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# Inverted Fates and Inverted Texts. Rationales of Reinterpretation in the Compositional History of the Isaianic Prophecies, with Special Emphasis on Isaiah 10,16–19 and Its Context

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In the current final form of the book, Isa 10,16–19 appears in the context of the famous anti-Assyrian prophecy. The extent and earliest form, as well as the inner coherence of Isa 10,5–11,9 is disputed, but exegetes generally agree in delimiting at least six blocks within this pericope: 10,5–15.16–19.20–23.24–27.28–34 and 11,1–9. This study focuses mainly on one particular unit, Isa 10,16–19, that will be argued to provide crucial information on the intricate rationales of the compositional history of the Isaianic prophecies, in particular Isa 10,5–11,9.

- 16 a Therefore, the Lord YHWH of the hosts will send leanness on his fat ones,  
b and instead of his »glory« there will be burning, like the burning of fire.
- 17 a And the light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame,  
b and it will burn and devour his thorn and his thistle in one day.
- 18 a And the glory of his forest and his orchard he will consume from soul to body,  
b and it will be as when a sick one wastes away.
- 19 a And the rest of the trees of his wood will be few,  
b even a boy will be able to record them.

Isa 10,16–19 is a highly metaphorical announcement of judgment that contains no explicit references regarding the meaning of the symbolic imagery and the identity of those envisioned by the divine wrath. The metaphors hinting at the addressee are either of the type body imagery or plant imagery. In both cases the judgment coming from YHWH appears in the form of a devouring fire.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The unity of the pericope is occasionally questioned based on the different metaphors used. Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Der Heilige in Israel: Jesaja 1–12*, BAT 17.1 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1960), 122–129;

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addressee under judgment remains concealed behind ubiquitous third person masculine singular suffixes.

The pericope as it now stands is related by לָכֵן to the previous description of the arrogant Assyria. However, apart from a limited number of voices,<sup>2</sup> the majority of exegetes do not consider vv. 16–19 the original follow-up to Isa 10,5–15. They view this pericope as a secondary insertion.<sup>3</sup> Two proposals have been put forward in this respect. (1) Centuries ago a few exegetes remarked the lexical correspondences with other Isaianic Judah- or Israel-related texts, suggesting that vv. 16–19 could have been inserted here as a fragment from another prophecy addressed originally to Judah or Israel.<sup>4</sup> (2) However, in current scholarship vv. 16–19 are more commonly considered a redactional pericope, i.e. one composed specifically for the current location in the course of the editorial process.<sup>5</sup>

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Reinhard Fey, *Amos und Jesaja: Abhängigkeit und Eigenständigkeit des Jesaja*, WMANT 12 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1963), 126. See, however, Hermann Barth, *Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit: Israel und Assur als Thema einer produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajaüberlieferung*, WMANT 48 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977), 32–34, and Kirsten Nielsen, *There is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOTSup 65 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 191f., who convincingly argued for unity. Cf. also Isa 8,14; 17,4–6.

2 August Dillmann, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1890), 109f.; Franz Delitzsch, *Commentar über das Buch Jesaja* (Leipzig: Dörfeling & Franke, 1889), 182–184; Eduard König, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1926), 149; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 267; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, FOTL 16 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 200; Michael Chan, »Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology«, *JBL* 128 (2009): 729.

3 Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 101; Karl Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1900), 105f.; George B. Gray, *The Book of Isaiah*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1949), 197–200; Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja: Kapitel 1–23*, ZBK (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1966), 158; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja: Kapitel 1–12*, BKAT 10.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1972), 406f.; Anton Schoors, *Jesaja*, BOT (Roermond: J.J. Romen & Zonen, 1972), 89; Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 17–18; 34; Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 113; Erhard Blum, »Jesajas prophetisches Testament: Beobachtungen zu Jes 1–11 (Teil I)«, *ZAW* 108 (1996): 560.

4 For vv. 17–23 (sic), see already Johann B. Koppe, *D. Robert Lowth's Jesaia's*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Wedmann, 1780), 182f. See further Karl Budde, »Über die Schranken, die Jesajas prophetischer Botschaft zu setzen sind,« *ZAW* 41 (1923): 194; Otto Procksch, *Jesaja I* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1930), 169 (»Gesamtisrael«); Fey, *Amos und Jesaja*, 126; Harold L. Ginsberg, »First Isaiah,« *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 9 (1971): 54; Nielsen, *Hope*, 197–199. Cf. also Konrad Schmid, *Jesaja, Band I: Jes 1–23*, ZBK (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2011), 116 (Judah?).

5 Cf. Gray, *Isaiah*, 199; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 408; Jaques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique: Isaïe I-XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millénaire d'expérience religieuse en Israël*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gabalda, 1977), 259–260; Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 34; Jesper Høgenhaven, *Gott und Volk bei Jesaja: Eine Untersuchung zur biblischen Theologie*, ATHD 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 119; Matthijs J. de Jong,

The obvious lack of direct allusions to the immediately preceding Assyria-related vv. 5–15, the noticeably different imagery and vocabulary that cannot be explained from its context make it indeed difficult to believe that vv. 16–19 could have been composed with Isa 10,5–15.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, these same considerations do not ease the burden of those maintaining that a later editor would have engraved vv. 16–19 in view of the Assyria-related 10,5–15. Such redactional pericopes, literary elaborations of earlier texts, are usually far more explicit with respect to the intention and meaning of the secondary additions.<sup>7</sup>

In what follows I acknowledge the validity of the two main observations made thus far, namely the problematic relationship between Isa 10,16–19 and 10,5–15, as well as the close lexical connections with other Isaianic prophecies dealing with the fate of YHWH's people. I shall start with the assumption that Isa 10,16–19 is indeed secondary on its current location. However, considering it a late redactional text does not sufficiently account for the problems raised above. On the other hand, while the idea that these verses were relocated from another context is enticing – as it would correlate well both with the burdensome flow of the text and the lack of obvious literary connectives with the preceding pericope –, lexical parallelism with Judah- or Israel-related prophecies is ambiguous data, in itself insufficient to either prove or disprove Isaianic origin or contextual derivation.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, earlier studies failed to disclose the intention of an eventual relocation and the rationales behind this process. How and with what purpose would vv. 16–19 have been annexed to the prophecy against Assyria in 10,5–15?

