

# The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse: An Eschatological or a Now Event?

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There is a general consensus in contemporary biblical research concerning the manner in which the first collection of the prophecies in the book of Isaiah (chs. 1-12) reaches its conclusion.<sup>1</sup> It is agreed, for example, that the prophet's song of thanksgiving in chapter 12 brings the first collection of prophecies to an appropriate conclusion. This climactic chapter, in turn, is preceded by a diptych: the woe oracle concerning Assyria that is to be hewn down "like mighty trees" (10:5-34) and the promise of salvation for the shoot of Jesse, upon whom the spirit of YHWH shall rest and who will be raised as an ensign for the nations (11:1-16).<sup>2</sup> This important insight is rooted in the observation that "the tall and lofty trees of Lebanon" (10:33-34) and "the shoot from the stump of Jesse" (11:1) form a counterpoint.<sup>3</sup> This counterpoint has its redactional complement at the beginning of the book of Isaiah: "the day of YHWH against all that is proud and lofty . . . the cedars of Lebanon / the oaks of Bashan . . . the high mountains / the lofty hills" (2:12-14)<sup>4</sup> and "the branch of YHWH" (4:2), which is interpreted as the holy remnant in Jerusalem that YHWH "cleansed . . . by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning" (4:3-4).

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised version of an earlier article ("'Lebanon with Its Majesty Shall Fall. A Shoot Shall Come Forth from the Stump of Jesse' [Isa. 10:34-11:1]: Interfacing the Story of Assyria and the Image of Israel's Future in Isaiah 10-11") that was published in: *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy. Festschrift for Henk Leene*, edited by F. Postma, K. Spronk, and E. Talstra, Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities (Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker Publication, 2002). The author thanks Carl J. Bosma for the revision.

<sup>2</sup> Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 277 and 303. John N. Oswalt (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 260-61 and 277) also reads 10:5-11:16 as a larger unit.

<sup>3</sup> This is not a recent insight. Campegius Vitringa was among the first to elaborate on this contrast with references to, for example, "the loathed branch" in Isa. 14:19 (*Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiae . . .*, (Herbornae Nassaviorum: Nicolai Andreae, 1715), 381-82). The fact that the MT has a *setuma* after 10:34 and begins a new *sefer* with chapter 11 and that 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has a vacat before chapter 11 does not argue against this insight.

<sup>4</sup> For the connection between 10:27-34 and 2:6-22 see: Erhard Blum, "Jesajas prophetisches Testament. Beobachtungen zu Jes 1-11," (I) ZAW108 (1996): 557-68, (II) ZAW109 (1997): 19-29.

Three arguments support the suggestion that 10:5-11:16 be read as a diptych. First, more recent biblical research has uncovered a number of important correspondences between chapter 11 and chapter 10:5-34.<sup>5</sup> We will turn our attention to these correspondences at a later point in this article.

Second, 10:5-34 and 11:1-16 are syntactically connected. The clause initial *wqatal* verb  $\text{נִצְּרָה}$  in 11:1, for example, clearly connects the following with the preceding<sup>6</sup> so that the tree imagery of 10:33-34 continues.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the majority of clauses in 10:34-11:16 are connected to each other by the conjunction *waw* (see appendix).

Third, the close syntactical and thematic connection between 10:34 and 11:1 is supported by the earliest text tradition. In manuscripts from the Second Temple period, the conclusion of chapter 10 and the beginning of chapter 11 are quoted without interruption. The following example from the Dead Sea Scrolls suffices to illustrate this point: “as the Prophet Isaiah said: ‘And they shall cut [the most massive of the forest with iron and Lebanon, with its magnificence, will] fall. A shoot will emerge from the stump of Jesse [ . . . ] the bud of David’” (4Q285 Frag. 5).<sup>8</sup>

Although it goes without saying that the two aforementioned panels of the diptych in 10:5-11:16 have emerged as the result a long and complicated process,<sup>9</sup> the purpose of this article is not to seek to reconstruct this complicated redactional process. Instead, this essay aims to demonstrate that a recognition of the compositional function of 11:1-16 as the counterpoint to 10:5-34 has important implications for the interpretation of the temporal sequence in 11:1-16.

Isaiah 11:1-16 has traditionally been read as an eschatological prophecy. Messianic and christological interpretations of “the shoot of Jesse” have contributed to this decontextualized reading. Whether one still awaits the Messiah or one recognizes him in Jesus of Nazareth, Isaiah 11 anticipates, according to this explanation, a completely new future in which God’s involvement with the world

<sup>5</sup> Oswalt (*Isaiah 1-39*, 261), for example, notes the repetition of the name “Assyria” in 10:5, 12, 24; and 11:11, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:378, n. 1. Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew-Part Three: Syntax* (Rome: Pontifical Institute Press, 1991), 396 (§ 119c), the *wqatal* verb  $\text{נִצְּרָה}$  in 11:1 is not used to denote an absolute beginning.

<sup>7</sup> Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen (*The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12*, Biblical Interpretation Series, 34 [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 194) calls attention to the phonetic link between the noun  $\text{נִצְּרָה}$  in 10:33a and the verb  $\text{נִצְּרָה}$  in 11:1b.

<sup>8</sup> Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vols. 1-2, (Leiden: Brill, 1997-1998; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 642-43; cf. 4Q161 Frags.8-10 (ibid., 314-17). It is possible that the contrast between the fate of the cedar, which follows the forest in its downfall, and the growing vine in 2 Baruch 36-37 is also rooted in an association with Isa. 10:34-11:1. I am grateful to my colleague Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar from the University of Groningen for providing a list of places in which the Dead Sea Scrolls quote Isa. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Blum (“Jesajas prophetisches Testament,” 567) is even of the opinion that “11,1-15 von vornherein in Anbildung an 10,27-34 konzipiert ist.”

is to reach its completion. Isaiah 10:5-34, by contrast, cannot be interpreted eschatologically because the fall of Assyria constitutes a single event in history.

However, this eschatological interpretation of 11:1-16 conflicts with the compositional function of this passage as the counterpoint to 10:5-34. In the final redaction of the book of Isaiah, these two units were combined as a diptych without making a single change at the temporal level. Indeed, the temporal perspective in 10:5-11:16 is extremely simple: first Assyria falls (10:5-34) and then, in contrast, a shoot comes out from the stump of Jesse (11:1).<sup>10</sup>

The absence of an essential change in temporal sequence between 10:5-34 and 11:1-16 is obvious from the fact that the present-future narrative sequence<sup>11</sup> in 10:33-34 and in 11:1-9 establishes a single chain of events. The basic elements of this sequence of events in 10:33-11:9 may be outlined as follows:

- <sup>10:33</sup>Look, the LORD, YHWH of host is about to lop the boughs . . . ;  
and the tallest trees are about to be cut down. . . .
- <sup>34</sup>and he will hack down the thickets . . .  
and Lebanon with its majesty<sup>12</sup> will fall.
- <sup>11:1</sup>and a shoot shall come out. . . .
- <sup>2</sup>and the Spirit of YHWH shall rest on him. . . .
- <sup>3b</sup>and he shall not judge . . .  
and he shall not decide . . .
- <sup>4</sup>and he shall judge . . .  
and he shall decide  
and he shall smite . . .
- <sup>5</sup>and righteousness shall be . . .
- <sup>6</sup>and the wolf shall dwell . . .
- <sup>8</sup>and the nursing child shall play. . . .<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The preceding context (10:33-34) suggests that the conjunction ׀ on the w<sup>c</sup>qatal verb נִכְרְתוּ has a contrastive sense. Cf. GKC § 154a; Paul D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1992), 219.

