



The Black Hole in Isaiah
A Study of Exile as a Literary Theme

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FREDERIK POULSEN

The Black Hole in Isaiah

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Frederik Poulsen

The Black Hole in Isaiah

A Study of Exile as a Literary Theme

Mohr Siebeck

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Dekan Kirsten Busch Nielsen
København, den 9. juli 2018

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Til Maren

Preface

The present monograph was written between July 2015 and November 2017. It was submitted in December 2017 to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Copenhagen for evaluation with the intent of defending it for the doctoral degree (*dr.theol.*). In July 2018 the Academic Council accepted it for defense. The oral defense will take place in March 2019. I am grateful to the members of the assessment committee Ulrich Berges, Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, and Jesper Høgenhagen for their evaluation and to the series editors of FAT for accepting this work for publication. With the permission of the dean, a number of small errors in the original manuscript have been corrected.

The monograph was written thanks to a postdoctoral scholarship from the Independent Research Fund Denmark and its *Sapere Aude* program. The generous grant has offered me completely undisturbed time for studying the poetically rich and theologically challenging vision of Isaiah, arguably the most exciting book of the Bible. I did not think scholarships like these still existed, but they do, and I am very grateful to have been the recipient of one.

My research was carried out at the Department for Biblical Exegesis at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen. I would like to thank my colleagues for their pleasant and inspiring company over the years. I am grateful to Hermann Spieckermann who first encouraged me to explore exile in Isaiah and Francis Landy who read and discussed an early version of the book. Parts of the initial chapters were written during my research stay at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the Spring of 2016, and the manuscript was completed during my stay at the University of Bonn in the Fall of 2017. I would like to thank my local hosts, Ronnie Goldstein (Jerusalem) and Ulrich Berges (Bonn), for hospitality and stimulating talks. I am particularly thankful to Sarah Hussell for the excellent effort in proofreading and improving my English.

Family and friends have continuously supported and encouraged me during the work on this book. I am most grateful to my wife Maren and our children Johan, Samuel, and Ada for their love and care. Living with you, Maren, is like eating raisin cakes and apples all day long. This book is for you.

Frederik Poulsen
October 2018

Contents

Preface	VII
Introduction	1
<i>Approaches to the study of exile</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Recent studies on exile in Isaiah.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Methodological considerations.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>The structure of the monograph.....</i>	<i>16</i>
Chapter 1. Entering into the black hole.....	19
<i>1.1. The gap between Isaiah 39 and 40.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>1.2. Entering down into Sheol (Isaiah 5:11–17)</i>	<i>29</i>
1.2.1. Isaiah 5:11–17: Text and translation.....	32
1.2.2. Isaiah 5:11–12: Woe to the drunkards who neglect YHWH.....	33
1.2.3. Isaiah 5:13–17: Exile, death, and a ruined city	35
1.2.4. Summing up	46
<i>1.3. The hidden God</i>	<i>47</i>
1.3.1. YHWH’s hiddenness.....	48
1.3.2. YHWH’s anger	54
1.3.3. YHWH’s silence	59
<i>1.4. Conclusion.....</i>	<i>66</i>
Chapter 2. Anticipating exile: Oracles of doom.....	67
<i>2.1. The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile in the Old Testament.....</i>	<i>67</i>

2.1.1. Destruction and exile narrated and interpreted.....	68
2.1.2. Destruction and exile anticipated.....	70
2.2. <i>Exile and vast emptiness (Isaiah 6:1–13)</i>	74
2.2.1. The vision (Isaiah 6:1–7).....	79
2.2.1.1. Isaiah 6:1–7: Text and translation	79
2.2.1.2. Isaiah 6:1–4: The sovereign judge	80
2.2.1.3. Isaiah 6:5–7: The prophet’s reaction and cleansing.....	82
2.2.2. The mission (Isaiah 6:8–13)	85
2.2.2.1. Isaiah 6:8–13: Text and translation	86
2.2.2.2. Isaiah 6:8–10: The sending of the prophet and his message	87
2.2.2.3. Isaiah 6:11–13: Deportation and complete destruction....	91
2.2.3. Summing up	100
2.3. <i>Jerusalem is doomed (Isaiah 22:1–14)</i>	100
2.3.1. Isaiah 22:1–14: Text and translation.....	104
2.3.2. Isaiah 22:1–4: The besieged Jerusalem and the weeping prophet.....	106
2.3.3. Isaiah 22:5–8a: The enemy attack	112
2.3.4. Isaiah 22:8b–11: Defense rather than faith	116
2.3.5. Isaiah 22:12–13: Festival rather than fasting	118
2.3.6. Isaiah 22:14: Death without forgiveness.....	119
2.3.7. Summing up.....	121
2.4. <i>Everything shall be carried off to Babylon (Isaiah 39:1–8)</i>	121
2.4.1. Isaiah 39:1–8: Text and translation.....	125
2.4.2. Isaiah 39:1–2: The visit from Babylon	127
2.4.3. Isaiah 39:3–4: The prophet’s interview	129
2.4.4. Isaiah 39:5–8: The prophetic word of doom	131
2.4.5. Summing up.....	136
2.5. <i>Zion has become a wilderness (Isaiah 63:7–64:11)</i>	136
2.5.1. Review of history and the confession of sin	140
2.5.2. Isaiah 63:17–19a: Enemies took control of the people’s land	142
2.5.3. Isaiah 64:7–11: Fire has destroyed the temple	147
2.5.4. Summing up.....	152
2.6. <i>Conclusion</i>	152

Chapter 3. Embodying exile: Typological figures.....	154
3.1. <i>Figures of exile as a biblical theme</i>	154
3.1.1. Excurses on the figures of Cain and Jonah	155
3.1.1.1. Driven away from the land (Cain).....	155
3.1.1.2. Down into the deep of the sea (Jonah)	159
3.2. <i>The naked prophet (Isaiah 20:1–6)</i>	165
3.2.1. The literary genre of sign acts	167
3.2.2. Isaiah 20:1–6: Text and translation.....	170
3.2.3. Isaiah 20:1–4: Acting out exile.....	171
3.2.4. Isaiah 20:5–6: Consequences for the audience.....	175
3.2.5. Excurses on other prophetic sign acts about exile.....	178
3.2.5.1. Jeremiah’s isolation (Jeremiah 16:1–13).....	178
3.2.5.2. Ezekiel’s departure from his house (Ezekiel 12:1–16).....	179
3.2.5.3. Nebuchadnezzar’s capture of Egypt (Jeremiah 43:8–13).....	181
3.2.6. Summing up	182
3.3. <i>Shebna and Eliakim (Isaiah 22:15–25)</i>	183
3.3.1. Shebna	185
3.3.1.1. Isaiah 22:15–19: Text and translation	185
3.3.1.2. Isaiah 22:15–16: Shebna’s transgression.....	186
3.3.1.3. Isaiah 22:17–19: The punishment of exile and death.....	188
3.3.1.4. Excurses on parallel stories of exiled individuals.....	191
3.3.1.4.1. Amaziah (Amos 7:10–17).....	191
3.3.1.4.2. Pashur (Jeremiah 20:1–6).....	192
3.3.1.4.3. Jehoiachin (Jeremiah 22:24–30; 2 Kings 24:8–17).....	192
3.3.2. Eliakim.....	194
3.3.2.1. Isaiah 22:20–25: Text and translation	194
3.3.2.2. Isaiah 22:20–25: The call and fall of Eliakim	195
3.3.3. Shebna and Eliakim as types for Judean kings.....	197
3.3.4. Summing up	200
3.4. <i>Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:1–22)</i>	200
3.4.1. Previous studies on exilic imagery in Isaiah 38	201
3.4.2. The narrative and psalm in Isaiah 38	205
3.4.2.1. Differences between 2 Kings 20:1–11 and Isaiah 38.....	205
3.4.2.2. Interaction between narrative and psalm in Isaiah 38....	207
3.4.3. Isaiah 38:1–8: Narrative frame	209

3.4.4. Isaiah 38:9–20: The psalm of Hezekiah.....	211
3.4.4.1. The textual form of the psalm.....	211
3.4.4.2. Isaiah 38:9–20: Text and translation.....	211
3.4.4.3. The literary form and structure of the psalm.....	213
3.4.4.4. Isaiah 38:9: The heading.....	214
3.4.4.5. Isaiah 38:10–12a: Removal and isolation.....	214
3.4.4.6. Isaiah 38:12b–14: Destruction and complaint.....	222
3.4.4.7. Isaiah 38:15–17a: Judgment and restlessness.....	225
3.4.4.8. Isaiah 38:17b–20: Anticipation of salvation.....	228
3.4.5. Isaiah 38:21–22: Narrative frame.....	231
3.4.6. Summing up.....	233
3.5. <i>The suffering servant (Isaiah 52:13–53:12)</i>	234
3.5.1. Literary motifs of exile in the servant portrait.....	235
3.5.1.1. Isaiah 53:7–9: The servant’s deportation and grave.....	236
3.5.2. Attempts to identify the figure in the context of exile.....	241
3.5.2.1. King Jehoiachin in Babylonian captivity.....	242
3.5.2.2. The people of Israel in exile.....	244
3.5.3. Summing up.....	247
3.6. <i>Conclusion</i>	247
Chapter 4. Slavery and captivity: Political and spatial images.	249
4.1. <i>A voice breaking the gap of silence (Isaiah 40:1–2)</i>	250
4.1.1. Isaiah 40:1–2: Text and translation.....	252
4.1.2. Isaiah 40:1–2: Heavenly comfort replaces heavy punishment....	253
4.2. <i>Images of slavery and imprisonment</i>	257
4.2.1. Isaiah 14:1–4a: Slaves become masters.....	258
4.2.2. Isaiah 42:6b–7: Liberating prisoners from dark dungeons.....	263
4.2.3. Isaiah 42:22: A people robbed and trapped in holes.....	266
4.2.4. Isaiah 51:13b–14: Fear of the oppressive tyrant.....	270
4.2.5. Isaiah 52:1–6: The bond of slavery shall be loosened.....	273
4.2.6. Summing up.....	279
4.3. <i>The redemptive power of YHWH</i>	279
4.3.1. Isaiah 43:1–4: Redemption through ransom.....	281
4.3.2. Isaiah 43:14–21: A way out of confinement.....	284
4.3.3. Summing up.....	293
4.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	293

Chapter 5. Scattering and dispersion: Geographical images.....	295
5.1. <i>The motif of scattering in the Old Testament</i>	296
5.2. <i>Gathering and reunifying the scattered people (Isaiah 11:11–16)</i>	301
5.2.1. Isaiah 11:11–16: Text and translation.....	302
5.2.2. Isaiah 11:11–12: Redemption and gathering of the dispersed	303
5.2.3. Isaiah 11:13–14: Reunification and reconquest	306
5.2.4. Isaiah 11:15–16: Splitting the river into streams.....	307
5.2.5. Summing up	309
5.3. <i>The great shofar shall sound (Isaiah 27:7–13)</i>	309
5.3.1. Isaiah 27:7–13: Text and translation.....	312
5.3.2. Isaiah 27:7: Did Israel cease to exist?.....	314
5.3.3. Isaiah 27:8–9: Blast away by the wind	315
5.3.4. Isaiah 27:12–13: Gathering the harvest	320
5.3.5. Summing up	323
5.4. <i>YHWH's gathering of his dispersed flock</i>	324
5.4.1. Isaiah 40:10–11: The divine warrior and shepherd	324
5.4.2. Isaiah 43:5–7: Brought home from far away.....	327
5.4.3. Isaiah 49:9b–12: The returning flock.....	331
5.4.4. Summing up	334
5.5. <i>Conclusion</i>	334
 Chapter 6. Blindness and disorientation: Cognitive images.....	 336
6.1. <i>Knowledge and ignorance in the Old Testament</i>	338
6.1.1. Wisdom-like language in Isaiah	341
6.2. <i>The blind and deaf people (Isaiah 42:18–25)</i>	344
6.2.1. Isaiah 42:18–25: Text and translation.....	344
6.2.2. Isaiah 42:18–20: The blind and deaf servant	345
6.2.3. Isaiah 42:21–25: Understanding the past	349
6.2.4. Summing up	352
6.3. <i>A stubborn and idolatrous people (Isaiah 48:1–8)</i>	353
6.3.1. Isaiah 48:1–8: Text and translation.....	354
6.3.2. Isaiah 48:1–5: Past events announced beforehand	354
6.3.3. Isaiah 48:6–8: The creation of new events.....	358
6.3.4. Summing up	360

6.4. <i>A people that walk in their own ways</i>	361
6.5. <i>A vision of renewed divine guidance</i>	365
6.6. <i>The transformation of the hardened minds (Isaiah 41:17–20)</i>	368
6.6.1. Isaiah 41:17–20: Text and translation.....	369
6.6.2. Isaiah 41:17: The needy seeking wisdom	370
6.6.3. Isaiah 41:18–19: Transforming the wilderness	372
6.6.4. Isaiah 41:20: A complete understanding of YHWH’s acts.....	375
6.6.5. Summing up.....	377
6.7. <i>Conclusion</i>	378
Chapter 7. Abandonment and bereavement: Social images	379
7.1. <i>Female imagery and issues of destruction and exile</i>	380
7.1.1. The lonely woman in Lamentations.....	382
7.1.2. Zion as a woman in Isaiah and the abasement of Lady Babylon	384
7.2. <i>The children of Zion shall return to their mother (Isaiah 49:14–21)</i> ...	388
7.2.1. Isaiah 49:14–21: Text and translation.....	389
7.2.2. Isaiah 49:14–16: God’s continuous attention to Zion.....	390
7.2.3. Isaiah 49:17–21: Restoration and repopulation of the empty city	393
7.2.4. Summing up.....	398
7.3. <i>The barren mother shall conceive (Isaiah 54:1–6)</i>	398
7.3.1. Isaiah 54:1–6: Text and translation.....	400
7.3.2. Isaiah 54:1–3: A mother giving birth to innumerable children...	401
7.3.3. Isaiah 54:4–6: A forsaken and rejected wife is called back.....	405
7.3.4. Summing up.....	409
7.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	409
Conclusion.....	411
Bibliography.....	415
Index of References.....	437
Author Index	465
Subject Index.....	470

Introduction

Any study of exile in the book of Isaiah has to consider a peculiar contradiction. On the one hand, exile appears to be a central theme in the book; on the other, it is difficult to detect references to it. Francis Landy cogently writes: “Isaiah is all about exile – but in a way it is not about exile at all.”¹ While other biblical writings explicitly depict the destruction of Jerusalem and the people’s deportation to Babylon in the early sixth century BCE, Isaiah is apparently silent. At the center of the book where readers would expect to find an account of these traumatic and defining events, there is just an abrupt break and a clear leap in time. Isaiah 39, which concerns the prophet’s encounter with King Hezekiah in the end of the eighth century BCE, predicts the fall of Jerusalem and its captivity to Babylon. The following vision in Isa 40, which seems to reflect a situation at least 160 years later, happily proclaims the end of exile and hope for future restoration. Yet the intermediate period – the exile *itself* – is not mentioned at all.

Why this apparent absence? Hugh Williamson states: “Exile is certainly not characteristic of Isaiah himself.”² Although the statement concerns the historical prophet living in the eighth century, it could be seen to cover most of the scholarly engagement with the book as a whole. Isaiah is thought to be about something else. Pervasive themes in the prophetic corpus include YHWH’s protection and glorification of Zion, divine kingship, the issue of justice and righteousness, the inclusion of nations into the salvific realm, and the role of human agents such as the Messiah and the servant. However, even when the theme of exile is concerned, the primary focus lies on Isaiah’s proclamation of release and restoration from it. To many interpreters, so it seems, experiences of exile may historically have shaped the composition and editorial reworking of several passages in Isaiah, especially those found in Isa 40–55, but the book as a whole is about something else. Exile itself simply disappears in the break between Isa 39 and 40.

The thesis of the present monograph is that exile in Isaiah hides itself as a “black hole” at the center of the composition and thereby has a decisive influence on the literary structure, poetic imagery, and theological message of the book. The gap between Isa 39 and 40 is like a black hole in space that, by its

¹ Landy, “Exile,” 241.

² Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 368.

tremendous gravity, pulls everything to itself. Even light cannot escape from it. As a result, one can only study a black hole by looking at its effects on the surroundings. In a similar manner, exile conceals itself at the center of the prophetic book. Apparently, nothing happens – there is just a blank space – but something decisive must take place. Exile is such a strong force that it absorbs life, light, and hope and only causes silence, darkness, and death. Therefore, one can only study exile in Isaiah by analyzing events and anticipations leading up to it and subsequent effects and reflections of it.

