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Human-Nature Blends and the Parent-Child Relationship in Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy

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Abstract

Texts from Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus attest a range of blends between the natural and human worlds in the domain of parent-child relationships. This essay uses conceptual blending theory to analyze the integration of natural imagery with human and divine parents in both corpora. The results of this analysis reveal patterns in the use of nature to conceptualize parenthood and differences in the manner and extent to which each prophetic corpus draws on specific taxonomies within nature.

Keywords: *Isaiah, prophecy; Akkadian; nature; ecology; childhood; conceptual blending theory; metaphor*

Introduction

The present work analyzes the book of Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts for their blending of non-human creation with parent-child relationships from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Cognitive linguistic frameworks were designed to explain and describe language in ways coherent with what is known about human psychology from other fields that study the human mind.[3] Cognitive

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[3] For an accessible introduction to cognitive linguistics that juxtaposes it to formalist linguistics, see Vyvyan Evans, *The Language Myth: Why Language is Not an Instinct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For a similar popular presentation of formalist linguistics that has not stood up well to growing evidence, see Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (New York, NY: Harper, 1994). On ancillary evidence supporting cognitive linguistics, see Michael Tomasello, *Constructing a Language: A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Daniel Everett, *Language: The Cultural Tool* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2012); Namhee Lee, et al., *The Interactional Instinct: The Evolution and Acquisition of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

linguistics explains how language reflects embodied cognition that develops from experience of the physical and social worlds.[4] This essay will focus on how texts in Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian prophecy blend the natural and human worlds to evoke and construe parent-child relationships.

We organize our experiences by creating mental models of the world. Language does not refer directly to the world but evokes these mental representations. Experience-derived knowledge of mothers, for example, gives rise to multiple mental models that influence the meanings of the word "mother."[5] The birth model selectively profiles the mother as the person who gave birth, who might not be the same person who raised the child. Hence, English has the term "birth mother" to clarify this model of motherhood when others do not apply. A second model is the genetic model of motherhood, in which the mother is understood as the person who contributed genetic material. The ancients would not have had this conceptualization, but they did have Lakoff's genealogical model in which the mother is the nearest female ancestor. The Israelites cared about perpetuating their family lines and inheritance, although this is most often expressed through patrilineal lines rather than matrilineal. Third, the nurturance model of motherhood focuses on the care a mother provides. The emotional bonds between mother and child involve nurturance above the other models. The marital model of

[4] For an accessible introduction, see Vyvyan Evans, *The Crucible of Language: How Language and Mind Create Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For textbook introductions, see Vyvyan Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics: A Complete Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Friederich Ungerer and Hans-Jörg Schmidt, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 2006). For an introduction focused on biblical studies, see Ellen van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009). There are several compendious works encompassing the field such as Jeanette Littlemore and John R. Taylor, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Barbara Dancygier, *The Cambridge Companion to Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Xu Wen and John R. Taylor, *The Routledge handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2021).

[5] This example famously comes from George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987). See also Alan Cienki, "Frames, Idealized Cognitive Models, and Domains" in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, eds. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170–87.

motherhood identifies the mother as the wife of the father. The English term "stepmother" specifies this model. One can see parallel models of fatherhood. Fathers do not give birth but participate in procreation and, like mothers, can be subjects of the verb *YLD* ("to give birth; *hiphil*, to beget"). As we will see, these models can be helpful for discussing and differentiating how various texts conceptualize the parent-child relationship. The three most important models in biblical literature are birth, nurturance, and genealogy, as texts typically select one or more of these as the focus of attention.

In what follows, we first introduce conceptual blending theory, which underlies metaphor. Proceeding according to the relevant models of motherhood, the study will then analyze ecological blends with the parent-child relationship attested in the book of Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts. Because many of the embodied experiences that structure conceptual metaphors transcend cultural differences, languages may share such a metaphor. However, variances in specific linguistic instantiations illuminate nuanced differences in their cultural and ideological contexts. When conceptual metaphors for a particular target domain differ between cultures, the result is a stark difference in the respective conceptualization of that domain.[6] Comparison between blends in the Isaianic and Neo-Assyrian corpora both illuminates and explains differences in the conceptualization of the parent-child relationship attested in each, particularly when facets of this relationship are in turn recruited to conceptualize the divine.[7] Isaiah makes extensive

[6] Raymond W. Gibbs, "Evaluating Conceptual Metaphor Theory," *Discourse Processes* 48 (2011): 538–39. See also, Zoltan Kövecses, "Language, Figurative Thought, and Cross-Cultural Comparison," *Metaphor and Symbol* 18 (2003): 311–20.

[7] The present essay is correspondingly lopsided in favor of Isaian material due to the asymmetry between the two corpora, but the work continues a long tradition of comparing biblical and ANE metaphor and prophecy. Previous comparative studies of biblical and Ancient Near Eastern conceptual metaphors include Marjo Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine,* UBL 8 (Munich: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990); Joseph Lam, "Psalm 2 and the Disinheritance of Earthly Rulers: New Light from the Ugaritic Legal Text RS 94.21," *Vetus Testamentum* 64: 34–46; Adam E. Miglio, "Imagery and Analogy in Psalm 58:4–9," *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015): 114–35; William R. Osbourne, *Trees and*

use of nature imagery to describe motherhood, but the Neo-Assyrian texts employ this blend relatively rarely. More generally, Isaiah includes extensive references to the natural world while the Akkadian have relatively few. The conclusion will summarize the results of the study and indicate patterns that emerge from the data.

Conceptual Blending Theory

Cognitive models and conceptual metaphors provide important structures through which we understand and communicate our experience of the world. Through metaphor, concepts from one domain of knowledge, called the source domain, are projected onto corresponding concepts in another domain of knowledge, called the target domain. The source domain provides concrete structures that can be used to understand and speak about more abstract targets.[8] The natural environment is fundamental to a culture's lived experience and provides a wealth of source domains through which complex targets can be structured and understood.

Conceptual blending theory arose in part from the study of conceptual metaphors and was developed through the combined efforts of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.[9] Their approach

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Kings: A Comparative Analysis of Tree Imagery in Israel's Prophetic Tradition and the Ancient Near East, Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements, 18 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017). For an extended comparison of Isaiah and Neo-Assyrian prophecy, see Matthijs J. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[8] For example, many languages structure the passage of time by recruiting the embodied experience of motion through space. For an overview of the spatialization of time, including the contributions of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor TIME IS (OBJECTS IN) MOTION ON A PATH and Joseph Grady's NOW IS HERE, see Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 105–8. Following the conventions established since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), this article will use small caps to indicate conceptual metaphors, abstract domains, and input spaces.

[9] The pioneering work produced by the two is presented in Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); a summary of its contributions within the field of cognitive linguistics and assessment of its ability to explain the emergence of meaning in complex figurative expressions can be found in: Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 5256–560; Raymond W. Gibbs and Herbert L. Colston, *Interpreting Figurative Meaning* (New

combines aspects from multiple veins of cognitive linguistic research to form a theory that views the semantic and syntactic structures of language as a series of prompts to construct meaning. Thus, when one thinks or talks, the information encoded in language prompts the construction of "small, conceptual packets" termed mental spaces.[10] These mental spaces are the basic units of conceptual blending theory and are integrated through basic cognitive and creative operations that are able to produce an emergent meaning that is greater than the sum of its parts.[11] A mental space contains the discrete elements of knowledge associated with a concept and some degree of structure based on relationships known to exist between these elements. This structure may be only partial, and a specific prompt to create a mental space will not evoke all knowledge related to a concept. The mental space NILE RIVER, for example, can draw on entrenched knowledge of the geography of Egypt, cycles of seasonal flooding, or the narrative of the birth of Moses, but all may not be in view at once.

The "blending" of conceptual blending theory occurs when connections between mental spaces are made and form networks. The most basic network has two input spaces (such as the source and target of a metaphor) whose elements may differ in specificity and structuring. Individual knowledge and the specific linguistic context prompt connections, or mappings, based on the relationships and commonalities between inputs.[12] When the mind "runs the blend,"

York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 109–13. For previous applications of conceptual blending in Biblical Studies, with contextualized discussion of theory, see for example, Timothy Brookins, "A Tense Discussion: Rethinking the Grammaticalization of Time in Greek Indicative Verbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137 (2018), 147–68; Brian C. Howell, *In the Eyes of God: A Metaphorical Approach to Biblical Anthropomorphic Language*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2013); William E. W. Robinson, *Metaphor, Morality, and the Spirit in Romans 8* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016); David A. Silva, "Seeing Things John's Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6–13," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (2008), 271–98; Blake E. Wassell and Stephen R. Llewelyn, "'Fishers of Humans,' the Contemporary Theory Of Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending Theory," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014), 627–646.

