

# THE VINEYARD IN DESTINY : AN INTEGRATIVE READING OF ISAIAH 27:2–13

Ryo Itoh

Scholars have long paid an extensive and exclusive attention to the recurring vineyard song (Isaiah 27:2–6) that opens the final discourse unit 27:2–13 in the so called “Isaiah Apocalypse.”<sup>1</sup> It is particularly worthy of note that many critical scholars have treated this song in isolation from the rest of chapter 27 and, naturally, from the wider context of chapters 24–27, mainly because it has a parallel relationship with 5:1–7.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this paper, thus, is to offer to the readers an alternative mode of reading our Isaiah text in question.

While it is undoubtedly important to examine the proposed literary unit of Isaiah 27:2–13 in its immediate context, the unit deserves a special focus of analysis from an inner-textual perspective that presupposes a consciously interacting relationship between the former work and the latter.<sup>3</sup> Such an integrative and pragmatic approach to the prophetic discourse, introduced and applied as below, should reveal a fruitful task of the synchronic text interpretation that demands an appropriate manner of literary and linguistic analysis.<sup>4</sup>

## Aspects of Inner-Textual Interpretation

The study of inner-biblical allusions and the interpretation, as Lyle Eslinger commented, has recently born a promise of supplying some much-needed evidence that can support a theory of the Bible’s compositional history.<sup>5</sup> Although an exhaustive discussion on the inner-textual interpretation is beyond the scope of this literary and linguistic approaches, a few relevant

features between the two methods could be described in connection with our prophetic text.

Modern biblical scholarship has long been convinced that the Bible rests upon traditions (oral or written) which have supposedly flowed into it.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the so called “tradition-history” has a salient feature of literary analysis that proceeds from the final form of a text and reaches the hypothetical traditions that compose it.<sup>7</sup> The task of tradition criticism, in Georg Fohrer’s definition, is to “examine the nature and manner of change (Veränderungen) that took place in the process of transmission.”<sup>8</sup> This process, however, poses a serious question to us, as the alleged “tradition” (Überlieferung) becomes a decisive factor in analyzing the canonical text.

Michael Fishbane, in his thought-provoking monograph *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, attempted to solve this problem by inverting this historical process.<sup>9</sup> In presenting his innumerable cases of “inner-biblical exegesis,” i.e., a movement from an earlier to later biblical text, he seeks to apprehend how the process of transmission (traditio) has modified what was handed down (traditium, i.e., original content).<sup>10</sup> According to Fishbane, inner-biblical exegesis, like its rabbinic scribes, tried to make the earlier obscure texts clearer, to expand the applicability of the text, and to update the sacred text.<sup>11</sup> To put it another way, for Fishbane, close analyses of the biblical text units, employing typological, generic, and stylistic criteria, allows the differentiation of its layers.<sup>12</sup> His assumption, here, exhibits a serious methodological difficulty, in that his approach is generally based on the diachronically assumptions of historical-critical literary history.<sup>13</sup>

When it comes to interpreting the prophetic literature, Fishbane’s problem becomes even more obvious. While he generally retains the traditional view about the priority of the Pentateuch to the Prophets, he recognizes a strong case for the prophet’s reapplication of the Pentateuch as a deliberate “homiletical-aggadic” exegesis.<sup>14</sup> Regarding the section of Isaiah 24–27, Fishbane assigns it to a category of “pseudonymous or pseudepigraphic” exegesis.<sup>15</sup> In this classification, he includes “the redactional collation of small collections of oracles of diverse authorship and their reassignment to a

prestigious prophetic personality of the past, or the composition of new oracles in the light of those of a prestigious forbear and in imitation of his concerns and style.”<sup>16</sup> For Fishbane, language and style are the most important criteria for inner-textuality. Because he fails to pay attention to the synchronic contexts of parallel texts, the goal of his inner-textual exegesis only reflects an “ideological imprint”<sup>17</sup> of the redactor(s) instead of presenting the theological developments of the author.

Despite Fishbane’s literary-linguistic and textually interpretive skills, he has unfortunately missed the crucial point involved in the inner-textual interpretation, that is, an integrative and synchronic analysis of lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and logical continuities/discontinuities of differing text units. Thus, our fundamental premise, that is, the synchronic approach to the parallel texts of a literary composition, remains unchallenged by Fishbane’s approach to text interpretation. Fishbane, nevertheless, is worthy of mentioning, as he has brought into our focus a promising agenda of inner-textual exegesis by specifying an identification of congruencies between imagery and linguistic forms.<sup>18</sup>

Götz Wienold, in this connection, raises a very suggestive point of contact between inner-textual interpretation and text processing (or composition): “the concept of text processing approaches structural properties of texts within a specific pragmatic framework...”<sup>19</sup> The aim of this synchronic pragmatic framework, according to Wienold, is “to describe factors which play a role in what participants do with a literary text.”<sup>20</sup> More specifically, Wienold’s pragmatic and semantic concerns lead him to describe what the participants do with regard to texts, e.g., suspense, horror, and other kinds of emotional engagements, which he thus terms “phenomena of participation.”<sup>21</sup> The method for understanding “phenomena of participation” in texts is to study relationships between the texts that are in an interactive relationship of text processing.<sup>22</sup> The positive case of this synchronic pragmatic situation of literary composition is a vital starting point for our interpretation of the new vineyard song in Isaiah 27, because we are dealing with those texts that show apparent traces of interaction employing common imageries and metaphors.

