

Bezalel in Babylon?

Anti-Priestly Polemics in Isaiah 40–55

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Religious practitioners are notoriously preoccupied with the details of their own religion, and interested in the internal dynamics of other religions only when they help to define their own.¹ An apparent Hebrew Bible exception is the author of Isaiah 40–55,² who seems to engage in considerable detail with Babylonian religion in his so-called anti-idol polemics and their textual surrounds. I hope to show that Deutero-Isaiah was not an exceptional religious practitioner in this respect; his primary target was not Babylonian idol-makers, but Israel's priestly cult. Deutero-Isaiah, as I read him, engages with Babylonian religion only insofar as it helped him to define late-exilic or early post-exilic Judaism. To be clear, I do not doubt that Deutero-Isaiah was critical of idol-worship for Jews, though I do not see idol-worship *per se* as an interest in these texts. What I doubt is that he intended to condemn idolatry as practiced by Babylonians or Persians.

For the purposes of this paper, I shall classify as idol-texts Isa. 40:18–20, 41:6–7, 44:9–20, and 46:1–7. I shall not address compositional questions here.³ Suffice to say that before starting this project in earnest, I had seen the first three idol-texts as later interpolations, with the fourth by Deutero-Isaiah (by whom I mean the main author of Isaiah 40–55) or a third author.⁴ I now question this assumption on the basis that all four texts relate more significantly and interestingly than I had thought to their broader literary context, and indeed my analysis will reflect this, extending well beyond their textual borders as strictly defined. On my reading, Deutero-Isaiah's anti-idol polemics serve as a focus for sustained anti-priestly polemics. By anti-priestly polemics, I do not mean the supposedly hostile prophet/cult dichotomy that has preoccupied many biblical scholars.⁵ Rather, I am concerned with the negotiation of

1. A short version of this article was presented at the summer meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study, Edinburgh, 2006. An expanded version appears in *Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales* (Sheffield, 2008).

2. Hereafter Deutero-Isaiah for convenience and with commitment but in full knowledge of the difficulties entailed.

3. For a detailed discussion of the composition of the anti-idol polemics, see W. Roth, "For Life, he appeals to Death (Wis. 13:18), A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies," *CBQ* 37 (1975), 21–47 (21).

4. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55, AB* (New York, 2002), on Isa. 44:9–20: "There seems to be broad but not universal agreement that this passage and some but not all of the others on the same subject in this part of the book (40:19–20, 44:6–7; 42:17; 44:16–17, 20; 46:1–7; 48:5) have been interpolated and perhaps derive from one and the same source" (p. 240).

5. See Z. Zevit, "The Prophet Versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis: Its History and Origin," in L. Grabbe and A. Ogden Bellis, eds., *The Priests in the Prophets. The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets, and*

theological and political tensions between Deutero-Isaiah's worldview and the worldview of the (broadly speaking) "priestly" writers.⁶ Indeed, it seems likely that Deutero-Isaiah preferred polemical allusions over explicit criticism precisely in order to avoid hostile polarization at a time when unity was at a premium.⁷

Polemical Allusions to Priestly Texts in Deutero-Isaiah

In a 1968 article, Moshe Weinfeld identified a number of polemical allusions in Deutero-Isaiah to priestly creation texts: Isa. 45:6–7, 9 (God created light *and* darkness) and 45:18–19 (the earth was not created as chaos) reflect Gen. 1:1–3; Isa. 40:18 (God is beyond comparison) and 40:13–14 (no other beings were involved in creation) reflect Gen. 1:26; and Isa. 40:28 (no rest) reflects Gen. 2:2 and Exod. 31:17.⁸ Benjamin Sommer subsequently found additional allusions to priestly texts (Numbers 18) in Isaiah 61 and 65.⁹ Although similarities have been noted between Deutero-Isaiah's idol texts and the Tabernacle narrative in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40,¹⁰ no one to my knowledge has proposed that Deutero-Isaiah alludes explicitly and intentionally to the Tabernacle texts. The occurrence of apparent allusions to the Tabernacle narratives alongside allusions to other priestly texts, both within and around the idol-texts, suggests either that the idol-texts are not, as is often supposed, the work of a separate author, or that they were carefully woven into the main text with an eye to language, imagery and ideas that were already present. The fact that Deutero-Isaiah engages with priestly texts on the theme of both Temple and Creation may show that these two themes were connected in his own theology. More likely, I think, it highlights his awareness that Temple and Creation are inextricably linked in priestly theology. If I am correct, Deutero-Isaiah was engaging more holistically with priestly theology than is usually supposed.

Scholars generally focus on monotheism and/or visual representation of the divine when discussing Deutero-Isaiah's anti-idol polemics.¹¹ The former interest is,

Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets (New York, 2005), 189–213; and R. P. Gordon, "The Study of Two Paradigm Shifts," in idem, ed., *The Place is Too Small for Us, The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Leuven, 1995), 3–26 (9–12).

6. It seems to me most likely that Deutero-Isaiah's polemics target those writers we would designate Priestly (P), as opposed to those we would designate Holiness School (HS), though this raises some difficult questions about Genesis 1 that I cannot debate here. Clearly, I have in mind the priestly authors of Exodus 25–31 and 35–40, but I think Deutero-Isaiah's polemic extends well beyond the scope of the Tabernacle narratives. To avoid confusion, I shall avoid using "Priest" with a capital P.

7. I assume that Deutero-Isaiah was writing in Babylon, and that his main interest was in persuading as many Jews as possible to return to Judah. This project would surely have been jeopardized by overt hostile criticism of one group or another whose participation was required.

8. "God and the Creator in Genesis 1 and in the Prophecy of Second Isaiah," *Tarbiz* 37 (1968), 105–32 (Heb.).

9. *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, 1998), 142–49.

10. See, e.g., R. N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isa. XL:13–14: A Study of the Sources of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* (Cambridge, 1971), 13, 60.

11. See, e.g., G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York, 1965), 1.107. D. H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (Leiden, 2002), moves helpfully away from the

I think, implausible and merits re-examination, but the latter should be pursued. Somewhat surprisingly, the Bible is more or less silent about representing God. The second commandment prohibits images of anything in the natural world. While the natural world does not positively include God, images of God are not—significantly in my opinion—specified. Exegetes try to fill the gap by citing texts that seem sensitive about portraying God, and Deutero-Isaiah is often utilized for this purpose, but perhaps inappropriately.

The anti-idol polemics respond to questions: to whom can God be compared? The standard answer runs along the lines of “no one, and certainly not idols,” but the answer is in fact “no one, and certainly not idol-makers.”¹² When Isa. 40:18 poses the familiar question, “To whom then can you liken God, What form compare to him?” the immediate answer is “the idol.” So accustomed are we to seeing the contrast between God and idols as the underlying theme of this text (perhaps because, as Holter shows with reference to Ps. 115:4–8, for example, similar texts elsewhere do have idols as their subjects¹³) that we think no further. Yet thereafter, the author’s attention shifts completely to the idol-maker: “a woodworker shaped it, and a smith overlaid it with gold. . . .” Similarly, Isa. 41:4 poses the question, “Who has wrought and achieved this . . . ?” The immediate answer is, “He who announced the generations from the start . . . ,” but the text that follows (41:6) may be read as a continuation of this: “I the LORD (v. 6) . . . [not idol-makers] each one [of whom] helps the other, saying to his fellow, take courage.” Again, Isa. 44:7 asks, “Who like me can announce, Can foretell it and match me thereby? . . . Is there any God but me?” This time the answer focuses directly on the idol makers (44:9): “The makers of idols all work to no purpose . . . Who would fashion a god or cast a statue that can do no good?” And finally, the questions posed in Isa. 46:5—“To whom can you compare me or declare me similar? To whom can you liken me so that we seem comparable?”—are answered in 46:6 with reference to idol makers, not idols: “Those who squander gold from the purse and weigh out silver on the balance.” The decision to respond to Deutero-Isaiah’s question—Who is like God?—with the answer “idol-makers,” not “idols,”

visual representation association: “Diatribes against the worship of other deities’ idols need not be related to the prohibition against creating a physical depiction of Yahweh,” 139. I am grateful to Nathan MacDonald for giving me early access to his interesting perspective on the image question, “Aniconism in the Old Testament,” in R. P. Gordon, ed., *The God of Israel* (Cambridge, 2008). MacDonald sees a contrast between the idols of the nations who cannot see or hear and Israel, whose eyes and ears have been opened so that they can be God’s witnesses.

