

Notes on the Book of Isaiah (13-24)

13:1—This v. marks the beginning a new section. In 1:1 the vision concerned Judah and Jerusalem (על־יהודה וירושלם/κατὰ τῆς λουδαίας καὶ κατὰ ἱερουσαλημ). Now, the vision concerns Babylon (בבל/κατὰ Βαβυλῶνος). Isaiah's self-identity remains the same: the son of Amoz (בן־אמוץ/ὁ υἱὸς Ἀμωσ).

13:2—The MT presents a mountain that has been swept bare (by wind? by humans? The Nihil indicates passivity: הר־נשפה), while the LXX has a mountain of/on a plain or a flat mountain (ὄρους πεδινού, Silva: mountain in the plain). There is the lifting (שׂאו/ἄρατε) of a standard and lifting (הרימו/ὑψώσατε) of a voice. The MT uses 3^p Pl to indicate description, while the LXX uses 2^p Pl to indicate address. The LXX adds the statement, “Do not fear” (μὴ φοβεῖσθε). The MT says to wave the hand back and forth (דניפו יד) so that the ones being signaled can enter through the entrance of the nobles. The LXX interprets this as “calling to” with the hand (παρακαλεῖτε τῆ χειρί).

13:3—These ones are called “sanctified” or “consecrated” ones (למקדשי). YHWH says he will command them (צויתי). This possessive description continues. YHWH will call (קראתי) them “great ones” (גבורי) and “proud ones” (גאותי). These ones manifest YHWH's anger (לאפי). In the LXX God calls together (συντάσσω) and leads (ἄγω) these ones. These ones will be “sanctified” or “consecrated” (ἡγιασμένοι εἰσίν). Interestingly, the statement “and I will lead them” (καὶ ἐγὼ ἄγω αὐτούς) appears again (emphasis? dittography?). These ones are called “giants” (γίγαντες trans. of גבורי) who fulfill God's wrath (πληρῶσαι τὸν θυμόν μου). When they come they come rejoicing (χαίροντες) and insulting (ὕβριζοντες). The MT does describe them as jubilant (עליזי).

13:4—This v. presents an intimidating picture. YHWH Sabaoth (צבאות/κύριος σαβαωθ) is the one who gathers the nations (Nifal indicates passivity: גוים נאספים) and the kingdoms (ממלכות). The nations are presented as a voice like a roaring crowd (קול המון) and roaring voice (קול שאון) and many people (עם־רב). The LXX describes the voice of many nations on the mountains “like that of many nations” (φωνὴ ἐθνῶν πολλῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων ὁμοία ἐθνῶν πολλῶν). There is a voice of the kingdoms and nations gathered together (φωνὴ βασιλέων καὶ ἐθνῶν συνηγμένων). YHWH is appointing an army for battle (מלחמה/ἐντέταλται ἔθναι ὀπλομάχῳ).

13:5—These warriors come from a land far away, from the furthest point under the sky or on the horizon (מרחק מקצה השמים/ἔρχεσθαι ἐκ γῆς πόρρωθεν ἀπ' ἄκρου θεμελίου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). YHWH comes in full indignation to waste the “all

the land” (כל־הארץ). In the LXX he comes to destroy the whole of the inhabited world (τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην).

13:6—“Wail, because near is the day of YHWH” (הילילו כי קרוב יום יהוה) seeks to strike fear into the heart of the reader, but it makes a wild claim as well: the coming enemy is under the guidance of YHWH. This is not Babylon alone, but Babylon under YHWH’s guide. Destruction is coming from the Almighty/God (די משידי/του θεου).

13:7—The fear caused by this announcement leads to the limpness/looseness of wrists (כל־ידיים/πάσα χεῖρ ἐκλυθήσεται) and the melting of hearts of men (וכל־לבב אנוש ימס), i.e., fear has overcome them (or, LXX, the entire soul of humanity will be afraid: πάσα ψυχὴ ἀνθρώπου δειλιάσει). The LXX tends to universalize (make eschatological?) the MT.

13:8—This v. depicts much suffering and astonishment. Imagery includes being terrified (ונבהלו), suffering the pains of childbirth (כילודה), looking at one another in shock (פני להבים פניהם), having “their faces inflamed” (אל־רעהו יתמהו). The LXX mentions “elders” (οἱ πρέσβεις). This doesn’t correspond to the MT. The emotions presented in the LXX include becoming distressed (ταραχθήσονται), the pains of childbirth (ὠδίνες), wailing with/toward one another (συμφοράσουσιν), and their faces morphing into a flame (ὡς φλόξ μεταβαλοῦσιν).

