

ISAIAH XLV 7 AND THE CREATION OF CHAOS?

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The themes of creation and the origination of the cosmos are receiving a great deal of attention these days.¹ Although the Hebrew Bible contains a variety of cosmogonic traditions, most agree that God creates the universe by imposing order upon a primeval, pre-created chaos. The Bible does not, however, present this chaos in a uniform manner. In his recent book, for example, J. D. Levenson identifies two major traditions about chaos.² In the one chaos is an inert mass lacking order or differentiation. God creates by isolating the various elements that will make up the created universe, and thereby imposes a structure upon the primeval muck. In this tradition God is a potter and chaos the unworked clay, a metaphor familiar from the bible itself (e.g., Gen. ii 7; Isa. xxix 16, lxiv 8; Jer. xviii 1-6) The best known example of this tradition is Gen. i, but Levenson also finds it in Ps. civ

¹ A partial list of publications appearing in English in this decade includes R. J. Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation", *TS* 46 (1985), pp 507-23, and his "Cosmogonies in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible", *Or*, N S 53 (1984), pp 183-201, D. A. Knight, "Cosmogony and Order in the Hebrew Tradition", in R. W. Lovin and F. E. Reynolds (ed.), *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics* (Chicago, 1985), pp 133-57, T. Frymer-Kensky, "Biblical Cosmology", in M. P. O'Connor and D. N. Freedman (ed.), *Background for the Bible* (Winona Lake, 1987), pp 231-40, P. D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol", *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 9 (1987), pp 53-78, R. Knaierim, "Cosmos and History in Israel's Theology", *HorBT* 3 (1981), pp 59-123, S. Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico, 1985), J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge, 1985), J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, 1988). Consider also the reprinting of B. W. Anderson's *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia, 1987), originally published in New York in 1967, and the collection of classic essays edited by B. W. Anderson, *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1984).

² *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, 1988), esp. chs 1-5.

In the other tradition chaos is a living being with its own will and personality. It is at cross-purposes with God, who must first vanquish the beast-named alternatively Rahab, Tannim, Leviathan, Behemoth, Yam, or Nahar-before he can proceed with creation. This tradition can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible, but is most common in the book of Job (e.g., iii 8, vii 12, ix 13, xxvi 13, xl 15-32), the Psalms (e.g., lxxviii 23, lxxiv 13-15, lxxxix 10-11), and the oracles of the prophets (e.g., Isa. xxvii 1, li 9-10; Ezek. xxix 3-5, xxxii 2-8; Hab. iii 8-15; Zech. x 11).

Isa. xlv 7 is thought to be the sole exception to the notion that chaos is pre-created and independent of the deity. Since C. Stuhlmueller's 1959 article scholars have commonly interpreted this verse as an assertion of Yahweh's authorship of everything, including chaos.³ In that article Stuhlmueller writes, "In II Is[aiiah] even this chaos is God's creature... In the beginning, even before chaos, God alone IS, the creature WILL BE" (pp. 460-1). A number of scholars, including J. D. Levenson, J. Day and M. Weinfeld, go so far as to suggest that the verse is a deliberate polemic against the more common notion that chaos existed prior to creation.⁴ Sensing the implication that the older notions of chaos

