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## Abbreviations

1QIsa <sup>a</sup>	The Great Isaiah Scroll
AA	American Antiquity
ARA	Annual Review of Anthropology
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB	The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon
BI	Biblical Interpretation
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CR	Codex Reuchlinianus
HeyJ	Heythrop Journal
HvTSt	Hervormde Teologiese Studies
IA	Iron Age
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near East Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JR	Journal of Religion
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTI	Journal of Theological Interpretation
KJV	King James Version

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NRSV*	New Revised Standard Version
OTE	Old Testament Essays
PBC	Pontifical Biblical Commission on Interpretation of the Bible in the Church
PRSt	Perspectives on Religious Studies
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studia Biblica et Theologica
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TB	Talmud Bavli
TY	Talmud Yerushalmi
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentlich Wissenschaft
ZTK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

\*All Scripture quotations unless otherwise noted are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## **Preface**

In the late 1980s I was living in Israel and had become reasonably fluent in Hebrew when I learned about Hebrew parallelism. As I was reading Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible, I came to the Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah 5:1-7, which I had read numerous times before. This time, however, I took a closer look at the structure of the passage along with the Hebrew grammar, and I saw a surprising possibility for how the vinedresser, YHWH, was portrayed. Previously it had seemed obvious to me how YHWH was characterised in the passage, yet now I could see the possibility of a completely different and seemingly contradictory characterization.

The discovery of this possibility in the Song of the Vineyard was a small piece in my personal journey of expanding my horizons in biblical interpretation. I had moved from the United States to Israel to learn Hebrew so I could be a better interpreter of the Bible, since I realised that grammar and language were important tools in the interpretive process. While there, however, I became aware of the importance of the physical and historical setting of the writings as well as the importance of the intertextual setting, the world of other texts that may influence both writer and reader in the interpretive process. Somewhat later in life, I learned about the importance of rhetoric, of understanding the sociological setting of a text, and the role of the reader as part of the interpretive process.

My interest in pursuing this question has been both academic and a matter of faith. In my view, intellectual curiosity alone would be enough to merit research. Yet my personal faith is at the core of my existence and everything that I do, and this fact adds an extra dimension to the work. I think that the product of biblical research should be meaningful and useful to the community of

faith. For the community of faith, the Scriptures are first and foremost a portrayal of the deity whom they (we) worship. How this deity is portrayed, then, has implications for the belief and practices of those who worship and seek to live lives pleasing to their God. The broader, more varied, more insightful understanding we have as to who this deity is, the better equipped we are to rightfully worship, obey, and offer, as the Scripture says, “pleasing sacrifices.”

I am indebted to more people than I could begin to mention in this preface, so I must limit this acknowledgement to those who have been the most directly influential in the production of the thesis. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the MandD department of the University of South Africa who has given me this late-in-life chance to earn a terminal degree in my field of interest and who immediately welcomed me back into the DLitt et Phil program after a false start and a 10 year (!) hiatus. Words cannot express my appreciation to Professor Gerrie Snyman, my advisor at UNISA. I needed good advice and counsel and he gave it. But far beyond that, his patience, encouragement and friendship throughout the process made all the difference between discouragement and completion. I am also indebted to Barb Silverstein of the Messiah College library department office of interlibrary loans. I do not think I could have completed this work without her help. Whether I needed articles in French written over a hundred years ago or articles in Hebrew from relatively obscure journals, Barb was able to find them and have them on my computer within days. I am fluent in Hebrew and still can read French, but I need help to read technical articles in German. I appreciate the hours that Ines Prater put into translation consultation and her answers to my questions. A special word of thanks is due to Kay Ben-Avraham, my former student who became my guide to the jots-and-tittles of SBL style; her attention to detail is simply amazing.

The most important acknowledgement of all, however, is in the dedicatory that follows:

*Kwa mwenzangu*

*Hii Ngaa Zhianni*

*For Deborah*

אשת חיל



## **Introduction**

*Life is enmeshed in the sacred*

*Malian proverb<sup>1</sup>*

### **The Problem, Hypothesis, and Questions**

The Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) begins with the deceptively simple introduction, “I will sing to my beloved . . .”. On the surface, the meaning of the passage appears obvious. YHWH, the vinedresser, spares no effort in the building of his vineyard. From choice of location and soil preparation to selection of the vine itself, everything is done with the greatest care. Then the vine does the unthinkable—it fails to bear the quality fruit expected despite the faultless preparation. The vinedresser becomes justifiably outraged at the situation and proceeds to destroy the vineyard. On first reading it may seem to the reader that the passage is a simple one and the portrayal of the vinedresser, YHWH, straightforward.

Yet on closer examination of this song—if indeed it is a song—its complexity becomes evident and certain anomalies come to light. For example, is it reasonable for a vinedresser to invest so much energy into the preparation of an agricultural plot only to destroy it? Would it not seem more reasonable to try to remedy the situation? In the New Testament parable of the fig tree in the vineyard, the vinedresser waits four years for fruit and attempts remedial action before destroying the tree (Luke 13:6-9). Wouldn't we as readers expect the vinedresser to attempt some remedial action before taking the drastic step of destroying the vineyard? This anomaly

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<sup>1</sup>Annetta Miller, ed., *African Wisdom on the Sacred*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2008), Reading for January 3 (no page numbers in this publication).

may prompt us to seeking another interpretation of the song and its characterisation of the vinedresser rather than coming to a full stop at the seemingly obvious meaning. Or perhaps this anomaly is not an anomaly at all but an irony which serves to heighten our shock and surprise at the event, strengthening our impression of YHWH as a god of fierce judgment. What characterisations of YHWH might emerge when the text is interpreted through the lens of the rhetorical trope of irony?

The questions above arise from a reading of the text itself. When the Song of the Vineyard is considered in its intertextual context, other vineyard passages in the Hebrew Bible, further questions arise. For example, is the apparently obvious characterisation of YHWH in this passage in keeping with other First Isaian passages in which YHWH is depicted as a vinedresser? The answer to this question reveals a problem. There are two other passages in First Isaiah that depict YHWH as the vinedresser of a vineyard. The first, Isa 3:13-15, is a very brief reference:

The Lord rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples. The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.

In this passage, YHWH is depicted as the defender of his vineyard against the elders and princes who are oppressing it. In Isaiah 27:2-7, YHWH defends his vineyard against all who dare to harm it:

On that day: A pleasant vineyard, sing about it! I, the Lord, am its keeper; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it; I have no wrath. If it gives me

thorns and briers, I will march to battle against it. I will burn it up. Or else let it cling to me for protection, let it make peace with me, let it make peace with me. In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit. Has he struck them down as he struck down those who struck them? Or have they been killed as their killers were killed?

In both these passages, YHWH is depicted as a defender of his beloved vineyard. Yet in Isaiah 5:1-7, he does not seem to be characterised in this way at all; rather, he seems to be a vinedresser who hastens to bring about swift and irreversible destruction while publically justifying the act.

The observations above, both from within the text of the Song of the Vineyard itself and from other writings of First Isaiah, suggest the possibility that a dichotomy or even a broad spectrum of characterisations of YHWH may be discerned in this one passage. At first, it might seem that it is not possible for a text to “say” two different things at the same time, or for a sacred text to project more than one characterisation of the deity. Yet a text does not “say” anything apart from the filter of the reader’s interpretive perspective and personal or community ideology. The suggestion that one biblical passage may yield more than one characterisation of the deity highlights the complex interaction between the world of the text and the world it portrays, the interpreter, the interpretive method, and the derived meaning of a text.

This possibility leads to the hypothesis of this thesis: If a variety of interpretive lenses are used on this single passage of Scripture, Isaiah 5:1-7, the result would be a wide spectrum of different and even seemingly contradictory characterisations of YHWH. The investigation of this hypothesis involves questions in every realm of the text and the world it represents and the reader’s interpretive lenses and ideologies.

The text itself may serve as the starting point for the investigation of the hypothesis. The “Song” of the Vineyard begins with the word אָשִׁירָה, “I will sing.” This word raises the question of genre: whether this song should be understood as one genre type, a combination of types, or whether it spans boundaries in such a way as to make conclusive determination impossible, leaving room for the “song” to be viewed in a number of different ways. The answers to these questions may allow for disparate characterizations of YHWH, the vinedresser. Grammar, structure, innertextual rhetoric, and aesthetic of progression are all communicative elements that contribute to the answers and extend the scope of the research question beyond the limited question of genre. To what extent do these elements separately or combined contribute to portrayals of the vinedresser in the passage?

The text represents a world and is itself set in a world of contexts. While it may be difficult or impossible to definitively determine when the text was written, it clearly portrays the agrarian world of ancient Judea. The Song of the Vineyard describes in detail a vinedresser’s acts of building and planting of a vineyard, as well as its subsequent destruction. These descriptions lead to questions concerning that agrarian world and to viticulture in particular. How important was vine growing in comparison to other activities? Could a different imagery have been used, and if so, how might that difference affect the portrayal of YHWH? How might the presumed hearers and we the readers characterise a vinedresser who tears down a vineyard? Further questions involve the social and socio-economic aspects of this ancient agrarian world. What is known about these two aspects of this world and how might this background affect our reading of the Song of the Vineyard?

The text portrays not only the world of agrarian activity but also is a literary creation that encompasses the world of agrarian metaphorical usage. There are two references in the Song of Solomon to vineyards, in chapters one and eight, which could be read either literally or as a sexual allegory. Can the Song of the Vineyard be interpreted as a sexual allegory? If so, what light do these passages in the Song of Solomon shed on the use of the vineyard as a sexual allegory in Iron Age Judea? If the Song of the Vineyard is read as a sexual allegory, how is YHWH portrayed in that romantic relationship? The Song of the Vineyard as a literary creation in its metaphorical usages, as well as in other ways, does not stand alone; it is part of a world of texts that may have influenced the writer and hearers and may influence the modern readers. What other biblical passages are there that may influence the interpretation of this passage in First Isaiah?

The text is a literary creation whose use of language creates a world, but it is created to portray a world that existed in an historical setting. The text appears to portray Judea prior to destruction, but the tale it tells points to destruction to come. We cannot know for certain if the text was written before or after the Assyrian devastations of the late eighth century. Can this text be read as an apologetic on the part of YHWH for those devastations? Isaiah 27:2-7 also portrays Israel as the vineyard of YHWH, yet Israel's deity is portrayed as a defender and restorer. Might this difference be due to different historical situations at the time of the creation of the two passages, and if so, does this intertextual relationship reveal anything concerning the characterisation of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard?

The geopolitical setting of the Song of the Vineyard is only part of its historical context. This world was a human society with social values, cultural norms and economic practices. The text

depicts a social relationship within that world, the metaphorical relationship of a vinedresser with a vineyard. In this metaphorical relationship the vineyard is not just an agricultural crop but a partner in a social relationship with the vinedresser. This then raises the question of social norms and systems of values and how these might affect our understanding of that relationship. How is YHWH relating to this other party in relation to the practices and norms of that world?

When the questions above have been considered, there remains one additional, important factor to weigh: the ideologies and beliefs of the speaker/writer, community of reception, and the modern reader. This question of ideology, in a sense, is not separate from the questions above but an integral factor in their consideration. At every stage we must ask how each of these participants in the text might perceive YHWH. Is it possible that in considering one limited aspect of the text, two different readers might characterise YHWH in two diametrically opposed ways? Might the portrayal of YHWH in the text differ, depending on the ideology of the recipients? Perhaps a spectrum of possible portrayals might be derived, since it may not be possible to determine exactly who the intended recipients were.

Finally, every research arrives at conclusions that have implications. The Bible is a compilation of texts produced at varying times and in varying circumstances. These biblical texts, or any individual passage from among them, may be researched as would any other ancient text. However, the Bible has been considered a sacred text for millennia and continues to be so for many today. How does this fact affect the implications of the findings of this research, or any other research into biblical text? Does modern biblical scholarship carry implications for the community of faith, and if so, what are the theological implications of this study? Are the

findings of this research relevant and helpful for the community of faith, or an exercise in textual scholarship of no theological import?

### Theoretical Construct and Methodology

In this thesis there is one limited matter of research: the question of the characterisation(s) of the deity described in the Hebrew Bible. However, this research leads to examination in multiple realms. Consequently, the hypothesis and the questions related to it point to the need for a broad-based theoretical construct and a multi-faceted interpretive approach.

A written text is not a static, objective reality; rather it is the basis of an interaction between writer and reader. Neither is it a locus of meaning, but the focus of meaning through which writer and readers interact. While every text is produced in a specific setting with a specific intent, the possibilities inherent within the text go beyond that original intent as the reader enters into the interpretive conversation. The reader may see possibilities in the text which are valid interpretations in his or her setting but which differ significantly from the writer's intent (which in any case, we cannot know). The setting of consumption of a text becomes part of its reading much as the purpose of production was part of its writing.<sup>2</sup> This interaction between reader and text is particularly important in the reading of a sacred text, which the individual and community of faith view as relevant to their lives in their setting.

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<sup>2</sup> Gerrie Snyman comments, "The consumption of a story rarely (if ever) resembles the purpose of its production." Gerrie Snyman, "Who is Responsible for Uzzah's death?: Rhetoric in 1 Chronicles 13," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 203.

Communication is a complex interaction of matters of speech and rhetoric, setting of events, and social norms, and ideologies between speaker and hearer (or in the case of a text, writer and reader). The text is a vehicle of communication, a world unto itself yet representing a world outside itself that encompasses these diverse realms of communicative interactions. The act of reading a text engages the reader in these worlds and their various elements. No single interpretive method can possibly encompass all of these elements. Concerning this situation and in reference to the methodology he developed, Vernon K. Robbins wrote:

Each [interpretive] method has great strengths, but when interpreters use only one of them, the result is too limited. When an interpreter uses them interactively, a rich and responsible approach is available for dealing with belief, action, and life in the world today. No interpreter will ever use all of the resources of socio-rhetorical criticism in any one interpretation. But no interpreter ever uses all of the resources of any method in an interpretation. The purpose is to build an environment for interpretation that provides interpreters with a basic, overall view of life as we know it and language as we use it.<sup>3</sup>

Robbins' personal response to the complexity of textual interpretation was to develop an integrated methodology that he called socio-rhetorical criticism. In the last two decades, socio-rhetorical criticism has attempted to integrate exegetical, social, and rhetorical approaches into a multi-faceted tool for delving into the richness of texts and expanding the horizons of their relevance to readers:

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<sup>3</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 2.



Socio-rhetorical criticism is an approach to literature that focuses on values, convictions, and beliefs both in the texts we read and in the world in which we live . . . The approach invites detailed attention to the text itself. In addition, it moves interactively into the world of the people who wrote the texts into our present world.”<sup>4</sup>

In giving detailed attention to the world of the text yet then moving into the contemporary world, this approach to biblical interpretation includes the strengths of the historical-critical method while addressing its weaknesses. As an integrated critical approach to interpretation, Socio-Rhetorical criticism can be divided into a number of realms. Robbins identifies five textual realms, referring to them as “textures”: innertexture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.<sup>5</sup> Each of these textures is an individual lens through which to approach a text. When used together, they yield insights into possible meanings and potential implications for the reader and his or her community.

It is the task of interpreters to choose those lenses they believe to be the most helpful in approaching a given text. This research thesis focuses on the realm of the sacred: the characterisations of YHWH, God<sup>6</sup> of the Hebrew Bible. Yet the purpose of this research is not to study a separate texture, but to discover the possibilities of the sacred interwoven within the other textures of the text: the innertexture, intertexture and socio-cultural texture. I consider the

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<sup>4</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.

<sup>6</sup> I capitalize God when used in reference to an individual’s or a community’s faith, or to the God of the Bible in relation to the community of faith.

ideological aspect of the interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard also as interwoven within the other textual considerations.

### Delimitation of the Study

One of the goals of a socio-rhetorical approach is to set specialized areas of analysis in conversation with one another. While this may clarify certain issues, it will continually raise others.<sup>7</sup>

This research is limited to the passage known as the Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah 5:1-7. Yet even given the brevity of the passage, new issues will continually arise. Necessity dictates the defining and delimiting of this and every study. It is not possible to equally consider every texture of a text exhaustively. It is also not possible to totally separate textures, any more than it is possible to separate out only certain threads of a tapestry. The focus of this study is to consider characterizations of YHWH, and that focus will determine both the degree and manner in which each texture is considered. Questions concerning the political, social, or ideological worlds of the story, for example, are considered only as they are relevant to the central question and not as ends in themselves.

The innertextual world is the world of the text itself, which includes questions of variant versions and redactions. These matters alone could be a matter of significant study. While I briefly consider these questions as relevant to the research, it is not my intent to examine them exhaustively. Scholars before me have done so extensively, and I do not purpose to duplicate

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<sup>7</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 3.

their work. The same is true concerning the grammar and poetic structure of the passage; it has been thoroughly studied and expounded upon by those who have gone before. I rely on their work, except where I see that a grammatical feature has bearing on the question of YHWH's characterisation.

The socio-cultural world exists as an outgrowth of the physical, economic and historical setting, which is the land of Judea in the eighth century B.C.E.. The geographic setting is known to us since it exists to this day and archaeology has been helpful in tracing the physical remnants of that world. The greater historical setting can be gleaned to some degree by other biblical texts, external texts, and archaeology of other lands. Apart from these sources of information, however, the world of ancient Judea is known to us only through the literary works of the Hebrew Bible. Some have even questioned the existence of a nation known as Judea in that time period.<sup>8</sup> I do not enter into this debate or do an extensive analysis of the archaeological and written sources of the time. Others have done so and undoubtedly more work will be done in the future. Rather, I analyse the Song of the Vineyard with this data and with the presuppositions I note below. My primary focus is the relationship between YHWH and the people in light of the social norms of the period, as best as they can be determined.

### Presuppositions of the Researcher

Every research work is conducted by a researcher or team of researchers who have their own presuppositions or biases. Part of the ideological texture of a text is the ideological

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<sup>8</sup> Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 2006 Continuum edition).

presuppositions of the researchers themselves. It is appropriate, therefore, that I state my presuppositions and ideological positions in the introduction to this work, as well as throughout the body of the research.

*God gives nuts to those who have no teeth*

*African proverb*<sup>9</sup>

While many African proverbs touching the sacred are in keeping with my personal ideological beliefs about God, the above mentioned quote is not.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the perception of the sacred that I hold is the most important and influential of my presuppositions as I approach the text. I am convinced that the Hebrew Bible and New Testament reveal God as good. Therefore a statement such as the one above, or an interpretation of a biblical text that categorically states otherwise, is one that I would immediately question.

*God's rain falls even on the witch*

*African proverb*<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, I would immediately accept the statement about the sacred in this proverb. In some way, it is this very presupposition that has led me into this study. Is YHWH a god demanding very high standards of behaviour and wrathfully judging when the holy standard is not met? I

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<sup>9</sup> Miller, *African Wisdom*, reading for Dec. 14.

<sup>10</sup> I acknowledge that my literal usage of the prover and my lack of knowledge of its the socio-rhetorical setting may lead me to misunderstand its intent and as such to interpret it in an unfair manner.

