I. THE SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION

"Creation" is one of the significant themes in the Hebrew Bible and this appears essentially in three literary genres, namely as a mythical narrative in Genesis 1 and 2, as hymns in the book of Psalms, and in the wisdom literature (for example in the book of Job and Proverbs) and the prophetic books.[1] The assertion that Yahweh, the God of Israel, created everything in the cosmos is expressed throughout the Hebrew Bible in a multi-dimensional fashion. However, the creation language in Deutero-Isaiah,[2] which refers to Yahweh as the sole creator of the universe and His ability to create, re-create and renew the whole of creation, or to transform the nature is one of the most distinctive features which is precisely found in Isaiah (esp.

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[1] ANDERSON traces four main sources of creation traditions in the OT: the creation stories in Genesis, Deutero-Isaiah, the book of Psalms, and the Wisdom Literature. BERNHARD ANDERSON, *From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 19.

[2] TERRANCE R. WARDLAW, "The Significance of Creation in the Book of Isaiah," *JETS* 59/3 (2016): 449-471; TINA DYKESTEEN NILSEN, "Creation in Collision? Isaiah 40-48 and Zoroastrianism, Babylonian Religion and Genesis 1," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* Vol 13 (2013): 1-19; FRIEDHELM HARTENSTEIN, „JHWH, Erschaffer des Himmels. Zu Herkunft und Bedeutung eines monotheistischen Kernarguments," *ZThK* 110 (2013): 383-409; JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP, "The Cosmological and Protological Language of Deutero-Isaiah," *CBQ* 73 (2011): 494-510; CARLY L. CROUCH, "Adapting the Cosmological Tradition in Isaiah 40-55," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 25/2, (2011): 260-275; R. REED LESSING, "Yahweh Versus Marduk. Creation Theology in Isaiah 40-55," *Concordia Journal* (2010): 237-238.; JAN CHRISTIAN GERTZ, „Antibabylonische Polemik im priesterlichen Schöpfungsbericht?" *ZThK* 106 (2009): 137-155; DOUGLAS T. MANGUM, "Creation Traditions in Isaiah 40-55," (paper presented at the Upper Midwest Regional AAR/SBL Meeting, Lutheran Seminary, St. Paul, MN – March 27-28, 2009); WANN MARBUD FANWAR, *Creation in Isaiah* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller e.k., 2008); RICHARD J. CLIFFORD, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation," *TS* 46 (1985): 507-523; RICHARD J. CLIFFORD, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and its Cosmogonic Language," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 1-17; JOHN I. DURHAM, "Isaiah 40-55: A New Creation, a New Exodus, a New Messiah," in *The Yahweh/Baal Confrontation and Other Studies in Biblical Literature and Archaeology: Essays in Honour of Emmett Willard Hamrick: When Religions Collide* (eds. J. M. O'BRIEN and F. L. HORTON Jr.; *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, 35; Lampeter: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995), 47-56; NORMAN C. HABEL, "He Who Stretches Out the Heavens," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 417-430; PHILLIP B. HARNER, "Creation Faith in Deutero-Isaiah," *VT* 17 (1967): 298-336; J. GERALD JANZEN, "On the Moral Nature of God's Power: Yahweh and the Sea in Job and DeuteroIsaiah," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 458-478; THEODORE M. LUDWIG, "The Traditions of the Establishing of the Earth in Deutero-Isaiah," *JBL* 92 (1973): 345-357; THOMAS W. MANN, "Stars, Sprouts, and Streams: the Creative Redeemer of Second Isaiah," in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. W. P. BROWN and S. D. MCBRIDE Jr.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 135-151; TRYGGVE N.D. METTINGER, "Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell—towards the Biblical Portrait of God," transl. F.H. CRYER, *ST* 39 (1985): 21-38; BEN C. OLLENBURGER, "Isaiah's Creation Theology," *Ex auditu* 3 (1987): 54-71; CARROLL STUHLMUELLER, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (*AnBib*, 43; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970); CARROLL STUHLMUELLER, "First and Last" and "Yahweh-creator" in Deutero-Isaiah," *CBQ* 29 (1967): 189-205; JACQUES VERMEYLEN, "Le motif de creation dans le Deutéro-Isaïe," in L. Devousseaux (ed.), *La Création dans l''Orient Ancien: Congrès de l''ACFEB, Lille (1985)* (*LD*, 127; Paris: CERF, 1987), 183-240; B.J. VAN DET MERWE, *Pentateuchtradities in die Prediking van Deuterojesaja* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1956), 7; HENDRIK ANTONIE BRONGERS, *De Scheppingstradities bij de Profeten* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1945), 109.