³ C. Stuhlmueller, "The Theology of Creation in Second Isaiah", *CBQ* 21 (1959), pp 448-9, 460-1 This interpretation is supported by J. L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (Garden City, 1968), p 77, C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja Kapitel 40-66* (4th edn, Göttingen, 1981), pp 131-2 R. Albertz, *Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung Untersucht bei Deuterjesaja, Hiob und in den Psalmen* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp 23-4, K. Elliger, *Deuterjesaja* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978), p 499, K. Koch, *Die Propheten II* (Stuttgart, etc., 1980), pp 133-4 = E. tr. *The Prophets 2* (Philadelphia, 1982, London, 1983), p 129, and J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, 1988), pp 124-7 This view, of course, precedes Stuhlmueller, and can be found, for example, in H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap. Joh. 12* (Göttingen, 1895), pp 136-7, and Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel, from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (New York, 1960 [Hebrew original published between 1937 and 1948]), p 68 However, it is only after Stuhlmueller that the issue and interpretation become dominant Prior to Stuhlmueller scholarly debate concerned itself largely with the relationship of the verse to Persian dualism, e.g., A. Dillmann, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (Leipzig, 1890), p 410, F. Feldmann, *Das Buch Isaias* (Münster, 1926), p 92, P. Volz, *Jesaja* (Leipzig, 1932), p 64, J. Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66", *IB* 5 (New York and Nashville, 1956), p 524, G. Fohrer, *Jesaja 40-66* (Zürich, 1964), p 86

⁴ Weinfeld's argument, available only in Hebrew, is conveniently summarized by Day ([n 1] p 55) and Levenson ([n 1] pp 124-7) According to these summaries, Weinfeld believes that Deutero-Isaiah composed this oracle in conscious opposition to Gen 1 (cf. Westermann [n 3], p 132) Day and Levenson modify

compromise Yahweh's sovereignty, Deutero-Isaiah, so the argument goes, asserts that there is nothing that Yahweh did not create, not even primeval matter. As P.-E. Bonnard puts it in his comment on this verse, "c'est reconnaître qu'il déclenche tout et qu'il n'existe auprès de lui aucun autre principe" (*Le Second Isaïe* [Paris, 1972], p. 174).

Many of these critics, moreover, have noted that this interpretation is not far from the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. If there is nothing that God did not create, it is a short step to the conclusion that he created out of nothing. And although Isa. xlv 7 does not explicitly claim that Yahweh created the universe from nothing at all, a number of exegetes locate the beginnings of this belief with this verse. L. I. J. Stadelmann, for example, states, "the stage is set for the disappearance of the chaos and the primeval monster to give place to the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*,"⁵ a sentiment repeated more recently by Levenson: "It is ... a confession that moves dramatically toward the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*" [n. 1] p. 127). For these scholars, then, Isa. xlv 7 takes on the added significance of being the link between the older notion that God fashioned the cosmos out of a pre-existing chaos, and the younger view that he created *ex nihilo*.

This interpretation, however, is not without its difficulties. According to C. Westermann, Isa. xlv 7 is the only verse in the Hebrew Bible to express the idea that Yahweh created chaos ([n. 3] p. 132). While novelty is not necessarily damning, the fact that Deutero-Isaiah is supposed to have developed the notion is more difficult than has generally been appreciated. More than any other prophet Deutero-Isaiah uses the theme of creation in his oracles. In every other instance he assumes the traditional view that Yahweh created by fashioning or slaughtering an already existing chaos (e.g., xlii 15-16, xliii 16-21, xlv 9-18, li 9-10).⁶ Why would the

this view, claiming that the prophet is addressing the traditions that lie behind Gen. i.

⁵ *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* (Rome, 1970), p. 28.

⁶ For discussions of Deutero-Isaiah's use of creation see R. Rendtorff, "Die theologische Stellung des Schöpfungsglaubens bei Deuterjesaja", *ZTK* 51 (1954), pp. 3-13; Stuhlmüller (n. 3), pp. 429-67, and "'First and Last' and 'Yahweh-Creator' in Deutero-Isaiah", *CBQ* 29 (1967), pp. 495-511; P. B. Harner, "Creation faith in Deutero-Isaiah", *VT* 17 (1967), pp. 298-306; T. M. Ludwig, "The Traditions of the Establishing of the Earth in Deutero-Isaiah", *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 345-57; B. C. Ollenburger, "Isaiah's Creation Theology", *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987), pp. 54-71.

prophet offer such a novel understanding on just this one occasion? The problem is only magnified if, as Weinfeld, Levenson and Day maintain, Isa. xlv 7 is a deliberate polemic against the traditional view. If this were the case the prophet would be polemizing against himself.

