

From Isa 5 to Isa 27: A prophetic metaphor for God's acting in ordinary Israelite prophecy and in apocalyptic thinking

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The biblical canon consists of a rich variety of texts expressing experiences of the Divine. These experiences cover a time span of more or less one millennium, if we consider the earliest material to date back into the 8th century BCE, the latest towards the end of the 1st century CE. That causes the phenomenon of substantial differences in the way, context and particularly in the cultural and social environment in which the proponents, authors and redactors of the biblical texts experienced the same God, but in diverse situations and often on even contradictory occasions within their life. Nevertheless there is also a clear thread running through the whole canon and with this through all these experiences of God which come to their expression throughout the various texts, and that is the common sense for interpreting God's ongoing seeking of and taking care for his people as well as his repeated revelations as *one* coherent salvation-history of JHWH with the humans and the world.

The famous vineyard-song of Isa 5:1-7 is one of the biblical motifs which was picked up by several later writers handing down Old as well as New Testament texts. With this study I want to show how this element was reworked within the Book of Isaiah itself and how the way of using the vineyard-parable can be read as an indicator for each time and circumstances of its usage. Comparing the relevant texts and contexts with each other can therefore be seen as a crosscultural encounter within the Hebrew Bible itself illuminated by one special motif.

My Friend's Song for his Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7)

- (1) Now let me sing for my friend
a song of my friend¹ for his vineyard,
a vineyard belonging to my friend
in a very fruitful hill².

¹ The Old Testament uses יָדִיד as well as רֵדִד almost only in the meaning "beloved" or "friend" of God (cf. Watts (1985) 54; Wildberger (1972) 167. The Song of Songs of course is an exception of this rule.

² קֶרֶן literally means "horn"; arabic language-traditions often use the term "horn" for "hill" (cf. the well known

- (2) He proceeded to dig it, then to clear it of stones³,
then to plant it with choice vines⁴.
Then to build a watch-tower in it
and even a winepress he hewed out in it.
He waited for it to produce grapes,
but then it made stinking things⁵.
- (3) And now, inhabitant of Jerusalem
and man⁶ from Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard!
- (4) What was there more to do for my vineyard,
that I did not do with it?
Why did I wait for it to produce grapes,
but then it bore stinking things⁷?
- (5) And now, please let me announce to you
what I am going to do for my vineyard!
Its hedge removed –
it shall be open to grazing.
Its wall broken down –
it shall be open to trampling.
- (6) So I will make it a waste⁸.
It will not be pruned,
not be hoed.
It shall surely grow up as thorns and thistles.

term “Horns of Hittim” for the hills in Galilee, where the troops of Saladin defeated the Crusaders), which is absolutely suitable for a vineyard; cf. Oswalt (1986) 149.

³ סָקַל means “to stone”; the here used piel has privative function (cf. Gesenius [²⁸1995] § 52 h) and therefore is to be translated as “to clear of stones”.

⁴ שָׂרָק points to very good wine-grapes, which were planted in famous regions within Israel and Judah (e.g. in Edom or in the Soreq-valley near Jerusalem; see Koehler – Baumgartner [³2004] 1269).

⁵ בִּאֲשִׁים is a hapax legomenon; but it seems appropriate to the given context to relate it to בִּאֲשׁ “have a bad smell”, “stink” (cf. Koehler – Baumgartner [³2004] 103).

⁶ The singulars “inhabitant” as well as “man” are to be understood in collective meaning.

⁷ Cf. n.5.

⁸ The exact meaning of בָּתוּה is uncertain; this root occurs only here, in 2 Chr 34:6 and in Isa 7:19 (cf. Koehler – Baumgartner [³2004] 159). The above translation “waste” follows Wildberger (1972) 163-164, who himself following Driver reconstructed this meaning from the akkadic *batû* “destroy”.

And upon the clouds I will lay a command
not⁹ to rain on it.

- (7) For the vineyard of JHWH of Hosts
is the House of Israel,
and the man of Judah
is the planting of his delight.
When he waited for justice:
behold bloodshed!
For righteousness:
behold a cry of distress!

The structure of this song in general as well as the distinction of different voices within this short text are very complex. We have at least three speakers and all of them use first person.