I believe that more significant data is available to elucidate the compositional process of Isa 10, in particular the role of vv. 16–19. First, I take a fresh look at text-internal arguments with respect to the meaning and intention of these verses. Second, I consider text-external arguments concerning the early understanding of Isa 10,16–19, gleaning the information from indirect contextual evidence. Third, I mention a few cases where redactional procedures can be identified that may explain how and why vv. 16–19 have found their way to the current position.

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»A Window on the Isaiah Tradition in the Assyrian Period: Isaiah 10:24–27«, in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Michael N. van der Meer et al., VTSup 138 (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 104. Opinions vary between a late pre-exilic and a post-exilic dating.

<sup>6</sup> I cannot discuss here issues of form, how far Isa 10,16–19 could be considered poetry or prose. It may be remarked though that the type of parallelism that we encounter in the preceding pericope is missing from our passage.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. in this respect Isa 10,20–23 in relation to 10,16–19, or 10,33–34 and 11,1–9.

<sup>8</sup> Strangely enough, motif-based relationship with other Isaianic text has also been used as an argument to discount Isaianic authorship (cf. Vermeylen, *Isaïe*, 259; Høgenhaven, *Gott*, 119), which is equally farfetched.

## 1 Text-internal evaluation of Isaiah 10,16–19

As noted, Isa 10,16–19 abounds in metaphors. Nonetheless, in order to clarify the intention of the prophecy, it is crucial to understand to what exactly those metaphors refer and which aspects of the multivalent imagery is exploited. I refer in particular to the phrases »his fat ones«, »his glory«, »his forest and his garden«, »his thorn and his thistle«.

### 1.1 בְּמִשְׁכָּנָיו

Three different interpretations have been proposed for בְּמִשְׁכָּנָיו, which depend heavily on how exactly one understands the judgment prophecy to be realised. (1) Commentators who believe that these verses manifest God's anger against the natural habitat (cf. the forest and garden imagery in v. 18) consider that the pl. form of מִשְׁכָּן refers to agricultural wealth, and translate accordingly »his rich areas«.<sup>9</sup> Semantic support for this idea is derived from Gen 27,28.39 and Dan 11,24. However, in Gen 27,28.39, מִשְׁכָּנִי is syntactically related to הָאָרֶץ, and it is only in this particular syntagmatic connection in which the word might eventually refer to the »fatness of the earth«.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in Dan 11,24 מִשְׁכָּנִי does not signify »rich areas« on its own but only connected to מְדִינָה »province, district«. Nonetheless, even so the generally proposed translation for מִשְׁכָּנֵי מְדִינָה as »rich provinces«<sup>11</sup> is both grammatically and contextually unlikely.<sup>12</sup>

(2) An overwhelming majority of exegetes take the body-imagery as central in the description of judgment and interpret מִשְׁכָּנֵי in the light of Isa 17,4, where מִשְׁכָּן

<sup>9</sup> Procksch, *Jesaia*, 169; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 405. Cf. also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, AB 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 263; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, HThK (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 275; Chan, »Rhetorical Reversal«: 726 f.

<sup>10</sup> But even that interpretation stumbles upon a textual difficulty. In Gen 27,28.39 one should probably follow the Samaritan Pentateuch and read מִשְׁכָּנֵי (i.e. מִשְׁכָּן + מֵן) instead of מִשְׁכָּנֵי (from מִשְׁכָּן), as this is required both by the parallelism with הַשָּׂמִים, as well as the inner logic of v. 39 (where מִשְׁכָּנֵי is an obvious allusion to v. 28 and a play on the partitive and privative nuances of the preposition מֵן). Note also that the related מִשְׁכָּן is used in the above noted syntagmatic construction to designate the richness of the earth or soil (אֲדִמָּה שְׂמֵנָה; Num 13,20; Neh 9,25.35) and pasture (מְרֻעָה שְׂמֵן; Ez 34,14; I Chr 4,40). For a similar construction, see חֵלֶב הָאָרֶץ in Gen 45,18.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. JPS Tanakh, NASV, ESV, NIV, HALOT 5826, etc.

<sup>12</sup> If a so-called genitive of quality was intended, one would expect מִשְׁכָּן to be positioned as a *nomen rectum* (cf. גֵּיא־שְׂמִינִים in Isa 28,1). Cf. Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, SubBi 14.2 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), § 129 f. See below another suggestion for Dan 11,24.

בשרו means »the fatness of his [Israel's] body«. Isa 10,16 is rendered accordingly as »(he will send leanness) on his fatnesses«. <sup>13</sup> The plural form is grammatically explained as of the type »plural of composition«, or »plural of amplification«. <sup>14</sup> However, the types of words that use these plural forms differ considerably from משמן. <sup>15</sup> Furthermore, while semantically Isa 17,4 backs the connotation of »fatness«, the singular variant משמן in that verse precludes at the same time the possibility that the plural form משמניו in Isa 10,16 could be interpreted in a similar sense. It would be also difficult to explain why the term רזון »leanness« in the same verse appears in sg., when it would in fact have to counter the pl. expression משמני.

(3) A third option commends itself as most probable, namely to translate משמניו as »his fat ones«, where this metaphor designates the wealthy upper strata of a society. <sup>16</sup> This possibility is clearly supported by Ps 78,31 and most likely also by the above mentioned Dan 11,24. <sup>17</sup>

This is not to deny that on the level of metaphoric poetic terminology the nuance of משמניו is multivalent. For it is not indifferent at all that the author has chosen this particular term to designate the leaders and not some other more common label. It is indeed fatness and welfare that this term *implies*. <sup>18</sup> This aspect is actually an important indication for the possible intention of the prophecy as I shall argue. But that does not mean that semantically משמניו could also be rendered as »his fatnesses«.

<sup>13</sup> Duhm, *Jesaia*, 101; Marti, *Jesaja*, 105; Dillmann, *Jesaja*, 109; Gray, *Isaiah*, 200; Otto Kaiser, *Der Prophet Jesaja*, ATD 17 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1981), 227 (»fette Körperteile«); Schoors, *Jesaja*, 89; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 265; Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 28.

<sup>14</sup> Beuken, *Jesaja*, 275 (plural of composition); Barth, *Jesaja*, 28 (plural of amplification).

<sup>15</sup> Plural of composition is used with countable things (barley, wheat, money), while plurals of amplification for abstract terms (mercy, power, faithfulness, etc.). As Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, § 136b notes, דם and דמים are used with different connotations in Hebrew.