Given this situation one naturally wonders what has led scholars to an interpretation so at odds with the rest of the Hebrew Bible, and Deutero-Isaiah's oracles in particular. The answer involves two elements. The first is the verse's assertion that Yahweh creates (*brʾ*) both darkness (*hōšek*) and evil (*ṛāʿ*). Since darkness is one of the terms commonly used to refer to chaos, and evil is its ethical evaluation, the conclusion that the verse is asserting Yahweh's authorship of chaos seems obvious enough.

This reasoning, however, is not sufficient to support such a reading. While darkness and evil can refer to chaos (e.g. Gen. i 2; Isa. v 30; xlvii 5; Ps. cxliii 3; Job xvii 13), they also constitute part of the created universe. That night follows day, and that this world is filled with all sorts of evils, would have been as obvious to an ancient Israelite as it is to any modern person. There are even a number of biblical texts that attribute these undesirable aspects of life to Yahweh (e.g., Job ii 10, xxxviii 12-13, 19-21; Ps. lxxiv 12-17; Amos iii 6, v 8-9; Eccl. vii 14).

What has convinced scholars like Westermann, K. Elliger and Levenson of the uniqueness of Isa. xlv 7 is the difference they detect between the relationship of light and darkness in this verse and in Gen. i. In Gen. i light and darkness originate in two very different ways. As vs. 2 indicates, darkness exists prior to creation, it is part of the undifferentiated chaos. Elohim incorporates it into the created order on the first day when he circumscribes it by light and names it night. Light, on the other hand, is not part of chaos, and does not exist prior to creation. It comes into existence only when Elohim calls it into being on day one.

According to Westermann, Elliger and Levenson, the situation with Isa. xlv 7 is different. In this verse Yahweh claims to create four things: darkness, evil, light and well-being (*šālôm*). By assigning these four elements the same created status, these scholars argue, the prophet is abandoning the differences of Gen. i, and thereby eliminating the notion of a chaos that existed prior to creation. Westermann puts it as follows: "Gott is zwar Herr", he writes of Gen. i,

aber nicht Schöpfer der Finsternis. Er hat sie eingegrenzt, aber nicht geschaffen... In diesem Deuterjesaja-Wort dagegen wird einmal in der Bibel, entgegen Gen. 1 und 3 gesagt: Gott hat die Finsternis geschaffen wie das Licht. Gott wirkt das Unheil (das hebräische Wort umfasst das Unheil und das Böse) wie er das heil wirkt (p. 132).

Elliger comes to the same conclusion: "Denn 'Finsternis' hier ist nicht 'Finsternis' dort. Finsternis dort Gen. 1 ist Chaos und bleibt es auch in der durch die Schöpfung des Lichts eingegrenzten Form als Nacht. Finsternis hier in 7a α ist wirklich Schöpfung wie das Licht..." (p. 499).

The difficulty with this position lies with its definition of creation. As indicated above, Westermann's definition is based on the distinction between "eingrenzen" and "schaffen".⁷ According to Westermann, only those elements that are brought into being qualify as created, a position he reaffirms in his comments on Gen. i 3-5 in his more recent Genesis commentary: "Gott nicht nur das von ihm erschaffene Licht benennt, er benennt auch die Finsternis, von der nicht gesagt wird, dass Gott sie geschaffen habe... Auf eine unerklärliche, dem menschlichen Verstehen entzogene Weise ragt damit das Ungeschaffene in das Geschaffene hinein."⁸

This definition is too restrictive, even for Gen. i. If it were accepted, only light and perhaps the heavens would qualify as created since they are the only two elements that are called into existence. Other elements such as the earth, the seas, and the waters above the heavens result from acts of separation. In Gen. i creation consists of a large variety of divine activities. In addition to calling things into being, Elohim makes things, names things, brings things forth, gathers things, and separates things, to give only a partial list.