As the first comprehensive treatment, this monograph investigates exile as a literary and theological theme in Isaiah. The following introduction provides an overview of recent approaches to the study of exile in the Old Testament and a review of past scholarly works on this topic in Isaiah to situate the present investigation within the larger field of studies. Then, I offer some methodological considerations and sketch the overall structure of the monograph.

Approaches to the study of exile

Until the late 1960s, the exile – commonly understood to be the Babylonian exile (587–538 BCE) – was largely seen as a time of degeneration in the development of Israelite/Jewish religion.³ Julius Wellhausen, for instance, regarded the effects of the exile to be very negative and damaging, introducing an unconstructive period of priestly and legalistic thought. An important challenge to this dominating view, however, was Peter R. Ackroyd's book *Exile and Restoration* (1968) and its thesis that the sixth century was a dynamic and creative age for the formation and editorial shaping of much of the Old Testament literature.⁴ Since the 1980s, a significant shift has occurred and in recent biblical scholarship the exile is studied not only as a historical event or period, but also as a broader social and cultural phenomenon. Three general approaches to the critical study of exile in biblical literature have emerged: historical-archeological, sociological, and literary.⁵

³ See the informative reviews of scholarship in Ahn, *Forced Migrations*, 8–27; Kelle, “Interdisciplinary Approach.”

⁴ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*.

⁵ Cf. Ahn, “Exile,” 197, and the headings for grouping essays in Ahn and Middlemas, *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon*. A fourth approach would be the reception-historical study of the interpretation of exile in later Jewish and Christian writings. Seminal works in this connection are Michael A. Knibb's article “The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period” (1976) and the collection of essays in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (1997) edited by James M. Scott. Works that are more recent include the co-authored book *From Babylon to Eternity: The Exile Remembered and Constructed in Text and Tradition* (2009) and the dictionary article “Exile” in *Encyclopedia of*

The *historical-archeological* approach attempts to produce a critical and reliable reconstruction of the sixth century, centering on the Babylonian campaigns against Judah, the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of its inhabitants, and the conditions for those who were deported and for those who remained in Judah. In addition to biblical texts, the examined material consists of archeological findings and Ancient Near Eastern sources and practices, including cuneiform texts from the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.⁶ Hans Barstad's *The Myth of the Empty Land* (1996) largely initiated a reassessment of the history and archeology of the period and was soon followed by the collection of papers in *Leading Captivity Captive* (1998) edited by Lester L. Grabbe.⁷ A major outcome of this reexamination has been a growing awareness of the discrepancy between the biblical picture of the exilic period and historical reconstructions of it. This is clear in two recent collections of articles: *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts* (2010) edited by Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin and *Myths of Exile: History and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (2015) edited by Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme and Ingrid Hjelm.⁸ Both volumes stress the literary creativity of biblical authors in their representations of the exile and its effects. Moreover, whereas past scholarship tended to reduce the period to one homogenous monolithic experience, recent works have emphasized the manifold and diverse aspects of this century in Judean history.⁹ Attention has been drawn to the fact that there were three different instances of deportation in the early sixth century (597, 587, and 582 BCE) which should not be conflated and which deserve equal treatment. Furthermore, Judean communities not only existed in Babylon and Judah, but also in Assyria (following King Shalmaneser's capture of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE), Egypt, and several other places.

The *sociological* approach draws on methodologies and insights from social-scientific disciplines and studies exile as a broader cultural phenomenon

the Bible and its Reception (2014). Furthermore, Jörn Kiefer's *Exil und Diaspora: Begrifflichkeit und Deutungen im antiken Judentum und in der hebräischen Bibel* (2005) offers a dense lexicographical study of exilic terminology in the Bible and its reception in antique sources.

⁶ See Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, *Neo-Babylonian Period*; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*; Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*.

⁷ Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*; Grabbe, *Leading Captivity Captive*.

⁸ Ben Zvi and Levin, *Concept of Exile*; Gudme and Hjelm, *Myths of Exile*, 1–4. See also the four essays devoted to historical issues in Ahn and Middlemas, *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon*, 9–62.

⁹ Ahn, *Forced Migrations*, 27–34; cf. Gudme and Hjelm, *Myths of Exile*, 4: “There is not one Exile in the Hebrew Bible, there are many, and there is not one interpretation of or portrayal of Exile in the biblical texts, there are as many as there are biblical authors – sometimes even more.”

across time. The approach is interdisciplinary in nature as it seeks to place the biblical texts in close dialogue with sociological, anthropological, and psychological analysis. This is often done by comparing the experiences of exile reflected in the Bible to contemporary experiences, patterns, and social realities, informed by various modern sub-disciplines such as disaster studies, refugee studies, and trauma theory. A pioneer in this approach is Daniel L. Smith-Christopher. His groundbreaking book *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (1989) applies sociological methodology to the study of the exilic period and its literature, and his *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (2002) relates this concern to larger ethical and theological issues.¹⁰ A scholar who has followed in these footsteps is John J. Ahn. His *Exile as Forced Migrations* (2011) studies the social structures of forced migration.¹¹ Drawing extensively on contemporary theories of migrations, economics, and generation issues among refugees, he seeks to understand the distinct waves of forced migrations in the sixth century and the exilic experience and identity formation of each successive generation of Judeans living in Babylon. Several essays in the recent volume *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (2012) edited by Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritschel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright likewise examine the biblical experiences in conjunction with the general phenomenon of exile.¹² The volume incorporates broader cross-disciplinary perspectives and offers a series of case studies which compare the stories of migration in the Bible with those of modern refugee crises and diaspora communities.

The *literary* approach focuses on the textual representations and expressions of exile in the Bible. The object of study is the literary responses to the exile and its impacts on the poetic and theological reflection of biblical authors. Initially, it is striking to notice that separate books and passages speak very differently about exile and employ a whole range of literary genres, including historiography, laments, hymns, and prophecy. As was mentioned, Peter R. Ackroyd's *Exile and Restoration* (1968) stresses the literary activity and creativity of the exilic period. He concentrates on thoughts rather than events and seeks to trace patterns of reflection and religious development in the reactions to the exile and exilic situation by examining the various texts from this period, including Jeremiah, the Deuteronomistic History, the Priestly work, Ezekiel, Deutero-Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and poetic passages.

¹⁰ Smith, *Religion of the Landless*; Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. See also his retrospective assessment of the development of the approach in Smith-Christopher, "Reading Exile Then."

¹¹ Ahn, *Forced Migrations*.

¹² Kelle, Ames, and Wright, *Interpreting Exile*. See also the four essays devoted to sociological issues in Ahn and Middlemas, *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon*, 125–89.

Not surprisingly, subsequent scholarly introductions to the literature of the period share this way of ordering and presenting the biblical material.¹³

Rainer Albertz's presentation of the history and literature of the sixth century in *Israel in Exile* (2003) likewise highlights the large-scale literary activity of this century: "Approximately half of the material in the Hebrew Bible came into being or was substantially shaped during this era."¹⁴ The primary focus of this comprehensive introduction is a detailed examination of the genres and writings assigned to this period, including their literary reconstruction, their political and religious substance, and their socio-historical context. In contrast to Ackroyd's interest in the development of religious thought, Albertz pays more attention to literary issues of form, composition, and origin. In particular, he emphasizes the role of editorial activity in the formation and reworking of biblical literature.

With regard to literary representations of exile in biblical texts, Robert P. Carroll has written two important articles: "Deportation and Diasporic Discourses in the Prophetic Literature" (1997) and "Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora" (1998).¹⁵ While Ackroyd and Albertz stress the exilic period as a dynamic age for the production of literature, Carroll highlights the importance of exile as a literary motif in the biblical corpus as a whole: "The Hebrew Bible is the book of exile. It is constituted in and by narratives and discourses of expulsion, deportation and exile."¹⁶ In the former article, he offers an informative survey of the range of the discourses of deportation, destruction, and return in prophetic texts.¹⁷ In the latter article, he considers the relation between the biblical language of exile and the historical events that this language may reflect. Carroll writes:

¹³ Ralph W. Klein's *Israel in Exile* (1979) examines six literary works – "six exilic voices" – and their responses to the theological challenges of exile: Lamentations and exilic psalms, the Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Second Isaiah, and P. More recently, Jill Middlemas' *The Templeless Age* (2007) introduces the biblical literature of the exilic century along thematic lines and types of reactions. They include: a lack of future vision (certain psalms, Isa 63:7–64:11, Lamentations, and the Deuteronomistic History), the intermingling of judgment and hope (Jeremiah and Ezekiel), and a turn to hope (Deutero-Isaiah, Ezek 40–48, Haggai, Zech 1–8, and the Holiness Code).

¹⁴ Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, ix. The original German version appeared two years earlier (*Die Exilszeit: 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*) in Kohlhammer's *Biblische Enzyklopädie* series.

¹⁵ Carroll, "Deportation"; "Exile."

¹⁶ Carroll, "Deportation," 64; cf. "Exile," 63: "Exile and exodus: those are the two sides or faces of the myth that shapes the subtext of the narratives and rhetoric of the Hebrew Bible. Between these twin topoi (and their mediating notion of the empty land) is framed, constructed and constituted the essential story of the Hebrew Bible."

¹⁷ Recent surveys of the rhetoric of exile in the prophets include David L. Petersen's "Prophetic Rhetoric and Exile" (2015) and Cian Power's "Constructions of Exile in the Persian Period" (2015) and "Images of Northern Exile" (2019).

Exile is a biblical trope and, whether it may be treated as an event in the real socio-economic historical world outside the text or not, it should be treated as a fundamental element in the cultural poetics of biblical discourses. It may have historical referents, but it is as a root metaphor that it contributes most to the biblical narrative.¹⁸

The main point is that the biblical representations of exile do not need to relate to history at all. The employed tropes *may* reflect historical events, but they do not *have* to. In several cases, it is difficult to determine whether we encounter reflections of real experiences or imaginative constructs.¹⁹

John Kessler's article "Images of Exile" (2010) provides a highly informative overview of literary representations of "exile" and "empty land" in the sixth to fourth century literature.²⁰ Attention is drawn to the centrality of these motifs in biblical literature and the different form and function of them in various writings from the period.²¹ Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor's *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of the Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (2011) studies the transformation of exile from geographical dislocation to a symbol of a variety of alienations, including political disenfranchisement and an existential alienation from God.²² She analyzes in depth the use of metaphors for exile in a series of passages from Jer 30–31, Isa 40–66, and Zech 1–8. Samuel Balentine's article "The Prose and Poetry of Exile" (2012) offers insightful considerations on the significance of various genres for mourning and recording the suffering of exile.²³

With regard to the prophetic literature, two recent collections of papers are of relevance. The first one is *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration* (2015) edited by Mark J. Boda, Frank Ritche Ames, John Ahn, and Mark Leuchter.²⁴ The volume draws attention to the recurrent motif of exile-forced migration in Old Testament prophecy. The second is the volume *Images of Exile in the Prophetic Literature* (2019) edited by Jesper Høgenhaven, Cian

¹⁸ Carroll, "Exile," 64.

¹⁹ Cf. Gudme and Hjelm, *Myths of Exile*, 3–4: "the theme of exile in the Hebrew Bible should not only be viewed as an echo of traumatic historical events, but also as a literary theme that is taken up and reworked in a variety of ways by the biblical authors in order to build specific identities and to express ideology."

²⁰ Kessler, "Images of Exile."

²¹ Kessler ("Images of Exile," 315–47) groups the examined texts in seven sections: 1. Texts favoring the 597 exiles (Jer 24; Ezek 11:14–21); 2. Inclusion of all the Babylonian exiles (Ezek 33:21–29); 3. Exclusion of the Egyptian Diaspora (Jer 40:7–41:18; 42:1–22; 43:1–13; 44:1–30); 4. Full emptying of the land as a result of Israel's disobedience (Lev 26:14–45; Deut 28:15–68); 5. The Babylonian *golah* as the sole repository of authentic Yahwism (2 Kings 25:22–26; Ezra-Nehemiah); 6. Full return of those scattered in Yahweh's judgment (Zech 1–8, Isaiah, Micah); and 7. No exile and no empty land (Haggai).

²² Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*.

²³ Balentine, "Prose and Poetry."

²⁴ Boda, Ames, Ahn and Leuchter, *Prophets*.

Power, and myself.²⁵ Several of the essays reflect on the language and metaphors that the prophets use to express the experience of exile.

Recent studies of exile in Isaiah

Two main factors have shaped past scholarship on exile in Isaiah. First, an important drawback of Bernhard Duhm's division of the book into three major sections (Isa 1–39, 40–55, and 56–66) was that scholars have approached these sections in almost complete isolation from one another as if they are independent prophetic books. This division has implied that the study of exile in Isaiah throughout the twentieth century in practice has focused on Isa 40–55 alone. A common assumption has been that these chapters should be assigned to an anonymous sixth-century author – “the Great Prophet of the Exile” – who lived among the Judean exiles in Babylon and addressed their needs.²⁶ Second, the frequent observation that Isa 40–55 from the very outset looks back on the exile as something that is now over has made scholars concentrate on the proclamation of hope and restoration rather than on the experience of exile itself.²⁷ With regard to exile, several of the works on Isa 40–55 are systematic presentations of the alleged response of this prophet to the theological problems of the exilic period.²⁸

An illustrative example is Peter R. Ackroyd's treatment of Isaiah in *Exile and Restoration* (1968) which because of its interest in the literature of the sixth century limits itself to Isa 40–55.²⁹ He locates the prophetic author in Babylon and looks for those features in the chapters that illuminate the exilic

²⁵ Høgenhaven, Poulsen and Power, *Images of Exile*.

²⁶ For an excellent overview, see Tiemeyer, *Comfort*, 13–51. Cf. also the recent essay “Provenance as a Factor in Interpretation” (2015) by Christopher R. Seitz in which he discusses the role of setting (historical reconstructions vs. canonical context) for reading Isa 40–55.

²⁷ Cf. Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 380: “the book of Deutero-Isaiah is the only prophetic book of the exilic period that contains nothing but prophecy of salvation.”

²⁸ For instance, Ralph Klein (*Israel in Exile*, 97–124) interprets Isa 40–55 as one long response to the exiled people's doubts about YHWH's ability and willingness to save: “the author sang his message into the dark night of Israel's exile.” Jill Middlemas (*The Templeless Age*, 94–111) also emphasizes the jubilant message that YHWH is acting salvifically in the midst of the exiles. In her opinion, Isa 40–55 has two goals: to stir the exiled community to leave Babylon and to comfort the despairing people. Rainer Albertz (*Israel in Exile*, 376–433) offers a rather technical examination of the historical development of the literary composition of Isa 40–55, proposing two editions, each of which has a distinctive theological message.

²⁹ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 118–37. Three pages in a subsequent chapter deal with selected texts from Isa 56–66 under the heading “Passages reflecting restoration”; see *Exile and Restoration*, 228–30.

situation. In his presentation, Ackroyd initially makes a division between “the backward and forward looking of the prophet,” that is, between the understanding of disaster and the prospect of salvation.³⁰ The first section – “The people’s present condition” – examines the exile as YHWH’s punishment of his people because of sin, thereby drawing more attention to their depressing condition in Isa 40–55 than other interpreters are perhaps willing to.³¹ The people themselves are seen to be wholly responsible for their present condition of humiliation: “The exile is at one and the same time a proper punishment for what Israel has been in the past and an act of discipline by which the future may be assured.”³² The second section – “The future hope” – then presents the various images of redemption in Isa 40–55, including the release from captivity, the exodus-like return, and the complete restoration of the land by means of YHWH’s creative power. All of these ideals are expressions of hope formulated against the background of exile.

While *Exile and Restoration* limits itself to Isa 40–55, Peter Ackroyd has dealt with passages in Isa 1–39 in later works.³³ His article “An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile” (1974) in particular is an excellent identification of literary motifs of exile in Isa 38–39 (cf. 2 Kings 20) and contains an informative discussion of the purpose of these chapters within the overall composition of Isaiah.³⁴

As far as I am aware, the recent rediscovery of the unity of Isaiah has not yet resulted in elaborate examinations of the theme of exile in the prophetic composition as a whole. Nevertheless, one can find briefer treatments of this issue in some of the works referred to in the previous section. The opening of Robert P. Carroll’s four-page review (1997)³⁵ highlights the importance of the motif:

Isaiah is the great scroll of diaspora discourses in the prophetic collection in the Hebrew Bible. It is shot through with images of devastation and deportation, of fugitives driven from their homeland and of abandoned territory which testifies to a disrupted cultivation, with loss of the civic centre.³⁶

³⁰ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 121: “Here we may distinguish, in spite of obvious interrelationship, between the prophet’s understanding of how his people has come to be where it is, and the anticipation which he shows of events in which God is acting and will continue to act to effect his purposes.”