13:9—The Day of YHWH comes (בא יום־יהוה/ἡμέρα κυρίου ἀνίατος ἔρχεται). The LXX adds the adjective “incurable” (ἀνίατος) likely signifying there is no changing the inevitable. It is characterized by “cruelty, fury, and burning wrath” (אכזרי ועברה וחרון אף) and YHWH will make the land into a wasteland (לשום הארץ לשמה). The LXX presents it as a day of “fury and anger” (θυμού καὶ ὀργῆς) and God will establish the whole inhabited world as a desert (θεῖναι τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην ἔρημον). Sinners will be extinguished/destroyed from the land (ישמיד ממנה/ τοὺς ἀμαρτωλοὺς ἀπολέσαι ἐξ αὐτῆς).

13:10—Apocalyptic language emerges here, though the important thing to notice is that it is not eschatological, per se. In other words, the cosmos are shaken, but it is not “the end of the world”, but rather the end of things as they are now. This scene is depicted as a time when stars and their constellations no longer provide light (כי־כוכבי השמים וכסיליהם לא יהלו אורם/ οἱ γὰρ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὁ Ὀρίων καὶ πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸ φῶς οὐ δώσουσιν). The LXX embellishes the description a bit more, noting that the ornamentation of the heavens is included (ὁ κόσμος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). The sun darkens when it comes up (שמשה תשח) or in the LXX, it will be dark when the sun rises (καὶ σκοτισθήσεται τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνατέλλοντος). As with the sun, the moon will not shine/give light

(וירח לְאִיגִיָּה אורו) / καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φῶς αὐτῆς).

13:11—What does read eschatologically is the switch from “the land” (הָאָרֶץ) to “the world” (for lack of a better translation: תֵּבֵל). The LXX translates both the same: τῆ οἰκουμένη ὄλη in v. 11. “Evil” is brought upon the word (רַעָה). Most English translations make evil the cause of the judgment, but I find that וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל־תֵּבֵל רַעָה is easier to translate as, “I will appoint upon the world evil”. It seems that the LXX translator went this direction: καὶ ἐντελοῦμαι τῆ οἰκουμένη ὄλη κακὰ. The second half of the v. provides similar problems in the MT: Should וְעַל־רְשָׁעִים עֲוֹנָם be translated as “and upon the wicked ones their transgressions” or “and upon the wicked ones *because of* their transgressions”? If option A, the idea is similar, but it would say that the transgressions are brought upon them. If option B, then something else (judgment) is brought upon them, with the transgressions being the cause. The LXX’s “and to the impious their sins” (καὶ τοῖς ἀσεβέσιν τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν) seems to support option A. YHWH causes the exaltation of the haughty to cease (וְהַשְׁבַּתִּי גֵאוֹן זָדִים) and he will causes the exaltation of the ruthless to be abased (וְגֵאוֹת עֲרִיצִים אֲשַׁפִּיל) or as the LXX says, the injury of the lawless will be destroyed (καὶ ἀπολῶ ὕβριν ἀνόμων) and the injury of the exalted will be abased (καὶ ὕβριν ὑπερηφάνων ταπεινώσω).

13:12—This v. uses language that sounds more universal. YHWH says he will make humans (אָנוּשׁ) more rare than gold (מַפֵּז) and humanity (וְאָדָם) more rate that the gold of Ophir (מִכְתָּם אֹפִיר). The LXX spins this a bit: those who are left are more valuable than unpurified gold (καὶ ἔσονται οἱ καταλελειμμένοι ἔντιμοι μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ χρυσίον τὸ ἄπυρον) and the person who is left is worth more than the stone of Souphir (καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος μᾶλλον ἔντιμος ἔσται ἢ ὁ λίθος ὁ ἐκ Σουφίρ).

13:13—YHWH Sabaoth’s (צְבָאוֹת יְהוָה/κύριος σαβαωθ) fury causes the heavens to quake and the land to shake from its place. The Day of YHWH is called “the Day of his Burning Anger” (וּבַיּוֹם הַרוּן אָפוּ). The LXX make the “Heavens” angry, likely using Heavens = God (future, ὁ γὰρ οὐρανὸς θυμωθήσεται). The earth shakes from its foundation (γῆ σεισθήσεται ἐκ τῶν θεμελίων αὐτῆς, trans. ממקומה וְתֵרַעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ). The cause is the “fury of the anger of the Lord Sabaoth” (διὰ θυμὸν ὀργῆς κυρίου σαβαωθ), which occurs “in the day” (וּבַיּוֹם /τῆ ἡμέρα). The LXX describes the day as that when “the wrath comes upon it” (ἡ ἄν ἐπέλθῃ ὁ θυμὸς αὐτοῦ).