12. W. Roth, “For Life . . .”: “The logical and, in most cases, grammatical subject is the idol-maker, while the image appears as the direct and logical object” (p. 27); R. J. Clifford, “The Function of Idol Passages in Second Isaiah,” *CBQ* 42 (1980), 450–64, notes the God/idol-maker contrast among others (p. 451). For a thorough treatment of the subject and its implications, see K. Holter’s excellent, *Second Isaiah’s Idol-fabrication Passages* (Frankfurt, 1995): “It is the major thesis in the present work that what have to be—ironically!—likened to God in the idol-fabrication passages are the *idol-fabricators* and not the idols or gods themselves” (87). Holter sees the idols as personifications of the nations and concludes that the contrast may indicate a more radical nationalism in Deutero-Isaiah than is usually supposed (239).

13. *Second Isaiah’s Idol-fabrication Passages*, 231–36.

has significant theological consequences.¹⁴ On this reading, the idol-texts can hardly be making the point that an invisible God is better than visible idols. Rather, they must be making a point that can logically be inferred from the text. I suggest that the answer lies in two different concerns that arise over and over again in Deutero-Isaiah: the power of prediction and the lessons of history. The message the prophet wants to send is that God's future plans will be revealed not through signs in the natural world or artificial representations of it, the mechanisms of priestly religion, but through God's past actions.

It is easy to see why most commentators fail to discuss this in detail. The contrast between the mighty God of Israel and impotent Babylonian idols is the one we have come to expect, and, moreover, may be the best-known foundation of monotheism: God is powerful while idols are helpless, God can predict and idols cannot.¹⁵ But why compare God to a Babylonian idol-maker? A possible answer lies in implicit parallels between Babylonian religion and the Israelite priestly cult. Deutero-Isaiah explicitly contrasts God with idol-makers; he denies that idols, and hence their makers and all those who depend upon them, can predict the future. Implicitly, Deutero-Isaiah equates priests with idol-makers; if neither the idols nor, by extension, their makers and worshippers, can predict the future, nor can the priests or the artifacts of their material culture. Moreover, the simultaneous equation with priests and contrast with God suggests at once that the priestly cult is heavily and inappropriately influenced by Babylonian religion, especially, perhaps, in its focus on a material culture, and that it has little to do with the God of Israel.

Whether Deutero-Isaiah was writing in exile immediately prior to return, as seems to me most likely (at least for chs. 40–48), or in Judah soon afterwards,¹⁶ Israel's future would surely have been a central preoccupation (41:21–24, 26–28; 43:9–10; 45:20; 47:10–11; 48:3–8, 14–16). This was a time of great political and religious uncertainty, when different options presented themselves, from peaceful acceptance of Persian rule to struggle for national autonomy under a reconstituted monarchy, and no doubt others in between. It seems likely that the priestly worldview reached its present form in response to this uncertainty. A fundamental objection to idols is that they cannot predict (41:21–24). I suggest that Deutero-Isaiah was unhappy with the priestly way forward, both in terms of content (its apparent focus on the Temple and

14. Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-fabrication Passages*, 237, flags that his reading has theological implications he is unable to pursue. D. Rudman, "The Theology of the Idol-fabrication Passages in Second Isaiah," *Old Testament Essays* 12 (1999), 114–21, takes up Holter's torch and concludes that the idol texts are a polemic against reliance on human agency (p. 115); in other words, this is an anti-Cyrus polemic (p. 119). This is an intriguing reading that deserves more attention than I can give it here. Suffice to say for now that it creates a tension between the idol texts and the strikingly pro-Cyrus passages in, e.g., Isa. 45:1–8. It is one thing to hint that Cyrus is God's puppet and quite another to lampoon him as a deluded idol-maker. G.K. Beale, "Isaiah vi 9–13: A Retributive Taunt against Idolatry," *VT* 41 (1991), 257–78, sees the idol texts as a judgment against Israel; God's own people are the idols who do not see or hear God's message (p. 277).

15. See, e.g., H. D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im alten Testament* (Kohlhammer, 1971), 208–15.

16. H. Barstad, "On the So-Called Babylonian Literary Influences in Deutero-Isaiah," *SJOT* 1 (1987), 90–110 (90 n. 1).

the cult) and form (its predilection for the tangible and visible). Moreover, he implies that the priests are not in a position to predict future events; their mechanisms for prediction are no better than idols, whose most serious limitation, as he repeatedly shows, is their inability to predict.

Deutero-Isaiah's discussion of failed prediction is not limited to idols; he targets Babylonian religion (or perhaps it is more accurate to say Babylonian science) for a similar failing. Isa. 47:12–13 forms part of what appears at first glance to be a sustained attack on Babylonian religion:

עמדי נא בחבריך וברב כשפיך באשר געת מנעוריך אולי
תוכלי הועיל אולי תערוצי: נלאית ברב עצתיך יעמדו
נא וישיעך חברי [הבריי] שמים החזים בכוכבים
מודיעים לחדשים מאשר באו עליך:

Stand up, with your spells and your many enchantments on which you laboured *since youth*! Perhaps you'll be able to profit, perhaps you will find strength. You are helpless, despite your art. Let them stand up and help you now, the scanners of **heaven**, the **star**-gazers, who **announce**, month by month, whatever will come upon you.¹⁷

As with the idol-texts, however, Babylonian religion is characterized so as to recall priestly texts. Thus מודיעים in conjunction with כוכבים recalls מועדים, while מנעוריך evokes מאור, and the difficult תערוצי אולי may even recall להאיר על הארץ (Gen. 1:14–19). It is noteworthy that הבריי (שמים), scanners (of heaven) is a possible Babylonian loanword, *bārû*, which refers strictly to extispicy priests.¹⁸ Yet while Deutero-Isaiah may equate the priestly cult with certain aspects of Babylonian religion to undermine its credibility as a source of future hope, he does *not* ridicule Babylonian religion in total. He simply claims that is not up to the task of predicting future events and saving people from all impending disasters (cf., for Israel, the prediction of Cyrus, and the exile, respectively).

God's interactions with Cyrus offer additional evidence that Deutero-Isaiah's primary target was not Babylonian religion. God seems to adopt a "when in Rome" attitude towards Cyrus, promising him אוצרות חשך (treasures concealed in the dark) and ומטמני מסתרים (secret hoards) in Isa. 45:3, while telling Israel he will not speak to them בסתר (in secret) ארץ חשך (in a dark land) in Isa. 45:19.¹⁹ This language is strongly reminiscent of Late Babylonian omen tablets (cf. esp. Akk. *niširtu*)²⁰ and, read collectively, the two biblical texts imply that Babylonian religion, though inappropriate for Israel, is acceptable in for its own practitioners. Moreover, even while Deutero-Isaiah rejects certain features of Babylonian religion for Israel, he seems to adopt and transform others. In order to illustrate Deutero-Isaiah's adoption

17. All English translations (with minor changes in some cases) from NJPS *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1985/1999).

18. I thank Edward Greenstein for this point.

19. K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah, A Commentary* (Minneapolis, 2001), interprets 45:3 as a reference to money (p. 226) and 45:19 to the underworld (p. 246) but, although he notes that v. 19 is difficult, hinting dissatisfaction with his reading of it, he does not relate these verses to each other.