[10] Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40.

[11] Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics,* 525.

[12] The relationships that produce mappings include identity, similarity, or analogy (Seana Coulson, "Metaphor comprehension and the brain," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought,* ed. Raymond W. Gibbs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 181.

these commonalities are projected, along with additional elements of either input space, onto a blended space. Not all elements from both inputs will be projected onto the blend. Rather, direct linguistic context and background assumptions influence the selective projection of elements.[13] When integrated, a novel "emergent structure" arises that is not a direct copy from any input.[14] More complex networks can have multiple input spaces and even multiple blended spaces. Through blending, complex, diffuse, and abstract concepts achieve a "human scale" that is more intelligible and useful to human cognition.[15]

A communicator may intentionally use a blend to guide reasoning in ways that prompt specific emotional reactions. Blending can thus be a valuable polemic tool, as "acceptance of the validity of such blends inevitably commits the listener to a certain course of action (or, at least, a potential course of action), and this effect can be reliably predicted by the blend author."[16] The exhortations of Isaiah 51:1–2 exemplify the ability of blending to direct attention and lead the audience to a specific outlook:

1 Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek Yhwh;

look to the rock (*ṣûr*) from which you were hewn,

and to the quarry from which you were dug!

2 Look to Abraham your father (*ʾăbîkem*), and to Sarah who bore you (*təḥôlelkem*);

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[13] Seana Coulson and Todd Oakley, "Blending and Coded Meaning: Literal and Figurative Meaning in Cognitive Semantics." *Journal of Pragmatics* 37 (2005): 1517.

[14] A detailed description of the mental spaces that comprise a network can be found in Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40–49; an abridged explanation is present in Mark Turner, "Conceptual Integration," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, 377–93.

[15] Certain scales of distance, intentionality, and cause and effect relationships are more compatible with the way human cognition evolved and is culturally supported to deal with reality. For illustration of the mechanics of achieving human scale, see Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 309–352, esp. 322–25.

[16] Edward Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 188.

for he was one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many!

These verses prime the addressee to agree with the claim in v. 3 that "Yhwh comforts Zion" and to derive from Zion's imminent exultation a measure of comfort for themselves as well.

Both assent and comfort are achieved through a process of two blends. The first uses the metaphor of quarrying to evoke and construe the addressee's inclusion in a larger social and religious whole. The direct address of v. 1 and subsequent commands to consider the "rock from which you were hewn" and "quarry from which you were dug," prompt the creation of two input spaces. In the first space, is the QUARRIED ROCK. Elements in this input space draw on basic knowledge of the actual quarrying process. This rock originated in a quarry pit and was separated from the whole of the rockface through a process of hewing and quarrying. Because of this process, time has passed between its existence as part of the rockface and its current state. However, this process did not change the actual substance of the rock, which continues to be as it was when part of the larger rockface. In the second input space is the ADDRESSEE. This ADDRESSEE is directly characterized as a group of those who "pursue righteousness" and "seek Yhwh." The ADDRESSEE is thus in a relationship with the divine. The second plural verbal forms allow an individual to identify with the whole being addressed. The part-to-whole relationship is an element common to both input spaces. When the blend is run, this structure is projected onto the blended space along with elements of both inputs. The communal ADDRESSEE, who is in a relationship with the divine, is the "part" in the part-to-whole relationship. This relationship is now characterized by elements of the QUARRIED ROCK's relationship to its whole. The whole is the origin point. There is an identity between the part and whole that continues across time.

The "whole" in this relationship remains relatively uncharacterized in the first blend. "Rock" (*ṣûr*) is a common enough metaphor for Yhwh, and Deut 32:18 explicitly terms God "the Rock that bore

you," providing a link to the language of the next verse.[17] However, the typical position of medieval rabbinic exegetes such as Ibn Erza identified Abraham and Sarah as the "rock" and "quarry" of the first verse.[18] The second blend will help to clarify the whole of which the ADDRESSEE is a part. In parallelism to v. 1, v. 2 issues the command to "look to Abraham your father" and to "Sarah who bore you." The second further develops the first so that the, now blended, ADDRESSEE becomes an input space once more. In the second input space are ABRAHAM AND SARAH, identified as father (*'āb*) and biological mother (*təḥôlel*; *polel* of *ḤYL*, "to bring forth with labor pains"). In this sense, they are an origin point. ABRAHAM is defined as one who was called, blessed, and made many by God, emphasizing his relationship with God. The communal ADDRESSEE is also in a relationship with the divine, retained from the previous blend. The ADDRESSEE's part-to-whole relationship includes its whole as an origin point. When this blend is run, the communal ADDRESSEE emerges with an origin in ABRAHAM AND SARAH, part of the whole that they represent. Because of the relationship to the whole defined in the previous blend, a continuity exists between the ADDRESSEE and ABRAHAM AND SARAH. The identity between part and whole allows the characteristics of ABRAHAM's relationship with the divine to become expectations for the ADDRESSEE's own relationship with Yhwh. These expectations are positive: being called, blessed, and made many. Such expectations are indeed a cause for comfort, and they prime the addressee to accept a favorable outlook when turning towards the future.

Conceptual blending theory is explicitly concerned with the mental processes underlying the "on-line," or real-time, construction of meaning, rather than a systematic program of literary analysis.[19] Nevertheless, blending facilitates the examination of a broad range

[17] Four of the six other metaphoric uses of *ṣûr* in Isaiah have this meaning (17:10, 26: 4, 30:29, 44:8; the remaining two are 5:28, 8:14).

[18] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday, 2002), 326.

[19] Coulson and Oakley, "Blending and Coded Meaning," 1534.

of linguistic constructions which recent research considers part of the expanding definition of figurative meaning.[20] Particularly relevant to the prophetic genre, the inferences prompted by the mappings between selectively projected elements of individual inputs change the conceptualization of those inputs. The result is often an "emotionally loaded view of … information" with heightened persuasive power.[21]

The Birth Model of Motherhood

When used to structure a source domain, both corpora ground the birth model of motherhood solely in the *human* experience of giving birth. Although mammals give birth to live young, neither Isaiah nor the Neo-Assyrian oracles make use of animal birth to describe a human experience. Rather, in Isaiah, the human experience of birth maps onto other domains of human experience. This section will briefly review the uses of the birth model before analyzing the example of the earth giving birth.

The verb *YLD* most often profiles human birth as an embodied reality.[22] Primarily, the verb profiles a woman giving birth (Isa 7:14; 8:3; 9:5; 45:10; 54:1; 65:23), but the *hiphil* profiles men engendering children in Isa 39:7. In other places, the experience of childbirth blends with other conceptualizations. Most often, CHILDBIRTH blends with the experience of CRISIS. The blend highlights the danger of the birth process while excluding or minimizing its result, new life.[23] The metaphor BIRTH IS A CRISIS appears in Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17;

[20] Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6–7. Dancygier and Sweetser note that there is no clear boundary between figurative and literal language (pp. 1–4), but ambiguous cases can still be analyzed because blending theory is not limited to metaphorical language.

[21] Dancygier and Sweetser, *Figurative Language,* 82–83. See also the analysis of the 2000 political ad referencing the murder of James Byrd Jr. in Seana Coulson and Todd Oakley, "Blending Basics," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11 (2001): 175–76, 194.

[22] For the use of "profile" to describe how expressions evoke concepts and direct attention to aspects of those concepts, see Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2008), 66–73; for a cognitive linguistic approach to lexical semantics, see Zeki Hamawand, *Semantics: A Cognitive Account of Linguistic Meaning* (Sheffield; Equinox, 2016).

[23] Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as Metaphor: Evidence from the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and 1QH XI, 1–18 (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 382; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

37:3; 42:14; 66:7–9. In conjunction with this conception, CHILDBIRTH also blends with the experience of PLANNING and ACTION (Isa 33:11; 54:9; 59:13). Here the blend construes external behavior as the result of internal processes. The ZION-WOMAN blend involves both the birth and nurturance models of motherhood (e.g., 49:21; 51:17–20; 54:1–3; 66:7–16).[24] These models can be separated as Zion gains children without giving birth (Isa 49:21).[25] In Isaiah 23, the CITY-WOMAN blend appears with Sidon as the city. In v. 4, the city of Tyre interjects in the discourse:

I have not been in labor or given birth (*lō' ḥaltî wəlō' yāladtî*),

nor raised (*giddaltî*) young men or reared (*rômamtî*) young women.