Kirsten Nielsen, in her dissertation on Isaiah's use of tree metaphors, raises a significant point of contact between the prophet's use of imagery and its synchronic pragmatic context.<sup>23</sup> In connection with our pragmatic concern for inner- textual interpretation, Nielsen's presentations are greatly welcome, as a starting point, in elucidating the functions of various images in the Old Testament:<sup>24</sup>

- a) Imagery acts in a specific context by an interaction. It, therefore, entails not only the analysis of figurative expressions but also the elucidation of the context on the basis of which it is to be understood.
- b) The object of imagery is to involve the hearers in so that, by entering into the interpretation, they take it over as their own perception of reality (performative function).
- c) Since imagery can be reused in another context, with the possibility of new interpretations, one specific meaning should not be imposed upon the new context. Rather, the new imagery must be examined in light of its informative (descriptive) function and the performative (pragmatic) function respectively.
- d) And, finally, it should be stressed that, whether a specific expression is perceived as imagery or literal language, it is important to investigate how the expression relates to all other literal language in each associated literary context. Use of imagery must never be analyzed in isolation from the context in which it is employed.

These elements of the pragmatic and contextual perspectives strikingly correspond to the objectives of the synchronic literary approach in consideration. Having identified along with the premises for inner-textual interpretation, we are now in a good position to progress toward our actual application of the methodology to analyze our Isaiah text under study

## Preliminary Observations

### Literary Unit of Isaiah 27:2–13

Literary and linguistic approach to our present study as shown above, requires a competent level of synchronic text investigation. This signifies to the interpreter that he should, first of all, examine the proposed text delimitation (Isa. 27:2–13) in its present form and in its entirety.<sup>25</sup> It presupposes also that the proper starting point of the text interpretation is a coherent and cohesive syntactic structure of Isaiah 27, in which the prophet constructs his argumentation.

The literary unit of Isaiah 27:2–13 (1–13) is viewed by many scholars as a collection of unrelated supplements later added to chapters 24–26, which are independent in origin from their context.<sup>26</sup> While there are several elements of development recognizable in this concluding chapter, we can not overlook some of the vital connections between chap. 27 and chaps. 24–26.

In Isaiah 27:2–13 one finds a number of lexemes and figures common to those in chapters 24–26: נָצַד (to watch, guard) in 26:3 and 27:3 (2 times); שָׁלוֹם (peace) in 26:3 and 27:5 (2 time each); פָּקַד (to visit, punish) in 27:1, 3 and 24:21, 23; 26:14, 16, 21; תִּבְלָה (world) in 27:6 and 24:4, 6; 26:18; קְעוּיָהּ (protection, stronghold) in 27:5 and 25:4 (2 times), הָדַד (to slay, smite) in 27:7 and 26:21; עִיר בְּצִיּוּדָהּ in 27:10 and 25:2. Of all these recurring lexemes, the verb נָצַד (26:3; 27:3) fills two significant roles: one, to make an allusion to the song of victory (26:1–6), and the other, to set an actual starting point for the new vineyard song (27:2–5).<sup>27</sup>

Other important syntactical functions and relationships contributing to the delimitation and framing of the present discourse unit include the following aspects. First, one will identify the placement of the temporal indicator בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא , בַּיּוֹם (on that day) both at the beginning and at the end of the unit (i.e., vv. 2 and 13). This inclusio form of arrangement can be explained by the cataphoric (pointing forward) and anaphoric (pointing backward) functions of this expression: בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא in v. 2 is pointing forward, those in vv. 12 and 13 referring backwards.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the vineyard is bracketed by

another temporal indicator “in days to come” (הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים).<sup>29</sup> One of the criteria for this distinction is the attachment of *waw* to the phrase, by which one judges the syntactical direction of the introduced sentence. Here **וַיִּזְכֹּר** in v. 2, unlike those in vv. 12 and 13 does not have *waw*, which indicates a cataphoric function.

### Literary Structure of Isaiah 27:2–13

A feature of the verbal tense aspect gives an overall framework to the syntactic textual unit. The present unit is introduced by an imperative verbal clause, which directs and determines the temporal flow of the song (vv. 2–6). Note a series of imperfect forms with the first person singular ‘I’ used for all 4 verbs in vv. 3 and 4, and the third persons ‘he’ and ‘they’ for the other 5 verbs. Then, a sudden change takes place at v. 7, which leads the sub-section of vv. 7–11 with a participle and infinitive (vv. 7–9a). The concluding strophe (vv. 11–12), with weqatal form, shows an anaphoric (i.e, pointing backward) relation to the preceding material. With these text surface analyses in consideration, the structure of thematic and semantic development may be illustrated as follows:

- A. (vv. 2–6): Yahweh protects (נָצַר) and nurture his vineyard/Israel so that she may bring forth its fruit in the world;
  - B. (vv. 7–9): Yahweh smites (נָכַח) Jacob/Israel in order to redeem them;
  - B'.(vv. 10-11): The fortified city, the people without discernment, is deserted in desolation;
- A'. (v. 12): Yahweh threshes out (תִּבְבֵּן) the grain (foreign nations) in order to pick up Israel; the remnant of Israel gather up to Jerusalem(Zion)to worship Yahweh.