20. LBAT 1526 rev. 17, discussed by F. Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge, 2004), 212.

and transformation of components of Babylonian religion, I want to return to a question that was implicit in a claim I made earlier, but that I did not address. I pointed out that Deutero-Isaiah contrasts the inability of idols to predict with God's predictive power, but I did not explain how I think God predicts according to Deutero-Isaiah. The obvious answer is via the prophet, but it is surprisingly hard to come up with textual evidence to support it. My own response is that Deutero-Isaiah's God predicts the future through His activity in Israel's history, and I shall attempt now to draw out a tantalizing connection between this form of prediction and Deutero-Isaiah's idol-texts.

In the past, Bible scholars routinely dismissed idol worship as primitive self-delusion, and assumed that biblical prophets were equally dismissive of the pagan religions that surrounded them.²¹ How can a block of wood made by human hands be divine or, in any meaningful sense represent divinity? Lately, though, Assyriologists and Bible scholars have begun to recognize that ancient Near Eastern idolatry was more sophisticated than their predecessors believed. In particular, they have paid renewed attention to the ritual that aimed to effect the transformation from human artifact to divinity, *mis pî*, the mouth washing or mouth opening ritual.²² Accounts of the *mis pî* ritual (or rituals) differ. It is sometimes said to have occurred in the idol-maker's workshop,²³ but the following components reflect a standard formula: the idol is (1) processed to (2) a body of water—past (3) an orchard and (4) channels of water—where the idol's (5) mouth is washed and/or opened four times with sweet foods, after which its senses are awakened and (6) it can taste and smell; (7) the idol-maker then symbolically cuts off his hand and (8) denies that he made it. Michael Dick believes that Deutero-Isaiah was familiar with the mouth-washing ritual and produced the idol texts in order to polemicize against it.²⁴ I suggest rather that the prophet removes the ritual from the domain of idols and, by implication, material objects such as those utilized in the priestly cult, and transfers it to the people of Israel. As I read it, Deutero-Isaiah seems variously to reflect or reverse the components of *mis pî* in relation to Israel, and may even have shaped the Exodus pattern that underlies his text in light of this ritual. If this is correct, his attitude towards *mis pî* is surely more constructive than Dick allows; it is not the ritual itself that troubles Deutero-Isaiah, but its application. Possible allusions to the component parts of *mis pî* may be found throughout Deutero-Isaiah, but Isa. 41:17–20 offers a concentrated glimpse:

21. Blenkinsopp makes this point well when he comments on the widespread failure to understand that these rituals were "meaningful to those involved"; *Isaiah* 40–55, 241.

22. See, e.g., V. A. Hurowitz, "The Mesopotamian God Image, From Womb to Tomb," *JAOS* 123 (2003), 147–55; C. Walker and M. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian mis pî Ritual* (Winona Lake, 2001); A. Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in K. van der Toorn, ed., *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven, 1997), 45–72; T. Jacobsen, "The Graven Image" in P. D. Miller et al., eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Minneapolis, 1987), 15–32. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities*, has a discussion of mouth-washing and metaphor (pp. 141–46) that deserves more attention than I can give it here.

23. Rudman, "The Theology of the Idol-fabrication Passages in Second Isaiah," 119.

24. M. Dick, *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Creation of the Cult Image* (Winona Lake, 1999), see esp. "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," 1–55.

יֹהֲנָנִים וְהָאֲבִיּוֹנִים מִבְּקָשִׁים מִים וְאֵין לָשׁוֹנִם בְּצִמָּא נִשְׁתָּה
 אֲנִי יְהוָה אֵעֲנֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֶעְזֹבָם: יְחִ אֶפְתַּח עַל-שְׂפֵיִם
 נְהִרֹת וְכִתּוּךְ בְּקָעוֹת מַעֲיִנֹת אֲשֵׁים מְדַבֵּר לְאָגָם מִים וְאֶרֶץ
 צִיָּה לְמוֹצֵאֵי מִים: יֵט אֶתֶן בְּמִדְבָּר אֲנִי שִׁטָּה וְתִהְיֶה נֶחֱלִים וְעֵץ שִׁמְן
 אֲשֵׁים בְּעֶרְבָה בְּרוֹשׁ תִּדְהֹר וְתִאֲשׁוּר יִחְדְּרוּ: כֹּ לְמַעַן יֵרְאוּ וַיֵּדְעוּ
 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ יִחְדְּרוּ כִּי יְדִ יְהוָה עָשָׂתָה זֹאת וְקִדְּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 בְּרָאָה:

The poor and **needy**
Seek water, and there is none;
 Their tongue is parched with thirst.
 I the LORD God respond to them.
 I, the God of Israel will not forsake them.
 I will **open up streams** on the bare hills
 And **fountains** amid the valleys;
 I will turn the desert into **ponds**,
 The arid land into **springs of water**.
 I will plant **cedars** in the wilderness,
Acacias and **myrtles** and **oleasters**;
 I will set **cypresses** in the desert,
Box trees and **elms** as well—
 That they²⁵ may **see and know**,
 Consider this and comprehend
 That the **LORD's hand has done this**,
 That the Holy One of Israel has **wrought it**.

The term **הָאֲבִיּוֹנִים** (the needy) sounds similar to the word for stone. While Deutero-Isaiah's idols are made of wood and metal, stone is a common material for idols, and the fact that this word does not scan is a possible indication that it was included to enhance the parallel between the account of Israel's journey from Egypt to Israel and the *mis pî* ritual.²⁶ The reference to water, recalling a motif of the procession out of Egypt, mirrors the water to which the idol is carried. The precise language used here also evokes the ritual. God promises that he will *open* streams. Open is not a verb commonly used in connection with water, and **שְׂפֵיִם**, streams, in the dual form recalls the sound-alike **שְׂפָתִים** (lips), also in the dual form. Three other kinds of water are mentioned in addition to **שְׂפֵיִם**, paralleling the four mouth openings. Seven kinds of trees are mentioned, signifying perhaps an orchard,²⁷ and all this is to that ensure that “they” will see and know that the LORD's *hand* (7) made “this” and created (בְּרָאָה) “it.” Far from being cut off, like the hand of the idol-makers, God's strong hand features prominently in his creation of Israel—the Exodus from Egypt. It is not clear whether the subjects at the end are the onlookers or the processors. The people who will see and know (have their senses awakened) could be the observers,²⁸ but since no observers have been mentioned thus far, it seems more likely to signify the people being processed. “This” could refer either to the event or the people being brought out, as could “it” but, assuming that “this” and “it” have the same point of reference, the

25. NJPS *Tanakh* reads “men” not “they.”

26. R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (London, 1975), ad loc.

27. Interestingly, *Shemot Rabbah* 35.1 cites this passage in relation to Exod. 36:15, implying that all seven trees mentioned in Isa. 41:19 are types of cedar.

28. NJPS *Tanakh*.

latter seems more likely. Deutero-Isaiah contrasts God with Babylonian idol-makers/Israelite priests to highlight an essential difference. Priests and idol-makers manufacture material objects (idols/cult paraphernalia) and “read” them as signs of divine involvement in the world.²⁹ God creates Israel, and they, his witnesses (אַתֶּם עֵדִי, 43:10), are the signs of his activity in the world, past, present and future. To whom can God be compared? Perhaps to an idol-maker after all, but whereas the idol-maker produces lifeless imitations of wood and metal, God makes living idols.

Did Deutero-Isaiah have access to priestly texts?

My claim that Deutero-Isaiah polemicized against priestly texts by alluding to them entails a theory of contact. A *sine qua non* of intertextual allusion is the possibility that the author of the alluding text had access to the source text. This is perhaps the biggest challenge, since the text itself is our only source of evidence. It need hardly be said that the process of deriving evidence about the relationship between texts from the texts themselves is unavoidably circular, and perhaps the strongest assertion we can make is that nothing categorically excludes the possibility that Deutero-Isaiah read priestly texts, in this case Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. Scholars disagree about date and location of both Deutero-Isaiah and the priestly texts, with theories ranging from an exilic Babylonian to a post-exilic Judean provenance for Deutero-Isaiah, and a pre-exilic Israelite through exilic Babylonian to post-exilic Judean provenance for the priestly texts. While there are combinations of the above that could rule out the relationship I have suggested here (an exilic Deutero-Isaiah and post-exilic priestly texts), the question of provenance is too uncertain to be allowed veto power. Similarly, the absence of archaeological or secure biographical evidence makes it impossible to ascertain how Deutero-Isaiah might have had access to priestly texts; too little is known about the prophet, and about scribal schools and Judaeen and Israelite texts in the Babylonian exile.