<sup>11</sup> Miller, *African Wisdom*, reading for May 28.

believe that YHWH, the Holy One, requires obedience. Yet when people fall short, does this god respond according to the traditional understanding of the Song of the Vineyard—quickly and irreversibly bringing annihilation making sure to justify the divine act of doing so? I would affirm that the God of the Bible does ultimately bring judgment upon evil and that these acts of judgment are righteous and do begin “at the house of God”<sup>12</sup>; yet I would see God’s mercy and patience reaching out to those under judgment in the attempt to avert the ultimate, irreversible act. This is the presupposition I hold concerning the sacred, and if I were not aware of it, this would necessarily limit my ability to see other possibilities in the text. In recognising and acknowledging my presuppositions, however, I can intentionally endeavour to read the text asking how it might appear when approached from different ideological perspectives. In so doing, I learn through the process. In fact, the purpose of this research is to prove the hypothesis that a broad spectrum of possible characterisations of YHWH can be seen in this one short pericope, not just those that my ideology claims must be there.

There is a further, basic presupposition that underlies my statements above: I believe that the biblical corpus is not just derived from the realm of the human, but that, at some level, it points to an underlying metaphysical reality: the God of the Bible. It is true, as the Apostle Paul says, “[f]or now we see in a glass, darkly” (I Cor 13:12, KJV), through the darkened lenses of our own ideologies and biases. While the biblical text can be studied as any other text, I also would not view it as any other text. Ultimately, the result of scholarly research in the field of biblical studies should have implications for the community of faith.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Pet 4:16

In addition to my ideological beliefs concerning the deity of Scripture, I hold to certain presuppositions concerning the text and the world that it represents. Some scholars today maintain that the text of the Hebrew Bible originated in the Second Temple Period after the return from the Babylonian captivity. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, however, the prevailing assumption was that the prophetic texts precisely reflected the words spoken by the prophets at the time of the story, which in the case of the Song of the Vineyard is the eighth century B.C.E.. I presuppose that the Song of the Vineyard may reflect an oral passage that could have been delivered originally in the Eighth Century B.C.E. but may have been written and/or edited significantly later. In stating this, I am not stating categorically that the Song of the Vineyard was necessarily orally delivered; it is the presupposition of a possibility.

I believe that a nation called Judah developed in the southern hill country of the eastern Mediterranean coastlands. The term “nation” is problematic in that it is easy to anachronistically view ancient nations in the same way we view nations today. I think that archaeological and written evidence support the view that a people group known as the Israelites migrated into the eastern Mediterranean as a very loosely confederated tribal grouping. Starting some time prior to the eighth century B.C.E., the process of centralisation of power and resources began. A royal line was established, centralised taxation and conscription begun, and a social and religious elite developed in the most important city, Jerusalem. I base my presupposition on archaeological evidence, not just on the biblical text. Yet to present the evidence and build a proof for this stance would stretch this already long research work beyond any reasonable limits. Therefore, I state this position as a presupposition, as it is relevant to my analysis of the socio-cultural texture of the text.

## Chapter Outline

The starting point for any research is a review of the work that has been done in the past. Since 1899, at least thirty articles and essays have been written on the seven-verse Song of the Vineyard. Both prior and subsequent to that time, the passage has been included in biblical commentaries and other related works. In the review of the literature, I summarise and evaluate each of the articles, but the focus of the review is on the development of interpretive approaches and the observations concerning the characterisation of YHWH in the pericope.

The second chapter, methodology, begins with a survey of the historical and conceptual background to socio-rhetorical criticism. This methodology grew out of the historical development of biblical hermeneutic and the philosophical context in which it developed and is therefore best understood in light of those developments and contexts. I then describe the methodology and survey the scholarly critiques, both positive and negative, of Robbins' approach. Many of these critiques highlight the fact that this interpretive methodology is understood and used somewhat differently by different interpreters and is a methodology in flux. There is room for variation in the specifics of its application. This chapter also includes a detailed description of the five textures of the text as outlined by Robbins, although many of the methodological specifics for each texture are included in the chapters on the textures.

Three specific textures of the text, the innertexture, intertexture, and socio-cultural texture are each studied in separate chapters. I do not consider the ideological texture in a separate chapter for reasons that I explain in the chapter on methodology, (in brief, because ideology is part of the weave and fabric of each of the other textures). I consider this aspect of the interpretive act and its relevance to the characterisations of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard, but I do so as part of

the analysis of the other textures. Finally, in this research, the sacred is not a separate texture; the research is a seeking of the sacred throughout the whole, and therefore “Seeking the Sacred” serves as the concluding chapter of the work.

The first of the three chapters on the specific textures, the innertextual texture, examines the world of the text itself, its language, patterns, and sensory-emotive impact. Preliminary considerations include questions of textual criticism, both redactive placement and the existence of variant versions. These questions must be considered when researching a text, although they are preliminary to analysing the texture itself. I briefly consider these matters in this chapter but then move on to the elements of communication of the text itself. Grammatical anomalies, unusual word constructions, or chiasmic structure are all elements of the communicative act that may provide emphasis or lend a tone to a passage, which in turn may affect a reader’s perceptions of it. Furthermore, an ancient written text may be a preservation of an oral event, or composed as an oral event, though in written form. This possibility—and in the case of the biblical world, it is a likelihood—raises questions concerning the aural impact of the written text. All of these elements of communication influence a reader’s perceptions of the text and of the characters’ portrayal within it.

The chapter on intertexture examines the context world of texts surrounding the writer and reader. This world is a matrix of other texts that may influence textual writing or reading through direct or indirect associations. The chapter considers the methodological difficulties of intertextual research and details the specific methodology used. It also focuses on two metaphorical aspects of the passage: YHWH as the planter of Israel, and YHWH as the lover or husband of Israel. In addition, the intertextual world is one which may include indirect mental or



emotive associations. Words or phrases in one passage trigger in a reader's mind associations with numerous other texts. Since the associations are formed in the mind of the reader, no research could consider all the conceivable associations, even in a brief passage. In this chapter I consider one possibility: an indirect association between the Song of the Vineyard and passages related to Sodom. This chapter raises the question of the recipients of YHWH's scathing indictment, whether it is the people as a whole or whether YHWH is defending the people against internal oppressors of the upper social and religious strata.

The Song of the Vineyard is set in the Eastern Mediterranean Iron Age agricultural/social world. That world existed in a geophysical environment that gave rise to its agriculture and lifestyle. Society developed with its social values, customs, and perceptions of the nature of their god. The chapter on the socio-cultural texture begins by describing that world and its social development from its earlier stages to the eighth century B.C.E.. This world and the social developments that transpired are the background to the socio-economic realities of eighth century Judea, such as land ownership, commerce, and social value systems. The first part of the chapter focuses on the transitions that take place in land ownership and the development of a social strata gap between the urban social elite and the rural community. The consideration then moves to the asymmetrical relationships and the social value system of honour and shame as important social and economic stabilising elements in that ancient world. Evidence is given to suggest that YHWH is portrayed as a patron who has been shamed by his client, Israel. This portrayal allows for two diametrically opposed characterisations of YHWH, depending on the ideology of the reader.

The concluding chapter, “Seeking the Sacred,” reflects back on the study with general conclusions and a review of the findings in relation to the hypothesis. This thesis is a scholarly work that examines a limited aspect of a text. The text, however, is from the Bible, a book held sacred by the Jewish and Christian communities of faith, both past and present. In this chapter I suggest how this scholarly work—and scholarly works on the biblical text in general—may profit the community of faith.

## **1.0 Review of the Literature**

At least thirty scholarly articles have been written on the Song of the Vineyard over the last one hundred and twenty years, in addition to numerous notations and articles included in broader commentaries. Over this period interpretive approaches to the biblical text have broadened.<sup>13</sup> As a result, both the nature of the questions researched and underlying interpretive assumptions have changed, producing a wide variety of literature on this Isaian text, short though it is.

The research question of this thesis concerns the spectrum of possible characterisations of the deity in the Song of the Vineyard when the passage is viewed through different interpretive lenses and by different interpreters. The review of the literature provides a window of insight into that problem, both by surveying the change in interpretive practices over the years and by discovering to what extent the characterisation of YHWH is explicitly or implicitly discussed in the corpus of literature.

### **1.1 Early Commentaries**

Written references to Isaiah 5:1-7 are extant in the Jewish world from as early as the Second Temple Period and in the Christian world from the earliest writings of the church.<sup>14</sup> These

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<sup>13</sup> These changes in biblical interpretive lenses are discussed in the chapter on methodology.

<sup>14</sup> In Jewish writings, the text appears in the Great Isaiah Scroll, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. In early church writings, references to the Song of the Vineyard in the Parable of the Tenants are recorded in all three synoptic gospel accounts. John Kloppenborg, however, has disputed the prevailing view that the gospel accounts of the Parable of the Tenants are based on Isaiah's passage, and a corpus of scholarship has

references pre-date the first scholarly articles dedicated solely to the passage. In the late eighteen hundreds, a number of grammatical-exegetical works on Scripture appeared, some of which are still used as references today, and to which I refer in the chapter on the innertexture of the text. Among these works are expansive commentaries on Isaiah, which also include small sections on the Song of the Vineyard. Some of these commentaries on the Song of the Vineyard are referred to by later scholars, generally for their determination of genre, views on the meanings of the words *dôd* and *yâdîd*, or the grammar of the passage.

I am beginning this review of the literature with the first modern article dedicated solely to the Song of the Vineyard, which appeared in 1899.<sup>15</sup> However, one general commentary written prior to that date should be noted because of its lasting contribution to Isaian studies. Bernard Duhm is most known for his three-part Isaiah theory, which he expounded in his 1892 commentary *Das Buch Jesaia*, a work “as foundational to twentieth-century Isaiah studies as Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* was to modern understanding of the Pentateuch.”<sup>16</sup> However, his

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arisen on this question. John S. Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, & Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> I have chosen to begin the literature review with the first article, not because it is the first scholarly work, but because it begins a new era of articles dedicated to a scholarly approach focused solely on the Song of the Vineyard. It is not possible to determine exactly when works that could be considered scholarly first appeared. Certainly the commentaries of the eighteen hundreds are scholarly, as are some of the works of several earlier Jewish and Christian interpreters.

<sup>16</sup> Claire M. Matthews and Patricia Tull, *As Those Who are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from LXX to SBL* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 26.

work was also marked by two other distinguishing factors, both relevant to the study of the Song of the Vineyard. Duhm showed that “changes in rhythm often concurred with a change of subject” and demonstrated “more forcibly than had ever before been done that the book of Isaiah is the product of centuries of compilers and editors.”<sup>17</sup> This last observation was certainly not new to Duhm, but it did bring this aspect of the text more to the forefront in subsequent scholarship. Duhm’s exposition of the three-part theory and the significance of compilers and redactors rapidly became foundational to the study of the book of Isaiah. His observation concerning the relationship between rhythm and subject is relevant to the study of the innertexture of the Song of the Vineyard.

## 1.2 Articles 1899-1930. Focus: Text, Structure, and Grammar

### 1.2.1 Cersoy

In 1899, P. Cersoy wrote the earliest modern article on the passage, which later scholars frequently reference. According to Cersoy himself, the work was a “collection of thoughts” rather than a detailed commentary.<sup>18</sup> His focus was on the prelude to the song and on the structural analysis of the text with particular reference to the Septuagint version. In his opening discussion, Cersoy considers the various possible meanings of the word *dôd*,<sup>19</sup> noting that the word can mean either *intimate friend* or *uncle*. He concludes that the word means “intimate

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<sup>17</sup> Kemper Fullerton, “The Book of Isaiah: Critical Problems and a New Commentary,” *Harvard Theological Journal* 6 (1913): 489-490.

<sup>18</sup> P. Cersoy, “L’Apologue du la Vigne,” *Revue Biblique* 8 (1899): 40-49.

<sup>19</sup> Use of transliteration is following Cersoy’s usage.

friend,” supporting his conclusion by the use of the term in the Septuagint and the Peshita, and sees it as synonymous with *yâdîd*. Cersoy notes that the interpretations of Duhm, Dillman, Kittel<sup>20</sup> and others, would read in French, “Je vais chanter, au sujet de mon ami, le chant de mon ami sur sa vigne.”<sup>21</sup> He rejects this reading, however, claiming that “*dôd* ne peut être considéré comme designant ici le même personnage que *yâdîd*, et *šîrat dôdi* ne doit pas se traduire par: le chant de mon ami.”<sup>22</sup> Instead he translates the prelude, “Je vais chanter à mon ami mon chant amical à propos de sa vigne.”<sup>23</sup> With this translation, Cersoy maintains that the song is a song of consolation to his dear friend who has suffered as a result of the unfruitfulness of the vine. To arrive at this translation, however, he has to assume that *dôdî* is an error in the Masoretic text. According to Cersoy, the *î* ending on *dôdî* in Hebrew construct form cannot mean “my beloved,” but rather must refer back to *šîrat*. The form would have to mean, literally, “my *dôd* song,” a view which some earlier translators and interpreters held.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Cersoy concludes that the

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<sup>20</sup> Cersoy, “L’Apologue,” 41. Cersoy notes their works but does not cite references.

<sup>21</sup> I will sing about my friend, the song of my friend concerning his vineyard.

<sup>22</sup> Cersoy, “L’Apologue,” 42. *Dôd* cannot be regarded as designating here the same person as *yâdîd*, and *šîrat dôdi* should not be translated as: the song of my friend.

<sup>23</sup> Cersoy, “L’Apologue,” 40. I’ll sing to my friend my friendly song about his vineyard.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Aquila, Jerome, Luther and von Ewald, and Ehrlich. See further discussion in Willis, 1977, 337.

correct reading must be *dôdim* (as according to Cheyne<sup>25</sup>) or *dôdaî*. Cersoy chooses the latter, claiming that Cheyne's view involves a textual error dropping a consonant, whereas his suggested translation merely presumes a Masoretic vocalisation error.<sup>26</sup>

Cersoy's second main consideration after the prelude is the structure. He divides the song into four sections, the first of which is comprised of verses 1-2. He maintains, "La première période 1-2 présente un parallélisme excellent, et, de plus, une grande symétrie dans la coupure des membres de phrase."<sup>27</sup> Cersoy does not show how he arrives at such a statement by outlining the structure, however. He then claims that the second section, beginning with verse three, still shows a parallel structure, but one that is much less precise than the first section. Again, Cersoy does not detail the structure to back up his statement. This second section of the Song of the Vineyard he calls an "apologue," or moral allegory. He sees the first section as just a short prelude to a popular song known in the day of the prophet and referred to by him.<sup>28</sup> Cersoy

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<sup>25</sup> Cersoy does not give the page reference, but Cheyne's statement is on page 29 of the 1882 edition: Thomas K. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah Vol. 1* (London: Kegan Paul, & Trench and Co., 1882).

<sup>26</sup> Cersoy, "L'Apologue," 43.

<sup>27</sup> "The first section 1-2 displays an excellent parallelism, and in addition, a great symmetry in the break of the phrases." Cersoy, "L'Apologue," 46.

<sup>28</sup> Cersoy, "L'Apologue," 46.

proposes that the prophet Isaiah<sup>29</sup> was making reference to a popular song, using terms that were familiar to the hearers: an intriguing thought, but one which unfortunately can neither be verified nor disproven.

The article concludes with a consideration of the Septuagint text. Cersoy notes first that the translator seems not to be very skilled, as evidenced by his repetitive wording in translating *beqeren ben sâmén* with ἐν χέρατι, ἐν τοπω πiónι. He then notes a more significant anomaly; the speaker illogically switches from third person (first verse) to the third person (second verse, but same sentence). Cersoy suggests that perhaps the translator was influenced by other, similar passages in the Hebrew Bible and that despite being aware of the inconsistency of the translation, the translator chose to leave it as such. Cersoy does not give any examples of similar Hebrew passages. Even if he had, his suggestion would remain in the realm of speculation, since the mind of the translator cannot be known.

Cersoy begins his article with the comment that his work is just a mere collection of thoughts. In keeping with that approach, he does not offer a conclusion to the article other than to suggest that the writer has the authority to switch to YHWH as the first person speaker based on similar usages in other passages in the Hebrew Bible. Cersoy's translation suggests that YHWH is the friend of the prophet, but he does not comment on that matter.

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<sup>29</sup> Writing in the late eighteen hundreds, Cersoy, as others of his time, wrote assuming that the passage was originally spoken by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, in the eighth century B.C.E..



### 1.2.2 Haupt

In 1903, Paul Haupt studied the poetic structure of Isaiah 5:1-7.<sup>30</sup> In his analysis, he differs from von Ewald, Duhm, Cheyne, Cersoy, and others. These scholars all saw breaks in the poetic structure of the parable,<sup>31</sup> although they differed in their views as to where such breaks occurred. Haupt, however, maintains that there were no such breaks and no rhythm change in the poem; the “parable consists of four stanzas; each stanza is composed of four משלים with two beats in each hemistich.”<sup>32</sup> The rest of the article he dedicates to arranging the text into poetic form, culminating in an attempt to provide a lyrical translation into English, along with extensive textual notes. Haupt arranges the text in two columns of double-hemistiches, a poetic style that appears in certain ancient Hebraic manuscripts.

Haupt maintains that there are numerous corruptions and expansions in the text. To give one example, for the first line, he proposes:<sup>33</sup>

אֲשִׁירָה נָא לִידִידִי שִׁירַת כְּרָמִי

Instead of the MT:

אֲשִׁירָה נָא לִידִידִי שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי לְכְרָמִי

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable of the Vineyard,” *AJSL* 19 (1903): 193-202.

<sup>31</sup> Haupt, Cersoy, and previous scholars referred to the passage as a parable. Later works look more closely at the problems of the genre(s) of the passage.

<sup>32</sup> Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable,” 194.

<sup>33</sup> Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable,” 195.

In his textual notes, Haupt does not explain why he thinks דודי must be dropped; he just makes the comment that after it was dropped, it was necessary to add the ל to כרמו.<sup>34</sup> I am left with the impression that he makes these emendations in order to make the double column double-hemistich format work.

In another case, Haupt maintains that the verb היה in verse two is not necessary, because the friend still has the vineyard. No other basis for the emendation is made. This reasoning is not in keeping with the textual evidence, since the word is present not only in the MT, but the Septuagint translates the verse using the aorist tense ἐγενήθη. In addition, Haupt's position does not take into account the flexible nature of Hebrew verbs in general and of the verb היה in particular.

Haupt's purpose for writing is to study the grammar and structure of the pericope, and there is no conclusion at the end of the article. His proposed structural layout of the passage forms the conclusion of his analysis. As noted above, for his conclusion as to the structure of the passage to be valid, he must make numerous, significant changes to the MT text.

### 1.2.3 Gray

Haupt's work, with its focus being the detailed study of the text, is characteristic of the scholarship of this early era, although it is unique in its attempt to arrive at a regular poetic structure for the passage. In the few decades previous to his work, Keil and Delitzsch; Brown, Driver, and Briggs; Cheney, and others produced their classic detailed textual studies. Just a few

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<sup>34</sup> Haupt, "Isaiah's Parable," 196.

years after Haupt, in 1912, the International Critical Commentary volume on Isaiah 1-39 appeared, edited by George Buchanan Gray.<sup>35</sup> This commentary is another classic work of textual scholarship on all of First Isaiah, yet for two reasons I think that at least it should be mentioned in the survey of the literature. First, as stated above, it remains a classic and is still referenced in Isaian studies. Second, it is demonstrative of the nature of the scholarship of the period, the years in which textual criticism and the historical-critical method were the primary modes of interpretation. Matters that arise later in biblical scholarship, such as the place of rhetoric, the ideology and sociology of the world of production, or the interpretive role of the reader are questions that during this period are only marginally considered. The words of the text and its historical setting are the interpretive issues in the early nineteen hundreds.