The above structure reveals two remarks: one is of the introductory function of the vineyard song (to the entire discourse unit), and the other the central focus of Israel’s role as a source and purpose of blessing (for the world).

## An Integrative Approach to Isaiah 27:2-13

### Syntactic and Stylistic Analysis of Isaiah 27:2–6

Before moving on to a close reading of the new vineyard song in comparison with the old one (Isa. 5:1–7), a few syntactic and stylistic observations should be made on 27:2–6. The syntactic analysis provides such an inner-textual approach to the text with an appropriate starting point, since this synchronic context serves the interpreter as a guide for investigating the meaning into the text.

The new vineyard song exhibits a curious manner of pronominal variation for the verbs. The opening clause (v. 2), for instance, contains an imperative form עֲנֵה-לָהּ (sing of it!), which involves a very peculiar pronominal use.<sup>30</sup> From the view of a communicative setting, this second person plural is somehow abrupt, since there is no antecedent for this pronoun. The only possible candidate for the identification of these singers would be the people of Judah or, at least, of Israel as a whole. Whereas the audience in 5:1–7 were no more than objective hearers of the song, they are given an active involvement in this song by making them singers here.

The accusative preposition לָהּ in v. 2 indicates the lamed of specification in the sense of “with regard to her” or “about her,”<sup>31</sup> referring to the vineyard. While the feminine form for the vineyard (כַּרְמָה) is unusual, this alteration of gender is very effective in creating an affectionate impression for the song, because it is concerned with an intimate relationship between the vineyard and its owner. The debated MT reading הַמֶּד (beauty, charm), can be warranted in this connection.<sup>32</sup> Although the word, as many commentators suggest, may be emended into הַמֵּד (wine) by mistake, MT’s הַמֶּד fits much better into the composer’s pragmatic scheme and development of the song.<sup>33</sup> Many commentators, unfortunately, favor the reading כַּרְמֵי הַמֶּד (vineyard that produces wine), based on the motif of fruitfulness, in contrast to the unproductive vineyard in 5:1–7.<sup>34</sup> This inference, however, is far-fetched, since a feature of productiveness is only secondary (v.6) or concomitant to the primary theme of 27:2–6; that is, the restored relationship between Yahweh

and Israel.

The four consecutive uses of first person singular for all four verbs in vv. 3 and 4 indicate the focus on the action being taken by the guard of the vineyard, i.e., Yahweh. Verse 3, in particular, forms a parallelism in view of a wordplay אֶשְׁקֶה and אֶצְרֶנָּה. This apparently is an indication of drawing attention away from the audience, by assimilating and concentrating the parallel lines.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the metaphorical sense involved in the word שָׁקָה (to water) is more specifically defined by the corresponding verb נָצַר (to keep, guard). In v. 4, however, another pair of verbs in the first person singular (אֶפְשָׁעָה and אֶעֱרִיבָנָה) describes a completely opposite image, i.e., of warfare.

Based on these syntactic and stylistic analyses shown above, the poetical structure of the present song will be further reconstructed as follows:

- A. (v. 2) Introducing the sweet vineyard;
- B. (v. 3) Yahweh caring for and protecting the vineyard;
- C. (v. 4) Yahweh fighting for the vineyard;
- B'.(v. 5) Yahweh inviting the vineyard to make peace with him;
- A'.(v. 6) The outcome for the sweet vineyard.

The above structure surprisingly reveals a chiasmatic movement. One of its most important features is the central focus or climax of v. 4 that serves as a turning point in the song.<sup>36</sup> The verse interestingly contains the same word “thorns and briers” (אֶצְבֵּיר שִׁירָה) as 5:6, in which Yahweh’s action is depicted in reverse. Whereas in 5:1–7 Yahweh exposes his vineyard to a danger of invasion and attack by its enemies, here in 27:2–6 Yahweh becomes its defense and offense. Evidently the emphasis is given to the element of contrast.

### Inner-Textual Perspective on Isaiah 5:1–7 and 27:2–6

A typical opinion among critical scholars has been that the two vineyard songs stand in an antithetical relationship to each other, simply because of the judgment described in Isaiah 5:1–7 as well as the restoration depicted in 27:2–5.<sup>37</sup> According to their views, the former passage is ascribed to Isaiah



himself, whereas the latter is supposed to have come into existence during the post-exilic period. Edmond Jacob, for example, specifies that the writer of the latter passage describes destructive elements, such as ‘thorns and briars’ against the background of the strife between the Jews and the Samaritans (4th century B.C.).<sup>38</sup> While a sharp contrast between the two songs is obvious, there are a number of significant elements of continuity that contribute to the interpretation. The two parallel passages can be approached in terms of the following three levels of analysis, namely, pragmatic contextual analysis, rhetorical uses of figures, and text-semantic analysis.