The text is corrupted so that the speaker is uncertain, but "the fortress of the sea" almost certainly means Tyre, the island city.[26] The text construes Tyre as a barren woman to represent her low status. The CHILDLESS WOMAN input space blends with the collapse of TYRE's trading network and the consequent decline in the city's wealth and power. Like the ZION-WOMAN blend, the passage compresses the complex physical and social reality of a city to "human scale" (literally) by blending it with a human woman.[27] The TYRE-WOMAN blend draws on the birth and nurturance models of

[24] See Marc Wischnowski, *Tochter Zion: Aufname und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschrift des Alten Testament Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* 89 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001); Maggie Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah: A Metaphor for Zion Theology* (SBL 155; New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2013); Frederik Poulsen, "Jerusalem/Daughter Zion in Isaiah" in *The Oxford Handbook of Isaiah,* ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 265–79; David A. Bosworth, "Daughter Zion and Weeping in Lamentations 1–2," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 38 (2013): 217–37.

[25] Low proposes that Yhwh gives birth to the children (*Mother Zion,* 111–19).

[26] Some reject this expression as a later gloss: Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27* (trans. Thomas Trapp; Minneapolis; Fortress, 1997) 407 and 426. Still others see it as Sidon itself: Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AB 19; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) 340. For the Tyre reading, see J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 299; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39* (New American Commentary 15A; Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007), 399–400.

[27] Relations marked by cause and effect, change, part-to-whole relationships, or intentionality, in addition to large intervals in time and space, are frequently compressed in blends. This process scales the relationship and allows only certain elements to be activated in a particular linguistic context. See Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think,* 113–38, 312–25.

motherhood, only to clarify that she is not a mother in either sense. None of these examples blend childbirth with non-human creation.[28]

In a difficult text, Isa 26:16–19 brings together several uses of the birth model of motherhood with nature imagery:

> 17 As a pregnant woman about to give birth (*hārāh taqrîb lāledet*)
>
> writhes and cried out in pain (*tāḥîl tiz̆ʿaq baḥăbālêhā*),
>
> so were we before you O Yhwh.
>
> 18 We conceived and writhed in pain (*hārînû ḥalnû*),
>
> giving birth only to wind (*yāladnû rûaḥ*);
>
> success (*yəšûʿōt*) we have not achieved for the earth (*ʾereṣ*),
>
> no inhabitants for the world were born (*ûbal yippəlû yōšbê tēbēl*).
>
> 19 But your dead shall live (*yiḥyû mētêkā*),
>
> their corpses[29] shall rise (*nivlōtam yəqûmûn*)!
>
> Awake and sing, you who lie in the dust!
>
> For your dew is a dew of light, and the land will give birth to the shades (*wāʾāreṣ rəpāʾîm tappîl*).

The beginning of the passage establishes two input spaces: a pregnant WOMAN IN LABOR and WE, the people of Judah. At first, the text employs birth as an image of crisis (v. 17), but the speaker continues the birth image to encompass the disappointment of giving

[28] If "the fortress of the sea" is a later gloss, and the Sea itself speaks (not Tyre), then the blend indicates the emptiness of Phoenician sea-borne trade, which will end and thereby end the future hope of Sidon. The context does not evoke the wider mythological context of the Sea as chaos but focuses on the fate of the maritime Phoenician cities.

[29] The MT reads *nəvēlatî* which may be a first-person suffix in contrast to the prior second-person singular suffix on "your dead." An original text with a different suffix may have been corrupted, or the yod here may not be a suffix at all. See Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 329; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*. Most translations follow the Syriac and render "their corpses."

birth to wind, an ephemeral, unsubstantial, and empty offspring (v. 18). This extension creates an emergent structure in which the COMMUNITY-WOMAN in CRISIS-LABOR produces nothing, no people are born to repopulate the land. Scholars generally understand *NPL* in v. 18 as profiling birth and translate it accordingly.[30] This use of *NPL* appears also in the subsequent verse, which construes the earth as a mother who will give birth to the dead. Since the people failed to populate the land, the LAND blends with a PREGNANT WOMAN to supersede the human inputs of the previous blend and solve the population problem. Within the LAND-WOMAN blend, the conventional blend of PEOPLE and PLANTS emerges with the mention of dew.[31] Dew, like rain, was a significant source of water in Judean agriculture and promises new growth.[32] "Dew of light" is an unusual expression likely influenced by the birth imagery and the idea that birth represents a transition from darkness to light.[33] The corpses that lie in the dust are like seeds that will germinate and burst above the soil into the light with the help of dew. In a similar way, the land will give birth to the dead. The dead lie in the dust as if asleep (Ps 88:11; Jer 51:39), and their rising resembles both seeds sprouting and babies being born. The image of corpses springing from the ground to populate the community offers the joy of birth without the danger and crisis of labor.[34] In this respect, it resembles Zion becoming a mother without giving birth or investing in raising

[30] See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 556; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 367; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 332. Note the noun *NPL* meaning miscarriage or stillbirth in Ps 58:9; Job 3:16; Ecc 6:3. LXX misunderstands the expression, rendering it *alla pesountai hoi enoikountes epi tēs gēs* ("the ones who dwell on earth will fall").

[31] On the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, see below and Benjamin M. Austin, *Plant Metaphors in the Old Greek of Isaiah* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 69; Atlanta: GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2019).

[32] See similarly, Hos 14:6. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 569–70; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 371; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 332–33.

[33] See Job 3:16. The baby as one who has "seen the light" appears regularly in Akkadian spells to calm crying babies. See Walter Farber, *Schlaf, Kindchen, Schlaf!: Mesopotamische Baby-Beschwörungen und -Rituale* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 2l; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989); David A. Bosworth, *Infant Weeping in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek Literature* (Critical Studies in Hebrew Bible 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

[34] Bergmann elaborates on labor as a metaphor for crisis in *Childbirth as Metaphor*.

children (Isa 49:21; similarly, 66:7–9). Birth fails in Isa 26:16, but the dead will come forth anyway in v. 19.

Some argue that the passage envisions a literal resurrection of the dead.[35] Others resist this reading in favor of a metaphorical understanding of resurrection as national revival, as in Hos 6:1–3; 13:13–14; 14:5–6; Ezek 37:11–14.[36] The people were unable to repopulate the land by birthing enough children, so the diaspora communities will return from exile. Others admit uncertainty about how to understand this unusual language within the unusual context of Isaiah 24–27.[37] The previous chapter envisions Yhwh swallowing death for the benefit of all peoples (Isa 25:7–8). The author's meaning in Isa 26:17–19 is difficult to discern and may not be limited to national restoration. At a minimum, the text provided inspiration for Dan 12:2 and its clear articulation of a bodily resurrection.[38] In any case, the passage construes the earth as a mother who gives birth, but the nurturance and genealogical models of motherhood are not in view.

The Nurturance Model of Motherhood

The figurative uses of the nurturance model of motherhood reverse the directionality of the birth model. Knowledge of animal parents, specifically mammal and bird species, is used to conceptualize parent-child relationships with human inputs. Blends of humans with other mammals are particularly apropos because, like other mammals, humans give birth to live young, nurture them with mother's milk, and protect them. Both corpora involve mammals in blends with humans, but in different ways.

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[35] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 371; Roland Kleger, "Die Struktur der Jesaja-Apokalypse und die Deutung von Jet 26,19," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 120 (2008): 526–46; Philip C. Schmitz, "The Grammar of Resurrection in Isa 26:19a–c," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 145–55.

[36] Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 567–68; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 13–27* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 2007) 382–83; Blenkinsopp. *Isaiah 1–39*, 370–71.

[37] Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 333.

[38] Daniel P. Bailey, "The Intertextual Relationship of Daniel 12:2 and Isaiah 26:19: Evidence from Qumran and the Greek Versions," *Tyndale Bulletin* 51 (2000): 305–8.

The book of Isaiah opens with an illustration of Israel's INFIDELITY to Yhwh blended with a child's REBELLION against a parent (1:2–3). Animals enter a complex blending relationship involving parents and children:

> 2 Hear O heavens and listen O earth
>
> for Yhwh speaks
>
> children I have raised and reared (*bānîm giddaltî wərômamtî*)
>
> and they have rebelled against me!
>
> 3 An ox knows its owner (*yāda' šôr qōnēhû*)
>
> and a donkey its master's manger (*waḫămôr 'ēbûs bə'ālāyw*).
>
> Israel does not know (*yāda'*),
>
> my people do not understand (*hithônān*).