<sup>11</sup> For the present-future narrative sequence see: Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), § 197(a).

<sup>12</sup> With respect to the prepositional phrase בְּאַדְרֵיָהּ, "with its majesty," in 10:34, the adjective אֲדָרֵיָהּ itself, the absence of a definite article, and the location of the word between the subject and the verb serve to support the interpretation of the preposition בְּ as a *beth essentialiae* (Eduard König, *Das Buch Jesaja* [Gütersloh: Bertelsman, 1926], 152; Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, vol. 2, *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations*, OBO 50/2 [Fribourg-Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986], 80-81).

<sup>13</sup> With respect to the present-future narrative sequence in 10:33-11:9, it should be noted, first of all, that the lead clause in 10:33a begins with the deitic particle *hinneh* and a lengthy introduction of a new subject, the LORD, YHWH of host, whose impending future actions are indicated directly by the active participle מְכַרְתֵּם in 10:33a and implicitly by the passive participle נִכְרְתוּ in 10:33b. Moreover, these lead clauses are followed by a series of clauses in 10:34-11:9 that are marked primarily by clause initial *wqatal* verbs (וְנִכְרְתוּ [10:34a]; וְרָעוּ [11:1a]; וְנָחַהּ [11:2a]; וְשָׁפַט [11:4a]; וְהוֹכִיחַ [11:4b]; וְהִדָּבָהּ [11:4c]; וְהִדָּהּ [11:5a]; וְגָר [11:6a]; and וְשִׁעֲשַׁע [11:8a]) or by disjunctive clauses with *yiqtol* verbs (וְשָׁפַל [10:34b]; וְפָרְהָהּ [11:1b]; וְשָׁפֹט [11:3b]; וְיִכְרִיחַ [11:3c]; וְיָמִית [11:4d]; וְרָבַץ [11:6b]; וְתָרַעְתִּיהָ [11:7a]; וְרָבַצְנָהּ [11:7b]; and וְאָכַל [11:7c]). Finally, I consider 11:3bc to belong to this series because of its contrast with 11:4ab (cf. Van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader*, 187, 197).

<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt  
or destroy. . . .<sup>14</sup>

This sequence of events is rounded off in 11:9 by the following emphatic *ki*-clause with the *qatal* verb  $\text{מָלֵא}^{\text{ל}}\text{אֶרֶץ}^{\text{ל}}\text{דָּעַת}^{\text{ל}}$ : “Truly, the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH” (11:9c).

The fact that 10:33-11:1-9 present a single series of events without any change in the temporal sequence leads to the conclusion that the temporal sequences of 10:5-34 and of 11:1-16 merit closer scrutiny and that the traditional eschatological interpretation of 11:1-16 must be reconsidered. To that end, we will first examine the temporal sequence of 10:5-34 (section I). Next, we will analyze the temporal sequence of 11:1-16 (section II). Finally, we will interface the results of this analysis with the traditional eschatological interpretation of 11:1-16 (section III).

### I. The Temporal Sequence of Isaiah 10:5-34

The first panel of the diptych (10:5-34) under investigation exemplifies an experience of time that is unique to the epic genre. A characteristic of this genre is the emergence of regressions and progressions within the narrative sequence. Such regressions and progressions do not have to be explicit. Indeed, it is even possible that the progression of time becomes diffuse. In this case, the readers are left to determine for themselves whether the narrator is looking forward or backward. As a result of this literary technique, the cohesion between the various episodes of the epic becomes more prominent.

Theoretically, this temporal patterning may also be used in prophetic texts that deal with the future and not with the past. To qualify, however, such prophetic texts must possess a narrative form. Our ensuing analysis will show that this temporal patterning was employed in the first panel of the diptych, Isaiah 10:5-34.

To facilitate our analysis of the temporal sequence in the first panel, we note that 10:5-34 may be divided into three subsections: 10:5-19; 10:20-27, and 10:28-34.<sup>15</sup> The first and third subsections focus on the judgment of arrogant Assyria while the second subsection assures YHWH’s people that a remnant will return from Assyria. Together, therefore, they form an A (10:5-19; Assyria)-B (10:20-27; remnant)-A’ (10:28-34; “Assyria”) compositional pattern.<sup>16</sup> For this

<sup>14</sup> For 11:9ab as direct speech with God as the speaker see: Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 315; Van Wierengen, *The Implied Reader*, 194.

<sup>15</sup> Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 277. Our subdivision of the text does not agree with the MT. While the latter does indeed have a *petucha* after 10:19, it also has a *setuma* after 10:23 and 10:32. IQIs<sup>a</sup> likewise has a vacat after 10:19 and a paragraph after 10:26. However, such subdivisions are based on different grounds. From a text-linguistic perspective, 10:20-27 constitutes a compositional unit (cf. Van Wierengen, *Implied Reader*, 171, 176-77).

<sup>16</sup> Isa.10:5-19 and 10:28-34 clearly belong together because, in sharp contrast to 10:20-27, they lack any reference to Israel.

reason, we will first analyze the temporal sequence in the first section (10:5-19), then in the third section (10:28-34), and finally in the second section (10:20-27).

At first reading, the first subsection (10:5-19) of 10:5-34 looks in general from the present to the future. However, a closer reading reveals that, rooted in YHWH's intention to chastise Israel, the experience of time in 10:5-19 oscillates between Assyria's current power and her future punishment in such a way that the reader is still able to look back and forward whenever a shift is made to another moment on the temporal axis.

In the opening verses (10:5-11) of this first section (10:5-19), for example, YHWH announces judgment against both Israel and Assyria, the latter being the instrument of his judgment: "Woe Assyria, the rod of my anger . . . against the people of my wrath I command him" (10:5-6). While the Assyrian king indulges boastfully in self-aggrandizement in the present, he includes in this boast the immediate past and the immediate future: "He says: 'Are not my commanders all kings? . . . As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols . . . shall I not do to Jerusalem. . . as I have done to Samaria?'" (10:8-11).

Moreover, the short prose announcement of judgment in 10:12 shows clearly that YHWH's judgment against Assyria is to take place at a later date: "It will be when the LORD will finish all his work on Mount Zion, I shall punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria." The shift in person from "the LORD" to "I" in 10:12 brings YHWH's intervention so near that we are able to look back from this perspective upon what the king has said in 10:13-14: "By the strength of my hand I have done it."<sup>17</sup> In a manner similar to the first quotation (10:8-11), the king of Assyria once again mixes both past and present in the second quotation (10:13-14): "I have done it . . . I have understanding. I remove the boundaries . . . I bring down . . . My hand has found."

After the quotation of the king's second boast, the time perspective returns once more in 10:16-19 to the moment at which judgment is announced (cf. יָבֹא in 10:16). Through this subtle move, the prophet exposes the absurdity of the king's arrogant boast (cf. 10:15).

The third subsection (10:28-34) of 10:5-34 locates the reader a little further along the same temporal axis, namely, to the execution of the judgment against Israel that was already announced by YHWH in 10:6 and articulated boisterously by the arrogant Assyrian king in 10:7-11. As for the temporal relationship between the two subsections, the first (10:5-19) and third (10:28-34) subsections appear to exhibit no significant differences in terms of the temporal perspective.