### Pragmatic Contexts of Isa. 5:1–7 and 27:2–6

In order to understand the performative function of each passage, we shall begin with an observation of each pragmatic context. Both Isaiah 5:1–7, the first vineyard song (VS-I) and 27:2–6, the second vineyard song (VS-II) sing about a vineyard (לְכַרְמֵנוּ, לְהָ), and vividly displays its figurative use.<sup>39</sup> There are, however, a few fundamental differences of communicative style between the two descriptions. Whereas the audience is given an interpretative comment by the speaker /singer only at the end of the song (5:7) in VS-I, in VS-II the comment is made right from the beginning of the song in the form of imagery (27:3). It is obvious that the purposes of the two compositions are different. The crucial point in interpreting the songs is that the hearers of VS-I did not discern the meaning of the song until the end, so that they had to judge themselves; in VS-II, however, the speaker (not the singer) gives a clue at the beginning so that he will not bewilder his audience.

Furthermore it is important to note that the prophet sings of his beloved in VS-I, but in VS-II the audience are the ones who will one day sing of it. Shall we then suppose, in this case, that this latter audience was already familiar with the earlier vineyard song or, at least, with what the metaphor of vineyard represents.

Continuing an important ingredient that describes the performative functions is observed in the way that the prophet identifies with the vineyard. In Isaiah 5:1 the vineyard is referred to, in a very affectionate tone, as “my

beloved” (לִידִידִי),<sup>40</sup> but 27:2 describes a “pleasant (חֶמֶד) vineyard” without any indication of an intimate relationship.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the choice of the expression, “my beloved” in VS-I, this is most probably part of the prophet’s rhetorical strategy, in which he creates a contrast between the expectation of the vineyard owner, as opposed to the unexpected and disappointing outcome produced by the vineyard.

In view of these observations, it is evident that the author in VS-I aimed at creating an effective impact on the hearers, by reversing the mood of the song. The shift from a mysterious, yet positive beginning, to an evident, negative ending in VS-I indicates the prophet’s intention to cause shock and irony in the hearers. In VS-II, conversely, the prophet consciously attempts to remove his earlier negative intention and connotation by presenting a clear identification of the vineyard owner as a personification of Yahweh at the outset of the song. In so doing, the poet/prophet succeeds in comforting and heartening the disheartened community of Yahweh.

### Rhetorical Uses of Figures in Isa. 5:1–7 and 27:2–6

The actual uses of the figure and metaphor in the poems also involve several points of similarities and dissimilarities. In Isaiah 5:1–7 we find a chain of verbs describing agricultural works in detail. Of twelve verbs in total, five are identified as those actions performed by the owner of the vineyard (v. 2), and the rest are specified as a consequence related to the vineyard (v. 4–6). The verbs יַעֲזֹק (to dig up) and יִסְקֶלֶהוּ (to remove stones) specifically describe the careful preparation for planting and growing of the vine.<sup>42</sup> Isaiah 27:2–6 also contains verbs related to agricultural works, though are limited to just two: אִשְׁקֶה (to water) and נִצֵּר (to watch, keep) in 27:3. Although the verb נִצֵּר is not an agricultural figure of speech in its precise denotation, another agricultural action וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל (to build a tower) indicates the antecedent for the verb נִצֵּר. Here the common idea in both songs is implicitly recognizable: the poet composed this latter song, in order to describe the owner’s unceasing, extensive care and concern for his vineyard.<sup>43</sup> There is, however, a slight difference or development of idea between the

verbal pairs *וְסִקְלֵהוּ-יַעֲזָבֵהוּ* and *אֶצְרְקֶה-אֶשְׂקֶנָּה*. Whereas the former verbal pair indicates merely an initiation of agricultural work, the latter pair presupposes that the vineyard was in danger of languishing, perhaps, because of drought, which may imply the survival of the feeble people of Yahweh through difficult times and situations.

In addition to the major figure “vineyard,” another minor figure “thorns and briers” (*שְׂמִירֵשִׁית*) in 5:6 and 27:4 draws our attention. This combination of botanical metaphors plays an important part in the interpretation of the songs of the vineyard in totality and continuity, since it appears in both songs and is closely tied to the interpretative clues or comments in 5:7 and 27:4, 5. The common connotation of the metaphors is that they describe negative actions that trouble the vineyard. The difference is: Isa. 5:1–7 describes the growth of “thorns and briers” as the result of the owner’s (Yahweh’s) intentional neglectful care for his vineyard; in 27:2–6, however, it is identified as an object of Yahweh’s wrath or punishment, which was caused by Yahweh’s betrayed expectation. In the earlier song the author/prophet designates “thorns and briers” the enemies against which the vineyard (i.e., Israel) must struggle; but in the latter song the same metaphor is used in reference to the external enemies of the vineyard (i.e., Israel), against whom Yahweh fights.<sup>44</sup>

### Literary Context of Isa. 5:1–7 and Isa. 27:2–6

The final procedure for inner-textual interpretation is undertaken by means of examining each literary context that may give a clue for the interpretation of each composition. Because, in normal cases, the texts featuring figures or imageries are placed next to those composed in literal language, it is important to investigate how the figurative expression relates to any literal language in the associated literary context.<sup>45</sup>

In this section, I would explore some of the extended literary contexts around each vineyard song, that involves important semantic cohesion and coherence to the songs. The best starting point, then, is the literary connection between Isa. 5:1–7 and the preceding chapters (chaps. 2–4), because the latter

pericope (5:1–7) should suggest possibly related contexts to the former.<sup>46</sup> We will collate this context with those of 27:1–6 (or of 27:1–13) later.

