulations are categorized as preexilic, exilic, or postexilic.

Documents from outside the Bible, however, help us recognize the rhetorical nature of these biblical accounts. Economic records from the sixth and fifth centuries BCE describe various ethnic groups laboring in the region of Nippur (in modern Iraq), settled there as part of the Neo-Babylonian program of settling captives into agricultural areas that had been depopulated. They invigorated the region's

economy by providing agricultural labor, functioning more like tenant farmers than the slaves of the antebellum South.

From a town named Al-Yahudu (Judah Town), we have loans, marriage contracts, and wills of those who can be inferred to be Judean based on their names (for example, many include "Yah," related to the divine name "Yahweh"). Dating from the years 567–482 BCE (20–90 years after the fall of Jerusalem), these records provide a window into the lives of second- and third-generation descendants of Judeans deported from Babylon. Although families in this community retained identity through naming practices, they also interacted regularly with non-Judeans—trading goods, occasionally traveling to Babylon, and at times marrying those with Babylonian names. Ethnically identifiable, they are also embedded in Babylonian society. These documents, economic rather than theological in nature, do not reflect on sin, forgiveness, or the obligation to return to Jerusalem, but they instead bear witness to the lived reality of Judeans primarily engaged in tenant farming in Nippur. A similar characterization of Jews outside the land of Israel can be inferred from the letters and legal contracts from the fifth-century Jewish colony in Elephantine, Egypt. Jews in Elephantine maintained contact with Jerusalem and observed Passover, but they worshiped in their own temple and seem uninterested in "return." Such documents from Babylonia, Elephantine, and from later diaspora communities suggest that not all Jews living outside the land of Israel considered themselves "exiles."

Reading these documents may help us understand why the author of chapters 40–54 needed to expend so much energy on convincing the second and third generations of Judeans living in Babylon to engage in "reverse migration." To be willing to relocate to a place that they had never lived, they would need to be convinced that they belonged in Jerusalem, that the culture and religious system among which they lived was inferior to that of their native land, and that return travel would not be overly arduous. As in the case of modern migrant communities, the "myth of homeland" would need to be created in order for people to desire it. As described by Marshall Cunningham, "Rather than a community ready and waiting to 'return' to their ancestral homeland, the message and rhetoric employed by the Author of Isa 40–48 suggests that he/she was addressing an audience with an ambiguous (at best) view of return migration and of their own attachments to Judea, an audience that

needed to be persuaded to undertake the journey to the homeland of their parents and grandparents" (Cunningham 2019, 4).

Reading behind the rhetoric of Second Isaiah confirms our suspicion that not everyone desired to return. The very need for the "pro" argument suggests a "con" argument. Telling people not to be afraid suggests that they are fearful; insisting on YHWH's power suggests that they doubt it; repeated reminders of divine care suggest feelings of abandonment. To effect change would mean changing their minds. Comparing the poetry of Second Isaiah to the song traditions of Mexican immigrants to the United States, Gregory Cúellar suggests that both seek to solidify a tenuous cultural identity by orienting immigrants to their ancestral homelands (Cuéllar 2008, 66).

The Structure of Second Isaiah

Following a brief introduction, two key blocks of material pivot around the rhetorical hinge of the call to return in 48:20. Each block employs a different mode of persuasion.

40:1–11	Introduction to the collection
40:12–48:22	Appeal to logic: YHWH's power and care
48:20	**Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea**
49:1–54:17	Appeal to emotion: a grieving mother and a vindicated servant

After an overture of key themes in 40:1–11, 40:12–48:22 adopts the style of logical argument to establish two primary claims:

- YHWH is uniquely capable of enabling the return. As Creator of all things, YHWH has the power to make the repatriation happen, is able to alter geography to expedite travel (Isa 40), and is far superior to the idols of Babylonian religion (41, 44). YHWH has anointed Cyrus to tear down the doors of Babylon so that the people may return home (45).
- YHWH is preparing to reverse Jacob's fortunes. YHWH has forgiven Jerusalem, loves the people, and is ready to comfort them (Isa 40, 42–44). The judgments announced in First Isaiah are now cast as passed (40, 48), and promises made in First Isaiah are now actualized (42:9; 43:18; 44:26). Criticisms once used against the Judeans are now turned against Babylonian gods (44:18).

Most often taking a combative tone, akin to legal disputation, this subunit preempts possible counterarguments that YHWH is weak and/or callous.

Chapters 49–54 offer additional persuasive arguments in the form of two alternating gendered metaphors. Jerusalem (here called Zion) is portrayed as a mother(land) grieving the absence of her children, a mother who can be comforted by their return (49:14–50:3; 51:9–52:12; 54). Israel/Jacob is described in masculine terms, a servant who once suffered but now receives redemption and vindication (49:1–13; 50:4–51:8; 52:13–53:12). Both characters are constructed to evoke the audience's empathy, but each functions according to gendered stereotypes.

