

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

‘WATER FOR THE JACKALS: YHWH’S ESCHATOLOGICAL PARTNERSHIP WITH
ANIMALS IN FIRST ISAIAH’

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INTRODUCTION

‘The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know; my people do not understand.’¹ First Isaiah² begins by comparing Israel’s relationship with YHWH to animals’ relationship with their master. The animals³ *yada’* (יָדַע) their master, a verb which indicates intimate relationship. This verb, coupled with the omission of direct objects in the parallel line for Israel, suggests that the animals can have an intimate knowledge of not just any owner or master but of YHWH.⁴ While recent scholarship has considered the metaphoric flora and fauna imagery in Isaiah⁵, little consideration has been devoted to YHWH’s partnership with animals in Isaiah. Further, although several have briefly alluded to it, there has been no critical, exegetical engagement with the eschatological dimensions of First Isaiah; even less consideration has been given to examining how YHWH’s relationship with animals may have eschatological ramifications. The trend in research has been to treat each of these as separate and unrelated topics: the prophetic views of eschatology and the prophetic views of ecology.

Several key passages in First Isaiah demonstrate interdependent relationships between animals, humans, and YHWH. These passages reveal that YHWH’s intentions for the flourishing of the non-human creation includes animals. Unlike other voices that envision the removal of wild animals for human flourishing⁶, First Isaiah pronounces both the inclusion and the transformation of the animal kingdom. This paper will briefly examine three salient passages from First Isaiah (11:1-10; 34:1-17; 35:1-10) and discuss the major themes relevant to animals that are present. Finally, the eschatological trajectory for

¹ Isa 1:3, NRSVUE

² I recognise the diverse positions concerning the delineation of Isaiah and that there is division about whether Isaiah should be sectioned into two-halves or even thirds. Because this section of Isaiah attributes an eighth-century context (1:1) and concludes with historical events at the close of the eighth century (36:1-39:8), I have chosen to utilise the term ‘First Isaiah.’ This also creates ease of communication with the reader.

³ Defining animals is challenging, but the Genesis creation poem does define different categories: sea creatures, birds, livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals (1:20-25). Meanwhile, the flood story includes the categories of birds, livestock, wild animals, and creatures that swarm over the earth (6:7; 7:21). Hosea 2:20 and 4:3 use several of these categories: wild animals, the birds of the air, the creeping things, and the fish of the sea. Further, the second Genesis creation story differentiates between humans and animals (2:18-23).

⁴ This intimate relationship is also demonstrated in Isa 11:1-10.

⁵ Within Isaiah, this topic has especially been emphasised in Second Isaiah. See *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, eds. A. Joseph Everson, and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

⁶ See, for instance, Ezek 34:25-31; 37:26; cf. Lev 26:6b.

animals will be considered. As Olley so poignantly asks, 'In descriptions of the present and visions of the future non-human members of the Earth community are clearly visible, but how are they involved?'⁷ This paper will explore this question within the context of the animal kingdom, especially as to how their role affects future realities.

ISAIAH 11:1-10⁸

1. Translation⁹

¹There will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, a shoot from its root will grow. ²And the spirit of YHWH will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of YHWH. ³His delight will be in the fear of YHWH. He will not judge by the sight of his eyes; neither will he decide according to what his ears hear. ⁴But with righteousness he will judge the helpless and he will decide with fairness the poor of the land. He will strike the land with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵Righteousness will be the waistcloth of his hips and faithfulness the waistcloth of his loins.

⁶The wolf will sojourn with the lamb and the leopard will rest with the kid. The calf and the young lion and the fatted steer together, and a small child will lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear will feed; their young ones will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The child will take delight over the hole of the asp and the weaned child will stretch out his hand on the viper's nest. ⁹They will not harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse will come to pass, which stands as a sign for the people. The nations will seek him and his resting place will be glorious.

2. Themes and Motifs

2.1. The Role of the Messianic Figure

⁷ Olley, John W., 'The World, the Lamb, and the Little Child: Transforming the Diverse Earth Community in Isaiah', *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets*, ed. Norman C. Habel, Cleveland, OH: Sheffield Academic, 2001, 218.