Chapters 2–4 expose a conflict between what Israel was expected to be and to do, versus what Israel is and has done. This latter theme is taken over as the main thrust into the entire fifth chapter, both in a figurative (5:1–7) and in a literal form (5:8–30). In this connection, 4:1–6 has a unique function in that it still retains the hope of Israel and for Zion’s future destiny. However, even such a future hope could never conceal or overlook their present evil, which must be completely removed.<sup>47</sup> The function of Isaiah 5 is now obvious: it brings the introductory oracles (chapters 2–4) to an end, but here the prophet presents a promise of hope that the remnant of Israel will be preserved as a result of divine intervention (4:4–6). Only on this basis and presupposition could Yahweh enter into such a severe confrontation with his vineyard (Israel). This concept of divine intervention is even more evident in chap. 26, which constitutes an immediate context of Isaiah 27.

Turning to the second vineyard song and its immediate literary context, we observe an intimate connection between 27:2–6 and the preceding chapter (chap. 26). Jaques Vermeylen, in particular, notes lexical and thematic similarities between 26:20, 21 and 27:1, namely, פָּקַד (to visit, punish).<sup>48</sup> With regard to the repetitive use of this verb in 27:3, Vermeylen suggestively points out that the song explicates the divine intervention (26:14, 21, and 27:1) as was the case with 27:4–6.<sup>49</sup> In fact, there are several other recurring lexemes and expressions exhibited along this theme of Yahweh’s visitation. Isaiah 26:18 and 21, for example, offer additional key words: יֹשְׁבֵי-הָאָרֶץ, תְּהַלְלֵשְׁבֵי (inhabitants of the world, the earth), which recur in 27:6 (כָּל-תְּהַלְלֵי, the whole world). All of these occurrences indicate that Yahweh’s visitation (פָּקַד), which was initially made against Israel, is now extended to all people on the entire earth.

Furthermore, the concept of “wrath” (זַעַם) in 26:20 recurs in 27:4 as חֲמָה. Although it is rather speculative to make a clear distinction between זַעַם and חֲמָה, it is interesting to note that the prophet Isaiah used זַעַם in reference to Yahweh’s wrath against foreign nation(s)/the entire earth (Isa. 10:5, 25; 13:5; 30:27). Also, חֲמָה is used to denote divine wrath both against Judah/Israel (Isa.

27:4, 42:25; 51:20; 59:18) and against the nations (Isa. 34:2, 63:3, 5, 6; 66:15).<sup>50</sup> If this is the case, the author perhaps deliberately chose the word *חָקַהּ*, which conveyed a more general connotation to the audience, instead of *עָנַן*, which is designated as Yahweh's wrath, in the sense of curse, against the hostile nations against Israel/Judah. This distinctive connotation of *חָקַהּ*, in the sense of divine anger that is generally set against the hostile nations, interestingly concurs with the prophet's rhetorical question in 27:7, in which he distinguishes between the manners of Yahweh's smiting his own people and their enemies:

*Has he smitten them as he smote those who smote them?  
Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain?*

It is now clear, in view of the above observations on the literary contexts, that the difference of the description between the two vineyard songs is not due to the dual authorship or redactorship, but, rather, as a consequence of the change in historical and religious (theological) perspectives experienced by the author. That is, whereas the context of the earlier song presupposed inescapable judgment for Israel/Judah, the new vineyard song and its context imply the divine intervention, the consequences of which extend beyond the boundary of Israel/Judah, even unto the foreign nations (as described in chap.13-23).

### Syntactic and Stylistic Analysis of Isaiah 27:7–13

This final sub-unit of the so-called “Isaiah Apocalypse” has been considered by almost all interpreters to be the most difficult passage in the entire section.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the challenge of textual-critical problems, one finds a considerable difficulty in understanding how this pericope is related to the preceding one, i.e., the new vineyard song. This difficulty is caused chiefly by certain observations about an anonymous people and an unidentified fortified city in v. 10, that exhibits an abrupt and discontinuous feature from the vineyard section.<sup>52</sup> The following syntactic and stylistic observations, however, are expected to give some clues, not only for the literary unity and connection between the two pericopes, but also for the interpretation of the

entire discourse unit of Isa. 27:2–13.

The present sub-unit is delimited stylistically by the introduction of a rhetorical question in v. 7 which seems to have no syntactic or thematic connection to the preceding pericope. Verse 7, nevertheless, has an important thematic relationship to v. 4 (as already observed in the previous section), in that both verses describe the manner of Yahweh's visitation to Israel. The abruptness of this verse can be explained in the light of the two consecutive lines of wordplays that create a sense of urgency and impact:

הַבְּמִכַּת מִכְדוֹ, הַקְּדוֹ: אִם-כִּהְרֵג הִרְגוּ, ה' ר'.

