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Review of Joseph A. Everson and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, eds. *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah. Ancient Israel and its Literature 4*; Atlanta: SBL, 2009.

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This is a collection of 13 essays, including separate essays by the editors, that reflects the work of the Formation of the Book of Isaiah Group of the SBL. It is dedicated to Roy F. Melugin who died unexpectedly in 2008; he was a founding member of the group. The set of essays open with Melugin's 2002 address, "Poetic Imagination, Intertextuality, and Life in a Symbolic World" (pp. 7-15). Melugin calls for the redirection of the Group's focus from a concern with "history of the text" issues, redactional theories, to the exploration of the full range of Isaiah's poetic, figurative language. This would entail more attention to the features that hold Isaiah together than to the differences between the parts of the book. Melugin has valuable insights into the workings of this symbolic, poetic language particularly when it requires attention to both ancient text and modern reader. He calls for an emphasis on synchronic over diachronic analysis but not for the rejection of the latter.

Patricia Tull's "Persistent Vegetative States: People as Plants and Plants as People in Isaiah" (pp. 17-34) examines the rich and multiple plant imagery in Isaiah both in its metaphorical and its mundane usages. Humans can draw lessons from the observation of trees, grains, and vineyards, as Isaiah does, and they are literally dependent on the flourishing of the same. The people are like a vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) and will plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit (65:21). Tull closes with reflections on the contemporary importance of ecological awareness.

Chris Franke, "'Like a Mother I Have Comforted You': The Function of Figurative Language in Isaiah 1:7-26 and 66:7-14" (pp. 35-55), explores the depictions of Zion and of God in feminine imagery in chapters 1 and 66. She is particularly drawn to the poem in ch. 66 that compares God to Jerusalem and regards both city and deity as the mother of the people. The sustained image of God as mother is perhaps unique in prophetic literature.

A. Joseph Everson, "A Bitter Memory: Isaiah's Commission in Isaiah 6:1-13" (pp. 57-75), interprets the chapter from a post-exilic perspective. To read it in an earlier historical setting would seriously distort "both the literary and the kerygmatic intentions of those who preserved the memory within the Isaiah scroll" (p. 59). Everson works with a developed redactional view of the scroll. The chapter is a bitter memory of the hardness of heart that can befall the people at any age and is a backdrop to the frequent preaching of hope and restoration in chs. 40-66. The hardness and rebellion are now in the past.

H. G. M. Williamson, "Poetic Vision in Isaiah 7:18-25" (pp. 77-89), acknowledges that the passage is not high poetry and proposes to read it intratextually. It includes a large number of allusions to and citations of earlier material in the book. Williamson has a developed redactional story of the scroll of Isaiah, although it is different than Everson's, and he is interested in dating the parts of this passage to stages in that story. Regardless of the specific history of the formation of the passage, "it clearly speaks to the reader of the possibility of some invasion in the future that will be more cataclysmic even than those already experienced" (p. 88) and there is no hint of the positive thrust of chs. 40-66.

Willem A. M. Beuken also reads his chosen material within the framework of a redactional theory of the scroll of Isaiah. "Yhwh's Sovereign Rule and His Adoration on Mount Zion: A Comparison of Poetic Visions in Isaiah 24-27, 52, and 66" (pp. 91-107) sees chs. 24-27 as an integral and not erratic

part of the scroll. The chapters, particularly 24:23 and 27:13, proclaim YHWH's kingship in Zion, a central theme in many of the following chapters. In chapters 51-52 Zion is first cleansed and then restored as a city worthy of a king. YHWH returns as king in 53:7-10 and is finally worshipped as king of all flesh at the close of ch. 66, forming a fitting close to the scroll.