³¹ Cf. the criticism in Middlemas, *The Templeless Age*, 102.

³² Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 126.

³³ Ackroyd, *Studies*.

³⁴ The article was originally published in *Scottish Journal of Theology*; see Ackroyd, *Studies*, 152–71.

³⁵ Carroll, “Deportation,” 73–77.

³⁶ Carroll, “Deportation,” 73.

Among others, he observes that the notion of the great return of the dispersed ones (e.g. 14:1–2; 19:18–25; 27:12–13; 43:5–6; 49:12) and the flow of nations to Jerusalem (e.g. 2:1–4; 66:12, 18) are pervasive themes in the book as a whole, contributing to its diasporic discourses: “the scroll itself represents a magnificent panorama of alienation, deportation and homecoming.”³⁷

John Kessler’s three-page review (2010)³⁸ likewise observes that “the motif of vast devastation followed by scattering and ultimately re-gathering of all Israel is [...] a highly important motif in the Isaianic corpus.”³⁹ As a test case, he examines Isa 6:1–11:16. Like bookends, Isa 6:11–13 and 11:11–16 “introduce and then resolve the matter of the exile and empty land in the section.”⁴⁰ Kessler draws attention to an important feature which forms a contrast to other biblical accounts of the exile. In Isaiah, there is no favored or excluded group. The basic polarity is not between various groups within the people (e.g. those who were exiled and those who remained in the land), but between the prophet as YHWH’s messenger and the population in toto: “The people of God consist of all the descendants of Israel [...] All have disobeyed and as a result judgment has come upon all.”⁴¹ He furthermore observes “the highly schematized vision” of these Isaianic texts.⁴² In Isaiah’s vision, the complete devastation and forsakenness of the land balance its complete restoration and repopulation.

A series of recent studies on exile in Isaiah has engaged in shorter passages or sections. Bradley C. Gregory’s article, “The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah” (2007), offers a reading of Isa 61:1–3 in light of Second Temple hermeneutics.⁴³ He attempts to demonstrate that this Isaianic passage is one of the earliest attestations to the concept of an enduring exile, that is, exile as an ongoing state beyond the geographical and temporal bounds of the Babylonian captivity.⁴⁴

³⁷ Carroll, “Deportation,” 76.

³⁸ Kessler, “Images of Exile,” 341–44.

³⁹ Kessler, “Images of Exile,” 341. As examples of texts, he lists Isa 6:11–13; 11:11, 16; 14:2; 43:1–7; 44:24–28; 45:12–13; 48:20–21; 49:19–26; 51:9–11; 60:1–22; 62:1–8; 66:10–16.

⁴⁰ Kessler, “Images of Exile,” 342.

⁴¹ Kessler, “Images of Exile,” 343.

⁴² Kessler, “Images of Exile,” 343: “There is no distinction between various groups of Yahwists based upon their geographical location, their redemptive sufferings, or their fate during the period of Yahweh’s judgment upon the land. Neither is there any explicit mention of their repentance or responsiveness to Yahweh.”

⁴³ Gregory, “Postexilic Exile.”

⁴⁴ See also the essay “The Individualization of Exile in Trito-Isaiah” (2019) by Ulrich Berges in which he explores how exile is turned into an individual and existential condition which can only be overcome by a certain ethical behavior.

Fredrik Häggglund's dissertation *Isaiah 53 in the Light of Homecoming after Exile* (2008) aims at understanding what problem Isa 53 addresses and seeks to answer.⁴⁵ He regards the specific historical problem behind this text to be a conflict regarding repatriation of the Judean exiles returning from Babylon in the late sixth century, because those who had remained in the land were reluctant to receive them. Isaiah 53, so he argues, encourages the people in the land to embrace the returnees as ones who have suffered on their behalf. Although Häggglund's main approach is historical, he applies a series of theories and methodologies in his investigation of the text of Isa 53, its notions of vicarious suffering and of exclusion and embrace, and its literary, geographical, and social contexts. Notably, in line with Smith-Christopher, Häggglund draws from modern refugee studies and the issues they present about the problems of homecoming in order to shed further light on the social conflict reflected in the biblical text.⁴⁶

The application of a contemporary, sociological perspective to Isaiah is also present in Gregory Lee Cuéllar's monograph *Voices of Marginality: Exile and Return in Second Isaiah 40–55 and the Mexican Immigrant Experience* (2008).⁴⁷ He employs insights from postcolonial studies and diaspora theology. A central aim of the work is to compare the rhetoric of Isa 40–55 to the Mexican *corrido* ballad songs, a traditional type of folk song, the lyrics of which describe aspects of Mexican immigrant experiences in the United States. Cuéllar attempts to demonstrate that there are shared socio-political and socio-religious concerns between the *corridos* and Isa 40–55 and that both groups of texts share a series of themes (e.g. marginalization, longing for home, yearning to return). In his view, the biblical and Mexican experience can inform each other.

Finally, two recent works, both of which are of particular significance to my own study, are devoted to the literary character of exile in Isaiah. The first one is Francis Landy's essay "Exile in the Book of Isaiah" (2010) which offers some highly original and inspiring ideas about this issue in the prophetic composition as a whole.⁴⁸ His essay is both thought-provoking and demanding. As cited at the beginning of the introduction, Landy initially observes an apparent contradiction. Exile is central to the structure and message of Isaiah, but it is very hard to find. On the one hand, all of the major sections of the book are concerned with exile. Isaiah 1–39 foreshadows the disaster of the early sixth century and the restoration from it by the fall of Samaria and the deliverance of Judah in the eighth century. The feeling of deep loss and

⁴⁵ Häggglund, *Isaiah 53*.

⁴⁶ Häggglund, *Isaiah 53*, 156–72.

⁴⁷ Cuéllar, *Voices of Marginality*.

⁴⁸ Landy, "Exile." His approach is advanced in the essay "Metaphors of Death and Exile in Isaiah" (2019).

Index of References

Old Testament

<i>Genesis</i>			
1	52	11:1–9	296–97, 339
1–11	296	11:4	296
2–3	218	11:8	296
2:7	147	11:9	296
2:9	38	11:27–12:20	155
2:17	38	11:30	401
2:25	173	12:10	278
3	157	13:9	404
3:3–4	120	13:14–18	131
3:6	376	14:19	305
3:7	173	14:22	305
3:8	268	15:18	322
3:10	173, 268	19:20	145
3:14	156	21:14	361
3:16	262	25:21	401
3:17	156	28:14	328, 334, 404
3:23	316	29:31	401
3:24	157, 164	31:18	174, 333
4:1–16	155	31:26	174
4:9–16	156	31:40	226
4:10–11	157	31:50	152
4:11	156–57	32:29	282
4:11–12	156–57	33:12	220
4:12	156–57, 372	33:13	325
4:14	156–57, 164, 227, 372	33:14	333
4:16	157, 227	34:21	189
5:24	239	34:29	267
6:19–20	227	35:7	119
7:11	289	37	269
8:21	50, 359	37:26–28	276
9:15	50	37:34	172
9:19	320	37:35	42
9:22	173	37:36	132
9:22–23	175	39:22	265
10:18	297	41:5–7	321
		41:6	318
		41:22–24	321

41:26–27	321	21:30	283
42:24	110	22:3	256
43:31	61, 151	22:6	256
45:1	61	22:8	256
45:8	195	23:10	306
48:16	280	25:9	188
49:7	297	27:19	195
50:10	118	28:40	195
50:20	227	28:42	175
50:21	254	30:12	283
		31:3	38
<i>Exodus</i>		32:4	356
1:11–14	249	32:8	361
1:12	404	33:11	197
1:14	263	33:20	84
2:12	362	34:10	359
3–4	76	34:24	107
3:1	174, 325	38:8	254
3:7	262	38:21	216
4:10	85		
4:15	85	<i>Leviticus</i>	
4:22–23	140	1:4	255
4:23	315	5:21	225
5:6	262	5:23	225
5:10	262	14	218
5:13–14	262	16:4	189
6:6	280	18	175
6:7	375	19:7	255
6:9	262	19:9	321
7:3	143	19:10	321
7:23	362	20	175
10:1	89	21:18	308
13:3	249	23:22	321
13:9	303	25:1–2	72
13:14	264	25:1–7	72
14:3	112	25:9	322
14:16	308	25:23–34	280
14:21	289, 308	25:46	260
14:26–27	308	25:47–66	280
15	292	25:50	254
15:2	213	26	68, 71–74, 94–95
15:3	60	26:1–2	71
15:8–10	308	26:3–13	72
15:13	280, 333	26:14–26	72
15:16	82, 303, 305	26:14–45	6
15:22	220	26:21	314
17:1–7	372	26:27–45	72
21:1–11	277	26:31	96
21:2	304	26:31–33	94

26:33	299	22:19	316
26:34–45	255	24:1	392
26:43	97, 255, 408	24:1–3	316
26:46	72	24:20	321
27:30–33	97	26:12–15	97
		28	68, 71–73, 94–95
<i>Numbers</i>		28:1	71
1:3	254	28:1–14	73
4:23	254	28:3–14	73
8:24–25	254	28:7	94
11:12	326	28:10	146
16:30	41	28:15–25	73
16:32–33	41–42	28:15–68	6, 73
18:21–24	97	28:21	94
20:1–13	372	28:26–46	73
21:6	81	28:37	174, 333
22:31	116	28:41	249
28:7	33	28:47–57	73
31:9	267	28:48	40, 276, 332, 371
33:54	260	28:49	130
35:19–27	280	28:53	271
35:31–32	283	28:55	271
		28:57	271
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		28:58–61	314
2:12	146	28:58–68	73, 353
2:30	143	28:63	94
3:27–28	131	28:63–68	218
4:6	340, 347	28:64	297–98
4:9	340, 347, 349	28:64–65	383
4:25–31	371	28:65	262
4:27	174, 297, 333	28:65–66	262
4:28–29	371	28:65–67	74
5:15	303	29:1–3	347
6:4–5	89	29:17	362
8:2–3	151	29:22	150
8:16	151	30:1–4	300
9:1	404	30:3	297
10:17	60	30:4	301
11:23	404	30:15–20	340
12:3	320	30:17	299
13:6	299	30:17–18	362
14:22–29	97	31:3	404
14:26	34	31:17–18	50
15:18	256	31:29	56
18:14	404	32:1–4	131
19:1	404	32:6	147, 305
19:6	280	32:9	55
20:14	267	32:15	90
22:1	299	32:20	50

32:24	32	2:5	402
32:33	56	2:6	53
<i>Joshua</i>		2:8	275
1:8	224	2:22	254
4:3	190	9:3	323
4:9	190	9:15	37
6:10	60	9:20	323
6:16	60	11:8	97
7:1	188	11:11	297
7:2–26	188	12:3	283
10:12–13	206	13:6	268
11:14	267	13:11	320
		13:12	61
<i>Judges</i>		14:1	190
1:16	158	14:11	268
2:14	267	17:20	60
4:11	158	18:11	188
4:17	158	20:33	188
4:21–22	195	23:5	174
5:4	63	28:17	172
6:11	320	30:2	174
6:11–17	76	30:2–3	261
6:18	197	30:20	174
6:25	190		
13:2–3	401	<i>2 Samuel</i>	
14:17	271	6:12	232
16:3	220	6:15	232
16:7	110	7:5	87
16:16	271	7:16	196
16:20	275	7:19	117
18:9	60	8:1	307
18:10	189	8:2	307
18:30	37	8:13–14	307
19:24	152	10:1–5	307
21:6	197	10:4	173, 175, 385
		11:25	190
<i>Ruth</i>		12:3	326
2:2	321	13:36	210
2:13	254	17:8	397
2:17	320	17:19	115
3:2	299	18:18	86
3:4	37	24:12	87
3:7	37		
3:13	280	<i>1 Kings</i>	
4:16	326	4:39	321
		5:1	128, 322
<i>1 Samuel</i>		7	116
1:3	107	7:7	81
		8:10–11	81

8:46–51	249, 261	20:12	126, 129
8:65	322	20:12–19	122–23, 133
9:7	316	20:13	126
10:16–17	116	20:19	135
11:17	364	21:1–18	69, 132
11:38	196	21:9	361
12:15	172	21:14	267
13:30	33	22	195
14:15	299	22:14–20	132
17:17–24	205	22:15–17	132
17:39	332	22:18–20	132
18:4	268	23:10	106
20:31–32	172	23:12	107
22:17	298	23:14–15	320
22:27	264	23:26–27	69, 132
		23:27	409
<i>2 Kings</i>		23:30–35	193
1:1	360	23:34	199
1:8	172	23:37	199
2:3	60	24–25	68–69, 123
2:10	239	24:3–4	69, 132
4:1	277	24:8–9	193
5:7	227	24:8–17	192–93
5:11	308	24:10–12	193
5:24	217	24:14–16	193–94
8:1	227	24:17	195
8:5	227	24:10–19	68
11:3	268	24:12	133, 243
12:18	171	24:13	133
15:29	37	24:14	222
16:9	106, 113	24:15	133
17:4	239, 264	24:20	163
17:15	409	24:20–25:21	68
17:20	267, 409	25	27, 110, 243
17:21	299	25:3	110
17:23	37	25:4–6	110
17:24	133	25:5	297
17:30	133	25:7	110, 133
18–19	184	25:9	150
18:3–7	135	25:10	113
18:13–20:19	122	25:11	94
18:32	316	25:12	222
19:26	176	25:13–17	133
20	8, 204, 206	25:20	69
20:1–11	127, 205–6	25:21	37
20:5	231	25:22–26	6
20:7	231	25:26	69, 94
20:7–8	205–6	25:27	175, 264
20:8	231	25:27–30	70, 132, 194, 243

<i>1 Chronicles</i>		4:11	38
3:17	265	4:21	220
3:17–18	243	6:9	222
4:9	262	7:1	255
4:38	404	7:4	226
4:40	189	7:6	222
8:8	316	7:9	42
20:25	267	7:12	289
29:3	150	7:19	111
		8:7	145
<i>2 Chronicles</i>		10:8–9	148
24:24	145	10:16	223
26:16–21	240	10:19	238
26:21	240	12:14	190, 272
28:14–15	173	12:24–25	143
29:6	188	12:25	361
32:31	126	13:24	50
33:9	361	14:9	111
36	68–69	14:14	255
36:4	199	15:34	397
36:9–21	69	16:10	41
36:19	150–51	18:15	298
36:21	71–72	18:18	227
36:22–23	70	19:7	113
		19:10	221
<i>Ezra</i>		20:8	227
1:1–3	70	20:27	115
3:8	250	21:32	238
		22:6	173
<i>Nehemiah</i>		24:7	38
1:3	113	26:12	289
1:8–9	300	27:20–21	318
5:1–5	277	28:28	339
5:8	304	29:19	371
7:4	189	29:23	41
9	137	30:3	397
9:15	332	30:6	268
		32:18	271
<i>Esther</i>		33:24	283
2:3	132	33:30	218
3:15	112	34:29	50
5:10	61	35:16	38
6:1	226	36:29	108
		38:2	38
<i>Job</i>		38:10–11	42
1:21	173	38:17	216
2:10	47	38:41	223
3:7	397	39:7	108
3:26	262	39:16	143

41:5	116	42-43	163, 225
42:3	38	42:3	218, 371
<i>Psalms</i>		42:5	225
1	340-41, 368	42:7	145
1:2	224	42:8	163
1:3	371	42:10	390
2:3	276	44:10-12	238
2:7	320	44:12	299
6:4	91	44:13	146, 276-77
6:6	229-30	44:18	140
9	81, 216	44:23	238
9:5	81	44:24	142
9:8	81	44:25	390
9:14	216	45:15-16	238
9:15	216	46:4	109
9:16	272	46:6	65
13:2	390	46:7	109
14:2-3	359	48:8	318
15:1	219	48:15	174, 333
16:10	272	49	82
17:14	219	49:2	219
18	213	49:8	283
18:7	113	49:12	188
18:29	48	49:13	82
22:2	142, 390	49:21	82
22:16	275	51:8	224
22:30	275	52:3-7	218
23:1	222	52:7	218, 222
23:2	325	55:11	197
24:3	107, 232	55:18	109
24:3-4	84	56:2-3	61
24:8	55, 60	56:8	287
28:1	60, 229	56:14	218
28:5	35, 190	58:4	359, 362
28:7	109	59:14	146
29:9	175	61:5	219
30	213, 230	63:2	372
30:4	164, 229	65:7	43
30:6	49	66:12	282
30:10	229	68:5	109
31:7	108	68:30	238
31:23	163, 240	69:3	321
32	213	69:16	321
34	213	71:20	164
34:15	34	74	67, 92, 144
39:2	60	74:1	142
39:5	219	74:2	144, 304
40:18	370	74:3-7	150
		74:3-8	149