The first speaker in v.1-2 is the prophet Isaiah himself and he speaks on his own behalf to his audience, but states clearly that he will sing for his friend and even more about the vineyard of his friend. For the friend the words *רַיָּה* and *יְרִיָּה* are used, both pointing to JHWH himself being this friend of the prophet¹⁰, which is not surprising within a prophetic writing. At least with the beginning of v.2 we get evidence, that even if “the prophet is clearly the Singer and Yahweh the Beloved, the song has more to do with the relationship between the Beloved and his vineyard than between the prophet and God“¹¹. The owner of the vineyard – JHWH – did everything within his power to get best possible results from his viticulture: First of all he dug up the ground. “This is the first deep breaking of the hard ground that is necessary to prepare it to receive the young and tender plants. The next step in rocky Palestine was to clear the ground of stones.”¹² After these excellent and troublesome preparations the winegrower only planted the best („choice“) wines. And he brought his vineyard to absolute perfection by building “first-class installations”¹³, such as a watchtower in the midst of it¹⁴ and a winepress right inside the vineyard. Because the vineyard was made this extravagantly, the owner of course could have “high hopes for it and great expectations that his work on it and

⁹ For the usage of *לֹא* to negate the following verb see Gesenius (28/1995) § 165 b.

¹⁰ See above n.1.

¹¹ Seitz (1993) 47.

¹² Watts (1985) 55.

¹³ Watts (1985) 55.

¹⁴ Normally the winedressers only built simple shelters of palm-branches for the watchmen (cf. Wildberger [1972] 168; Watts [1985] 55), but of course a watchtower built of stones was much better and much more effective.

his expertise in viticulture would produce grapes that would make good wine”¹⁵. Therefore his disappointment and disapproval of his vineyard when recognizing that it only produces “stinking things” instead of good grapes is more than understandable.

In v.3-4 now the speaker changes and we have the voice of the winemaker himself. The situation of the speech is that of a courthouse; the winemaker appears as the accuser and asks the audience in their role as the jury or witnesses what more he could have done for his vineyard. The answer seems to be clear: Nothing! The place of this court must be Jerusalem, since the mentioned audience is addressed as “inhabitant of Jerusalem and man from Judah”, perhaps Judeans, having vineyards of their own. It is obvious right now, that at the end the vineyard will be condemned and that at least “the owner knows exactly what he will have to do with his own vineyard. The hearers can only testify to and confirm the validity of his actions to follow”¹⁶.

The now following v.5-6 contain the pronouncement of the final judgement against the vineyard, and this judgement first of all sounds very harsh: It will be the complete destruction of the whole vineyard. The speaker of this judgement is nobody else than the winemaker himself, but for the readers or hearers of the text it becomes more and more clear, that the supposed voice of the winemaker in reality is the voice of JHWH. “God himself speaks the harsh sentence of Judgment”¹⁷! This at least becomes obvious with the mentioning of the last part of the punishment: Any winemaker may remove a hedge, break down a wall or refuse pruning and hoeing of the plants (v.5.6a) by his own power, but no human being is able to command the clouds not to rain (v.6b).¹⁸ This lays only in God’s power.

In v.7 the prophet Isaiah again rises his own voice and makes it clear: The vineyard in fact is only a metaphor for the people of JHWH; they received this loving care of JHWH, but by forsaking him they had brought out only “stinking fruits”! And therefore the above pronounced judgement is a divine judgement against Israel, and the “inhabitant of Jerusalem and man from Judah” (v.3) have spoken against their own people. The last two stichoi describe the sin of Israel against the expectation of JHWH in the form of a brilliant poem¹⁹:

¹⁵ Widyapranawa (1990) 21.

¹⁶ Widyapranawa (1990) 22.

¹⁷ Seitz (1993) 47.

¹⁸ Cf. Widyapranawa (1990) 22; Wallace (2004) 119.

¹⁹ “The repetition of the verb קָוָה (‘to wait, hope’) in vv.2, 4 and 7 ties the interpretation into the earlier description of the vineyard owner’s activity. *Yhwh*’s waiting for justice is comparable to the owner’s waiting for the vineyard to produce grapes” (Wallace [2004] 120).