<sup>16</sup> For this interpretation, see the Targ. (ברברבוהי), »among his chiefs«; August Knobel, *Der Prophet Jesaia* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1843), 76; Delitzsch, *Jesaia*, 183; König, *Jesaja*, 149. Cf. also NASV: »stout warriors«. See further Jud 3,29, where שמן is used for the valiant leaders of Moab (par. איש חיל). Dictionaries also mention the Arabic cognates *samīn*, »nobles« and *musmin*, »nobleman« (cf. Gesenius-Buhl, 558; 471; HALOT, 5826).

<sup>17</sup> For »and with/against the fat (=eminent) ones of the province he shall come«. It is these eminent leaders to whom the preposition ליהם of the same verse refers.

<sup>18</sup> Insofar one may agree with Beuken, *Jesaja*, 275, that multiple images are superimposed in this metaphor.

## 1.2 ותחת כבוד

This metaphor of v. 16b is generally translated as »under his glory«, where כבוד is believed to refer more concretely to nobles,<sup>19</sup> military might,<sup>20</sup> rich property,<sup>21</sup> outward appearance,<sup>22</sup> or even to the body<sup>23</sup> of the one addressed. Not all of these suggestions can be justified semantically. But whatever nuance of the word כבוד is adopted, the abstract character of this term makes it very unlikely that the preposition תחת could have a locative sense, as the commonly used translation, »under (his glory)«, would imply. תחת also means »instead (of his glory)«, and this provides a far better alternative.<sup>24</sup>

While כבוד is a complex term, lexicographic studies agree that the sense »heaviness« lies at its etymological bases.<sup>25</sup> When transposed to the social sphere, כבוד denotes »respect«. Respect was closely bound to social status granted by property, so that occasionally the reason of respect itself, i.e. personal property is also called כבוד. This may allude to material wealth<sup>26</sup> but also family, population.<sup>27</sup> This latter appears to be the case in a few texts of key importance, such as Isa 5,13; 8,7; 16,14; 21,16, and perhaps Hos 9,11, where כבוד acquires the nuance of »multitude«, i.e. population of a country.<sup>28</sup> As in the previous examples, this

19 Wilhelm Gesenius, *Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über den Jesaia* (Leipzig: F. Chr. W. Vogel, 1921), 399.

20 Knobel, *Jesaia*, 76; Dillmann, *Jesaia*, 109; Beuken, *Jesaja*, 287.

21 König, *Jesaja*, 149; Beuken, *Jesaja*, 287.

22 Gray, *Isaiah*, 200, understands this as a kind of raiment, while Proksch, *Jesaia*, 169, and Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 409, view this term in relation to the tree imagery.

23 Cf. JPS Tanakh, »under its body«; Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 29: »in seiner Person, Lebenszentrum / in seinem Innersten«. However, כבוד can hardly be connected specifically with the body. Texts such as Gen 49,6 or Ps 7,6 suggest that כבוד is similar to שם, both of which can refer to the person itself (see Moshe Weinfeld, כבוד, *ThWAT* 4 (1984): 38 f.; C. John Collins, כבוד, *NIDOTTE* 2 (1997): 581 f.).

24 So also Kaiser, *Jesaja*, 227; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 265.

25 See Weinfeld, כבוד: 23–40; Jarl E. Fossum, »Glory,« *DDD*<sup>2</sup> (1999): 348.

26 Cf. Gen 31,1; Isa 10,3; 22,24; Nah 2,10. Cf. Weinfeld, כבוד: 26.

27 In these cases, כבוד may actually be a synonym of כבודיה, as in Jud 18,21, where it denotes the house property of a man (wives, children and livestock).

28 Cf. Delitzsch, *Jesaia*, 183. For Isa 5,13 and 16,14 this was already noted by JPS Tanakh and Weinfeld, כבוד: 25–26. The interpretation »multitude« for כבוד in these places is supported by the parallelism with המון, having a similar sense. With respect to Isa 8,7, the gloss »king of Assyria and its multitude« is correlated with the metaphor of »mighty and many« waters of the Euphrates, where »the king« stands for »the mighty« and »the multitude« corresponds to »the many« (cf. the use of המון instead in Isa 17,12; Ez 31,2,18; etc.). It is also the sense of »multitude« (and not »strength«, as Weinfeld suggested) that is implied in Isa 21,16. For here »the multitude of Kedar« is paralleled by »the (small) number of the sons of Kedar« (not by לגבור!).

makes good sense also in Isa 10,16, where משמנו and כבוד refer as a merism to »his leaders« and »his multitude«. <sup>29</sup>

However, there is probably also a yet unnoticed secondary aspect in כבוד that the author exploits here, a literary feature not unknown in biblical texts. <sup>30</sup> כבוד also means »outward radiance« in the form of visible light or aura. This meaning – which is probably based on cultic-mythological theophany-traditions <sup>31</sup> – is used in correlation with God's glory. <sup>32</sup> While the notion of »multitude« fitted well the parallelism with v. 16a, this second nuance of »radiance« makes good sense in the current verse line where it clarifies the meaning of the subsequent comparison: »instead of his glory a glow will glow, like the glow of a fire«. Just like in the previous משמנו > רזון antithesis, v. 16b is also built around the idea of turning something into its opposite: the radiant light, the shiny splendour is converted here into a negative image of a threatening fire, an aspect often convoluted with the fearful appearance of YHWH (Ex 3,2; 19,18; 24,17; Zach 2,9). <sup>33</sup> This means that the suffixed כבוד implicitly alludes to the divinity himself as the nation's »glory« (cf. I Sam 4,21–22; Ps 3,4; 106,20; Jer 2,11; Hos 10,5!).

With this sense v. 16b becomes the semantic parallel to the image of v. 17a, YHWH, the light of Israel. This relationship is also underlined by a phonetic assonance between אש כיקוד in v. 16 and קדושו in v. 17. I suggest therefore that כבוד is used here as a double duty metaphor, on the one hand, referring back to v. 16a

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the parallelism of the two lexical roots in Isa 17,4 (משמן | כבוד) and in Isa 6,10 (the hiph. verbal forms of שמן | כבד).