74:5-6	151	103:13	140
74:7	144	103:15-16	318
74:9-10	92	104:4	330
74:10	144, 278	104:9	42
74:13	162	104:25	189
74:13-14	307	105:39	115
74:18	278	106	137
74:23	43	106:9	289
75:9	56	106:27	299
76:6	360	107:2-3	328
76:12	238	107:4-5	40
77:4	109	107:5	332, 371
77:10	390	107:10	265
78:4	55	107:14	276
78:13	289	107:14-16	287
78:40	140	107:18	216
78:52	174, 220, 325, 333	107:27	156
78:54	305	107:35-43	372
78:59	409	107:39	239
78:67	409	109:10	156
79	68, 92	113:9	401
79:1	144, 149, 274	115:4-9	357
79:5	92	115:17	64, 229
79:11	272	116:16	276
80:2	174, 333	119	349
80:5	91	119:18	116
80:9	220	119:122	225
81:3	34	119:131	41, 61
81:4	322	119:176	361
83:2	60, 63, 215	122:1	232
87:4	289	122:5	81
88:5	42, 229	124:7	268
88:6	240	131:2	223
88:11-12	229	136:13-14	289
89	68	137	68, 164, 249
89:11	289	137:3	261
89:29	196	139:7-12	157
90	92	139:8	42
90:15	151	145:6	55
92:2-5	34	146:7-8	264
94	92	150:3	322
94:17	64		
95:8	143	<i>Proverbs</i>	
95:10	362	1:12	42
96:12	109	2:6	339
98:2	37, 115	2:22	218
102:20-21	272	4:1-2	339
103:3-4	229	4:4	340
103:12	94, 229	4:10-19	340

4:23	88	1:1	106, 336
6:35	283	1:2	360
7:11	109	1:2–3	280, 336, 341, 348
7:23	268	1:2–4	57, 140, 377
7:25	362	1:3	36, 38, 87–88, 253, 304, 312
8:22	305	1:3–4	89
8:29	42	1:4	30, 33, 87, 97, 99, 120, 149, 255, 278, 319, 350
9:1–6	340	1:5–6	90, 235, 314
9:10	38, 339	1:6	203
9:13–18	340	1:7	33, 46, 93, 149
10:17	362	1:7–9	304
11:13	115	1:8	384
12:5	364	1:8–9	27, 133, 312
12:26	362	1:10	87, 131
13:8	283	1:11	45
14:22	362	1:12	218
14:23	262	1:13	109
15:7	298	1:21	108, 384
15:13	408	1:21–28	98
16:6	120	1:23	34
16:28	376	1:25	58
20:1	34	1:29–31	98
20:12	339	1:30	141, 375
21:16	362	2	112
23:11	280	2:1–4	9
23:29–35	34	2:2	231–32
24:30–34	339	2:2–4	28, 66, 233, 323, 330, 342, 371
25:4–5	318	2:3	371
25:9	115	2:6–22	44
26:20	156	2:8	323
27:20	41	2:9	31, 43
28:14	143	2:10	43
30:15–16	41	2:11	31, 43
30:16	239	2:17	31, 43
<i>Ecclesiastes</i>		2:19	43
3:7	60	2:20	323
4:14	390	2:21	43
<i>Song of Songs</i>		3	93
4:16	330	3:9	83
7:6	222	3:11	83
<i>Isaiah</i>		3:12	87, 142, 362–63
1–5	43, 89	3:13	316
1–12	58, 295	3:14	87, 98
1–39	7–8, 10–11, 16, 22– 24, 67, 136, 166, 247, 253, 255	3:14–15	370
		3:15	87

3:16–4:1	39, 384	5:17	31, 36, 40, 44–45,
3:17	173		49, 98, 149, 151,
3:20	395		292, 396
3:24	172	5:19	35
3:26	93, 385	5:21	343
4:1	394, 405, 407	5:22	34, 57
4:2–6	98, 304	5:24	35, 278
4:3	133	5:24–25	55
4:4–5	58	5:25	87, 97, 256, 304,
4:5–6	115		314
5	30, 45	5:25–30	30, 112
5:1	76	5:25–11:16	301
5:1–7	30, 310–11, 341	5:26	114, 304, 334, 391
5:2	187	5:29	223
5:3	33	5:30	65
5:5	98, 404	6	44, 74–78, 81–83,
5:6	45, 293		87, 93, 96, 99, 137,
5:7	30, 33, 43		146, 152, 236, 251–
5:8–24	29, 311		52, 254, 325, 378
5:9	76, 93, 120, 149	6:1	79–81, 171, 303
5:10	45	6:1–4	79–80
5:11	34, 57	6:1–7	74, 78
5:11–12	29–30, 34, 38–40	6:1–11	97
5:11–13	31, 39, 119, 343,	6:1–13	16, 67, 74, 100,
	363		152, 234, 290, 411
5:11–17	16, 19, 29–32, 45–	6:1–8:18	75, 78
	47, 54, 66–67, 98,	6:1–9:6	75
	104, 107, 132, 178,	6:1–11:16	9
	311, 336, 411	6:3	90, 251
5:12	35, 38–39, 43, 88,	6:4	90
	117, 148–49, 171,	6:5	79, 81–83, 87, 131,
	219		141, 146, 215, 238,
5:12–13	377		274, 286
5:13	11, 29, 31, 33, 35–	6:5–7	79, 82, 91, 351
	38, 40–42, 46, 57,	6:7	84, 98, 120, 149,
	87–88, 253, 332,		255, 319
	352, 371, 397	6:8	79–80, 85, 91, 303
5:13–14	11, 44, 46, 108,	6:8–10	85, 87
	163, 215, 258, 295	6:8–13	74, 78, 85
5:13–17	29–30, 33, 35, 44	6:9	87, 146, 172, 266,
5:14	29–30, 36, 41–43,		346
	46, 64, 98, 109,	6:9–10	34, 87, 91, 96, 104,
	119, 216, 272, 288,		131, 141–42, 152,
	363, 412		179, 236, 264, 291,
5:14–17	31		336–37, 346–48,
5:15	44		352, 377
5:15–16	31, 43, 45, 80	6:9–13	120
5:16	43		

6:10	86, 88–90, 92, 96, 98, 143, 254, 315, 359	9:5	195
6:11	80, 85–86, 91–95, 98, 108, 142, 149, 152, 252	9:6	60, 342
6:11–12	97–98, 232, 396	9:7–10:4	54
6:11–13	9, 14, 78–79, 83, 85, 91–92, 100, 123, 132–33, 136, 152, 252, 352, 360, 391	9:11	304
6:12	94–95, 98, 130, 295, 385	9:12	97, 314
6:12–13	77, 92, 97	9:15	42, 362
6:13	11, 58, 77, 86–87, 97–99, 291–92	9:16	304
7	165	9:17	97–98
7–8	75–76	9:20	304, 306
7:1–2	129	9:21	97
7:1–9	124	10:1	393
7:2	112, 210, 308	10:1–4	30
7:3	98, 116–17, 129, 304	10:3	130
7:8	174	10:4	97, 304
7:9	117	10:5–34	301
7:11	42, 232	10:6	267, 286
7:13	210	10:11	356
7:14	232	10:12	217
7:16	174	10:13	267
7:23–26	93	10:14	224
7:25	45, 98	10:17	98
8:5–8	51	10:20–23	304
8:7	307	10:20–27	314
8:7–8	49	10:21	60
8:11	363	10:24–34	175
8:12–15	51	10:26	308
8:15	35	10:31	226
8:16–18	51, 59, 83	10:32	106, 308
8:17	51, 65	10:33	197
8:18	27, 174	10:33–34	99
8:19	224	11	301, 303
8:21–22	65	11:1	99
8:21–9:1	265	11:1–9	301
8:22	300	11:1–10	303
8:22–9:1	365	11:2	38, 342
8:23–9:6	51	11:2–3	143
9:1	65	11:9	149, 305, 323, 377
9:3	261	11:10	301, 305
		11:11	301, 303, 305, 307, 320, 325, 327–28, 377
		11:11–12	301, 303, 306–7, 328, 334, 394
		11:11–13	307
		11:11–16	9, 278, 295–96, 301–2, 304, 309, 322–23, 333, 412
		11:12	298, 304–5, 308, 322, 327, 330–31

11:12–16	301	14:19	229
11:13	306	14:20	271
11:13–14	301, 306, 327	14:22–23	259
11:14	307–8, 404	14:24–28	27
11:15	307–9, 314, 318, 320, 365, 372	14:25	112
11:15–16	301, 303, 307, 311	14:26	97
11:16	300, 309, 333	14:28	171
12	295, 301, 371	14:29	81
12:1	59, 252	15:1	65, 82, 215
12:2	213	15:2–3	118
12:3	371	15:3	107
13–14	101, 134, 216, 257	16:3	37, 226
13–19	101	16:3–4	300
13–23	100–3, 106, 134, 147, 165, 184	16:11	111
13–26	312	16:14	174
13:1	259	17:2	45, 98
13:1–14:23	102, 259, 312	17:3	115
13:2	308	17:3–11	310–11
13:2–22	259	17:9	96
13:3	109	17:10	392
13:10	65	17:12	109
13:11	217, 241, 269	17:12–13	43, 108
13:14	299	17:12–14	27
13:16	387	17:13	50, 318
13:18	114	17:13–14	65
13:20–22	45	17:14	267
13:21–22	292	18	165
13:22	81	18:4	62
14:1	259–60	18:7	238, 322
14:1–2	9, 259	19	165
14:1–4a	250, 258–59, 267, 412	19:13–14	361
14:2	133, 258, 260–62, 269–70, 276, 330, 396	19:16	308
14:3	255, 262–63	19:18–25	9
14:3–4a	259	19:22	91
14:4–5	261	19:25	55, 309
14:4–21	134, 259, 262, 293, 388	20	11, 76, 82, 101, 128, 165–69, 174, 178, 181, 190, 239, 248, 394
14:4–23	271	20:1	165, 171, 176
14:5	241	20:1–2	167
14:11	42	20:1–4	165–66
14:12	197	20:1–6	16, 101, 154, 165– 66, 170, 182, 232, 234, 412
14:15	42, 288	20:2	87, 165, 167–69, 172
14:17	190, 265, 272, 394	20:2–4	171, 309, 379
14:18	188	20:2–5	166

20:3	165, 168–69, 174, 180	22:9	118
20:3–4	165, 168, 172–73, 201, 295	22:10	118
20:3–5	177	22:11	117, 119, 148–49, 171, 178, 219, 377
20:4	167–68, 173–75, 238, 276, 333, 385	22:12	110, 116, 118–19, 183, 186, 195
20:5	166–67, 176	22:12–13	100, 103, 118
20:5–6	165, 175	22:12–14	120
20:6	166, 176–77	22:14	37, 100, 103, 116, 119, 131, 149, 183, 256, 284, 319
21–23	101–2	22:15	172, 183, 186, 190– 91
21:1	101	22:15–16	186
21:1–10	102	22:15–19	183, 185, 241
21:2	113	22:15–25	17, 101–2, 154, 183, 198, 200, 234, 248, 412
21:3	111	22:16	186–87, 189–90, 393
21:11	64	22:17	186
21:11–12	63–65	22:17–18a	186, 188–90, 192, 201, 295, 379
21:12	65	22:17–19	188
21:13	101	22:18b	186, 189, 192, 196
21:13–17	63	22:19	183, 190
21:14	226	22:20–23	183, 195–99, 210
21:15	226	22:20–24	173, 183
21:16	174	22:20–25	183, 194–96
22	102, 115–16, 183– 84, 190	22:21	394
22:1	101, 106–9, 111, 130	22:22	264
22:1–4	100, 102–3, 113, 116	22:24	196–97
22:1–14	16, 46, 67, 100, 102, 104, 121, 132, 147, 153, 183–84, 186, 234, 290, 311, 337, 379, 411	22:25	183, 195–97
22:2	43, 106–11, 113, 118, 199	23	102, 109
22:3	107, 109–10, 199, 226, 363	23:1	37
22:4	36, 103, 107, 110– 12, 119, 253, 385	23:2	176
22:5	106, 112–13, 116, 183, 186	23:6	176
22:5–8a	100, 103, 112	23:7	109
22:6	113–14	24–27	44–45, 295, 309, 310
22:7	113–14	24:1	298
22:8	37, 114–16, 119, 171, 195, 398	24:1–3	310
22:8b–11	103, 116, 199, 215	24:2	190
22:8b–13	100	24:8	109
		24:8–9	35, 43
		24:10–12	45
		24:11	37
		24:16	83
		24:20	156

24:21–22	217	28:16	117
24:22	264	28:23–29	341–42
25:2–3	45	28:25	297
25:6	34	28:26	342
25:8	322	28:27	320
25:11–12	44	29:1	106
26:1	44	29:1–8	27, 106
26:4	213	29:2	271
26:5	44–45	29:4	224
26:11	60	29:5	109, 355
26:14	217, 322	29:7	271
26:19	275, 322	29:9–10	337
26:20–21	315	29:13	254
26:21	37, 115, 217	29:14	343
27	310	29:16	147–48
27:1	162, 217, 289, 310– 12, 315, 320–21, 325	29:17	373
27:2–6	310–11, 314, 321	29:17–21	376
27:4	312	29:17–24	373, 375
27:6	314	29:18	336, 346
27:7	311–15, 319, 332	29:23	148, 375
27:7–9	312, 314	29:24	376
27:7–11	310	30	140
27:7–13	45, 295–96, 309– 12, 323, 412	30:1	140
27:8	308, 311, 313, 315– 16, 318, 321, 330, 333, 391	30:1–5	175
27:8–9	120, 284, 315	30:6	81
27:9	120, 310–11, 316, 318–19, 322–23	30:7	289
27:10	45	30:8	351, 393
27:10–11	311–12, 314	30:9	88, 140
27:11	321	30:9–11	337, 351
27:12	311, 317, 320–21, 329, 331	30:11	351
27:12–13	9, 295, 310–12, 320, 323, 327	30:15	88, 109
27:13	311, 322–23, 327, 331, 333	30:20	366
28:1	34	30:20–22	366
28:1–4	34, 252	30:21	367
28:2	256	30:23–26	315
28:7	34–35, 57, 337, 361, 363	30:24	299
28:7–13	34–35, 337	30:25	315
28:12	88	30:26	90, 203
28:14	131	30:27	55
		30:27–33	60, 314
		30:30	55
		30:32	140
		31:1–3	117, 176
		31:3	256
		31:4	55, 109, 224
		32:3–4	346
		32:14	45, 98
		32:15–18	373
		32:19	44

33	25	38	21, 121–22, 129, 135, 155, 200–2, 204–9, 231–34, 248, 335
33:3	226, 320	38–39	8, 25
33:5	188, 346	38:1	210
33:6	38, 143, 342	38:1–8	129, 200, 205–6, 209, 231
33:9	275	38:1–22	17, 154, 200, 234, 412
33:14–24	98	38:5	87
33:20	195, 220	38:5–6	206, 209–10
33:21	189	38:7–8	232
33:24	120	38:8	206, 229
34–35	25	38:9	126, 210, 213–14, 235
34:2	308	38:9–20	200, 204–5, 207, 211–13, 258
34:5	308	38:10	63, 164, 213–17, 219, 228–30, 272, 287
34:13–14	292	38:10–12a	214, 218, 295
34:14	64	38:10–17a	213
35:1–10	373	38:11	213, 217, 219, 240
35:5	336, 359	38:12	37, 188, 219–24, 240
35:5–7	374	38:12b–14	214, 222
35:8	366	38:13	223–24
35:8–10	374	38:14	224, 229
35:9	279	38:15	225–27, 230
35:10	119, 279	38:15–16	213, 225
36–37	21, 27, 121, 128, 165–66, 184, 190, 198, 201, 209–10	38:15–17a	214, 225
36–38	125, 135	38:16	126, 210, 227
36–39	23, 25–26, 76, 121	38:17	149, 213, 222–29, 241, 272
36:3	185	38:17b–20	213, 214, 228
36:10	271	38:18	229–30, 241, 288
36:17	133	38:19	213, 230
37–38	231–32	38:20	209, 214, 216, 219, 230–31
37:1	108, 172, 200, 231	38:21	126, 129, 174, 203, 210, 230–31
37:2	185	38:21–22	200, 205, 207–9, 231
37:3	112	38:22	107, 206, 209, 226, 231–32
37:8	220	39	1, 11, 13, 16, 19– 20, 22, 24, 26–29, 31, 46–48, 54, 59,
37:11	308		
37:14	126, 231		
37:16–20	375		
37:21–29	384		
37:22	386		
37:26	108		
37:27	176		
37:30	174		
37:30–32	304		
37:32	60		
37:35	210		
37:36	65, 118		
37:36–38	314		
37:37	220		

