

The Eschatological Blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit in Isaiah: with Special Reference to Isaiah 44:1-5

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1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to explicate the identity of the “eschatological¹⁾ blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit”²⁾ in Isaiah 44:3. The Hebrew term — בְּרָכָה — and its derivative form appear ten times (19:24, 25; 36:16; 44:3;

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- 1) The English term “eschatology” comes from Greek word *eschatos* (“last”). Accordingly in a broad sense, “[e]schatology is generally held to be the doctrine of ‘the last things’, or of ‘the end of all things.’” (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 1). In a similar vein, Willem A. VanGemeren defines eschatology as “biblical teaching which gives humans a perspective on their age and a framework for living in hope of a new age” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 88). G. B. Caird defines eschatology as “the study of, or the corpus of beliefs held about, the destiny of man and of the world” (G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980], 243). Due to the complexity of the etymology of this term, however, it has a wide range of meanings and branches: Eschatology^I (Individual), Eschatology^H (historical), Eschatology^K (consequential), Eschatology^R (realized), Eschatology^E (existential), Eschatology^N (newness), Eschatology^P (purpose), and Eschatology^A (apocalyptic).
- 2) Prevailing scholarship regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is marked by the dogged pursuit of the intrinsic attributes of the Holy Spirit as described in Old Testament, and toward that end, scholars have dealt primarily with two lines of analysis: the first line has focused on the meaning of the רִיחַ, its identity, and forms of existence. The second line has centered on the possibility of the inward transformation (i.e., regeneration, indwelling, and sanctification) of believers in the Old Testament. For the further study, see, Charles A. Briggs, “The Use of *Ruah* in the Old Testament”, *JBL* 19 (1900), 132-145; Daniel Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of RWH in the Book of Ezekiel”, *JETS* 32 (1989), 27-49; “Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historiographic Writings of the Old Testament”, *SBJT* 1 (1997), 42-61; W. R. Shoemaker, “The Use of רִיחַ in the Old Testament and Πνεῦμα in the New Testament”, *JBL* 23 (1904), 13-67; James M. Hamilton Jr, “He Is with You and He Will Be in You: The Spirit, the Believer, and the Glorification of Jesus”, Ph.D. Diss. (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 6-24.

51:2; 61:9; 65:8, 16, 23; 66:3) in the Book of Isaiah and often represent “the divine blessings” which are “essential for the spiritual well-being” of God’s people and their prosperous future.³⁾ If we delve into Isaiah 44:3 carefully, there we may find the “eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit”⁴⁾ that the future community of Israel would experience. Many scholars have called particular attention to its identity and have put forth diverse viewpoints concerning this blessing (בְּרָכָה) the people of YHWH will experience in the *eschaton*. Unfortunately, however, regarding this issue of the spiritual blessing, so far little consensus has been reached among the scholarly community. In this regard, it is justifiable for us to investigate the issue again in a different approach and further pursue the issue in this article.

2. The Methodology

In this study, we shall attempt to approach the issue of the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 in a different way than that of the majority of the scholars. In his article, “The Literary Approach to the Study of the Old Testament: Promises and Pitfalls”, Tremper Longman III highlights the ‘emic’ approach in comparison with the ‘etic’ approach. Longman explains the two as follows,

The ‘emic’ seeks native designations and classification of literature. The advantage of this method is that the researcher gains insight into the native consciousness of a particular text and also the relationship between that text and others bearing the same designation. The ‘etic’ view of literature imposes a non-native grid or classification scheme on the texts in order to categorize them ... there is always the danger of distorting

3) Michael L. Brown, “ברך”, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 766.

4) In Isaiah 44:3b (אֶצְקֵה רוּחִי עַל-וְרִעֶךָ וּבְרָכָתִי עַל-צִצְעֹנֶיךָ), the רוּחִי makes a ‘paradigmatic parallelism’ with בְּרָכָתִי. In other words, this blessing is caused by the decisive event of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the descendants of Israel. Furthermore, as the verb אֶצְקֵה indicates, it refers to the future event by the outpouring of the Spirit upon descendants of Israel. In this regard, we shall call this blessing, the “eschatological blessing of the Spirit” in this paper. For the paradigmatic parallelism, see Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 72-75.

understanding of the texts by imposing foreign standards on them.⁵⁾

Every culture, and even every epoch in a particular culture, develops certain idiosyncratic literary conventions and moods in order to articulate its meaning. In this respect, it is legitimate for us to stay inside of the ancient (native) literary text and its textual model, furthermore seeking the meaning of that native text (emic). In addition, it is natural that a potentially oversimplified and straightforward application of modern literary notions upon the ancient biblical text will severely distort the textual meaning.