<sup>30</sup> This feature called Janus-parallelism was identified in biblical and non-biblical texts by various scholars. Cf. David Yellin, משנה ההרואה בתנך, *Tarbiz* 1 (1929): 1–17; Cyrus H. Gordon, »New Directions,« *BASP* 15 (1978): 59; Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 159; Scott B. Noegel, »Janus Parallelism in Job and Its Literary Significance,« *JBL* 115 (1996): 313–320; Idem, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, JSOTSup 223 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 28 f. and Nielsen, *Hope*, 192 also argue for the double sense of יקד in v. 16 (»fever« / »burning«).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Severre Aalen, אור, *ThWAT* 1 (1973): 178; Fossum, »Glory«: 348.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Isa 4,5; 60,1; Jer 13,16; Ez 1,28; 10,4; 43,2. Cf. Weinfeld, כבוד, 27 f.; 31 f. With respect to Isa 10,16, this possibility was noted only by Kaiser, *Jesaja*, 227, who rendered here »Glanz«. The precise relationship with the basic sense of this word is not easy to map. Since the verb כבד never alludes to such meaning, this nuance may have been developed secondarily (in Akkadian *kabattu*, only means »heavy« but never »glorious shining«. This latter aspect is expressed by another term, a Sum. loanword *melammu*).

<sup>33</sup> By contrast, note that in Isa 17,4, כבוד is turned into its opposite by the verb דלל »to become little«.

(משמניו), but, on the other, pointing forward to v. 17a (אור).<sup>34</sup> Of course, this interpretation raises some dramatic questions with respect to the addressees and the intention of the prophecy.

Along the very same lines, v. 17 confers the encouraging imagery of YHWH, the light (אור) of Israel, a threatening tenor: the light that for Israel conveys the notion of salvation and life is transformed into a negative symbol, namely that of a life-threatening and devouring fire.<sup>35</sup>

I presume that similar is the case with »his Holy One«. In its usual sense, this divine name portrays YHWH confidently as a divinity committed towards his nation, Israel.<sup>36</sup> A close reading of this verse suggests, however, that the rhetorical intention of the verse line is to overturn this familiar picture. The formulation הִיָּה ל + הִיָּה may imply that YHWH »becomes« something that he has not been before, he is going to manifest himself in an unexpected way, defying the nomenclature »Light of Israel« and »his Holy One« (cf. Isa 30,3).

### 1.3 יְעָרָה וְכַרְמֶלֶךְ וְשִׁתּוֹ וְשִׁמְרִיָּה

The pair of metaphors »thorn bush and thistle« appears exclusively in Isaiah, and with one exception the two terms are always used side by side.<sup>37</sup> This is in itself significant exegetical data, but there is even more to say. Exegetes failed to recognise that within Isaiah this symbolism is used in two basically different ways. On the one hand, »thorn bush and thistle« belongs to descriptions of desolate landscapes (cities and cultivated fields). As wild growth, thorn and thistle signify the lack of life and civilisation. In these accounts, the appearance of thorns and

<sup>34</sup> For כבוד and אור used together, see Isa 60,1 and Ez 43,2. For the literary phenomenon where such parallelism reaches beyond the logical breaks of sentences, see also Isa 10,17b and 18a; 28,2f. and 3a.

<sup>35</sup> The metaphorical or theological sense of אור »light« is always positive, connoting life and salvation (Ps 36,10; 49,20; 56,14; 97,11; 112,4; Job 33,20; Isa 2,5; 9,1; 58,8; Am 5,18; see further Aalen, אור: 172–181). אור is occasionally used even for God himself (Ps 27,1; Isa 60,1.19; Mic 7,8; cf. also YHWH as נר »light, lamp« in I Sam 22,29; Ps 18,29). אור as a divine predicate appears in theophoric names in the Bible and beyond, suggesting that the motif was widely familiar in the Near East (cf. Edward Lipiński, »Light אור«, *DDD*<sup>2</sup> [1999]: 518 f.).

<sup>36</sup> There is no threatening or negative notion in this divine name. The name »the Holy One« was actually an ancient appellative for the divinity, especially El (and YHWH), with the two names used interchangeably (cf. Frans van Koppen and Karel van der Toorn, »Holy One קדוש«, *DDD*<sup>2</sup> [1999]: 415–418).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Isa 5,6; 7,23.24.25; 9,17; 10,17; 27,4. In Isa 32,13 we find the combination קוץ שמיר »thorn and thistle«.

thistles is part of the judgment scene: »I shall make it [the vineyard] a desolation; it will not be pruned or hoed, and it will be overgrown with thorn and thistle.« (Isa 5,6; cf. 7,23–25; 32,13).

However, the symbols »thorn and thistle« are exploited quite differently in Isa 9,17.<sup>38</sup> This text is worth citing in full since it provides a key reference for understanding Isa 10,17:

Isa 9,17	כִּי־בַעֲרָה כֹּאֵשׁ רִשְׁעָה שְׁמִיר וְשִׁית תֹּאכֵל וְתַצַּת בַּסִּבְכֵי הַיַּעַר וַיִּתְאַבְּכוּ גְאוֹת עֵשָׁן	For wickedness will burn like fire, thorn bush and thistle it will consume, and it will kindle the thickets of the forest, and they will be swirled up [like] majestic <sup>39</sup> smoke.
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In this text judgment does not take shape with the appearance of »thorn and thistle« but rather with their disappearance. Punishment means that »thorn and thistle« is removed, consumed by the fire of wickedness.

Before venturing a suggestion with regard to the meaning of the metaphor in this particular text, we should take a closer look at its parallel verse line referring to the burning of »the thickets of the forest«.<sup>40</sup> Note that both the »thorn and thistle« as well as the »forest« metaphors are used side by side in Isa 10,17–18 as well (and only in these two texts).

The word »forest« appears relatively rarely in a metaphoric sense. In the Isaianic context it stands as a symbol for the city of Jerusalem in Isa 29,17; 32,15,19 (probably late texts) and either Jerusalem or more specifically its leaders in Isa 10,34.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> As well-known, Isa 27 alludes to the wine yard song from Isa 5, but it interprets the thorn-motif through the lens of Isa 9,17 (and perhaps Isa 10,17? cf. אֲצִיתָנָה in 27,4 and וְתַצַּת in 9,17, as well as אֶחָד in 10,17 and יָחִיד in 27,4). Apparently »thorn« is here a symbol of ungodliness (cf. 27,6), which differs from the original sense of 9,17, however (see below).

<sup>39</sup> גְאוֹת in 9,17d is not »smoke« (as HALOT suggests), but it has its usual meaning of »majesty« or pejoratively »presumption« (correlated with the forest-symbolism), which often typify the attitude of Israelite or Judaeen leaders in Isaianic prophecy (cf. 9,8; see further 2,12–15; 10,32–34; 28,1; etc.).