- 66–67, 78, 83, 99–
100, 121–23, 125,
127, 134, 152–53,
200–1, 209, 234,
236, 248, 250–51,
254, 256, 290, 337,
384, 395, 411–13
- 39:1 127, 134
39:1–2 121, 129, 131
39:1–8 16, 25, 67, 121–22,
125, 136, 153, 234,
257, 290, 411
- 39:2 126–27, 129–33
39:3 127, 129, 334
39:3–4 121, 130–31
39:4 129, 132–33
39:5–7 20, 131
39:5–8 121
39:6 124, 129, 131, 133,
151, 394
- 39:6–7 26, 132, 134, 216–
17, 295
- 39:7 81, 129, 133
39:7–8 124
39:8 21, 126, 134–35,
228
- 39:8–40:1 19
40 1, 11, 13, 16, 19–
20, 22–24, 26–29,
31, 46–48, 54, 59,
66–67, 78, 83, 99–
100, 123, 134, 152–
53, 200, 225, 234,
236, 248, 250–51,
254, 256, 290, 293,
337, 384, 395, 411–
13
- 40–48 118, 134, 357, 389
40–55 1, 7–8, 10–12, 16,
23–24, 138, 203,
234–35, 259
- 40–66 6, 13, 16, 21–24,
26, 66, 136, 234,
246, 411
- 40:1 21–22, 29, 59, 112,
254, 256, 292, 324–
25
- 40:1–2 12, 20–21, 78, 120,
250–53, 255, 260,
- 262, 270, 280, 284,
293, 391, 412
- 324
- 40:1–9 251, 324–25
- 40:1–11 26, 56, 253–57,
262, 319, 377, 385
- 40:2 309
- 40:3 366
- 40:3–5 37, 120, 324
- 40:5 252, 318
- 40:7 141
- 40:7–8 324
- 40:9 146, 286, 324–27,
333
- 40:10 296, 298, 300, 324,
327, 394, 412
- 40:10–11 325–26, 331–32,
385, 391
- 40:11 342
- 40:12–14 38
- 40:14 98
- 40:16 54, 357
- 40:18–20 358
- 40:26 51, 53, 61, 344,
361, 389
- 40:27 389
- 40:27–31 281
- 41:1 347, 353, 368
- 41:1–7 368
- 41:1–42:12 281
- 41:2–3 177
- 41:5 54, 357
- 41:6–7 260, 328
- 41:8–9 370
- 41:14 318
- 41:15–16 299
- 41:16 59, 61, 368, 370,
372–73, 376
- 41:17 291, 338, 368–70,
374, 377, 413
- 41:17 372
- 41:18 368, 372, 374, 376
- 41:18–19 372
- 41:19 368, 371, 375–77
- 41:20 54, 347, 353
- 41:21–29 376
- 41:22 350
- 41:23 246, 281, 385
- 41:27 54
- 42

42:1–4	244	43:5–6	9, 329–30, 333–34, 394
42:1–9	263, 349	43:5–7	281, 295–96, 324, 327–28, 412
42:4	177	43:6	130, 328, 330, 334
42:5	253, 358	43:7	281, 328–29, 331
42:5–9	13	43:8	336, 362, 367, 373
42:6b–7	250, 263, 412	43:8–13	285, 347–49, 358
42:7	164, 263–66, 268, 275, 280, 287, 330	43:10	246, 348, 375
42:8	292	43:11	53, 279
42:9	21, 291, 358	43:12	348
42:10–12	292, 368	43:14	216, 285–87, 290
42:11	401	43:14–15	285, 288, 290
42:13	55, 59–62	43:14–21	250, 279, 284–85, 293, 308, 412
42:13–14	59, 62, 65–66	43:15	285–86
42:14	60–62, 151	43:16	291
42:15	61	43:16–17	285, 288–90
42:16	61, 336, 365–67, 372	43:16–21	285, 288
42:17	357	43:17	60, 284, 287
42:18	219, 346–47	43:18	290
42:18–19	336	43:18–19a	285
42:18–20	264, 344–49, 373	43:18–21	288, 290, 292
42:18–25	12, 266, 281, 285, 338, 344, 346, 349, 351–54, 362, 365, 413	43:19	99, 291, 358
42:19	345–46, 349–50	43:19b–20	285
42:20	344, 346–47, 350, 359, 367	43:20	291–92, 372
42:21	266, 349	43:21	285, 292
42:21–25	88, 344, 349, 351	43:25	149, 229
42:22	250, 258, 266–269, 287, 330, 349–50, 412	43:27	359
42:23	349–50, 368	43:27–28	350
42:24	350–52, 361	43:28	55, 308
42:25	55, 58, 254, 271, 344, 352, 360	44:2	345
43:1	280–81, 285, 292, 328	44:3	371, 374
43:1–4	250, 279, 281, 293, 304, 328, 412	44:3–4	374
43:1–7	269, 281, 285, 328, 344	44:4	374
43:2	281, 284	44:5	393
43:3	53, 281–85	44:6	286
43:4	281–84	44:8	348
43:5	328–29	44:9	357
		44:9–10	367
		44:9–20	54
		44:15	98
		44:18	376
		44:18–20	357
		44:19	38
		44:22	149, 253, 280
		44:23	289, 292, 401
		44:24–45:7	48
		44:25	38, 343

44:26	136, 385	47:6	55, 58, 144, 148, 257
44:26–28	48	47:8–9	388, 397–98
44:28	81, 136, 280, 385	47:9	56
44:28–45:1	281	47:10	38, 343
45	52	47:11	355
45:1	264	47:12	367
45:1–2	287	47:15	362
45:2	356	48:1–2	360
45:4	286	48:1–5	354
45:5–7	52	48:1–8	338, 353–54, 356, 360, 367, 413
45:6–7	47, 414	48:2	149
45:7	53, 65, 147	48:3	353, 355–58
45:8	52, 291	48:3–5	353, 358, 360
45:9	147–48	48:3–8	355
45:11	147–48, 285	48:4	353, 355–59
45:13	11, 175, 277, 281, 286, 393	48:5	353, 355–59
45:14	52	48:6–8	353, 358
45:14–17	54	48:7	353
45:15	47, 52–53, 58, 279, 414	48:8	57, 353, 359–60
45:16	357	48:9	58
45:18–19	52	48:9–11	57, 359
45:19	371	48:10	58
45:20	357	48:11	58
45:21	53	48:14–15	281
45:22	52	48:14–16a	358
45:23	355	48:17	285, 367–68
45:25	99	48:18	350
46:1	356	48:18–19	367
46:1–2	261, 387	48:20	280, 288–89
46:1–4	357	48:20–21	12, 288
46:2	275–76	48:21	291, 372
46:3–4	326	49–54	111, 383, 386, 389, 406
46:5–7	357	49:1	281
46:7	357, 372	49:1–6	244, 332
46:8	360	49:1–13	388
46:8–13	360	49:7	285, 332
46:11	281, 334	49:7–13	13
46:12	254, 360	49:8	136, 403
46:13	386	49:8–9a	332
47	175, 257, 274–75, 379, 386, 398, 409, 413	49:8–12	332, 388
47:1	386–87	49:9	37, 110, 265, 280
47:2	116	49:9b–10	332–33
47:2–3	37, 398	49:9b–12	295–96, 298, 324, 331, 365, 394, 412
47:3	175, 387	49:10	40, 174, 325, 328, 332–33, 372
47:5	387		

49:11	309, 333	51:9	146, 162, 253, 274, 290
49:12	9, 130, 333–34, 394	51:9–11	270, 274, 289, 308
49:13	289, 292, 332, 384, 389, 401	51:9–52:12	274
49:14	53, 61, 388–92, 395–97, 407	51:10	279, 291, 303, 307
49:14–15	392	51:11	119, 279, 292
49:14–16	388, 390	51:12	274
49:14–21	258, 379, 384–85, 388–89, 391, 398, 402–3, 413	51:12–16	12, 270, 274
49:14–50:3	388–89, 391	51:13	258, 271, 278, 392
49:15	397	51:13b–14	250, 270, 293, 412
49:15–16	389	51:14	228, 268, 271–72
49:16	187, 393	51:17	57, 253, 256, 274, 377
49:17	190, 393, 395, 408	51:17–18	56
49:17–21	388, 393	51:17–23	55, 66, 256, 271, 273–75, 379
49:18	329–30, 333, 394– 95, 398	51:19	256
49:19	94, 137, 258, 395– 96, 403	51:19–20	56–57, 384
49:19–21	369, 391, 401	51:20	56–57
49:20	396, 403	51:21	57
49:21	37, 388, 394, 396, 401	51:22–23	57
49:22	260, 306, 330	52	246
49:22–23	389	52:1	149, 253, 258, 394
49:24–25	133, 239, 261, 271, 275–76, 278	52:1–2	274–75, 395
49:24–26	269, 279, 293, 389	52:1–6	239, 250, 273, 412
49:25	270	52:2	272, 275–76, 387
49:26	270	52:3	145, 274, 276–77, 279
50:1	120, 277, 316, 389, 391–92, 407–8	52:4	225, 277
50:1–3	389	52:4–5	274
50:2	50, 303	52:5	133, 239, 270, 277– 78
50:4	246, 343, 367	52:6	274, 277–78
50:4–9	244	52:7	392
50:4–11	388	52:7–10	274
50:5	359	52:9	137, 280
50:7	405	52:11	274
51:1	34, 371	52:11–12	274, 288
51:1–3	369	52:13	376
51:1–52:12	235	52:13–15	235, 243, 245
51:2	404	52:13–53:12	17, 154, 234–35, 243, 246–47, 399, 412
51:3	119, 137, 150, 291– 92, 374, 384	53	10, 244–46
51:4	368	53:1	37, 120, 243, 245
		53:1–3	243
		53:1–11a	235
		53:2	236, 245
		53:2–3	243

53:3	219	54:11–17a	399
53:3–4	235	54:13b–17a	399
53:4	243	54:14	225
53:4–6	243	54:14–17	27, 404
53:5	236	55	244, 292–93
53:6	361–64	55:1	371
53:7	238, 242, 245	55:7	366
53:7–9	236–37, 243, 247, 295, 399	55:8–9	363–64
53:8	133, 218, 236–37, 239–40, 243, 245, 278	55:11	355
53:8–9	237, 245	55:12	238, 401
53:9	238, 240, 245	55:12–13	288, 292, 369
53:10	243	55:13	293
53:10–12	243, 245	56–66	7, 11–13, 16, 23– 24, 137–38
53:11	38	56:1	37, 120
53:11b–12	235	56:1–8	331
53:12	243	56:3	260
54	48, 246	56:6	260
54–66	143	56:8	300, 331
54:1	137, 399, 401–4	56:9–12	362
54:1–3	399, 401, 405	57:3–13	357
54:1–6	379, 384, 398–400, 409, 413	57:8	37
54:1–8	399	57:11	60
54:1–10	385, 399	57:12	367
54:1–17	235, 398–99	57:13	318
54:2	195, 403	57:15	227
54:2–3	400, 403	57:16	57, 316
54:3	137, 404	57:17	51, 148, 315, 364
54:4	399, 404–6	58:2	38
54:4–6	399–400, 402, 405	58:3	262
54:4–8	399	58:5	172
54:5	401, 406–8	58:6–7	13
54:5–6	395, 408	58:7	173
54:6	96, 391, 399, 408–9	58:8	291
54:7	50, 329, 399	58:9	59, 223, 372
54:7–8	53, 379, 399, 406, 409	58:10–11	377
54:7–10	48, 51, 53, 58, 66, 260, 399	58:12	137
54:8	50, 148	59:2	51
54:9	49, 57	59:3	84
54:9–10	49, 399	59:7	364
54:10	50	59:8	365
54:11	57, 319, 383, 403	59:8–10	361
54:11–12	395	59:11	224
54:11–13a	399	59:12–13	360
		59:13	225
		59:17	54, 394
		60	28, 63
		60–62	139, 146
		60:1–3	63, 65

60:1–22	323	63:18	112, 138, 144–46, 150
60:4	130, 306, 330	63:18–19a	142, 144
60:7	150	63:19a	146
60:8–9	330	64:4	142
60:9	130	64:4b–6	141
60:10	58, 315, 393	64:5	141, 318
60:14	278	64:6	51, 141–42
60:15	96, 391, 408	64:7	140, 147–48, 329
60:21	148	64:7–11	139, 147
61:1	110, 203, 264, 276, 280	64:8	148, 152
61:1–3	9, 13, 266	64:9	149–51, 292
61:2–3	21	64:9–10	138, 142, 149, 385
61:4	137, 403	64:10	149–51
61:10	394–95	64:11	60–62, 137, 149, 151–52
61:11	291	65–66	137
62	62	65:1	371
62:1	60, 65, 151	65:2	364
62:3	407	65:2–5	357
62:4	96, 137, 391, 408	65:11	357, 392
62:4–5	395, 407	65:17	291, 358
62:5	408	65:21–22	137
62:6	64	65:24	59, 372
62:6–7	63, 215	65:25	149
62:10	309, 333	66:3	357, 364
62:11–12	325	66:6	81
62:12	279, 408	66:7–13	402–3
63:1	272	66:8	402
63:6	112	66:10–12	403
63:7–14	137	66:12	9
63:7–64:11	5, 16, 51, 62, 67– 68, 136–39, 148, 152–53, 234, 252, 346, 351, 364, 395, 411	66:13	384
63:8	140	66:15	55
63:8–10	140	66:15–16	58
63:9	140	66:17	357
63:10	55, 140–41	66:18	9
63:11–14	333	66:18–24	28, 66, 323
63:12–14	143	66:19–20	233
63:14	174	66:20	231–32, 260, 322, 330
63:15	61–62, 137, 150, 219	66:24	336, 360
63:15–64:11	137	<i>Jeremiah</i>	
63:16	140, 147, 329	1:3	37
63:17	55, 142, 145, 148, 236, 362, 364	1:4–10	76
63:17–19a	139, 142, 146	1:6	85
		1:9	85
		1:10	190
		2–3	380

2:9	316	10:16	144
2:13	141, 187, 371	10:17–18	180
2:15	223	10:17–22	381
2:18	176	10:19	83, 236
2:20	271, 276	10:20	403
2:24	61	10:21	298
2:32	395	11:19	218, 238, 240, 242
2:36–37	176	12:7	49, 55, 70, 115
3:1	316	12:10	144, 150
3:6–11	380	12:10–11	93
3:8	316, 380	13	169
3:18	307	13:1–11	178
3:22	90	13:17	111, 261, 325
4:1	156	13:18–19	193
4:7	93	13:22	37
4:11	299, 318	13:26	175, 190
4:16	114, 130	14:2–6	370
4:19	109	14:6	61
4:19–21	381	14:8	117
4:20	355	14:9	146
4:28	96	14:17	111
4:29	96	14:17–18	110
4:30	395	14:19	110
4:30–31	381	15:2	182
5:15	114, 130	15:3	306
5:28	90	15:4	132
6:1	82, 322	15:7	299
6:1–2	381	15:8	355
6:2	70	15:10	83
6:7	236	16:1–13	178–79
6:8	93	16:10–13	95
6:14	228	16:13	161, 189
6:23	109	16:18	256
6:26	111, 355	17:5–8	341
7:15	163	17:7–8	371
7:26	355	17:13	117, 371
7:29	409	18–19	147
7:33	238	18:5	108
8:7	224	18:12	364
8:9–10	176	18:17	318
8:11	228	18:21	397
8:28–23	111	18:22	355
8:21	111	19:1–13	107, 178, 192
9:9–11	38	19:9	271
9:10	70, 93, 95	19:13	108
9:10–15	95	19:14–15	192
9:11	45	20:1–6	192
9:12–13	95	20:4	37
9:15	70, 298	20:5	267