Could Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 allude to Deutero-Isaiah, rather than vice versa?

Even if a relationship of some kind between Deutero-Isaiah and the Exodus Tabernacle narratives could be established beyond doubt, it would remain to determine that the prophet was alluding to the priestly text and not *vice versa*. Since uncertainty about the provenance of either text renders dates inconclusive in this debate, we must resort to logic. First, it is not easy to see why a priestly author might allude to anti-idol polemics in Deutero-Isaiah. Human workmanship is a central component of the priestly worldview as it is manifested in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. Drawing attention to the parallels with idol-worship serves only to undermine craftsmen and their projects, unless the point is to make a contrast. This idea—an intentional contrast between priests and idol makers—cannot be ruled out. Although it seems unlikely in the end, the golden calf narrative in Exodus 32–34 may have been placed between

29. For a discussion of ANE semiology, see Z. Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia, 2003), esp. 121–49.

the instructions for the Tabernacle and their execution to show precisely how the material culture of the priests differs from idolatry (the calf was not divinely commissioned, for instance). Yet even if this was the case with the golden calf, is it plausible that the anti-idol polemics functioned similarly? The similarities between idol-makers and the builders of the Tabernacle seem far greater than the differences, and what differences there are (once again, the idols are not commissioned) do not stand out.

A second factor that makes it unlikely that the priestly authors wrote the alluding text is theological. While Deutero-Isaiah's notion of a transcendent God conflicts problematically with the priestly idea of an anthropomorphic God, which may explain the allusions to the creation narrative, the incompatibility is less pronounced in the opposite direction. Deutero-Isaiah's categorical denial that God has a shape or form plays a significant role in his claim that God is transcendent. Moreover, his vision of a transcendent God fits poorly with the notion of a God who dwells in a temple in Jerusalem, which may account for the almost total absence of references in Deutero-Isaiah to the Temple. (The few references that do occur are in relation to Cyrus and the political value of the temple, rather than to its spiritual or ritual aspects.) Equating the idol-makers with the builders of the Tabernacle enabled Deutero-Isaiah to undermine the Temple as the House of God. The situation is quite different for the priestly authors, who anthropomorphize God through positive claims, such as that man is made in his image, and that God inhabits a man-made structure, but not by the negative strategy of denying his transcendence. In other words, the priests, unlike Deutero-Isaiah, do not establish what God *is* by asserting what he *is not*. To be sure, their emphatic anthropomorphism could be a response to Deutero-Isaiah's notion of transcendence. On this view, the priestly assertion that God rested on the seventh day was intended precisely to counter Deutero-Isaiah's claim that God never wearies or weakens. Yet this seems far-fetched, to say the least; the priests were hardly short of motives for suggesting that God rests on the seventh day and that people should keep the Sabbath in imitation.

Third, on the point of the direction of the allusion, the language shared by the idol polemics and the Tabernacle texts is the priestly authors' standard fare, but not Deutero-Isaiah's. No reader or hearer could reasonably be expected to make the leap from Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 to Deutero-Isaiah on the basis of linguistic clues. We see in Tabernacle narratives exactly the type and distribution of language and imagery we should expect in priestly text, and there is nothing that cries out, "Interpret me with reference to another biblical text!" In Deutero-Isaiah, though, the language and imagery of the idol texts stand out from the surrounding text, prompting historically-critically trained Bible scholars to assume a later hand, and other readers to think about where else they have encountered similar language. Once again, this indicates a relationship in one direction but not the other. Finally, the polemic is richer and more potent in one direction than the other. Read as a polemic against Deutero-Isaiah, the priestly texts might counter the prophet's notion of God, but they neither fault him for forming it, nor function as a convincing attack on worshippers of transcendent beings. Read as a polemic against priestly texts, on the other hand, Deutero-Isaiah contrives to offer a counter view of God while suggesting at the same time that the priestly view is lacking.

Could Deutero-Isaiah be alluding to a text other than Exodus 25–31 and 35–40?

In addition to verbal links, an alluding text must have thematic connections with its source text. Just as thematic coherence is, for Martin Buber, a *sine qua non* for the identification of leading words,³⁰ so it is essential if textual allusions are to be classified as intentional as opposed to random. In our texts, the main thematic link is workmanship, which is applied in both the alluding text and the source text to man-made structures *and* to the created order. In Deutero-Isaiah, the workmanship theme emerges from the idol polemics and from the many texts in which God creates, including some (e.g., Isa. 40:12,15) that portray him as a master builder who measures water, gauges skies and weighs mountains. In Exodus 25–31 and 34–40, the workmanship theme is manifested in the construction of the Tabernacle and through explicit references to the priestly creation narrative (Exod. 31:12–17, 35:2, 40:33b). It is the combination of human and divine workmanship that gives Deutero-Isaiah and the Tabernacle texts their thematic coherence. Building language applied to divine creation is common throughout the ancient Near East,³¹ and occurs in Job (38:1–7), another possible source text for Isa. 40:13–14. (It should be noted that G. von Rad identifies anti-idol polemics in general with Wisdom, while acknowledging that Deutero-Isaiah is different; his polemic is part of his prophetic message as a whole.³² H. D. Preuss perceives a Wisdom influence on the idol texts.)³³ Yet, crucially, Job lacks an interest in human workmanship. Since Deutero-Isaiah, like the priestly writers, engages extensively with priestly ideas on the theme of divine and human workmanship, it seems unlikely that Job, which focuses only on divine workmanship, is the source of Deutero-Isaiah's interest in idols. I see Job as a post-exilic text, which would in any case rule out for me the possibility that Deutero-Isaiah was alluding to it.³⁴ The likelihood that Deutero-Isaiah alludes to the Tabernacle texts, not to Job, increases if we take into account the allusions to priestly texts in Genesis observed by Weinfeld, and examples of distinctive priestly vocabulary: *בְּמִדְבָּר* (Isa. 40:18; cf. 25 occurrences elsewhere, mostly in Ezekiel 1); *בְּרָא* (42:5, 43:7, 45:8, 18; cf. 48 occurrences elsewhere, 11 in Genesis 1–6; 16 in Deutero-Isaiah); *תְּוַלְּעֵת* (Isa. 41:14; cf. 25 occurrences elsewhere, mostly in priestly texts, 15 in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40).

I exclude Job as a source for Deutero-Isaiah in part because Job deals with divine workmanship, but not human. For the opposite reason, I exclude also the Temple building texts in 1 Kings 6–8 and 1 Chronicles 28–29 as likely sources; there we encounter human workmanship, but no divine creativity. Where Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 connect the building project with Shabbat and creation, the Solomonic account is linked to the monarchy, the Exodus from Egypt, the law, and the cult as

30. M. Buber, "Leitwort Style in Pentateuch Narrative," in M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, trans. L. Rosenwald (Bloomington, 1994), 114–15.

31. V. A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House, Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and Northwestern Semitic Writings* (Sheffield, 1992), 242.

32. *Wisdom in Israel* (Canterbury, 1972), 179–80.

33. *Verspottung fremder Religionen*, 212.