Indeed, a number of recent studies suggest that the acts of separation are those most fundamental to the Genesis notion of creation. Light may be called into being, but for the purpose of separating it from darkness. Similarly, the heavens are made in order to separate the water above from those below. And the seas are gathered together so that the dry land may emerge. Even the

⁷ Elliger's use of "eingegrenzten" and Levenson's use of "accommodated" to describe the status of darkness in creation indicates that they have a similar distinction in mind.

⁸ *Genesis 1: Genesis 1-12* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1974), p. 159.

various members of the plant and animal kingdoms are created according to their kind, and defined by the region of space they are assigned to inhabit. As T. Frymer-Kensky says in her recent study of biblical cosmology: "In Genesis 1 the creation of the universe is presented as the creation of order out of chaos, the progressive demarcation and division of an originally undifferentiated mass. Light is divided from darkness, the waters above are divided from the waters below, and the seas are divided from the dry land. Cosmic order depends upon maintaining clear demarcations among the elements of the universe" ([n. 1] p. 236). Westermann subscribes to this definition on other occasions. In his theology of the Old Testament, for example, he writes:

Die Gliederung dieses Kapitels erschliesst sich nur, wenn man von Ganzen ausgeht. Es gliedert sich in die Erschaffung der Grundkategorien der Zeit (Gen 1,3-5), des Raumes (Gen 1,6-10), die Erschaffung der Vegetation (Gen 1,11-13) und der Gestirne (Gen 1,14-19), der Tiere (1,20-25), des Menschen (1,16-31) und dem Ziel des Ganzen in Gen 2,1-4.⁹

Still, there is a sense in which Westermann's comments on the cosmological status of darkness in Gen. 1 ring true: Elohim does bring the uncreated into the created. Where he errs, the above discussion suggests, is in his assumption that the uncreated remains such even after it has been brought into creation. I contend that after entering creation the once uncreated qualifies as created just as much as do those elements that are called into being for the very first time.

The account of the creation of the earth illustrates my point. Like darkness, the earth is originally part of chaos. In its chaotic state it is described as *tōhū wābōhū* (i 2a). It enters creation on the third day when Elohim gathers the waters below the heavens into one place, thereby permitting the dry land to assume its position in the

⁹ *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen* (Göttingen, 1978), p. 77. A sampling of those stressing the fundamental nature of separation to the notion of creation in Gen. 1 include S. Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico, 1985), ch. 1; M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York, 1979), p. 8; B. W. Anderson, "A Stylistic Study of the Priestly Creation Story", in G. W. Coats and B. O. Long (ed.), *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology* (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 156; S. Talmon, "The Biblical Understanding of Creation and the Human Commitment", *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987), pp. 111-12.

created world (i 9-10). According to the definition of creation Westermann espouses in his commentary on Deutero-Isaiah and in his discussion of Gen. i 3-5, the earth does not qualify as a created element. However, contrary to what Westermann's definition allows, Gen. i 1 refers to the earth as created: "In the beginning Elohim created (*br*³) the heavens and the earth." As is generally recognized, the expression, "heavens and earth", is a merism and refers to the totality of the cosmos in its created form.¹⁰ Nonetheless, it indicates that an element that was initially part of the unordered chaos can be referred to as created once Elohim has acted upon it in a creative (i.e., structuring, ordering, dividing, categorizing) manner. In this case by exposing the dry land and naming it earth. In the case of darkness by circumscribing it with light and naming it night.