In fact, the third subsection serves to bring the main event of the text closer to present reality. In the first segment (10:28-32), for example, we witness for

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<sup>17</sup> From a text-critical perspective, there is no reason to harmonize this shift in persons (Barthélemy, *Critique*, 74-75), especially because seventeen such instances are found in the book of Isaiah (cf. Eduard König, *Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik in Bezug auf die biblische Litteratur* [Leipzig: Weicher, 1900], 249).

the first time the panic instilled by the Assyrian army as it marches toward Jerusalem. In this segment, we even hear the voices of both the hostile soldiers (10:29b) and the people of Jerusalem (10:30).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, the next segment (10:33-34) emphatically calls attention to the fact that YHWH's intervention against Assyria is already underway:

“Look, the LORD, YHWH of host is about to lop the boughs with terrifying power  
The tallest trees are being cut down. . .  
He will hack down the thickets of the forest with an axe.”

Instead of creating a temporal perspective of two sequential periods (there may be war now, but the enemy will ultimately fail), the dramatic tension established by the simple juxtaposition of Assyria's present military success in 10:28-32 and of its impending destruction in 10:33-34 gives the impression that the two events are occurring almost simultaneously. In the midst of its apparently insuperable military advance, the enemy has already been overthrown.<sup>19</sup>

The second subsection (10:20-27) is linked to the preceding passage by way of the catchword *remnant* in 10:19 and 10:20. However, it contains a prophecy that is different from 10:5-19 and 10:28-34. This prophecy announces the return of “the remnant of Jacob” (10:21).

In our analysis of the temporal sequence in the prophecy concerning the return of the “remnant of Israel/Jacob” (10:20-22a), we note, first of all, that it is introduced by a specific temporal formula, “It will be on that day” (10:20), which refers back to the phrase “in one day” in 10:17. While this formulaic expression clearly has a redactional function (e.g., the transition to prose),<sup>20</sup> it does not place the following event (10:20-27) on an essentially different temporal level (e.g., in the last days) than that of the preceding event (10:5-19).<sup>21</sup> The fact that, according to 10:19, only an insignificant remnant of Assyria remains inspires the redactor to draw comparisons with the more fortunate state of the remnant of Israel in 10:20-22a. The concept *remnant* thus serves as a contrapuntal term, and it is for this reason that the passage lacks chronological temporal succession.

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<sup>18</sup> Van Wieringen, *Implied Reader*, 199-201.

<sup>19</sup> The verb forms in 10:28-34 establish a subtle temporal distinction between 10:28-32 and 10:33-34. The predominance of *qatal* verbs in 10:28-31 presents the Assyrian advance as complete in the present (present perfect). Moreover, the present-future narrative sequence in 10:33-34 (see n. 13) presents YHWH's intervention as an impending future event that begins in the present.

<sup>20</sup> Simon J. De Vries, *From Old Revelation to New: A Tradition-Historical and Redaction-Critical Study of Temporal Transitions in Prophetic Prediction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 49. In this connection, it is important to note that the same formula recurs in 10:27. According to De Vries (40), this same formula in 10:27 functions as an “epitome.” He defines as “a succinct distillation and summation on the part of the authoritative interpreter . . . regarding the central significance of a past event.” In this case, the repetition of the formula in 10:27 forms a frame with its occurrence in 10:20.

<sup>21</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003), 93-94.

Next we call attention to the fact that even in the prophecy of the return of the remnant of Jacob the imminent Assyrian attack referred to in 10:24-27 forms an integral part of the total picture, although from a different perspective. “My people, who dwell in Zion” have no reason to fear the Assyrian invasion (10:24) because it shall not last long (10:25) and because YHWH shall smite Assyria as he did Egypt in the past (10:26). In fact, without this digression concerning Assyria in 10:24-27, the remnant passage in 10:20-22a would have no thematic relationship with the preceding and following passages. Without 10:24-27, it would be left as an isolated island in the middle of chapter 10.<sup>22</sup> Such, however, is not the case because, in addition to the repetition of the catchword *remnant* in 10:19, 20, 21, and 22, the pivotal second unit (10:20-27) also contains a subtle but important semantic association with 10:5-19 by way of the adjusted significance of the concept *rod/staff* (*shebeth/matteh*). In the first passage (10:5-19), Assyria is the rod/staff in YHWH’s hand (10:5); in the present passage, Assyria itself employs a rod/staff to smite God’s people (10:24; cf. 10:20: “the one who struck him”). Significantly, the announcement that “the remnant of Israel” shall return to YHWH (10:20-22a) precedes the brief announcement of judgment over the entire earth in 10:22b-23. This universal judgment includes not only Israel but also, and in particular (cf. יִצְרָאֵל in 10:24), the announcement of Assyria’s oppression and ultimate downfall in 10:24-27. As a result of the above important semantic association, 10:20-27 serves to elaborate a specific event that has its parallel in 10:5-19. “The judgment of Israel, the judgment of Assyria and the rescue of Israel’s remnant (vv. 20ff.) are all to occur synchronously as the realization of Yahweh’s comprehensive intention.”<sup>23</sup>

We conclude our analysis of the temporal sequence in the first panel (10:5-34): From the perspective of the epic experience of time, the paralleling of the remnant passage (10:20-27) with the Assyria passages (10:5-19, 28-34) has its roots in the phenomenon of “multiple threads” occurring within a single narrative.<sup>24</sup> This means that a number of different and subordinate activities enjoy, at least with respect to time and place, a degree of independence within the context of a broader, more inclusive event. However, it is evident that these activities are not completely independent of one another because they clearly exhibit points of interconnection. In the prophetic design of Isaiah 10:5-34, the episodes related to Assyria and the return of Jacob’s remnant are placed side by side as a single history instigated by YHWH, although in reality they occurred chronologically one after the other. “The return of the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God” and “the destruction (of Israel and Assyria) overflowing with righteousness” constitute two elements of a single climactic event that YHWH is actively implementing (10:21-23). Both elements are brought

<sup>22</sup> Isa. 10:24-27 constitutes primarily a redactional unit with 10:20-23 and not with 10:28-34 because “your / my people” (10:22, 24) is clearly the collective main theme.

<sup>23</sup> De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> For this phenomenon see: Frank Christiaan Maatje, *Literatuurwetenschap. Grondslagen van een theorie van het literaire werk*<sup>8</sup> (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1974), 156-57, and the literature referred to therein.

into close contact with one another by the fact that the time between Israel's punishment and the destruction of Assyria—experienced in reality as interminably long—is reduced from YHWH's perspective to almost nothing in 10:25: “For in a very little while my indignation [at Israel] will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their [Assyria's] destruction.”

The synchronization of different events in Isaiah 10:5-34 is thus placed on a different level by the insertion of 10:20-27 between 10:5-19 and 10:28-34. Oscillation along the temporal axis of the Assyrian narrative thread merges into oscillation along the temporal axis of the remnant narrative thread. Here, too, we encounter the interchange of narrative moments brought about by semantic elements such as “no more lean on the one who struck them, but lean on YHWH” (10:20), “to return” (10:21), “to make full end, as decreed” (10:23), and “in a very little while” (10:25). The interchange is underscored by the broadening of the temporal sequence to include the memory of Israel's history in which Assyria's punishment is placed on the same lines as that of Midian and Egypt (10:26).