34. I am grateful to Edward Greenstein for drawing my attention to a different kind of evidence in support of the claim that Job alludes to Deutero-Isaiah and not *vice versa*. Job 12:9 is the only case in the dialogues of Job in which the Kedemite (non-Israelite) speakers use the tetragrammaton. The explanation for this is that the author of Job is quoting Isa. 41:20 and does not change his source.

a locus of forgiveness of sin. To be sure, the Tabernacle narrative's interest in creation is clearest when it is read in conjunction with Genesis 1, but there is evidence that the priestly authors themselves did precisely that. The Tabernacle narrative contains several apparent allusions to creation, and moreover, Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 is linked to creation through explicit references to Shabbat. But perhaps the most powerful argument that Deutero-Isaiah is polemicizing specifically against a priestly text is that the Bible's most detailed and sustained attack on idol-makers outside Isaiah 40–55—the golden calf narrative—also engages with a priestly narrative. The calf narrative can be read positively, highlighting the differences between idolatry and priestly materialism, or negatively, emphasizing similarities between the two. Either way, the juxtaposition of the calf narrative and the Tabernacle texts creates an intense engagement between a polemic against idol-makers and a priestly work. Naturally, this equation in Exodus does not prove beyond doubt that Deutero-Isaiah had in mind the same model when he penned the idol texts but, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, and in view of the various forms of support outlined above, it suggests that this is the most plausible account of his interests.

Inner-Biblical Allusions

I turn now to detailed textual evidence for the arguments I have presented in general terms thus far. The claim that one biblical text (or almost any text for that matter) alludes explicitly to another is not easily supported. I am grateful to David Aaron for suggesting that I consider a more fluid model of allusion, involving “floating motival elements and clusters (matrices), [and] semantic fields that are readily engaged and adapted, whose goal was to stabilize an otherwise unstable world of ideas.”³⁵ The notion of speaking more broadly of an interaction between different worldviews and the language in which they are articulated holds significant attractions for me, not least because it moves me towards my own final position—namely, that what lies before us is evidence of two competing visions for the future of the Jewish people in Judah. My project here, then, is not to identify verse for verse allusions, but to try to demonstrate that Deutero-Isaiah alludes with intent and purpose to a body of texts that reflects an opposing worldview. This does not, of course, liberate me from the need to find and examine specific verses. Texts remain our primary source of evidence of those worldviews and the people who held them. The most effective (perhaps the only) way to show that Deutero-Isaiah was responding to a set of ideas and images that reflect a priestly worldview is to locate that worldview in priestly texts and then to show through yet other texts how Deutero-Isaiah responded to it.

Types of Allusion

I shall organize my examples of allusion to priestly texts in Deutero-Isaiah by type of allusion.³⁶ As is so often the case with textual interpretation of this kind, there is

35. I am grateful to David Aaron for this suggestion, and for his detailed and extremely helpful comments on a preliminary outline of this paper.

36. For methodology see, e.g., G. W. Hepner, “Verbal Resonances in the Bible and Intertextuality,” *JSTOT* 96 (2001), 3–27; Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 18–22; R. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation*:

a chicken and egg problem. The plausibility of my general claim cannot rest on any one type of allusion. Rather, evidence of several different types is required, and yet each must stand on its own merits. Bearing this in mind, I suggest that the plausibility of my claims should be assessed in three stages. First, the types themselves must be deemed reasonable evidence of the activity of textual allusion. Second, the specific examples must be deemed plausible. Third, the overall plausibility of the argument must be deemed convincing. Once again, I am not claiming that Deutero-Isaiah necessarily alludes to specific verses from priestly texts, even though they are the source of his familiarity with priestly language and modes of expression. When he describes God's stretching out the heavens like a "tent," for example, he may not have in mind a specific occurrence in a priestly text of the word "tent." Rather, he uses this image because a tent features in many priestly texts and plays a central role in the priestly worldview. Yet although I do not claim that Deutero-Isaiah alludes to a particular verse, but to a set of texts of which a given word is characteristic, I must nevertheless locate the given word in a range of priestly texts. As noted above, these texts are my only evidence that the word was indeed typical of priestly language. This leads to a final point on this subject. Words alluded to are likely to be distinctive terms that might reasonably be identified as hallmarks of a particular worldview. If my claims about intentionality and purpose are correct, it would make little sense for Deutero-Isaiah to allude to terminology that is dispersed evenly throughout the Bible and thus incapable of evoking a particular competing vision or concept.

In order to make this exercise as "scientific" as possible, I have limited my selection to examples that came to mind during the course of a fairly cursory reading of the text. My claim that the inner-biblical allusion I identify below is not simply word-play for its own sake, but has a serious theological and political point, entails that it would have been evident to the audience it was intended to impress. Had I wished to be really scientific, I would have restricted my examples to those I could detect with my ear rather than my eye; I assume that more people would have heard than read these texts. As it is, I have excluded only those examples generated by concordances and computer word searches.³⁷

The alluding text and source text share clusters of semantically identical words

I shall refer to Deutero-Isaiah as the "alluding text," and to the priestly writing to which I claim Deutero-Isaiah alludes as the "source text."³⁸ Perhaps the strongest

Verbal Parallels in the Prophets (Sheffield, 1999); for examples in Deutero-Isaiah see, e.g., M. Polliack, "Deutero-Isaiah's Typological Use of Jacob in the Portrayal of Israel's National Renewal," in H. G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman, eds., *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Sheffield, 2002), 72–110; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), esp. 363–64. R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, 1993), 29–32, offers seven helpful tests: Availability, Volume, Recurrence, Thematic Coherence, Historical Plausibility, History of Interpretation, Satisfaction. The allusions I identify here clearly fail the History of Interpretation test; to my knowledge, no one has discussed them before. Fortunately, however, Hays cautions against rejecting proposed allusions on the basis of this test, provided they pass his other tests. As far as I can tell, they do, and I hope to show that they score especially well with regard to Satisfaction (illuminating the surrounding discourse).

37. I have, however, used concordances and computers to supply some of the supporting evidence offered here.

38. Cf. Fishbane's *traditio* and *traditum* in *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.

signal of intentional allusion is the presence in the alluding text of words that are semantically identical (the same Hebrew root, used to convey the same meaning) to words that appear in the source text. These words ideally, but not necessarily, appear in clusters, or are otherwise highlighted by one or more of a range of devices. Allusions in this category are especially prevalent in texts with the following thematic interests:

a. *Divine spirit, human knowledge and understanding*

Deutero-Isaiah's insistence that God created the world without help recalls the commission of Bezalel, where divine spirit, knowledge, and understanding occur in one of the two source texts. The absence in Exod. 36:1 of the term רוּחַ (spirit) may be explained by the fact that it was reported in Exod. 31:3 and again in 35:31 that Bezalel was filled with the divine spirit. Notably absent from the alluding text, but present in both source texts and in the almost identical formula in Exod. 35:31, is the word חֵכְמָה (wisdom). It is not clear why wisdom is excluded from Isa. 40:13, 14. Perhaps בְּאֵרַח מִשְׁפָּט (in the way of justice or the right) takes the place of wisdom here (cf. the appearance of these terms in consecutive verses of Proverbs 17, vv. 23 and 24), or perhaps Deutero-Isaiah associates wisdom not with a plan or design, his theme here, but with its execution, his subject in 40:20, where wisdom is mentioned. Deutero-Isaiah's allusions to Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 effectively undermine the priestly pairing of creation and the Tabernacle, with its implied creative partnership between Bezalel and God.³⁹ Finally, the rhetorical questions posed here in vv. 13 and 14, again in v. 18 (“To whom, then, can you liken God, What form compare to him?”), and later in the idol texts (e.g., Isa. 44:7 and 46:5), may suggest that Deutero-Isaiah begins even here to weave the web of allusions that will ultimately set God in opposition to Babylonian idol-makers and Israelite priests.⁴⁰

מִי חָכַן אֶת רוּחַ יְהוָה וְאִישׁ עֲצָתוֹ יוֹדִיעָנּוּ: אֵת מִי נִוְעֵץ
וְיִבְינְהוּ וְיִלְמְדוּהוּ מִשְׁפָּט וְיִלְמְדוּהוּ דַעַת וְדַרְךְ תְּבוּנוֹת
יִוְדִיעָנּוּ:

Who has plumbed **the spirit of the LORD**,
What man could tell Him his plan?
Whom did He consult, and who taught Him,
Guided Him in the way of the right?
Who guided Him in **knowledge**
And showed Him the path of **understanding**? (Isa. 40:13–14)

39. *Shemot Rabbah* 34.1–38.9 and 48.1–52.5 identifies and expands many parallels between the design of the Tabernacle and the order of the universe as described in Genesis 1. See e.g., 35.6: “R. Hiyya b. Abba said: This teaches that the gold clasps in the Tabernacle looked like the glittering stars in heaven”; and 50.1: “AND BEZALEL MADE THE ARK (37:1). It is written, *The opening of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple* (Ps. 119:130). When God created the world it was full of water everywhere, for it says, *And darkness was on the face of the deep; and the spirit of the LORD hovered over the face of the waters* (Gen. 1:2).” Scholars disagree over whether parallels of this kind have a firm textual basis in the Bible. Since there is no space here to make the case, I shall comment only that the notion that the Temple, and thus in our texts the Tabernacle, is a microcosm of the universe is at the heart of priestly theology as I understand it.