in 40-48) when it is compared with the other books of the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, the researcher opines that the significant usage of the creation language and the presentation of Yahweh as Creator demands a deeper investigation in order to understand the role and function of the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48.[3]

II. MAPPING THE CREATION-THEME IN ISAIAH 40-48

Although there are numerous imageries used in the book of Deutero-Isaiah (40-55) to describe Yahweh, the most unique is the indication of Yahweh as 'Creator.' In Deutero-Isaiah (40-55), the creation-theme appears predominantly in chapters 40-48 (40:12-31; 41:17-21; 43:1-7, 16-21; 44:2, 24-28; 45:1-8, 18-21) with a brief citation in chapters 50:2 and 51:9-11 in reference to Yahweh's imminent redemption/restoration of the exiled Israel. The variety and frequency of the creation language used in the following way for Yahweh is remarkable: Yahweh is depicted as creator of the cosmos, humanity, people of Israel and as the one who transforms nature.[4] The creation language used in Isa 40-48 is more representational[5] in nature, however it does not undermine the theological emphasis of Yahweh as Creator. On the one hand it is used in the anti-idol polemic passages[6] and on the other it corresponds to the creative activity of Yahweh.

Isaiah 40-48 employs a variety of creation vocabularies which includes **ברא** (to create), עשׂה (to make), **יצר** (to form), פעל (to work), נטה (to stretch out), **יסר** (to

[3] According to scholars like CLIFFORD and HARAN, second Isaiah introduces 'creation' as a 'new theological theme' and it serves as one of the fundamental elements providing unity and structure of the book. RICHARD J. CLIFFORD, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and its Cosmogonic Language," 2; MENAHEM HARAN, "The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies in Is. XL-XLVIII," in *Congress Volume: Bonn, 1962* (VTSup, 9; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 134.

[4] An intertextual study also reveals the plausibility of these concepts originating from the Priestly and Yahwistic creation traditions and ANE cosmological mythologies added with the Exodus traditions. PAUL DEL BRASSEY, *Metaphor and the Incomparable God in Isaiah 40-55* (BIBAL Dissertation Series Bd. 9; North Richland Hills, Texas: BIBAL Press, 2001), 53.

[5] It is to say that the author is not concerned with portraying a chronology of how the world and its beings came into existence, rather he uses the creation imageries to accentuate the creative activity of Yahweh.

[6] Creation texts in Isa 40-55 served as polemics against the allegedly more powerful Babylonian gods and the religious ideology found in the creation text *Enûma Elîš*. LENA-SOFIA TIEMEYER, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Isaiah 40-66. History of Research," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-55* (eds. LENA-SOFIA TIEMEYER and HANS M. BARSTAD; FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 40.

found), רקע (to spread out), צמח (to sprout), כון (to establish), טפח (to extend), and נטע (to plant).[7] The verb ברא needs special attention, since it occurs forty eight times in the Old Testament and among these, it is used thirty seven times to denote the origins of the universe (world) or humankind. It occurs fourteen times in Isaiah 40-48 (Isa 40:28; 41:20; 42:25; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7, 8, 12, 18; 48:7) and only three times in the rest of Isaiah.[8]

III. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PRESENTATION OF THE CREATION-THEME IN ISAIAH 40-48[9]

The creation vocabularies with their multi-dimensional meanings depict Yahweh as creator in the anti-idol polemic passages. Yahweh's creative acts are emphasized in His act of transforming the desert into a fertile place. Especially, Yahweh's creative activity is accentuated more in the creation of the cosmos and humanity – the Israelites in particular. Most of these references, highlighting Yahweh as the incomparable creator and the ultimate God, are found in Isaiah 40-48.

a. Yahweh as Creator of the Cosmos

Isaiah 40:12-31 begins with the reference to the creation of the earth and the sky in a rhetorical style, where Yahweh is depicted as the ultimate creator who cannot be compared with anyone or anything.[10] The creative mastery of Yahweh and His dominion over the universe is presented to accentuate the enormity of the gulf between Yahweh and humanity; in addition, Yahweh's unrelenting creative capacity

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[7] KARL EBERLEIN, *Gott der Schöpfer–Israels* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), 73-82; BLENKINSOPP, "Cosmological and Protological," 494-496; LESSING, "Yahweh Versus Marduk," 237-238.