Significantly, even Westermann refers to the earth as a created element. In his discussion of Gen. i 9-10 he writes: "Die Erde wird nicht von Gott 'gemacht' wie die Himmelfeste, sie wird vielmehr durch die Scheidung vom Wasser freigelegt. Ein Schöpfungsbefehl, durch den die Erde entsteht, wird vermieden; hier also ist die Scheidung nicht etwas zur Schöpfung Hinzukommendes, sondern diese selber" ([n. 8] pp. 167-8). This is an amazing statement in the light of the definition he employs only pages earlier in his discussion of darkness. Not only does Westermann equate what he earlier claimed mutually exclusive, he explicitly denies that "entstehen" is essential to the biblical notion of creation. Gen. i 1 indicates that this definition is to be preferred.

As with the land, darkness also occurs in two states (a situation that also applies to the waters). In Gen. i 2c it exists in an uncreated or precreated state described as being "upon the face of the deep". In vss 3-5, on the other hand, it exists in a created state called night. In this form, moreover, it does not exist alone, but in a symbiotic relationship with light, each circumscribing the other, and thereby endowing the created world with its sense of time. And as is the case with the creation of the earth, it is the fact of divine separation that qualifies night as darkness created.

There remains the question of the evil that Isa. xlv 7 claims as one of Yahweh's creatures. As with darkness, it is the apparent dif-

¹⁰ See, most recently, the discussion in G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, 1987), p. 15.

ference between its status in Isa. xlv 7 and Gen. i that impresses Levenson. “Whereas in this passage”, he states of Gen. i,

God is the creator only of what is good or, to state the converse, God pronounces everything that he creates to be good, in the great anonymous prophecies from the end of the Exile (ca. 540 B.C.E.) we hear a bold proclamation that God is the author of everything, even of evil... And no longer is God responsible only for the good that there is. Now he is the creator of evil as well, and no more is the existence of evil a blemish on his claim to absolute mastery over all that is ([n. 1] p. 124).

The difficulty with this interpretation is that it is based on an argument from silence. Gen. i simply does not refer to evil. (Might it not be assumed as part of the chaos in Gen. i 2?) His comparison, moreover, may be guilty of a category mistake. Unlike Isa. xlv 7, Gen. i never uses goodness in a substantive way. It only occurs when Elohim expresses his opinion about his creative activity: God is pleased with what he has done. Evil is mentioned in Gen. ii 9, however, when Yahweh Elohim plants the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This verse may be the more appropriate comparison, since, like Isa. xlv 7, it couples evil with goodness and uses them both substantively. In any case, the verse is explicit in its identification of Yahweh Elohim as the source of both goodness and evil (cf. Amos iii 6b).

If darkness and evil can exist both in pre-created and created forms, the only question remaining is, to what form of these elements is Isa. xlv 7 referring? Since the text claims that Yahweh creates (*br*²) them, the issue appears resolved: the verse is referring to these elements in their created form. This conclusion is guaranteed by the verse’s form. Isa. xlv 7 reads:

I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create evil.
I, Yahweh, make all things.

The four elements that Yahweh claims to create are not listed in a random fashion. They appear in two groups of two, each group containing a pair of terms normally thought of as opposites. This form of expression is called a merism, a figure in which two opposite terms are used together to refer to a totality. I have already referred to Gen. i 1 where the merism, “heavens and earth”, refers to the cosmos in their final created form. In the case of Gen. i,

moreover, the figure is more than rhetorical. It reflects the text's understanding of the structure of the cosmos.¹¹ This understanding, moreover, extends beyond the structure of the whole to the individual elements that make up creation. Thus, for example, on day one Elohim creates light and darkness. On day two he divides the waters above the heavens from those below, and on day three he establishes the relationship between water and dry land. *ʾādām*, the pinnacle of creation, is similarly composed of a binary pair, male and female.

Gen. i is not the only text to reflect this bipartite understanding of the created universe.¹² Ps. lxxiv 12-17 praises Elohim for his work at creation. After praising him for crushing Leviathan, the psalmist adds,

Yours is the day, yours also the night,
 you have established the luminaries and the sun
 You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
 you have made summer and winter

Like the author of Gen. i, the psalmist conceives of the created universe as being made up of opposites. In this case he lists three pairs: day and night, the elements of the heavens and the elements of the earth, and summer and winter.