40. See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 46–48 for a discussion of the function of rhetorical questions.

רָאָה קִנְיָתִי בְשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן אֹרִי בֶן חוּר לְמִטֵּה יְהוּדָה: וַאֲמַלְא
אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה וּבְתִבְיוֹנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל מְלָאכָה:

See I have singled out by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have endowed him with a **divine spirit** of *wisdom*, **understanding** and **knowledge** in every kind of craft. (Exod. 31:2–3)

וַעֲשֵׂה בְּצַלְאֵל וְאֶהְיָאֵב וְכָל אִישׁ חָכָם לֵב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה חָכְמָה וּתְבִיּוֹנָה
בְּהִמָּה לְדַעַת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל מְלָאכָת עֲבֹדַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה

Let, then, Bezalel and Oholiab and every person *wise of heart* in whom the LORD has given the *wisdom* and **understanding** that produces the **knowledge** required to undertake all the tasks connected with the service of the sanctuary do according to all that the LORD has commanded. (Exod. 36:1)

b. Pattern

Isaiah 44:13 may allude to the notion that the Tabernacle and its contents were constructed according to a divine plan. Three of the Bible's twenty occurrences of **תְּבִינִית** are in Exodus 25 (vv. 9, 40), with five others in Deut. 4 (vv. 16–18), a text replete with priestly vocabulary and themes. The reference to a shrine (**בֵּית**) in Isa. 44:13 is followed immediately in v. 14 by the mention of cedars, the tree most closely associated throughout the Bible with the Temple (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs. 6:14–18, 7:2–12). Following on from this, Isa. 44:15–17, with its focus on fire and meat, may be read as a broad-brush caricature of the priestly cult. That Deutero-Isaiah is parodying at the same time the priestly notion that the Tabernacle/Temple is a mirror of creation is suggested by an internal parallel between Isa. 44.13 and Isa. 40:22. Both verses contain the word **לִשְׁכָּת** (to dwell), while **וּבְמַחְוֶה** (compass) in 44:13 reflects **חֹוּג** (vault) and **כְּתִגְבִּים** (grasshoppers) in 40:22. The magnitude of the created order is thereby contrasted with the limitation inherent in manmade structures. The equation of the earth's human inhabitants with grasshoppers may represent a subtle criticism of priestly anthropocentrism (particularly the idea that man is made in God's image), in which case, as we should indeed expect from its context, his reference to the beauty of a man is tongue in cheek.⁴¹

יִגְחַשׁ עֲצִים נֹטֶה קוֹ יִתְאַרְהוּ בְּשֹׁרֶךְ יַעֲשֶׂהוּ בְּמִקְצָעוֹת
וּבְמַחְוֶה יִתְאַרְהוּ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ תְּבִינִית אִישׁ כְּתִפְאֶרֶת אָדָם לִשְׁכָּת
בֵּית:

The craftsman in wood measures with a line
And marks out the shape with a stylus;
He forms it with scraping tools,
Marking it out with a *compass*.
He makes it according to **the pattern** of a man,
The beauty of a man to *dwell in a shrine*. (Isa. 44:13)

41. In the description of men like grasshoppers (Isa. 40:22), we see Deutero-Isaiah looking at himself from God's eye-view. I can recall only one other biblical text in which, to paraphrase Robert Burns, people see themselves as other see them, and it too concerns grasshoppers: "and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them" (Num. 13:33b).

כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵרָאָה אוֹתְךָ אֶת תְּבִנֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת תְּבִנֹת
כָּל־כֵּלָיו וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה:

Exactly as I show you—the **pattern** of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—
so shall you make it. (Exod. 25:9)

c. *Wise craftsman*

Deutero-Isaiah alludes here to the ideal expressed in texts from many different provenances that the craftsman (a smith, in these cases) commissioned for a sacred project should possess wisdom. That the allusion is to a priestly text in particular is suggested by other words (most notably תְּרוּמָה “gift,” which occurs predominantly in priestly texts) that are identical or sound similar to typical priestly terminology. Verse 35:35 is one of several in Exodus that describe the perfect craftsman as having wisdom or being wise of heart (e.g., 28:3, 31:6, 35:10, 36:2, 8).

הַמְסַכֵּן תְּרוּמָה, עֵץ לֹא יִרְקֵב יִבְחַר חֹרֵשׁ חָכֵם יִבְקֹשׁ לוֹ לְהַכִּין פֶּסֶל
לֹא יִמוּט

As a *gift*, he chooses the mulberry—
A wood that does not rot—
Then seeks a **wise** craftsman
To make a firm idol,
That will not topple. (Isa. 40:20)

מָלֵא אֹתָם חֲכָמַת לֵב לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מְלָאכַת חֹרֵשׁ וְחֹשֶׁב וְרָקֵם
בְּתִכְלִת וּבְאַרְגָּמָן בְּתוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וּבַשֵּׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּן עֲשֵׂי כָל־מְלָאכָה
וְחֹשְׁבֵי מַחְשָׁבֹת:

They have been endowed with the skill do do any work—of the carver, the designer, the embroiderer in blue, purple, crimson yarns, and in fine linen, and of the weaver—as workers in all crafts and as makers of designs. (Exod. 35:35)

d. *Witnesses*

As well as alluding to the plan and the workman responsible for executing it, Deutero-Isaiah may allude to the product, the Ark of the Covenant. That the Ark is intended here is suggested by its pairing with תְּחִמֹּתֵיהֶם “their treasures,” a term associated with the Temple (Ezek. 24:25). The allusion may be underscored by the presence in the same verse of תְּהוֹ, which appears in the priestly creation narrative (Gen. 1:2) and, if Weinfeld is correct, is particularly highlighted in Isa. 45:18–19.⁴² Exod. 27:21 contains one of nineteen occurrences of עֲדָת in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. In Biblical Hebrew, עֲדָת means “covenant” or “treaty” and not “testimony.”⁴³ Nevertheless, at the very least, its superficial similarity to עֲדִים (witnesses) allows for the possibility that Deutero-Isaiah intended one term to evoke the other. A more significant claim might also be justified. The prophet could perhaps have misunderstood the meaning

42. See preceding discussion of Weinfeld’s allusions to priestly texts in Deutero-Isaiah.

43. V. A. Hurowitz, http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Hurowitz_repor.htm.

of a term with specific priestly connotations, thus anticipating the history of exegesis on this matter. More powerfully still, his use of the same root with a different semantic value could have been intended precisely to underscore his rejection of the priestly concept. As I read Isa. 44:9, the “witnesses” are the idols they manufacture. Deutero-Isaiah equates idols with the Ark of the Covenant, and elsewhere contrasts these false witnesses with Israel, God’s true witnesses (cf., e.g., Isa. 43:10, 12). Implicit in this equation is the notion that Israel should seek guidance and reassurance not from the Ark of Covenant, the center of the priestly cult, but rather by examining its own history for signs of divine intervention. The false witnesses that Deutero-Isaiah opposes are not, as usually supposed, the nations or their idols, but members of his own people whose future vision, and methods of determining it, he opposes. The contrast between the idols and Israel may provide indirect support for my claim that Deutero-Isaiah intends to allude to the priestly cult when he writes about idols. In this context, Deutero-Isaiah is interested in Israel’s capacity to act as God’s *witnesses* (e.g., אֲתֵם עֵדִי, Isa. 43:10, 12), which suggests he may have had in mind the Ark of the Covenant (הַעֲדֻת).