#### 1.2.4 Graham

Early exegetes of the Song of the Vineyard concerned themselves with the meanings of the terms יְדִיד and דָּוָד, wrestling with the idea that the prophet could refer to YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, with such a term of intimacy or even sexual attraction. In his article in 1929, Creighton Graham considered the problematic nature of the terms, relating them to their usage in Semitic fertility cults.<sup>36</sup> Graham demonstrates that in the Hebrew Bible יְדִיד is not used in reference to YHWH but rather to the one whom YHWH loves, which calls into question its usage in the Song

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<sup>35</sup> George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I-XXXIX* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912).

<sup>36</sup> William Creighton Graham, "Notes on the Interpretation of Isaiah 5:1-14," *AJSL* 45, (1929): 167-178.

of the Vineyard. He rejects Gray's view that the term is not used in reference to YHWH because a prophet would never use so familiar a term for the deity. Instead, Graham suggests that the prophet uses the term ידִיד satirically "as expressive of a popular conception of relationship to God which did not meet the prophet's approval" and "[t]hat Isaiah's parable of the vineyard was composed in opposition to fertility-cult tendencies in the popular religion of the Israel of his day."<sup>37</sup> Following Meek, Graham asserts that while ידִיד does not refer to the deity in other passages, the term דוד does, and that דוד can be identified as *Adad*, the Palestinian equivalent of *Tammuz*.<sup>38</sup> Graham agrees with the earlier scholar Wittekindt that Isaiah composed the song in direct reference to the Jerusalem *Tammuz* cult that was openly practiced in Isaiah's day.

Graham summarizes his interpretation of the terms דוד and ידִיד and the way in which they are used in the "Dod-song":

When the use of this word ידִיד is studied, then, it is seen that this type of unmoral, particularistic Yahwism, in which ידִיד is used to express a relation between Yahweh and his worshipers, lies upon the magical side of the religious realm, and therefore has close affinities with all varieties of Semitic nature cults. In his use of the terms דוד and ידִיד Isaiah satirizes the potentially harlotrous Yahwism which shades over imperceptibly into openly licentious paganism. . . . If such be assumed as the situation behind Isa 5:1-7, the passage immediately takes on new significance. The prophet appears, in satirical vein, offering to give, for the

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<sup>37</sup> Graham, "Notes," 167-178.

<sup>38</sup> James Meek, "Canticles and the Tammuz Cult," *AJSL* 39 (1922): 3. Meek asserts that Tammuz worship was "an integral part" of early Hebrew religion.

benefit of those who cultivate only that type of religion which can express the conception of relationship to God by such a term as  $\text{דָּוִד}$ , his version of the Dod-song.<sup>39</sup>

Graham supports his thesis that  $\text{דָּוִד}$  is used of harlotrous Yahwism with several biblical references, for example Deuteronomy 33:12 and Psalm 127:2:

Of Benjamin he said: The beloved of the Lord rests in safety— the High God surrounds him all day long—the beloved rests between his shoulders, for he shields him all day long.

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.

He claims that, “An examination of all these passages suggests that the religious circles in which the term was used were distinguished by an unmoral conception of relationship with the deity.”<sup>40</sup>

Graham makes a convincing case that  $\text{דָּוִד}$  is used as a term for the male deity and that  $\text{דָּוִד}$  refers to one loved by the deity. However, his claim that these terms are used intentionally in opposition to, or satirical of, immoral Semitic nature cults is rejected by later scholars. For example, Willis rejects his conclusion because in all of his writings, Graham shows a strong predisposition to finding allusions to fertility cults in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>41</sup>

Having stated that Isaiah’s wording must be seen as a parody on immoral cultic worship, Graham then suggests that the purpose behind the parody is to arrive at an unexpected conclusion in

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<sup>39</sup> Graham, “Notes,” 168-169.

<sup>40</sup> Graham, “Notes,” 168.

<sup>41</sup> cf. John Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 340.

“which the prophet lays down a principle which differentiates his religion from the basic ideas of the fertility cults. . . His prime concern is the fruit of human relationships, the fruit of the moral aspect of life, rather than the fruit of soil or womb.”<sup>42</sup>

Graham substantiates his point based on an underlying assumption, that the entire chapter is to be read as one unit and is not the product of later redacting:

[N]ot only does the situation above suggested as underlying Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard throw light on the parable itself, but the exegete may be repaid in his study of the following verses, 8-14.<sup>43</sup>

The latter assumption, which many later scholars do not accept, does not invalidate Graham’s work, however. Graham’s conclusions are not based on verses eight to the end of the chapter; rather, he considers them as strengthening his argument. However, this assumption leads him to spending over half of the article on verses eight through fourteen.

In this article, Graham characterises YHWH as being different from the deities of the fertility cults that surrounded ancient Israel in that Israel’s deity expects righteousness of his people. Unfortunately, Graham’s apparent preoccupation with fertility cult references in the Hebrew Bible and his questionable assumption concerning the redaction of the chapter weaken his position.

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<sup>42</sup> Graham, “Notes,” 170-171.

<sup>43</sup> Graham, “Notes,” 171.

### 1.3 1959-1989. Focus: Structure, Genre, and Literary Approaches

#### 1.3.1 Junker

Graham's 1929 article primarily concerns the persons to whom the passage is addressed and how the terms of address are to be understood. In 1959, Herbert Junker considered the problem of the speaker. He proposes that the prophet who sings the Song of the Vineyard, serves as the friend of the bridegroom.<sup>44</sup> Before developing his own theory, Junker first reviews previous scholarship, observing that earlier scholars generally viewed the parable as a teaching parable meant to be readily understandable by the hearers. He points out, however, that scholarship more recent to his day had observed that the message is not obvious at first glance, nor would it have been to the original hearers.<sup>45</sup> Rather, the prophet wanted to hide his message by presenting the song in several layers. Junker suggests that the superficial layer acts as bait, as it were, to draw the hearer (and later, reader) in the wrong direction, hiding the deeper meaning of the parable. He notes that some scholars viewed the passage as a love song and others as a vineyard song sung at the Feast of Tabernacles; however, he finds problems with those views. Junker acknowledges that scholars have agreed that the parable is a song, but he feels that none have clearly expressed its purpose.

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<sup>44</sup> Herbert Junker, "Die Literarische Art von Isa 5:1-7," *Biblica* 40 (1959): 259-266.

<sup>45</sup> Junker does not question who the original hearers would have been. His underlying assumption is that the song is originally sung by the eighth century prophet to his contemporary audience.

After considering the diverging views of previous scholarship and the weaknesses of each view, Junker proposes that the key to understanding the passage is in a cultural custom of the period, the prophet serving as friend of the bridegroom:

Wenn er Jahwe als «seinen Liebsten» bezeichnet, so spricht er damit nicht die dem A.T. fremde Sprache einer «Liebesmystik», sondern gebraucht einen feststehenden formalen Ausdruck, der den atl. Hochzeitssitten entlehnt ist. Und aus dem Gebrauch dieses Ausdrucks wird eindeutig die Rolle klar, die der Prophet als Sprecher dieses Liedes annimmt. Nämlich, wenn er Jahwe in der Sprache der atl. Braut- und Hochzeitssitten als «seinen Liebsten» bezeichnet, so folgt, dass er selbst auch umgekehrt als «der Liebste» oder «*der Freund des Bräutigams*» bezeichnet werden muss. Er tritt also hier auf in der Rolle dessen, der Joh 3,29 als ὁ φίλος του νυμφίου «der Freund des Bräutigams»<sup>46</sup>

Junker's proposal is based on an assumption, though possibly a correct one, that the role of friend of the bridegroom was a cultural tradition at the time of the passage. The only biblical reference to such a relationship, however, is from the NT, the relationship between John the

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<sup>46</sup> Junker, "Die Literarische," 264. "When he describes YHWH as 'his beloved,' he does not thus use the O.T. foreign language of 'mystical love,' but uses a fixed, formal expression, which has been 'borrowed' from O.T. wedding rites. And from the use of this expression, its role becomes completely obvious, which the prophet as the speaker of this song takes on. Namely, when he describes YHWH in the language of O.T. wedding rites as 'his beloved,' it follows that he himself vice versa has to be designated as 'the beloved' or 'friend of the bridegroom.' To sum up—he appears then here in the role of the one, whom John 3:29 describes as . . . the 'friend of the bridegroom.' [Own translation—DJM]



Baptist and Jesus, which Junker cites. Yet the text lends itself to such an understanding, and therefore Junker's suggestion is conceivable, though it cannot be proven.

### 1.3.2 Orbiso

It is a bit difficult to state the focus of Tbófilo Orbiso's 1960 article "El Cántico a la Viña del Amado (Is 5:1-7)"<sup>47</sup> since he does not state it himself, nor is it easily discerned. He begins his work with a short summary of the symbolic usage of the vine in the Hebrew Bible and then briefly notes the determinations of genre made by scholars before him. He does not conduct a thorough study of the question of genre, but after discussing the earlier works, he sees the most justifiable conclusion to the question of genre as being a parable mixed with allegorical elements:

Lo más justo es decir que es una parábola mixta, con elementos alegóricos. . . Pero hay que convenir también en que nuestro Cántico es una parábola *sui generis*, muy teñida de alegoría, en que la figura y la realidad se entremezclan.<sup>48</sup>

Following this determination, Orbiso briefly considers the redactional state of the text. Citing Cheyne, Duhm, Skinner and Gray, Orbiso accepts the view that Isa 2:6-5:30 is an unredacted block attributable to the prophet Isaiah and that this song was originally sung by the prophet in

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<sup>47</sup> Tbófilo Orbiso, "El Cántico a la Viña del Amado (Isa 5:1-7)," *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 34 (1960): 715-731.

<sup>48</sup> Orbiso, "El Cántico," 718, 721. "It is fairer to say that it is a parable mixed with allegorical elements. . . But we must also agree that our Song is a parable *sui generis*, much tinged with allegory, in which the figure and reality intermingle." [Own translation—DJM]

the courtyard or in the courts of the Temple.<sup>49</sup> Orbiso gives no proof for this view other than the fact that some earlier scholars also had adopted that same position, a position that probably can never be conclusively proven or disproven. I consider the question of the possible oral presentation of the song in the chapter on the innertexture of the text.

The author then proceeds verse by verse through the passage as would a general commentary, with no new insights of particular note until the conclusion. It is Orbiso's conclusion, I think, that makes this article most noteworthy. He takes the following line of thought: In the song, the owner of the vineyard spells out his detailed, caring work of preparation, then asks, "What more could I have done for her (the vineyard)?", leaving the addressees in a state of confusion. Through this device, the prophet has brought them to the point of judging themselves, that they are worthy of YHWH's total abandonment. Yet the nature of the abandonment is not specified: is it temporary or permanent? The matter is inconclusive. The parable ends suddenly, leaving an impression of terror, the terror of abandonment by the owner of the vineyard, YHWH. Yet this threat is made in the hope of bringing forth repentance in the vineyard, the hearers. The passage invites the reader to correct the impression that the abandonment is permanent; people, unlike vines, are capable of repentance, and this song is a call to repentance.<sup>50</sup>

Using this conclusion, Orbiso then broadens his viewpoint to make a general comment about the character of YHWH and YHWH's relationship with Israel. According to Orbiso, the parable leads to an understanding of the goodness and salvation of God:

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<sup>49</sup> Orbiso, "El Cántico," 718-719.

<sup>50</sup> Orbiso, "El Cántico," 730.

Toda la economía (divina) de la salvación procede del amor de Dios al hombre, amor que nunca se desmiente, y, aun cuando castiga al pecador, busca su bien y no quiere se muerte, sino que se convierta y viva.<sup>51</sup>

Orbiso ends with his observations of how the goodness of YHWH has extended to Israel and will extend again to them. According to Orbiso, the warning of the parable was not heeded, and, metaphorically speaking, the vineyard was torn down and the land left barren during the Babylonian captivity. He further states that Israel's sin of rejecting Jesus as Messiah is far more grievous than the sins addressed by Isaiah, yet even that sin is met by the goodness and salvation of God:

El castigo será proporcionado a la culpa, más universal y más duradero: salvo un pequeño «resto», el pueblo como tal será reprobado. Más ni aun entonces la reprobación será tan total y definitiva que no sea iluminada por un rayo de esperanza. Es «el misterio» que San Pablo nos revela: el pueblo judío que durante siglos ha permanecido obstinadamente incrédulo, al fin de los tiempos se convertirá reconocerá en Jesús de Nazaret al Mesías.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Orbiso, “El Cántico,” 730. “The entire (divine) economy of salvation proceeds from the love of God to man, love that never goes back on itself, and, even when it punishes the sinner, seeks his good and does not desire his death, but rather that he would turn and live.” [Own translation—DJM]

<sup>52</sup> Orbiso, “El Cántico,” 731. “The punishment will be proportionate to the fault, more universal and enduring: save for a small remnant, the people as such will be rejected. Yet not even then will the rejection be so total and final that it is not illuminated by a ray of hope. It is ‘the mystery’ that Paul reveals to us: the Jewish people, who for centuries have remained stubbornly disbelieving, at the end of time will turn and recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.” [Own translation—DJM]

I think that the conclusion is helpful in that it makes a statement about the character of YHWH based on the passage, and the author finds this characterisation consistent with another major theme of Scripture. He views YHWH as a god who may reject for a season, but who ultimately restores. According to Orbiso, YHWH as a restorer can be seen in his relationship with Israel, past, present, and future. Not everyone would agree with Orbiso's conclusion, of course. Yet this article goes beyond just debating the genre, studying the redactional state of the text, or delving into the sociology of the ancient world. Rather, it meaningfully reflects on the character of the God of the Bible, reflection that is useful for the communities of faith who look to the Bible for such guidance.

### 1.3.3 Schottroff

Willy Schottroff is known for his determination that Isaiah 5:1-7 should be classed as a fable. Understandably, later scholars who consider the genre of the passage pass an opinion on his views, many of which are not favourable. Before I review his theory, however, I would like to begin with a comment Schottroff makes in passing that is not touched upon by later scholars but that I think is worth noting.

In the introduction to his article, Schottroff speaks to the enduring quality of the passage and the remarkable immediacy of its effect.<sup>53</sup> He attributes this quality to the complex, changing nature of the passage and the surprises that unfold as a result. Then he states:

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<sup>53</sup> Willy Schottroff, "Das Weinberglied Jesajas, Jes 5:1-7: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Parabel," ZAW 82 (1970): 68.

Die alttestamentliche Parabel ist eine Parabel in actu bei der sich der Parabelcharakter erst nach der Stellungnahme des Hörers zu einem interessanten Einzelfall ergibt.<sup>54</sup>

In reviewing Schottroff's work, later scholars do not cite this comment, probably because it is not directly relevant to Schottroff's topic, the determination of the genre of the passage. I find it interesting, however, because of its nature and timing. Schottroff acknowledges that the only thing that makes a biblical parable a parable is the engagement of the reader. In other words, Schottroff acknowledges the role of the reader in the interpretive process. The parabolic nature of the text is not embedded in the text or the words of the original speaker, but is, in a sense, embedded in the interaction between these words and the hearer/reader.

Schottroff's article was published in 1970, so this comment was written in that year or a short while earlier. At that time, Stanley Fish was in the early years of his career, just developing his reader-response theory. One of his earliest works touching on the matter, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, was published in 1967,<sup>55</sup> only three years before Schottroff's article. In that same year, Schottroff's German colleagues Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss established the Constance School, in which they further developed their new reception theory. I think it is significant that Schottroff makes the comment that he does, particularly since earlier

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<sup>54</sup> Schottroff, "Das Weinberglied," 69. The OT parable is a parable in which the character of the parable becomes an interesting individual case only after the opinion of the listener. [Own translation—DJM]

<sup>55</sup> Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1967).

scholars do not note in such an explicit way the importance of the reader in the act of interpretation.

Schottroff acknowledges the role of the reader in the beginning of the article, but he then determines its genre based not on the interaction of reader and text, but rather on the form in comparison with other ancient Near Eastern forms. Perhaps Schottroff's approach would have been somewhat different had he written his article a decade later, by which time his colleagues had further refined their reception theories.

Schottroff begins the substance of his article by pointing out the similarities between Isa 5, and 2 Sam, 12 and 14. He not only compares the similarities but later in the article observes that this comparison highlights the problematic nature of Isa 5:1-7:

Der Vergleich des Weinberglieds mit diesen drei Parabeln ist geeignet, nicht nur die Übereinstimmung in der wesentlich auf Überraschung, ja: auf Überrumpelung des Hörers angelegten Wirkung, sondern auch den Sondercharakter und damit die spezifische Problematik von Jes 5: 1-7 zu verdeutlichen.<sup>56</sup>

Schottroff then considers the problematic nature of the passage to deduce its genre. He begins his argument in agreement with many earlier scholars, such as Kaiser, but in contrast to others, such as Bentzen. He asserts that the vineyard song cannot be a parable with a historical salvific

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<sup>56</sup> Schottroff, "Das Weinberglid," 71. "The comparison of the vineyard song with these three parables is suitable not only for comparison in their surprise, yes, the surprise effect created for the listener, but also for its special character thus highlighting the specific problems of Isaiah 5:1-7."

interpretation.<sup>57</sup> Rather, the listeners follow along, not aware at first that the words are a parable. Only at the end do the hearers realise that they are hearing a legal judgment. Yet Schottroff does not accept Wildberger's view that the parable is a court speech (*Gerichtsrede*) because of the accused being a vineyard and not a person. Rather, he sees it as an argumentative poem (*Streitdichtung*), a type of ancient fable, after the model of such poems from Sumerian and Akkadian traditions.

There are strengths and weaknesses to Schottroff's position, as there are perhaps to every position. Schottroff bases his position on the similarity between Isaiah 5:1-7 and the structure of the above-mentioned traditions:

- a mythological introduction giving the roles of the parties;
- the segment in which parties boast of their functions and disparage that of the other party;
- an appeal to a god for judgment;
- the settlement of the dispute and reconciliation.<sup>58</sup>

If Isaiah 5:1-7 is to be read as a unit, then there are some problems with the above structure. The final verse does not fit that pattern, as Schottroff himself notes. If the Song of the Vineyard is a *Streitdichtung*, an argumentative poem, where is the boasting? Certainly the vineyard is not boasting. Perhaps the vinedresser, YHWH, is boasting.<sup>59</sup> In this passage, the appeal is not to a

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<sup>57</sup> Schottroff, "Das Weinberglied," 74.

<sup>58</sup> Adrian Graffy, "The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," *Biblica* 60 (1979): 402. In reviewing Schottroff's work, Graffy outlines Schottroff's argument by these four points.

<sup>59</sup> I consider this possibility in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture.

god, but it is the god appealing the matter to the people. There is no final settlement of the dispute or reconciliation. The possibility of reconciliation is an open matter, as noted by Orbiso.

Finally, Schottroff's label of the passage as fable is also problematic in that a fable involves animal and/or vegetable characters, such as in Jotham's parable in Judges 9:8-15. The vineyard fits that category, but the vinedresser does not.<sup>60</sup> In the process of time, scholarship has rejected Schottroff's views because of the above mentioned weaknesses.

#### 1.3.4 Lys

Daniel Lys' 1974 article<sup>61</sup> presents the most detailed structural study of the passage of any work prior or since. His sixteen-page article is a careful and comprehensive study of the marks of articulation, verbal and semantic recurrences, with notes on other types of recurrences, pronoun, and prepositional use. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Lys' article, as noted by Willis, is to demonstrate that "the structure and smooth flow of thought of the whole pericope bear strong witness to its coherence."<sup>62</sup> In addition, Lys' detailed work would tend to disprove Haupt's reading, which structures the pericope in a series of double hemistiches, since that reading requires significant emendation of the MT. Lys' structure does not require an emendation of the text.