13:14—In that day people will be like a hunted gazelle, a lost sheep, with each person turning to his/her own people, and each person fleeing to his/her own land. In the LXX v. 14 begins like v. 12 (καὶ ἔσονται οἱ καταλελειμμένοι). It maintains the image of a gazelle, but rather than being passively hunted (מִדָּב) it actively flees (φεύγον).

Similarly, in the MT, the sheep passively has no one to (actively) gather (וּאִין מִקְבֵּץ), but in the LXX the sheep itself (middle) wanders (πλανώμενον) and it is not actively gathered (καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ὁ συνάγων). The LXX seems to intensify to “turn” of a person to one’s people (פִּנּוּ) by presenting a person as (passively) being put to flight (ἀποστραφῆναι).

13:15—This v. presents a parallelism in the MT:

All who are found are pierced through [with a sword]

(כִּלְהֵנִמְצָא יִדְקֶר)

and

All who are captured will fall by a sword

(וְכִלְהֵנִסְפָּה יִפּוֹל בַּחֶרֶב)

The LXX summarizes the point: “For whoever captured, and whoever is gathered together, they will fall by a dagger.”

(ὅς γὰρ ἂν ἀλῶ, ἠττηθήσεται, καὶ οἵτινες συνηγμένοι εἰσὶν, μαχαίρα πεσοῦνται)

13:16—The depiction in this v. is quite gruesome. Children will be killed before their parent’s eyes, houses will be pillaged, and wives will be sexually violated (תִּשְׁגַּלְנָה). The LXX follows closely, rendering the final part of the v. as wives being “taken” or “possessed” (ἔξουσιν).

13:17—YHWH awakens (מְעִיר/ἐπεγείρω) the Medes (מְדִי/Μήδους) who do not value silver and who do not delight in gold.

13:18—The young men are destroyed by arrows, there is no compassion toward the “fruit of the womb” (וּפְרִי־בֶטֶן), and upon the sons there is no “eye pity” (לֹא־תַחֲוֶה עֵינַם). The LXX seems to soften v. 18b. If wonder if the MT imagery “fruit of the womb” is another way of saying children, which is what the LXX does with it (τὰ τέκνα), or a baby in a womb, presently?

13:19—Babylon is described as the beauty of kingdoms and the elegance of the Chaldeans’ majesty (or, LXX, the “glory of the kingdom of the Chaldeans: ἔνδοξος ὑπὸ βασιλέως Χαλδαίων). Now she will become like Sodom and Gomorrah. It seems that Isaiah uses the divine name YHWH frequently, but here we have “God” (אֱלֹהִים/ὁ θεός).

13:20—Babylon will not be inhabited permanently (לֹא־תִשָּׁב לְנֶצַח/οὐ κατοικηθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον). It will not be indwelt from generation to

generation (עֲדֵדֹר ודֹר). Arabs won't place their tents there and herders won't have their animals lie down there.

13:21—In the MT there is twist: herders won't have their animals lie down there (יִרְבְּצוּ, v. 20), but wild animals (צִיִּים) will lie down there (רִבְצוּ). The LXX follows the pattern (ἀναπαύσονται/ἀναπαύσονται). The houses will be full of jackals/hyenas (ומלאו בתיהם אחים). Ostriches will live there and goats will skip about there. The LXX goes a different direction: Rather than with hyenas, the houses are filled with sounds (ἦχου). Rather than ostriches there will be sirens resting there (ἀναπαύσονται ἐκεῖ σειρήνες). Rather than goats skipping, there will be demons dancing (δαμόνια ἐκεῖ ὀρχήσονται)! In the Facebook group some proposes that “sirens” is a description of many non-kosher birds and that it may be that goats are seen as symbolic of demons. Interesting.

13:22—The MT presents an odd statement: Jackals/hyenas sing in his widows (באלמנותיו) The NET note says the following:

The Hebrew text reads literally, “wild dogs will yip among his widows, and jackals in the palaces of pleasure.” The verb “yip” is supplied in the second line; it does double duty in the parallel structure. “His widows” makes little sense in this context; many emend the form (אַלְמְנוֹתָיו, 'almnotayv) to the graphically similar אַרְמְנוֹתָיָהּ ('arménoteha, “her fortresses”), a reading that is assumed in the present translation. The use of “widows” may represent an intentional wordplay on “fortresses,” indicating that the fortresses are like dejected widows (J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah* [NICOT], 1:308, n. 1).¹

We have a *lamed* where we should have a *resh*. Fortresses make more sense than widows!

The rest of the v. presents jackals in the palace with Babylon's time dwindling.

In the LXX the translator uses ἐκεῖ four times in v. 21-22.

¹ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006).