The passage establishes a parent-child relationship between God and Israel. God's parenthood is described strictly in terms of nurturance and there is no mention of conception, birth, or genealogical relationship. The verb *giddaltî* (*piel*) profiles the work of raising a child (Isa 23:4; 49:21; 51:18; Hos 9:12; Job 7:17). LXX reads *egennēsa*, likely translating *yāladtî*, "to give birth" (of a woman) or "to engender" (of a man). LXX thereby construes both the birth and nurturance model of parenthood, perhaps motivated in part by other passages that pair these two aspects (Isa 23:4; 49:21; 51:18), but all Hebrew manuscripts agree with MT's exclusive focus on nurturance. The second verb, *rômamtî* (*polel*), appears with the sense of raising children only in conjunction with *GDL* (Isa 1:2; 23:4) and otherwise profiles making things grow tall (plants Ezek 31:4; waves Ps 107:25; building Ezr 9:9). The passage does not specify Yhwh as mother or father, although these verbs occur most often in contexts where motherhood is in

view (Isa 23:4; 49:21; 51:18).[39] This nurturing focus makes sense given the contextual emphasis on God's investment in Israel and Israel's ingratitude. Isaiah has little to say elsewhere about the exodus, Sinai, and conquest, so the image may involve more generic divine care through agricultural productivity, moral guidance, and social well-being.[40] This blend introduces a familial metaphor that recurs throughout the book in various ways.[41]

The text intensifies the REBELLION of CHILD-JUDAH by introducing a new space as a contrast, LIVESTOCK. Oxen and donkeys reliably follow their self-interest by recognizing the owner who feeds and cares for them. Berman describes the bovine behavior that forms the knowledge structure of the bovine mental space.[42] In pastoral contexts, cattle return to the stables built by their owners every night for safety. They do not need to be called or herded because they instinctively know the danger of remaining exposed outdoors at night. A Hittite treaty deploys a CATTLE-HUMAN blend to describe the loyalty of people who have submitted to Hatti: "Now, finally, the cattle have chosen their stable. They have definitely come to my land." Similarly, "Now the people of the land of Kizzuwatna are Hittite cattle and have chosen their stable."[43] This blend of CATTLE selecting a stable and PEOPLE choosing their loyalty closely matches the blend in Isa 1:2–3. LIVESTOCK reciprocates the care of their owners with loyalty, but Yhwh's CHILDREN rebel against their parent. The contrast implies that the people of Israel are like cattle that

[39] Rainer Kessler, "'Söhne habe ich großgezogen und emporgebracht…': Gott als Mutter in Jes 1,2," in *"Ihr Völker, klatscht in die Hände!" Festschrift für Erhard S. Gerstenberger zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Kessler et al. (Munich: Lit, 1997), 134–47. Kessler shows the error of assuming that Yhwh is a father in Isa 1:2 but does not convincingly argue that Yhwh is specifically a mother. Yhwh is here a parent of indeterminate gender.

[40] H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5* International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 33.

[41] Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

[42] Joshua Berman, "What does the Ox Know in Isa 1:3a?" *Vetus Testamentum* 64 (2014): 382–88. See also Udo Rüterswörden, "Ochs und Esel in Jes 1,2–3," in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie, Festschrift für Arndt Meinhold*, ed. Rüdiger Lux (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006).

[43] Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* Writing from the Ancient World 7 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 1996), no. 2, 15.

wander off into the wilderness at night instead of returning to their stables.

The passage combines multiple relationships into a parallel series, so it is not limited to two input spaces. The parent-child, God-Israel, and owner-animal relationships stand in analogy with one another in a complex series of blends. The YHWH IS A PARENT metaphor is an emotionally intense relationship used to describe the divine-human connection, and the text begins with this blend of GOD-PARENT and ISRAEL-CHILD. Both God and parents share the concepts of care and nurturance in their respective relationships with Israel and children. When projected into the blended space, the emergent structure evokes the pain and anger of a parent in the face of unnatural rebellion and blends it with Yhwh's anger at Israel. The addition of the ox and ass does not directly contribute to the parenting blend but heightens its impact and evokes amazement at the strange and unnatural infidelity of Israel's rebellion.

The Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts focus on the relationship between Ištar and the king.[44] Ištar protects the king from conspirators and foreign enemies. The blending of IŠTAR and MOTHER explains and describes her behavior toward the king. Some oracles construe Ištar as a cow and the king as her calf:

SAA 9 1.9 27–30 (to Esarhaddon)

Ištar of Arbela has gone out to the steppe and sent (an oracle of) well-being to her calf [*mu-ri-šá*] in the city.

SAA 9 2.6 20' (to Esarhaddon, fragmentary)

[44] For the Akkadian texts, see Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* SAA 9 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997), also available online at The State Archives of Assyria Online: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao. See also *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Martti Nissinen 2nd ed. (Writings from the Ancient World 41; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2019). The SBL volume includes extensive bibliography of scholarship on the Neo-Assyrian prophecies, but there has not been work focused on blending theory, parenthood, or ecological approaches except Hilary Marlow, "Ecology, Theology, Society: Physical, Religious, and Social Disjuncture in Biblical and Neo-Assyrian Prophetic Texts," in *"Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela:" Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period,* 187–202.

[Have no fear] my calf [*mu-u-ri*]!

SAA 9 5 3 (to the queen mother)

Mullissu has heard the cry [of her calf (*mu-ri-šâ*)]

SAA 9 7. r 6–11 (to crown prince Ašurbanipal) concludes:

You whose mother [AMA-*šú-ni*] is Mullissu, have no fear! You whose nurse is the Lady of Arbela, have no fear! I will carry you on my hip like a nurse [*ki-i ta-ri-ti*], I will put you between my breasts (like) a pomegranate. At night I will stay awake and guard you; in the daytime I will give you milk; at dawn I will play 'watch, watch your…' with you. As for you, have no fear, my calf whom I (have) rear(ed) [*mu-u-ri šá ana-ku ú-rab-bu-u-ni*].

The last text most fully expresses Ištar's care for the king through multiple blends. It establishes the spaces of MOTHER and IŠTAR, and immediately projects them into a blend in which the goddess is the mother of the king. It then adds a NURSE space separate from MOTHER, since wealthy ancient mothers often outsourced the work of nursing their infants to nursemaids.[45] The nurse space construes the king as an infant. By adding this space into the blend, Ištar becomes both mother and nurse, emphasizing her nurturing care for the king by repeatedly stating that she will give him milk and stay awake with him at night (another job for a nursemaid). The text refers to a game that nurses and mothers played with infants, further depicting Ištar's care for the INFANT-KING. The bovine image appears last in the sequence of Ištar's motherhood. It is consistent with the previous mention of milk, but the text only explicitly mentions the cow "rearing" the calf. All the input spaces thereby focus on nurturing.

The multiple input spaces (IŠTAR, MOTHER, NURSE, COW) mutually reinforce a focus on nurturance and construe Ištar in the blended

[45] Mayer I. Gruber, "Breast-Feeding Practices in Biblical Israel and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia," in *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992) 69–107. See also, Bosworth, *Infant Weeping*, 75–77; Gale A. Yee, "'Take This Child and Suckle It for Me:' Wet Nurses and Resistance in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39 (2009): 180–89.

space as a MOTHER-GODDESS whose care and nurture should fill the INFANT-KING with strength and confidence so that he does not fear.[46] The Neo-Assyrian oracles often seek to give confidence to the king, with the expression "Fear not!" appearing frequently (*la ta-pal-làh* in, e.g., 1. 1 24', 30'; 2. 2 15'; 2. 6 20'; 7. r 6, 11). The king need have no fear because Ištar herself is his mother and will protect him. Her motherhood focuses on the nurturance model without childbirth or genealogy in view.

Like mammals, birds care for their young. The specific behaviors vary by species, but usually both the male and female participate in caring for the eggs and hatchlings. Bird parenting behavior appears in a few places in Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophecies and seems to lurk in the background of the expression "daughters of ostriches."

The speech of the king of Assyria in Isa 10:14 presents the power and pride of the king:

> My hand has obtained, like a nest (*watimṣā' kaqēn yādî*),
>
> the wealth of nations (*ləḥêl hā'ammîm*).
>
> As one gathers eggs abandoned (*wəke'ĕsōp bêṣîm 'ăzūbôt*),
>
> so I gathered all the earth (*kol-hā'āreṣ 'ănî 'āsāptî*).
>
> No one fluttered a wing (*wəlō' hāyâ nōdēd kānāp*),
>
> or opened a beak, or chirped (*ûpōṣeh peh ûməṣapṣēp*).

