Daughter of Zion: A Metaphor of Israel’s Ego

by

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November 25th, 2008
1. INTRODUCTION

The Bible contains various metaphorical expressions which deal with the affairs related to God and His people, that is, affairs which often cannot be expressed fully in univocal language. Recently, scholars adopting metaphor theories have tried to explore the rich implications of those metaphorical expressions, which have not been revealed fully by earlier methods. The topics chosen by these biblical scholars have often been metaphors for God and His people. The topic under discussion in the present paper, אָחָיָה (daughter Zion), is a metaphor related to Zion which plays an important role in the description of the relationship between God and Israel in the Old Testament.

2. RESEARCH HISTORY

In the research history of our topic, there have been three different approaches. First, scholars dealt with this topic with grammatical interest. Traditionally, אָחָיָה has been translated as “daughter of Zion,” because אָחָיָה consists of two nouns in genitive relation. The relationship between these two nouns in construct, however, has been considered by the majority of Hebrew grammarians not to be a genitive of location, which denotes “a daughter living in Zion,” but one of an appositional genitive or a genitive of association, which denotes “Zion who is a daughter,” that is, “Zion” who belongs to the class of “daughter.” The translation, “daughter of Zion,” however, can be misunderstood as a genitive of location, that is, “a daughter living in Zion.” Therefore, in 1965 Stinespring argued strongly that Zion does not have a daughter and it would be more accurate to translate it as “daughter Zion.” His argument has been accepted in recent English translations.

The second was comparative approach with interest in the origin of this expression. During the latter part of the last century, several academic projects concentrated on the origin

1 See KJV, RSV, NASV, and NIV.
2 IBHS, § 9.5.3h. See GKC, § 128k; § 122i; J-M, § 129f; Williams, § 42.
4 See NRSV and NJPS.
of אָיֵּרָתֵי against the backdrop of the ancient Near East.⁵ Although these projects found some common elements between אָיֵּרָתֵי in the Old Testament and goddesses in other ancient Near East religions, they were not able to reach a definitive conclusion because of the lack of evidence. In addition, they did not reveal the metaphorical character of אָיֵּרָתֵי, which may contain various nuances depending on the specific context.

The last is the literary and ideological approach. Although their approaches are diverse and often ideological rather than literal, many of them try to show the metaphorical aspect of our topic. In line with these approaches, the present project will focus on the metaphorical aspect of our topic using metaphor theories.

3. A METAPHORICAL APPROACH

Traditionally, metaphor has been considered as a substitution for literal language for rhetorical or poetic reasons.⁶ However, there appears a new understanding. According to this new understanding, metaphor is not a substitute but rather is irreplaceable, “… fundamentally it [metaphor] is a borrowing between thoughts, a transaction between contexts. Thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom.”⁷ Following Richards, Black described metaphor in terms of the “interaction” between two parts. In his interaction theory, metaphor calls up “the associated commonplaces” of the different words involved, so that one filters and transforms the standard configuration of the other.⁸ In addition, metaphors are “necessary for even attempting to deal rationally with our experiences”

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⁸ Stiver, Religious Language, 115.
because they have the power to define reality. Thus, for understanding of a metaphor, we have to search for “the system of associated common places” between “the tenor” and “the vehicle.” The tenor is the subject of the metaphor and also called “target domain.” The vehicle is the object through which it is being viewed and also called “source domain.”

In our expression, the target domain is “Zion” and the source domain is “daughter.” By finding the meanings and connotations of “Zion” and “daughter,” we can obtain the basic data for the detail research of the metaphor “daughter Zion.”

4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF ZION AND DAUGHTER

4.1. Zion

In the Old Testament, the meaning of Zion has grown progressively in close connection with historical circumstances. First of all, it denotes the name of a fortress, which David captured from the Jebusites (2 Sam 5:7) and called “the city of David” (2 Sam 5:9). Second, after Solomon built the temple and brought up the Ark of the Covenant from Zion, the City of David, to the Temple Mount (1 Kgs 8:1; 2 Chron 5:2), Zion designated the Temple Mount on which the temple was placed. Third, because the temple was of great significance in Jerusalem, through synecdoche, Zion became a synonym for Jerusalem itself. Finally, because of the significance of Jerusalem in Israel, by a process of metonymy, the meaning of Zion was extended to the people or land of Israel. With the growth of its meaning, Zion evokes many connotations and becomes one of the central metaphors of Israelite religion. The metaphorical uses of Zion can be divided into two: royal metaphor and female metaphor.