⁸ While the consensus demarks the passage as Isaiah 11:1-9, Wildberger (*Isaiah 1-12*, 463) and Marlow (*Biblical Prophets*, 239) prefer to include v. 10 with vv. 1-9. Thus, verse 10 creates an inclusio with v. 1 and finishes a chiasmic structure.

⁹ This and all translations are the author's own, unless otherwise noted.

Although scholars are divided over the identity of this ruler¹⁰, a link is implied between the restored Davidic kingship and the renewal of the non-human creation. Extra-biblical works parallel peaceful reigns with the harmony of animals, such as the Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninhursag*.¹¹ In this way, the political sphere and the non-human creation are interdependent. The king's reign affects not only the human subjects, but also the entire created order. Characteristic of the new reign are justice and righteousness (vv. 3-5). The vision seems to imply a causal relationship between these qualities and the peace that ensues in the entire created order in vv. 6-9.¹² Although the causal relationship is not explicit, the progression of the vision from the just practices of the ruler to the peaceful effects in the cosmic order suggests this connection. This is consistent with DeGuglielmo's study on messianic passages, which consistently link eschatological kingship with the renewal of the non-human creation.¹³

2.2 The Interrelatedness of the Created Order

After the royal figure assumes his reign and establishes justice and righteousness (vv. 2-5), the vision presents a world in which the entire created order displays peaceful relationships: wild animals, domestic animals, and humans all coexist in a state of harmony (vv. 6-9). The passage stresses the relationships animals have with other animals, but interestingly humanity's relationship with other humans is missing from the vision. Perhaps this peaceful relationship among humans has already been established in vv. 2-5, thus allowing animals to take centre stage in vv. 6-9. This eschatological vision of harmonious relationships among animals and humans is unique to Isa 11 and its reprisal in Isa 65:25. In other prophetic passages, YHWH completely removes the wild animals in order to save humanity.¹⁴ The

¹⁰ Sweeney argues the ruler is Josiah, an identity he also bestows upon the young child in v. 6 (Sweeney, Marvin A., *Isaiah 1-39, The Forms of OT Literature*, Vol. XVI, eds. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 204). Delitzsch merely refers to this figure as a 'second David' (Delitzsch, Franz, *Commentary on the Old Testament, VII: Isaiah*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973, 283).

¹¹ ANET 38. See also ANET, 606-7.

¹² Tucker, Gene M., 'The Peaceable Kingdom and a Covenant with the Wild Animals', *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, W.P. Brown and S.D. McBride, Jr., eds., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 2000, 216.

¹³ DeGuglielmo, Antonine, 'The Fertility of the Land in the Messianic Prophecies', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, July, 1957, Vol. 19, No. 3 (July, 1957), 311.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Ezek 34:23-31; 37:26; cf. Lev 26:6b.

animals that would normally pose a threat to humanity are not banished but instead 'share in the transformation with humans', thus implying 'interconnectedness and purpose'.¹⁵

In addition to preserving the wild animals, Isa 11:1-10 removes the boundaries that exist between the three spheres of wild animals, domestic animals, and humanity. This contrasts with the vision presented in Isa 34:11-15¹⁶, where threatening animals invade the boundary of human civilisation after humanity is banished, and Isa 35:9, where the threatening animals are banished and humanity invades the boundary of the wilderness. Rather than presenting a world in which only one entity can dwell, Isa 11:6-9 presents a world in which animals and humans can coexist on YHWH's holy mountain.

The poem pairs not just the wild animals with domestic animals and humans, but it also pairs the most powerful with the most vulnerable: wolves and leopards will lie down with baby lambs and calves (v. 6). Toddlers need not fear the venomous snake (v. 8).¹⁷ Even more surprising, the wild animals will eat grass, a practice they have not done since their pre-flood state (Gen. 1:30; 9:3). According to Marlow, 'this depiction of perfection is not intended to negate the natural biological processes of the world, but rather to paint a wide picture of the potentiality of YHWH's ideal reign'.¹⁸ The cycle of predators and prey has been broken.¹⁹ The effects of this harmonious interrelatedness of the non-human creation with humanity extends to the entire cosmic order, demonstrated by the terminology of 'earth', 'sea', and 'nations' in vv. 9-10. The 'they' in v. 9 is vague, but perhaps refers to the animals previously mentioned.²⁰ Another possibility is that the pronoun encompasses both the animals and the human beings.²¹

¹⁵ Olley, 'World', 227.