<sup>40</sup> For הַיַּעַר as »thick forest«, cf. Jer 4,1 and 12,8. For סִבְכָּה, »thicket«, see Gen 22,13 and especially Isa 10,34 (see below). See further also סִבְכָּה in Ps 74,5; Jer 4,1 (and possibly Jer 21,14, cf. HALOT, par. by יַעַר).

<sup>41</sup> The antithesis between the thick forest cut down in Isa 10,34 and the ruler that is emerging from Jesse's stump in 11,1 may suggest that the forest metaphor was understood as a reference specifically to leaders by the later author of 11,1 as well. For non-Isaianic contexts where »forest« refers to a nation or its leaders, see Jer 46,23; Ez 21,2–3 (cf. v. 7!); Zach 11,2. These usages of עֵר obviously differ from other cases, where the »forest«-symbolism is used to describe the wantonness of uninhabited areas (Jer 26,18; Hos 2,14; Mic 3,12).

Isa 10,34	ונקה סבכי היער בברזל והלבנון באדיר יפול	He will hack down the thicknesses of the forest with iron, and Lebanon by a mighty one will fall.
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This verse uses the same expression (סבכי היער) as Isa 9,17 (these are the only two locations). The forest of Isa 10,33–34 stands here as a symbol for the presumptuous ones, »those of high stature« (רמי הקומה; cf. Isa 2,13). »The forest« is paralleled by »the Lebanon«, which is not a geographical name but connotes the divine mountain. With obvious cultic traditions in the background (cf. Ps 48,4), the »forest« and »Lebanon« designate Zion and Jerusalem, or more specifically its leaders (and not Assyria as Isa 10,34 is often understood).<sup>42</sup> This implies an anti-Judaean interpretation of the prophecy in 10,28–34 to which I shall return a little later.

In Isa 9,17 the consumption of the vegetation by fire symbolises the annihilation of YHWH's nation. In my view, it gives most sense to assume that »the thick forest« metaphorically designates the leaders of the nation, while »thorn and thistle« symbolises the common people. The imagery invokes the ideas of »valuable« and »worthless«, or »significant« and »insignificant«. This correlates well with the entire pericope of 9,7–17, which uses four other comparable representations – including plant imagery – to express the merismus of »entire population«.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The »mount of the temple of Zion / daughter of Zion« (depending on the ketiv-qere) and the »hill of Jerusalem« is mentioned just before in Isa 10,32. With respect to Lebanon as a symbol for Jerusalem, compare Isa 29,17 with 32,15, where Jerusalem is termed as a »wilderness« that shall be restored to its previous »Lebanon«-state. Cf. Csaba Balogh, »Blind People, Blind God: The Composition of Isaiah 29,15–24,« ZAW 121 (2009): 51 f. In Isa 2,12–17, the arrogance of the people is compared to a lofty cedar on the mountain of Lebanon. The motif of Lebanon is ambiguous in Isa 14,8. It most likely conceals Mesopotamian traditions such as those recorded in the myth of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* about ancient kings' conquest of the cedar forest. But obviously Lebanon stands here for the divine mountain (cf. 14,13!), and as such it can be substituted for Jerusalem, the singer of this song (cf. 14,4). Similar could be the case with Isa 2,13; 37,24 (par. II Reg 19,23) and Hab 2,17 (probably under Isaianic influence). For Lebanon as an allusion to Jerusalem, see further also Jer 22,6–7,23; Ez 17,3 (cf. 17,12!). We may also note here references to the cedar-metaphor (cf. Ps 80,11 [cedars of El]; 104,16; Jer 22,7; Ez 17,3.22–23; 31,3 pass.). For the mythological background of the Lebanon-, cedar- and forest-motifs, see especially Fritz Stolz, »Die Bäume des Gottesgartens auf dem Libanon,« ZAW 84 (1972): 141–156, and Nielsen, *Hope*, 126–128; 130 f.

<sup>43</sup> Note יתמו ואת־זואלמנתיו and בחוריו (9,15) מאשריו and מאשרי העם (9,13) כפה ואגמון, ראש וזנב (9,16). Isa 9,16 provides the explanation for the merismus: »they are all transgressors and wicked, and every mouth speaks unjustly«. See also Isa 3,1; 19,10.15; 31,3.

The descriptions of judgment in Isa 10,17 and 9,17 relate to each other on both lexical<sup>44</sup> and structural levels.<sup>45</sup> Most importantly, it is only in these two texts where, in the materialisation of the divine punishment, »thorn and thistle« is annihilated by fire.<sup>46</sup> One may assume therefore, that the meaning of the metaphors in Isa 10,17 is also similar to Isa 9,17. »His forest and his garden«<sup>47</sup> correlated with »his thorn and his thistle« are used here, too, as symbols for the choicest ones of the nation and the general people respectively.<sup>48</sup> The third masc. suffixes, »his thorn and his thistle« and »his forest and his garden«, confer a partitive nuance to these metaphors, suggesting that they express the notion of entirety collectively rather than individually – unlike the »forest« and »garden« metaphors in Isa 29,17 and 32,15, where they individually symbolise the entire Jerusalem. The fact that »his thorn and his thistle« as well as »his forest and his garden« denote the two poles of a society is also in line with the interpretation provided above for the pair of metaphors »his fat ones« (=leaders) and »his glory (= multitude)« in v. 16.

#### 1.4 Preliminary conclusions

The analysis above leads to some important preliminary conclusions. (1) The fact that those doomed to destruction are called »his fat ones« implies that the prophecy was particularly concerned with the welfare of the addressees. However, this does not appear to coincide with the substance of the previous anti-Assyrian

<sup>44</sup> Cf. אש, בער, אכל. Note also that the phrase יום אחד from 10,17 appears in 9,13.

<sup>45</sup> Both pericopes use »thorns and thistles« and »the forest (and garden)« metaphors together. There is also a certain correspondence between ביים אחד and מנפש ועד־בשר, both alluding to the completeness of destruction.

<sup>46</sup> It is important to emphasise here that vegetation is devastated by fire and not by cutting (unlike implied by vv. 15 and 33–34). Contra Chan, »Rhetorical Reversal«: 728 f.

<sup>47</sup> כרמל may occasionally designate a geographical area (Jos 12,22; I Reg 18,19), a field with rich vegetation (Isa 16,10; but not specifically agricultural field). But כרמל has also clear mythological connotations referring to a divine garden (see Am 9,3 and Martin Jan Mulder, כרמל, *ThWAT* 4 [1984]: 350; in Jer 2,7; 4,26 the land of Israel appears as a divine garden). As such, כרמל is basically synonymous with יער. The two terms are used together in Isa 29,17; 32,15; 37,24; II Reg 19,23. כרמל also substitutes »Lebanon«, i.e. Jerusalem. Compare Isa 29,17 and 32,15 (מדבר = לבנון) with 32,16 (כרמל = מדבר). For other notions of a mythological divine garden, see also Gen 2–3; 13,10; Isa 51,3; Ez 31,8; 36,35; Joel 2,3.