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<sup>60</sup> Willis thinks that a conflict between a vineyard and a man constitutes a fable, and so sees this as strengthening Schottroff's argument. Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," 352.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Lys, "Le Vigne et le Double Je: Exercice de Style sur Isa'ie," *Studies on Prophecy: A Collection of Twelve Papers*, VTSup 26, (Leiden: Brill, 1974): 1-16.

<sup>62</sup> Willis, "Genre," 360.



I would see Lys' conclusion as one of the important contributions of the article, as in Orbiso's 1960 work. Lys does not conclude by summarizing the details of the pericope's structure, but he derives from these studies observations about the character of God.<sup>63</sup> He notes that from verse seven it becomes clear that the "beloved" of verse one is God. The language is love imagery between God and the people whom he has planted and who will be restored, but the parable ends "badly"; the state of the relationship is not good because of the deeds of beloved's people. Then Lys adds:

On a noté plus haut que ce poème finit mal et en un sens ne finit pas. Que sera le sort de cette vigne qui devait faire les délices de ce chéri qu'elle ne reconnaît pas? Faut-il conclure par l'échec de l'amour de Dieu?<sup>64</sup>

To answer the question, "What will become of the 'delight'?"<sup>65</sup> he turns to the final chapter of post-exilic Isaiah,<sup>66</sup> Isa 66:11-12. The word "delight," used for the one who did not recognise her loved one, is once again used as God's delight:

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<sup>63</sup> I use the term "God" here rather than YHWH or the god, following Lys.

<sup>64</sup> Lys, "Le Vigne," 51. "It was noted above that the poem ends badly and in a sense never ends. What will happen to this vine which was the delight of the beloved it does not recognize? Should we conclude it is the failure of God's love?" [Own translation—DJM]

<sup>65</sup> French, délices; Hebrew root שׂעשׂע

<sup>66</sup> Lys' terminology.

[M]ais c'est le Seigneur lui-même qui la dirige. . . vers Jérusalem, en nourrissant, portant et "délectant" ses enfants. Ici, comme pour espérer, il y a un grand renversement. C'est seulement par la grâce de Dieu que le dernier mot peut revenir à "délices."<sup>67</sup>

One could make the case that it is irrelevant to cite a wording parallel between a passage in First Isaiah and post-exilic Isaiah in the way that Lys does. Yet it is also possible that the wording in the latter passage is an intentional intertextual reference to its earlier uses, in particular to its usage in this passage. If so, some would see in that usage the post-exilic writer's ideology, a belief that YHWH must restore the chosen nation. Others, including Lys, would see it as divinely inspired theology. When considered in light of its intertextual possibilities, Lys sees the passage as characterising YHWH as a god who restores, as did Orbiso before him.

### 1.3.5 1977-1982, Debate over Genre. Willis, Graffy, Yee, and Shepherd.

#### 1.3.5.a Willis

Many works on the Song of the Vineyard since 1977 refer to the article by John Willis simply entitled "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7."<sup>68</sup> Willis thoroughly surveys the major works of the eighty years prior to his writing, endeavouring to categorize the various scholarly views on the genre of Isaiah 5:1-7. In this survey, Willis divides the works into twelve different genre possibilities, as suggested by the scholars he reviews:

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<sup>67</sup> Lys, "Le Vigne," 51. "But it is the Lord himself who directs it. . . to Jerusalem, feeding, carrying and 'delighting' their children. Here, as hoped, there is a big reversal. Only by the grace of God can the last word go back to 'delight.'" [Own translation—DJM]

<sup>68</sup> Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7": 337-362.

- An uncle's song
- A satirical polemic against Palestinian fertility cults
- The prophet's song concerning his own vineyard
- The prophet's song expressing sympathy for his friend YHWH
- A drinking song
- A bride's love song
- A groom's love song
- A song of the friend of the bridegroom
- A lawsuit or accusation
- A fable
- An allegory
- A parable

In his suggestion for a solution, Willis notes that scholars prior to his time (1977) had focused primarily on textual studies, assuming that the genre was obvious:

We who deal with such matters seem to assume that the determination of the genre is obvious *prima facie*, and merits little careful analysis. This is not said to detract in the least from the importance of attempting to determine the extent of a pericope, or the *Sitz im Leben*, or the stages of transmission, etc., but to emphasize the importance of giving due attention to real issues pertaining to genre.<sup>69</sup>

I think that Willis' article marks an important turning point in scholarly approaches to this passage. Until this time, as Willis notes, the focus was on textual studies with a by-product, as it were, of genre determination. By studying the question of genre the way he does, Willis broadens the interpretive horizon. I find it interesting to note that Willis' article appears in

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<sup>69</sup> Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," 338.

roughly the same time period as Schottroff's (just seven years later). This expansion of interpretive viewpoints is not happening in a vacuum; it is during this period that horizons are expanding in all areas of literary interpretation, including the field of biblical studies.<sup>70</sup>

Determining the genre of a passage is important in the interpretive process, but it is not a simple matter. One of the difficulties of the process is the differing ways in which interpreters arrive at genre determination:

[S]ome scholars determine the genre of a text by their interpretation of its content. . . ; others, by its occasion. . . ; others, by its purpose. . . ; and still others, by its literary type. ... And indeed, these four concerns are inseparably connected with the problem of genre. The scholar's primary goal should be to determine and define the genre of a text in such a way as to comprehend all that is in that text.<sup>71</sup>

In his quest to determine the genre of the passage, Willis apparently holds to the underlying assumption that the passage is necessarily comprised of only one genre, which later scholars reject. He thinks that scholars working together, supplying pieces that others may miss, will ultimately arrive at the answer to the genre question:

To be sure, this undertaking is so complex that one may not be successful; and yet, with various scholars working on the same or similar texts, that which escapes one may be

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<sup>70</sup> I consider the matter of expanding horizons in biblical interpretation in the chapter on methodology.

<sup>71</sup> Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," 359.

suggested by another, and that which is not clearly defined by one may be stated in a more polished form by another.<sup>72</sup>

Willis concludes his article by stating that the question of genre for the Song of the Vineyard is still an open one and describes the genre of the passage as “a parabolic song of a disappointed husbandman.”<sup>73</sup> Graffy and Yee (see below) express disappointment in Willis’ conclusion. In addition to the underlying assumption that the Song of the Vineyard should be viewed as a single genre, he also assumes that the passage necessarily reflects a literary genre type. He refers to the literary genre, with no reference to the possible influence that orality of the passage may have. I consider the question of orality in the chapter on the innertextual texture.

#### 1.3.5.b Graffy

Two years after Willis’ article was published, Adrian Graffy briefly reviewed Willis’ work, finding his solution to the genre question to be unsatisfactory.<sup>74</sup> Graffy continues the consideration of the problem of genre determination, agreeing with Willis that such determination is not an easy matter. Following the work of Richter, Graffy maintains that the starting point of genre determination should not be content, but form:

A particular form is found to be common to a number of independent texts, and thus a formal relationship is established between a group of texts; these constitute a literary genre. The first

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<sup>72</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 358.

<sup>73</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 359.

<sup>74</sup> Adrian Graffy, “The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” *Biblica* 60 (1979): 400.

criterion in establishing a genre is therefore that a specific form is found to be common to two or more unconnected texts in the same literary tradition.<sup>75</sup>

Before considering the form of the pericope, Graffy reviews the conclusions of earlier scholars, pointing out the weaknesses of their genre determinations. He begins with Junker's derivation of a marriage-related genre, the song being given by the friend of the bridegroom on behalf of the bride. Graffy rejects Junker's view for the same weakness I noted above, that there is not enough external evidence to justify this delineation. The only other passage that refers to a "friend of the bridegroom" is the NT saying of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus. Graffy also rejects Schottroff's view that the passage is a fable. Schottroff bases his determination on Akkadian and Sumerian traditions, but Graffy maintains that verse seven does not fit that pattern, as Schottroff himself noted. Schottroff's solution to this problem was to see the genre as shifting at this verse, thereby revealing the true meaning of the "fable."

Graffy not only sees problems with earlier designations of genre, but he also rejects the term "allegory" for the passage. He notes that the Targums treat the passage allegorically, as do early Christian interpreters, but that these interpretations are far removed from the text itself, giving "full rein to their imaginations in interpreting Isa 5:1-7 in this way."<sup>76</sup> Since allegories require that each element have one specific interpretive reality, he notes that a parable may come close to being an allegory, without necessitating such detailed interpretation:

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<sup>75</sup> Graffy, "Literary Genre," 400.

<sup>76</sup> Graffy, "Literary Genre," 402.

[W]e might define parable as an imaginary narrative presenting a principle, in which the individual details are not to be interpreted as representing individual realities, but which has one basic message. Such a definition would not exclude the possibility of secondary messages but would rule out an interpretation of each detail of the narrative as representing a separate reality.<sup>77</sup>

The final form that Graffy reviews is the courtroom speech or “*rîb*-pattern.” He briefly cites the works of Fohrer, Gemser, Vermeylen, and Westermann and concludes:

[I]t is clear that an application of the structure of the *Gerichtsrede* [court speech] does not provide for the “parabolic” quality of the passage, disregarding the crucial importance of verse. In fact, our passage in its general form could belong to this genre, but the designation is not yet as specific as it might be.<sup>78</sup>

Since Graffy’s approach to the determination of genre is through analysis of structure, he analyses the pericope in comparison with four other similarly structured passages: 2 Sam 12:1-7, 2 Sam 14:1-20, 1 Kings 20:35-42, and Jer 3:1. In his analysis, he demonstrates that all these passages follow the form: introductory formula, presentation of the case, judgment of the case, and true meaning revealed. The Isaian passage also includes a call to judgment after the presentation of the case. Graffy concludes:

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<sup>77</sup> Graffy, “Literary Genre,” 404.

<sup>78</sup> Graffy, “Literary Genre,” 403.

[W]e might say that they [the four passages] share a common “spiritual” *Sitz im leben*. In each a prophetic (*sensu lato*!) voice convinces or attempts to convince an unwitting hearer of his guilt. Can more be said without forcing arbitrary conclusions on the texts involved?<sup>79</sup>

I think that Graffy is correct in determining that a genre is defined by style and not by content. This is evident in genre styles today. A *haiku*, for example, is defined by its style, not its content, as is a limerick. While these styles may often convey a certain kind of content (the limerick, for example, is often lewd), nevertheless the style makes the genre. The same is evident in biblical literature. For example, there are many forms of laments or expressions of sorrow, but a lament psalm is a genre known by its style; it is written as a psalm that follows a certain, more or less prescribed, pattern.<sup>80</sup>

It is worth noting that Graffy does not attempt to name the genre of the five passages he considers, but rather demonstrates their commonality of style. In so doing, he avoids forcing an arbitrary conclusion on the text, an error which he notes is all too easily and too often made.

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<sup>79</sup> Graffy, “Literary Genre,” 409.

<sup>80</sup> Lament psalms generally follow a pattern that begins with a plea to God for help, a complaint from the psalmist, an expression of confidence in God’s response, and ends with praise. Examples would include: psalms 22 and 74.



#### 1.3.5.c Yee

Four years after the publication of Willis' study of genre, Gale Yee undertook to expand on his work.<sup>81</sup> Yee was either unaware of Graffy's work or chose not to relate to it, limiting her discussion to a review of Willis and an expansion on his thoughts. She begins by expressing "disappointment" both at his conclusions and his methodology. She points out that although Willis delineates the passage as a parable, he does not demonstrate how this definition is seen in the text or how it fits with the text's own delineation as a song. In addition, Willis maintains that the delivery of the parable works as a decoy to draw the hearers into the speaker's message, but Yee claims that he does not demonstrate how.<sup>82</sup>

Yee's thesis is that the Song of the Vineyard utilises two similar but functionally different literary forms: a song and a juridical parable. Through these, "Isaiah manipulates the southern kingdom . . . to condemn itself."<sup>83</sup> She compares the pericope with Deuteronomy 32, a lawsuit in the form of a song, and with the juridical parable in 2 Sam 12:1-14. Yee points out the similarities and differences between the Song of the Vineyard and the passage in Deuteronomy. I have placed her comparisons in table form:

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<sup>81</sup> Gale Yee, "A Form Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Song and Juridicial Parable," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 30-40.

<sup>82</sup> Yee, "A Form Critical Study," 30.

<sup>83</sup> Yee, "A Form Critical Study," 31.

<u>Similarities</u>	<u>Differences</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both passages are “songs”</li> <li>• Theme: YHWH’s covenantal love</li> <li>• Indictment in form of question</li> <li>• Final sentence given</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deut: YHWH’s acts concrete; Isa : metaphorical</li> <li>• Identity of YHWH not revealed until end of passage in Isaiah.</li> <li>• Deut: YHWH is the judge; Isa : the people of Jerusalem and Judea judge</li> </ul>

There are four similarities, but also three differences. At first it may seem that the basic premise of similarity between the two passages is invalid, or barely so, given the significant differences between them. Yee acknowledges the potential problem that the dissimilarities pose for her analysis. She explains the reason for them:

These dissimilarities are due, for the most part, to the fact that two different forms are joined in the Isaian text: a *šîrâ* embodying a lawsuit, which I have discussed above, and a juridical parable, which I will discuss presently. The “song” form is a “broken” form in this text, since it is not presented in pure form. It is the juridical parable which “breaks” this form. An understanding of both forms throws light on the passage.<sup>84</sup>

After the brief discussion of the lawsuit, Yee turns to the juridical parable. She compares the Isaian passage with the same passages considered by Graffy: 2 Sam 12:1-7, 2 Sam 14:1-20, 1 Kings 20:35-42, and Jer 3:1-5. Yee eliminates this last passage, claiming that it does not fit the pattern of the juridical parable. Graffy had noted the same, but did include it in his considerations. Graffy felt that the one verse encompassed the basic elements of a juridical parable present in the other passages.

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<sup>84</sup> Yee, “A Form Critical Study,” 33.

After consideration of the other juridical parables, Yee claims that the Isaian passage follows a similar pattern, though with some divergences (table format mine):<sup>85</sup>

<u>Element</u>	<u>Verses</u>	<u>Divergence</u>
Parable	Isa 5:1b-2	
Judgment	Isa 5:3	
Recital of benevolent actions of God	Isa 5:4a	Rhetorical question found in Nathan's parable, but not in others.
Indictment	Isa 5:4b	In other parables, indictment is addressed to a king.
Sentence	Isa 5:5-6	
Interpretation	Isa 5:7	Placement of interpretation different in Isaian passage.

Earlier in the article, Yee had claimed that the divergences in the structure of the lawsuit were due to the “broken” nature of the “song.” Here she notes the differences, but gives no further explanation of their cause; one assumes that she views these divergences as being derived from the conjoining of the two different genre styles. She also makes the claim that when both the lawsuit and the juridical parable are understood, then the problem of the dissimilarities is clarified. In my view, she does not sufficiently explain how so. While she makes her case that there are elements of both genres in the passage, there are sufficient divergences in each type as to seriously weaken the foundation of her argument.

Without a clear transition, Yee then moves to the use of the term בית ישראל. While Wildberger and others see the term as a synonymous parallel to “men of Judah” or “inhabitants of Judah,”

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<sup>85</sup> Yee, “A Form Critical Study,” 36. I have found the table format helpful in analysing Yee’s arguments. The weakness of her arguments becomes more apparent to me when her data and observations are placed in this format.

Yee sees it as referring to the northern kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel.<sup>86</sup> She suggests that the Isaian passage may have been written at the time when Tiglath-pileser was devastating the north. When hearing this ironic device, בית ישראל, meaning the northern kingdom, and knowing that the northern kingdom was being devastated, the inhabitants of Judah would be tricked into thinking at first that the proclamation of judgment is solely against the north. The surprise then comes when they are included, with the phrase “men of Judah.”

Yee’s argument that בית ישראל refers to the northern kingdom is based on several points. First, the phrase does not appear in synonymous parallelism with “men of Judah” or “inhabitants of Jerusalem” any other place in the Hebrew Bible. She notes that Hosea uses vine imagery in relation to the northern kingdom, and that some scholars also see Psalm 80 as doing the same. According to Yee, even Micah, prophet to the south and Isaiah’s contemporary, uses the term “house of Israel” in the same way in every case. She claims that Jeremiah does the same.

I differ with Yee in her reading of some of the passages that she cites as evidence. For example, Micah 3:1, “And I said: Listen, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Should you not know justice?” There is no reason to think that the phrase “rulers of the house of Israel” necessarily means the northern kingdom. On the contrary, it appears to be in synonymous parallelism with the phrase “heads of Jacob.” The same holds true with her evidences from the book of Jeremiah. In addition, the force of her argument is predicated on the assumption that the song is sung or passage written while Tiglath-pileser is invading the North (734-732). While she may be correct, she presents no evidence to back up this assumption.

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<sup>86</sup> Yee, “A Form Critical Study,” 37.

After the considering the meaning of בית ישראל, Yee returns to the interplay of the lawsuit and juridical parable in the passage, completing her explanation as to why there are divergences between the Isaian passage and the lawsuit and juridical parables:

Isaiah's decoy, the intentional veiling of the real transgressor, differs from the other juridical parables because of its relationship with the "song." The "cases" in the other parables are truly fictional situations similar to the king's own predicaments. The "song," on the other hand, articulates a real situation between God and his people. The vineyard-decoy, therefore, represents figuratively a real situation used as a subterfuge by Isaiah to trap Judah.<sup>87</sup>

As demonstrated above, there are almost as many dissimilarities as similarities between the Isaian passage and the passage in Deuteronomy, and there are half as many differences between the Song of the Vineyard and a juridical parable. I do not find Yee's explanation that the differences can be accounted for by the fact that the other passages are fictitious situations whereas the Song is a real one sufficiently strong to override the many divergences. Yet the similarities cannot be overlooked. Perhaps Yee is working a bit too hard to force a conclusion on the text by attempting to arrive at a definitive genre determination.

#### 1.3.5.d Sheppard

In a brief article less than a year after Yee's study, Gerald Sheppard expanded on her work.<sup>88</sup> He affirmed her conclusion that Isaiah 5:1-7 should be seen as a juridical parable, while restating the

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<sup>87</sup> Yee, "A Form Critical Study," 30.

<sup>88</sup> Gerald Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Juridical Parable," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 45-47.

difficulties she encounters in her analysis. According to Sheppard, these difficulties are resolved if Isa 3:13-15 was part of the original pericope and was later moved in redaction.<sup>89</sup>

Sheppard cites three reasons why his analysis is plausible. First, because Isa 3:13-15 is fragmentary, evidencing that it originally was part of another passage. Second, because the two passages, Isa 3:13-15 and Isa 5:1-7, bear a “remarkable resemblance” to each other; and third, because there is evidence of other editorial displacements within First Isaiah. From these three evidences, Sheppard concludes:

We detect, therefore, a repeated redactional device used in this case to create anticipatory resonance in concert with later thematic retrospective resonance (27:2-4) on the motif of Israel as a vineyard.<sup>90</sup>

He then restructures the passage as follows (table form mine):<sup>91</sup>

5:1-2	parable	Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
	judgment	---(implied on part of the audience)

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<sup>89</sup> This article presents a section of his earlier article on the influence of the Assyrian Redaction (AR) on the Book of Isaiah. Gerald T. Sheppard, “The Anti-Assyrian Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1-39.” *JBL* 104 (1985): 193-216.