“He looked for *mishpat* (‘justice’), but behold, *mispah* (‘bloodshed’); for *tsedaqah* (‘righteousness’), but behold, *tse’aqah* (‘a cry’)!”²⁰ With this the “stinking things” are clearly defined as injustice and unrighteousness.²¹

The thus given identification of Israel with the vineyard makes the message for the Israelites obvious: Final destruction! Israel was God’s delight and he had worked for righteousness and justice,²² but instead of this he only found oppression and violence,²³ which had to and also did lead to judgement. With this the “Song of my Friend’s Vineyard” gives a setting “for the funeral of a nation and its people who had once held such great promise as the chosen and nurtured people of God. But their fruit was a bitter disappointment which finally necessitated God’s withdrawing his protection and support.”²⁴ The song seems to be written in the early time of Isaiah’s public appearance shortly before the Assyrian catastrophe²⁵ in order to predict and justify the judgement to come over the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It leaves the audience in the anxious situation of an uncertain future for the former beloved people of God. With such a message it is a typical piece of early pre-exilic Israelite prophetic tradition. Its final goal is to show the Israelites that their actual behaviour in social matters as well as before God will after all lead into an overall national catastrophe.

The New Vineyard-Song (Isa 27:1-6)

- (1) In that day
 JHWH with his sword will visit
 the hard and the great and the strong one,
 against Leviathan, a fleeing serpent,
 and against Leviathan, a twisting serpent.

²⁰ Widyapranawa (1990) 22; the here mentioned ‘bloodshed’ and ‘cry’ become reality in the following section of the woe oracles in Isa 5:8-24 (cf. Huber [1996] 76).

²¹ Cf. Wallace (2004) 120.

²² “Der Begriff *Recht* ... bezieht sich auf die Rechtsprechung und das ihr zugrundeliegende Recht. Für den Propheten hat der Begriff vor allem mit der Gleichheit aller vor dem Gericht, mit dem Recht der Rechtlosen und Rechtsschwachen zu tun, das zu vertreten, Sache des Königs und des Hofes war. ... Der Begriff *Gerechtigkeit* meint eigentlich ein soziales Verhalten, das so geartet ist, dass es dem Mitmenschen gerecht wird. Das ist eine Sache der Einstellung den verschiedensten Mitmenschen gegenüber. ... Gerechtigkeit meint Solidarität, das Vertrauen, das auf Gegenseitigkeit beruht. Es ist neben dem juristischen Begriff des Rechts der ethische Begriff.” (Seybold [1999] 118-119).

²³ Cf. Oswalt (1986) 154-155.

²⁴ Watts (1985) 56.

²⁵ Cf. Wildberger (1972) 166-167; Watts (1985) 54.

- And he will kill the monster
which is in the sea.
- (2) In that day
a fruitful vineyard (there will be) –
sing to it²⁶.
- (3) I, JHWH, am its keeper!
Moment by moment I water it!
Lest one will approach against it,
night and day I watch it!
- (4) Wrath – I have none.
Who will give me²⁷ thorns, thistles? -,
in the battle I would set out against it.
I would burn them altogether.
- (5) Unless²⁸ one lay hold on my protection,
making peace with me.
Peace let one make with me.
- (6) In the coming days²⁹
Jacob will take root,
Israel will blossom and bud.
And they will fill the world's surface with fruit.

It is obvious that the author of these verses refers to the vineyard-song in chapter 5, that he somehow creates this song as a counterpart to the former and that therefore also here the vineyard is metaphor for the people of Israel and Judah, the winemaker himself is a metaphor for JHWH. Was Isa 5:1-7 a piece of judgement-prophecy, so is Isa 27:2-5 a masterpiece of salvation-prophecy. “Both songs portray Israel as precious to Yahweh”³⁰ (5:1 ‘fruitful hill’, 27:2

²⁶ Literally לה means “(sing) to her”; but since כרם is masculine – so also the usage in Isa 5 – as in Isa 5 we translate it by keeping the English grammar as neutral. Maybe the feminine form here derives from the metaphoric meaning for “Israel”, which is often shown as a female counterpart to JHWH. But anyway there is to be noticed that כרם also in Lev 25:3 appears as a feminine, as Wildberger (1978) 1007 and Sweeney (1987) 59 have stated.

²⁷ Here the literal meaning – against many commentators – has to be kept and understood as a weakened optative expression; cf. Gesenius (²⁸1995) § 151 b.

²⁸ For the understanding of אֵין as “unless” if followed by a jussive, see Oswalt (1986) 492.

²⁹ Hebrew הַבָּאִים “the coming ones” is against BHS (which corrects to בָּא הַיָּמִים) and many others most easily to be understood as a breviloquence of הַבָּאִים הַיָּמִים; so among others Wildberger (1978) 1013; Watts (1985) 345; Oswalt (1986) 492.

³⁰ Watts (1985) 349.