## II. The Unique Temporal Sequence of Isaiah 11

The presentation of the temporal sequence of Isaiah 11 exhibits a unique structure. Our ensuing analysis of this chapter will highlight seven features of its uniqueness.

The first feature is the striking absence of a temporal indicator at the beginning of this chapter (11:1). As we noted above in the introduction to this article, syntactically chapter 11 connects seamlessly with 10:33-34 in spite of the fact that the passage of time in 10:5-34 as a whole is a rather complex affair. The absence of temporal indicators between 10:33-34 and 11:1 transforms the felling of tall trees in 10:33-34 and the emergence of “the shoot of Jesse” in 11:1-2 into one single event. Both stem from “YHWH of hosts”: He cuts down majestic Lebanon, and he lets his spirit rest on the shoot of Jesse.

A second important feature is the suppression of any reference to Assyria in 10:33-34, and the unexpected mention of Jesse in 11:1 (cf. 11:10). The fact that the temporal perspective does not shift in 11:1 leaves one with the impression of some kind of literary maneuver, a sort of suppression on the part of the redaction. This goes hand in hand with the completely surprising introduction of a new figure in 11:1, “the shoot of Jesse.”

While it is evident that the terms *shoot* and *trees* in the preceding verses form part of the same semantic element, the reference to Jesse instead of David in 11:1 comes as a surprise.<sup>25</sup> This unexpected substitution may be an attempt to downplay the dynasty of David (cf. Isa. 7:2, 13).<sup>26</sup> Because the house of David did not fulfil its expectations, a new and more radical beginning was essential.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; Hos. 3:5; and “the root of David” in Rev. 5:5.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 1:372; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 278-79.

Just as surprising as the emergence of this name is the disappearance of the name Assyria in the transition (10:33-34) from 10:5-34 to chapter 11. In this transition Assyria is replaced by the toponym Lebanon, a metaphor for pride (10:34; cf. Isa. 2:13; 14:8; 37:24; Jer. 22:6, 20, 23; Ezek. 31:3-11; Ps. 29:5-6). In fact, the name Assyria is already missing from the preceding graphic and dramatic sketch of the advancing army (10:28-32). As a world power, it no longer features in chapter 11 because it has been reduced to the place from which “the remnant of his people” are to make their departure (11:11, 16; cf. 10:15: “the River”).

A third feature is the striking absence of a temporal indicator before the prophecy of peace in 11:6-9. As a result of this omission, there is also no shift in temporal perspective in the shoot prophecy as a whole (11:1-9). The reader expects a temporal formula—even an elaborate one such as “Behold, the days are coming” (Isa. 39:6; Jer. 16:14; 23:5, 7; 31:27, 31, 38)—prior to the announcement of peace in the animal kingdom (11:6-9). However, there is none! In 11:1-9, the image of the future shifts from a situation that *potentially* belongs to the existing world order, namely, the righteous governance of the shoot (11:3-5), to a world order that differs radically from our present world order, namely, the complete absence of hostility among living beings (11:6-9).

However one interprets the harmony of the animal kingdom in 11:6-9—as an allegorical reference to harmony among the nations or as an ideal portrayal of the restoration of the original creation or the habitability of the land of Israel—it nevertheless presupposes a complete rupture with this world.<sup>27</sup> Even if one allows for the fact that righteous judgment and the subjugation of animals that threaten the social order was one of the tasks of a king in the royal ideology of the Ancient Near East, Isaiah 11:1-9 still introduces a different degree of reality by assigning an active role to the shoot of Jesse in the establishment of justice (11:1-5), while the harmony of the animal kingdom in 11:6-9 seems to emerge of its own accord. In spite of this, the difference is not reduced by a temporal formula to the dawning of new eon. The connection between 11:6-9 and 11:1-4 consists of nothing more than a syntactical sequence similar to the one that connects 11:1 with 10:33-34.<sup>28</sup> Like 11:1a, 11:6a begins with a *wqatal* verb (וָקָטַל). Consequently, there is no break in the temporal sequence between 11:1-5 and 11:6-9.

A fourth feature is the double occurrence of the familiar formulaic temporal indicator “it will be on that day” in 11:10 and 11:11, which was also used in 10:20 and 10:27. The successive occurrence of this formulaic expression in 11:10 and 11:11 stands in sharp contrast to the absence of temporal indicators in 11:1-9.

<sup>27</sup> Erich Zenger, “Die Verheissung Jesaja 11,1-10. Universal oder partikular?,” in: *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten and Marc Vervenne, BETL, 132 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 137-47.

<sup>28</sup> It is indeed striking that both the MT and IQIs<sup>a</sup> vv. 1-9 also do not separate 11:1-4 and 11:6-9.

The temporal formula, “it will be on that day,” separates 11:10 from 11:1-9 and serves in 11:11 to introduce a new segment (11:11-16).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in both instances, the formulaic expression is used to insert prose additions between poetic texts (11:1-9 and 11:12-16).<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, there is no compelling reason to suggest that its use in 11:10 and 11:11 places the events that follow in 11:12-16 in a different temporal order from that of the shoot episode (11:1-9), certainly not in an eschatological order.<sup>31</sup> In 11:10 and 11:11, the double occurrence of the formulaic temporal phrase has primarily a redactional function in that it adds explicitly a new element to the prophecy and locates the event in question in the same future as the preceding event, without indicating a time-gap between the two. More specifically, both texts, 11:10 and 11:11, serve to synchronize the fact that the shoot of Jesse, in addition to its vitally important task for Israel, shall also be an “ensign for the peoples” (11:10).<sup>32</sup> The significance of this additional aspect of the shoot’s task is explicated in 11:12-16.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, it can hardly be the case that successive periods of time are intended at this compositional juncture in Isaiah 11.<sup>34</sup> Neither the twofold task of the “ensign for the peoples”—namely, to occasion the inquiry of the nations in 11:10 and to instigate the return of “Israel’s dispersed” in 11:12—nor the sequence of events that constitute this return occupy a principally different place in the perspective of time. The ransoming and ingathering of the remnant in 11:11-12, the end of the conflict between Ephraim and Judah in 11:13, the subjugation of the neighboring nations in 11:14, YHWH’s punishment of Assyria and Egypt in 11:15, and the subsequent opening of a highway for the remnant in Assyria in 11:16 all belong to the same temporal sequence.

A fifth feature of the temporal sequence in chapter 11 is the occurrence of the unusual phrase *a second time* in 11:11.<sup>35</sup> From the perspective of the subdivision of time, the statement “YHWH will apply his hand a second time to

<sup>29</sup> The MT and 1QIs<sup>a</sup> segment 11:10 and 11:11-16, the former with a petucha and the latter with a vacat and a paragraph before and after 11:10. Consequently, 11:10 serves as a pivotal link between 11:1-9 and 11:11-16. Cf. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, 315-16; Childs, *Isaiah*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 125.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to explain the relationship between 11:11, a prose text, and 11:12-16, a poetic text.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. De Vries, *Old Revelation*, 120-21.