[8] Yahweh is personified as the ultimate creator who is sovereign over the heavenly bodies (Isa 40:26), the source of strength to His people Israel (Isa 40:28), the one who transforms nature (Isa 41:20), caring about His people (Isa 42:5), the one who brings Israel into being and protects them (Isa 43:1), the one who intervenes in Israelite history (Isa 43:15), the one who causes disasters that indirectly bring restoration to His people Israel (Isa 45:7), commanding His creation to fulfill His purposes (Isa 45:8), and the one who makes new things to happen (Isa 48:7) etc. BLENKINSOPP, "Cosmological and Protological," 494-496; LESSING, "Yahweh Versus Marduk," 237-238.

[9] GERTZ, "Antibabylonische Polemik," 137-155; HARTENSTEIN, "JHWH, Erschaffer des Himmels," 383-409; PAUL DEL BRASSEY, *Metaphor and the Incomparable God in Isaiah 40-55,* 55-99; JOACHIM SCHAPER, "Divine Images, Iconophobia and Monotheism in Isaiah 40-66," in *Continuity and Discontinuity. Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66* (eds. LENA-SOFIA MEYER and HANS M. BARSTAD; FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 145-158.

[10] The author here uses the elements from human understanding of construction in the form of measuring and weighing materials in order to emphasize the incomparable creative activity of God in contrast to nihility of humankind and the powerlessness of the nations.

which is immeasurable and His understanding which is incomparable is emphasized. Yahweh's incomparability and His comprehensive creative activity is also demonstrated in Isaiah 45.[11]

b. Yahweh as Creator of Jacob/Israel

The creation language is used in Isaiah 40-48 specifically in relation to Jacob/Israel with various connotations: Yahweh is represented as creator (**ברא** – Isa 43:1; 15), maker (**עשׂה** – Isa 43:7; 44:2), potter (**יצר** – Isa 43:1, 7, 21; 44:2, 21, 24; 45:9, 11), refiner (**צרף** – Isa 48:10); and other verbs such as: set, place (**שׂים** – Isa 41:15), give, place (**נתן** –Isa 42:6), which are used in transforming Israel. Isaiah 43-45 specifically addresses Yahweh's creation of His people, Israel, which emphasizes Yahweh as an incomparable God.[12]

c. Yahweh as (Trans)forming Nature

Isaiah 40-48 does not tend to present the evolution of the cosmos and all in it which were created by Yahweh. Rather it accentuates the unique creative activity of Yahweh which is also presented in His activity of (trans)forming the nature that already exists. The transformation or renewal of nature in Second Isaiah (esp. in 40-48) is generally connected with the miraculous transformation of the desert (between Babylon and Jerusalem) through which the Judean exiles from Babylon will travel to Jerusalem. This presentation is understood in "a literal and a metaphorical" way (Isa

[11] The verb **ברא** which is used elsewhere in the OT to denote the creative activity of Yahweh appears in Isaiah 40-55 in parallel with the other creation terms which indicates human craftsmanship – **עשׂה** to do, make (41:20; 43:7; 45:7, 12, 18), **יצר** to form (43:1, 7; 45:18), **נטה** to stretch out, extend (42:2; 45:12), **כון** found, establish (45:18). In the OT, **ברא** is uniquely used for Yahweh's creative activity and all other terms were used metaphorically denoting the creative activity of Yahweh and human craftsmanship. The terms referring to creation are likewise used to denote human craftsmanship of forming, making, founding, stretching etc. however, it does not surpass Yahweh's creative power, because His creativity is incomparable. These similar verbs are used in the Genesis creation account (Gen 1:1-4:4a).

[12] Creation of the people of Israel is connected with the formation of heaven and earth (Isa 44:24). At the same time, the creation of Jacob/Israel is also connected with redemption (Isa 43:1-7). On one hand Isaiah 40-48 emphasizes Yahweh as cosmic creator (Isa 45:18), and on the other hand as a national deity who is concerned over His people whom He has created (Isa 43:1-7). Furthermore, imageries such as, "Yahweh fashions His people as a potter" (Isa 45:9-11) and shapes them for the expected future events are also depicted.