<sup>48</sup> William H. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: New Studies*, SHCANE 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 87, suggested that Isa 10,18 alludes specifically to the destruction of Sennacherib's royal park built around Nineveh. This assumption fails to take account of both the Isaianic use of the images »forest and garden«, as well as the related metaphors, »thorn and thistle«, that are difficult to explain in his suggested Assyrian context.

verses which focus on military arrogance. Similarly, the axe-metaphor of v. 15 and the flora-metaphor of vv. 17–18 are so far removed from each other that both a primary (coming from the same author) and a secondary (vv. 17–18 were composed later in view of v. 15) connection between the two pericopes is precluded. (2) In the portrayal of v. 17 YHWH is turned from an intimate deity into an unfriendly one. The rhetoric of this presentation makes most sense if the addressee is presupposed to be someone previously intimately related with YHWH as the light of Israel, i.e. Israel and not Assyria. (3) If it is correct to interpret כבוד in v. 16 as referring to the divinity as the »glory« of the one envisaged by the prophecy, this again requires the addressee to be Israel rather than Assyria. (4) In an Isaianic context, the expressions »his thorn and his thistle« and »his forest and his garden« also point – as a merismus – to entire Israel as the reference behind the third person masculine suffix.

Having looked above closely at the subtleties of vv. 16–19, it becomes important to recall the connections with texts from Isaiah noted previously. Two of these pericopes appear to be of utmost importance, Isa 9,17 and 17,4. The exegetical significance of these correlations is underlined by a high concentration of common terminology, by the fact that the metaphors are understood similarly and that some of these parallel lexemes are seldom used elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

Isa 10,16–19 and 17,4–6 משמן (10,16; 17,4), רזון (10,16; רזה in 17,4), כבוד (10,16,17; 17,4), יעקב (10,16; 17,4), בשר (10,18; 17,4), שאר (10,19; 17,5)

Isa 10,16–19 and 9,17 אש (10,17; 9,17), בער (10,17; 9,17), אבל (10,17; 9,17), שית (10,17; 9,17), שמיר (10,17; 9,17), יער (10,18; 9,17), יום אחד (10,17; 9,13)

This accumulation of similarly nuanced common terminology is obviously more than pure coincidence. It is then all the more important that both related texts proclaim judgment on Israel (rather than Judah). These observations may additionally underscore the suggestion made above on other grounds that Isa 10,16–19 was originally intended to be read as part of a prophecy of judgment against Israel and not Assyria.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., משמן only in Dan 11,24; רזה only in Ps 106,15; שמיר and שית only in Isa. See Nielsen, *Hope*, 194–197.

## 2 Text-external evaluation of Isaiah 10,16–19

Beside the text-internal evidence concerning the meaning and purpose of the prophecy, there are a few clues outside this pericope as well which point in the direction outlined above. I consider two of these indications particularly important: the relationship between Isa 10,16–19 and 10,20–23 and the connection between 10,5–15 and 10,24–27.

### 2.1 Isaiah 10,20–23

In the context of the anti-Assyrian prophecy, Isa 10,20–23 sounds particularly strange. It comes as no surprise that this text is generally seen as a foreign body, genetically detached from both the previous and the following units.<sup>50</sup> One is perplexed by its occurrence here and can barely explain the intention of its author.<sup>51</sup> For while, on the one hand, vv. 20–23 have nothing to do with the anti-Assyrian context, as they deal with the future of the rest of »Israel« and the »house of Jacob«, on the other hand, they do appear to intentionally elaborate on vv. 16–19.

The well-known introductory formula ויהי ביום ההוא is used regularly before texts related to an immediately preceding pericope, or more precisely, to a predictive section of a previous prophecy. Here the previous prophecy ended with the phrase: »And the rest of the trees of his wood will be a few so that even a boy could record them« (v. 19). In the ביום ההוא section it is exactly this idea of the remnant (שאר), which is explored in details. Vv. 20–23 actually intend to elaborate on the destruction scene and the שאר in the previous verses, expanding an earlier judgment prophecy with a promise of salvation. While this is certainly not an unusual turn in the textual history of the Isaianic prophecies,<sup>52</sup> it is surprising to observe that Isa 10,20–23 assumed the remnant of v. 19 to refer not to Assyria but to Israel. In other words, the author of vv. 20–23 still read vv. 16–19 as an Israel- and not Assyria-related text. Since this interpretation would be unexpected in the

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Procksch, *Jesaia*, 171. Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 41 sees vv. 20–23 as a late fragment which presupposes 10,16–19 and 10,24–27 on their current location.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 415.

<sup>52</sup> In v. 19 the idea of remnant is used in an entirely threatening context, vv. 20–23 understand it in a positive way: there will be a remnant. The relationship between the two is very similar to the connection between Isa 10,28–34 and 11,1–9: out of the stump of the former forest a new sprout will rise. Much like in the remnant-motif, here, too, a few [נצר / חטר] from the many [סבכין] shall survive. It should also be noted that Isa 17,4–6, which was mentioned above already in relation to 10,16–19, also has the motif of remnant as its central theme.

current context, one is tempted to presuppose that the expansion 10,20–23 was added to vv. 16–19 when this latter had still been part of some other, Israel-related judgment prophecy.<sup>53</sup> Or, to put it differently, Isa 10,16–19 was appended to the anti-Assyrian vv. 5–15 *together with* its expansion in vv. 20–23 at a later date.

## 2.2 Isaiah 10,5–15 + 10,24–27

The fact that Isa 10,16–19 was not originally intended to provide the announcement of judgment on Assyria is also supported indirectly by another observation. The prophecy in vv. 5–15 ends abruptly with rhetorical questions in v. 15 and hardly forms a self-explaining complete unit in itself.<sup>54</sup> We have reasons to believe that v. 15 was originally followed by the announcement of judgment in vv. 24–27, also introduced with  $\text{וְכִי}$ .<sup>55</sup> This implicitly reaffirms the idea presented above, namely that vv. 16–19 + 20–23 form a foreign body within the context of the anti-Assyrian prophecy. If this section is removed, vv. 24–27 fall back to their original place.