<sup>35</sup> The term “a second time” (שֵׁנִיָּה) is sometimes emended to read “to raise” (infinitive of רָאָה) because a complementary infinitive in relation to verb יִשְׁפֹּיֵן, whereby the suffixed noun יָדָה would constitute the object, is lacking (cf. BHS). From a text-critical perspective, however, such an emendation is unjustified (Barthélemy, *Critique*, 83-84).

acquire the remnant of his people” in 11:11 is of crucial importance. The expression, *a second time*, refers to the intervention of YHWH’s hand in the preceding confrontation between Judah and Assyria, especially in the refrain: “For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still” (Isa. 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4; cf. also 1:25; 5:12; 10:5). This interpretation of the phrase is supported by the fact that YHWH’s hand in 11:11 is placed in sharp contrast to that of Assyria in chapter 10 (10:10, 13-14, 32). Through this contrastive juxtaposition, 11:11 depicts the return from exile as a new episode that occurs side by side with YHWH’s punishment of Israel by means of Assyria. Moreover, it also brings emphatically to the fore the fact that 11:1-16 functions as a pendant of 10:5-34.

In defense of our proposed interpretation of the phrase *a second time*, attention is called to the following fact: Biblical scholars generally interpret this phrase as a reference to the first manifestation of YHWH’s might during the exodus from Egypt. Ibn Ezra and Redak, however, together with a number of modern authors, have pointed out that the first return from exile was not complete at the time and that a second return was thus necessary.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, although the unusual Hebrew construction in 11:11 corresponds with the LORD’s hand motif in texts that refer to the exodus event (Ex. 3:19; 6:1; 9:3; 13:9, 14; 14:31; 15:17; Num. 33:3; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8; 9:26; 26:8; Jer. 32:21; Ps. 136:12; Dan. 9:15), this allusion is not the dominant one in this context.<sup>37</sup> This fact affords us the right to interpret the term *a second time* in connection with the hand motif from the immediate Isaianic context, as we have argued above.

A sixth, and in the present context, a novel feature is the literary manipulation of time in 11:12-16. The ingathering of Israel’s dispersed results in a number of salutary consequences: the end of the conflict between Edom and Judah (11:13), the subjugation of the neighboring nations (11:14), YHWH’s punishment of Egypt and Assyria (11:15), and the opening of a highway for the remnant in Assyria (11:16).

Commentators usually explain this reversal in ethnic hostilities on the basis of political relationships between the peoples of Palestine during and after the

<sup>36</sup> Avraham I. Rosenberg, *Isaiah I: Translation of Text, Rashi and Commentary*,<sup>2</sup> *Miqra’ot Gedolot* (New York: Judaica Press, 1982), 110; cf. August Dillmann, *Der Prophet Jesaja*<sup>6</sup> (für die sechste Ausgabe herausgegeben und vielfach umgearbeitet von R. Kittel), KEH, V (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1898), 120; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja. 1. Teilband. Jesaja 1-12*, BKAT, X/1, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 467; ET: idem, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 491.

<sup>37</sup> From a linguistic perspective, the *hiphil* of the verb  $\text{פָּדַן}$  with the noun  $\text{יָד}$  as the direct object can mean: “to apply the hand” (cf. Barthélemy, *Critique*, 83-4; Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah I-II*, [1875;<sup>2</sup> reprint, Grand Rapids 1976], 256; König, *Stilistik*, 165; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 284-85). As a result, the infinitive construct  $\text{לְפָדוֹן}$ , “to acquire, to recover,” in 11:11c acquires greater emphasis.

exile.<sup>38</sup> Besides this diachronic explanation, however, a more synchronic approach seems appropriate. It is also possible to read these verses as a retrogression in Israel's history.<sup>39</sup> The journey back through Israel's history in 11:15-16 ultimately reaches its beginning, the liberation from Egypt (11:15): "YHWH will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind; and will split it into seven channels, and make a way to cross on foot." The layout of this retrospective journey explains why Assyria occupies second place. The land is not mentioned by name; it is only alluded to metaphorically as "the River," thus forming the pendant of "the sea of Egypt." It only becomes evident in the final verse that the journey back through Israel's history to the exodus from Egypt is intended to make the promise of the return of the remnant from Assyria credible (11:16).

A seventh feature is the selective organization of events in 10:26-27 and 11:15-16. A striking correlation becomes apparent at this juncture with the remnant passage in the first panel, 10:20-27. The chastisement of Assyria is compared in this passage with that of Midian and Egypt, but the said intervention does not lead to an announcement of a return from Assyria, only to the removal and destruction of its yoke. The return from Assyria does become part of the discussion in the second panel, in the continuation of the appearance of the shoot (11:15-16). There would thus appear to be an ellipsis at work here, or rather a selective organization of events. The return from Assyria means more than the simple reversal of a hostile act of power. It is part of the reorganization of the world of the nations (11:10-16) that besides righteous judgement and harmony among all living beings (11:3-9) will characterize the shoot's governance.

To summarize: The seven features of the literary construction of the temporal sequence in 11:1-16 lead to the conclusion that the time chart of this chapter differs clearly from that of Isaiah 10:5-34. The shoot section (11:1-10) lacks the temporal oscillation and evidence of multiple narrative threads so charac-

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<sup>38</sup> The theme of jealousy and hostility between Ephraim (Samaria) and Judah in 11:13, for example, can be more specifically situated at a time immediately following the first return during the Persian or the Maccabean period (11:13). Moreover, the references to neighboring nations (Philistines, the people of the east, Edom, Moab and Ammon) in 11:14 serve to illustrate historically well-known conflicts between the latter and the population of Judah, both those who had remained and the returnees, during the power vacuum that emerged after the fall of Babylon.

<sup>39</sup> The hostility between Ephraim and Judah relocates the reader to the time of the divided monarchy with the prophets clearly forming the background (Isa. 7:1-17; 9:8, 20; 28:1-3; Jer. 31:6; Ezek. 37:15-19; Hos. 5:8-15). The hostility with the Philistines dates from an earlier time, the period of the judges, Saul and David (Judg. 10:6-11:29; 13:1-5; 15:1-16:31; 1 Sam. 4-7; 13-14; 17; 23:1-5; 28-29; 31; 2 Sam. 5:17-25). Judges and kings also waged war against Edom, Moab, and Ammon (Judg. 3:12-30; 1 Sam. 11; 12:9; 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:2, 12-13; 10:1-5; 11:1; 1 Kings 11:15-18; 2 Kings 3; 8:20-22; 14:7; Amos 1:11, 13). In addition, the people of the east, i.e., Midian, threatened Israel during the time of Gideon (Judg. 6:3,33; 7:12; 8:10). In Jer. 25:4, 10 the phrase, *people from the east* refers to Ammon and Moab. In the period prior to this, however, as Israel took possession of the land, these nations were already part of the drama in that they refused to allow Israel safe passage (Num. 20:14-21; 22:2-24:25; Deut. 23:3-6; cf. Ex. 15:14-15; Judg. 11:12-29).

teristic of 10:5-34. The reason for this lies in the fact that the passage sketches a situation rather than a future event. The section dealing with the return of the remnant (11:11-16), however, places the various phases thereof on a temporal axis that takes the reader on a retrogressive journey through Israel's history that concludes in the Exodus through "the sea of Egypt" (11:13-15). The return from exile in Assyria is thus given firm foundations (11:16). This return is presented as a mirror image and serves to underscore the global task of the shoot. He is to be "an ensign for the peoples" (11:10) because he will reassemble Israel from the mighty Assyrian empire (11:11-12), just as YHWH himself once assembled his people in liberating them from slavery in Egypt (11:16).