יִצְרֵי פֶסֶל בְּלֹם תִּדְּוּ וְחִמּוּדֵיהֶם בָּל יוֹעִילוּ וְעֵדֵיהֶם הִמָּה בָּל
יִרְאוּ וְכָל יָדְעוּ לְמַעַן יִבְשׁוּ:

The makers of idols
All work to *no purpose*;
And *the things they treasure*
Can do no good,
And [as for] **their witnesses**, they⁴⁴
neither look nor think,
And so they can be shamed. (Isa. 44:9)

כָּא בְּאֵהָל מוֹעֵד מִחוּץ לַפֶּרֶכֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָעֲדֻת יַעֲרֹךְ אֹתוֹ אֶהְרֹן
וּבָנָיו מִעֶרֶב עַד־בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Aaron and his sons shall set them up in the Tent of *Meeting*, outside the curtain which is over [the Ark of] the Covenant, from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a due from the Israelites for all time, throughout the ages. (Exod. 27:21)

e. *Spread out, overlaid*

Deutero-Isaiah constructs a web of allusions that links the fabrication of idols with creation. As in 40:22, the web includes self-allusion: יִרְקַעְנִי (overlaid it) in 40:19 with reference to idol-makers and idols contrasts with רָקַע (spread out) in 44:24 with reference to God and the earth. These verses may further allude to the Tabernacle as described in Exod. 39:3, and to the creation of the world in Gen. 1:6. The threefold repetition in Exod. 39:3 of בְּתוֹךְ “among” recalls Gen. 1:6, where רָקַע is juxtaposed with בְּתוֹךְ.

44. I depart here from NJPS *Tanakh*, which reads “As they themselves can testify” and has “they” at the beginning of the next line.

הַפֶּסֶל נִסָּד חֲרָשׁ וְצֹרֵם בְּזָהָב יִרְקָעֻהוּ וּרְתָקוֹת כֶּסֶף צֹרֶה־:

The idol? A woodworker shaped it,
And a smith **overlaid** it with gold,
Forging links of silver. (Isa. 40:19)

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה גֹּאֲלְךָ וְיֹצֵרְךָ מִבְּטֶן אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה עָשָׂה כָּל נֶטָה
שָׁמַיִם לְבִדֵּי רַקַּע הָאָרֶץ מִי אֲתִי [מֵאֲתִי]:

Thus said the LORD, your Redeemer,
Who formed you in the womb:
It is I, the LORD, who made everything,
Who alone stretched out the heavens,
And unaided **spread out** the earth. (Isa. 44:24)

וַיִּרְקָעוּ אֶת פְּתֵי הַזָּהָב וְקָצְצוּ פְתִילִים לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּתוֹךְ הַתְּכֵלֶת
וּכְתוֹךְ הָאַרְגָּמָן וּכְתוֹךְ תוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וּכְתוֹךְ הַשֵּׁשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב:

They hammered out sheets of gold and cut threads to be worked into designs *among* the blue, [*among*] the purple, and [*among*] the crimson yarns, and [*among*] the fine linen. (Exod. 39:3)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ כְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מִכְדִּיל בֵּין
מַיִם לְמַיִם:

God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” (Gen. 1:6)

f. *Tent*

Deutero-Isaiah’s image of the world as a tent in which people dwell recalls the Tent of Meeting that covers the Tabernacle. The word אֹהֶל “tent” appears about sixty times throughout the Tabernacle narrative. Whereas the priestly authors construct a positive link between the Tabernacle and the universe, with the Tent of Meeting mirroring the dome of the heavens, Deutero-Isaiah sets them in opposition. What use would God have for a tent erected by people who crawl on the earth’s surface like grasshoppers when he has constructed a dwelling place for people whose roof is the sky?

הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל חֹוֶג הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁבֶּיהָ כְּחַגְבִּים הַנוֹטָה כְּדֶק שָׁמַיִם
וַיִּמְתְּחֶם כְּאֹהֶל לְשֹׁכֶת:

It is He who is enthroned above the *vault* of the earth,
So that its inhabitants seem as *grasshoppers*;
Who spread out the skies like gauze,
Stretched them out like a **tent** to dwell in. (Isa. 40:22)

וַיִּפְרֹשׂ אֶת הָאֹהֶל עַל הַמִּשְׁכָּן וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת מִכְסֵּה הָאֹהֶל עָלָיו
מִלְמַעְלָה כְּאֹשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת מֹשֶׁה:

He spread **the tent** over the Tabernacle, placing the covering of **the tent** on top of it—just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Exod. 40:19)

g. *Anthropomorphic beauty in the context of a shrine*

The occurrence here of תִּפְאָרֶת “beauty” in relation to a man in a shrine (בַּיִת), and in conjunction with a term, תְּבִנִית “pattern,” with strong Temple building associations,

may allude to Aaron and his sons, as described in Exod. 28:2, 40. Given its context in an idol polemic, the phrase **כְּתִפְאֶרֶת אָדָם** (according to the beauty of a man) has mocking undertones that are transferred, via the allusion, to Aaron and his descendants. Deutero-Isaiah may wish to contrast the man-made beauty identified here with a select group of Israelites (the priests) with divine beauty associated with the people as a whole (Isa. 46:13b, “And I will bestow . . . my beauty upon Israel”).

חָרַשׁ עֲצִים נֹטֶה קוֹ יְתָאֲרֶהוּ בְשֶׁרֶד, יַעֲשֶׂהוּ בַמִּקְצָעוֹת
וּבְמַחוּגָה יְתָאֲרֶהוּ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ כְּתִבְעֵית אִישׁ כְּתִפְאֶרֶת אָדָם לְשֹׁכֶת
בֵּיתוֹ:

The craftsman in wood measures with a line
And marks out the shape with a stylus;
He forms it with scraping tools,
Marking it out with a compass.
He makes it according to *the pattern* of a man,
The **beauty of a man** to dwell in a shrine. (Isa. 44:13)

וַעֲשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיד לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת

Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for honor and **for beauty**. (Exod 28:2; cf. v. 40)

Alluding and source texts share homonyms

If textual allusion is a meaningful attempt to shape opinion, rather than an intellectual exercise, or wordplay for its own sake, the intended audience must be able to recognize the allusions it encounters. Audiences in Deutero-Isaiah's time were more likely to hear than read texts, and it seems likely that writers wishing to suggest ideas without articulating them explicitly would work accordingly. Visual techniques, such as patterning words on a page, require sight of the text. Homonyms are effective whether a text is read or heard, but they are especially appealing for a writer who expects his work to be transmitted orally. We might also expect semantically identical words, such as discussed above, to be reinforced by homonyms. Here below are examples of verses that evoke priestly texts through a set of words that are semantically identical (same root, same meaning) to typical priestly vocabulary, such as **חָרַשׁ חָכֵם**, in combination with words that sound similar to vocabulary that belongs in that context. This latter device will be most effective if the alluding homonym is unusual and difficult.

Raised?/Offering

The Bible contains 76 occurrences of **תָּרוּמָה**, 15 of which are in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40, and most others in priestly texts. The word **תָּרוּמָה** is not readily translatable in Isa. 40:20 and is often emended. Viewed from one perspective, this undermines its value for my analysis. Viewed from another perspective, this textual uncertainty makes it more likely that a function of **תָּרוּמָה** in Isa. 40:20 is to evoke priestly language. Since some commentators favor “raised up” without a sacrificial connotation, I treat it as a homonym, but it may also function as a semantically identical allusion. It occurs in conjunction with other terms that are identical (**חָרַשׁ חָכֵם**) or sound similar (**הַמִּסְכָּן** cf. **משכן**) to characteristically priestly vocabulary.