¹⁶ As well as the similar themes in Isa 13:21-22.

¹⁷ Unlike Isa 34, the animals in this passage are discernable, with the exception of the נָחָשׁ, whose precise species is indeterminable.

¹⁸ Marlow, Hilary, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 241-2.

¹⁹ This imagery is consistent with Sumerian texts that present ideal reigns. See Wildberger, Hans, *Isaiah 1-12*, Continental Commentaries, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991, 479.

²⁰ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 287.

²¹ So Oswalt, John N., *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998, 284.

2.3. The Role of the Non-Human Creation

The double reference to the 'knowledge of YHWH' (v. 2, 9) brackets this passage. Its first use in v. 2 relates to humanity, specifically the human ruler. Its second use in v. 9, though, broadens to include the entire cosmic order, implied by the 'earth' and the 'sea'.²² In this way, the passage's scope shifts from humans to the non-human creation, from national to global. All participate in the 'knowledge of YHWH', including the animals.²³ This knowledge of YHWH creates a causal relationship in which both humans and animals dwell in safety.²⁴ As such, animals participate in the renewal that YHWH initiates via her relationship with YHWH.

In YHWH's ideal reign, the animals peacefully interact with humanity and depend on humanity's rule. As previously mentioned, this new reality is contingent upon humanity's just rule. This concept is further affirmed by the image of a child leading all the animals mentioned in v. 6. This theme of humble and vulnerable leadership over and against a proud and powerful monarchy is a consistent theme in Isaiah.²⁵ This child could represent the new Davidic figure, as seen in vv. 1-5, but the divergence from the kingship language suggests that the child represents humanity as a whole. In God's vision, the lowly and weak welcome and guide God's initiative of a peaceful kingdom.

2.4. Eschatological Implications

The futuristic verbal tenses (especially 'it will come to pass' in v. 1), along with the phrase 'on that day' (v. 10), indicate that these events are yet to be experienced.²⁶ What is to be experienced, however, varies depending on the interpretation of the metaphors. Kaiser, for instance, approaches the vision with a minimalistic interpretation, concluding that 'in the end the present text merely expresses

²² Similar language and imagery is found in Hab 2:14.

²³ Cf. Isa 1:3

²⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 284.

²⁵ Ibid. 283.

²⁶ Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 201.

the longing for a life with no danger'.²⁷ This interpretation is reductionistic of the vivid imagery.

DeGuglielmo argues that spiritualizing eschatological texts like this one is a 'failure to view the land in its own merit, outside of its relationship to humanity'.²⁸ He argues that messianic prophecies already list the spiritual results of the redemptive act.²⁹ Assuming the text presents a mere spiritual or metaphorical reality undermines the significance of the inclusion of the animals. Other approaches consider the imagery to be mythological. Wildberger concludes that the text should not be reduced to mere allegory; such an approach would render the text remarkably differently.³⁰ He argues that such a text 'would speak *only* of animals and not of children'.³¹ In fact, Isaiah 1-39 never employs allegory.³²

In his examination of the impact messianic passages have on the non-human creation, DeGuglielmo prefers a more literal interpretation. He argues that passages such as Isaiah 11:1-10 never indicate that the fertility of the non-human creation will atrophy after YHWH's acts of salvation; the renewal of the non-human creation is presented as a permanent result.³³ Further, he argues that the reason why scholars tend to interpret these eschatological passages allegorically is because they have yet to be fulfilled literally.³⁴ If the effect of the metaphor can be demonstrated to be fulfilled as a literal reality, there is no reason to depart from a literal understanding of the prophecies.³⁵ Delitzch also prefers a literal approach, arguing that as prophecy it would have been expected to be realised in the future; it would not have been understood merely as a 'beautiful dream and wish'.³⁶ Oswalt rejects a purely allegorical approach and deems the vision 'figurative'. In this way, Oswalt preserves the transformation as actual events.³⁷ Marlow, too, concludes the vision is 'poetic hyperbole' that portrays actual

²⁷ Kaiser, Otto, *Isaiah 1-12*, Second ed., Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983, 260.

²⁸ DeGuglielmo, 'Fertility', 308.

²⁹ Ibid. 309-310.