20:11	269	30:17	91
21:3–10	70	31:7–14	326, 333
21:5	55	31:8	326
21:8	218	31:9	238
22:5	149	31:10	299, 326
22:10	193	31:11	326
22:10–12	180, 193	31:15–16	325
22:11–12	193	31:19	406
22:13–19	199	31:21	309
22:18	190	31:29	135
22:24–27	193	31:34	229
22:24–30	192–93, 242	32	108, 169, 178
22:26	161, 189, 193, 199	32:29	108
22:28	161, 163, 189, 199	32:35	106
22:28–30	193, 243	32:43	93
23:1–2	298	33:1	239
23:1–8	193	33:4	117
23:3	326–27	33:5	50
23:5	376	33:6	51, 91, 115
23:13	361	33:10	93
23:19	318	33:12	93
23:32	361	34:5	33, 190
24:5	175, 316	34:8	264
24:6	190	34:13	249
25	70	34:22	93
25:8–13	70	36:29–31	199
25:9	181, 308	37	70, 166
25:15	56	37–38	69
25:18–26	57	37:2	172
25:27	56	37:15	264
26:17–19	135	37:18	264
27	178, 181	38:1–13	202
27:6	70, 181	38:22	202
27:10	94, 130	39	68, 110
27:11	260	39:4	110
28:3	174	39:7	110
28:4	175	39:15	239
29:2	276	40:1	110, 175
29:10	48	40:7	222
29:10–14	364	42:13–22	181
29:13	371	43:8–13	181–82
29:14	300	43:10	70, 181
29:20	316	44	182
29:22	175	44:6	93
30–31	6	46	166, 181
30:8	276	46–51	101
30:10	130, 250, 334	46:27	130, 250
30:14	140, 236	47:5	82, 215
30:16	267	48:12	271, 320

48:38	107	2:1–10	149
48:46	275	2:2	190
49:32	299	2:3	197, 383
49:35	114	2:4–5	140
49:36	299, 319	2:5–9	382
50:4	371	2:7	144, 150
50:4–5	307	2:8	385
50:6	143, 322, 362	2:10	82, 172, 387
50:17	224, 300	2:11	111
50:33	225, 261, 278	2:12	110
51	162	2:13	111
51:2	286	2:19	110
51:8	355	3	174, 229
51:19	144	3:2	48, 174, 333
51:27	322	3:4	224
51:34	159, 162, 258, 272	3:8	223
51:38	224	3:10	223
51:43	117	3:34	164
51:44	162	3:38	47, 82
51:59–64	178	3:48	111
52	27, 68	3:53	230, 240
52:2	299	3:54	240
52:8	297	3:55	240
52:15–16	222	3:55–56	230
52:31	175	4:1–2	384
		4:2	148
<i>Lamentations</i>		4:3–5	110
1	382	4:9	110
1:1	382, 384–85, 387, 398, 405	4:10	111
1:2	111, 382–83	4:11	55
1:3	37, 255, 397	4:14–15	156
1:3–5	382	4:21	57
1:4	38, 385, 403	4:22	36
1:5	249	5:7	135
1:6	42, 332	5:11	152
1:6–7	383	5:18	45, 151
1:8	175, 387	5:20	142, 391
1:8–10	383	5:22	148, 152
1:9	111, 383		
1:10	150–51, 274, 383	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
1:12	236	1–3	76
1:13	403	1:2	175
1:17	111, 383	1:13	215
1:18	236, 249, 383	2:4	96, 355, 360
1:19	110, 382	3:7	96, 143, 355, 360
1:20	110	3:7–9	356
1:21	111, 383	3:24–27	83, 178
2:1	384	3:27	219
		4–5	178

4:1	393	18:2	135
4:1-3	180	18:18	225
4:3	180	19:12-13	319
4:13	178, 192	20	359
5:3	178	20:8	359
5:5-17	96	20:12	180
5:8-9	71	20:13	359
5:12	306	20:20	180
5:14-15	71	20:21	359
6:5	298	21:23-27	178
6:6	197	22:5	84
6:9	261	22:11	152
6:11-12	178	23	381, 406
6:14	71, 93	23:3	406
7:2	306	23:8	406
7:7	112-13	23:10	116
7:18	118	23:14	187
7:20	395	23:19	406
7:21	242, 267	23:21	406
7:21-27	71	23:22-29	381
7:22	115	23:26	381
7:24	242	23:29	383, 387
8:6	71, 115	23:34	56
8:12	49	23:36-39	381
9:9	49	24:21	150
11:16	94, 130, 298	24:25-27	83
11:23	71, 115	25-32	101
12:1-16	179-81	25:5	45, 98
12:11	249	26-32	177
12:14-15	299	26:4	190
12:19-20	71	26:12	190
12:20	93	26:20	218
12:27	118	27:26	318
13:10	228	27:31	118
13:14	190	28:8	272
13:16	228	29-32	166
14:8	180	29:3	162, 289
14:21	306	29:10	332
15:8	93	29:18-19	325
16	381	30:6	332
16:1-8	406	32:2	82, 162, 289
16:22	406	33:3	322
16:29	241-42	33:21	175
16:32	381	33:21-22	83
16:36-37	37	33:23-27	218
16:37	116, 383, 387	33:28-29	93
17:4	241	33:32	218
17:10	318	34	298
17:21	306	34:5	38

34:5-6	298	6:1	91
34:11-16	326, 333	6:3	34
34:12	298	7:5	34
34:14	326, 332	7:11	159
34:15	326	9:3-4	192
34:16	322, 327	9:17	226
34:21	298	10:7	49, 82
34:28	267	13:7	223
35:4	149	13:8	397
36:3	61	13:15	318
36:4	267	14:2	90
36:20	278	14:5	90
36:34	93		
36:35	404	<i>Joel</i>	
37	240-41, 246	1:6	223
37:11	240	1:7	175
37:14	260	1:13-14	119
37:15-28	178, 307	1:14	119
38:12-13	267	1:18	112
39:11	113	2:1	60, 322
39:23	37	2:2	65
39:23-24	50	2:12	118
39:29	51	2:12-17	119
40-48	5	2:15	119, 322
40:1	175	2:25	286
43:9	94	4	81, 106, 112
47:1	371	4:2	112
47:13-23	322	4:5	151
		4:6	94, 130, 276
<i>Daniel</i>		4:12	81, 112
9:17	144	4:13	261
		4:14	109, 112-13
<i>Hosea</i>		4:17	275
1	178	4:18	371
1:9	36		
1:11	140	<i>Amos</i>	
2	316, 380	1-2	31
2:2	307	1:5	106, 113
2:5	371	1:6	37, 175
2:12	116, 387	1:9	175
2:15	395	1:11	158
3	178	2:4	361
3:5	371	2:4-5	101
4:1	38, 316	2:6-16	101
4:5-6	82	2:16	173
4:6	38, 215	3:5	268
4:10	404	3:6	47
4:11	34	3:11	287
4:12	362	3:14	197

4:1	34	2:4-5	163
4:1-3	39, 57, 385	2:5	225, 233
4:2	132	2:6	163
4:2-3	31	2:7	161, 163-64, 229, 258, 287
4:8	156	3:6-9	119
4:10	286	4:8	57
5:3	60, 97	4:16	161
5:5	37		
5:12	283		
5:18-20	30, 65, 112	<i>Micah</i>	
5:27	39, 191	1:16	37
6:1	40	2:11	34
6:1-7	39	2:12	327
6:4-6	39	2:12-13	327
6:6	34	2:13	327
6:7	31, 40, 191	3:4	50, 59, 64
6:9	97	3:5	361
7:9	191	3:6	64
7:10-17	191	3:10	215
7:11	191-92	3:12	45
7:12-13	191	4:6	327
7:14-15	191	4:6-8	327
7:16-17	191	4:7-8	327
7:17	191	7:4	112
8:11	332, 372	7:19	229
8:12	156		
8:13	57, 372	<i>Nahum</i>	
9:2	42	1:8	49
9:2-4	156	1:13	276
9:7	106, 113	2:2	297
9:9	156, 321	2:4	174
9:12	404	2:8	224
		2:13	268
<i>Obadiah</i>		3:5	37, 116, 190
1:20	175		
		<i>Habakkuk</i>	
<i>Jonah</i>		1:14-16	57
1	157	2:5	41, 215, 258
1-2	161	2:6-20	30
1:3	161, 164, 229	2:9-13	215
1:4	161, 188	3:2	262
1:5	161, 164, 188, 229	3:14	297
1:10	161		
1:11-13	319	<i>Zephaniah</i>	
1:12	161, 179, 188	1:5	107
1:15	161, 179, 188	1:11	215
2	213	1:14	60
2:3	163, 223	1:15	65
2:3-10	163	2:4	96

2:6	45–46, 98	7:14	319
2:14	45	9:5	171
3:10	298	9:14	322
3:11	109	10:3	325
		10:9	130, 329
<i>Haggai</i>		10:11	308
2:1–2	172	12:10	118
		13:4	172
<i>Zechariah</i>		13:7	298
1–8	5–6	14:8	371
1:12	92	14:13	112
2:1–4	299		
2:10	319	<i>Malachi</i>	
2:12	149	2:3	298
2:13	308		
3:2	50	<i>Sirach</i>	
3:11	43	48:17–21	21
4:7	108	48:22	21
4:12	321	48:22–25	20
6:15	130	48:23	21
7:8–14	96	48:24–25	21

New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>		<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
3:4	172	15:32	119
4:8–9	131		
<i>Acts</i>		<i>Revelation</i>	
10:9	107	3:7	198

Author Index

- Abernethy, A. T. 15, 30
Ackroyd, P. R. 2, 4–5, 7–8, 25, 70, 122,
125, 129–131, 133–35, 159–60, 201–4,
207–8, 210, 229
Aejmelaeus, A. 138–39, 145, 148
Ahn, J. J. 2–4, 6, 14
Albertz, R. 5, 7, 16, 67, 69–70, 92, 137–
38, 238, 250
Allis, O. T. 21
Ames, F. R. 4, 6
- Baldauf, B. 338, 345, 352
Balentine, S. E. 6, 47, 50, 52–53, 59, 61
Balogh, C. 165–67, 171–74, 176–78
Baltzer, K. 20, 254, 256
Barré, M. L. 204–6, 211–13, 215, 217,
219–22, 224, 226–28, 240
Barrett, R. 356–57
Barstad, H. 3, 23, 73, 368–69
Batchelder, C. 79, 85, 99
Becker, U. 78, 94
Becking, B. 68
Beentjes, P. C. 20
Begg, C. T. 124, 128, 134
Begrich, J. 204, 207, 211, 213, 218, 220–
21, 226
Ben Zvi, E. 3, 26
Berges, U. 9, 13–14, 16, 23–25, 27, 30, 48,
52–59, 77–78, 101, 103, 122, 131, 139,
145, 149, 152, 214, 235–36, 239, 246–
47, 250–56, 261, 263, 265, 269, 283,
285–88, 290, 324–25, 328, 332, 334,
342, 345–48, 351–53, 355–56, 358,
367, 371, 375, 380, 382, 384, 387,
392–93, 397, 399, 401, 407
Berlin, A. 382, 384
Beuken, W. A. M. 13–14, 24–25, 30, 32–
33, 35–36, 41, 43–44, 89, 109–10,
113–14, 117, 120, 166, 184, 207, 209,
213–14, 229, 302, 304, 307–8, 310,
312–19, 321–22
- Bewer, J. A. 159
Biddle, M. E. 380, 386
Bleeker, L. H. K. 242
Blenkinsopp, J. 3, 30–33, 48–49, 52, 62–
63, 77, 81, 86, 89, 98, 105–6, 112–15,
120, 122, 124, 126–28, 132, 139, 144–
45, 166, 169, 171–72, 185, 188, 196,
198, 207, 211, 217, 221, 225, 227, 229,
251–52, 265, 270–72, 274–75, 277,
290, 302–3, 310–11, 313, 317, 321,
324, 330, 343, 345, 347, 349–50, 360,
363–64, 366, 369–70, 390, 393, 396–
97, 399, 402, 404, 407–8
- Boda, M. J. 6, 319, 329
Borocin-Knol, S. 392
Bosman, H. 289, 317
Bosshard-Nepustil, E. 103, 195, 199
Brandscheidt, R. 52–53
Brown, M. L. 244–45
Brownlee, W. H. 19
Brueggemann, W. 48
Buhl, F. 23, 145
Burnett, J. S. 28, 47, 339
Bürki, M. 312
Byron, J. 155
- Calvin, J. 22
Campbell, S. 89
Carroll, R. P. 5–6, 8–9, 14, 70, 73, 154,
160, 162, 182, 193, 336–38
Cassuto, U. 156–58
Childs, B. S. 25, 30–31, 33, 37, 44, 52, 62,
65, 78, 80–81, 83–84, 89, 99, 101–5,
107, 111, 114–15, 120, 123, 125, 132,
141, 144, 146, 165, 176–77, 184–86,
195, 199, 201, 206, 209, 211, 235,
237–39, 241, 251–52, 255–56, 265,

- 275, 282–83, 287, 290, 310–12, 316, 345, 348, 350, 353, 363, 366–67, 399, 402, 405
- Clements, R. E. 31, 36, 44–45, 65, 75, 77, 83, 85, 87, 89, 97, 103, 106, 114, 123–24, 128, 165, 170, 176, 184–85, 190, 196, 198, 200–1, 206, 295, 302, 305, 310–11, 316, 321, 336, 371, 375
- Clifford, R. J. 30, 33
- Clines, D. J. A. 237–39
- Coats, G. A. 156–58
- Coetzee, J. H. 203, 211, 213, 233
- Cole, R. L. 89
- Cook, P. M. 166–67, 176–77, 181
- Croatto, J. S. 306
- Cuéllar, G. L. 10
- Dahood, M. 127, 219
- Daiches, S. 317–18
- Darr, K. P. 15, 59
- Daube, D. 131
- Davidson, R. 157
- Day, J. 162
- de Boer, P. A. H. 207
- Delitzsch, F. 26
- Dempsey, C. J. 310
- Dille, S. J. 15, 58, 380–81, 384, 391, 407
- Dittert, K. 254–55, 268, 386
- Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W. 111, 382, 385
- Downs, D. 160–61
- Doyle, B. 311, 313, 315, 317, 320, 322
- Driver, G. R. 33, 313, 317
- Driver, S. R. 236, 245
- Duhm, B. 7, 23, 115, 234, 244, 316, 331–32
- Eggleston, C. L. 373
- Elliger, K. 251–52, 255–56, 263–65, 269, 281–83, 285, 287, 290, 292, 345, 368–70, 372–73, 376
- Emerton, J. A. 32–33, 87
- Engnell, I. 77, 84, 97, 243
- Eusebius of Caesarea, 21
- Evans, C. A. 19
- Fabry, H.-J. 371
- Fey, R. 39
- Fichtner, J. 341
- Fischer, G. 162, 182
- Fohrer, G. 24, 166–69
- Franke, C. A. 134, 386
- Franzmann, M. 380, 386–87
- Fretheim, T. E. 54
- Friebel, K. G. 167–70, 179–81
- Fullerton, K. 198
- Ganzel, T. 186, 188–89, 195, 197
- Gerstenberger, E. 30
- Gertz, J. C. 31, 39
- Gesenius, W. 23, 145
- Gile, J. 297–98
- Ginsberg, H. L. 186
- Goldenstein, J. 89, 138–40, 142–44, 148–49, 152
- Goldingay, J. 20, 38, 47–49, 52, 55–56, 59–63, 80, 137, 142–43, 145–46, 149, 152, 235, 237, 240–42, 252–53, 261, 263–65, 267–73, 275–77, 279, 284, 286, 291–92, 324–25, 329, 333–34, 342, 344–49, 351–52, 354–55, 358, 363, 366, 370–73, 376, 386–88, 390, 392, 395–96, 399, 401–2, 404–5, 407
- Gordon, R. P. 157
- Goswell, G. 207, 209–10, 213, 231–32
- Goulder, M. 242–44
- Grabbe, L. L. 3
- Greenberg, M. 180–81
- Gregory, B. C. 9–10, 13, 266
- Grimm, W. 254–55, 268, 386
- Gudme, A. K. de H. 3, 6, 15, 133
- Haag, H. 241–42, 244
- Habel, N. 76
- Hadjiev, T. S. 380
- Hägglund, F. 10, 235, 237–38, 245–46
- Halvorson-Taylor, M. A. 6, 11–13, 15, 71, 73, 154, 252, 254–55, 257, 264, 266–67, 269–71, 279, 407
- Hanson, P. D. 138–39, 144
- Hardmeier, C. 103, 106
- Hartenstein, F. 81, 251
- Hasel, G. F. 76
- Hays, C. B. 32, 41, 185, 187, 189–90, 215–17, 219, 222, 230
- Head, P. M. 73–74
- Hibbard, J. T. 295, 310–12, 314–15, 321, 323
- Hjelm, I. 3, 6, 15