<sup>90</sup> Sheppard, “More on Isaiah 5:1-7,” 46.

<sup>91</sup> Sheppard, “More on Isaiah 5:1-7,” 46. As with Yee, I have placed Sheppard’s reconstruction in table form to make his argument more visible, and the weaknesses in the argument thereby become more evident.

3:13-14	interpretation	The Lord rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples. The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
3:15	indictment	What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.
5:7	further interpretation	For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!
5:3-4	summons to judge in light of the interpretation	And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?
5:5-6	sentence	And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

Sheppard sees this reconstruction as explaining the theme of the fruitless vineyard that appears also in Isaiah 27:

With this proposal one can readily see why the extraction of the original parts announcing the Lord's judgment (both from the interpretation and the indictment) provided a coherent unit for the purpose of creating thematizing resonance around the motif of God's fruitless vineyard which will one day blossom again (27:2-6).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7," 46.

In order to make his reconstruction plausible, Sheppard explains that the editor was left with the problem of where to place Isa 5:7. Sheppard's view is that the editor placed it after 5:1-6 in order to explain a love song that trails off into judgment.

I think that Sheppard's reconstruction is not plausible for a number of reasons. Lys' work on structure referenced earlier, as well as the work of Gil'ad (see below) and my work later in this thesis,<sup>93</sup> give good evidence that Isa 5:3-6 ought not to be rearranged as Sheppard has done. Sheppard has to make a number of baseless or minimally-based assumptions in order to explain his ordering. He assumes that there was intent on the part of the redactor(s) to create a "thematizing resonance" in First Isaiah. He also must assume that the editor placed 5:7 after 5:6 in order to explain the love song that "trails off suddenly into judgment."<sup>94</sup> In order to arrive at his conclusions, Sheppard must reorder texts and operate on minimally supported assumptions.

### 1.3.6 Gil'ad

In the same year that Graffy's article appeared, Tsipporah Gil'ad also published a work on the structure of the passage.<sup>95</sup> Gil'ad's work did not appear in a peer-reviewed journal, however, and no later work of scholarship that I have encountered references it. I think this is most unfortunate, since she brings a different perspective and challenges traditional views of the

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<sup>93</sup> See section 3.2.1.

<sup>94</sup> Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7," 46.

<sup>95</sup> Gil'ad, Tsipporah, *עיוני החוג לתנ"ך לזכר ישי רון* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979).



passage. Although she considers the question of genre, she may have been unaware of the works of Willis, Yee, or others, since she makes no reference to them.

Gil'ad opens her study by stating that on first reading, the passage seems to be a simple parable following the common form of פתיחה, משל, נמשל (Introduction, parable, interpretation or explanation of the parable). Gil'ad maintains that while the parable can be read in that way, by using different criteria, the parable can be divided in a different way. She divides the "song" into four stanzas with the introduction, though not part of the "song" *per se*, also in the first stanza:

Stanza 1	Let me sing for my beloved / my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard / on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, / and planted it with choice vines; He built a watch-tower in the midst of it, / and hewed out a wine vat in it; He expected it to yield grapes, / but it yielded wild grapes.
Stanza 2	And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem / and people of Judah, Judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard / that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, / why did it yield wild grapes?
Stanza 3	And now I will tell you / what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, / and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, / and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; It shall not be pruned or hoed, / and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds / that they rain no rain upon it.
Stanza 4	For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts / is the house of Israel, And the people of Judah / are his pleasant planting; He expected justice / but saw bloodshed; Righteousness / but heard a cry!

One of the interesting aspects of the Song of the Vineyard is that its structure can be viewed in a number of different ways. Gil'ad's division is intriguing as one possible structural division. With Gil'ad's breakdown, it may be possible to see two original pericopes, one a simple parable and the other a song, joined together in the process of redaction, the purpose of the song being to add

emotional content to the simple *משל*, *נמשל*, *פתיחה* parable format. I consider Gil'ad's structure in detail in the chapter on innertexture and therefore do not do so here.

Gil'ad's division of the song then leads her to conclusions about the genre. If the *משל-נמשל* is located in the first and last verses of the pericope and the song in between is an expansion, then there is no way the song could be an allegory. In the *משל-נמשל*, there is no mention of YHWH and no threat of judgment. The elements of an allegory simply are not present, and the parable cannot be viewed as one, even though, as Gil'ad notes, the great Jewish interpreters of the last two thousand years have viewed it as such.

Gil'ad touches on an important interpretive aspect of the Song of the Vineyard: the appeal to the emotions of the hearers or readers. Her basic thesis is that the song is designed to speak to the reader's/hearer's emotions.<sup>96</sup> She sees this in the pictorial language of the first and third stanzas as well as in the repeated statement of the expectation for good grapes but the disappointing reality of the bad.

The final question that Gil'ad considers is that of the style of delivery and the imagery chosen for the parable. She maintains that the vine imagery is used both to conceal and to reveal the message, very much in the same way that Samuel first conceals and then reveals to David his call to repentance (2 Sam 12:5). As Samuel's use of an agricultural image brought David to repentance, so also the prophet intends to call forth repentance. Additionally, Gil'ad observes that the prophet uses the image of a vine and not that of a sown field to draw out an emotional

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<sup>96</sup> Gil'ad makes no statement as to the relationship between the MT text and a possible oral substructure.

response from the hearer. A field is sown today and in a few months reaped. A vine, however, is carefully tended over a long period of time; a relationship is established between the vine and the owner. The hopes and expectations of good fruit are therefore higher, and the higher the hopes, the greater the disappointment at a corrupted fruit.

Gil'ad's structural analysis and her view that the song is designed to draw out the emotions of the hearer lead her to a portrayal of YHWH in the passage. Through the lens of structural analysis, she portrays YHWH as a vinedresser disappointed at the state of the vineyard, hoping to draw his vineyard, his people, to repentance. This portrayal is the same as Willis', but she uses her structural analysis to highlight the emotive response of the vinedresser

#### 1.3.7 Höffken

In 1982, Peter Höffken considered the Song of the Vineyard in light of the changes that arise from an oral presentation appearing later in written form.<sup>97</sup> In opening his article, he states that the writings of the prophets as we have them do not directly reflect the prophets' original words but are written documents that reflect the process of transferral of an oral vorlage into a written text. This process may involve the modification, compression, or even elimination of literary material. Since this is the case, a new approach is needed to discern between units of early prophetic tradition and later editorial additions or redactions. He sees Isaiah 5:1-7 as an excellent text for this horizon of interest.

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<sup>97</sup> Peter Höffken, "Probleme en Jesaja 5, 1-7," *ZTK* (1982): 392-410.

Höffken approaches the task of re-evaluating the Song of the Vineyard by first looking at its internal literary structure. Then he attempts to give the song and its elements a superimposed structure, asking to what extent the song shows an older phase. He then describes the song as a several-layered reality.<sup>98</sup>

To begin this process, Höffken briefly touches on the matter of genre, noting the work of Lys and Willis, but concludes that it is questionable that one particular genre type can be assigned to the passage:

Es ist allerdings die Frage, inwieweit diese Struktur, die eben beschrieben wurde, einem bestimmten literarischen Genre zugeordnet werden kann, d. h. einem bestimmten vorgeformten »Muster« von Sprache.<sup>99</sup>

Höffken sees Isaiah 5 as a unique form of speech, noticeably differing from other related forms,<sup>100</sup> which he attributes to changes and additions that occur when an original story is later put into writing. He observes that until his time, most scholars had seen the passage as reflecting the actual words of the prophet, even to the point of specifying a time and place in which these words were spoken. However, Höffken maintains that the song has a more complicated history

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<sup>98</sup> Höffken, "Probleme," 395-396.

<sup>99</sup> Höffken, "Probleme," 400-401. It is, however, a question of how much the structure which has just been described can be associated with a particular literary genre, i.e. a particular pre-formed pattern of language.

<sup>100</sup> Höffken, "Probleme," 401.

than that.<sup>101</sup> He proceeds to analyse the structure of the passage, noting the similarity between verses 1b-2 and 7 with the *rîb* stories of 2 Sam 14, 1 Kings 20, and Jer 3:1.<sup>102</sup> He comes to the conclusion that verses 1b-2, 7 were an original orally-presented short story:

Man könnte sich durchaus vorstellen, daß diese zugrundeliegende Einheit V. 1 b—2 + 7 ein ursprünglich mündliches Gebilde war, das sprachlich einfach und für den Hörer übersichtlich strukturiert, Erzählung und Deutung vereinte.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, according to Höffken, verses 3-5b presented an allegorisation of YHWH *a posteriori* of the prophet for further explanation of the story.<sup>104</sup> In light of his description of the layers of superimposed structure, Höffken concludes that the passage takes on a different tone than that which is normally attributed to it:

Damit aber wird wohl weiterhin auch der Schritt vollziehbar, die Fortführung des Liedes vor allem in V. 5f nicht als Ausdruck von Recht und Berechtigung zum unheilvollen Handeln Gottes, sondern auch als Hinweis auf die umfassende Übermacht Jahwes auch und gerade im

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<sup>101</sup> Höffken, “Probleme,” 404. One will therefore have to ask if there is not evidence that the song has a more complicated pre-history than usually assumed.

<sup>102</sup> See also Jacques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique: Isaïe, I-XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millénaire d'expérience religieuse en Israël*, (Paris, J. Garabalda, 1977) 1: 160-162.

<sup>103</sup> Höffken, “Probleme,” 405. One could reasonably imagine that this underlying unit was originally an oral construction which—structured clearly and simply linguistically—united the story and its meaning.

<sup>104</sup> Höffken, “Probleme,” 408.

Gegenüber und im Umgang mit seinem Volke zu verstehen, die sich in der Katastrophe von 587 bewährt — und in solcher »Bewährung« mögliche positive Erschließung von Zukunft im Blick haben kann.<sup>105</sup>

In conclusion, Höffken's depiction of the vinedresser is to some degree similar to that of Gil'ad's, that YHWH, the vinedresser, is disappointed with the vineyard. Yet Höffken also emphasises the "rightness" of YHWH in acting as he does, as demonstrated through the comparison between the Song of the Vineyard and the *rib* stories of the historical and prophetic books.

### 1.3.8 Williams

In 1985, Gary Williams broadened the interpretive approach to Isaiah 5:1-7 by taking a literary perspective not focused on genre determination. Williams maintains that the Song of the Vineyard is rife with "frustrated expectations" and notes that these frustrated expectations are a significant but overlooked literary device:

[I]nsufficient attention has been paid to a literary device used by the author to underscore the message of Yahweh's frustration, a literary device which also contributes to some of the major exegetical problems of the pericope. As we move through the passage, again and again we are

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<sup>105</sup> Höffken, "Probleme," 409. With this in mind, it becomes a reasonable step to think that the continuation of the song, especially in v5f, is not an expression of the right of God to act disastrously, but a pointer to the all-encompassing superior strength of Yahweh, especially in relation to his dealings with his people, which proved their worth in the catastrophe of 587—in such a 'probation,' one can have a positive view of the future.

led to expectations which are shortly proven to be false. These false expectations force us to reinterpret the passage repeatedly.<sup>106</sup>

Williams proceeds to interpret the passage allegorically based on the use of the words דוד and כרם which he notes are often used in ancient literature as sexual images. He also claims that the construct use שירת דודי means “a song of praise,” backing his claim by citing examples from the Hebrew Scriptures of the use of the phrases שירת יהוה and שירת האלוהים. Williams maintains that the singer of the first line is a female, singing a song of praise to “her intimate friend,” her דוד.<sup>107</sup> However, since כרם is female imagery, Williams sees an interpretive frustration, as the female is both the subject and object of the song.

Williams expands the allegorical approach, stating that the loving care given by the husbandman to the vineyard “implies a matrimonial relationship in which the husband admirably provided for his wife. The expectation of grapes (v. 2c), perhaps a symbol of children, was fully justified.” He goes on to suggest that באשים may mean illegitimate children. This interpretation leads to the need for another re-interpretation: “it begins to appear that the purpose of the song is not to praise the groom but to lay the foundation for a complaint against his wife.”<sup>108</sup> Williams sees verse three as requesting judgment against the bride for the באשים, the “minstrel” now being male. The subsequent verses allegorically indicate that the husband will no longer help her nor

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<sup>106</sup> Gary R. Williams, “Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation,” *VT* 35 (1985): 459.

<sup>107</sup> Williams, “Frustrated Expectations,” 460.

<sup>108</sup> Williams, “Frustrated Expectations,” 460-461.

protect her from those who would take advantage of her; problems will engulf her, and, perhaps, the curse of drought indicates that she will become barren.

I think William's interpretation would be highly problematic if he had concluded his thoughts at this point. My comments on the article to this point would be several-fold. First, his interpretation is built on tenuous premises, the first of which is that **דוד** and **כרם** must be understood allegorically. Along these same lines, the second premise assumes that the following verses allegorically describe the care of a husband toward a wife. Once such an allegorical interpretation is assumed, then there must be explanations for every term, such as the one Williams gives for **באשים**.

Not only are these premises and their allegorical extensions questionable, but the logic of the interpretation itself is faulty. For the interpretation to work, the passage must be understood allegorically. Yet for the allegory to work, the interpretation must continually be re-interpreted as one reads.

Those would be my comments if Williams' article were to end with the sexual allegory he at first proposes. Yet his article must be read dynamically, as he states that the passage itself must be read:

The Song of the Vineyard must be interpreted dynamically, i.e., as it is revealed bit by bit.

Any attempt to interpret every part in the light of the whole, when the whole includes those



parts which have not yet been heard or read, forces the exegete to choose between alternative interpretations.<sup>109</sup>

After making that statement, Williams then unfolds the “real” interpretation as he thinks the original Judean hearers would have received it. His unstated assumption is that the Song of the Vineyard was originally sung to an eighth century Judean audience, and that the text preserves this song as it was originally delivered. His assumption may or may not be correct; many earlier scholars held that chapter five is original Isaian material, but other scholars, particularly more recent ones, differ. It seems clear, though, that the implied hearers/readers of the passage are the eighth century inhabitants of Judea or some segment of that society.

Working under his assumption, Williams lays out the step-by step unfolding of an unpleasant surprise. With the condemnation of the “House of Israel,” the implied hearers would understand that the song is not in fact a sexual allegory or a song of praise to a lover, but rather a declaration of judgment. The minstrel is not a friend, but YHWH. If so, who must the vineyard be? The hearers have an instant of relief, understanding that the vineyard to be judged is **בית ישראל**, the northern kingdom of Israel.<sup>110</sup> The moment of relief is exceptionally brief, however, as **איש יהודה**

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<sup>109</sup> Williams, “Frustrated Expectations,” 465. Nic Tromp takes a similar approach to the passage, seeing it as a gradual unveiling that must be read dynamically. Nic J. Tromp, “Un démasquage Graduel. Lecutre Immanente d'Is 5,1-7,” in *The Book of Isaiah-Le Livre D'Isaïe: Les Oracles et Leurs Relectures Unité et Complexité de L'Ouvrage*, by Jacques Vermeulen, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 197-202.

<sup>110</sup> Williams assumes that the Judean hearers would understand **בית ישראל** as limited to the Northern Kingdom.

is placed in immediate parallelism with *בית ישראל*. Now comes the true understanding of the *באשים*: it is not illegitimate children in a sexual allegory but rather the violence and oppression of the hearers themselves. The word play of the last verse hammers the point home, making the message so clear that no one could miss the point. Williams concludes the article by giving a reinterpretation of each element involved in the tearing down of the vineyard, an interpretation as he thinks the hearers would have understood the matter. The fruitful hill is Canaan; the torn down wall means there will be no more protection from enemies, and so forth.

I stated the first part of Williams' conclusion earlier, that the pericope must be read dynamically as it develops. He ends with the observation:

A static interpretation misses a key aspect of the poet's art. In the dynamic approach the interpreter's expectations are frustrated repeatedly. This hermeneutical frustration is a literary device which strengthens the main message of the song: Yahweh's frustrated expectations concerning Judah.<sup>111</sup>

One may question some of the details of Williams' approach. For example, I am not convinced that the hearers of the song would hear it as a sexual allegory, as Williams suggests. Nevertheless, I think that Williams' basic thesis is sound and is important. I think that in order for this passage to be understood correctly, it must be read progressively as a series of ironic turns and changed expectations. I consider the question of the progressive aesthetic of the text later in this thesis.<sup>112</sup> I also appreciate how Williams wrote his article, leading the reader into one

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<sup>111</sup> Williams, "Frustrated Expectations," 465.

<sup>112</sup> See section 3.2.

type of interpretation and then “springing the trap” to reveal his real interpretation. By doing so, he not only describes the literary device of irony in the passage, he demonstrates it.

### 1.3.9 Folmer

Margaretha Folmer also took a literary approach in her work on Isa 5:1-7, but from a very different perspective from that of Williams.<sup>113</sup> Observing that earlier exegetes have needed to emend the poem for their structural schemas to work, she states her assumption that they did so because they did not appreciate its literary quality and uniqueness. According to Folmer, analysing the poem synchronically and fully appreciating its literary qualities leads to valid interpretation of the text without the need to emend.<sup>114</sup>

Folmer’s work is a detailed line by line literary analysis, with particular focus on the poetic sounds and word interactions in the text. Most of her interpretations of the text are derived from such literary nuances. I will cite two examples. In the first, Folmer refers to the building of the watch tower and the hewing of a wine vat:

The direction of the building and the hewing contrast with each other. The upward movement of the building and the downward movement of the hewing reflect the all-encompassing

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<sup>113</sup> Margaretha L. Folmer, “A Literary Analysis of the ‘Song of the Vineyard’ (Is. 5:1-7),” *Jaarbericht... van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* (1987): 106-123.

<sup>114</sup> Folmer, “A Literary Analysis,” 106.

energy of the *yādīd*.<sup>115</sup> The two cola of this line are connected with each other through rhyme and alliteration: *b'tōkō* and *bō* at the end of colon a and colon b respectively.<sup>116</sup>

In a second example, Folmer focuses on what she calls an unmarked shift in subjects, from *yādīd* to *kèrēm* in the cola, “he (*yādīd*) expected it to yield grapes, but it (*kerem*) yielded wild grapes.” From this she concludes:

The transition from *yādīd* to *kèrēm* as subject of the verbal forms is thus unmarked in the text. It looks as if their actions merge into each other. We feel here a tension between form, which suggests a smooth take-over of the action by the *kerem* as was expected, and content, which tells us the bitter truth: the vineyard has reacted in the wrong way. The same tension can be felt in the words *'anaḥim* and *b<sup>l</sup>'ūšīm*. The identical form of the two words (both carry the plural morpheme *-im* and have three syllables) wrongly suggests that they are also identical in meaning. Their meaning, however, could not be more contrasting: “good grapes”-“bad grapes.” We can conclude that both the change of subject and the change of object is realized very subtly in this line.<sup>117</sup>

Folmer’s work is a valuable contribution in that it expands the horizon of detailed textual studies of the text to include literary considerations. However, I think that care needs to be taken that the passage is not “over-exegeted,” an approach in which major conclusions are drawn from minor nuances that are, quite likely, not significant.

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<sup>115</sup> Transliteration marks are according to Folmer.

<sup>116</sup> Folmer, “A Literary Analysis,” 110.

<sup>117</sup> Folmer, “A Literary Analysis,” 111.