### III. The Emergence of the Shoot: The Eschatological or the Now Event?

So far, our analysis of 10:5-11:16 has demonstrated that the narrated time in Isaiah 10:5-11:16 forms a literary construct that consists of a number of different phases. The two panels of this literary construct, namely the one concerning Assyria (10:5-34) and the other concerning the shoot (11:1-16), appear to deviate from one another in this regard. Nevertheless, they form a temporal continuum.

We have shown above that the first panel (10:5-34) of the diptych in 10:5-11:16 is essentially epic in nature. This panel consists of *two interlocking narratives*, one concerning the expansion and ultimate downfall of the Assyrian world power (10:5-19 and 10:28-34) and one concerning the return of a remnant out of Jacob to YHWH and its liberation from the yoke of Assyria (10:20-27). As we noted above, together these subsections form an A (10:5-19; Assyria)-B (10:20-27; remnant)-A' (10:28-34; "Assyria") compositional sequence.

It is clear that the passage of time within each of these narratives is not consistently successive. Depending on its particular function in the design of the each of these narratives, the passage of time is sometimes progressive and sometimes retrogressive. In the two subsections that deal with Assyria (10:5-19; 10:28-34) the temporal perspective flashes consistently to and fro among past, present, and future depending on the actants (participants in a narrative), especially when their speech is quoted. The compositional structure of the pivotal remnant subsection (10:20-27), however, is determined by a selective, anticipatory passage of time. In this subsection, the return of the remnant to YHWH (10:20-22a) precedes the judgment (10:22b-25) and punishment of Assyria (10:26) and the ultimate destruction of its yoke (10:27).

The combination of the first two narratives (10:5-19; 10:28-34) in the first panel (10:5-34) by way of the catchword *remnant* (10:19, 20) is both a familiar literary procedure as well as a theological construction that distorts the actual sequence of history. Given the fact that Babylon ultimately stepped into the political scene with a new "yoke," it can hardly be claimed that Assyria's downfall in 612 B.C. had resulted in the return of a remnant in northern Israel to YHWH (cf. Isa. 10:20-21 with 2 Kings 17:24-41) or in the political liberation of

“my people in Zion” (10:24-27). It was only after the fall of Babylon in 538 B.C. that a remnant returned, not to northern Israel but to Judah. While it would be correct to argue that Babylon took on the characteristics of Assyria in the book of Isaiah (chs. 13-14), this is not yet the case in chapters 1-12, the first major segment of the book. In 10:5-11:16, *Assyria* stands for Assyria and nothing more. In short, the first panel serves to synchronize two distinct episodes in Israel’s history. More specifically, the punishment of Assyria, the return of the remnant to YHWH, and the liberation of Zion are reduced to a single interconnected event by the prophetic interpretation of Assyria as an instrument of punishment for Israel in the hand of YHWH, an instrument YHWH planned to destroy on account of its arrogance.

The first segment (11:1-9) of the second panel (11:1-16) is more descriptive in nature, rather than strictly narrative in genre. Only in the pivotal verse (11:10) of the second segment do we encounter the beginning of a narrative event as such: The shoot of Jesse draws the nations to itself (11:10). According to the second segment (11:11-16) of the second panel, this important event will result in the return of a remnant from Assyria (cf. 11:11-12 and 11:16). Significantly, the second segment takes the disappointing history of YHWH’s people as its model and runs through its phases in reverse order as a sort of healing exercise. The three major threats that undermined Israel’s existence—the partition of North and South, the endless struggle with the neighbouring nations, and the oppression in Egypt—are invoked in the same order (11:13-15). Assyria (the River) is thereby paralleled with Egypt. Israel thus returns to her origins, liberation from Egypt, in order to experience this foundational event once again in the exodus from Assyria.

In view of the above data, we are now in a position, first of all, to evaluate the meaning of the temporal continuum of Isaiah 10:5-11:16. The most surprising aspect of the literary construction of narrated time in Isaiah 10:5-11:16 is that the association of the shoot panel (11:1-16) with the Assyrian panel (10:5-34) does not exhibit a break or transition in time. The felling of the lofty trees of Lebanon, Assyria, in 10:33-34 and the emergence of the shoot of Jesse in 11:1-10 are presented as one single event initiated by YHWH. The relationship between the two is no different from any other announcement of salvation and punishment. From a diachronic perspective, this connection is clearly the result of a redaction that understood the downfall of the oppressor and the emergence of the spirit-bearing shoot as a single, inseparable event. Although distinct and unique in actual time, these events are molded together in the context of narrative time into a single temporal continuum. Ultimately it is the *continuity of the history of YHWH’s dealings with his people* that is at stake here.

Next, we must discuss the mutual harmonization of 10:5-34 and 11:1-16. The literary transformation of the substantial gap in time between the Assyria episode and the emergence of the shoot into a sequence of events in which the one follows immediately after the other goes hand in hand with the mutual harmoniza-

tion of both narratives at a variety of different levels. This is particularly evident with respect to the primary actants in what they do and what they experience:

- The promise: “The root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples” (11:10, cf. v. 12) is set in contrast with the rumor that the Assyrian aggressor during his lightening campaign already “stands at Nob” (10:32).
- Assyria’s hostile gesture (“He waves his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion”) will meet with YHWH’s punitive response in 11:15: “He will wave his hand over the River.”
- The shoot shall judge with righteousness and shall smite the godless “with the rod of his mouth” (11:4), in contrast to the Assyrian king who, although he serves as the “the rod of my (YHWH’s) anger” sent against his people (10:5-6), ascribes his power to his own divine pretensions (10:7-15).
- The Assyrian king appeals to his own “wisdom and understanding” (10:13), while YHWH’s “spirit of wisdom and understanding” rests upon the shoot (11:2).
- The intervention of the shoot serves to benefit “the remnant of his (YHWH’s) people” (11:11, 16) after its conversion (10:20-22), while nothing more will remain of Assyria’s wood than an insignificant remnant (10:19).
- Just as the first panel places Assyria and Egypt on the same line as Israel’s arch enemies (10:24-26), so YHWH’s judgement is intended for both peoples (11:15, 16).
- Finally, the metahistorical confrontation between YHWH’s degenerate instrument, the king of Assyria, and the shoot of Jesse equipped with YHWH’s spirit, takes place in one and the same location, Mount Zion / Jerusalem (10:12 [24], 32), which shall ultimately serve as “my (YHWH’s) holy mountain” (11:9).<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, we must also raise several important questions: Does the literary construction of time in 10:5-11:16 place the newness of salvation in jeopardy? Or more specifically, does the literary construction of time in 10:5-11:16 deprive the future of its newness with respect to the present? Does such a representation of the relationship between judgment and liberation fit appropriately into the design of the postexilic authors and their plan to provide, by way of the Scriptures, a sense of hope to the people who know too well that the promises made by the prophets are far from fulfilled? Does such a procedure in the book of Isaiah not run counter to the scheme of “former things and new things” that lies at the foundation of the construction of dramatic time in Second Isaiah (chs. 40-55)?<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> One can add the following subordinate analogy to the primary agreements: A boy can write down the number of the remnant of Assyria’s trees (10:19) / a little boy shall lead the calf, the lion and the fatling (11:6).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hendrik Leene, *De vroegere en de nieuwe dingen bij Deuteroseja, (Amsterdam VU Uitgeverij, 1987)*; idem, “History and Eschatology in Deutero-Isaiah,” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, 223-49.