‘fruitful vineyard’) and well kept by him (5:2a-d; 27:3a), but then whereas in 27:3b he waters it moment by moment, in 5:6e-f he commands the clouds not to rain on it, whereas in 27:3c-d he protects the vineyard from any evildoers, in 5:5c-6a he himself appears as the destroyer of it, whereas in 27:4b-d he burns down any thorns or thistles in it, in 5:6c he lets them come up and grow, whereas in 27:5b-c he offers peace to all who turn back to him, in 5:7e.g he expects justice and righteousness³¹ from his people.

There is a broad consensus among scholars that the song as such only consists of the v.2-5, whereas v.1.6 build a later frame on it. Less agreement can be found in the question about the original setting of this song. On the one hand it was often rightly argued that within the body of the song nothing – neither in vocabulary nor in style – points to an eschatological or even apocalyptic horizon, but on the other hand the song was very seldom interpreted as an independent piece of prophetic poetry by keeping aside the now given context of Isa 24-27. If one tries to do this, one may notice, that the main message of the text as well as the probable setting are mostly comparable with the famous exilic salvation-prophecies of a better future for Israel in Deutero-Isaiah (cf. Isa 40; 43 e.a.). Therefore, as a first step of the following interpretation only v.2-5 shall be taken into our consideration.

The initial-formula “in that day” in v.2 shows that this song is part of a prophetic vision about a time to come in the (near) future.³² Israel is predicted a flourishing and fruitful existence and the audience is invited to join in this song of hope and optimism. As Wildberger states, owning a beautiful vineyard is always a reason for happiness and pride and therefore the invitation to sing to it is appropriate.³³ JHWH with this confesses that Israel still is his pride, which (v.3) causes his special care on it. Moment by moment he waters it and day and night he guards it. “It is not some lesser being, some hireling, but the Lord himself who watches over his own”³⁴, in order to protect it against any potential evildoers. With those “approaching against the vineyard” Israel’s enemies are obviously in view. They will not have the power any longer to harm Israel because of this special protection by JHWH himself. V.4a then presents the main message of the whole song: “Wrath – I have none!” The time of JHWH’s anger has passed and now he “is able to look at his people with nothing but fatherly affection”³⁵. This text, on the one hand, originates – as above stated – from the same deutero-isaianic tradition as Isa 40 e.a., and presents itself, on the other hand, somehow as a contrafactum to the first vineyardsong in Isa 5; whereas there JHWH puts all his energy into the de-

³¹ Cf. Wildberger (1978) 1009; Watts (1985) 349.

³² Against Sweeney (1987) 58 e.a. the formula **הַיּוֹם הַהוּא** must by no means always point to an eschatological moment. Even within the Book of Isaiah it quite often means an indefinite future time, but within this world and for the present people (cf. for instance Isa 2:20; 3:18; 4:1.2; several times in c.7.8 etc.).

³³ See Wildberger (1978) 1009-1010.

³⁴ Oswalt (1986) 494.

³⁵ Oswalt (1986) 494.

struction of the vineyard, he here uses it for the protection of and care about it. Any enemies – now symbolized as thorns and thistles (v.4b-c) – he would immediately come across with war by burning them down. But behold, there is nevertheless still also a chance for them, namely (v.5) to make peace with JHWH³⁶ by gaining שְׁלוֹמִים in him. In this predicted time to come there will be no room for enemies and destroyers of Israel, but a real chance and salvation for all who convert to JHWH and who accept his sovereignty. Such a kind of salvation-theology of course “is not without an element of judgment”³⁷, but in contrast to the first vineyard-song, judgment is avoidable here, if one agrees in JHWH’s offering שְׁלוֹמִים.

With this message including its characteristic way of expression, the new vineyard-song – as well as the first vineyard-song – are pieces of common Israelite prophecy. But this time it is spoken into the exilic community in Babylon. The author without any doubt belonged to the deuteroisaianic school, took the vineyard-song of Isa 5 as a model and created a contrafactum to it. The goal of his work was to give the exiled Israelites hope, faith and an optimistic view to the future to come, as the deuteroisaianic texts do in general.

But this was not the last step of development of the vineyard-song-tradition in Isaiah. That however has to be seen in later post-exilic times, when this new vineyard-song had been integrated into its now given context by an early apocalyptic – or at least eschatologically oriented – redactor.