*Has he smitten them as he smote those who smote them?*

*Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain?*

The effect of this rhetorical question is to draw an attention of the audience in order to convince them that they have suffered at the hands of an enemy, but it was not fatal or hopeless, unlike the way their enemies suffered. The function of v. 8 is to elaborate and implement the content of v. 7, which presents a thematic and metaphorical connection with v. 4b in terms of *בְּמִלְחָמָה* (in the war) and *בַּסֹּאסְאָה* (assailing).<sup>53</sup> In this light, vv. 7–8 offer Yahweh's apology for smiting His people.

Verses 9–13 give a response to the issues involved in the rhetorical question of v. 7. This response includes three sections which account for the purposes of Yahweh's visitation to Israel, namely--the purification of the people and forgiveness of their iniquities by banishing all idol worships (v. 9), desolation of the fortified city and the people therein (vv. 10–11), and the gathering of the remnant up to Zion. The sequence of this thematic development is syntactically and logically arranged by the use of such particles as *לָכֵן* (v. 9), *כִּי* (v. 10) and a phrase *בֵּינֵיהֶם* (vv. 12, 13).

### Inner-Textual Analysis of Isaiah 17:1–9 and 27:9–11

Jacques Vermeylen has pointed out a number of references, which associate Isa. 27:9–11 with Isa. 17:1ff.<sup>54</sup> Both passages evidently deal with the punishment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel with reference to Jacob (17:4, 27:9).<sup>55</sup> There are, in addition, three lexemes common to both pericopes: *מִצְבָּה*,

אֲשָׁרִים as symbols of Jacob's apostasy in 27:9 which make clear allusions to those in 17:8. Isa. 27:10 and 17:9 are also parallel in that both describe the culture and situation of the fortified city (עִיר בְּצִיּוּרָה) and its desertion (בְּעִזְבוּתָהּ, קְעוּזָהּ, נִעְזָבָה). Furthermore, both pericopes share a common theme of harvest or gleaning, קָצִיר (17:5, 11 and 27:11).<sup>56</sup> Finally, both (17:7; 27:11) point to the “maker” (עֹשֶׂהוּ) who was betrayed by his own people.

In addition to these citations, Marvin Sweeney further extends a limit of the reference between Isa. 17 and 27. Sweeney notes such a common theme as Israel's future blossoming and blooming (פְּרֹחַ in 27:6 as a result of divine care which is contrasted to the futile attempts of the people to make the seed bloom (וַיִּבֶב' קָרַר נִרְעַף תִּפְרִיחוּ) in 17:11.<sup>57</sup> The imagery of God's threshing from the branch/ear of the river (יִהְיֶה מִשֵּׁב לֶת הַנָּהָר) and the gleaning of Israel for their return to Jerusalem in 27:12–13 also corresponds to the gleaning of ears (in a destructive sense) in the Valley of Rephaim (17:5).<sup>58</sup> All of these cross-references suggest to consider that the description of 27:7–13 is apparently dependent on that of 17:1–11. However, the correspondence of key figures and concepts between two passages such as idols, a fortified city, and growing, or gleaning by Yahweh need not be considered in terms of reinterpretation or redaction. While there are a number of indications of contrast or antithesis, we find a few significant elements of continuity and correspondence. One is that both accounts refer to Israel (northern kingdom) and Assyria and the collapses in their futures, as the similar historical occasion for both texts: there are clear indications of Damascus, Israel/Jacob/Ephraim (17:1–4), the channel of Euphrates,<sup>59</sup> Assyria and Israel/Jacob (27:7–13). The fundamental difference is in the perspective of the prophet: the former text was composed from the prospective view point, and the latter the retrospective. This means that the former passage was written prior to the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.), and the latter was composed subsequent to that.<sup>60</sup>

The author's use of the temporal deixis<sup>61</sup> gives a clue to the above interpretation. Both texts describe the identical event, which is indicated to occur “on that day” (הַיּוֹם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) in 17:4 and “in the day of the east wind” (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) in 27:8.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, whereas in chap. 17 the expression בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

יְהִי is placed at vv. 7–9 so as to predict the desertion and desolation of the strong cities, in chap. 27 it is used to indicate the future return and pilgrimage of the remnant (vv. 12, 13).

Still another significant element of difference or discontinuity between the two texts can be explained in light of the wider literary contexts. Whereas Isa. 17:1–11 the pericope is included in the larger segment of the oracles against foreign nations and therefore negatively and critically depicted,<sup>63</sup> Isa. 27:7–13, on the other hand, anticipates a positive and promising future of Israel, being tied to the new vineyard song of reconciliation and restoration.

With regard to the implication of the city in Isaiah 17:9 and 27:10, there is also a slight difference between the two. Although the cities in 17:1, 2 are specifically identifiable as Damascus and other neighboring cities in Aram,<sup>64</sup> the identification of the strong cities in 17:9 is not easy. Indeed, the function of the anonymous figures, “abandoned cities,” nevertheless, can be explained in terms of rhetorical purpose for warning. The cities filled with idols, whether be it Israelite cities or foreign ones, are destined to be deserted.

The prophet’s intention through this statement is evident; the cities of Judah are no exception to this fate. In 27:10, however, the city is referred to in singular form as a “fortified city” (עִיר בְּצִיּוּרָהּ), which is reminiscent of בְּצִיּוּרָהּ קָרְיָהּ in 25:2, whose destruction anticipates the presence of Yahweh’s feast. In a similar manner, the “fortified city,” though, is to be desolated, to bring forth the new relationship with Yahweh. Thus, the fortified city that here sits solitary, forsaken and deserted, like wilderness, is neither Jerusalem, nor much less Samaria, but rather, the symbol of strength broken down before the majesty of Israel’s God.