41:17-20). At the same time the depiction of transformation of the desert into a path mirrors the exodus tradition (Isa 43:16-21).[13]

d. Creator Yahweh vs Idol Manufacturers

Deutero-Isaiah (esp. 40-48) employs numerous terms relating to skillful workers who manufacture idols which are worshipped as gods. The usage of this human craftsmanship is mainly to depict Yahweh's creative activity; at the same time these presentations raise rhetorical questions of Yahweh's incomparability (Isa 41:4; 44:9, 12-20). The manufacture and worship of idols supplies a large portion of the vocabulary of human craftsmanship which is the vehicle for describing the creative activities of Yahweh.[14]

IV. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

In the history of Biblical scholarship the theme – 'creation' has always been considered as a subordinate theme to 'salvation/redemption.' GERHARD VON RAD'S claim of creation's subservient role to redemption paved way to undermine its significance and uniqueness in the successive research works done by various scholars[15] in the field of Biblical Studies (esp. in Old Testament). However the uniqueness of the theme 'creation' is evident in several books of the Old Testament, among which Isaiah's (esp. chaps. 40-48) depiction of Yahweh as the unique creator occupies a special place. Therefore, this investigation accentuates that Isaiah's focus on the creative activity of Yahweh needs an in-depth analysis in order to understand the intention of the author and the historical context in which it was proclaimed. Furthermore, the repeated emphasis of Yahweh not only as creator but also as incomparable God, king of gods and nations, and master of historical events in the

[13] Transformation of nature is also used to depict the spiritual renewal of the people (Isa 40:6-8) and also assures the provision of life. Such passages with emphasis on the transformation of nature again underline Yahweh's ability to create, destroy and recreate since He is the ultimate creator and sustainer of the entire created cosmos.

[14] These polemic passages establish that idols represent the antithesis of Yahweh. Idols are made by humans – Yahweh makes humans. Idols are visual presentations of deities, but Yahweh cannot be visually presented. Idols are made out of the creation of Yahweh, i.e. wood. Idols cannot save those who worship them; in contrast Yahweh is not only the creator, but also the savior of Israel. Idols know nothing, but Yahweh is the source of all knowledge.

[15] This is elaborately discussed in the second chapter, entitled 'history of research.'

past, present and future leads to numerous queries: In the Babylonian exilic context (where Isaiah – chapters 40-48 actually originated or were prophesied), what actually prompted the author(s) of these chapters to underscore the uniqueness and incomparability of Yahweh through the creation language? Specifically, during the Neo-Babylonian period – *Marduk* was elevated to the status of supreme god of the Mesopotamian pantheon; the creation epic *Enūma eliš* canonized *Marduk's* supremacy over the other gods and this was ritually re-emphasized recurrently through the recitation of the epic during celebration of the annual New Year *Akītu* festival. Hence, the researcher hypothesizes, whether it became mandatory for the author(s), who were aware of these political and religious contextual realities to emphasize that Yahweh, the God of Israel is the unique creator and incomparable God unlike *Marduk*? Therefore, the passages emphasizing on Yahweh as creator have to be investigated in the light of the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma eliš.* In addition, this research work underscores the need to re-examine and shed light on the versatile and multi-dimensional presentation of Yahweh as the creator of the cosmos, humankind, Israel and re-creator or transformer of the nature. With these objectives this entire study aims at unearthing the uniqueness of Yahweh as creator embedded in the selected passages of Isaiah 40-48.

V. DELIMITING THE RESEARCH TO ISAIAH 40-48[16]

Towards the end of the 18th century CE, singular voices within Old Testament scholarship maintained the notion that Isaiah 40-55 was not written by the 8th century Isaiah of Jerusalem. Subsequently, the view of isolating Isaiah 40-55 as a single book surfaced during the end of the 19th century CE. The process of composition, authorship and dating of Isaiah 40-55 are some of the significant topics of discussion which prevail even today. There are two main parts to Isaiah 40-55, namely: the Jacob/Israel section (40-48) and the Zion/Jerusalem section (49-55). However, there are many internal editions that have been made in the process of

[16] The issues related to the redactional development of the Deutero-Isaianic text has been and the view of placing Isaiah 40-48 are discussed extensively in chapter 1.

redaction.[17] The researcher subscribes to the above scholarly views and has the presumption that the creation theme that appears in Isaiah 40-48 is significant with role and function in the context in which it was spoken if compared with the creation language that appears in Isaiah 1-39 and 56-65. With this presupposition the researcher places Isaiah 40-48 in the exilic context and assumes that the creation language serves a different purpose and therefore it has to be understood evidently.