The New Vineyard-Song within the context of Isa 24-27

Already a long time ago scholars noticed, that the unit of Isa 24-27 in its given form must be the product of an early apocalyptic or at least a strictly eschatological redaction. As early as the 19th century Delitzsch spoke of these chapters as being “eschatological and apocryphal”³⁸ and only a short time after him within Old Testament scholarship it became common to call the passage the “Isaiah-Apocalypse”. The final redaction of it cannot be dated earlier than the 3rd century BCE.³⁹ At least with this redaction also the new vineyard-song was embedded into its now given context and therefore since then has got an eschatological (or even apocalyptic) touch, as the tradition automatically began to read the vineyard-song in the light of its new setting.

³⁶ For the enemies of Israel as the original addressees of this offer, see Wildberger (1978) 1011; Oswalt (1986) 495; Seitz (1993) 198.

³⁷ Wallace (2004) 121 (n.17).

³⁸ So in the 19th century german written Isaiah-commentary, here cited in its english reprint Delitzsch (1996) 275.

³⁹ Cf. for instance Kilian (1994) 142 e.a.

This setting as a whole of course is the entire piece of Isa 24-27, framed by the undoubtedly apocalyptic units Isa 24:1-13; 27:12-13; the very frame of the song itself, which directs its new understanding, consists of Isa 27:1.6.

V.1 starts with the initial-formula “in that day”, which in the given context points to an apocalyptic or at least to an eschatological time and moment. In order to let the absolute salvation-time for Israel become reality, JHWH has to kill the mythological chaos-dragon, called “Leviathan”⁴⁰, which is described to be hard, great and strong, a fleeing and twisting serpent and a monster. All these attributes – against some commentators⁴¹ – clearly point to one and the same monster, which is derived from the ancient Ugaritic myth of Baal defeating Yam, which itself was part of the common ancient Near Eastern mythological topic of a struggle between a high god and a sea- or chaos-dragon. As many scholars have stated, no concrete power around Israel is in view,⁴² but the monster is a cipher for “all those earthly powers which oppose God and his people”⁴³. Before JHWH can establish his final kingdom on (heavenly) Mount Sion, all the evil and negative elements have to be exterminated forever. To express this apocalyptic theological thought, the author used the well known motif of God fighting against the chaos-dragon and putting it to death,⁴⁴ but as it is the case within Old Testament usage of this metaphor in general, the dragon has already lost most of its mythological power against JHWH. It appears as God’s creature which is even used as a tool by him (Psa 104:26) experiencing a process of depotentization throughout the five occurrences within the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁵

Read in the light of v.1, the vineyard-song (v.2-5) now appears in a new apocalyptic meaning as well. “In that day” now also in v.2 refers to that eschatological act and shows

⁴⁰ “Leviathan” occurs 5 times within the Hebrew Bible (Ps 74:14; 104:26; Job 3:8; 40:25; Isa 27:1) as the mythological chaos-dragon; the name derives from the root לָרַב “gathering itself in folds”, “twist”, “being wreathed”. See for evidence Lipiński (1984) 521; Paul (1997) 778.

⁴¹ Cf. for example Widyapranawa (1990) 159 e.a.

⁴² So Wildberger (1978) 1006; Oswalt (1986) 490-491; Widyapranawa (1990) 159; Seitz (1993) 198, whereas for instance Watts (1985) 348 argues for Tyre being symbolized by the monster.

⁴³ Widyapranawa (1990) 159; Lipiński (1984) 523 had already expressed this thought in similar words: “Jes 27,1 ist die letzte und vielleicht entscheidende Stelle über Leviathan im AT. Hier personifiziert Leviathan die bösen Mächte, die am Tag JHWHs vernichtet werden. ... Der Verf. dieses Verses, der wohl in der persischen Zeit lebte, adaptierte einen alten mythologischen Text, um die Vorstellung auszudrücken, daß JHWH schließlich über alle triumphieren wird.“

⁴⁴ How this motif of creation-theological origin could be easily reused by apocalyptic authors got a convincing explanation by Day (1992) 295: “In Isa 27:1 we read of an eschatological defeat of Leviathan by Yahweh. That a conflict originally associated with creation should become an element of eschatological imagery is explained by the principle *Urzeit ist Endzeit* ... which is attested elsewhere in apocalyptic literature, as in the notions of Paradise regained and a new heaven and a new earth.”

⁴⁵ So, for instance, Schreiner (1961) 995: Im AT des mytholog. Gehalts entleert, wird L. Bild der von Gott erschaffenen und beherrschten urweltl. Kräfte u. endzeitl. böser Weltmächte“.