The last question in this series of questions certainly constitutes an important exegetical problem. The prophetic expectation of salvation in Isaiah 40:5-55 exhibits a different perspective on time from that of Isaiah 10:5-11:16. Whether both sections arrive at a point of agreement in the book of Isaiah is a question that is beyond the scope of this article.

In any event, for Israel in exile, with its own spiritual needs, the combination of punishment (in all its phases) with the advent of a just governance into a single event most likely constituted a highly salutary paradigm, creating a simultaneity of judgment and salvation that served to interrupt the ongoing tribulation in the form of the exile and its consequences. It is here that we encounter the uniqueness of Israel. The exile had deprived this people of its identity in time and space: divine election and promised land. At the same time, however, Israel created a new existence for itself. Even from abroad, Israel considered the territory from Dan to Beersheba, around Jerusalem as YHWH's dwelling, to be its own territory and perceived its irreversible national downfall as a necessary evil that sowed the seeds for ultimate new growth. Of course, other nations maintained a similar desire for recovery from almost total obliteration. Israel, however, enjoyed the additional support of having documented the history of its own downfall as an act of justification on the part of YHWH and having prepared a blueprint of its new future as a project of the same God. It is for this reason that the generation of returning exiles provided the story of Israel's past with a prophetic quality and based the construction of their vision of the future on their memory of past events. "Elle a pensé deux temporalités à la fois pour naître à l'histoire avec la vitalité qu'il on sait."<sup>42</sup>

In addition, we must interface the understanding of time in Isaiah 10:5-11:16 with the classical Christian understanding of eschatology. Classical Christian eschatology tends to be dominated by the paradigm that creation and salvation history will ultimately reach their final goal and completion. Inherent to this perspective is a linear periodization of time that maintains not only a line from a specific beginning through a continuation of successive events to a definitive end but also insists on an end that goes far beyond any representation of human existence in terms of its quality. Such an end implies the realization of YHWH's plan for Israel and the world. The New Testament expectation of God's kingdom transformed this periodization of time into the all-but-necessary framework of eschatology.

The question remains, however, whether the Old Testament necessarily understood the complete realization of God's plan for Israel and the world in terms of "still suffering, not yet redeemed." Exegetical research of the twentieth century arrived at the following conclusion in this regard: The application of the dogmatic concept of eschatology to the Old Testament was an inappro-

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<sup>42</sup> François Smyth-Florentin, "La mémoire et l'invention," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 84 (1996): 167-76, esp. 169.

appropriate methodological move.<sup>43</sup> Israel's salvific expectations did not depend so much on the notion of two eons but tended to focus their attention much more on the history of YHWH's dealings with his people as a whole. Rooted in such a concept of history, Israel was able to distinguish between God's one-time act of liberation and his final and definitive intervention. It maintained the expectation that God would finally and definitively resolve the situation of Israel and the nations in the cosmos he had created according to his own design. For this reason the concept *irreversible* is more appropriate to God's plan than the concept *eschatological*.

The following considerations appear to be justified against such a background. When we recognize the fact that Isaiah 10:5-11:16 represents the fall of Assyria and the emergence of the shoot as one single event, this does not deprive chapter 11 of its decisive and enduring character. The kingdom of the spirit-bearer constitutes the completion of YHWH's plan, not because it is located at a later point than the Assyrian era along the temporal axis but because of its qualitatively surplus value and its irreversibility. A series of characteristics make this surplus value all the more evident: the new beginning stemming from Jesse and not David (11:1) and the endowment of the shoot with the fullness of YHWH's spirit (11:2), which results in just judgment (11:3-5) and harmony among living beings (11:6-8). This irreversibility is also apparent from the fact that the elimination of all evil on the mountain of God will fill the entire world with the knowledge of YHWH (11:9).

Finally, the literary construction of the temporal sequence in 10:5-11:16 obliges us to examine its concept of God and its understanding of time. The combination and mutual harmonization of the past and the future, of Assyria's dominance and of the governance of the shoot, do not respond only to a literary canon and to the spiritual needs of the exile. Israel's very concept of God and his interaction with time lies at its foundation.

First, we will describe the concept of God in the two panels of Isaiah 10:5-34 and 11:1-16. In these two panels YHWH is clearly the primary actor. Rather than passively permitting Assyria's military expedition, he actively sends Assyria against his own people (10:6) because he is determined to initiate and complete his judgement as well as to bring an end to Assyria's arrogance (10:22-23). While the close association between Assyria's downfall and the emergence of the shoot prevents reference to YHWH in the latter instance as the primary

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 99-125; Hans-Peter Müller, *Ursprünge und Strukturen alttestamentlicher Eschatologie*, BZAW 109 (Berlin: Topelmann, 1969); G. Sauter, "The Concept and Task of Eschatology: Theological and Philosophical Reflections," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988): 499-515; Friedrich Beisser, "Aufgaben heutiger Eschatologie-Probleme und Lösungsmöglichkeiten," *ThLZ* 120 (1995): 495-510; J.-M. Van Cangh, "Temps et eschatologie dans l'Ancient Testament," in *Temps et eschatologie: Données bibliques et problématiques contemporaines*, ed. J.-L. Leuba, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1994), 17-38.

subject (11:1), the descent of YHWH's spirit upon the shoot presupposes his initiative. As a matter of fact, the return of the exiles is explicitly referred to as YHWH's work (11:11, 15). The interaction of God's works in the two distinct scenarios, Assyria and the shoot, is expressed in the statement: "When YHWH shall bring to an end all his work on Mount Zion" (10:12; cf. 10:23: "YHWH will make a full end, as decreed"). It goes without saying that this understanding of the fundamental unity of judgment and salvation in the deeds of YHWH has been ultimately misinterpreted in the absolute distinction between announcement of judgment and promise of salvation that has been maintained up to the recent past. This unity has everything to do with the confession: "YHWH is our God, YHWH is one" (Deut. 6:4).

Next, we must raise the question as to the way in which *the Scriptures*, or primarily the book of Isaiah, understood YHWH's interaction with time. This question can easily lead to a philosophical or dogmatic representation thereof that is foreign to the biblical texts.

Unfortunately, this important topic has drawn little attention in the last decades. Moreover, twentieth-century research has tended to focus on the anthropological content of specific terms, scarcely their theological content.<sup>44</sup>

The few modern studies that have researched this topic tend to take Psalm 102:27 as their point of departure: "But you are the same, and your years have no end" (cf. v. 24: "You whose years endure throughout all generations").<sup>45</sup> Following the line of thought found in this psalm, we have to distance ourselves from the understanding of time as an empty, yet-to-be-filled space that typifies the modern world.<sup>46</sup>

In connection with this topic and the interpretation of Psalm 102:27, Augustine is a useful guide. In his *Confessions*, Augustine explains Psalm 102:27 in relation to 2 Peter 3:8: "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years." The latter verse is itself a quotation from Psalm 90:4: "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (*Confessions* 11.11-31).