VI. THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

One approach or method is not adequate to engage in any textual analysis; therefore, this research will not apply one single method to investigate the selected passages from Isaiah 40-48. The literary development and the redactional process play a vital role in understanding the role and function of the 'creation-theme' in Isaiah 40-48. Added to this, a deeper literary-textual analysis of the end-text (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) with form-critical (*Gattung*) emphasis would enable understanding of the structure and meaning of the texts in a profound manner in order to focus the central question of this research. The selected texts will be grouped according to their structure and composition in which the main focus of the study (role and function of the 'creation-theme') will be examined in detail.

VII. PREVIOUS RESEARCH[18]

Beginning from the 19th century, the work of Herman Gunkel,[19] followed by the research of Gerhard von Rad[20] drew greater attention in the study of the theme

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[17] ODIL HANES STECK, *Gottesknecht und Zion: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Deuterojesaja* (FAT 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 125; KRATZ, *Deuterojesja-Buch,* 217; JÜRGEN VAN OORSCHOT, *Von Babel zum Zion: Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (BZAW 206; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 345; ULRICH BERGES, *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS 16: Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 549; JÜRGEN WERTLITZ, *Redaktion und Komposition: Zur Rückfrage hinter die Endgestalt von Jesaja 40-55* (BBB 122; Berlin: Philo, 1999), 319-323.

[18] Most of the research that has been conducted in the area of the theme 'creation' in Deutero-Isaiah has been listed out in the footnote number 2. Moreover, a detailed survey on the theme 'creation' has been presented in chapter 2.

[19] HERMANN GUNKEL, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: einen religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 2 and Ap Joh we* (Göttingen: Vandenhoef & Ruuprecht 1921); HERMANN GUNKEL, "The Influence of Babylonian Mythology upon the Biblical Creation Story" in *Creation in the Old Testament* (ed. BERNHARD W. ANDERSON; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 25-52.

'creation' in Old Testament scholarship. An ample volume of research has been conducted linking the themes 'creation' and 'redemption,' focusing on their inter-dependence and independency. In recent times, it has been traced that there are three articles focused on the creation-theme in Isaiah.[21] Among those, two articles particularly by TINA DYKESTEEN NILSEN (2013) and JOSEPH BLENKINSOPP (2011), seem to have handled similar approaches in dealing with the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48. These articles have attempted to trace out the historical, cultural and textual influences from ANE on the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48. However, the researcher opines that a thorough investigations (as detailed research work) on the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48 in order to understand its role and function are scanty. Therefore, this research will be an attempt to understand the creation-theme in a profound and comprehensive manner.

VIII. LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter 1 begins with the issues related to the authorship, date, historical context and especially the redactional process of Isaiah 40-55 with the aim of placing Isaiah 40-48 in the Babylonian context. This detailed survey is intended to present an overall background to the complete research in order to narrow it down to the specific research of the 'creation-theme' in Isaiah 40-48.

Chapter 2 presents a precise history of the research. It begins from the time of Gerhard von Rad until now and depicts briefly how the 'creation-theme' has been handled in the history of Old Testament scholarship with different approaches and intentions, particularly focusing on the study of the 'creation-theme' in Isaiah 40-55. The chapter concludes with the researcher's objectives and approaches in analyzing and tracing the role and function of the 'creation-theme' in Isaiah 40-48.

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[20] GERHARD VON RAD, "Das theologische Problem des alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens," in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments* (eds. PAUL VOLZ, FRIEDRICH STUMMER & JOHANNES HEMPEL; B ZAW 66; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1936), 138-147.

[21] WARDLAW, "Significance of Creation," 449-471; NILSEN, "Creation in Collision?" 1-19; BLENKINSOPP, "Cosmological and Protological," 494-496.

Chapter 3 aims at understanding the role and function of the Babylonian creation epic *Enûma Elîš.* A wide-ranging inquiry will be conducted by analyzing the motif of the *Enûma Elîš* and its meaning in order to understand its role and function in the Babylonian context which possibly influenced the creation passages in Isaiah 40-48.

Chapter 4 is the core chapter of this research and explores and investigates in detail the selected passages which deal with the 'creation-theme.' A comprehensive exegetical study is undertaken to explore the selected passages syntactically and semantically in order to understand the role and function of the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48.

Chapter 5 aims at listing out the pragmatic role and function of the creation theme in Isaiah 40-48 based on the conclusions drawn from the detailed study that has been conducted in chapter 4. A brief intertextual analysis of the creation-theme from other passages of the OT will be presented in order to understand the significance, function and uniqueness of the creation-theme in Isaiah 40-48.