Marvin A. Sweeney works with his theory of a major Josianic redaction of the first part of Isaiah and reads his material in that context. "The Legacy of Josiah in Isaiah 40-55" (pp. 109-29) refers to Second Isaiah's use of themes and issues from that period and from that redaction. He interweaves material from Genesis, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Zephaniah to support his thesis that the interplay between male Jacob and female Bat Zion reflects the Josianic drive for the reunion of Israel (Jacob) and Judah (Bat Zion). All of these texts, and perhaps others that we no longer have, were rich and diverse source material for the depictions in Isaiah 40-55.

Francis Landy, in his unique style of reading biblical poetry, offers a close analysis of 40:1-11 in "Spectrality in the Prologue to Deutero-Isaiah" (pp. 131-58). Spectrality is the ghostliness of the disembodied voices in verses 1, 3, and 6: One, two, or three voices? No bodied speaker is noted or even implied. This is a rich and multi-layered reading of the poem in its Isaianic setting and in the larger context of the Hebrew Bible. In his introductory comments Landy underscores "a certain tentativeness" in his reading, "a proliferation of perhapses" (p. 132). The openness of his analysis is on full display in his ample footnotes where he details all the varied readings offered by a wide range of scholars. For him the poem moves from voices of comfort, of divine manifestation, of the experience of transience to the deferred hope in verse 9-11.

Hyun Chul Paul Kim employs the image of a spider's web to capture both obvious and subtle connections introduced by individual words and motifs in Isaiah 41, hence his title "The Spider-Poet: Signs and Symbols in Isaiah 41" (pp. 159-80). He regards Isaiah as "a holistically connected book" held together by many shared words, phrases and such. קִיּוּם, meaning "to strengthen" and the base for King Hezekiah's name, is his main focus. Through it he is drawn to chs. 34-35 and 36-39 (where Hezekiah is the central character) and concludes that strength and ultimate trust in YHWH and not in idols or humans is a major message of Isaiah.

James M. Kennedy, "Consider the Source: A Reading of the Servant's Identity and Task in Isaiah 42:1-9" (pp. 181-96), recognises the composite nature of Isaiah but still advocates a synchronic reading that takes the entire scroll into account in assessing the servant in Isaiah 42. He argues that the chapter and much of the scroll is a conscious rejection of a cult statue as providing communication between the human and the divine. For Isaiah the community of Israel is the channel for divine teaching and this community must not rely on cult statues of any sort.

In "They All Gather, They Come to You': History, Utopia, and the Reading of Isaiah 49:18-26 and 60:4-16" (pp. 197-216) Roy D. Wells explores the strengths and weaknesses of synchronic and diachronic reading through the interrelationships of chs. 49 (Zion, a woman) and 60 (Jerusalem, a woman, the city of Zion). He notes the many words, phrases and even sounds shared by the two (a synchronic focus) but argues that ch. 60 proposes a utopian vision that goes far beyond ch. 49, and claims that the newness is best revealed in a diachronic reading.

For Carol J. Dempsey, "From Desolation to Delight: The Transformative Vision of Isaiah 60-62" (pp. 217-32), Isaiah 60-62 are a vision of transformation and of the prophet who will both proclaim and bring the vision to be. The vision is "a golden thread that runs throughout the book of Isaiah" (p. 217) with strong echoes from chs. 1-39. Jerusalem, both city and people, is central to Isaiah's vision of a new heavens and a new earth (65:17-25).

Gary Stansell, "The Nations' Journey to Zion: Pilgrimage and Tribute as Metaphor in the Book of Isaiah" (pp. 233-55), centers on the twin themes of pilgrimage and tribute with special concern for the latter when it involves the wealth of the nations. He contrasts the nations bringing unwilling

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tribute, as in chs. 60-61 and echoed at other points in the book, with the nations' willing pilgrimage and offering of gifts as in 2:2-4 and 66:18-21. The latter bring Israel together with the Gentile world.

The collection is a solid witness to the varied concerns and approaches of the Isaiah Group: historical issues (both history of Israel and history of the text), literary and poetic imagery and language, the roles of text and reader in interpretation and the impact of the book of Isaiah on modern society. Beyond Isaiah, it is a fine introduction to the diversity and complexity of contemporary biblical studies.