The king construes the wealth of nations like eggs that a man takes for his own benefit even though he did not create them. The WEALTH-EGGS were abandoned so no one objected to this theft. Birds typically defend their nests from intruders, although most species do not have the means to repel determined attackers. They

[46] For a comparison of these and other motifs within the Neo-Assyrian prophetic prophecies with Egyptian texts and the Hebrew Psalms, see John W. Hilber, "Royal Cultic Prophecy in Assyria, Judah, and Egypt," in *"Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela": Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, eds. Robert P. Gordon and Hans M. Barstad (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 161–86.

may make loud noises, fly around the nest, and sometimes dive at the intruder. The king describes a lack of resistance to his theft (*šôšētî,* in 10:13, "I plundered"), suggesting that the NATION-BIRDS are overwhelmed by his power and majesty.[47] The king attributes his success to his own power and wisdom, oblivious to his humble role in God's plan. The blend of NATION-BIRDS that do not defend their WEALTH-EGGS serves to magnify the power of the king and the extreme fear and awe that the king inspires in the peoples that he conquers. The silence of the birds seems uncanny compared to the avian image in Isa 16:2, where a FLOCK OF BIRDS flapping in alarm blends with fleeing MOABITE REFUGEES. Again, the birds do not defend their nesting ground. However, they do make considerable noise, in contrast to the silence of the acquiescent birds faced with Assyrian might in 10:14.

The attachment behavior of birds that protect their young offers an image of the relationship between Yhwh and Jerusalem (Isa 31:5):

> Like hovering birds (*kəṣippŏrîm ʿāpôṭ*)
>
> so shall Yhwh of hosts shield Jerusalem (*kēn yāgēn yhwh ṣəvāʾôt ʿal-yərûšālāim*),
>
> to shield and deliver (*gānôn wəhaṣṣêl)*,
>
> to spare and rescue (*pāsōaḥ wəhamlêṭ*).[48]

The blend combines a multitude of BIRDS with a singular YHWH. The plurality of birds might be explained by the mention of hosts or armies in conjunction with Yhwh. In addition, a flock of birds working together can better protect their nesting territory than a single bird acting alone. Four verbs focus attention on the protective action of Yhwh. The instinctive protective behavior of BIRDS toward their young blends with YHWH's protection of Jerusalem. This image

[47] For an interpretation of the blend construing the king's conquests as insignificant, see Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* Conitectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series 56 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 44–45.

[48] Reading four infinitives with Vulgate. MT has two infinitives each followed by perfects: "shielding, he will deliver sparing he will rescue."

of protection contrasts with the prior verse depicting Yhwh like a lion with Jerusalem as its prey. Some have tried to read v. 5 as a similar description of an aggressive and attacking deity, but the text juxtaposes the divine attack in v. 4 with rescue and protection in v. 5.[49] The two images cohere with the wider contextual description of Yhwh's plan to punish and redeem the community (e.g., Isa 1:21–28; 10:5–12; 29:1–8).

Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts employ the image of birds brooding over their young to illustrate the relationship between Ištar and the king. Birds appear twice in Ištar's oracles to Esarhaddon:

SAA 9 2.3 ii 6–8 (to Esarhaddon)

a-ki iṣ-ṣur a-kap-pi ina U[GU AMAR-*šu*]

ina UGU-*hi-ka a-ṣab-bur ina bat-bat-[ti-k]a*

a-la-ab-bi a-sa-hu-ur

Like a winged bird ov[er its *young*]

I will twitter over you

and go in circles around you

SAA9 2.5 26–28 (to Esarhaddon)

a-na-ku AD-*ka* AMA-*ka*

bir-ti a-gap-pi-ia ur-ta-bi-ka

né-ma-al-ka am-mar

[49] For an attempt to see 31:5 negatively, see Michael Barré, "Of Lions and Birds: A Note on Isaiah 31:4–5," in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image, and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, eds. Philip R. Davies and David J. A. Clines Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 144 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994). For counterarguments, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 427–28; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 405.

I am your father and mother.

I raised you between my wings.

I will see your success.

The context of both oracles involves divine protection and care. The bird brooding over its young and circling around the nest evokes this protection. The second oracle uses the more active language of raising a HATCHLING-CHILD.

The goddess identifies herself as both father and mother. In the oracles, Ištar presents herself as the only deity taking a special interest in the king. There is no god to play the role of father parallel to her as mother. By projecting mother and father into one blended space, Ištar draws attention to herself as the all-sufficient protector and nourisher and communicates her love and care to the king. The mention of wings introduces a fourth input space so that MOTHER-FATHER-IŠTAR blends with a BIRD. The bird image fits the context because both the male and female birds participate in caring for their young. Importantly, this expression includes active language, "I raised you." Ištar claims to have exerted the care and work of both mother and father. The statement, "I will see your success." in the context of the oracle constitutes an assurance of ongoing divine protection. Like a human mother-father, Ištar maintains an ongoing interest in the safety of her adult child. In this respect, she is unlike bird parents, who do not maintain life-long connections to their young. Ištar's role as mother and father of the king explains her love for him, which motivates her protection of him. Her parental role is focuses solely on the nurturance model of parenthood.

The expression *bənôt ya'ănâ* ("daughters of ostriches," in Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:21; also, Jer 50:39; Mic 1:8; Job 30:29; singular in Lev 11:16; Deut 14:15) profiles the ostrich as species with a gendered construct phrase that evokes the daughter-parent bond. Other animals are simply identified by name, with *bēn*, and not *bat*, appearing only when the young are in view (e.g., Deut 22:6). The reputation of ostriches as poor mothers may motivate this unusual expression for ostriches.

The description of ostriches in Job 39:13–19 focuses on the female of the species (*rənānîm,* profiles the ostrich hen) and faults her for leaving her eggs on the ground, neglecting them, and then treating her chicks harshly. The negligence of the ostrich as a mother emerges as the most culturally salient aspect of the ostrich in biblical literature, appearing also in Lam 4:3. The verse likens the Judeans ("my daughter people") to the indifferent ostrich and unfavorably contrasts them with jackals that nurse their young.

Ostriches do care for their young, but their normal behavior may seem neglectful compared to mammals and many other bird species.[50] A leading male ostrich creates a hole in the ground as a nest for the eggs of several females, and a leading hen places her eggs at the center where they are most likely to survive. If the nest becomes too full, some hens lay eggs separately concealed under brush. The lead cock and hen protect the nest. They stay nearby when the chicks hatch and raise them communally with the other adults. Ostrich eggs are the largest bird eggs in the world and are bright white to reflect heat during the day. Both features make them easy for predators like hyenas, jackals, lions, and vultures to spot. At night, the ostrich pair camouflage well in the darkness and conceal the white eggs by sitting on the nest. Even with this care, only about 15% of ostrich eggs survive to adulthood.[51]

The observation that ostriches do not immediately incubate their eggs led to the species' reputation as neglectful mothers.[52] The focus on ostriches as mothers in biblical literature may motivate the language "daughters of ostriches" because this construct phrase highlights the most culturally salient aspect of ostrich behavior. The relational noun "daughter" necessarily implies "mother" or "father," but likely evokes the mother with the feminine *bat* and the cultural concern about the ostrich's parenting associated with the hen, but

[50] The ostrich once found in the Levant (*Struthio camels syriacus*) became extinct in the 1960s due to overhunting and was a somewhat smaller variety of the same species found in Africa.
[51] Edgar Williams, *Ostrich* (Reaktion: London, 2013), 44–53.
[52] The same reputation appears in Aesop's fable of the ostrich and pelican.

not the cock. The construct phrase thereby profiles the mother-daughter relationship that the Israelites viewed as so strangely negligent.

In both Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus, blends involving birds and mammals occur infrequently in the context of parent-child relationships. When employed, blends with mammals construct a relationship structured according to the nurturance model of parenthood. Of the eighty-two references to domesticated mammals in Isaiah, only two occur in a passage involving the parent-child bond. In the Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts, calves appear four times, always in reference to the king conceptualized as Ištar's offspring. Since birds invest in protecting and nurturing their young, they also offer a suitable blend to communicate the protective care of a deity for a people or king. Birds are not always fierce in their defense of nests, however. They may abandon threatened nests, offering an opportunity to depict the submission and fear of the nations before the king of Assyria. In all cases, the nurturance model of parenthood is in view. Of the twenty-five references to birds in Isaiah, two involve blending birds with human (10:13) or divine parents (31:5). The questionable motherhood of ostriches may motivate the expression "daughters of ostriches" as the typical means of profiling this species, including all its occurrences in Isaiah. In the Neo-Assyrian corpus, four terms profile birds, and one speaks of the wind having a wing (1.1). The other three occurrences appear in texts that blend Ištar and birds (2.3 "bird" and "wing"; 2.5 "wing").