I think both examples above may tend in that direction. In the first example, Folmer suggests that the upward and downward movements are literary devices to emphasize the care of the husbandman. Is that so, or does the already-drawn observation from the text give birth to the perceived “literary device?” In other words, it is clear that the passage reveals the love and labour of the husbandman. Having already seen that, does the interpreter then “read into” small details of the text that same meaning, calling them “literary devices?” I believe that may be the case here.

In the second example, Folmer notes the transition between *yādīd* and *kèrèm*, stating that this literary device leads the reader to expect a “smooth” transition of action between the two, the vineyard taking over where the husbandman leaves off. A literary device of tension is created, according to Folmer, when the vineyard does not function as one would expect. Hebrew is a concise, compact language, particularly when it is in poetic form. Is Folmer perhaps seeing a literary device in a phrase that reflects language usage in which no literary device is intended or present? That may be the case; however, I think that making a definitive statement as to the validity of her comment would require a significant amount of research that is outside the realm of this thesis.

Folmer considers the similarity of form of the two words *‘anāḥīm* and *bē’ūšīm* in the phrase, “וַיָּקֹוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים וַיֵּשֶׁב בָּאֲשִׁים,” maintaining that the similarity of their forms is a literary device that heightens the sense of contrast between the two. Both words, *‘anāḥīm* and *bē’ūšīm*, are plural, and plurals in Hebrew have the *-im* ending. It would be hardly possible to avoid that usage. Both words also happen to be three syllables, which is very common. The phrase sounds good poetically, and perhaps that is why it is written the way it is. I again question if perhaps

Folmer is seeing a literary device in a phrase that simply reflects a normative Hebrew usage. Similar to the previous example, there is no question that these two terms are set in opposition to each other, but I think that her explanation of the features that make this a literary device is questionable. While I raise these questions concerning Folmer's approach, I do think that this approach may lead to a good homily, emphasizing what is already clear, but making it detailed, more colourful, and meaningful for the hearer.

### 1.3.10 Korpel, 1988, 1996

Marjo Korpel wrote two articles on the Song of the Vineyard, in 1988 and 1996. In her first article, she considers the genre of the passage and rejects the designation of parable:

In general it is said that Isa 5:1-7 is written in the form of a parable. But if this is true, there should be only one point of comparison. Nevertheless, a mere glance at the explanation of vs. 7 immediately shows us more than one point of comparison.<sup>118</sup>

Korpel's statement that a parable should only have one point of comparison is a generally accepted view, although the view that parables may have more than one point of comparison has been expressed by others.<sup>119</sup> This is an important matter because of an underlying assumption that she holds, that verse seven gives more than one point of comparison, thereby eliminating the

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<sup>118</sup> Marjo C. A. Korpel, "The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7)," In *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, ed. Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988): 119.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1990): 163.

possibility of the passage being a parable. However, I do not see that verse seven necessarily does give more than one point of comparison. The question of reference in verse seven is a matter of scholarly debate. Do the phrases *איש יהודה* and *בית ישראל* refer to two different parties, or are they in parallelism, referring to the same party? This question has never been conclusively decided and probably never will be. Rather than noting that there are several possibilities, Korpel instead makes the assumption that “house of Israel” and “the people of Judah” are two different groups. While they might be, she would need to defend that position or else state it as her assumption. These two related assumptions, that a parable can only have one point of comparison and that verse seven has two such points, are the basis upon which she proceeds.

After a brief review of earlier literature, Korpel explains her primary task and the reason for it:

As we have seen, the question of the literary genre of the Song of the Vineyard was addressed by many scholars and was answered in many different ways. The present author will now examine the poetic structure of the text to show that this procedure is helpful in defining the genre of the text.<sup>120</sup>

The analysis of the text is similar to earlier exegetical works, except that Korpel also includes considerations of poetic style, and in this respect her approach is similar to that of Folmer. While she states that structure is helpful in defining the genre of the text, much of her interpretive approach is based on general considerations surrounding the text, such as intertextual references and cultural practices in the ancient Near East, and not on the poetic style. For example, in her discussion of verse 1b, My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill:

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<sup>120</sup> Korpel, “The Literary Genre,” 123.

The parallel to this verse in Cant. 8:11 (כרם היה לשלמו) is striking, which indeed makes it very likely that the vineyard could be interpreted by the hearers as a beloved woman. The קרן בן שמן also can be taken as a part of the love song. Perfumed oil played an important role in the Ancient Near Eastern love poetry (cf. Cant. 1:3; 4:10).<sup>121</sup>

Korpel's assertion that the similarity of the opening phrase of this pericope with Song 8:1 may lead the listeners to expect a love song is reasonable. However, she then writes that the phrase קרן בן שמן (literally, "a horn the son of oil") adds to the expectation, since "perfumed oil played an important role in the Ancient Near Eastern love poetry." I think Korpel needs to explain how she understands the phrase קרן בן שמן. Does she understand it as a geographical term? If so, how does that raise the expectation of a love song? Does she think that קרן refers to a vessel for carrying oil, a "horn of oil"? She does not specify. If she would take the phrase to mean a "horn of oil," in a non-geographical sense, then her interpretation is understandable and perhaps valid. However, she would need to at least state that she understands the phrase that way and preferably defend her reasoning.

There are a number of points in her analysis of the text in which she makes some sweeping assumptions, some of which may possibly be incorrect. For example, after citing texts in which YHWH is associated with building Jerusalem, a sanctuary, or a palace on Zion, she writes:

Interesting in connection with these texts is Mic 4:8 where the עפל of Zion is paralleled by the מגדל עדר. In light of vss. 6f. this indication has to be seen as an *ad hoc* name (מגדל עדר),

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<sup>121</sup> Korpel, "The Literary Genre," 125.



“Tower of the Flock”) for the Tower of David, which was standing on the top of the Ophel (cf. Neh 3:25; Cant 4:4; Isa 32:14).<sup>122</sup>

Korpel reasons that מגדל עדר refers to the Tower of David, and that its location was at the Ophel. There are a number of problems with this assertion. She bases her assertion that מגדל עדר and the Ophel are the same as portrayed in the parallel structure of Micah 4:8. It is true that these terms are in parallelism in that passage and would seem to be synonymous. The general locale of מגדל עדר is known, however; it was several kilometres south of Jerusalem<sup>123</sup> and therefore cannot be located at the Ophel.

Korpel further asserts that this tower was a synonymous name for the Tower of David, although she provides no evidence for this assertion. She assumes that David’s Palace was located on top of the Ophel; while that assumption may be true, it is not necessarily so. She backs up her assertion with three biblical citations,<sup>124</sup> but I do not see that any of them validate her claim. The passage she cites in the Song of Solomon (Song 4:4) refers to the darling’s neck being like the tower of David hung with shields. The Isaian passage (Isa 32:14) merely places the terms palace, populous city, Ophel, and watchtower in parallelism. Korpel takes this as synonymous parallelism, so that the Ophel, the palace, and the tower are one. Rather, the picture in the Isaian passage seems to be one depicting total devastation, the various terms serving to highlight the proclamation that the destruction will be all encompassing. The passage in Nehemiah (Neh 3:25)

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<sup>122</sup> Korpel, “The Literary Genre,” 128.

<sup>123</sup> m. Sheqalim 7:4.

<sup>124</sup> Neh. 3:25; Song of Sol. 4:4; Isa 32:14.

refers to the upper palace, and she takes that to mean David's palace; however that seems not to be the case. The next verse in Nehemiah describes the area of work in the next section of the wall as extending from the water gate to the projecting tower. The water gate guards the Gihon Spring, the water source of Jerusalem,<sup>125</sup> while the projecting tower guarded the northeast corner of the city in the Iron Age 1, the time of David.<sup>126</sup> By the description in Nehemiah, it is clear that the upper palace was not in that section, therefore not part of the city of Jerusalem in the time of David. The upper palace may refer to one of the palaces built after David by Solomon or perhaps a later king. In any case, it apparently was in the section of the city that was built after the time of David.

She follows the above statements by basing a conclusion on two more tenuous geographic assumptions, the locations of the Tower of Hannanel and the King's winepresses:

The only text where מגדל and יקב occur together is Zech. 14:10. In this text the North-South line of Jerusalem is indicated with the words ומגדל חננאל עד יקבי המלך. Probably Isaiah has thought of the highest point of Jerusalem when choosing the metaphor 'tower,' and of the lowest point when choosing the 'winepress.' In this connection it is striking that neither the מגדל nor the יקב is involved in the judgment passed in verses 5 and 6 of Isa 5. If it is true that Isaiah intended the Temple and Jerusalem when speaking about the tower and the winepress,

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<sup>125</sup> The water gate is under excavation and reconstruction at the time of this writing.

<sup>126</sup> Yigal Shiloh, "City of David Excavation 1978," *BA* 42 (1979): 168.

this belief in the theology of Zion may have prevented him from drawing the ultimate consequence.<sup>127</sup>

Korpel's conclusion that Isaiah's theology may have prevented him from including the temple in his pronouncement of judgment may or may not be correct. However, Korpel bases her conclusion on an assumption that the tower of Hannanel is the highest point of Jerusalem and the King's winepresses the lowest, and that these two form the North-South line of Jerusalem. Neither written sources nor archeology give clear indication where the king's winepresses were, although the lower portions of the city, the southern portion, in the area of Solomon's gardens and the Pool of Siloam, is a reasonable guess. The location of the Tower of Hannanel cannot positively be identified. While it may have been at the highest point of the city, there is also the likelihood that it was not.<sup>128</sup> Korpel suggests that Isaiah "probably" used these two geographic indicators to indicate the Temple and Jerusalem. To arrive at these conclusions she also had to assume that the word "tower" referred to the Temple. It would have been better had Korpel suggested the possibility and then been more circumspect in assigning to that possibility a theology and an interpretive position of the passage.

It appears to me that that Korpel's assumptions drive her interpretations, rather than her findings molding her conclusions. I also think that her article is a good example of the pitfalls of making geographic conclusions based solely on literary evidence, and then deriving theological inferences from these geographic "realities."

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<sup>127</sup> Korpel, "The Literary Genre," 128-129.

<sup>128</sup> Compare Neh 3:1, 12:39.

On a more positive note, however, Korpel gives biblical citations in which the word עֲנִיִּים could refer to either people or deeds. She suggests that בְּאֲשֵׁים may be understood by a reference in the Targum of Isaiah in which the word may mean “deeds.”<sup>129</sup> Unlike the previous examples, Korpel arrives at a conclusion based on the evidence rather than on assumptions and guesses.

In the second major section of the article, the author takes a detailed look at the poetic structure. She conducts a verse by verse structural analysis and then comments on the higher structure of the passage. Despite the shortcomings of the work noted above, Korpel makes a significant contribution in her observations of the higher structure of the passage. Apart from Lys, no interpreters prior to Korpel conducted such a detailed analysis of the chiasmic structure of the passage. In addition to her analysis of the chiasmic structure, she tabulates the shifts the listener must make upon hearing each word and each section of the passage.

In conclusion, Korpel argues that the passage is an allegory. She notes that while certain parts of the song may be considered a love song or a lawsuit, the whole cannot; therefore, the passage cannot be considered to be either of those genres. If the passage is to be given a genre label, that label must be applicable to the whole, not to just part. In addition, the metaphors of the song cannot be reduced to only one semantic sphere, which argues against the song being labelled a parable. She concludes that there is only one basic metaphor, in which Israel is the vineyard, and therefore the passage could be called an allegorical parable. “But the allegory still remains the

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<sup>129</sup> Korpel, “The Literary Genre,” 129.

leading feature, in which almost every word (metaphor) has its literal tenor. In our opinion the genre of Isa 5:1-7 can best be described as an allegory.”<sup>130</sup>

I think that Korpel’s argument for the designation “allegorical parable” is a very strong one. That term recognizes that this song has a specific direction with a specific addressee. By couching the term as “allegorical parable” and not just “allegory,” the likelihood of over-exegeting by finding specific meanings for every element in the parable is reduced. I think the greatest weakness of Korpel’s work is that she endeavours to find a literal tenor for every metaphor, thus arriving at the designation of allegory.

In 1996, Korpel followed up on the 1988 article by considering the redaction of Isaiah chapter 5 as a whole.<sup>131</sup> Structural analysis of the entire chapter is outside the limits of this thesis, but her conclusion to the 1996 article is worth noting:

The relations between the Song of the Vineyard and the four sub-cantos [in the rest of the chapter] we found render it not improbable that the latter were composed to explain the terse statements of the former. Because two clearly post-exilic (5.24c-25; 10.4b) and one possibly Isaianic (5.8-10) insertions were found, the regularly structured canto consisting of four sub-cantos must have been appended to the Song at a relatively early date, perhaps by Isaiah himself.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Korpel, “The Literary Genre,” 155.

<sup>131</sup> Marjo C.A. Korpel, “Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism: The Example of Isaiah 5 and 10:1-6,” *JSOT* (1996): 53-71.

<sup>132</sup> Korpel, “Structural Analysis,” 71.

## 1.4 1991-Present. Diversification of Approaches

### 1.4.1 Consideration for Translations: Emerton and Clark

#### 1.4.1.a Emerton

In “The Translation of Isaiah 5:1-7,” J.A. Emerton “seeks to discover whether it is possible to make sense [of the Song of the Vineyard in] . . . the MT as it stands.”<sup>133</sup> He notes that it would be incorrect to suggest that the MT is always correct and never needs amending, but it should be the starting point for a textual analysis. As the title suggests, the purpose of his article is to investigate certain translation difficulties in the passage. As scholars both before him and after have discussed, the translation of the terms *dôd* and *yädîd* in their various forms are particularly problematic and yet central to the understanding and interpretation of the passage.

Emerton’s article is little more than a thorough review and critique of the works of previous scholars, yet that is not a criticism. Emerton’s purpose is to review the translation possibilities and to determine whether the MT text needs to be amended, as some have done, or whether it correctly serves as the basis for the most likely translation of the passage. I will not review his article here in detail. Some points are worth noting, however.

One of the numerous dilemmas of the passage is the shift from the third person of verses 1-2 to the first person of verses 3-6. Emerton agrees with Cersoy that the latter verses do not make sense without the first two, so these latter verses cannot stand on their own as the song of the

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<sup>133</sup> J.A. Emerton, “The Translation of Isaiah 5:1-7,” in *The Scriptures and the Scrolls: Essays in Honour of A.S. Van der Woude*, ed. F. García Martínez, A. Hilhorst and C.J. Labuschagne (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 18.

“friend.” The first two verses cannot just be the prophet’s introduction (cf. Schottroff) to the song; they are part of the song, and thus the dilemma remains. Emerton tacitly acknowledges that the poetry of verses 3-6 is different from that of 1-2, but he rejects two extremes. The first, taken by Cersoy, is that verses 3-6 are in prose and not poetry at all. The other extreme is represented by Haupt, who attempts to find regular metre in every line, an attempt that only works if the MT text is significantly amended. Emerton finds Haupt’s hemistich arrangement forced and does not see the need for such amendments of the MT. To resolve the problem, Emerton poses a possibility and looks to the LXX for support for his solution:

If verses 3-6 are unintelligible without lb-2, and the third person in the latter is difficult if they are part of the song of the owner of the vineyard, is it possible that the prophet substituted his own introduction for the song’s original beginning? In the LXX, the verbs in verse 2 are in the first person, and verse lb has ‘my vineyard,’ not ‘his vineyard’; but the difference may be explained as an attempt to solve the problem rather than as evidence for a different Vorlage.<sup>134</sup>

Yet, on examining this possibility, Emerton finds that amending the MT to read as does the LXX does not solve the problem of the usages of the first and third persons. It was important for Emerton to consider the above possibility, since his primary objective in the paper is to determine if the MT needs to be amended in order for translation difficulties to be resolved. He found that the possibility he posed, that the prophet substituted his own introduction for the song’s original, though supported by the LXX, still did not resolve the difficulties. He then states:

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<sup>134</sup> Emerton, “The Translation of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 22.

If there is an apparent inconsistency between verse 1a, as usually understood, and the use of the third person in verses 1b-2, then it is necessary to look again at the phrase *šîrat dôdî* in the former half verse.<sup>135</sup>

After a lengthy consideration of the alternatives posed by previous scholars, Emerton suggests another translation possibility, one “which involves no change to either the consonantal text or the vocalization.”<sup>136</sup> The difficulty is resolved by translating the construct relationship in *šîrat dôdî* differently from ‘the song of my friend’ or ‘of my beloved,’ which are the ways in which they are usually translated. Upon researching his thought, he discovered that Hitzig in 1833 suggested that the construct should be translated “Ein Lied über meinen Freund,” (a song about my friend), which was closely followed by Knobel and Fohrer.

For Emerton, this translation resolves all the difficulties of the text considered by previous scholars. He concludes:

If *šîrat dôdî* is understood to mean ‘a [or, the] song about my friend,’ the difficulties considered above disappear. Since Isaiah is singing about his friend, verses 1b-2 can be the song, although they refer to the friend in the third person. Then, in verses 3-6, the prophet speaks in the person of the owner of the vineyard. All the other interpretations of the phrase considered above have been found to be open to objection. It may therefore be concluded that

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<sup>135</sup> Emerton, “The Translation of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 23.

<sup>136</sup> His comment about the vocalisation is in reference to Cersoy’s suggestion that the vocalization should read *šîrat dôdaî*.



*šîrat dôdî* should be translated ‘a song about my friend,’ and that there is no need to alter the text.<sup>137</sup>

Emerton asks a very specific textual question: does the MT need to be amended in order to resolve the problem of persons speaking? Since the question is specific, he is able to conclude his article with a one line conclusion: no, the MT text does not need to be amended to make sense. Any further discussion of the meaning of the passage is beyond the scope of his work.

#### 1.4.1.b Clark

Just two years after Emerton considered the translation problem of the words *dôd* and *yädîd* and the personal pronoun endings, David Clark also wrote an article with the end goal of improving translation.<sup>138</sup> Clark, however, considers the passage from a broader perspective with a different research question. Clark does not succinctly state his question(s) as Emerton does, but he considers the discourse of the passage to determine how best to translate not just the word value of the text, but how best to communicate the aesthetic or “feel” of the text. Since Clark’s focus is on the discourse of the passage and not detailed textual problems, he easily passes over matters that are considered in depth by Emerton. For example, concerning the problem of personal pronouns, he states:

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<sup>137</sup> Emerton, “The Translation of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 29.

<sup>138</sup> David Clark, “The Song of the Vineyard: Love Lyric or Comic Ode? A Study of the Oral and Discourse Features of Isaiah 5:1-7,” in *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures*, ed. Ernst Wendlen (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 131-146.

Verse 3 also sees a change of the persona speaking, though this is made explicit in Hebrew only in a low-key way by a change of pronoun to first person. The words in verses 3 to 6 are the words of the owner of the vineyard, though we assume that they too are reported by the prophet and delivered by him on the owner's behalf. The same speaker continues to speak, but wearing, so to say, a different hat.<sup>139</sup>

Because Clark's approach is an analysis of the discourse, he is able to suggest broad patterns. For example, he suggests an over-arching structure to the pericope:

There is thus an inclusion in terms of the speakers: the prophet in verses 1-2 and 7, and the owner in verses 3-6. By giving more weight to the pause that seems to be implied between verses 4 and 5, one might also analyze this as a chiasmus: prophet (1-2): owner (3-4) : owner (5-6): prophet (7).<sup>140</sup>

I think that the differences of approaches between Emerton and Clark highlight the value of a multi-textural reading of a pericope. On the one hand, there is a tension between them. One could say of Emerton that he misses the big picture, while saying that Clark too easily passes over important technical questions. Yet when the two are viewed together, the two approaches serve complementary functions in the complex task of the interpretive undertaking. In this case, Emerton states that the MT text does not need to be amended; the personal pronouns are correctly in place. He provides the technical support, as it were, for Clark to assume the

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<sup>139</sup> Clark, "The Song of the Vineyard," 134.