10 M. Black, “More about Metaphors,” Metaphor and Thought, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 37. In the terminology of cognitive linguistics, tenor and vehicle are called conceptual domains. That is, most metaphorical expressions consist in the systematic connection of two different conceptual domains, “one (source domain), which provides language and images (the structure or frame), and the other (target domain), which is the actual concept being considered” (Mary Therese DesCamp and Eve E. Sweetser, “Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans? The Application of Contemporary Cognitive Linguistics Research to the Debate on God and Metaphor,” Pastoral Psychology 53, 3 (2005): 220).
11 Levenson classifies the meaning of Zion into four categories according to its historical development (“Zion Traditions.” ABD 6: 1098). For a similar classification, see HALOT, 3: 1022.
12 Cf. Isa 8:18; 10:12; 18:7; 24:23; Joel 3:5; Mic 4:7; Ps 74:2; Lam 5:18.
In the royal metaphor, the central theme is “The LORD is the great King.” This is most frequently found in the Psalms. In this metaphor Yahweh is the great King, the Creator, who dwells in Zion, His city. Thus, He rules over the world in Zion and Zion becomes the centre of the world. Eventually, all the people who recognize God’s authority will come to Zion, God’s holy place, from all over the world. Therefore, this royal metaphor shows Israelites’ faith in God who dwells in the midst of them in Zion. Because this Great King chose Zion as his abode and promised that He will dwell there forever, the Israelites believed in Zion’s inviolability. Therefore, Zion is a symbol of their faith in God the Great King. The royal metaphor, however, also implies what will happen to Zion if Zion is not faithful to God, the Great King. What is implied in the royal metaphor is made explicit in the female metaphor.

Zion is described not only as God’s glorious abode, but also as a woman, which is frequently found in Isaiah and Lamentations. This metaphor is not limited to one kind of woman, but denotes various kinds of women including wife, mother, widow, and daughter. In these metaphors, there is a wide range of connotations with different nuances according to each particular passage.

By using these female metaphors, the biblical writers tried to evoke the common associations with which these female metaphors were linked in ancient Israel. As Darr points out, “dependence,” “vulnerability,” “familial and conjugal love,” “fertility,” and “adultery” are prominent among the female metaphors. Thus, when Zion is described as a wife, daughter, or mother, Zion’s dependence and vulnerability are of the most prominent associations. The image of Zion as a dependable and vulnerable woman in the female metaphor is a good match for the image of God as King-Defender in the royal metaphor.

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Besides these negative connotations, there is the positive dimension of female metaphors which denotes the close relationship between God and Zion (or Israelites who are personified as Zion) with familial and conjugal love.22

While the dominant focus of the royal metaphor was on the faithful God, their King who promised a glorious future for Zion, the dominant focus of the female metaphor was on the His people who produced the piteous state of Zion by their disobedience to God. Through the female metaphor, the biblical writers tried to reveal the complex emotions of God for Israel such as compassion, anger, love, and joy, and to describe effectively the desperate situation which Israel experiences because of God’s rejection. Therefore, the shocking effect created by the female metaphor reveals their sins, leads them to repent, and eventually gives them the hope of restoration, that is, the fulfillment of the glorious Zion, which was promised by God their King.

4.2. Daughter

As seen above, the metaphor “daughter Zion” not only shares many similarities with the other female metaphors but also possesses its own semantic field and connotations which are discerned from the other female metaphors. It is because the source domain “daughter” has its own elements different from other female designations, such as “mother,” “wife,” and “widow.” In addition, this metaphor is always used in a fixed form as an idiomatic expression.

In the figurative sense, נָּדְרַת is used as a personification of a city, nation, or land. This sense only occurs in singular form and is restricted to the prophetic and poetic texts.23 In the metaphor daughter Zion, the source domain “daughter” has various associations with “daughter” in ancient Israelite society: dependence, vulnerability, and preciousness. The meaning of נָּדְרַת “daughter” extends on both the literal and figurative level. This extension of the meaning usually is related to associations which are evoked by the social position and role of a daughter in ancient Israel. Therefore, in the female metaphors which consist of נָּדְרַת and the name of a city, land, or nation, the word נָּדְרַת vividly evokes common associations with a daughter in ancient Israel.

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22 See Frymer-Kensky, Wake of the Goddesses, 169, who mentions “The name “Zion” is never used in angry passages: it always stands for the beloved… Jeremiah uses the name “Jerusalem” in anger, rebuking her for persistent rebellion … But he uses the name “Zion” in love, sorrow, and hope rather than in anger.”

23 Cf. נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter Zion” (e.g., Isa 1:8; 16:1; Lam 1:6; 2:1; Zech 9:9) and נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter my people” (e.g., Isa 22; Jer 4:11; Lam 2:11). It is used for other nations and cities: נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter Tyre” (Ps 4:13); נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter Babylon” (Ps 137:8); נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter Egypt” (Jer 46:24); נָּדְרַת נָּדְרַת “daughter Edom” (Lam 4:21).
The metaphor “daughter Zion,” which personifies “Zion” as “daughter,” is employed by biblical writers to express their emotion, both their joy and their lament. Because the metaphor “daughter Zion” is highly emotive and the target domain “Zion” also is a metaphor, “daughter Zion” has a flexible semantic range, such as Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Israelites as a whole, Judah, and Israel. This flexibility of meaning often makes it difficult to distinguish between these meanings.