The Genealogical Model of Fatherhood

Of the 235 nouns used to designate vegetation in Isaiah, forty-two appear in contexts involving a parent-child relationship. Vocabulary for generic plant parts, rather than individual plant species, draws on familiar knowledge of the life cycle and reproduction of plants to construe the relationship predominantly according to the

genealogical model.[53] Many usages are formulaic and consistent with stereotyped phrases from inscriptions in cognate language but do not have counterparts in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus.

The close association between the genealogical model and plant imagery is not surprising given the widespread use of the conceptual metaphor PLANTS ARE PEOPLE within and beyond Isaiah. For agrarian societies like ancient Israel and Judah, agricultural activities and the physical landscape readily provided a rich source domain for metaphoric language. The importance of agriculture was woven into the economic, social, and religious aspects of life. Crops sustained life, cycles of planting and harvest organized the passage of time, and botanical imagery and fine woods adorned religious space. Metaphors utilizing this cultural and experiential knowledge could characterize large-scale theological concepts such as the divine-human relationship or describe the course of a single human life.[54]

Viewed in this way, both plant and human life cycles begin with seed. Encompassing the meaning of both "offspring" and (human and plant) "seed," the Hebrew word *zera'* occurs twenty-four times within Isaiah. Nineteen instances profile human offspring.[55] It is the most common botanical term used in the context of the parent-child relationship. However, applying the label of "metaphor" in these

[53] The simile in Isa 44:4 compares the growth of willows and reeds (*'ărābâ,* and *ḥaṣîr*) when watered to the flourishing of descendants. However, these terms are not used to describe the parent-child relationship itself, which is profiled using *zera'* and *ṣe'ĕṣā'îm* in the previous verse.

[54] Over the course of their life, a human will be born, grown up, settle in a location and bear children, grown old, and die. A plant will similarly be sown and sprout, grow and blossom or bear fruit, wither, and die. For more on the conceptual metaphor PLANTS ARE PEOPLE and its theological use, see Alec Basson, "'People Are Plants:' A Conceptual Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," *Old Testament Essays* 19 (2006): 574–76; Göran Eideval, "Use of Metaphors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Isaiah;* Austin, *Plant Metaphors*; "Jennifer Metten Pantoja, *The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

[55] Human offspring are designated in 6:13; 14:20; 41:8; 43:5; 44:3; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 57:3, 4; 59:21 (3x); 61:09; 65:9, 23; 66:22. Purely botanical uses occur in 5:10, 17:11, 23:03, 30:23, 55:10.

cases is complicated by the status of *zera'* as a polysemous word.[56] Polysemous words have multiple senses. These senses may be related to each other by general principles such as metaphor, but each sense has a degree of autonomy.[57] That is, one sense is not understood in terms of the other, as is the relationship between the source and target domains of a metaphor. A polysemous word has a range of "meaning potential." Parts within this range become the focus of attention upon different occasions of use in particular linguistic contexts.[58]

Polysemy can be explained as the result of blending that has effected a change in the domain application of an input.[59] In the case of *zera',* the inputs are PLANT SEED and HUMAN OFFSPRING. Seeds are planted at the start of a cycle that will end in a harvest. In agrarian societies, they have a high value because of their potential to become the crops necessary for survival. Achieving this potential requires action by a farmer, but also depends on factors outside the farmer's control that could limit or even prevent the seed from yielding a usable crop. Crop failure impacted both short- and long-term survival, causing scarcity in the present and reduced prospects for sowing in the future. Patrilineal succession and survival of the family in ancient Israelite society entailed children. Production of a male heir moved a family forward to the next generation and allowed for the economic survival of the *bêt 'āb*. Children were needed to work, support their parents in their old age, and propagate the culture of the larger

[56] Conceptual blending theory facilitates analysis of such linguistic expressions, which occupy an ambiguous place on the sliding scale between literal and figurative because the "extended" figurative meaning has become conventionalized. Coulson and Oakley, "Blending and Coded Meaning," 1533–34; Dancygier, *Figurative Language*, 6.

[57] Brigitte Nerlich and David D. Clarke, "Polysemy and Flexibility: Introduction and Overview," in *Polysemy: Flexible Patterns of Meaning in Mind and Language,* eds. Brigitte Nerlich, Zazie Todd, Vimala Herman, and David D. Clarke (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2011), 5.

[58] William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Lingistics,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 109.

[59] Fouconnier and Turner, "Polysemy and Conceptual Blending," in *Polysemy: Flexible Patterns of Meaning in Mind and Language,* 90.

community.[60] The crops grown from seeds and the next generation's economic and social potential made both necessary for survival, and their destruction a major threat to a community's coherence and continuity.[61] When the blend between them is run, the correspondence between plant and human life cycles, and the economic and cultural value of both inputs, is projected onto the blended space. These common elements are joined by the human referent and the phonological form of the word *zera'* itself, producing the change in domain application.

This blend accounts for the polysemous nature of *zera'* generally. Individual uses will involve other elements and inputs specific to the linguistic context. These additions provide particular blends with their emotional or ideological weight. For instance, Isa 65:9 promises to bring forth *zera'* from Jacob. In this case, the human input space involves the added element of Jacob as progenitor. This adds specificity to the family line and community continued by the offspring. It also draws on cultural knowledge of the divine covenant with the patriarchs, which itself involves a promise of *zera'* and a focus on fertility.[62] Procreation through "seed" in this context allows the transmission of tradition and divine relationship. The OFFSPRING in this blended space have Jacob as "father." The economic aspects of survival are eclipsed by the social and religious. These OFFSPRING will contribute to the future of a community in a particular relationship with its God, and it is this God who will ensure their survival.

Provision of "seed" in the procreative act is the paternal equivalent to the birth model of motherhood. However, in each of the occurrences in Isaiah, the focus is not on this act but on the resultant

[60] Pamela J. Scalise, "'I Have Produced a Man with the Lord:' God as Provider of Offspring in Old Testament Theology," *Review & Expositor* 91 (1994): 579; Naomi Steinberg, *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 51; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 50–51; Laurel Koepf-Taylor, *Give Me Children or I Shall Die: Children and Communal Survival in Biblical Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013); Christine Garroway, *Growing Up in Ancient Israel: Children in Material Culture and Biblical Texts* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2018).

[61] Koepf-Taylor, Give Me Children or I Shall Die, 100.

[62] Koepf-Taylor, Give Me Children or I Shall Die, 51.

generational succession. As such, when *zera‘* profiles human offspring in Isaiah, the genealogical model alone is in view. This model constructs a linear relationship that perpetuates certain attributes of the progenitor. In eight occurrences that progenitor is explicitly the addressee (43:5; 44:3; 48:19; 54:3; 59:21x3; 66:22).[63] Only three are in construct with a specific, named individual. Each of these profiles a direct relationship to a patriarchal ancestor, once to Abraham (41:8) and twice to Jacob (45:19; 65:9). There are no occurrences of "seed" (NUMUN [*zēr*]) in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus.[64] However, both "seed" and "bud" (NUNUZ [*per'u*]) regularly feature in the genealogies of royal inscriptions.[65] As with Abraham and Jacob in Isaiah, this use enabled intervening generations to be compressed.[66] Compression construes the relationship with the named individuals as closer and more direct, by virtue of the blending between human and plant life cycles inherent in the polysemous "seed." Like modern oral genealogies, these written genealogies could express a kinship that corresponded to a biological reality, but often expressed a social reality, whether actual or desired.[67]

In addition to "seed," Isaiah uses terms for the root (*šōreš*), fruit (*pərî*), blossom (*peraḥ*), shoot (*ḥōṭer*, *nēṣer, yônēq*), and stump (*gēza‘*, *maṣṣebet*) of a plant in the context of parent-child relationships. Within Isaiah, seven of nine nominal and verbal uses of "root" occur with the

[63] The addressee is singular in all passages except 66:22.

[64] (Grand)sonship is exclusively expressed with DUMU. DUMU.UŠ (aplu) occurs twice for "heir" (SAA 9 1 iv 5, 20), and halputu once for "successor" (SAA 9 7, 4).

[65] Outside of the genealogies, NUMUN also frequently designates human offspring when used alone (e.g., RINAP Tiglath-pileser III 53: 27) or in stereotyped phrases such as "seed of his father's house" (e.g., NUMUN É AD-*šú* in RINAP Sargon II 7: 31). Texts available through the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period at http://oracc.org.rinap.

[66] As seen with the CITY-WOMAN blends above, such compression is frequently an operation of blends in order to achieve the "human scale" that produces meaning intelligible to the human mind. Sumner describes the ideological result of this process, which he terms "telescoping," in Isa 11:1: Stephen T. Sumner, "The Genealogy and Theology of Isaiah 11:1," *Vetus Testamentum* 68 (2018): 643–59.