<sup>140</sup> Clark, "The Song of the Vineyard," 134.

correctness of the text and to take a broader perspective more concerned with the meaning of the communication.

Clark undertakes a brief, non-technical verse-by-verse analysis. His study of the Hebrew text seeks to discover the aesthetic, or discourse “in the interplay between prophet and audience.”<sup>141</sup> In his analysis, however, there are some assumptions or statements he makes concerning the detail of the text that may not be correct. For example, he states the following:

The word rendered “wine vat” is marked in Hebrew in two ways: it is front-shifted in its clause, and it is preceded by the particle *gam*. The effect is to bring it into focus and draw attention to it; it appears that the effort of building a wine vat in advance was a public display of the owner's confidence that the fruit of the vineyard would be good.<sup>142</sup>

Clark's first statement is that the word wine vat, *yeqeb*, is front-shifted, and this fact, along with the inclusion of the particle *gam*, draws attention to it. Nouns of this form (two syllables, both with *sēgöl* vocalisation) are almost always front-shifted;<sup>143</sup> the front-shifting in this verse is not exceptional but normal. It is possible that the particle *gam* is intended to emphasise the inclusion of the winepress, since the particle does not need to be added; the *waw* is sufficient. However,

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<sup>141</sup> Clark, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 136. Clark makes no mention of the role of later editing, real audience as compared to intended audience, or matters of that nature. While he does not explicitly say so, his writings give the impression that he believes that the text reflects the original words of the Prophet Isaiah to his eighth century audience.

<sup>142</sup> Clark, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 135.

<sup>143</sup> To mention but a few of many possible examples, *šemen*, *šeqer*, *reqeb*, *neqeb*, *‘eqeb*.

has Clark considered that it may be included for poetic reasons? His prior incorrect statement concerning the front-shifted noun calls into question his explanation of the inclusion of *gam*. One may suspect that Clark is trying too hard to make a case. This impression is strengthened, at least for me, by his second statement, that the building of the wine vat in advance was a public display of the owner's expectation of good fruit. Clark suggests that the construction of the winepress in advance is somehow exceptional, yet there is no evidence to that affect. He also suggests that the building of the wine vat in advance publicly demonstrates his expectation of good fruit. Every farmer who constructs a vineyard expects that it will yield fruit, and that fruit must be processed in a wine vat. With these comments, Clark is building toward his conclusion that the pericope is "a discourse-level paradox,"<sup>144</sup> a conclusion which I feel is justified. However, perhaps he strains a bit too hard with these comments to arrive at it.

Finally, Clark attempts to define the genre, but he does so as part of the greater discussion of the problem of finding semantic equivalents in translation. As those who went before him, he is hard pressed to define a genre that fits the pericope. He sees humour and irony in the passage, but he also sees the serious warning encompassed in the whole. In an effort to combine these ideas, he suggests that perhaps "a cheery ode"<sup>145</sup>—which he himself acknowledges is almost an oxymoron—might perhaps grasp the breadth of the discourse.

Despite the flaws noted above, I think that Clark's article is a valuable addition to the literature on the Song of the Vineyard. The article appeared in a United Bible Society publication to be

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<sup>144</sup> Clark, "The Song of the Vineyard," 139.

<sup>145</sup> Clark, "The Song of the Vineyard," 141.

read by other translators, and he attempts to make a case for translators to be sensitive to the matter of discourse in their translation work. Clark's chief contribution is not in the answers he provides or new insights into this pericope, but rather the insightful questions for translators' consideration, questions that are relevant not only for the translation of the Song of the Vineyard but for many portions of Scripture:

Is it possible for structural features of the original text to be carried over into another language? To what extent should they be carried over even if it is possible? What about points of emphasis and thematic focus? Are the normal ways of indicating emphasis and/or focus in the receptor language compatible with the retention of structural features from the original language? How can the aesthetic value and emotive impact of the original be conveyed in a translation? Can format and typographical ingenuity be used to reflect the discourse structure of the original more clearly without simply mystifying the modern reader?<sup>146</sup>

These questions are not only valuable for translators, but are also key questions for a researcher studying the innertexture of a biblical passage. I find it interesting that this article was published at the same time that Vernon K. Robbins was developing the method of socio-rhetorical criticism. This article evidences the broadening of interpretive horizons that I discuss in the next chapter.

#### 1.4.2 Olivier

J. P. J. Olivier's 1996 article, "Rendering 777 as Benevolent Patron," broke new ground in the study of the Song of the Vineyard. Until that time, articles considered the meanings of words 777

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<sup>146</sup> Clark, "The Song of the Vineyard," 140.

and **וַיְיָ** primarily from a grammatical and intertextual viewpoint. Olivier, however, broadens the scope of consideration by taking a multi-faceted approach. He considers not just the philology of the word **וַיְיָ**, but its concept from a socio-anthropological, historical-archaeological, and theological basis. In so doing, Olivier touches on the characterisation of YHWH, finding him to be a “benevolent patron,” as the term was understood in that world:

The patron-client metaphor seems an effective description of the relationship between God and his chosen people. Isaiah’s Song of the Vineyard presents a unique picture of God, namely that of a benevolent patron. God acts like a patron to the farmers by protecting their interests, by granting them sufficient means of existence when needed most, and by managing and organising their affairs.<sup>147</sup>

Olivier is one of the few scholars who makes an explicit statement concerning the characterisation of YHWH in the passage, describing him as a benevolent patron. Earlier scholars do not make the characterisation of YHWH the focal point of the research and therefore such characterisation is only by inference or as a side issue to the question of genre. Textual questions such as the reliability of the MT and the philological and intertextual meanings of the words **וַיְיָ** and **וַיְיָ** or questions of genre dominate the scholarly writings. There may be a number of reasons why the characterisation of YHWH is rarely considered in the study of the Song of the Vineyard, but one possibility that I discuss later<sup>148</sup> is that interpreters may hold to a tacit

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<sup>147</sup> J. P. J. Olivier, “Rendering **וַיְיָ** Benevolent Patron in Isaiah 5:1,” *JNSL* 22 (1996): 63.

<sup>148</sup> See discussion on “presumed intent,” section 3.3.1.

assumption that the characterisation of YHWH in the passage is clear and therefore needs no consideration.

Olivier's article is quite brief, only five and a half pages (not including the bibliography), yet he interprets the passage from four major areas of consideration. His work is the first and to date only article that attempts to view the passage from such diverse viewpoints. In so doing, he is close to viewing the passage from a socio-rhetorical criticism perspective, but since it is so brief, the article is more helpful in pointing the way for further study than it is for making conclusive statements. I think that this brief article hints at the value of a broad-based interpretive modality, such as socio-rhetorical criticism. I refer to this article in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture of the text.

#### 1.4.3 Irsigler

Prior to 1997, the year in which Hubert Irsigler's article appeared,<sup>149</sup> David Clark had noted the importance of interpreting the Song of the Vineyard with a dynamic approach. Irsigler also recognised that some biblical texts, and in particular the Song of the Vineyard "[force] the interpreter not only to realise the closely structured unit of the text as a whole, but also to understand the progressing of the text as a constitutive level of interpretation."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Hubert Irsigler, "Speech acts and intention in the 'Song of the Vineyard' Isaiah 5:1-7," *OTE* 10 (1997): 39-68.

<sup>150</sup> Irsigler, "Speech acts," 40.

Irsigler takes a dynamic approach, applying Austin and Searle's speech-act theory to the interpretation of the passage. Before engaging in the body of the study, Irsigler briefly surveys the history of the use of speech-act theory in biblical exegesis. He notes seven fundamental aspects of the methodology in biblical study, some of which are worth noting here. Irsigler clarifies that speech-act analysis is not meant to replace other methods, including linguistic or historical-critical methods. Rather:

It is able, however, to support and clarify the analysis of meaning, intention and effect of oral or written speech, and to contribute to the knowledge of presuppositions and conditions of communicative, linguistic action.<sup>151</sup>

After a brief discussion of the unity and structure of the text, Irsigler states that the closely structured unit forces the interpreter to view the progression of the text in its discourse:

In such a dynamic interpretation the text is not deciphered only as a process of informative contents or as a mental process. Rather, the text appears as an event of discourse, a manifestation of an intentional and effect-related, linguistic action of text-internal or implicit speakers on the basis of certain communicative presuppositions and conditions.<sup>152</sup>

Irsigler charts the relationship between the illocutive speech acts and perlocutive attempts in the pericope. "The main issues are the communicative speaker's actions, expressed or implied by written discourse, the 'illocutions' or the illocutionary (illocutive) action content of the

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<sup>151</sup> Irsigler, "Speech acts," 40.

<sup>152</sup> Irsigler, "Speech acts," 40.



speech.”<sup>153</sup> The illocutory speech act is a perlocutionary attempt, an attempt to bring forth a specific action or emotive response. “The perlocutionary (perlocutive) effects of speech, intended by the speaker, his ‘perlocutionary attempt’ (attempts to cause effect) are of course not always regular but are textually specific functions of effect of the speaker’s actions.”<sup>154</sup>

Irsigler observes that in verses 1-2 and 5-6, “The sequence is either COMMISSIVE (manifestation of self-commitment) or ASSERTIVE (truth-relational presentation),” the commissive always preceded by the particle *אֲנִי*.<sup>155</sup> Then, however:

The interestedly observed short story in verses 1b-2 with its surprising turn has now become a factual legal case, involving the listeners as judges. In verses 3-4 the COMMUNICATIVE, DIRECTIVE and INTERROGATIVE speech act, the last one semantically and contextually presented as a statement, is intensified into a condensed rhetorical challenge.<sup>156</sup>

Irsigler concludes the section on the structural analysis of the passage with the observation that the tone of the speaker’s illocution in verse seven is not “in the style of direct accusation, but as the statement of deep disappointment against the background of the care and intervention of YHWH for his people.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Irsigler, “Speech acts,” 48.

<sup>154</sup> Irsigler, “Speech acts,” 48.

<sup>155</sup> Irsigler, “Speech acts,” 51.

<sup>156</sup> Irsigler, “Speech acts,” 53.

<sup>157</sup> Irsigler, “Speech acts,” 55.

The question of authorial intent in any text is a problematic one when the author himself/herself is no longer living and has left no record of his or her intent in writing. Yet Irsigler attempts a résumé of the prophet's intentions, based on textual analysis. He discerns five levels of effect-intentions:<sup>158</sup>

1. YHWH's care for his people aims at doing 'right' and 'justice' in society
2. Expression of disappointment in the useless fruit
3. YHWH's justification of his actions
4. Demonstration of the people's guilt by indirect means
5. The acknowledgement of guilt

As I completed this rather lengthy and technical article and considered Irsigler's conclusions, I'm not sure I see how his methodology has clarified my understanding or shed new light on the passage. As far as I can see, many scholars have made similar conclusions as to the tone, intent, and effect of the pericope without speech-act theory, the methodology applied by Irsigler. That is not to say that there was no value to his approach. The use of speech-act theory places the interpretive focus on the intended effect of the song on its hearers as the song, the speech act, develops. Other scholars, Gil'ad and Williams in particular, had also commented on the need to consider the effect of the passage on the hearers of the song, and the use of speech-act analysis presents one structured way in which to study the matter.

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<sup>158</sup> Irsigler, "Speech acts," 60.

#### 1.4.4 “Sour Grapes;” YHWH a Berserker God or Just Judge? Carroll and Chaney

##### 1.4.4.a Carroll

In my earliest readings of the Song of the Vineyard, the tearing down of the vineyard particularly caught my attention. This seemed to me a very strange thing: that a frustrated husbandman would actually go to such efforts in dealing with an unproductive vine. Yet, as strange as this is, few scholars seriously address the matter. This act seems to be taken at face value, but even a brief consideration raises many questions. Robert Carroll is one of the few who touches on the tearing down of the vineyard in his article “YHWH’s Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>159</sup> The article is not specifically about the Song of the Vineyard, yet it is worth considering for a number of reasons. First, he is one of the few scholars who makes an explicit statement about the character or portrayal of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard. Not only that, his portrayal is blunt, unsettling, and unusual, but he makes a good case for it. Carroll is also refreshingly honest about his own ideology and how it affects his view of the character of the god of the Hebrews. Finally, later in the same year of the publication of Carroll’s article and in the same journal (*Semeia*), Marvin Chaney picks up on Carroll’s title and asks, “Whose Sour Grapes?”<sup>160</sup> Chaney writes from a socio-political point of view and does not cite or directly reference Carroll, yet his view of YHWH is radically different from that of Carroll.

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<sup>159</sup> Robert P. Carroll, “YHWH’s Sour Grape: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible,” *Semeia* 86 (1999): 113-131.

<sup>160</sup> Marvin Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?: The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 105-123.

Carroll's article is a brief survey of food and drink as used in the prophetic writings, particularly in the book of Isaiah. While he states his hope that his conclusions will be non-contentious, he opens with a number of provocative statements:

Butchery is food and drink to YHWH. Such a proposition would appear to reflect one of the most dominant strands in the Hebrew Bible . . . , especially in the prophetic literature. Images of YHWH in the prophets frequently reflect a blood-thirsty figure, wading through blood, blasting everything in sight and threatening further violence to generations and generations of people and their children's children (e.g., Jer 2:9). The representation of the deity is generally that of a berserker god.<sup>161</sup>

These statements are indeed provocative, yet it seems at first that Carroll presents sufficient scriptural evidence for them. There is no lack of passages in which YHWH is portrayed pouring out a cup of wrath on his enemies or feeding them with gall and wormwood. He does give the appearance of a "chef of death," to quote Carroll, serving food and drink to his guests in order to punish and destroy them.<sup>162</sup> While all this is true, to what extent is this characterisation the fruit of the interplay between text and interpreter? Could not another reader see these same passages but have a different view of YHWH?

Carroll recognises his own ideology as the product of his environment and he is quite open about how this ideology affects his reading of the text.

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<sup>161</sup> Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes," 114.

<sup>162</sup> Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes," 115.

For this reader of the Bible situated at the end of the twentieth century—a century remarkable for its sustained practices of violence, deportations and destructiveness—the images of violence and horror stick more in the mind than all the friendlier images of a non-rampaging YHWH. So for myself as reader of the Hebrew Bible, reading the material on the general topics of food and drink as they are related to the representation of YHWH, as it appears in the discourses of the prophetic literature, is more akin to dining out with the Macbeths than it is to pleasanter encounters with the deity celebrated elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>163</sup>

By his honest self-evaluation as a player in the interactive game of interpretation, Carroll is able to use the blunt language that he does and present his case, but to present it as an offering, a suggested view, a view into a reality, but not necessarily the only view. The view is offered in the spirit of “This is how I see it because of my background.” This type of approach invites others to join the interpretive process in the same spirit, without the necessity of first totally negating the validity of others’ viewpoints. For example, I do see the validity of Carroll’s perspective; YHWH is often portrayed through the image of food and drink as bringing harsh judgment and violent destruction on his enemies. Yet from this, I would not conclude that he is a “berserker god” or a Macbeth who loves butchery. I would see those characterisations as being more the product of Carroll’s ideology. And, of course, I should enter into the discussion as honestly as Carroll does and recognise that in the same way, my view is the product of my ideology. Carroll brings honesty and directness to the table, and it seems to me that he invites others to do so as well.

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<sup>163</sup> Carroll, “YHWH’s Sour Grapes,” 115.

Carroll's conclusion is as direct as the rest of the article. In it, he seriously calls into question the notion of divine justice in the prophetic writings:

I would especially want to focus on and highlight the notion of "YHWH's sour grapes" in Isa 5:1-7 which, in my opinion, seems to give promise of a wrecking notion which would deconstruct any sense of YHWH's justice in the prophetic discourses and which would raise fundamental problems about the prophetic construction of the idea of divine justice as a basis for the destruction of the community.<sup>164</sup>

Given so blunt and provocative a conclusion, it is no wonder that in just a few months time Chaney's article appeared, in which he builds a case that the declarations of judgment of YHWH are just and not capricious. Rather, YHWH's judgments fall on a specific segment of the eighth century Judean/Israelite community, and rightly so.

#### 1.4.4.b Chaney

Marvin Chaney picks up on Carroll's title by entitling his Semeia article, "Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in Light of Political Economy." By doing so, it seems he is hinting that his article should be seen as a rebuttal to Carroll's characterisations of YHWH. Chaney does not directly address any of the provocative statements or issues brought out by Carroll, yet indirectly he builds a case against Carroll's conclusion. Carroll concluded that there are basic problems with the prophetic idea of divine justice; the Hebrew god is a berserker god. Chaney, however, writing from a social-scientific perspective, maintains that YHWH's acts are directed against a specific community and are totally justified in light of the agrarian political

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<sup>164</sup> Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes," 129.

economy of the time. According to Chaney, the socio-scientific perspective brings to attention “how radically readers’ presuppositions about agrarian political economy condition the import of the literary unit in question.”<sup>165</sup> Indirectly, I would see Chaney’s implicit rebuttal of Carroll as a rebuke on attempting to arrive at a characterisation of the god of the Hebrew Bible without considering the socio-historical context which it addresses.

Chaney contends that previous interpreters misidentified the recipients of the prophet’s harsh words in verses three and seven. He claims that previous interpreters all held to the tacit assumption that terms used in those verses were collectives for the community at large. He then sets out to show how a political-agricultural perspective as well as intertextual reading of all the eighth century prophets point to a much more limited group: the wealthy land-owning class of Judah and Israel.

Chaney begins his argument with a quote from Gitay, noting that the song must be understood in light of the polemic background in which it ostensibly occurs. Since the song is agricultural in setting, the social polemic of the eighth century viticultural world is essential to the interpretation of the passage.<sup>166</sup> He briefly sketches the picture of the eighth century agrarian world in Judah and Israel that has emerged through a variety of perspectives. The picture he paints is one of consolidation of land ownership in many parts of Judah and Israel into the hands of a few, large-scale, wealthy landowners. No longer was it the norm that the one who worked the land also owned it and enjoyed its fruits. Rather, as a result of the economics of the time, it was the urban

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<sup>165</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 105.

<sup>166</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 106.

elite, those in places of power, who gathered taxes, traded, and had a taste for wine and oil who now in many cases owned the land on which the peasants laboured. “The vineyards being constructed and planted by the processes described in Isa 5:2 were at the vortex of a battle that convulsed Judahite and Israelite society.”<sup>167</sup> Chaney observes that both archaeology and other eighth century prophets<sup>168</sup> lend credence to this picture.

If Chaney’s analysis is correct,<sup>169</sup> then it “calls into question the assumption that Isaiah’s parable condemns indiscriminately the entire populations of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel.”<sup>170</sup> Only a very small percentage of the total population, those who were in power, benefitted from the process of consolidation of land ownership; the vast majority hated the process. “Under those circumstances, one would expect a prophetic parable about a vineyard to condemn those responsible for the process, not to blame its victims.”<sup>171</sup> Though not explicitly stated, in opposition to Carroll, Chaney sees YHWH as a just judge, the defender of an oppressed community and just judge over the oppressors.

To strengthen his argument, Chaney turns to intertextual references, a brief form-critical analysis, and a lexicographical argument. First, he considers the question of other

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<sup>167</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 108.