In order to take the ‘emic’ approach to the ancient biblical text in this study, then, we will interpret the biblical text, in particular, Isaiah 44:1-5, with the text-linguistic approach, literary (rhetorical) approach, and intertextual interpretation (canonical approach). First, the text-linguistic approach will provide the basic framework for the interpretation of the text — syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics — in this study. Closely related with the literary and canonical approach, the text-linguistic approach “clarifies how and why meaning are expressed through particular linguistic form.”⁶⁾ Second, it is the ‘literary approach’ to the issue that we will utilize in this study. To interpret biblical Hebrew properly as it presents, it is imperative for us to get into the textual world and call special attention to the poetic device, structure, genre, and linguistic form of the text as an ancient Near Eastern literature.⁷⁾ In addition, it is the immediate literary and theological context of Isaiah 44:1-5 that provides the proper theoretical foundation on which we achieve the accurate interpretation of the text. Finally, the ‘intertextual interpretation’ is necessary to understand the target-text (Isa 44:1-5). Because every text has certain connections with other texts in terms of theme, imagery, and linguistic form in close relationship, they potentially provide interpretative clues to each other and help themselves for the

5) Tremper Longman III, “The Literary Approach to the Study of the Old Testament: Promises and Pitfalls”, *JETS* 28:4 (1985), 391; *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 52-53.

6) Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 131; In this theory, text is the “verbal record (spoken or written) of a communication”, namely, a “communicative occurrence.”

7) For further study on the poetic device, see, Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006); Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*; G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*; Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*.

proper and rich interpretation. Therefore, it might be proper to say that these three approaches are a text-oriented and a text-sensitive approach that help us to appreciate the textual meaning from the text itself.

3. The Eschatological Blessing of Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 by the Etic Approach

By and large, there are three different interpretations on the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 by the etic approach. First, Claus Westermann argues that the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in 44:3 is the “innate power and vitality” of the Spirit which creates miraculous life, energy, and fertility in Israel.⁸⁾ James Muilenburg⁹⁾ and Wonsuk Ma¹⁰⁾ also share a similar viewpoint. Their approach is ‘ontological’ in that they focus on the innate nature of the Spirit in resolving the issue. Second, R. N. Whybray perceives the eschatological blessing of the Spirit as “numerous offspring”¹¹⁾ of future Israel and G. W. Grogan has a similar viewpoint.¹²⁾ While having a similar approach, Jane L. Koole recognizes the eschatological blessing of the Spirit differently as a “spiritual change of the people”¹³⁾ in the future community of Israel. George T. Montague has a viewpoint similar to that of Koole.¹⁴⁾ The approach of these four scholars is more ‘consequential’ since they primarily emphasize the result of the outpouring of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:4-5, but their viewpoint is contrasted with each other as a ‘physical’ (Whybray and Grogan) and ‘spiritual’ (Montague and Koole) blessing. Finally,

8) Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 136.

9) James Muilenburg, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, The Interpreter’s Bible 5 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 502.

10) Wonsuk Ma, “The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah and Its Eschatological Significance”, Ph.D. Thesis (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1996), 331.

11) R. N. Whybray states that “Spirit, here parallel with blessing, refers to the renewal of God’s life-giving strength which creates fertility and prosperity, without the deeper spiritual significance.” See, *Isaiah 40-66*, New Century Bible (Marshall: Oliphants, 1975), 94-95.

12) G. W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 264.

13) Jane L. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48. Part 3. Vol. 1* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1997), 361-362.

14) George T. Montague, *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 51.

Christopher R. Seitz,¹⁵⁾ Joseph Blenkinsopp,¹⁶⁾ and George A. F. Knight¹⁷⁾ assume that the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:3 is the “future realization of the blessing” promised to Abraham and Jacob (Gen 12:1-3, 15:1-6, and 18:17-19, and in 25:19-21). The approach they use is ‘mythic’ in that they infer this eschatological blessing from the ‘mythos’¹⁸⁾ of Israel.

In spite of diverse interpretations on the eschatological blessing of the Spirit, a consensus has not yet been reached among the scholarly community. In my opinion, it is due to that scholars already have their own frameworks for understanding the ministry of the Holy Spirit and its consequence — innate power and vitality, physical or spiritual change, and realization of the old promised blessing — and thus they put the ancient text into their own restraints. To put it differently, according to Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, these scholars make “the possible imposition of modern Western categories on the biblical text in a way that distorts the Bible.”¹⁹⁾ It is arguably true that these three types of interpretations do not properly present the identity of the spiritual blessing (בְּרָכָה) in Isaiah 44:1-5 within the whole Book of Isaiah, requiring the new approach to the issue. In a different method — emic approach, therefore, we will scrutinize the ancient biblical text being considered and see what text itself says about the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit.