[67] Robert R. Wilson, "Between 'Azel' and 'Azel:' Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies," *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 12–13.

genealogical model in view.[68] In these passages, "root" can profile descent over a single generation (e.g., 14:29) or be used similarly to "seed" to compress many (e.g., 11:10). Uses of "fruit" can be found in the context of the birth model of motherhood (e.g., 13:18) but have a genealogical sense when paired with "root."[69] "Blossom" twice profiles a genealogical relationship, also in conjunction with "root" (5:24; 27:6).[70] The remaining terms are not widely attested in Isaiah and do not occur in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus.[71]

Isaiah 37:31 represents the pairing of "root" and "fruit" in a blend between a growing PLANT and a collective of Judean SURVIVORS: "And again the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall take root downward and bear fruit upward." These words are spoken to Hezekiah, in response to Assyrian attempts at intimidation (vv. 21–22), framing the Judean input as an event in Judah's national history. The oracle immediately preceding the blend further construes Judah's history, and that of all nations, as governed by Yhwh (vv. 22–29).[72] The PLANT input changes over time, growing in multiple directions and completely defined by its flourishing. When the blend is run, the SURVIVORS similarly flourish through population growth.

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[68] Isa 5:24; 11:1, 10; 14:29, 30; 40:24; 53:02; both Ugaritic (e.g., KTU 1.17 ii, 15) and Phoenician (e.g., KAI 26 i, 10; KAI 14, 11) attest similar uses of *šrš*. "Root" does not occur in the Akkadian prophetic texts.

[69] As a plant's awaited product, "fruit" can profile what comes forth from a body or the culmination of a goal. "Fruit" is paired with "root" in 2 Kings 19:30; Isa 14:29; 37:31; Ezek 17:9; Hos 9:16; Amos 2:9. This idiom is not limited to the Hebrew Bible; e.g., KAI 14, 11–12, "may they not have root *šrš* below nor fruit *pr* above."

[70] In total, Isaiah uses *PRḤ* twice as a noun and five times as a verb. "Bud" (NUNUZ [*per'u*]) does not appear in the Neo-Assyrian prophet texts but is used analogously to NUMUN in royal inscriptions (e.g., RINAP Sennacherib 168: 71; Esarhaddon 107, viii 3').

[71] The word *ḥōṭer* occurs in this verse and with the meaning of "rod" in Prov 14:3. Nielsen (*There Is Hope for a Tree*, 132) draws on the meaning of its cognates in Akkadian and Ugaritic to make a connection to royal tree of life imagery. *Gēza'* occurs also in Isa 40:24 and Job 14:8, each time also in conjunction with *šoreš*. The repeated connection of *gēza'* with *šoreš* in each of the former's three uses indicates that the part of the plant it labels was conceived of as related to but distinct from the part of the plant conceived of as *šōreš* (cf. Sumner, "The Genealogy and Theology of Isaiah 11:1," 644n2). Isaiah 11:1 and 60:21 use *nēṣer* in plant-human blends, but interpretations of the remaining instance in Isa 14:19 vary. Some translate "miscarriage" for interpretational reasons (Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah,* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997], 64–5).

[72] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39,* 468–78; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 466–71.

[73] Because Yhwh governs this process, threats to the coming generations (vv. 11–13, 30) recede from view, and confidence can replace fear. The SURVIVORS' presence signifies a positive change allowing the nation's history to continue into coming generations.[74]

Growth from seeds planted in the ground is only one way that plants reproduce. Agricultural practices known in the ancient world also take advantage of asexual methods of propagation, as with the planting of individual garlic cloves or the grafting of scions. [75] Through these processes, a farmer can over time select and maintain desirable traits. The most important fruit crops of the ancient Mediterranean were all well-suited to this type of propagation: grapes and figs by the cutting and rooting of shoots, pomegranates through digging out suckers, olives by planting basal knobs, and date palms through transplanting offshoots.[76]

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[73] The resulting blend is consistent with proposals that *pərî* profiles a crown of "boughs," and *šōreš,* "stock" in this and similar contexts, as in H. L. Ginsberg, "Roots Below and Fruit Above' and Related Matters," in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies. Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday,* eds. D. Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy (Oxford: Claredon, 1963), 72–6). A similar blend could be suggested for the "holy seed" (*zera' qōdeš*) and the "stump" (*maṣṣebet*) of Isa 6:13, though textual and lexical issues must first be dealt with.

[74] Blends featuring the eradication of both "root" and "fruit," or "root" and "blossom," communicate the opposite, complete destruction of the human input, the family line (Isa 5:24; Ezek 17:9, Hos 9:16, Amos 2:9). The imagery of the destruction of fruit-bearing plants in Isaiah draws upon their long-term care to evoke an emotional reaction (for example, Isa 16:7−11), but this is not the primary sense in the context of a parent-child relationship. An ambiguous case is the use of *yônēq* in Isa 53:2. In Isa 11:08, the noun profiles a young, nursing child, but in 53:2 the parallelism with "root" suggests a botanical referent. This is the only such use in the Hebrew Bible, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the nuances of its meaning. Derivation from the root *YNQ* could indicate that the nurturance model of motherhood forms its conceptual background but does not necessitate that this is the case. See Ginsberg, "Roots Below and Fruit Above," 74; Koepf-Taylor, *Give Me Children*, 56.

[75] Ted Bilderback, R. E. Bir, and T. G. Ranney, "Grafting and Budding Nursery Crop Plants," NC State Extension Publications, North Carolina State University, June 30, 2014, https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/grafting-and-budding-nursery-crop-plants; Steve Finch, A. M. Samuel, and Gerry P. Lane, *Lockhart and Wiseman's Crop Husbandry Including Grassland,* 9th ed. (Amsterdam: Woodhead, 2014), 16; Karl J. Niklas and Edward D. Cobb, "The Evolutionary Ecology (Evo-Eco) of Plant Asexual Reproduction," *Evolutionary Ecology* 31 (2017): 320–21; Daniel Zohary, Maria Hopf, and Ehud Weiss, *Domestication of Plants in the Old World: The Origin and Spread of Domesticated Plants in Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Mediterranean Basin,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 156.

[76] Zohary, Hopf, and Weiss, *Domestication of Plants*, 114–15.

The asexual reproduction of plants is a likely background for the new growth profiled in Isaiah 11:1:[77]

> A **shoot** (*ḥōṭer*) will come forth from the **stump** (*gēza*ʿ) of Jesse,
>
> and a **branch** (*nēṣer*) shall grow out (*yipreh*) of his **roots** (*miššārāšayw*).

The verse prompts a blend between new plant growth and an unnamed human figure. The PLANT input space contains the elements of "shoot" and "branch" which will promote and continue the life cycle of a preexisting, foundational plant profiled by "stump" and "roots." The grammatical construction with Jesse as *nomen rectum* places the HUMAN figure in a direct relationship to Jesse, who is in turn known to be the father of David. This places the HUMAN input in the context of a foundational period in Judah's history and makes available attributes of David. When the blend is run, the HUMAN input is in the foreground. As such, there is no incoherence in understanding the pronoun in the following verse to refer to a person ("the spirit of the Yhwh shall rest upon *him*"). This figure retains a relationship to Jesse. A separate blend characterizes this relationship as genealogical by virtue of the parallelism between "stump" and "roots," and the demonstrated ability of "root" to profile descendants in PLANT-HUMAN blends. Thus, the relationship to Jesse entails a relationship to David and a place in the history of Israel. This figure's imminent role in that history will produce a positive result, as the matured shoot would yield a desired product. This figure will function in a role comparable to David, marked by specific, desired characteristics illustrated as the passage progresses (vv. 2–5).[78]

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[77] Sumner, "Genealogy and Theology of Isaiah 11:1," 644; Marvin A. Sweeney, "Jesse's New Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah," in *Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A. Sanders*, eds. David Carr, et al. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplment Series 225 (Sheffield: Sheffeild Academic, 1996), 107–108.

[78] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39,* 263–65; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 179; see also H. G. M. Williamson, "Davidic Kingship in Isaiah," in *The Oxford Handbook of Isaiah*.

Passages such as 44:3–5 make use of the metaphor of PLANTS ARE PEOPLE to communicate the continuance of the family line through the flourishing of offspring. Here, descendants are referred to as *zera'* and *ṣe'ĕṣā'îm*, "seed" and "those which emerge."[79] Yhwh will bless these descendants, an action likened to the pouring of water on dry land (44:3), in response to which they will "sprout up" (*wəṣomḥû*) like well-watered plants (44:4).[80] The reciprocal curse, in which lack of progeny is communicated through failing vegetation, occurs in Job 18:16.[81] The roots of the guilty are said to dry up beneath them and their boughs above them, a fate also characterized by lack of progeny, and one in which one's memory and name (*šēm*) do not continue (vv. 17, 19).