³⁰ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 481.

³¹ Ibid. 218. Italics original.

³² Tucker, 'Peaceable', 218.

³³ DeGuglielmo, 'Fertility', 309.

³⁴ Ibid. 310.

³⁵ DeGuglielmo, 'Fertility', 310.

³⁶ Delitzch, *Isaiah*, 285.

³⁷ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 283.

transformative events.³⁸ The preferred approach in this paper is to treat the passage as a ‘mythological portrayal of the future’³⁹ while at the same time treating the metaphors as real, yet hyperbolised, anticipated events.

This eschatological vision portrays the animals as both participants in and recipients of YHWH’s salvation. This hopeful message is not a return to some ideal past, but a proclamation of an astonishing new act of YHWH that transforms the non-human creation.⁴⁰ YHWH initiates and maintains this new cosmic order. Eschatologically, it is one of only three places in the prophets where peaceful bonds are created between animals and humans.⁴¹ It is in the loci of this renewed cosmological order that YHWH makes YHWH’s ‘resting place’ (v. 10).

ISAIAH 34:1-17

1. Translation

¹Come near, nations, to listen; people, pay attention! Let the earth listen and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. ²For the wrath belonging to YHWH is upon all the nations and fury is upon all their hosts. He has removed⁴² them, he has delivered them to the slaughter. ³Their slain will be sent out and the stench of their corpses will rise. The mountains will melt from their blood. ⁴All the hosts of heaven will dissolve and the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll. All their host will wither like a leaf withers from a vine or a withering fig tree.

⁵For my sword has drunk its fill in heaven – look, upon Edom it descends; upon the people I have set aside to judgement. ⁶YHWH has a sword filled with blood; it drips with fat – the blood of rams and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of oxen. For YHWH has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷And the wild bull will fall with them and bulls with the powerful. And their land will be drunk with blood and their soil will be fattened with fat.

³⁸ Marlow, *Biblical*, 242.

³⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 480-481.

⁴⁰ Childs, B.S., *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001, 104.

⁴¹ This theme is also presented in Isa 65:25 and Hos 2:20.

⁴² This word is used to denote something devoted to YHWH, often via destruction. It can also denote the removal of something from use or function.

⁸For it is a day of vengeance for YHWH, a year of reckoning for the controversy⁴³ of Zion.⁹The streams of Edom and will be turned into pitch and her soil into brimstone; her land will be burning pitch. ¹⁰Night and day she will not be quenched, forever her smoke will go up. From generation to generation it will be in ruins forever and ever there will not be anyone in her.

¹¹But the hawk and the hedgehog will possess her, the owl and the raven will live in her. He will give to her a string of formlessness, a plummet of emptiness.¹²Her nobles there will not be there a kingship; they will cry out and all her princes will be nothing.⁴⁴ ¹³Thorns will go up in her palace, thistles and briars her fortresses; and it will be a settlement for jackals, grassy homes for the ostrich. ¹⁴Wildcats will meet with hyenas, the satyr⁴⁵ will call upon friends, there Lilith⁴⁶ will linger and she will find for her a resting place. ¹⁵There the snake will nest, lay, hatch, and brood under her shadow; there also will buzzards be gathered, each with its mate.

¹⁶Seek from the book of YHWH and read; no one of these will be missing, no woman will visit her mate, for his mouth has commanded it, and his breath⁴⁷ has gathered them.¹⁷He has cast a lot for them and his hand has divided for them a string; forever they will possess it, from generation to generation they will live in her.

2. Themes and Motifs

2.1. Humanity's Effect on the Non-Human Creation

While the description of YHWH's wrath against the nations in general and Edom⁴⁸ in particular is vivid, the text does not specify the distinct sins that have triggered this response of judgement. The list of animals in v. 6 is often used as metaphors for leaders, which appears to be how they are functioning with reference to Edom.⁴⁹ Several of these animals are also used metaphorically to allude to human slaughter.⁵⁰ The text assumes sacrificial imagery in its description of judgement against these leaders,

⁴³ Driver offers a translation of 'advocate of Zion' based upon the assumption that רִיב is the nomen agentis of צִיר and קִים. See Driver, Samuel Rolles, *Isaiah: His Life and Times*, London: James Nisbet, 1888, 55. Pope also demonstrates its function as the nomen agentis and translates it as 'controversy'. See Pope, Marvin, 'Isaiah 34 in Relation to Isaiah 35, 40-66', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Dec., 1952, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Dec., 1952), 236-7. This use only occurs elsewhere in Isaiah in 41:11.