Based on the examination above the following conclusions may be formulated. (1) The announcement of judgment in Isa 10,16–19 has the nation of Israel (and not Assyria, perhaps not even Judah) in view. (2) Vv. 16–19 constitute a fragment of some other judgment prophecy. This pericope was not composed for the current context (hence it is not a redactional text) but was relocated from elsewhere. (3) As the vv. 20–23 still read this prophecy as an anti-Israel text, we may surmise that the relocation postdates vv. 20–23. (4) Vv. 5–15 and 24–27 form another original unit. This prophecy was split up with the insertion of vv. 16–19 + 20–23. Therefore this editorial rearrangement of chapter 10 should be seen as a subsequent attempt to interpret earlier Isaianic prophecies.

<sup>53</sup> Note that 10,21 touches the theme of the return of Israel to YHWH, also appearing in the Israel-related 9,12.

<sup>54</sup> With Gray, *Isaiah*, 199, contra Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 406; Barth, *Jesaja-Worte*, 19 n. 11. The contrary presupposition of Wildberger and Barth is based on the premise of the early Isaianic origin of Isa 10,5–15 and the lack of any suitable closure in the proximity of vv. 5–15 which would correspond to this criteria.

<sup>55</sup> So already Koppe, *Jesaias*, 2:183; Procksch, *Jesaia*, 172. Basically similarly De Jong, »Window«: 86 f., 95. Schmid, *Jesaja*, 118 f., also believes that vv. 24–27 are better connected to 10,5–19 (sic!), but he considers them of late origin. Vermeulen, *Isaïe*, 296 f., and Uwe Becker, *Jesaja – von der Botschaft zum Buch*, FRLANT 178 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 205 f., regard Isa 14,24–27 as the follow-up to 10,5–15 (Becker: 10,5–9.11\*), but that is doubtful. Isa 14,24–27 is – unlike 10,24–27 – an intelligible unit within itself.

### 3 Traces of a similar editorial logic

In the compositional history of Isa 10 we are witnessing a clear hermeneutical process: a prophecy originally dealing with the future collapse of the people of YHWH is subsequently relocated and by this reinterpreted as a prophecy predicting the downfall of Israel's enemies. While this may sound exotic at a first sight, the Old Testament provides several other examples which suggest that this was indeed a familiar exegetical procedure in the development of the canon. A clear example of this type of reinterpretation by later editors appears in Jer 50,41–43. This anti-Babylonian text, one of the latest sections of the book of Jeremiah, is almost literally the same as Jer 6,22–24, deriving from the earliest collections of this book. The two segments differ only on one significant point: the addressee of the judgment, »the daughter of Zion« of the early text, was replaced by the »daughter of Babylon«. The one who has once been introduced as the enemy from the north against Zion has now become the victim of another enemy from the north.

With all due respect for the distinctive hermeneutical methodologies in Jer 50 and Isa 10, it is hard to deny the similar in the results achieved through the exegetical process, by revealing a clear rationale by the late editors working on the biblical canon: the prophecies against Jerusalem, in which its enemies implemented God's judgment upon the holy city, can be and have been reutilised as prophecies against the very same enemies. The basic concept behind this interpretative process is probably the well-known principle of proportional retribution (*lex talionis*). World order is restored when the one who had committed a crime is paid back the same measure of punishment.

The fact that this was indeed an influential idea in the reevaluation of Israel's history is underlined by several explicit statements in biblical prophecies dealing with the restoration of Israel after its punishment. Isa 33,1 could be mentioned here as a telling example: »Woe to you, destroyer, while you were not destroyed, and he who is treacherous, while others did not deal treacherously with him. As soon as you shall finish destroying, you shall be destroyed; as soon as you shall cease to deal treacherously, others shall deal treacherously with you.« (cf. also Isa 14,2; Jer 27,7; 30,16; Ez 39,10; Hab 2,8; etc.)

I believe that this theological idea explicitly formulated in prophecies dealing with the restoration of Israel and Judah is also implicitly at work behind the (re?) edition of the early prophecies of Isaiah. Space restrictions do not permit me to work out the details here, but two other examples may shortly be mentioned by way of illustration.

In Isa 29,15–24 an early Isaianic prophecy of judgment against YHWH's people was transformed into a prophecy condemning Israel's enemies by exploding the

structure of the early text and inserting in-between the reinterpreted sections. In another study I have shown that vv. 15 and 21 had once formed the basic core of Isa 29,15–24:<sup>56</sup>

- Isa 29,15      Woe to those, who deeply hide their plans from YHWH,  
and whose deeds are in the dark,  
and say: »Who sees us, who knows us?«
- Isa 29,21      [Woe to] those who mislead one in a (legal) case,  
and for the arbiter at the gate they set a trap,  
and deceive the righteous one with emptiness.

The meaning of the early Isaianic woe-prophecy was turned over when these two verses were detached from each other and, by way of example, v. 20 was inserted before v. 21.

- Isa 29,20      For the tyrant will be no more,  
the scoffer will perish,  
those evilly watching will be cut off ...

The superficial join of the theme of injustice providing a certain connection between vv. 20 and 21 appears as the result of secondary editorial work. The early v. 21 originally focused on injustice in legal cases at the gates of the city, in the prophet's own community. V. 20, however, converts this text to refer to the atrocities committed by a *foreign* perpetrator.

Certainly, it is here not the relocation of an earlier prophecy to a new context by which the late author (editor) achieves his goals. Nonetheless, the purpose and the result of the manipulation of an early Isaianic text is similar to what has been argued for above: to turn a prophecy of judgment against Israel or Judah into a text condemning their enemies.

Another brilliant example for the power of recontextualisation comes from the immediate vicinity of 10,16–19, namely Isa 10,28–34. The problems involved with the interpretation of this section are too numerous to be even listed here.<sup>57</sup> In general this pericope is treated as either an anti-Assyrian<sup>58</sup> or an anti-Ju-

<sup>56</sup> Balogh, »Blind People, Blind God«: 48–69. See this article for a justification of my contentions below.

<sup>57</sup> For the details, see especially Gordon C.I. Wong, »Deliverance or Destruction? Isaiah x 33–34 in the Final Form of Isaiah x-xi,« *VT* 53 (2003): 544–552.