The blend prompted by the enjoinder concerning the eunuch in Isa 56:3–5 involves similar imagery:

> 3 Let not the foreigner joined to the LORD say,
> "The LORD will surely separate me from his people."
> And let not the eunuch say,
> "Behold, I am a dry tree." (*hēn 'ănî 'ēṣ yābēš*)
>
> 4 For thus says the LORD:
>
> "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
> who choose what pleases me
> and hold fast to my covenant,

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[79] Like *zera',* though used only seven times, *ṣe'ĕṣa'îm* is used to refer to plant life (34:1, 42:5) and to human descendants (22:24, 44:3, 48:19, 61:9, 65:23). Of the five instances in which it refers to human offspring in Isaiah, in four it is paired with *zera'*. In the fifth (22:24), it is paired with *ṣəpi'ôt*, the etymology of which is uncertain but may also be botanical (HALOT s.v. צפעות). Its relationship to the verbal root *YṢ'* and the elaboration in 48:19 *me'ekā* ("from your belly") illustrates that the correspondence is between the new plant life which emerges from seed planted in the ground and the progeny which will result from human issue (HALOT s.v. מעה), and may indicate that the pairing has both the genealogical and birth models in view.

[80] The phrase *bəbên ḥāṣîr* in 44:4a is unusual. 1QIs[a], LXX, and Tg. support reading *kəbîn*, either to be understood as "as among" or with *hyn* referring to a type of plant. In either case, the image of flourishing plant life emerges, especially in parallel to 44:4b.

[81] For discussion of the "family tree" metaphor and other descriptions of children in Job, see Michael David Coogan, "Job's Children," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, eds. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller, Harvard Semitic Studies 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 135–47.

> 5 I will give to them, in my house and within my walls
> a monument and a name
> better than sons and daughters;
> I will give them an everlasting name
> that will not be cut off."

Understanding the negative command requires understanding the incompatibility of a situation in which a eunuch would make his complaint and a situation in which the same eunuch would not make the same complaint. There is an incompatibility therefore between a eunuch who is a dry branch and a eunuch given "a monument" and an "(everlasting) name." The state of being a dry tree can be in some way negated, either redressed or avoided, through the provision of these things.

We have seen that descendants have an economic and cultural value beyond a purely emotional one. The next generation continued the *bêt 'āb* beyond its adult members.[82] A man's significance continued after death primarily through his children, and, in the remembrance of his name, he might live on as well.[83] Cutting off a person's name is a stock phrase for obliterating their memory.[84] Children bear the responsibility not only to care for their parents in their old age but also to bury and care for them after they die. In Mesopotamian contexts, this duty was especially incumbent upon the one, usually the eldest son, who succeeded the *paterfamilias*.[85]

This background frames the response of Yhwh with language and imagery related to care for the dead and continuance of memory, both filial duties.[86] However, this service may be performed on behalf of the deceased by someone outside the parent-child relationship.

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[82] Darr, *Isaiah's Vision,* 51.
[83] S. B. Frost, "The Memorial of the Childless Man," *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 441.
[84] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* Anchor Bible 19B (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 139.
[85] K. Van Der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Ugarit and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 48.
[86] Jacob L. Wright and Micheal J. Chan, "King and Eunuch: Isaiah 56:1–8 in Light of Honorific Royal Burial Practices," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 102.

Within a king-servant relationship, a faithful servant or vassal may be rewarded with a monument.[87] However, concerns for progeny and community are intertwined. A lack of descendants can put community membership in jeopardy.[88]

The negative command in Isa 56:3 prompts two mental spaces, one with a eunuch (A) who can make the complaint, and one with the eunuch (B) who is not justified in making the complaint. EUNUCH A was not given a memorial and an everlasting name. EUNUCH B is the same eunuch but has demonstrated the three behaviors towards Yhwh (v. 4) to merit Yhwh's bestowal of the memorial and name. When the blend is run, the actions of Yhwh emerge as the cause of the circumstances compelling EUNUCH A to make the complaint. The complaint itself blends the EUNUCH A with a DRY TREE. Without water, a tree withers and cannot produce its fruit. It is of limited use to humans, and at risk of dying before it can perpetuate itself. The eunuch's fertility is also impaired, and he is a member of a peripheral group like the foreigner (v. 3). The blend construes the EUNUCH A's infertility according to the TREE's point near the end of its life cycle. In the blend prompted by the negative command, the moribund TREE-EUNUCH can, through the actions of Yhwh, overcome his inability to perpetuate himself. However, the fact or number of offspring is not in view as much as the social role that they play (v. 5), a role here superseded and uniquely filled by Yhwh.[89]

Isaiah's uses of botanical vocabulary chiefly highlight the genealogical relationship between parent and child. Although Akkadian attests the blends of human descendants and several plant terms found in Hebrew, they never appear in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus. The instances in Isaiah do not envision God as

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[87] Such a situation is described in the Panammu inscription. Here, Panammu's son and successor records that Tiglath-Pilezer III initiated mourning, set up a memorial (*mšky*), and transported the body of his father when Panammu died on campaign (KAI 215, 16–19). Wright and Chan ("King and Eunuch," 103–16) add to this multiple examples from Syria, Egypt, Assyria, and Greece.

[88] Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 137.

[89] For a survey and evaluation of other arguments promoting or deemphasizing offspring in the eunuch's complaint see, D. W. Van Winkle, "The Meaning of Yād Wāšēm in Isaiah LVI 5," *Vetus Testamentum* 47, (1997): 383; Frost, "The Memorial of the Childless Man," 446.

having a parental relationship, but still frequently have a relationship between God and the people of Israel in view. Patrilineal succession is conceived in terms of the propagation of plants. The same language can also illustrate continuity at a communal level. This extends backward in time to a promise foundational to Israel's understanding of its identity and forwards to its survival and continuance as a community. Though not a progenitor, Yhwh consistently emerges in the attendant circumstances of PLANT-HUMAN blends as a source of confidence and hope, able to facilitate and guarantee the community's survival and flourishing.

Conclusions

The texts from Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpus attest a range of blends from the natural and human worlds in the domain of parent-child relationships. The model of parenthood in view is sometimes ambiguous, but several patterns emerge. Generally, texts draw on a single model, but occasionally multiple models contribute to the conceptualization of parenthood. The birth model of motherhood appears several times in Isaiah, but rarely involves blends with nature. The blend of the earth and woman is the exception, depicting the earth giving birth to a population that the people were unable to provide. Scholars have long debated whether this birth image indicates belief in a bodily resurrection or only national restoration. The nurturance model occurs with both mother and father and draws primarily from the domains of birds and domesticated mammals. In this model, the parent may be human or divine. Genealogical models overwhelmingly use botanical blends but can draw on other domains. The parent is most often conceptualized as a human male.

The above analysis finds some striking differences between Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophetic corpora. Even apart from the great extent of the Isaiah corpus, the Akkadian material makes far less use of animal imagery relevant to parent-child relationships and does not recruit plant imagery. Isaiah makes extensive use of animal imagery

(202 animal references) and often presents both Yhwh and Zion as parents, but animal references rarely appear in parental contexts. The Neo-Assyrian texts include nineteen references to animals, with seven of them appearing in animal-Ištar blends highlighting her parental love for the king. Even controlling for its smaller size, the Assyrian corpus includes far fewer references to nature than Isaiah, but the relatively few animal references reflect a greater interest in animal parenting. Ištar is both mother and father to the king. The bovine blend draws on motherhood, while the bird blend is gender neutral. Yhwh likewise appears as both father and mother, but blends with animal parents only once, blending with a bird in a gender-neutral context. Marlow remarks on the paucity of reference to the natural world in Assyrian prophecy compared to biblical material and observes that this result is the product of multiple cultural differences.[90] The corpora differ in the value of animal references, but both draw on the nurturance model of parenthood to describe the deities. Ištar focuses her care on the king. Although Yhwh is also parent to the king (Psalm 2; 89), Isaiah focuses on Yhwh as nurturer of the people.

[90] Marlow, "Ecology, Theology, Society." The lack of overlap in metaphors seems to be further evidence of cultural difference. See Manfred Weippert, "Die Bildsprache der neuassyrischen Prophetie," in *Beiträge zur Prophetischen Bildsprache in Israel und Assyrien* Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 64 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 55–93.