⁴⁴ NRSVUE: They shall call its nobles No Kingdom There.

⁴⁵ Or goats, goat demons.

⁴⁶ Or nighthawk, night demon.

⁴⁷ Or spirit.

⁴⁸ Since Edom was not included in the list of nations in the OAN (13-24), it is possible that this nation was reserved so as to especially contrast with Judah's triumph in ch. 35. In this way, Edom in Isa 34 could represent all nations opposed to YHWH's rule. The numerous addressees in this oracle (nations, peoples, earth, and world in v. 1) suggest a broader identity than just Edom.

⁴⁹ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 612; See also Isa 14:9; Zech 10:3; Ezek 17:13.

⁵⁰ Jer 51:40; Ezek 39:18

resulting with a blood- and fat-soaked land (v. 7).⁵¹ These two sacrificial rituals take place not in a sacred space but in the profane space of pagan land. In this space, the blood is used to purify the land instead of a temple and the offering meal of fat goes not to the priesthood but to the soil.⁵² This is dually emphasised by the parallelism of 'land' with 'soil', a pairing that constitutes the climax of the poem's first three strophes.⁵³

While the sacred space could be atoned through the cultus, particular via the placement of blood, the land could not be atoned from humanity's pollution against her (Lev 18:24-28). An exception, however, is if the atoning blood is the blood of the transgressors (Numb 35:33) or if YHWH is the one who atones via judgement (Deut 32:41-43). Both of these atonement actions occur in Isa 34: YHWH inflicts judgement upon Edom's leaders, whose blood in turn cleanses the land. Edom's sins may not have been committed directly against the non-human creation, yet Edom's blood is payment for the ways in which the non-human creation has been polluted.

2.2. Eschatological Implications

It is only after humanity is ravaged and the land desolated that the passage shifts once more to a description of the occupation of animals (vv. 11-15). This shift in residency is at odds with the destructive imagery of vv. 8-10, where the land's burning is described as lasting 'forever'.⁵⁴ Humans no longer live in this territory but have been driven out; this is evidenced by the absence of rulers in vv. 6-7, 12 and the presence of thorns and briars, plants hostile to human life, in v. 13. The totality of the destruction is indicated by *בָּהוּ תִהְיוּ* in v. 11b. While *בָּהוּ תִהְיוּ* is frequently used to demonstrate the devastation of the

⁵¹ Similar sacrificial language is used in Jer. 46:10, although it does not mention the land receiving the sacrifice nor the sacrificial meal.

⁵² Tull (Tull, Patricia K., *Isaiah 1-39*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2000, 507) acknowledges the sacrificial language (blood, fat, kidneys) and Kaiser likens this description to the ritual meal that follows the sacrifice (*Isaiah 13-39*, Old Testament Library, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974, 357).

⁵³ Muilenburg, James, 'The Literary Character of Isaiah 34', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Sept., 1940, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Sep., 1940), 350.

⁵⁴ This language of 'forever' and 'generation to generation' is also evident in Isa 13:20 and Jer 50:29.

entire created order, or a return to the pre-creation state in Gen. 1:2, here in Isa 34 it is used to demonstrate the devastation of human civilisation alone. While no human can even pass through the land (v. 10), wild animals will occupy it and flourish.⁵⁵ Although some identify this development as a wild animal curse⁵⁶, Marlow argues this is YHWH's 'deliberate provision for these animals' as it 'is only for the human population, not the animal one, that the outcome is disastrous.'⁵⁷ Indeed, there is a contrast between the fate of humanity in v. 10 and the fate of the animals in v. 17. Both verses share similar language, but the outcome is only positive for Edom's wildlife. God has purposefully taken the land away from sinful humanity and given it to the animals.⁵⁸

These particularly mentioned animals are unclean. In fact, three of the four appear in the list of prohibited animals in Lev 11. This contrasts with the clean sacrificial animals used symbolically in vv. 6-7. Another five of the species named in ch. 34 appear in 13:21-2.⁵⁹ While it is often challenging to identify English-equivalent animals to the Hebrew vocabulary, it is clear that these twelve animals⁶⁰ In Isa 34:11-15 live on the margins of human settlements. They are elusive and live at the periphery of human consciousness, often in places of tension. By inviting these specific animals into the former dwelling place of humanity, YHWH is issuing punishment by disrupting the created order.⁶¹ The clear boundaries between humanity's realm and the wildlife's realm have been blurred as these wild animals invade human territory.