Implicitly assuming the exiles' concerns, Second Isaiah promises them safety and challenges their despair and doubt. It seeks to overcome opposition to the project of repatriation by portraying YHWH as both consoling and frustrated, comforting and incomparably powerful.

Many interpreters understand Second Isaiah as extending further, through 55. That chapter does indeed share themes and vocabulary with 40–54, reiterating the fulfillment of YHWH's plan (55:11; cf. 46:10) and YHWH's alteration of the physical world for the sake of the return (55:1–13; cf. 41:17–20). And yet, a more decisive shift appears in the collection at the end of 54. In 54:17, the term "servants" appears for the first time in the plural to refer to a subgroup within the community; this use of the plural, repeatedly in contrast to another group, is distinctive to Third Isaiah. In addition, 55 resonates more closely with the remainder of the book in style, tone, and vocabulary. It abandons the argumentation of 40–54 and instead adopts the rhetorical style of exhortation, calling the audience to draw near and seek life. Its theology does not proclaim unconditional acceptance of the whole community but instead insists that divine favor is conditional on repentance (55:7), presaging the recurrent theme in 55–66 that only the righteous are true servants of YHWH.

Whose Voice?

A key challenge facing interpreters of Second Isaiah is identifying its "voice." Both historically and from a literary perspective, who speaks these words?

To some degree, all prophetic books pose this challenge. Their opening sentences, known as superscriptions, often name a prophet but then insist that the words to follow are those of YHWH. Speeches that constitute the books intentionally blur any demarcation between the voice of the prophet and that of YHWH, as in Hosea 1–3 where the fusion of the Divine and human is explicit. In Jeremiah 9:1, the identity of the anguished voice is tantalizing unclear: is this the prophet, who cannot keep his message silent (4:19)? Or YHWH, whom the people do not know (4:22)? While modern translations such as the NRSVue occasionally use quotation marks to set apart divine speech, such punctuation does not appear in Hebrew. In the Prophets, there also is always another implicit voice, a "narrator" who reports on what YHWH has said to the prophet and what the prophet has done. The narrator obviously speaks in the third-person superscriptions and in narrated episodes such as Amos's encounter with Amaziah (Amos 7) or Jeremiah's imprisonment (Jer 37), but the narrator also is implicitly the master voice behind the book as a whole.

In the case of Second Isaiah (Isa 40–54), the matter of voice is even more complicated. Its style is modeled on that of the Prophets, relaying the divine voice, and yet here the prophetic messenger is not explicitly identified. The collection has been appended to materials associated with the eighth-century prophet Isaiah, without a separate superscription, and yet nowhere does it refer to the prophet Isaiah by name. Are we *literarily* to read these words as if Isaiah were speaking, even though *historically* the collection comes from a later time? Or are we encouraged to imagine another anonymous prophetic voice that speaks in response to Isaiah's message? Adding further complexity is the fact that the speaking voice often shifts throughout the collection. In the opening verses, someone is told by YHWH, "Comfort my people" (40:1); a voice cries out further instructions (40:3); and someone identified as "I" seeks to clarify the instructions (40:6). Later in the collection, someone called a servant will speak as "I" (49:1–6). Are these the same characters?

Many interpreters talk about Second Isaiah as an anonymous prophet, a real person who lived in the sixth century BCE. Such a speculation, I argue, is grounded too heavily in a long-standing bias toward imagining prophets as lone voices of their generations, courageous individuals who speak to and outside of their communities

(O'Brien 2024). Given the multiple references to other ancient texts, this material may have been produced by a scribe or a group of scribes who reframed the community's traditions to support a specific course of action.

To maintain the anonymity and ambiguity of the material's origins, this commentary uses "Second Isaiah" as the name for this block of material. This name refers to the text itself and the way in which I as an interpreter understand its nature and intentions. I use the term "narrator" not to mean a historical author but as the literary voice that occasionally speaks independently of reporting divine speech. The details of Second Isaiah's origins, like the origins of all biblical materials, cannot be definitively reconstructed historically. And yet, the worlds that their words create, enable, and deny clearly call for our close attention.

Literary Style

Like the majority of prophetic literature, Second Isaiah is poetry. It expresses meaning in parallel lines, wordplay, repetition, and exaggeration. It evokes mental images and seeks emotional response. Distinguishing between literal references and figurative ones is often impossible.

One of the key literary devices employed by Second Isaiah is allusion. Multiple scholars have extensively chronicled the diverse ways in which Second Isaiah cites and reframes earlier biblical traditions. Patricia Tull (P. Willey for some of her work) underscores its complex interplay with the book of Lamentations, "correcting" Zion's complaint that she has no comforter (51:12; Lam 1) and that YHWH has forgotten her plight (49:14; Lam 5:20) (Willey 1997). Benjamin Sommer argues that the deep dependence of Second Isaiah on the book of Jeremiah suggests that it was originally imagined as a continuation of Jeremiah rather than Isaiah (Sommer 1998). Other past traditions are evoked and modified as well: "past events—both real and invented—are selected, rearranged, and deployed in such a way as to reconstitute, or resituate, the community's narrative identity" (Duperreault 2013, 264).