- Hoffer, V. 90, 203–4, 231–32
 Holladay, W. 162, 179, 181–82
 Hrobon, B. 80, 84
 Høgenhaven, J. 6–7, 34–35, 38, 40, 65, 88, 357, 361
- Janssen, E. 73
 Jenner, K. D. 322
 Jenni, E. 198
 Jensen, J. 341, 343
 Jenson, P. P. 159–61, 163–64
 Jeremias, C. 207
 Johnson, D. G. 310–11, 317, 321
 Johnston, P. S. 41, 216, 272
 Jong, M. J. de 78, 94
 Joyce, P. 179–180
- Kaiser, O. 31–33, 65, 75, 77, 83–84, 91, 94, 97–98, 101, 103, 105, 111, 123–24, 127, 166–67, 169, 185–86, 190, 197, 215, 217, 243, 259–60, 302–3, 308, 310, 313, 317, 321, 342, 366
- Kapelrud, A. S. 242–43
 Kasher, R. 205, 209
 Kelle, B. E. 2, 4
 Kennedy, J. M. 201
 Keown, G. L. 182
 Kessler, J. 6, 9, 14, 67, 72–74
 Kiefer, J. 3
 Kim, H. C. P. 12, 43, 80, 101, 107
 Klein, A. 290, 381
 Klein, R. 5, 7, 174
 Knibb, M. A. 2, 20
 Knight, G. A. F. 24
 Koenen, K. 145
 Konkel, A. H. 122, 205
 Korpel, M. C. 31–32, 34
 Kostamo, S. K. 26–27
 Kraus, H.-J. 163
 Kronholm, T. 299
 Kustár, Z. 15, 90, 205, 232, 235–36
- Laato, A. 241
 Lamb, D. T. 54–56
 Landy, F. 1, 10–11, 13, 28, 35, 38, 41–42, 44, 64, 75–76, 78, 80, 82, 85, 90–92, 95, 98, 251, 337
 Lau, W. 138, 140, 145, 148–149, 151
 Leene, H. 235, 311, 314, 318
- Lessing, R. R. 21
 Leuchter, M. 6
 Levin, C. 3, 69
 Lim, B. H. 19, 23
 Linafelt, T. 383
 Lipschits, O. 3
 Locke, J. W. 54, 58
 Low, M. 15, 56, 380, 382, 384, 391–92, 397, 399, 403, 406
 Lucas, E. C. 339
 Lund, Ø. 15, 40, 332–34, 345, 351, 361–62, 374
 Lust, J. 296–97
 Luther, M. 22
- Macintosh, A. A. 63–65
 Maier, C. 380, 391, 407
 Marböck, J. 20
 McEvenue, S. 20
 McKeown, J. 158
 Melugin, R. F. 25, 76, 250–51, 344
 Mettinger, T. N. D. 245
 Middlemas, J. 2–5, 7–8, 14, 137
 Milgrom, J. 85
 Miscall, P. D. 204, 233
 Moberly, R. W. L. 32, 44–45
 Morgan, D. F. 339, 341
 Motyer, J. A. 21
 Müller, R. 72, 75, 78, 90, 93
 Mulzer, M. 22
 Murphy, R. E. 339
- Na'aman, N. 184–85
 Navarro, E. F. 374
 Neubauer, A. 236, 245
 Nielsen, K. 15, 77–78, 97–99
 Niskanen, P. 147, 408
 North, C. R. 236, 241–42, 244–45, 330
- Obermayer, B. 15, 54
 Olson, D. T. 155, 158, 297, 339
 Oosting, R. 253
 Oswald, J. N. 21, 32–33, 36, 42, 45, 64–65, 75, 77, 89, 95, 102–4, 106–7, 113, 122, 128, 132, 171–72, 176, 186–87, 189, 195, 211, 213, 216, 220, 225, 230, 260, 302–3, 305, 309, 311, 316–17, 321–22, 351, 360, 366–67, 376

- Park, S.-M. S. 28, 122–23
 Parker, T. C. 380
 Paul, S. M. 16, 37, 43, 45, 49–50, 52, 56–59, 62, 141–43, 145, 237, 239–41, 246, 251–52, 257, 261, 264–65, 268, 271, 273, 275, 278, 283, 286, 288–90, 319, 325–26, 329–30, 334, 343, 345–46, 349, 353, 363–64, 366, 370, 372, 374, 387, 390, 392, 394, 396, 399, 401–2, 404–5, 407
 Payne, D. 235, 237, 240–42
 Perdue, L. G. 47
 Petersen, D. L. 5, 96
 Pfaff, H.-M. 76
 Phinney, R. H. 76
 Pilkington, C. 47
 Pokrifka, J. 341, 371
 Poulsen, F. 7, 13, 22, 27–28, 70–71, 82, 95–97, 109, 112, 114–15, 163, 177, 195, 230, 234, 239, 244, 257, 263, 274, 285, 295, 304, 306–8, 323, 326, 331–33, 338, 349, 368, 373, 383
 Power, C. 5, 7
 Prokhorov, A. V. 78, 86
 Quinn-Miscall, P. D. 204
 Rendtorff, R. 76, 89, 91, 96, 251
 Ridpath, I. 28
 Ringgren, H. 297
 Roberts, J. J. M. 321
 Rothstein, D. 210, 242
 Saur, M. 339
 Sawyer, J. F. A. 380, 384, 387, 399, 402, 406
 Schipper, J. 235–36, 244
 Schleicher, M. 384–85, 393
 Schmid, K. 101, 114, 199
 Schmitt, J. J. 384
 Scott, J. M. 2
 Seitz, C. R. 7, 25, 27, 31, 76–77, 92, 97, 103, 109, 115, 122, 128–29, 132, 135, 165, 177, 201, 206, 209, 213–14, 251–52, 302, 304, 311, 316–17
 Sellin, E. 241–44
 Seufert, M. 21
 Sherwood, Y. 160, 162, 164
 Shields, M. A. 341–42
 Simon, U. 22
 Smart, J. D. 159–62, 253, 265, 268, 272, 338, 347, 350, 355, 375
 Smelik, K. A. D. 122
 Smith, D. L. 4
 Smith, G. V. 89
 Smith, P. A. 138
 Smith-Christopher, D. L. 4, 10, 160, 163, 249
 Snaith, N. H. 245
 Soggin, J. A. 240–41
 Sommer, B. 383, 403
 Spencer, B. J. 369–70, 372
 Stassen, S. L. 399, 405
 Steck, O. H. 16, 24–25, 75–77, 81, 139, 295–96
 Stern, P. 347
 Stökl, J. 3
 Stromberg, J. 13, 16, 24, 138, 301, 306
 Stuhlmueller, C. 279, 282
 Stulman, L. 179, 182
 Sweeney, M. 19, 23, 25, 30, 65, 75–77, 87, 97, 99, 101–3, 106, 114, 122–23, 125–26, 166, 196–97, 205, 214, 233, 259, 301–2, 310–11, 316, 319
 Terblanche, M. D. 269
 Terian, A. 57
 Thompson, T. L. 158–59
 Tiemeyer, L.-S. 7, 16, 138–39, 159, 161, 286, 290, 329, 369, 383, 397
 Tull, P. K. 30, 107, 383
 Turner, K. J. 72, 74, 297
 Uhlig, T. 15, 76, 81, 84, 89–90, 139, 143, 345, 351, 355–56
 van der Kooij, A. 87
 van der Woude, A. 384
 van Grol, H. W. M. 317
 van Wieringen, A. L. H. M. 213
 Vermeylen, J. 24, 198
 Vincent, J. M. 23
 Vogt, E. 83
 von Rad, G. 203, 256
 Waerzeggers, C. 3
 Wagner, T. 25, 76, 80, 202, 213, 221
 Walsh, J. T. 163

- Watts, J. W. 207–8, 229
Weinberg, J. 155
Weinfeld, M. 339
Weiser, A. 163
Wenham, G. J. 156, 158
Westermann, C. 37, 47–49, 52, 56, 60, 62–63, 137–38, 141, 145, 151, 156–58, 237, 239, 252, 265–66, 269, 274–78, 281, 285–86, 290, 296, 325, 328, 344–46, 349, 363, 367–68, 388–89, 395, 399, 405, 408
Wetter, A.-M. 37, 300
Whedbee, J. W. 341
Whybray, R. N. 237, 239–42
Widengren, G. 298, 300
Wildberger, H. 31–35, 44, 63, 75–79, 81–82, 84, 86, 88–90, 97–99, 101, 103, 105–7, 113–15, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126–28, 130, 132, 134–35, 165–66, 169, 171–73, 176–77, 183–85, 189–90, 195–99, 205, 207, 211, 213, 217, 224–25, 227, 230, 259–60, 262, 302–4, 306–7, 310–11, 313, 317, 320–21, 343, 350, 366, 374, 376, 385
Wilken, R. L. 22
Willey, P. T. 383, 403
Williamson, H. G. M. 1, 23–25, 31–36, 39–40, 42, 44–46, 75, 77, 96, 122, 136–38, 204, 251, 259, 302–4, 336, 341, 351, 385, 396
Willis, J. T. 184, 186–89, 195–96, 198, 310–11, 321
Wilson, L. 341–42
Wilson, R. R. 83
Wischnowsky, M. 111
Wolff, H. W. 39, 160, 191–92
Wong, G. C. I. 89
Wright, C. H. H. 159, 163
Wright, J. L. 4
Young, E. J. 21, 25, 35–39, 44, 52, 65, 81, 89, 106–7, 109, 112–14, 132, 135, 144, 148, 151, 170, 173–74, 176, 186, 189, 207, 210, 216, 220, 223, 252, 255–56, 303, 311, 316–17, 321, 366
Young, R. A. 122
Zimmerli, W. 179, 181
Zipor, M. 355
Zobel, H.-J. 36

Subject Index

- 1QIsa^a 19, 48, 55–56, 58, 62, 106, 113,
126, 145, 147, 171, 217, 222, 226, 228,
237, 252, 260, 269, 275, 285–86, 289,
313, 324, 331–32, 345, 354, 363, 374,
390, 401, 407
- 1QIsa^b 63
- Aaron 92, 162, 356
- abandonment 15, 49, 66, 71–72, 95, 115,
159, 242–43, 260, 318, 329, 385, 388–
89, 395, 402, 405–13
- Abel 155, 158
- Abiram 41
- Abraham 22, 91, 155, 195, 277, 322, 328–
29, 331, 355, 402, 404
- Adam 155, 157, 164, 316
- Africa 283
- Ahaz 75, 112, 116, 129, 171, 206
- Ahimaaz 115
- Amaziah 39, 191–92, 200
- Ammon, Ammonites 45, 93, 173, 300,
302, 307
- Amnon 210, 402
- Amos 39, 173, 191–92, 200
- anger 16, 19, 47, 49–51, 54–59, 66, 92, 97,
134, 141, 148, 157, 161, 261, 274, 304,
315, 345, 352, 359, 364, 379, 406, 411
- Aquila 80, 213, 316
- Ar 82
- Arabia 63, 283
- Aram 106, 113–14, 281
- Ariel 106, 271
- Ashdod 103, 165, 167, 170–73, 176, 182
- Asherah 86
- Ashkelon 82
- Assyria, Assyrians 3, 22, 39, 54, 69, 107,
112, 122, 125, 127–28, 133, 165, 170–
71, 173, 176–78, 182, 184, 192, 206,
220, 224, 278, 301–2, 305, 307–9,
313–14, 322, 329, 331, 380–81, 404
- Aswan 334
- Babel, tower of 296–97, 338–39
- Babylon, Babylonians 1, 2–4, 7, 10, 20,
25, 31, 36, 45, 54, 68–71, 81, 93, 102,
107–8, 110–11, 113, 115–18, 121–34,
136, 151, 153, 155, 159–60, 162, 166–
67, 177, 179–83, 189, 192–94, 216,
224–25, 236, 241, 243, 245–46, 249–
50, 257, 259–63, 265, 267–70, 275–76,
278–79, 284–90, 292–94, 299, 305,
311–12, 316, 328, 334–55, 358, 362,
368–69, 381, 386–88, 404, 412–13
- Babylonian captivity, exile 2, 6, 9, 12, 22,
26, 31, 67–68, 123, 159–60, 178, 203,
242–43, 246, 250, 264–65
- Babylonian king 42, 68, 71, 121, 127–28,
132, 134, 144, 162, 194, 243, 258, 261,
271, 394, 412
- banner 305, 322, 335
- Baruch 181
- Benjamin 197
- Bethel 119, 191–92, 328
- black hole 1–2, 16, 19, 28–29, 43, 46, 59,
64–67, 83, 99–100, 136, 153, 234,
250–51, 253–54, 296, 384–87, 394–95,
411–13
- blessing 13, 28, 48, 62, 71–73, 128, 135,
140, 143, 146, 256, 293, 340, 371, 374
- blind, blindness 12, 15, 17, 34–35, 88,
115, 179, 263–66, 269, 281, 285, 326,
333, 336–39, 342–49, 351–52, 361–63,
365–67, 373–78, 413–14 *see also*
ignorance
- Boaz 407
- Budde, K. 158
- Baal, Baals 108

- Cain 49, 154–59, 161, 164, 227, 233, 235, 240, 372
 call narrative, commission 75–77, 87, 89, 91, 93, 160, 215, 251–52, 337
 Calvin, J. 22
 Canaan, Canaanites 176, 242, 297
 Chaldea, Chaldeans 69–70, 93, 257, 284, 286–88, 387
 cognitive metaphors 17, 35, 39, 333, 336, 338, 348, 361, 378, 413
 compass, metaphor of the 295–96, 305, 328, 334, 394, 404, 412
 Condamin, A. 186
 covenant 37, 50, 69, 71–74, 150, 196, 229, 263, 316, 340, 345, 358, 380
 creation 24, 28, 42, 47, 84, 95, 118, 138, 143, 149, 244, 282, 285, 288–89, 291–92, 340–41, 353, 355, 357–58, 365–66, 368, 372, 377
 creator 47, 52, 65, 83, 99, 102, 118–19, 147, 281–82, 285–86, 288–89, 291, 333, 342, 357–58, 368, 373, 378
 cup of wrath 57, 256, 274, 377, 379
 Cyril of Alexandria 22
 Cyrus 11, 22–23, 52, 68, 70, 159, 250, 265, 280–81, 283, 286–87, 355–56, 393

 Daham 41
 Damascus 39, 45
 Daniel 119, 154
 Daughter Zion 36, 42, 82, 111, 216, 273, 275–76, 380, 384, 386, 391, 407
 David 20, 39, 99, 105–6, 173, 175, 188, 195–96, 205, 210, 214, 221, 306–7, 326, 355
 Davidic king, kingship 99, 136, 143, 153, 193, 210, 307
 Davidic monarchy 70, 77, 99, 102, 123–24, 132, 184, 195–99, 210, 248, 307, 322–23, 404
 Day of Judgment 112
 desert 40, 45, 63–64, 101, 137, 202, 285, 291–93, 309, 316, 318, 330, 332–33, 341, 366, 368–71, 373–75, 386, 394
see also wilderness
 Deuteronomistic History 4–5, 69, 122, 124, 166
 Deuteronomistic Law Code 72
 Deuteronomistic tradition 69, 74–75, 127, 160, 166, 171, 350, 404
 diaspora 3–6, 8, 10, 14, 68, 155, 160, 164, 260, 289, 296–97, 301, 304–7, 333, 369, 392
 disorientation 15, 17, 35, 142, 336, 361, 365, 376, 378–79, 412–13
 dispersion 15, 17, 238, 245, 295–97, 300, 322, 333, 361, 412–13 *see also* scattering
 divorce 316, 380, 391–92, 395, 397, 409
see also marriage
 drinks, drinking 29–30, 33–35, 39–41, 43, 45–46, 56–57, 105, 119, 337, 341, 343, 363
 Dumah 63–64
 Döderlein, J. C. 22–24