### Concluding Summary

The literary unit of Isaiah 27:2–13, consisting of two smaller units (vv. 2–6 and 7–13), conveys important aspects of the prophetic message in the particular pragmatic (communicative) context. The prophet finally hints at the actual historical context of the pericope vv. 7–13 with reference to Samaria



and Assyria (most probably some years after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.).

In this light, the inner-textual contrast between the two vineyard songs can be understood in light of the different historical contexts. Thus the function of the vineyard image is primarily performative. Whereas in the initial song (5:1–7) the prophet's intention is to involve his audience in the discussion so that they themselves pronounce the necessary judgment, in the new song (27:2–6) he develops the imagery so as to console his people with the promise of the future restoration, even though they will experience another exile.

Another performative function of the present textual unit is observed in vv. 7–9, in which the prophet admonishes them with the new information that purification is necessary before such a positive time comes. The allusion to the concrete historical event and figures in these verses indicates the author's intention to convince his listeners of the manner and purpose of Yahweh's dealings with them; it is different from His dealing with those who have no discernment. With the last two verses of the chapter, the author returns to the theme of restoration that was introduced earlier by the vineyard song (vv. 2–6). Whereas the focus of the preceding sub-unit was Yahweh's dealing with his people, here the purpose of His threshing and gathering is described in detail. The function of these verses is to conclude not only the present literary unit, but also the entire section of chapters 24–27, in which judgment, restoration and the universal pilgrimage to Zion are depicted.

---

1 George W. Anderson, "Isaiah XXIV–XXVII, Reconsidered," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 9 (1963), 118, judges the widely accepted title "Isaiah Apocalypse" as questionable considering the inclusion of other possible components such as 'prophetic liturgy,' 'eschatological poems' and thanksgiving hymns. For a survey on the history of interpretation and criticism to these chapters, see William R. Millar, *Isaiah 24–27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 1–22.

2 Edmond Jacob, "Du premier au deuxième chant de la vigne du prophète Esaïe,

- Réflexions sur Esaïe 27,2–5,” *Wort-Gebot-Glaube: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments*, eds. J. J. Stamm, E. Jenni and H. J. Stoebe (Zürich: Zwingli verlag, 1970), 325–30; Georg Fohrer, “Der Aufbau der Apokalypse der Jesajabuchs. Jesaja 24–27,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 34–45.
- 3 For this special area of inner-textual interpretation, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1985); idem., “Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 343–61.
  - 4 The method of synchronic text interpretation concerns with a careful study of composition, syntax, style, distinctive from the diachronic method that exclusively deals with form, tradition or redaction criticism.
  - 5 Lyle Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category,” *Vetus Testamentum* XLII (1992): 47.
  - 6 For example, Douglas A. Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel* (Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973).
  - 7 See Georg Fohrer, *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Einführung in die Methodik* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1983), 121–38.
  - 8 Fohrer, *Einführung*, 128, my translation.
  - 9 Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
  - 10 Ibid., 6–14.
  - 11 Ibid., 91–106.
  - 12 Ibid., 170–87. Fishbane recognizes that interpretive portions within the text are assigned to D and P documents as later revision or gloss.
  - 13 See Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 51–52.
  - 14 Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 304–307; cf. 282, defines aggadah as “applied moral and theological homilies, didactic expositions of historical and folk motifs.”
  - 15 Ibid., 530–33.
  - 16 Ibid., 532.
  - 17 Ibid.
  - 18 Idem., “Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 354–61.

- 19 Götz Wienold, “Textlinguistic Approaches to Written Works of Art,” in *Current Trends in Textlinguistics*, ed. W. Dressler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 145.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., 146.
- 22 Ibid. Wienold, however, focuses only on the narrative texts.
- 23 Kirsten Nielsen, *There is a Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 65–67.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Marvin A. Sweeny, “New Gleanings from an Old Vineyard: Isaiah 27 Reconsidered,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, eds. Craig A. Evans and W. F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 51–66. Sweeny sees a literary unity and cohesiveness in the entire chapter of Isaiah 27. Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39, Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1993), 198–201.
- 26 For example, Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 903–4; Mary-Louis Henry, *Glaubenskrisis und Glaubensbewahrung in den Dichtungen der Jesajaapokalypse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1967), 196; Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 2d ed. trans. S. Rudman, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1968), 71–74.
- 27 Paul Auvray, *Isaïe 1–39* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1972), 240.
- 28 The position of 27:1 contains **וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה** and is debated as to which pericope it belongs to (26:7–23 or 27:1ff). In view of the thematic commonality and continuity, i.e., Yahweh’s ultimate victory over the hostile power, the verse finds its more appropriate place at the conclusion of 26:7–23.
- 29 MT’s original form **וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה** is suggested to read **וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה** “when the day comes” or “in the coming of the day.” The former apparently involves a difficulty due to the inconsistency in number of the verb.
- 30 Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, *Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1978)1007, affirms the above MT reading due to his judgment that the suffix **וַיִּבֶן** can be attributed only to the vineyard.
- 31 See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, Second ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 49; Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 206–208.