Augustine can be located in the philosophical tradition of classical antiquity (Aristotle and Plotinus) on account of the fact that he engaged in reflection on time and made use of the conceptual apparatus developed therein. With the possible exception of the book of Qoheleth, by contrast, the Old Testament

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<sup>44</sup> The most recent studies are by James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, SBT, 33 (London: SCM Press, 1962); John R. Wilch, *Time and Event: An Exegetical Study of the Use of 'eth in the Old Testament in Comparison to Other Temporal Expressions in Clarification of the Concept of Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1969); Simon J. De Vries, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

<sup>45</sup> For a contextual exegesis of this verse see: Gunild Brunert, *Psalm 102 im Kontext des Vierten Psalmenbuches*, SBB, 30 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), 161-68.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Eicher, "Temporalisation de l'éternité. Le Seigneur du temps et l'origine de la modernité," in *Temps et eschatologie*, 216-34.

does not contain a systematic reflection on the concept of time. Augustine's understanding of time, however, was no longer oriented toward the representations of antiquity that maintained present time to be a reflection of cosmic time and the significance thereof to be rooted in its harmony with the cosmic laws. For the Bishop of Hippo, the eternal movement of the heavenly bodies was not determinative of our involvement in time but rather the beginning of creation and its completion revealed in God's communication with human persons. Augustine is thus grounded in the biblical tradition insofar as he determined time in relation to human persons and to God.

In this article, we will leave unanswered the question of whether for Augustine time enjoyed no reality outside the human person. Contemporary scholars tend, in any case, to reject such a conclusion. For Augustine, the human person only experiences time as a created being placed within this world (*Confessions* 11.30.40: *nullum tempus esse posse sine creatura*). Augustine did not achieve a full elaboration of this question.<sup>47</sup>

For our purposes, it is important to note that Augustine argues that "the standing present" determines the essence of time and not the shifting threefold division of past, present, and future. We measure the past and the future against the present, a present that has no dimensions. Time takes that which is not yet as its point of departure and passes through the immeasurable now to the no longer. It is for this reason that time exists only in human persons: In this moment we remember the past, observe the present and wait for the future that we do not know. At each and every moment, God invites us to engage in a pilgrimage to his eternity by way of this threefold orientation.

God's time, according to Augustine, does not consist of his preexistence and postexistence vis-à-vis created things in terms of years, from before the beginning of time to the end thereof. God's time is always present now. His time does not constitute an unlimited expansion of our time. The statement that God knows no beginning and no end is insufficient. God's time encompasses simultaneity with all our interchanging times. The following quotation from the *Confessions* serves to illustrate this point:

It is not in time that you precede times. Otherwise you would not precede all times. In the sublimity of an eternity which is always in the present, you are before all things past and transcend all things future, because they are still to come, and when they have come they are past. "But you are the same and your years do not fail" (Ps. 101:28). Your "years" neither go nor come. Ours come and go so that all may come in succession. All your "years" subsist in simultaneity, because they do not change; those going away are not thrust out by those coming in. But the years which are ours will not all be until all

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<sup>47</sup>G. Haeffner, "Bemerkungen zur augustinischen Frage nach dem Wesen der Zeit im XI. Buch der 'Confessiones,'" *Theologie und Philosophie* 63 (1988): 569-78; J. M. Quinn, "Four Faces of Time in St. Augustine," *Recherches augustiniennes* 24 (1992): 181-231.

years have ceased to be. Your “years” are “one day” (Ps. 89:4; 2 Pet. 3:8), and your “day” is not any and every day but Today, because your Today does not yield to a tomorrow, nor did it follow on a yesterday. Your Today is eternity. So you begat one coeternal with you, to whom you said: “Today I have begotten you” (Ps. 2:7; Heb. 5:5). You created all times and you exist before all times. Nor was there any time when time did not exist” (*Confessiones*, 11.13.16).<sup>48</sup>

We are left with the impression that Augustine’s understanding of God’s time expressed in the affirmation, “In the sublimity of an eternity which is always in the present, you . . . transcend all things future” is in agreement with the structure of narrative time in Isaiah 10:5-11:16, no matter how much his world differed from that of the Bible. While the structure of narrative time in Isaiah 10:5-11:16 enjoys both a literary and a theological aspect, both are joined together in an unbreakable association. Without the presupposition of YHWH’s sovereign presence in relation to the king of Assyria in every phase of his mission and his activities, and likewise in relation to the remnant of Israel in judgment and return from exile, the literary oscillations and multiple narrative threads of Isaiah 10:5-34 would be impossible to understand. The same is true for the dramatic reversal of Israel’s history in Isaiah 11:11-16. The “theologoumenon” is most evident, however, in the combination of the fall of Assyria with the emergence of the shoot. It is here that the distance between present and a distant, perhaps qualitatively different future, is abandoned for the eternal presence of the power of YHWH.

In conclusion, viewed from the perspective of Israel’s history, the justice and peace-establishing emergence of the shoot is, of course, radically new in comparison with the death and destruction sown by Assyria’s military campaign. When Israel succumbed to Assyria’s dominance, a new and prosperous existence could only be a utopian dream. Isaiah 10:5-11:16, however, unites Israel’s downfall with this utopia into one reality because of the one intervention of YHWH (10:12: “all his work on Mount Zion”). For YHWH, the acting persons in world history are mere instruments: the king of Assyria a rod, the shoot a bearer of his spirit. They do not establish epochs. Past, present, and future stand before YHWH, who is present on the mountain of Zion.

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<sup>48</sup> Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 230.

## Appendix: The Delimitation of Clauses in Isaiah 10:33-11:9

Participle	הנה הארון יהיה צבאות מסעך פארה במערצה	10:33a
Participle	ורמי תקומה גדועים	b
YQTL	והנבחים ישפלו:	c
WeQTL	ונקף סבכי הער בברזל	34a
YQTL	והלכנון באדיר ופול: ס	b
WeQTL	ויצא חטר מונע ישי	11:1a
YQTL	ונצר משרשיו ופרה:	b
WeQTL	ונחה עליו רוח יהנה	2a
Non-Verbal	[ ] רוח חכמה ובינה	b
Non-Verbal	[ ] רוח עצה וגבורה	c
Non-Verbal	[ ] רוח דעת ויראת יהנה:	d
Non-Verbal	והריחו ביראת יהנה	3a
YQTL	ולא למראה עיניו ושפט	b
YQTL	ולא למשמע אזניו וזכוח:	c
WeQTL	ושפט בצדק הלים	4a
WeQTL	והזכוח במישור לענוי ארץ	b
WeQTL	והכה ארץ בשבט פיו	c
YQTL	וברוח שעתיו ימית רשע:	d
WeQTL	והיה צדק אזור מתניו	5a
Non-Verbal	ו [.] האמונה אזור חלציו:	b
WeQTL	וגר זאב עם כבש	6a
YQTL	ונמר עם גדי רבץ	b
Non-Verbal	ועגל וכפיר ומריא יחדו	c
Participle	ונער קטן נהג בם:	d
YQTL	ופרה נדב תרענה יחדו	7a
YQTL	ורבצו גלדיהן	b
YQTL	וארזה פבקר יאכל חבן:	c
WeQTL	ושעשע יונק על אחר פתן	8a
QTL	ועל מאורת צפעוני נמול ידו הדה:	b
YQTL	לא ירעו	9a
YQTL	ולא ישיחיתו בכל הדר קדשי	b
QTL	כירמלאה הארץ העה את יהנה	c
Participle	כמום לים מכסים: פ	d