הַמְסַכֵּן תְּרוּמָה עֵץ לֹא יִקָּב יִבְחַר הָרֵשׁ חָכָם יִבְקֹשׁ לוֹ לְהַכִּין פֶּסֶל לֹא יָמוּט

As a **gift**, he chooses the *mulberry*—
A wood that does not *rot*—
Then seeks a *wise craftsman*
To make a firm idol,
That will not topple. (Isa. 40:20)

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוֹ תִּקְחוּ אֶת
תְּרוּמָתִי:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Tell the Israelite people to bring Me **gifts**; you shall accept **gifts** for Me from every person whose heart so moves him. (Exod. 25:1–2)

Alluding text paraphrases words or phrases in the source text

In some cases, the alluding text contains terminology that does not replicate the terminology of the source text, as in the example above, but rather paraphrases it. An alluding text may also respond to or engage with the source text by saying the opposite. It goes without saying that a completely unexceptional claim that appears in two texts is not evidence of allusion, which raises the question of whether the claim that the LORD created the world is unexceptional. This is not the place to debate the matter in full, but it is worth noting that most explicit and unambiguous references to God as creator occur in priestly texts or in Isaiah 40–55. This indicates neither that Deutero-Isaiah absorbed the concept of creation from priestly texts, nor that he was engaging with them when he referred to it. He could have formulated the concept independently, or perhaps both authors were influenced by the same external source. Given the other allusions to priestly material, however, it seems most likely that allusion to a priestly text is intended.

a. Creation

Deutero-Isaiah describes God as creator in language that mirrors priestly creation texts.⁴⁵

הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתָּ אִם לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם | יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא קְצוֹת
הָאָרֶץ לֹא יֵעָף וְלֹא יִיגַע אֵין חֲקֵר לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is God from of old,
Creator of the earth from end to end,
He never grows faint or weary,
His wisdom cannot be fathomed. (Isa. 40:28)

בִּינִי וּבִין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הוּא לְעֹלָם כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה
יְהוָה אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיְנַפֵּשׁ:

45. Identified by Weinfeld in “God and the Creator.”

[It shall be a sign for all time] between Me and the people of Israel. For in six days the LORD **made heaven and earth**, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and was refreshed. (Exod. 31:17; cf. Gen. 2:2, which features ברא)

b. *Weariness, weakness in the context of creation*⁴⁶

Deutero-Isaiah asserts that God created the earth and, without pausing even for a conjunctive *waw*, that He was neither faint nor weary. This represents a polemic against the anthropomorphic priestly God, who rests at the end of His creative act. The two verbs indicating fatigue in Isa. 40:28 may respond to the two verbs indicating rest and rejuvenation in Exod. 31:17:

הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתָּ אִם לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם | יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא קְצוֹת
הָאָרֶץ לֹא יֵעָף וְלֹא יִיָּגַע אֵין חֶקֶר לַתְּבוּנָתוֹ

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is God from of old,
Creator of the earth from end to end.
He never grows faint or weary,
His wisdom cannot be fathomed. (Isa. 40:28)

יֵדְבִיחַ וּבִינֵן בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הוּא לְעֹלָם כִּי שָׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה
יְהוָה אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיָּנַחַשׁ:

[It shall be a sign for all time] between Me and the people of Israel. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day **He ceased from work and was refreshed**. (Exod. 31:17; cf. Gen. 2:2, which features ברא)

Conclusions

I end with a few general observations that emerge from this study and seem to me to merit further consideration. First, the Tabernacle narrative is an important priestly text that serves, among other things, to validate the Temple by suggesting that the blue-print for its prototype was given at Sinai. The possible allusions I see in Isaiah 40–55 suggest a stronger opposition to the Temple than the allusions Sommer sees in Isaiah 61–65, which indicate no more than a need for the reorganization and democratization of Temple service.⁴⁷ This is precisely what we should expect. The Temple is barely mentioned in Deutero-Isaiah and, where it is mentioned, it is connected with Cyrus and seems to serve a political function—the validation of Cyrus’s rule—rather than a religious function—the home of the cult. Indeed, Deutero-Isaiah shows no practical interest at all in the restoration of the cult, and it is difficult to see how it is compatible with his non-anthropomorphic, transcendent God. This line of reasoning, if correct, calls into question the notion that Deutero-Isaiah is one and the same author as Trito-Isaiah, whose interest in the Temple is so concrete.⁴⁸

46. See the preceding note.

47. *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 142–49.

48. Contra, e.g., Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*.

Second, as Holter points out, the recognition that the anti-idol polemics contrast God with idol-makers not, as usually supposed, with idols and false god, entails a significant reassessment of what is usually seen as a central proof-text for Deutero-Isaiah's absolute monotheism. If I am correct that these texts do not oppose all forms of Babylonian religion (idols or idol-makers), but rather function as part of an inner-Israelite debate,⁴⁹ we must surely re-evaluate the routinely held view that Deutero-Isaiah's condemnation of idolatry was a pillar of his monotheism. There is, of course, no need to revisit the asseption that Deutero-Isaiah was a monotheist; the text contains many powerful monotheistic claims other than the inference from idolatry.⁵⁰

Third, Isaiah 40–55 contains few indications of what its author hoped would happen once the exiles had resettled in Jerusalem. Certainly, the positive account of Cyrus suggests a pro-Persian stance that is in keeping with the prophet's approaching-universalist outlook.⁵¹ Yet Deutero-Isaiah seems long on inspiring vision and short on practical detail on such crucial matters as worship, social organization and identity. The possible anti-priestly polemic I have identified here implies that he was more engaged than with the politics of restoration than this account allows. The anti-priestly, and especially anti-Temple, polemics suggest that he opposed a society that revolved around the Temple and the cult, and may even have wished to diminish the role of the Sabbath. His own version of the future was less time-bound and more concerned with land, indicating perhaps, that despite his universalist leanings, the only future he saw was in Judah, in contrast to priestly writers who may have seen a future for Israel outside the land. Indeed, a possible land/Diaspora dichotomy may offer another justification for Deutero-Isaiah's hostility towards the Ark—a portable home for God that could function in the wilderness.

Fourth, occurrences of distinctive vocabulary and concepts embedded in otherwise alien texts are usually taken as indicative of redaction by another hand. Priestly language in Deuteronomy 4 is thus seen by most exegetes as the later contribution of a priestly editor.⁵² My conclusions here suggest that we should ask whether writers from one school utilized a concentration of language and ideas from another with the intention of evoking it in order to engage with it, whether negatively, positively, or selectively.

Finally, although Deutero-Isaiah was critical of priestly religion, especially for its dependence on images and representations (42:8, 17; 45:16, 20), he may not have intended to criticize Babylonian religion as practiced by Babylonians. Rather, his own co-religionists were the object of his condemnation, and if there is any truth in

49. I am grateful to Knut Holter for his generous response to an outline of this paper, and especially for confirming that he too sees the idol polemics as a message intended for Israel's benefit (personal communication, 14 December 2005).

50. See B. Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in J. Neusner, ed., *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, 1987), 77–115.

51. Space does not permit me to enter the Deutero-Isaiah-particularist/universalist fray. In a nutshell, I see universalism as the logical extension of Deutero-Isaiah's theology, but think that he himself had not made that leap.

52. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between this text and the priestly source, see K. Holter, *Deuteronomy 4 and the Second Commandment* (Frankfurt, 2003).

the claims I have made about his use of the *mis pî* ritual, he did not have a *carte blanche* objection to borrowing and adapting. Deutero-Isaiah's idol texts are frequently offered as parade examples of biblical condemnation of other ancient Near Eastern religions. If I am correct that they convey evidence of an internal debate, not an assertion of the superiority of one religion over another, we should re-evaluate other biblical texts that seem to attack the religions of their neighbors.