- 32 BHK maintains the reading *תִּיבֵי* (wine). This reading, however, is poetically redundant. The combination *בְּרֵם תִּיבֵי* is attested to in Amos 5:11 (*בְּרֵם-תִּיבֵי*) and even in Isa. 32:12 (*שְׂדֵי-תִיבֵי*).
- 33 Lindblom, *Die Jesaja-Apokalyse*, 54; Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 1009–1010.
- 34 Otto Procksch, *Jesaja I-XXXIX*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Leipzig: Werner Scholl Verlag, 1930), 337–38; D. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 86.
- 35 See Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 11–12 notes that phonological similarity promotes the perception of semantic equivalence and assimilation.
- 36 Cf. Sweeny, “New Gleanings,” 59–60, who include v. 5 in the central theme of the poem.
- 37 For example, Jacob, “Du premier,” 325–30; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 1008–12.
- 38 Jacob, “Du premier,” 327; so Werner Kessler, *Gott geht es um das Ganze: Jesaja 56:66 und 24–27* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1967), 167.
- 39 The Functions of the prepositions *בְּ* in these cases fall into the category of ‘specification in the sense of ‘with regard to’ or ‘about.’ See Waltke and O’Conner, *Hebrew Syntax*, 210; also Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), 101.
- 40 Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 177–78, does not see in this word any special intimacy which the Prophet had with God, but suggests it to be understood as “friend.” Cf. Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1991), who reads it as a lover with sexual connotation, which seems dubious in this context.
- 41 See the textual notes on this word *תִּיבֵי* in the foot note #32.
- 42 Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 181.
- 43 Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39, New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 219.
- 44 Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 184.
- 45 Nielsen, *Hope for a Tree*, 67.
- 46 While Isaiah 1 is not unrelated to our discussion, it is generally set aside as a summary or introduction to the entire book of Isaiah. Regarding a redaction critical

- approach to this issue, see Georg Fohrer, “Jesaja 1 als Zusammenfassungen der Verkündigung Jesaja,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962): 251–68; for a more holistic approach see Christopher Seitz, “Isaiah 1–66: Making Sense of the Whole,” in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, ed. C. R. Seitz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 105–26.
- 47 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39, New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986), 150–51.
- 48 Jacques Vermeylen, “La composition litteraire de l'appocalypse d'Esaië (Is., XXIV-XXVII),” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 50 (1974): 5–37.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 31–32.
- 50 These references correspond to the total number of occurrences in the book of Isaiah: all 5 times for  $\text{עָרָה}$ , and 9 out of 10 for  $\text{עָרָה}$  refers to divine wrath.
- 51 Paul Lohmann, “Die selbständigen lyrischen Abschnitte in Jes. 24–27,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 37 (1917-18), 27; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 226.
- 52 The most popular and convincing solution for these identifications is proposed by G. Fohrer, *Jesaja 24–39*, 42; O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 73–75, H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 1019–20. These scholars all identify the fortified city as Samaria and the people without discernment as those of the Northern Kingdom.
- 53 The meaning of  $\text{מִסְתַּחֲרֵם}$  (hapaxlegomenon) is uncertain. Greek translation ( $\mu\alpha\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$  = in disputing, fighting), however, maintains an appropriate sense of the word, in view of the parallel relationship to the preceding line and the semantic sequence to the rest of the same line, particularly to  $\text{בְּשִׁלְחָהֶם}$  (in driving them away). See Procksch, *Jesaja I–XXXIX*, 340
- 54 Vermeylen, “La composition,” 33–35; Sweeny, “New Gleanings,” 55–58.
- 55 See Jesper Høgenhaven, *Gott und Volk bei Jesaja: Eine Untersuchung zur biblischen Theologie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 8–10.
- 56 See Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 89.
- 57 Sweeny, “New Gleanings,” 55.
- 58 J. J. Glück, “Paronomasia in Biblical Literature,” *Semitics* 1 (1970), 56, observes a device of “equivocal pun,” (a wordplay on double meaning). The duality of the homonym  $\text{לֶחֶם מַשׁבֵּחַ}$  meaning either “ear of corn” or “whirl pool” and “strong warter

current” is put to the best possible use in in the context of v. 12: the connection with “ear of corn” is hinted at in the words יָרֹב־ט (will thrash) and יִתְלַקְּנוּ (will be picked up).

59 This is a translation of the *TANAKH: A New Translation of the Holy Scripture According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), 671.

60 Gerald T. Sheppard, “The Anti-Assyrian Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1–39,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 193–216.

61 The term is introduced to signify the grammatical indicator in discourse context. It is also called simply “pointing words” by Robert de Beugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London, Longman, 1981), 167–68.

62 Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27*, 1019, considers קָרַיִם as a simple metaphor for ‘ruin’ what Jacob/Israel was by the east wind symbolic of Assyria or other eastern people. Cf. George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I–XXVII* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 458.

63 Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 142.

64 By mentioning עֲרֵי־עָרֹר (the cities of Aroer) the prophet, most probably, meant to form a wordplay. See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 156. For a reference to Aroer, see Num. 32:34.