God's final destruction of all the evil powers as the necessary precondition for the peaceful, safety and well cared living conditions the song presents. So the vineyard now symbolizes Israel and Judah as the restored rest in heavenly Zion; nobody and nothing can harm it anymore, because JHWH would not allow any negative power (v.3c-d) and the thorns and thistles of v.4 in this context can be understood "in a figurative sense as referring to internal disturbers among the people themselves. They will immediately be removed and burnt up. This would then be the final purification."⁴⁶ But all those people from among the nations, who are willing to make peace with JHWH and Israel, are welcome to join this luxurious and safe life to come (v.5).⁴⁷

V.6 then concludes the unit by summarizing again the status of wellbeing and fruitfulness of this community on Mount Zion. From there it once will "spread out to cover the whole earth"⁴⁸. Whereas the vineyard of the first song (Isa 5:2.4) produced only "stinking things", now the whole earth will be full of the fruit of this new vineyard.⁴⁹ With this the ancient promise to Jacob, being a blessing for the world, comes to its final fulfilment.⁵⁰ The new vineyard-song in this secondary setting outside an originally ordinary piece of exilic Israelite salvation-prophecy arose to a voluminous eschatological song on the splendid world to come after the great day of the Lord. This also pictures the final fulfilment of Israel's eternal determination as God's chosen people, chosen not only *among* the nations, but finally also *for* the nations, or as Sweeney expressed it: "Until Israel is not restored, full cosmic order is not complete"⁵¹. The main message is exactly what is so characteristic of apocalyptic thinking: "God is the sole sovereign of the universe, and while evil and destruction now seem to threaten the principles of justice upon which his order is founded, they will not prevail. God will triumph and those who have kept faith with him through dark days will triumph with him. ... His people may await that day with joy."⁵²

⁴⁶ Widyapranawa (1990) 160; cf. also Huber (1996) 80-81.

⁴⁷ Seitz (1993) 200 stresses exactly this point to link the thus understood new vineyard-song with other eschatologizing prophetic texts: "Zion will be restored as promised and take on its new role as capital of the nations. All peoples are invited to the banquet of fat things God has prepared for just this occasion."

⁴⁸ Oswalt (1986) 495.

⁴⁹ Cf. Wallace (2004) 122.

⁵⁰ See Widyapranawa (1990) 161.

⁵¹ Sweeney (1987) 65.

⁵² Oswalt (1986) 491.

Conclusions

The Jewish-Christian concept of human history as salvation-history of God with his people, which has its foundations in the Hebrew and Christian Bible and is kept and further developed by the theological traditions of the churches as well as the Rabbies, automatically causes the fact, that the way of divine revelation differs from time to time, from situation to situation, from place to place, from culture to culture. If God is the creator of the whole universe, the leader and companion of his people through the times and also the salvator of them, then he also has to be aware of the different cultures and human developments in general and in the therefore various ways of perceiving God's revelation and reacting on it in particular.

The ways of experiencing God and his care are dependent on one's cultural environment, on one's education and circumstances of life, on one's present inner condition and on one's mental and physical possibilities. This is even more the case concerning human expression of the individually or collectively perceived acting of God. The Divine and its kind of activity can only be described by analogies, which themselves of course are highly dependent on the concrete cultural and temporal setting.

In Isa 5:1-7 and especially Isa 27:2-5 as independent text as well as within its given context of Isa 24-27 we have a splendid example of how ancient Israelite theologians experienced the same God speaking to his same people in three absolutely differing contexts and eras within their history. These experiences of the Divine were put into words by way of the same metaphor, the vineyard, but nevertheless the main message and theology expressed in these texts are totally different in each context and are even contradictory. In literary criticism this technique is called "Intertextuality" and more specialized "relecture"⁵³. But read from the perspective of the concrete authors and redactors within their specific political, social and temporal circumstances, it can also be understood as a crosscultural encounter within the Hebrew Bible itself and moreover within one writing of the later canon. Such an encounter is both helpful and necessary to keep God's word of salvation vivid throughout the centuries and to respect that his ongoing acting in the world from the very beginning till the very end at least is to be seen and believed as a salvation-history for his creation as a whole.

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⁵³ See the detailed study of Huber (1996), esp. 71-81, which takes also the extrabiblical usage of the vineyard-metaphor into its consideration.

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