5. THE METAPHOR “DAUGHTER ZION”

The contexts of “daughter Zion,” which occurs 26 times, can be divided into three different categories. The first category includes thirteen occurrences which refer to the situation of God’s punishment. Among them, God’s punishment is a past event in Lamentations, while in the other texts it is a future event. Therefore, through using this metaphor, Lamentations expresses the grief of the distressed ruin of Jerusalem and Israel, while the other texts warn about the severe pain and distress which the people of Jerusalem and Israel will experience.

The second category describes a changed situation from God’s punishment to Zion’s restoration and occurs in eight places. In the texts of this category, “daughter Zion” mainly refers to God’s restored abode to which her king is coming, as well as to the Israelites as a whole, who are returning from their captivity. This restoration of “daughter Zion” symbolizes the restoration of God’s kingdom, Israel. Therefore, this metaphor gives hope to the people who are concerned about the future of Israel.

The last category includes the texts which describe “daughter Zion” as God’s glorious abode, which cannot be conquered by any enemy but rather can mock or destroy the enemy. These texts do not evoke the connotation of Zion’s destruction but only those of security and strength contributing to Zion’s ideal picture, as seen in the Zion tradition.

When biblical writers employ this metaphor, they often contrast two opposite images in order to make this metaphor more effective. In the first category, they use a contrast between

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\begin{align*}
24 & \text{Isa 1:8; 10:32; Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; Lam. 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; Mic 1:3.} \\
25 & \text{Cf. Isa 52:2; 62:11; Lam 4:22; Mic 4:8, 10; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:14; 9:9.} \\
26 & \text{Cf. Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:14; 9:9. Also cf. Isa 62:11 and Mic 4:8 describe this situation as “the coming of salvation” and “the coming of kingdom.”} \\
27 & \text{Cf. Lam 4:22; Mic 4:10.} \\
28 & \text{Cf. Ps 9:15; Isa 16:1; 37:22; Mic 4:13.}
\end{align*}
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Zion’s glorious past as God’s abode and her distressed present as an abandoned and ruined city. These contrasting pictures produce a shock in the reader and through them the biblical writers express their lament and urge the people to repent.

The second category shows a contrast between daughter Zion’s distressed present as captivity and ruin and her glorious future as God’s restored abode. While using these contrasting pictures, biblical writers encourage the people to hope for the future. In the third category, an unstable and dangerous situation is contrasted with the situation of security and strength which “daughter Zion” possesses as God’s abode. This contrast strengthens the people’s confidence in God and Zion’s inviolability.

These three different categories also confirm the fact that a metaphor works not at the level of a word but at the level of a sentence or a paragraph, as argued in cognitive theories of metaphor. Therefore, although the same metaphor is used, the focus can change according to the context. In the first category, the main focus is on daughter Zion’s vulnerability, because “daughter Zion” is described as a ruined, devastated, and abandoned one.

The second category mostly evokes the images of Zion’s restored preciousness and her dependence on her King, because the restoration of her status depends on the return and deliverance of her King. Therefore, these texts often urge “daughter Zion” to rejoice in the return of her King. The third category largely focuses on the image of security and protection as God’s abode, because “daughter Zion” is described as a place of inviolability, in spite of the threat of any mighty enemy.

6. CONCLUSION

Through this paper, we have observed how effectively biblical writers use the metaphor “daughter Zion.” While using this metaphor and others, they try to communicate God’s message to their contemporaries in a more successful way: to warn, to encourage and to give hope. Because a metaphor works in people’s cognition creatively making a new meaning, a metaphor often functions as a more effective tool than univocal language. That is the reason why many

29 Stiver, Religious Language, 115.
biblical writers employ this metaphor as a poetic tool to communicate God’s message to His people.

The metaphor “daughter Zion” signifies the Israelites’ pride and faith in relationship with God. Threatened by a mighty enemy, biblical writers express their confidence in God by using “daughter Zion.” They also warn the sinful Israelites using the image of daughter Zion’s pain and killing. After Israel’s destruction, they reveal their lament and distress in the picture of daughter Zion’s ruin. The Israelites’ pain is daughter Zion’s pain and their captivity is her captivity. However, “daughter Zion” is also a metaphor of hope. Daughter Zion’s restoration symbolizes the restoration of her people. Therefore, the biblical writers, who warn Israelites using the picture of daughter Zion’s ruin, encourage them to have hope by employing “daughter Zion.” “Daughter Zion” is a symbol of their connectedness to God and their confidence in God.