4. The Eschatological Blessing of Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 by the Emic Approach

In this section, we will attempt to interpret Isaiah 44:1-5 with the “emic approach” and thus focus on the immediate context of the target-text, its interpretation with diverse approaches, and its implication.

15) Christopher R. Seitz, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, The New Interpreter’s Bible VI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 386.

16) Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 233.

17) George A. F. Knight, *Servant Theology: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, 1984), 76.

18) G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 220. Caird defines that “myths are stories about the past which embody and express a people’s traditional culture.” He categorizes the myth as Myth^E, Myth^R, Myth^P, Myth^N, Myth^I, Myth^{PS}, and Myth^L.

19) Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 24-25.

4. 1. The Immediate Context of Isaiah 44:1-5

Before we go on to investigate the main passage, we will take a look at the context of Isaiah 44:1-5 — Isaiah 43:22-44:23. In order to interpret the main text properly, it is necessary to explore the primary language and the thematic flow of its co-text which provide the clue to the interpretation of the main text. Since text is a discourse (a communicative occurrence) produced in the communicative environment, the textual meaning is “a meaning intended by the original speaker or author, related to the *context* within which it was generated and the *co-text* of which it is a part.”²⁰⁾

This pericope — Isaiah 43:22-44:23 — refers to the heart of Israel’s religious and spiritual issue: the eschatological salvation of future Israel with the outpouring of the Spirit. If we schematize this pericope in terms of the eschatological ministry of the Spirit, however, we will do it under three main bodies: (I) the judgment of YHWH upon Israel due to the absence of the ministry of the Spirit (43:22-28), (II) the eschatological blessing and restoration of the descendants of Israel with the outpouring of the Spirit upon them (44:1-5), and (III) the result of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the future community of Israel (44:6-23).²¹⁾ Furthermore, it is not hard to state that the outpouring of the Spirit is the key message in this pericope.

Due to space and time limitations, we will not deal with the whole pericope in detail, but concentrate on 43:22-28 which provides an essential interpretative clue to understand the main text in this section. According to Westermann, this passage is the only ‘trial speech’ in which YHWH opposes Israel in Isaiah 40-55.²²⁾ Yet, the argument set forth by YHWH in the first person speech is to

20) Peter Cotterell, “Semantics, Interpretation, and Theology”, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *A Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 141.

21) By and large, this pericope is to be divided into six stanzas: (I) story of Israel’s failure in 43:22-28, (II) Yet, Israel is YHWH’s servant in 44:1-5, (III) God’s witness in 44:6-8, (IV) polemic against idolatry in 44:9-20, (V) the servant whose sins are forgiven in 44:21-22, and finally, (VI) hymn in 44:23. I owe the division of this pericope from VanGemeren’s lecture notes. (Unpublished: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2007).

22) Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 130; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 341; The division of the book of Isaiah into three segments was made by the epoch-making commentary of Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja*, HKAT 3.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). According to him, chapter 1-39 (“Proto-Isaiah”) is mainly related to the work of Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eight century

justify YHWH's judgment of exile upon the people of Israel. Namely, the co-text argues that the main reason for this judgment is none other than the rampant abuse of religious practices and the sacrifice, that is to say, the religious and ethical corruption of Israel.²³⁾

In detail, what is striking in this text is the seven repetitions of a negative, לֹא in vv. 22-24. Among them, five are used to refer to the abuse of religious practices of Israel (the first, second, third, sixth, and seventh one) and two are used to justify YHWH's judgment on Israel (the fourth and fifth one). Significantly, this repetition makes a typical *repetition-initial*²⁴⁾ in biblical Hebrew and ought to be conceived as a kind of keyword.

וְלֹא־אֲתִי קָרָאתָ יַעֲקֹב כִּי־זָנְעָתָ בִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ²²
 לֹא־הִבִּיאתָ לִי שֶׁהָ עַל־חֵיד וְזָבַחֶיךָ לֹא כַבֵּדְתָנִי ²³
 לֹא הִעֲבַדְתִּיךָ בַּמִּנְחָה וְלֹא הוֹנַעְתִּיךָ בַּלְבוֹנָה:
 לֹא־קָנִיתִ לִי בַכֶּסֶף קָנָה וְחִלַּב זָבַחֶיךָ לֹא הִרִוּתָנִי ²⁴

According to Watson, “[a] poem provides its own interpretation by repetition of what is essential to its understanding.”²⁵⁾ In this sense, the repetition of לֹא obviously represents and emphasizes the negative side of Israel's religious life with remarkable impact into the audience.²⁶⁾ Furthermore, this negative aspect of Israel's religious life is more clearly embodied as a vital issue of Israel's sin (חַטָּאת), offense (עוֹן), and transgression (פְּשָׁע), all of which become the ‘thematic keyword’ in vv. 24, 25, and 27 within the repetition of the similar keywords. Therefore, it is possible for us to say that these repetitions imply that the primary concern of the prophet must be the spiritual and ethical depravity of the people rather than their political and social situation — the exile. From the overall

B.C., chapter 40-55 (“Deutero-Isaiah”) is the work of an anonymous prophet who lived in the exilic community of Babylon at around 538 B.C., and chapter 55-66 (“Trito-Isaiah”) originated from another prophet who was a member of the post-exilic community of Jerusalem.

23) Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 130-133; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library, 341.

24) Watson categorizes the repetition in the biblical Hebrew in three types: (I) repetition-initial, (II) end-repetition, and (III) immediate repetition. Watson too divides the keyword in three categories: (I) dominant keyword, (II) repeated keyword, and (III) thematic keyword. In this case, it is the repeated keyword. See, Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, 274-282.

25) *Ibid.*, 288.

26) Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 341.

literary context, furthermore, it is evidently true that the primary reason for such spiritual depravity and deficiency is the absence of the Spirit's ministry in the people of Israel.

Then, how is this stanza related to the targeted text of Isaiah 44:1-5? To answer this question, there is no doubt that the restoration and blessing cannot be understood apart from reference to the fundamental issue of the spiritual and ethical depravity in the exiled community. In other words, the eschatological salvation and the blessing must be understood as something that resolves those issues of Israel's spiritual and ethical corruption and failure in this co-text.

4. 2. The Exegesis of the Main Text, Isaiah 44:1-5²⁷⁾

In this section, we will tackle the primary issue of the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:3 with an exegesis of Isaiah 44:1-5. Having granted the fact that this stanza consists of both an utterance for the real world (vv. 1-2, 5) and that for the imaginative world (vv. 3-4),²⁸⁾ it might be proper for us to divide it into three main strophes as follows:

(I) the utterance of the actual world: the invitation to the exiled Israel (vv. 1-2),

(II) the utterance of the imaginative world: the outpouring of the Spirit (vv. 3-4),

(III) the utterance of the actual world: the result of the outpouring of the Spirit in v. 5.

Then, it is reasonable for us to do exegesis of this stanza according to the above strophic division.

4. 2. 1. The Exegesis of Isaiah 44:1-2

¹ ועתה שמע יעקב עבדי וישראל בחרתי בו:
² כה אמר יהוה עשך ויצרך מבטן יעזרך
 אל־תירא עבדי יעקב וישרון בחרתי בו

27) In my opinion, the English translation of the text is not very useful in our investigation. Thus, I put it in the appendix.

28) This poem is a communicative utterance which is divided into two categories: (I) the utterance regarding the actual world of the exiled Israel and their descendents (vv. 1-2, 5), and (II) the utterance mentioning the world of the imagination, of which the Spirit acts for the blessing and restoration of Israel (vv. 3-4).

From the overall flow of the main theme, it can be regarded that *waw* in v. 1 functions as the disjunctive adverbial *waw* and thus translated “but now!” Contrasting to Israel’s spiritual and ethical depravity in Isaiah 43:22-28, *waw* in v. 1 signifies the beginning of YHWH’s new action for his people and their renewed status in future.²⁹ In verses 1 and 2b, in particular, the suffix ׀ in עֲבָדִי (my servant) and בְּחֵרְתִּי (my chosen one) is repeated four times in similar phraseology and seems to highlight the ‘closeness’ between YHWH and Israel. Furthermore, it is significant that the main accent is on בוּ, i.e., on Jacob, which underscores the ‘election’ of Israel by YHWH used with the verb בְּחֵרְתִּי (I have chosen).³⁰ The emphasis on the theme of both ‘closeness’ and ‘election’ in this strophe opens the possibility of the direct reversal of Israel’s fortune from the judgment in the previous text to the salvation and blessing in the following strophe. Finally, it is their faith in the creator YHWH — יִצְרָךְ and עֲשֵׂךְ that provides the theological ground for the reversal of Israel’s fortune in vv. 1-2.

4. 2. 2. The Exegesis of Isaiah 44:3-4

כִּי אֶצְקֶמְוּם עַל-צִמָּא וְנִזְלִים עַל-יִבְשָׁה³
 אֶצְקֶ רֹוחִי עַל-יִרְעָךְ וּבְרָכְתִּי עַל-צִאֲצָאִיךְ:
 וְצִמְחוּ בְּבֵין חֲצִיר כַּעֲרָבִים עַל-יִבְלֵי-מַיִם:⁴

This section is about the utterance of the imaginative world, namely, the outpouring of the Spirit and its resultant blessing (בְּרָכָה) in the future community of Israel. Here we will deal with several important rubrics — theological background, water metaphor, identity of tree imagery — in relation to the primary issue of the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:3.