<sup>58</sup> So the overwhelming majority of interpreters: Fohrer, *Jesaja*, 164; Kaiser, *Jesaja*, 234; Schoors, *Jesaja*, 95 (but see 96); Vermeylen, *Isaïe*, 268; Clements, *Isaiah*, 120 f.; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 275; Matthijs J. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Ear-*

daean<sup>59</sup> prophecy. Some suggested that this ambiguity could also be intentional.<sup>60</sup> However, I believe that the hermeneutical conundrum can be more likely be argued to derive from the fact that a prophecy originally addressing the gloomy future of the Judaeen state was removed from its original context and inserted immediately after an anti-Assyrian prophecy. The sense of ambivalence is fuelled by the very tension that the reader perceives between the present setting and the terminology of Isa 10,28–34, which at a closer look appear to contradict each other. The question is which data is accorded priority above the other? Even scholars adhering to the opinion that vv. 28–34 predict the fall of Assyria admit that the ultimate reason for taking this standpoint, namely the current location of the prophecy, is secondary.<sup>61</sup> This speaks against relying on vv. 5–15 and 24–27 as the ultimate interpretive guidelines to these verses. Text-internal and text-external data can be summoned in support of reading Isa 10,28–34 as originally predicting the fall of »Lebanon«, i.e. Jerusalem, by YHWH's mighty one (יְהוָה), the iron-man Assyria (v. 34; cf. 10,15). Beyond its metaphors, this is also the way how Isa 11,1, written as an expansion to these verses, interpreted 10,28–34 as well: from the *stump of Jesse* a new shoot will grow out. The anti-Assyrian tone comes into play only with the relocation of these verses after Isa 10,27.

## 4 Conclusion

We have reasons to believe that the current anti-Assyrian prophecy beginning with Isa 10,5 is not the context for which vv. 16–19 were originally created. Previous research already emphasised the difficulties in viewing this pericope as the original closure of vv. 5–15, but it has also left many problems unanswered. Considering Isa 10,16–19 as a redactional text written in the formation process of Isa 10 appears to be less reasonable than the hypothesis that this pericope was relocated from a different context, where it originally dealt with the total ruination of Israel. Beyond the striking literary connections with similar, Israel-focused Isaianic prophecies, it was argued that this intention is strongly endorsed by the meaning of the metaphors used in these verses. Moreover, circumstantial evidence shows that, upon their addition, vv. 20–23 still considered vv. 16–19 as

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liest *Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies*, VTSup, 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 103f.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 427; Blum, »Testament«: 561f.; Nielsen, *Hope*, 123–130; Wong, »Deliverance«: 550; Schmid, *Jesaja*, 121.

<sup>60</sup> Schmid, *Jesaja*, 121.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Koppe, *Jesaias*, 2:183; Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 425.

an anti-Israel and not anti-Assyrian text. The genetic independence of Isa 10,16–19 (and 20–23) from its current context is indirectly also underlined by the close connection between 10,5–15 and 10,24–27.

In this process of relocation Isa 10,16–19 acquires a new level of meaning, completely inverting its original intention: the judgment once spoken out against Israel has come to denounce the very same nation with the help of whom YHWH had punished his people. Several texts from the Old Testament lead us to conclude that in this prophetic view of Israel's future (or present) the well-known ancient concept of proportional justice (*lex talionis*) and restoration of world order has played an exceptional role. This theology often explicitly formulated within the prophets was suggested to provide here the implicit rationales for the compositional history of the Isaianic tradition.<sup>62</sup>

**Abstract:** This study argues that Isa 10,16–19, located in the context of the anti-Assyrian prophecy, provides essential clues in understanding the formation of the book of Isaiah. While current research often takes this text as a late redactional composition, it is more reasonable to argue that the pericope was relocated by the editors from a prophecy originally threatening Israel with destruction. This level of meaning is endorsed by the specific metaphors used, as well as arguments from the context, most notably vv. 20–23, which still regard vv. 16–19 as an anti-Israel text. As a result of this editorial process, the earlier message of judgment on Israel becomes a threat against Israel's enemy. Restoring world order by inverting fates according to the measures of proportional retribution, often explicitly formulated in prophetic literature, elucidates the rationales behind inverting texts within the editorial process.

**Résumé:** L'étude défend que Isa 10,16–19, placé dans le contexte d'une prophétie anti-assyrienne, apporte des indices essentiels pour la compréhension de la formation du livre d'Ésaïe. Alors que ce texte est souvent considéré dans la recherche actuelle comme un ajout rédactionnel tardif, il semble plus pertinent de penser que la péricope a été déplacée, empruntée par les éditeurs à une prophétie qui menaçait originellement Israël de destruction. Ce niveau de sens est supporté par les métaphores spécifiques qui sont utilisées, ainsi que des arguments tirés du contexte, en particulier les v. 20–23 qui voient toujours les v. 16–19 comme un texte anti-Israël. Le résultat de ce processus éditorial est que l'ancien message de jugement sur Israël devient une menace contre l'ennemi d'Israël. Restaurer

<sup>62</sup> An earlier version of this study was presented originally on 08–07–2014, at the joint meeting of EABS and SBL in Vienna (session Hebrew Bible / Old Testament).

l'ordre du monde en inversant les sorts selon les mesures de rétribution proportionnelles qui sont souvent formulées dans la littérature prophétique permet de comprendre les raisons qui ont poussé à inverser les textes pendant le processus éditorial.

**Zusammenfassung:** Nach dieser Studie bietet Jes 10,16-19 als Abschnitt innerhalb der antiassyrischen Prophetien wesentliche Anhaltspunkte, um die Entstehung des Buches Jesaja zu verstehen. Während die gegenwärtige Forschung den Text häufig einer späten redaktionellen Komposition zuordnet, erscheint es sinnvoller, dass der Abschnitt von einem Redaktor aus einer Prophetie herausgelöst wurde, welche Israel die Zerstörung androhte. Diese Bedeutungsebene bestätigt sich sowohl beim Blick auf die verwendeten Metaphern als auch auf den Kontext, vor allem die Verse 20–23, die V.16–19 immer noch als einen antiisraelitischen Text ansehen. Als Ergebnis des redaktionellen Prozesses wird aus der früheren Botschaft eines Gerichts über Israel eine Drohung gegen die Feinde Israels. Die Sinnhaftigkeit der Umkehr des Textsinns innerhalb des redaktionellen Prozesses wird verdeutlicht, wenn man den Gedanken der Wiederherstellung der Weltordnung durch eine Umkehrung der Schicksale entsprechend der gerechten Vergeltung zugrunde legt, wie er oft in prophetischer Literatur formuliert wird.