The same understanding informs Gen. viii 22. This verse occurs at the end of the flood story and contains God's promise never again to flood the world. God proclaims to Noah: "So long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." Although the flood story is not, strictly speaking, a cosmogony, scholars are increasingly recognizing that the text means to portray the flood as the undoing of creation, and the abatement as the re-establishment of the

¹¹ It is the structuralists that are most responsible for bringing this aspect of creation to the fore. See, for example, E. Leach, *Genesis and Myth and Other Essays* (London, 1969), pp. 7-23; M. Casalis, "The Dry and the Wet: A Semiological Analysis of Creation and Flood Myths", *Semiotica* 17 (1976), pp. 35-67; M. P. Carroll, "Leach, Genesis, and the Structural Analysis: A Critical Evaluation", *American Ethnologist* 4 (1977), pp. 663-77.

¹² The Hebrew Bible, however, is not consistent in viewing reality as bipartite. Texts such as Exod. xx 11, Ps. cxlv 6, and Hag. ii 6 envision a tripartite structure consisting of the heavens, the earth, and the sea (see the recent discussion by D. T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2* [Sheffield, 1989], pp. 72-4).

created order.¹³ What God is actually saying in this promise, then, is that he will forthwith support the created order. Significantly, God conceives of that order as a series of four binary pairs.

I would argue that Isa. xlv 7 reflects the same notion that the created world is comprised of sets of binary opposites. In this case, the two pairs reflect the two dimensions of human existence: light and darkness reflect the physical world, while well-being and evil stand for the ethical world. Of course, since light and darkness can be metaphors for good and evil, the distinction is by no means absolute, and reflects the Hebrew notion that the physical and ethical realms are intertwined. The last stich of the verse summarizes in a more succinct manner the point of the first two: Yahweh is the creator of everything!

The disparity Westermann, Elliger and Levenson detect between Gen. i and Isa. xlv 7 is traceable to one overriding difference: Gen. i is a cosmogony, Isa. xlv 7 is not. Concerned as it is to describe the formation of the heavens and earth, Gen. i quite naturally mentions the means by which Elohim forms the different elements that constitute the created universe. Isa. xlv 7, on the other hand, is part of a prophetic oracle the purpose of which is to reassure the reader (listener?) that Yahweh is in control of the events shaping world history,¹⁴ in this particular case the events surrounding the rise of Cyrus and the fall of the Babylonian empire. The oracle achieves its goal by reminding the reader that there is no god but Yahweh (vss 5-6), and that he is the creator (vs. 7). The differences between the ways the different elements of creation enter that order are beside the point of the oracle. Deutero-Isaiah simply says nothing about the ways in which light and darkness, or well-being and evil, enter creation, or what state they may or may not have been in prior to creation. The prophet only makes the point that Yahweh is the creator and therefore in control.

To conclude, Isa. xlv 7 proclaims that Yahweh is the creator. The two merisms reflect the notion, common in the Hebrew Bible,

¹³ See, for example, D J A Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield, 1978), pp 73-6, and S Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico, 1985), pp 22-4

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of the genre, meaning, and literary strategy of the oracle see, Y Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion: a Study of Isaiah 40-48* (Bonn, 1981), pp 178-87, R P Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte: Eine Untersuchung von Jes 40-48* (SVT 31, Leiden, 1981), pp 412-20, and R F Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (BZAW 141, Berlin 1976), pp 123-6

that the cosmos are binary in structure, and that this bipartite structure exists on both the macroscopic level ('heaven and earth'), and on the level of the elements that make up the universe. There is no evidence that Isa. xlv 7 contains any ideas about the cosmos not already found in the Hebrew Bible. The verse does not claim that Yahweh created chaos, and thus makes no advance towards the idea of creation *ex nihilo*.



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