⁵⁵ In Isa 13:21-22, five of these same creatures "lie down" in the devastated land, a word that designates comfort in Ps 23:2. This parallel passage also suggests care for these wild animals.

⁵⁶ Hillers, Delbert R., *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964, 44ff; Clements R.E., *Isaiah 1-39*, The New Century Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982, 274.

⁵⁷ 229.

⁵⁸ Sweeney acknowledges that some of this imagery may have been very literal, as most of these animals would occupy in Edom in the fifth century (446).

⁵⁹ Three of the animals appear in Zeph. 2:14, where the prophet pronounces ruin upon Assyria. Another three appear in Jer 50:39.

⁶⁰ As 12 is often symbolic in the OT for God's presence or God's favored people, it is possible that this number is being used here to express favor for the animals.

⁶¹ Marlow, *Biblical Prophets*, 233.

The list of animals moves from owls, birds associated with the underworld⁶² (v. 11), to jackals and ostriches, two dangerous animals associated with deserted areas and destruction (v.13).⁶³ Next, the passage mentions two mythological creatures (v. 14). It is not just the owl and jackal who now occupy this space, but the mysterious goat-demons (שָׂעִיר) and the Lilith (לִילִית).⁶⁴ Frey-Anthes identifies these creatures as belonging to humanity's 'counterworld'.⁶⁵ Goat-demons appear to have been worshipped and in some cults existed as gods.⁶⁶ Here in Isa 34:14 they function as eerie, intimidating creatures who dwell in the periphery. They straddle the tenuous line between the world of animals and the world of demons.⁶⁷ In Sumerian and Assyrian mythology, Lilith was understood to be a feminine wind or storm demon.⁶⁸ Together, these deadly creatures make Edom uninhabitable for humans.

Interestingly, after climaxing with these dangerous, mythological entities (v. 14), the list concludes with the more common, albeit still unclean, arrow snake and buzzard (v. 15). These last two animals seem inconsequential after the adversarial goat-demon and Lilith. Why are they reserved for the end? The text specifies that the snake will nest under 'her shadow', a pronoun which most likely refers back to Lilith in v. 14. Perhaps this placement emphasises YHWH's hospitality for all wildlife, hostile or common. Despite humanity's wariness of these creatures, they will not exhibit their predatory behavior in YHWH's eschatological era – snakes will care for their young and buzzards can mate in the presence of the Lilith without fear. Of the five instances of wild animals in Isaiah, only two instances demonstrate violent behavior.⁶⁹ This sharply contrasts with Ezekiel's frequent portrayal of violent animals.⁷⁰

⁶² Frey-Anthes, Henrike. 'Concepts of 'Demons' in Ancient Israel', *Die Welt Des Orients* 38 (2008): 38–52, 45.

⁶³ Frey-Anthes, 'Concepts', 43.

⁶⁴ לִילִית is sometimes translated as a screech owl or night hag (Tull, *Isaiah*, 509). Oswalt, for instance, acknowledges the possibility of interpreting the goat-demons and Lilith as demonic, but he believes they should be interpreted as animals to be consistent with how other animals are used in passage (*Isaiah*, 616). Since the LXX translates these creatures as 'satyrs' and 'demons', however, there appears to be a tradition of associating them with mythology. See Geyer, John B., 'Desolation and Cosmos', VT. Jan., 1999, Vol. 49, Fasc. 1 (Jan 1999), 57.

⁶⁵ 'Concepts', 45. Geyer identifies the setting of these demonic creatures as the wilderness, a location thought to contain portals to the underworld (*Desolation*, 58).

⁶⁶ Lev 17:7; Deut 32:2; 2 Chr. 11:15; Isa 13:21.

⁶⁷ Kaiser, Otto, *Isaiah 13-39*, 20.