As I'll explore throughout the commentary, Second Isaiah evokes the past for the sake of the present in several ways:

- It reverses the judgment pronounced by (First) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations.
- It reiterates previous predictions of a hopeful future and declares them fulfilled.
- It redeploys the imagery from the people's founding, applying it typologically to the present.

In Second Isaiah, the past is not static. It reveals new meanings in new contexts. Such "newness" is strikingly clear in the collection's allusions to Davidic kingship. Imagery that once described the Davidic line (Isa 7, 9, 11) is now applied to YHWH alone (41:21; 42:1–9; 44:6; 49:22; 52:7). The encouragement "Fear not," once offered to kings (7:4–9; 37:6), is now extended to Israel as a whole (41:8–13, 14–16; 43:1–7; 44:2–5). Importantly, suffering also takes on a new meaning: as the Prophets insist, Jerusalem may have suffered for its sins (40:2), but the example of the servant reveals that suffering can also be redemptive (Isa 53).

Especially in chapters 49–54, Second Isaiah also relies heavily on the use of metaphors. Comparing exiles to a servant and the city of Jerusalem to a mother, it seeks to elicit the socially conditioned emotional responses to these gendered roles. In the discussion that follows, I explore both the effectiveness of these comparisons and their dangers, the ways in which they not only reflect social constructs but also reinforce them.

Connections with Our Present

In what ways can modern readers find meaning in a collection so singularly designed to persuade the descendants of Judeans exiled to Babylon to (re)locate to Jerusalem? How do the faithful continue to find meaning in ancient texts?

Throughout the history of Christian interpretation, a common strategy has been to spiritualize the message of ancient texts. Following this trend, Second Isaiah's claims are often stripped of their ancient context and framed as universal truths about the Divine's unchanging character. The comfort, salvation, and care offered to Jacob is transferred to all the faithful and/or all of humanity. The Holy One's power in and beyond creation is cast as an eternal divine trait. "Exile" becomes something everyone experiences, a common human state of

alienation and aloneness. While such an approach does allow the text to speak directly to the present, it does so only by reading Second Isaiah selectively, glossing over other aspects, including its sarcasm, accusations, and xenophobia.

And it also erases other people's trauma, the violence of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem that included destruction of infrastructure, rape, death, and forced displacement. Reading Second Isaiah's "comfort" alongside the agony expressed in Lamentations and the violence lingering in the words of Jeremiah helps readers recognize the scandalous nature of Second Isaiah's call to move beyond a traumatic past. Reading Second Isaiah alongside extrabiblical documents such as those from al-Yahudu and Elephantine reminds us, too, that not all ancient persons interpreted their experiences in Babylon in the same way.

A contrary approach to reading Second Isaiah for the present is also common: treating this ancient text as "merely" a politically motivated artifact from the past. Given its seeming support of the Persian king Cyrus, some interpreters cast these words as pro-Persian propaganda, a thinly veiled attempt to grant theological warrant to Cyrus's imperial expansion (Blenkinsopp 1988). Read in this way, Second Isaiah becomes an intellectually interesting window into ancient history, a puzzle piece that allows us to reconstruct the dynamics of the ancient world. And yet, this approach often bears scant theological fruit, offering little for the modern faithful beyond information.

In an attempt at responsible and faithful interpretation, my commentary will instead read Second Isaiah within its historical context while also exploring the theological and ideological significance of its framing of reality. In keeping with the poetic nature of the material itself, my reflections will often draw comparisons between the past and present for the sake of sparking our ethical imaginations. Throughout, I will consider the strengths and weaknesses not only of Second Isaiah's theological claims but also of its techniques of persuasion. As we seek to effect change in our own communities, what can we gain and of what should we be warned by our careful attention to the ways in which Second Isaiah sings new words to familiar tunes?

As I'll explore, Second Isaiah touches on issues of vital importance to faith communities and civic life.

- Its insistence that Jerusalem is the only true home for those of Judean ancestry resonates in multiple ways with modern controversies about immigration, both voluntary relocation and displacements imposed by political violence and climate catastrophes. How are "home" and "exile" defined and by whom? Is living a hybrid identity in Diaspora a faithful option?
- The collection's moving portrait of Zion as a woman whose well-being depends on the correct behavior of her children reverberates strongly in a contemporary society where expectations for women are both personally fraught and politically charged. Does placing a high value on motherhood benefit all women and bless all aspects of women's lives?
- Second Isaiah's reframing of the past to spur action invites deep reflection on modern discourse that relies heavily on distinct constructions of the past. How do understandings of their history constrain congregations, political movements, and individuals, and how do new configurations of their story energize them? How do constructions of the past serve as authoritative, dictating the future? Whose past do they ignore?

As we explore these and other resonances between Second Isaiah and our own world, we endeavor to seek greater wisdom and insight into the past and into the present.

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