 Eden 150, 155, 157–58, 173, 292, 316, 374–75
 Edom 36, 54, 63–64, 158, 281, 302, 307–8, 330, 386
 Egyptian captivity, slavery 220, 262–64, 280, 303
 Eichhorn, J. G. 23
 Elam 105, 113–14, 300, 302, 305, 319
 Eliakim 17, 21, 102, 154, 183–84, 190, 194–200, 248, 412
 Elkanah 107
 empty land 5–6, 9, 14, 72–74, 153, 255, 319
 Ephraim 34, 115, 302–3, 306, 310, 406 *see also* Northern Kingdom
 Esar-haddon 210
 Esau 146
 Esther 68, 154
 Ethiopia 165, 169–71, 174–75, 177, 182, 281, 283, 302, 305, 333
 Euphrates 286, 299, 302, 307–8, 313, 322
 Eusebius of Caesarea 21
 Eve 155, 164
 exodus 5, 8, 73–74, 280, 288, 290, 303, 307, 333, 355, 372, 375
 Exodus tradition 303, 307–8, 333, 355
 Ezekiel 76, 82–83, 88, 178–182, 238, 247, 356

 female imagery 379–88, 397–98, 409 *see also* woman, women

- fertility 71, 340, 368–69, 373
 forced migration 4, 6, 14, 297, 300
- Gad 87
 gathering 9, 222, 251, 281, 295–96, 300–1,
 303, 305–6, 309–12, 320–24, 326–30,
 334–35, 344, 361, 364, 394, 412–13
- Gesenius, W. 23
 Gideon 76, 320
 Gilgal 37, 39
 Gog of Magog 113
 Gomorrah 87
 grave 42, 98, 161, 186, 188–89, 192, 212,
 228–29, 233, 236–38, 241–44, 247,
 258, 270, 272, 275, 384 *see also* pit,
 prison, Sheol
- Greeks 94, 276
 guidance 61, 85, 143, 174, 279, 292, 325,
 333, 336, 338, 342–44, 352–53, 361,
 365–67, 372, 412–13 *see also*
 shepherd, shepherd imagery
- Hagar 361
 Haman 61
 Hamath 302, 305, 404
 Hannah's prayer 53, 401
 hardening 15, 34, 75–76, 78, 85, 87–92,
 95, 100, 131, 137, 139, 141–42, 152–
 53, 174, 236, 252, 254, 264, 337–38,
 346, 351, 364, 368, 370, 375, 377, 414
- healing 86, 90–91, 126, 129, 201, 203,
 205–6, 214, 225, 227, 230–33, 236,
 291, 308, 315, 346, 365, 374 *see also*
 illness
- heavenly court 20, 251
 Hermon 39
 Hezekiah 1, 11, 17, 19–22, 25, 28, 37, 63,
 77, 90, 102, 107–8, 112, 121–36, 151,
 154–55, 161, 163, 172, 183–85, 198,
 200–11, 214–19, 221–36, 240, 248,
 257–58, 272, 287, 295, 335, 375, 394,
 412
- hiddenness 16, 19, 47–48, 50–54, 58–59,
 141, 315, 338
- highway 301–2, 309, 318, 366
 Hinnom 106, 108, 192
 Holiness Code 5, 72
- honor 57–58, 92, 127–28, 189, 194, 196,
 285, 292, 359, 379–80, 382–84, 395,
 398, 407, 409–10, 413 *see also* shame
- Hosea 178, 361
 Hoshea of Samaria 264
 Huldah's prophecy 132
- Ibn Ezra 22, 244–45
 idols, idolatry 54, 107–8, 110–11, 115,
 121, 179, 261, 299, 311–12, 314, 316,
 318–20, 323, 336, 338, 347, 353–57,
 359–62, 364, 367, 371–72, 378, 381,
 413
- Idumea 63 *see also* Edom
 ignorance 34–35, 39, 42, 46, 87–88, 100,
 102, 254, 264, 282, 337–41, 343–44,
 347, 350, 352, 359, 361, 377, 413
- illness 15, 73, 90, 121–22, 124, 127–29,
 135, 200–2, 204–7, 209, 211, 214, 229,
 231–33, 235–36, 245, 247–48
- Immanuel, Immanuel-sign 202, 232
- Jacob 4, 51, 55, 119, 155, 245, 258, 260,
 280–82, 286, 297, 310, 313–14, 318,
 320, 323, 325–28, 331–32, 334, 342,
 345, 350, 354, 370, 375, 389, 404
- Jehoahaz 193
 Jehoiachin 68–69, 123, 133, 175, 189,
 191–94, 199–200, 241–45, 247, 264–
 65, 394
- Jehoiakim 184, 190, 193, 199–200
 Jehoshaphat, valley of 106, 112
 Jeremiah 69, 71, 76, 85, 88, 109, 111, 169,
 178–79, 181–82, 192, 200, 202, 238,
 242, 246–47, 271, 276
- Jeroboam 191, 299
 Job 148, 246–47
- Jonah 42, 154–55, 159–64, 188, 201, 215,
 223–25, 229, 233, 240, 246, 258, 272,
 287, 319, 396
- Jonathan 115
 Joppa 161
 Joseph 61, 151, 155, 174, 195, 249, 254,
 265, 269, 276
- Joshua 197
 Josiah 132, 135, 184, 193, 195, 198, 302
- justice 1, 28, 30, 32, 44, 108, 115, 215,
 237, 239, 265, 342–43, 349, 361

- Kenites 158
 Kidron 106
 Kir 82, 105–6, 113–14
 Korah 41

 Lady Babylon 37, 55–56, 175, 274, 343, 379, 384, 386–87, 398, 402, 409
 Lady Folly 362
 Lady Wisdom 305
 laments, lamentation 4, 33, 61–62, 83, 100, 111, 121, 137–38, 157, 164, 172–73, 175, 213, 218–19, 222, 225, 236, 240, 252–53, 269, 271, 274, 276, 284, 290, 295, 343, 370, 382–85, 389
 leadership 176, 332–33, 336, 361, 363, 366, 378
 Lebanon 329, 373
 Levi, Levites 254, 297
 Leviathan 310, 312, 315, 321
 Lilith 64
 liturgy, liturgical 91, 137–38, 213, 251, 305, 322
 Lot 404
 Luther, M. 22

 Malchiah, cistern of 202
 Manasseh 132–33, 198, 267, 306, 361
 marriage 178, 380, 383, 392, 405, 407–10 *see also* divorce
 Masoretes 188, 214, 217, 318
 Masoretic text (MT) 32–33, 37, 51, 55, 58, 62–63, 97, 105–6, 126, 144–45, 164, 171, 186, 188, 211, 217, 222, 226, 228, 237, 266, 269, 273, 281, 285–86, 327, 331, 343, 345, 363, 374, 390, 400, 407
 Masoretic tradition 59, 171, 173, 213–14, 366
 Media 113
 Mediterranean Sea 305
 Megiddo 193
 Merodach-baladan 25, 121, 123–25, 127, 134
 Mesopotamia 113, 189, 307
 Messiah, messianic figure 1, 60, 198, 202, 242, 265, 301 *see also* Davidic king, kingship
 Micaiah, son of Imlah 264, 298
 Midianites 320
 Minor Prophets 297

 Moab 44, 93, 111, 174, 271–72, 275, 300, 302, 307, 360
 Moloch 106
 morning 32–34, 65, 192, 197, 212, 223, 367 *see also* night
 Moses 41, 72, 76, 85, 92, 155, 195, 220, 283, 297–98, 320, 340, 346, 358, 371
 Mount of Olives 106
 Mount Scopus 106

 naked, nakedness 11, 37, 40, 116, 165, 168–70, 172–73, 175, 182, 190, 232, 248, 268, 379–83, 387, 394–95, 398, 406, 410, 413
 Naomi 326, 382
 Nathan 87, 326
 Nebuchadnezzar 25, 27, 68–70, 110, 114, 123, 150, 162, 177, 181–82, 193–94, 224
 Neo-Assyrian empire 31
 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 16, 32–33, 37, 73, 80, 97, 105, 142, 144–45, 162, 164, 171, 209, 211–13, 226, 240, 252, 263, 272, 303, 314, 317, 329, 332, 345, 390, 408
 night 7, 63–65, 111, 180, 212, 222–23, 226, 262, 318, 340–41, 383, 397 *see also* morning
 Nile 181, 332
 Nineveh, Ninevites 45, 109, 116, 119, 133, 161, 174, 287
 Noah 49, 175, 227, 296, 320
 Nob 106
 Nod 157–58, 227
 Northern Kingdom 3, 69, 77, 97, 134, 191, 200, 267, 306, 310, 380 *see also* Ephraim

 Obed 326
 Oholah 116
 oracles against the nations 100–1

 Palestine 169, 268–70, 329, 369
 Pashur 191–2, 200
 Pathros 302, 305
 Paul 119
 Pentateuch 71–72, 95, 154, 264, 279, 297
 Persia 22, 70

- Peshitta 63, 147, 186, 263, 269, 316, 331, 374, 400, 407
 Pharaoh 82, 89, 92, 162, 181, 193, 195, 199, 288–90
 Philistia, Philistines 61, 94, 165, 176, 275, 302, 307
 pit 12, 42, 61, 161, 163–64, 202, 212, 218, 228–30, 233–34, 240–41, 248, 258, 270, 272, 283, 288 *see also* grave, prison, Sheol
 praise 34, 44, 60, 64, 80, 82, 140, 202–3, 207, 212–13, 216, 218, 221, 229–31, 233–34, 285, 291–92, 328, 349, 375, 384, 401, 403 *see also* worship
 Priestly ideology, texts 2, 4, 72–73, 84, 175, 195, 254
 Primeval History 158
 prison 12, 37, 164, 194, 217, 230, 233, 239, 243–44, 249–50, 254, 258, 263–64, 272, 287, 330, 387, 390 *see also* grave, pit, Sheol
 Promised Land 155, 219, 289, 297, 404
 prophecy 4, 6–7, 21–23, 25, 30–31, 69–70, 72, 89, 94, 103, 120, 123, 132–35, 138, 151, 165, 174, 176, 184, 191, 193, 228, 277, 346
 Ptolemy 139

 rabbinic tradition 22, 55, 159, 202, 210, 236, 278
 Rachel 325, 401
 Radak 244–45
 Rashi 244
 Rebekah 401
 Red Sea, the 220, 284–85, 288–89
 redemption 8, 12–13, 65, 91, 229–30, 249–50, 254, 264–65, 270, 278–81, 283–84, 287–89, 291–93, 304, 310, 328, 355, 407, 412
 remnant 11, 49, 60, 76, 97–98, 133, 174, 178, 180–81, 217, 245, 267, 301–4, 307, 309, 326–27
 revelation 21, 28, 37, 44, 64, 80, 84, 91, 106, 115, 324, 338, 349, 351, 365, 372
 Riblah 71
 Ruth 154, 246, 254, 320–21, 407

 Sabbath 49, 70, 72, 255
 Samaria 10, 39, 49, 57, 82, 115, 172, 264, 299, 310–12, 404, 406
 Samson 275, 401
 sanctuary 55, 92, 107, 112, 137, 142, 144–45, 149–50, 164, 219, 267, 274, 355, 383, 404 *see also* temple
 Sarai 401
 Sargon II 103, 165, 170–71, 177
 Saul 61, 188, 320
 savior 57–58, 66, 117, 270, 279, 282, 293–94, 348, 367
 scattering 9, 15, 17, 48, 95–96, 141, 156, 178, 236, 260, 295–301, 306–8, 310–11, 318–20, 324, 329, 334, 338, 361, 379, 394, 412 *see also* dispersion
 Seba 281, 283
 Second Temple 9, 247
 Seir 63–64, 146
 Sennacherib 21, 27, 103, 106, 210, 384
 Septuagint (LXX) 32–33, 51, 62–64, 86–87, 89, 98, 105–6, 126, 142–43, 145, 147, 157, 172, 185–86, 210, 218, 221, 228, 237, 251–52, 274–75, 281, 286, 297, 303, 313, 324, 331, 345, 354, 364, 370, 373, 385, 390, 400–1, 407
 seraphs, seraphim 79–82, 84, 100, 251
 Servant Songs 234, 241, 244
 Shalmaneser 3
 shame 37, 56, 116, 170–71, 175–76, 182, 189, 248, 257, 357, 379–80, 383, 386–87, 391, 397–98, 400, 405–7, 409–10, 413 *see also* honor
 Shebna 17, 21, 102, 154, 161, 183–92, 194–200, 241, 248, 295, 379, 393, 412
 sheep 33, 45, 105, 158–59, 174, 182, 220, 224, 236, 238, 245, 248, 298–300, 306, 322–27, 335, 361–62 *see also* shepherd, shepherd imagery
 Sheol 11, 19, 28–32, 36, 41–43, 46, 64, 66, 163–64, 212, 214–17, 219, 223, 229–30, 233, 248, 258, 272, 287–88, 295, 363, 388, 411–12 *see also* grave, pit, prison
 shepherd, shepherd imagery 38, 40, 158–59, 174–75, 182, 212, 220–22, 233, 281, 298–300, 306, 317, 324–27, 332–35, 362, 365, 367, 378, 413 *see also* guidance, sheep

- Shilo 107
 Shinar 302, 305
 shofar 309, 322–23, 331, 335
 Sidon 94, 276, 386
 sign act, symbolic action 11, 82, 101, 107,
 165–74, 177–83, 239, 248, 379
 silence 2, 16, 19, 29, 43, 46–47, 59–66,
 82–83, 100, 123, 139, 142, 151, 153,
 178, 188, 192, 215, 223, 238, 241, 245,
 247, 250, 253–54, 384, 387, 409, 411
 Sinai 339
 Sirach 20–21
 Solomon 127, 130, 133, 322
 Southern Kingdom 123, 301, 306, 310,
 380
 spirit 20–21, 74, 98, 140, 143, 174, 212,
 227, 262, 265–66, 330, 342, 361, 371,
 373–74, 376, 400, 408
 Stade, B. 158
 suffering servant 17, 80, 90, 123, 154, 218,
 232, 234–36, 241–42, 244, 246–48,
 295, 361, 399, 412
 Syene 331–32, 334
 Symmachus 80, 316, 345, 390
 Syro-Ephramite war 75
- Targum 32, 65, 147, 185–86, 223, 226,
 251, 264, 275, 316, 331, 345, 371, 374,
 393, 401
 Tarshish 37, 161, 330
 teaching 28, 265, 336, 340–44, 349, 351,
 362–63, 367–68, 378 *see also* guidance
 Teman 328, 334
 temple 14, 21, 23, 27, 45, 48, 55, 58, 68–
 69, 71, 73, 79, 81, 84–85, 97, 100,
 107–8, 110, 112–13, 115, 123, 128,
 130, 132–33, 136, 138, 144–45, 147,
 149–53, 163–64, 172, 188, 190–92,
 200, 202–4, 206–7, 216, 218–19, 222,
 225–26, 230–34, 240, 246, 251, 259,
 268, 274, 278, 303, 382, 411 *see also*
 sanctuary
 Theodotion 80, 213, 316
 Tigris 113
 torah 35, 97, 140, 339–41, 343, 349, 351–
 52, 371
 Tyre 94, 102, 109, 177, 218, 276, 386
- Uzziah 79–80, 171, 240
- vineyard 30, 45, 93, 98, 144, 150, 306,
 310–12, 314, 321, 384
 Vulgate 51, 64, 80, 126, 143, 147, 157,
 185–86, 190, 213, 220–21, 252, 263,
 269, 275, 287, 303, 316, 324, 331, 354,
 390, 400–1, 407
- warrior 55, 59–62, 173, 269, 284, 324–25,
 334
 watchman motif 62–65, 363
 Wellhausen, J. 2, 158
 wilderness 40, 45, 58, 71, 73, 93, 101, 136,
 140, 147, 149–50, 152–53, 155, 157,
 174, 285, 291–93, 319, 325, 333, 341,
 361–62, 366, 368–76, 386, 404 *see also*
 desert
 wind 65, 96, 141, 161, 188, 299–300, 302,
 306–9, 312, 315, 317–20, 330–33, 335,
 341
 wisdom 30, 38, 89, 266, 299, 333, 338–43,
 349, 362–63, 370–71, 375, 377
 wisdom literature 34, 38, 43, 338–39
 woe, woe-oracle 29–30, 33–34, 39, 47–48,
 65, 82–83, 177, 311
 woman, women 37, 39, 59–61, 93, 96,
 107, 111, 116, 152, 246, 249, 254, 261,
 267, 274, 280, 306, 327, 379–92, 397,
 399–410, 413 *see also* female imagery
 worship 39, 68, 71, 74, 81–82, 107–8, 121,
 141, 151, 164, 179, 202, 218, 233, 240,
 261, 289–90, 292, 309, 311, 313, 320,
 322–23, 339–40, 353, 357, 360–61,
 364, 380–82 *see also* praise
- Yam 289
 Yehud 26, 138
- Zadokite community 139, 144
 Zaphon 328
 Zedekiah 68–70, 110, 117, 133, 166, 180,
 194, 199, 243
 Zerubbabel 108, 159, 172