⁶⁸ Tull 510

⁶⁹ Isa 35:9; 56:9

⁷⁰ Out of all the references to wild animals, Ezek. 31:6, 13 are the only instances where they are not portrayed violently.

ISAIAH 35:1-10

1. Translation

¹The wilderness and the parched land will be glad, the desert will rejoice and blossom as the crocus; ²she will blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to her; the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of Yahweh and the majesty of our God. Strengthen your feeble hands and make firm your staggering knees. ⁴Say to them who are hurried of heart: 'Be strong! Do not be afraid!' Look, your God will come with vengeance, with the requital of God he will come and save you.

⁵Then the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶Then the lame will leap as a stag and the tongue of the mute will sing, for in the wilderness waters will burst open and streams in the desert. ⁷The dry land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water. In the settlement of jackals it will be a resting place; grass reeds and rush. ⁸And there will be a highway and a way, a way of holiness it will be called. The unclean will not cross over it. It will be for those. The wanderer, the fools, will not wander about.

⁹No lion will be there, nor will predators, wild beasts, come up on her. They will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk there. ¹⁰And the ransomed of YHWH will return, and come up to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain joy and jubilation; sorrow and sighing will run away.

2. Themes and Motifs

2.1 The Restoration of the Non-Human Creation

The counterpart to the preceding oracle of judgement (ch. 34) begins with a proclamation that water will flood the dry regions (vv. 6-7). 'Burning sand' is used as an antonym for water in Isa 49:10. Wildberger observes that the language of these waters bursting open sounds similar to the rupture of the 'waters of the deep' in Gen 7:11.⁷¹ Rather than this outburst of water being a threat as it was in the flood account, here in Isa 35:6 it is a symbol of vitality, perhaps even a symbol of creation.⁷² While some have viewed this metaphor as a specific reference to the desert region the former exiles traversed from

⁷¹ Wildberger, Hans, *Isaiah 28-39*, Continental Commentaries, Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002, 352.

⁷² See Gen 2:6.

Babylon to Israel, Oswalt broadens the metaphor by suggesting the desert refers to the entire world.⁷³

Just as Edom perhaps referred to all the nations in Isa 34, it is possible this region in Isa 35 refers to the entire non-human creation.

In addition to the desert regions, the waters also flood the ‘haunt of jackals’, a phrase that specifically connects Isa 35:7 to Isa 34:13.⁷⁴ This habitation of jackals will become a ‘resting place’ full of lush ‘grass reeds and rush.’ Jeremiah frequently uses a ‘haunt of jackals’ negatively to imply the destruction of human settlements and desolation of pastures.⁷⁵ Isaiah, on the other hand, presents it as a positive metaphor for the jackals in Isa 34:13. Perhaps the positive metaphor is continued here in Isa 35:13.⁷⁶ In this reading, the jackals are not driven out from their dwelling place, but are further accommodated with fresh water and fertile land. Jackals are referenced similarly in Isa 43:20, where the wild animals honour YHWH for his provision of water. In this way, Isa 35:7 does not reverse the metaphor from Isa 34:13; rather, it reinforces it. Moyter describes this as a ‘reversal of a settled and inhospitable situation’, in which the location becomes hospitable for creatures beyond the jackal.⁷⁷ YHWH’s care for animals continues, only now humanity is invited to flourish alongside the wild animals.

2.2 The Interrelatedness of the Cosmic Order

While the ‘haunt of jackals’ becomes a ‘resting place’ for animals and humans alike, Isa 35:9 announces the removal of all predatory animals, particularly the lion. At first, it appears that this is a reversal of Isa 34 and implies the exile of all the dangerous animals. Lions, however, did not appear on the list in Isa 34:11-15. Were the prophet attempting to reverse the habitat for wild animals in Isa 34,

⁷³ 620

⁷⁴ While there are many contrasts between Isa 34 and Isa 35, there are two particular words that appear in both chapters, further binding them as a unit. First, YHWH’s ‘vengeance’ (נִקְמָה) is stressed (34:8; 35:4), although both times it is directed toward the nations surrounding Judah. Second, both chapters mention a ‘habitat of jackals’ (34:13; 35:7), a phrase of particular interest to this paper.