First, Isaiah 44:3-4 has a strong allusion to the theme of creation in Genesis 2:5.

וְכָל שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם
 וְצִמְחָה כִּי לֹא הַמַּטֵּיר יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין
 לַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה:

29) Jane L. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 356; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 134; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 341; Wonsuk Ma, “The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah”, 187.

30) Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 126.

Isaiah 44:3-4 has a linguistic and thematic connection with Genesis 2:5 by both the parallel use of two verbs — צָמַח (grow) and מִטָּר (יֶצֶק, rain) — and the co-occurrence of the creation theme, the raining theme, and the growth motif. Even though Genesis 2:5 has no outright creation language, from the literary context, it is obvious that it has a form of creation narrative. In other words, Genesis 2:5's thematic and linguistic nexus to Isaiah 44:3 provides the interpretative background for the interpretation of the Spirit's eschatological ministry in Isaiah 44:3-4. First, we can infer that the dynamic ministry of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 must be understood as YHWH's act of the new creation for Israel. Just as YHWH's Spirit works to create the world at the initial creation, so too she will be poured out to recreate the people of Israel in future. Second, YHWH's act of the new creation by his Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 can be represented as the "growth (צָמַח) of tree" with the life-giving raining (מִטָּר). Probably, the creation narrative in Genesis 1-2 has influenced Isaiah 44:3-4 thematically and linguistically (cf. Psa 74:13-17; 26:11-14).³¹⁾

Second, what does the metaphor of 'water' signify in this strophe? From the parallel structure in 3a and 3b, it is clear that the water metaphor signifies the nature and characteristic of the Spirit's ministry. To examine this issue, let us see how it is used in some other texts - Isaiah 41:17-20 and 43:19-21.

Isaiah 41:17-21³²⁾ portrays the radical transformation of Israel with "water imagery" as does Isaiah 44:3-4. In this text, the water metaphor represents the "source of life" which is responsible for the re-creation of life in the wildness. If this is correct, "water can be a symbol of God's life-bringing power"³³⁾ in Isaiah 44:3-4. The same meaning is found in Isaiah 43:18-21 in which the water in the wilderness evidently highlights the life of the thirsty in there.

Third, how does the text itself articulate and highlight the radical transformation of God's people, which is represented as the eschatological

31) G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 226; Peter D. Miscall, "Isaiah: New Heaven, New Earth, New Book", Danna Nolan Fewell, ed., *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 41-56; Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon", Craig C. Broyles, ed., *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 170.

32) This text has a linguistic affinity with Isaiah 44:3-4 in that it has the language of thirsty (אַנְחָה), water (מַיִם), and the creation (בְּרִיאָה). It too has the literary similarity with Isaiah 44:3-4 since it has the similar tree imagery and the growth motif.

33) Jane L. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 177-178.

blessing of the Spirit in 3b? If we delve into the text, it is obvious that this text highlights Israel’s fundamental transformation as the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in diverse ways. In this section, we will reveal it from three dimensions of this strophe—the phonetic, structural, and the semantic dimension.

First, as regards the phonetic, we find that the repetition of two similar sounds — צָמָא (thirsty) and צָמָח (grow) — is unique and outstanding here. Namely, the repetition of the similar sound — צָמָא and צָמָח — in this strophe emphasizes the radical change in Israel’s status from their thirsty into their ‘growth’ as the blessing of the Spirit. If we read this strophe carefully several times, basically, it is ‘alliteration’, ‘wordplay’, and ‘paronomasia’, the unique poetic devices of biblical Hebrew. According to Watson, they have the “*enargaeic* function, to focus the reader’s attention, vividly and suddenly on the physical details of an object, a person or an event.”³⁴ In this regard, it is true that these two terms lead us to recognize the huge change in the situation of God’s people from ‘thirsty’ into ‘miraculous growth’ as the result of the outpouring of the Spirit in future.

Second, as regards structure, this strophe highlights a reversal in Israel’s fortune as the blessing of the Spirit, which is finally depicted as the “growth of tree.” If we schematize the strophe in terms of the critical event of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the offspring of Israel, it can be thus represented:

- A: צָמָא (thirsty) – Before the outpouring of the Spirit
- B: The outpouring of the Spirit (רִיחַ) upon Israel’s offspring
= the blessing (בְּרָכָה)
- A’: צָמָח (grow) – After the outpouring of the Spirit

It is a typical chiasmic strophic structure (ABA’) and indicates the reversal of fortune in biblical Hebrew. According to Watson, “reversal of fortune is often neatly expressed by wordplay [— paronomasia].”³⁵ Here, this wordplay is

34) Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, 228. Beside these two functions of alliteration, he points out three more functions of alliteration: a cohesive function, a vocative function, and an end stop function.

35) Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, 246. Regarding the function of wordplay, he also mentions six more functions of the wordplay: (I) to amuse and sustain interest, (II) to assist composition, (III) to lend authenticity, (IV) to link a poem or its part, (V) to show appearance can be deceptive, and finally (VI) to equate two things. See, *ibid.*,

further associated with the ABA' *chiastic* strophic pattern, which confirms the reversal of fortune in this text. In this regard, A and A' structure evidently denotes the reversal of the Israel's fortune with the outpouring of the Spirit, which is picturesquely depicted in the "growth" of tree in the end.

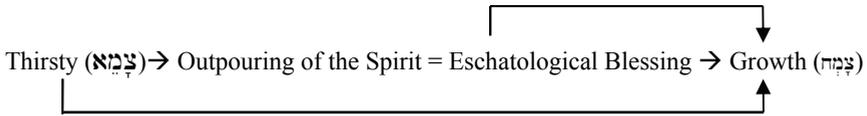


Figure 1. Reversal of the Fortune

Third, as regards semantics, the key verb צָמַח (grow) in this strophe craftily represents the growth of the tree as *YHWH's new action* for the eschatological blessing of the Spirit. The special attention must be directed to the verb צָמַח, which appears in Isaiah 42:9 and 43:18-21 again. In Isaiah 42:9 and 43:19, it is צָמַח that is directly related with הַדְּשׁוּת (the new things). From the literary context, the term הַדְּשׁוּת represents the task of the servant of YHWH for the eschatological restoration of Israel.³⁶⁾ Finally, connecting the verb צָמַח with the term בְּרִכָּה in Isaiah 44:3-4, the prophet shows that YHWH's new action for Israel's restoration, metaphorically depicted as the "growth of the tree," is none other than the eschatological blessing of the Spirit.

Fourth and finally, what is the identity of the "tree image" in this strophe? In the previous section, we have recognized that the fundamental and radical transformation of Israel in future has been represented by the growth of tree in verses 3-4. In this regard, to identify the tree imagery is the crucial aspect in

245-246.

36) Walter Brueggemann suggests that "the phrase 'former things' refers to the work of judgment..., [but] the phrase 'new things' concerns the restoration of Israel after the Exile." (Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998], 60-61). Compositional perspective, Childs also appreciates that "'former thing' and 'new thing' refer to the structure of the book of Isaiah that reflects the pivotal turn from judgment to rescue in the life of Israel" (Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 329). More specifically, concentrating on the "new things", Koole (*Isaiah 40-48*, 239) and Dirk H. Odendaal (*The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40-66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* [Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1970], 111) understand it as the task of the "Servant of YHWH" on behalf of the eschatological restoration of Israel and nations.

understanding the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5. In verse 4, a tree image is represented by “poplar” (עֲרָבָה) by streams of water. The majority of scholars argue that the growth of the tree implies numerical increase of Israel in the blessed future era.³⁷⁾ However, this proposal is hardly persuasive in that the thematic flow of the immediate co-text in Isaiah 43:22-28 highlights spiritual and ethical depravity in their relation with YHWH and therefore the radical restoration of Israel’s fortune, metaphorically expressed by the “growth of the tree” with the sweet rain of the Spirit in verse 4, must have something to do with the spiritual and ethical transformation which resolves the main issue of exiled Israel.

What then does the tree image imply in this strophe? In order to answer this question, we need to consult two related inter-texts — Isaiah 45:8 and Isaiah 61:11 — which have similar language and theme with Isaiah 44:3-4.

Isaiah 45:8

הֲרַעֲפוּ שָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וּשְׁחַקִּים יוֹלִי-צָרָק
 תִּפְתַּח-אֲרֶזֶן יִפְרוּ-יֵשַׁע
 וּצְרָקָה תִּצְמַח יַחַד אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּרֵאתִיו:

This verse is “a sweeping doxology for the creator”³⁸⁾ used as the concluding hymn of Isaiah 44:24-45:7. What is integral for our investigation is the fact that both texts make a linguistic and thematic equivalence by depicting YHWH’s new creation (בְּרָא) by the growth motif (צָמַח). While Isaiah 44:3-4 portrays the new creation of YHWH as the ‘growth of tree’ in a more figurative sense, Isaiah 45:8 interprets it as the ‘growth of righteousness’ in a more descriptive sense. In other words, if the prophet represents the transformation of Israel in future with the growth of tree in Isaiah 44:3-4, in Isaiah 45:8 he clarifies it as the growth of righteousness in the course of narrative of Isaiah. If this is correct, the “growth

37) Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 136-137; Wonsuk Ma, “The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah”, 190-191; G. W. Grogan, *Isaiah*, 264; E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 167; George A. F. Knight, *Servant Theology*, 76; John D. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 144; Christopher R. Seitz, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66*, The New Interpreter’s Bible. Vol 6 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 387; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 233.

38) Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 77; Westermann defines it as the concluding “hymn” as Isaiah 44:23. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 163.

of tree” in Isaiah 44:4 is none other than the “growth of righteousness” in Isaiah 45:8.

Isaiah 61:11

כִּי כְאֲרִיזׁ תִּזְכָּא צְמֻחָהּ וּכְנֶגֶת זְרוּעֶיהָ תִּצְמַח׃
כִּן אֲדַגֵּי יְהוָה יִצְמַח צְדָקָהּ וּתְהִלָּה נֶגֶד כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם׃

Isaiah 61:11 is another intertext which has the verb צָמַח expressing the inevitability of YHWH’s new action and uses the terms צְמַח, רוּחַ, זָרַע, צִיָּא and בְּרִדָּה. Thematically, this verse also has the same growth motif with the critical term — צְמַח. Significantly, the prophet implies YHWH’s new action for the future restoration in the similar phrase יִצְמַח צְדָקָה (righteousness grows). It makes a linguistic and thematic pattern with the phrase of הָצִיר כְּעֵרְבִים (they will grow up among the grass like the poplars) in Isaiah 44:4. In Isaiah 61:3, the phrase — אֵילֵי הַצִּדֵק (oaks of righteousness) — which implies the transformed destiny of Israel in future also supports that the growth of righteousness takes place as the result of the outpouring of the Spirit and none other than the expected blessing of Israel in *eschaton*. Therefore, we can state that the growth of righteousness in Isaiah 61:11 is the interpretation of the growth of tree in Isaiah 44:3-4 and thus the tree image again implies righteousness.

4. 2. 3. The Exegesis of Isaiah 44:5

זֶה יֹאמֵר לַיהוָה אֲנִי וְזֶה יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְעֻקֵּב׃
וְזֶה יִכְתֹּב יָדוֹ לַיהוָה וּבְשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנֶה׃

This verse refers to the response of the Israelites vying to belong to YHWH and be called as Israel. They are those of Israel who experienced the life-giving ministry of the Spirit. When they experience the outpouring of the Spirit and her powerful presence among them, they will be eager to be called the people of YHWH and attempt to join the membership of God’s people.

4. 3. The Emergence of Righteousness as the Blessing

In this section, finally, we will investigate the reason why the emergence of righteousness is to be the eschatological blessing for the descendants of Israel by

exploring Isaiah 32:15-20. We cannot find a specific linguistic connection between these two texts, but both the image of the Spirit’s dwelling (שָׁכַן) in the future community of Israel and the similar growth motif connect these two texts and at the same time the former (Isa 32:15-20) provides the interpretative clue for the latter (Isa 44:1-5) in the Book of Isaiah.

It begins with the preposition עַד in v. 15a whose basic sense is “allative (movement toward) or terminative (movement up to).”³⁹⁾ Used as the temporal in this verse, it indicates that until the outpouring of the Spirit of YHWH from on high, the negative situation of the YHWH’s judgment in Israel in vv. 9-14 would continue. To put it differently, with the decisive event of the outpouring of the Spirit of YHWH, the people’s fortune would reverse. From v. 15b to v. 19, if we look at it carefully, we can find out that there is a kind of linguistic pattern. V.15a is followed by a series of five *waw*-consecutive statements which describe the “future circumstances of salvation”⁴⁰⁾ paralleled with the hemistich beginning “*waw*-noun” in each colon. For sure, it is an intentional configuration by the prophet to emphasize a certain message to the audience,

... וּכְרָמַל	... וְהָיָה	And it will be ... and a fertile field
... וְצִדְקָה	... וְשָׁכַן	and it will dwell ... and righteousness
... וְעִבְרַת הַצְּדָקָה	... וְהָיָה	and it will be ... and an effect of righteousness
... וּבְמִשְׁכְּנֹת מִבְּטָחִים	... וְיָשָׁב	and it will dwell ... and in a secure dwellings
... וּבְשִׁפְלָה	... וּבָרָר	and it will hail ... and in humiliation

There is no doubt that the keyword repeating three times in this stanza is “righteousness (צִדְקָה)” and “peace (שְׁלוֹם)”, which imply the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit upon God’s people. By using both verbs שָׁכַן (dwell) and יָשָׁב (sojourn), the prophet underscores that “righteousness and justice would not be guests that visited from time to time, but they would be permanent residents there”.⁴¹⁾ Righteousness would emerge and be manifested as the primary quality and feature in the future community of Israel as the result of the outpouring

39) Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 215.

40) Marvin A Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 412.

41) Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39. A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 261.

water of the Spirit. With *merismus* in Hebrew poetic device (מִדְבָּר [wilderness] and כַּרְמֶל [fertile field]), furthermore, the prophet emphasizes the fact that the eschatological blessing of righteousness will dwell in “the whole new world” in verse 15 under the life-giving effect of the Spirit.⁴²⁾

The accompanying result of the growth of righteousness is none other than peace (שָׁלוֹם), quietness (הַשְׁקֵט) and security (בְּטָח) in a peaceful habitation (בְּנִיחָה שְׁלוֹם), secure dwellings (בְּמִשְׁכָּנֹת מִבְּטָחִים), and undisturbed resting places (בְּמִנוּחַת שְׁאֲנָנוֹת) in verses 17-18. This signifies the fundamental and integral transformations and restoration of YHWH’s people in the future. In particular, security is the primary concern of the people in the ancient Near East they pursue. From the inter-textual connection, therefore, we can make it obvious that the growth of righteousness in the future community of Israel would bring about accompanying blessings, namely, the peaceful and secure status in their spiritual and physical life with the dynamic ministry of the Spirit. Thus, it is not hard to state that the growth of righteousness is a particular axis on which all kinds of YHWH’s blessings turn around.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to identify the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 from the emic approach. This is not the blessing the contemporary Israel shall experience, but the future community of Israel would experience. From the etic approach, the majority of scholars have put forth diverse opinions from their own viewpoints: (I) “innate power and vitality” of the Spirit, (II) the “numerous offspring” of future Israel or a “spiritual change of the people”⁴³⁾ in the future community, and (III) the “future realization of the blessing” promised to Abraham and Jacob. Even though they have argued diverse arguments on this issue, it is true that they cannot reach the proper consensus on it. Against the viewpoints of the majority of scholars, therefore, with an emic approach to Isaiah 44:3-4, we pursue the identity of the

42) Alec, J. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 261.

43) Jane L. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 361-362.

eschatological blessing of the Spirit in this paper and reach the conclusion that this blessing of Spirit is none other than the “growth of righteousness” in the future community of Israel with the life-giving power of the Spirit. The emergence of this “righteousness” with the life-giving ministry of the Spirit must be *the blessing* for Israel since it signifies the prevailing emergence of the “total rectitude” and the “new order” in their spiritual and ethical life — peace, security, quietness in the secure dwelling. This also implies the reversal of the disorder and chaos in the human life. Therefore, there is no doubt that the growth of righteousness implies the complete reversal of Israel’s fortune, thus signifying the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5!

When the blessing (בְּרָכָה) is proclaimed by a preacher in Christian community in the contemporary or the ancient world, it is often mistakenly conceived as the physical affluence, prosperity, and well-being of believers in a church. However, the Book of Isaiah with special reference to Isaiah 44:1-5 particularly emphasizes an essential point that *the life of righteousness* is none other than the blessing (בְּרָכָה) the Spirit of YHWH intends to cultivate in the midst of Christian community. In this regard, both *the life of righteousness* and *its growth* must be underscored and executed not only in the personal life, but also in the Christian community.

<Keywords>

Blessing, Righteousness, Spirit, Emic Approach, Etic Approach.

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<Abstract>

**The Eschatological Blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit in Isaiah:
with Special Reference to Isaiah 44:1-5**

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In this paper, we attempt to identify the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5 from the emic approach. From the etic approach, the majority of scholars have put forth diverse opinions from their own viewpoints: (1) “innate power and vitality” of the Spirit, (2) the “numerous offspring” of future Israel or a “spiritual change of the people” in the future community, and (3) the “future realization of the blessing” promised to Abraham and Jacob. Even though they have made diverse arguments on this issue, it is definite that they cannot reach the proper consensus on it. Therefore, we pursue, against the viewpoints of the majority of scholars, the identity of the eschatological blessing of the Spirit in this paper with an emic approach to Isaiah 44:3-4, and reach the conclusion that this blessing of the Spirit is none other than the “growth of righteousness” in the future community of Israel with the life-giving power of the Spirit. In order to resolve this issue, we utilize the text-linguistic approach, literary approach, and intertextual approach (canonical approach), all of which are text-oriented and text-sensitive approaches to the issue. The emergence of this “righteousness” with the life-giving ministry of the Spirit must be *the blessing* for both Israel and the ongoing Christian community since it signifies the prevailing emergence of the “total rectitude” and the “new order” in their spiritual and ethical life — peace, security, and quietness in secure dwelling. This also implies the reversal of the disorder and chaos in human life. Therefore, there is no doubt that the growth of righteousness implies the complete reversal of Israel’s fortune, thus signifying the eschatological blessing (בְּרָכָה) of the Spirit in Isaiah 44:1-5!