⁷⁵ Jer 9:10; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37

⁷⁶ Olley concludes similarly, arguing this is not a negative metaphor for the jackals (222).

⁷⁷ Moyter, J.A., *The Prophecy of Isaiah: Introduction and Commentary*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 274.

surely he would utilise a specific animal already mentioned. Further, the animals in Isa 34:11-15 no longer had predatory behaviour. This is especially evident in v. 15, where the dangerous animals demonstrate hospitality to one another. Thus, it is not that all wild creatures are removed from this eschatological vision; only those who are predatory are removed.

In addition to the flourishing of non-predatory animals alongside humanity, the text links the restoration of the non-human creation with the healing of humanity.⁷⁸ Marlow notes 'ד ('for') in v. 6 connects the healing of humanity with the outpouring of water.⁷⁹ This link is further demonstrated by the double use of 'then' (אז) in v. 5 and v. 6, connecting humanity's healing to the gift of water in vv. 1-2. Renewal comes first to the non-human creation and then extends to humanity. While it is possible to view humanity's healing as a physical reality in light of the blind and deaf allusions, these two impairments are used symbolically elsewhere in Isaiah with regard to Israel's spiritual impairment.⁸⁰ Whether interpreted literally or figuratively, there is a connection between the flourishing of the non-human creation and the vitality of humanity.

CONCLUSION

These selected passages from First Isaiah present a diverse portrait of YHWH's relationship with animals. According to First Isaiah, animals have a relationship with YHWH separate from that of humanity. In Isa 11:1-10, the animals, along with the 'earth' and 'sea', have knowledge of YHWH.⁸¹ This contrasts with YHWH's accusation that humanity does not have this knowledge, which is a prerequisite for a right relationship with YHWH.⁸² In Isa 34:11-17, YHWH cares for animals who are hostile to humanity. This care is deliberate and everlasting (v. 17).

⁷⁸ This theme is also evident in 29:18; 30:26; 35:5-6.

⁷⁹ 236

⁸⁰ See Isa 6:9-10. Marlow suggests the metaphors can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically (*Biblical Prophets*, 236-7).

⁸¹ Cf. Isa 1:2-3

⁸² Hos 4:1; 2:22

The passages do not limit YHWH's care for animals to the present reality, but portray YHWH's eschatological vision for the care of animals. Isaiah 11:1-10 presents a world in which animals demonstrate flourishing relationships with YHWH, with each other, and with humanity. In Isaiah 34:8-17, YHWH cares for animals by driving sinful humanity away. Like the vision presented in Isa 11:1-10, there is no hostility among even the most predatory animals. While a counterpart to Isa 34:1-17 in many ways, Isa 35:6-7 nevertheless surprisingly preserves the wild animals in the eschatological vision: the jackals receive water as their habitation becomes a resting place for God's people.

Part of this transformed cosmos involves animals, both domestic and wild. Collectively, these three passages present a future in which even the dangerous animals are not banished from God's community but are transformed alongside humanity. Wild animals are invited to participate as equal co-partners, perhaps even the most prominent party member⁸³, in the new covenant of peace YHWH makes with humanity. The animals exhibit peaceful relations with each other and with humanity while God provides for even the most elusive and threatening within the animal kingdom. These animals 'know' YHWH, and as such YHWH remains committed to their flourishing. All creatures are invited to participate in this new cosmological order wherein YHWH's values of righteousness, justice, faithfulness, and wisdom⁸⁴ are exhibited by all - humans and the non-human creation alike.

These passages from First Isaiah invite the listening community to consider the ways in which they participate in this interrelated cosmos alongside YHWH and the non-human creation. God's people have the unique position within God's world to affect the vitality of the non-human creation through their interactions with God and each other. The eschatological visions remind God's people that God has not abandoned God's relationship with animals, and neither should humanity. Through the prophets, YHWH invites YHWH's people to participate in the continuation and completion of the salvific creation of the non-human creation. The inclusion of humanity alongside animals reminds the listening community

⁸³ See Hosea 2:20 [18]

⁸⁴ Isa 11:1-5; cf. Hos 2:21-22; cf. Hos 4:1

that they are actors in this cosmic drama. They are not only invited into this literary world, but they are also invited to imagine, work toward, and realise a time when God places the final parenthesis on the destructive force of chaos.

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