<sup>168</sup> Amos 5:11.

<sup>169</sup> I will consider this matter in more detail in the chapter on the social-cultural setting of the Song of the Vineyard.

<sup>170</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 109.

<sup>171</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 109.



perpetrator/victim passages in First Isaiah.<sup>172</sup> In those passages the victims are the common people, while the perpetrators are the royal or wealthy class. For the form-critical argument, he accepts the conclusions of Willis, Graffy, and Yee that the Song of the Vineyard is a juridical parable, a form that is designed to fool the king into self-condemnation, since no one other than the king himself can make such an accusation about the royal monarch. Finally, he considers at some length the lexicography of the words יושב and איש maintaining that they point to royalty and not to the general class of residents.

In the summation of his article, Chaney states that his conclusions concerning the pericope apply to Isaiah 5:1-7 as a separate unit. However, the socio-historical context in which it was redacted and placed in chapter 5 changes the polemic. Rather than a pericope decrying judgment upon one element of society, the land-grabbing elite, it becomes one of “*national* identity and unity” to explain “the fall of the monarchic *nation-states* of Israel and Judah.” This shift in socio-historical context is “congenial” to the modern reader, since the modern reader also lives in a day of nation-states, and this reality heightens the need for a historical reading of the text through the lens of the social sciences.<sup>173</sup> Chaney’s thesis is that in the original context of presentation, the nation as a whole was not in view. Only later, as a result of socio-historical context in which the passage was redacted, does this passage yield the picture of judgment falling on the entire nation, a reading with which we, as modern readers, would readily identify.

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<sup>172</sup> Isa 3:12-15; 5:8-10.

<sup>173</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?,” 118. Italics in original.

I think Chaney's article is important in a number of respects. First, it emphasises the need to read the prophetic writings in light of the historical setting of the presumed event as well as the presumed setting of redaction. Certainly, a consideration of the historical setting of a passage is nothing new. The new element is bringing the insights of the social sciences into the act of interpretation. Yet Chaney does not make the mistake that it seems to me so common in scholarship. Having seen the importance of viewing the passage through this lens, he does not limit himself to it. He also considers the passage from the perspectives of the older disciplines of form criticism and lexicography. In addition, he touches on the matter of reader response by noting the congeniality of the redacted version of the text to the modern reader.

Considering the breadth of disciplines he considers, his article is necessarily merely a sketch, and he himself acknowledges that fact. I do not see that as a weakness, but rather an invitation to a more in-depth consideration. I undertake such a consideration in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture. Finally, Chaney does not mention socio-rhetorical interpretation; he may not even have been aware of it, since his article appeared just five years after Vernon Robbins' earliest works. Yet his article moves in the direction of that type of multi-textural reading, much as did Olivier's three years earlier.

#### 1.4.5 Gomes

In the year 2000, Jules Gomes composed an article interpreting the text from an eco-justice perspective. He opens his article with a statement about the Christian responsibility to shape the future toward social justice and an environmentally sound society. He then states his purpose in writing:

This article is an attempt to use modern methodologies to study the text under consideration, to examine and develop the inextricable bond forged between ecology and justice. Secondly, to demonstrate the effectiveness of particular methods in doing so.<sup>174</sup>

Gomes delineates four problem areas that have bearing on the study: the existential, biblical, methodological, and hermeneutical. The existential problem is the injustice in the world, particularly related to the disparity of food resources between rich and poor countries. He specifically cites the injustice produced by the market economy system “that compels poorer countries to produce only cash crops which occupy land that could be used for growing food for local consumption.”<sup>175</sup> The second problem, the biblical problem, is that ecology *per se* is not mentioned in the Bible. However, quoting Gibson, Gomes maintains that the psalmists were “implicit ecologists” and “[i]t is the task of this paper to explore how this sort of ‘implicit ecology’ was used to further the quest for justice.”<sup>176</sup> Gomes cites the historical-critical method as the primary methodological problem.<sup>177</sup> His response to that problem is to explore more recent methods. Finally, Gomes sees the hermeneutic problem as derived from considering a topic, eco-justice, which was non-existent in the period in which the text was written.

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<sup>174</sup> Jules Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7: An Eco-Justice Reading Using Socio-Literary Methods,” in *The Bible Speaks Today*, ed. Daniel Jones Muthunayagum (Bangalore: United Theological College, 2000): 182.

<sup>175</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 18.

<sup>176</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 183.

<sup>177</sup> See extended quote below.

After outlining these four areas, Gomes starts his analysis. He sets the pericope in the mid-eighth century, stating that there is “general agreement” that the poem belongs to that period.<sup>178</sup> Gomes cites only one source, Wildeberger, for that statement, however.

Gomes points to the rest of Isaiah chapter five to claim that this period of time, the eighth century B.C.E., was one of latifundialization,<sup>179</sup> yet he cites only Premnath for this view. There is a wealth of scholarly material that he could have cited, as Chaney did just one year earlier. Gomes continues by briefly discussing the social ramifications of peasant farmers who are forced to be tenants. Then, after describing the process of latifundialisation and its social consequences, he considers its consequences from an ecological viewpoint. According to Gomes, ecological imbalance resulted from the process of latifundialisation, since crops for commercial export were raised rather than a diversity of subsistence crops:

Commercial crops occupy extensive plantations in response to market pressures. This naturally affects the ecological balance. . . .

Whereas earlier, cereals and vegetables would be produced by peasants on their plots of land, newly formed large estates were now being used for commercial crops like vines and olives for the market.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 190.

<sup>179</sup> Latifundialisation is the process of acquisition and integration of smaller agrarian plots into large single-owner estates.

<sup>180</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 191.

Gomes does not cite a source for the claim that the creation of large estates for the production of export crops affected the ecology of ancient Judea; he merely states it as fact. A far-reaching comment such as this one needs to be well documented, especially since there is literature on archeological excavations in the Judean Hills and Shephelah of Judah that would indicate otherwise.<sup>181</sup> His statement is undoubtedly true that olives and grapes became major export products during the monarchical period<sup>182</sup> and may have decreased to some degree the diversity of crops grown, although in this article that is an unproven assumption. Yet in my view, to make

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<sup>181</sup> To cite two significant sources here: There was a massive olive oil industry at Philistine Tel Migne, pre-dating the latifundialisation of the eighth century. The size of the industrial area (over one hundred olive presses were found) indicates the presence of massive olive orchards in the Shephelah of Judah. See *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*,

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Early%20History%20-%20Archaeology/Ekron%20-%20A%20Philistine%20City> (accessed December 30, 2011).

For an excellent description of the agricultural produce grown in the Judean Hills throughout history, see Yosi Schafner, *בוסתן עצי ארץ-ישראל בסטף*. (Jerusalem: Jewish National Fund, 2009). Schafner has extensively researched the topic of Judean Hill agriculture in his life-long work to establish the hillside agricultural site Sataf. In that work, he does not indicate that any such ecological disaster ever occurred. At a day long seminar at the Sataf Biblical Garden (October 25, 2012), I had the opportunity to ask Shafner about the matter and he affirmed that there is no such evidence.

In addition to the above, massive plots of olives are now grown in the Judean and Samarian hills today, yet they do not seem to be causing ecological disaster.

<sup>182</sup> I discuss this matter further in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture.

the leap from the probable truth that olives and grapes were more extensively grown for export to the far-reaching statement he makes is unjustified without significant proof.

Gomes states that the combining of small plots to large estates for the purpose of growing export crops was the cause of the claimed ecological problems. From the wording, it seems to me that Gomes is implying that the very fact of combining small holdings into a large estate is a contributing factor, as, for example, combining small family farms to create mega-farms, such as has occurred in the United States, Kenya, and other developing or developed nations. While Gomes' wording allows for that understanding, that may not be his intent. If that is what Gomes is stating, however, then the statement is problematic. Agriculture in ancient Judea and Samaria was conducted on steep, terraced hillsides, and even if many plots were joined together under one owner, they still would be terraced in small sections. While the ownership of many small plots may have transferred to single ownership, they would not form what Gomes calls "extensive plantations" in the sense that we might picture today, such as the massive hemp or sugarcane estates of western Kenya. Through his lack of research and his rhetoric, it seems that Gomes constructs a world in which there are huge plots of land growing single species of agricultural produce, wreaking havoc on the ecology of the region.<sup>183</sup> Gomes appears to be anachronistically envisioning our world back into the text. He does not provide scholarly backing for his description of this presumed ecological change. However, he supplies some backing, primarily Premnath, for his description of the social changes that resulted from latifundialization.

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<sup>183</sup> Such extensive estates as Gomes seems to picture would be possible in the large, flat Jezreel Valley. That valley is in the Northern Kingdom, however, and is not the region in view in the Song of the Vineyard.

Yet his stated objective is not to prove that a sociological change occurred, but to prove that the social change and the resulting change in agricultural practices resulted in ecological disaster.

Gomes makes other statements in the article that he could have backed with scholarly citations but does not. For example, Gomes paints a rather detailed picture of the eighth century world in which the elite follow “conspicuous consumption” and “plainly disdain physical labor.”<sup>184</sup> Gomes does not explain how he knows that the elite behaved in such a way. As with other statements, his statement is not necessarily incorrect, but he should either cite sources or clarify that it is an assumption, albeit a highly likely one. Instead, he states the situation as a fact.

These assumptions and perceptions lead Gomes to a conclusion that to me is astounding, particularly in light of the lack of scholarly backing:

No wonder, the ecosystem revolts under the sabotage of its primary function and demonstrates solidarity with the oppressed peasant by refusing to yield anymore for the market.<sup>185</sup>

Gomes gives us a picture that we as readers can envision, but it is not fully in keeping with the reality of those times. I think the problem is derived not only from his assumptions but also from his methodology. Gomes makes it clear that to him the text as a window on its presumed world is basically irrelevant. What matters is the text as a mirror on the reader’s present world:

Since the meaning of a text has to be actualised in the lives of the readers who appropriate it, the reader beginning with his/her situation is summoned to uncover new meanings, along the

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<sup>184</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 191.

<sup>185</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 191.

fundamental line of meaning indicated by the text. The text is no longer perceived as a “window” but a “mirror,” which reflects a complex and rich life of its own.<sup>186</sup>

In the chapter on methodology, I discuss the matter of texts as both windows and mirrors. The historical-critical method focused on the window world of the text, while more recent methods tend to emphasize the mirror-world of the reader. I would see Gomes’ approach as unbalanced toward the latter. Reader-response readings serve the important function of bringing into play the context in which readers read a text, but the historical world to which the text refers should not be neglected.

Apart from the problems of scholarship and methodology, it also strikes me that the rhetoric Gomes employs is tendentious. For example, he opens his article with the following statement:

Capitalism continues to degrade eco-systems and create social injustice.<sup>187</sup>

I don’t argue with the statement. The gold mines of South Africa, the deforestation of Kenya, or the coal mines of Pennsylvania give plenty of evidence that unregulated capitalism often is destructive to ecosystems.<sup>188</sup> However, as the opening line of a study on the Song of the Vineyard, both the tone and content seem to point to an ideologically driven work. The

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<sup>186</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 186.

<sup>187</sup> Gomes, “The Song of the Vineyard,” 181.

<sup>188</sup> It should also be noted that the same is true of socialist systems. The Soviet Union was an ecological disaster at the time of its collapse.



impression I hold is strengthened by the fact that he writes four pages on the modern ecological situation before engaging any other questions.

Tendentious rhetoric often appears in phrases throughout the article. While every reader's interpretation of a text is to some degree driven by his or her ideology, ideology to the point that it overshadows the text is problematic. I have italicised words in the following paragraph on the historical-critical method that to me illustrate this aspect of Gomes' writing:

The historical critical method that has predominated biblical scholarship thus far is in some sense *responsible for stunting* a biblical eco-theology. This is primarily because of its *insistence* on the author's intention and the resulting *stringent* application to the life-situation. Thus a *rigid* adherent of historical criticism might say that because the author's intention does not warrant it, there can be no ecological interpretation of a great many texts! Further, the historical critical method has *espoused* and *endorsed* an anthropocentric reading of the text; which has *obviously* undermined ecological strands. . .<sup>189</sup>

To make the case that he wishes to make, Gomes would need to state his numerous assumptions. He would then need to document thoroughly that ecological distress did occur in that place and time period. Then, with sufficient documentation and with a clearly delineated argument, he could build his case that such economic damage was directly caused by the social injustice of latifundialization. From that point, then, he would be able to consider the ramifications of his finds in the modern world, thus obtaining his objective for writing.

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<sup>189</sup> (Gomes 2000), 185. Italics mine.

#### 1.4.6 Malul and Landy: Sexual Imagery

##### 1.4.6.a Malul

Meir Malul's intertextual approach to the Song of the Vineyard<sup>190</sup> focuses on the metaphor of the relationship between YHWH as husband to his wife, Israel, a motif that Malul notes is used throughout the Hebrew Bible. In addition, the motif of the god as husband or *baal* of the wife is not limited to the Hebrew writings, but is found throughout ancient Near Eastern literature. Previous scholars have discussed this motif in Isaiah 5:1-7, Malul claims, however, that a second motif, one that relates land to a woman, has not for the most part been considered in relation to this passage, except for those who have noted the sexual imagery of the vineyard. He sees the two motifs working together: the actions of YHWH as husbandman toward his vineyard parallel the actions of YHWH as husband stripping away the protection of Israel, his wife, as described in other biblical passages.<sup>191</sup>

Malul reviews the biblical and extra-biblical metaphors of vineyard and vine as references to a woman, including the ancient practice of rituals linking human fertility with fertility of the earth. He makes the case that these images are used symbolically to portray the sexual union in the relationship between a man and woman, but also, and even more significantly, they are used to symbolise the breaking of a relationship between the two and the punishment that results from

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<sup>190</sup> Meir Malul, "מה בין פריצת הגדר במשל הכרם לבין הפשטת האישה העירומה במקרא?" *Beit Mikra* (2005): 11-24.

<sup>191</sup> Malul, "מה בין?", 12-13.

unfaithfulness on the part of the woman.<sup>192</sup> Vineyard and Woman are thus used in similar fashion as portrayals of the relationship between YHWH and his chosen nation, YHWH being the husband or vinedresser and Israel the wife or vineyard. Malul's thesis is that the numerous prophetic passages portraying the stripping or punishing of the woman for her unfaithfulness have their parallel in the destruction of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. Malul states that to the best of his knowledge, no other scholar has discussed this parallel.

In building his case for the parallel between the tearing down of the vineyard's fence and the stripping of the woman, the author states that in ancient Near East societies, which were patriarchal, the woman was closely guarded in the tent or house. Punishment for an adulterous woman was to strip away that protection. He points to Ezek 16:36-42 in which the woman who had been unfaithful was stripped in view of all—the Gentiles, the nations (since the woman represents the people)—and left exposed so those nations may do with her as they wish. In similar fashion, when the fence around a vineyard is removed, it is exposed to all who pass by. Once exposed, the vineyard is trampled. The ultimate judgment upon both woman and vineyard is abandonment. After drawing the parallel between the stripping of the woman and the exposing of the vineyard from a social-agricultural perspective, Malul turns to the use of language to strengthen the argument. He points out that the same Hebrew verb, שסה, is used both to describe the trampling of fields and the raping of women.<sup>193</sup> Malul does not read the passage as a sexual allegory; rather, he demonstrates the parallel message of the stripping of a woman with removing

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<sup>192</sup> Malul, “מה בין?” 16.

<sup>193</sup> Malul, “מה בין?” 19.

the fence of the vineyard. The two images carry the same meaning concerning the relationship between YHWH and the people.

I find Malul's thesis acceptable because of the quality of his argument. He builds his case carefully, step by step, with abundant intertextual references. He keeps the pericope in its agricultural setting while considering the broader cultural and intertextual world. In building an argument such as this, it would be easy to go beyond that which is clearly justifiable by the text and the *sitz im leben* of the passage and to extend to conclusions that would not be justified by the text. I do not think that Malul makes that error.

The parallel that Malul draws raises questions concerning the characterisation of YHWH which Malul does not touch upon. His purpose is to draw the parallel; the implications of this parallel are relevant to the research question of this thesis. I consider the matter of the various portrayals of YHWH as husband of Israel in the chapter on intertexture.

#### 1.4.6.b Landy

Numerous scholars prior to Malul commented on the sexual imagery in the Song of the Vineyard, but Malul's article was the first to focus on it exclusively. Just four years after Malul's work, Francis Landy published a work<sup>194</sup> that also dealt solely with the sexual aspect of the passage. While both Malul and Landy perform this same task, I find Malul's argument to be thoroughly convincing and an example of careful, reasoned scholarship, but I find Landy's reasoning difficult to follow.

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<sup>194</sup> Francis Landy, "The Parable of the Vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7) or 'What's a Love Song Doing among the Prophets?'," *Studies in Religion/Science* 34 (2005).

Allegorical interpretations of Scripture in general and of the Song of the Vineyard in particular are not new. An allegorical approach to the Song of the Vineyard can be found throughout the writings of the church fathers and the earliest rabbinic commentaries on the text. Jesus' parable of the tenants can even be seen as an allegorical interpretation of the passage.<sup>195</sup> Malul draws the conceptual parallel between the tearing down of the vineyard and the stripping of a woman, but he does not assign to every detail of the passage an allegorical meaning. Landy, however, chooses to take an allegorical approach and finds sexual allegorical meaning at every turn.

Landy opens his article by stating his view of the passage, which “deals with the ambiguities and shifts of gender, and the alternation between erotic idealization and violence, that characterize the relationship of God and Israel . . .”<sup>196</sup> His approach is allegorical, as he states in the second paragraph, “I treat *qeren ben-šāmen* (NRSV: “a very fertile hill”) in 5:1 as allegorical.”<sup>197</sup> With that note, Landy indicates that his interpretive approach separates the passage from the physical, agricultural setting of the world of the story. Although Landy

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<sup>195</sup> See my earlier note on Kloppenborg.

<sup>196</sup> Landy, “The Parable of the Vineyard,” 148.

<sup>197</sup> Landy, “The Parable of the Vineyard,” 148. Although Landy chooses to read *qeren-ben-shamen* allegorically, he later states that the name *qeren* could be a geographical feature. However, citing Bjørndalen, (Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen, *Untersuchungen allegorischen rede der Propheten Amos und Jesaja*, (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1986), 319-320, he incorrectly claims that if it is a geographic feature, “the name is strange and otherwise unknown,” 151. The term is used in rabbinic literature in a geographic sense (m. *kelaim* 6:7; T.Y. *Peah* 11, 17a) and two hills today in Israel bear that name. See further discussion in the section “physical setting” in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture of the text.

divorces the passage from a physical setting, he keeps it in a literary setting. Landy turns to Malul's thesis concerning the parallel between "earth" and "woman." He accepts Malul's argument, but extends it much further:

Malul's insight suggests the enormity of the implications; at stake is not just the history and existence of Israel, but God's relationship to the earth and creation. We will find in it allusions to, and a reversal of, the creation narrative. . . But this also has consequences for the language of the parable. If language is the medium of creation, the undoing of creation is a negation of language. Hence the poem is at odds with itself.<sup>198</sup>

I find that Landy's writing is ambiguous in that it works to obfuscate rather than clarify his meaning. In addition, he makes some extreme statements that would require further explanation. For example, in the quote above, Landy sees that the history of all creation is at stake and that the parable is a negation of creation. Is this poem a "negation of language," as Landy maintains? How so? In what way is "God's relationship to the earth and creation" at stake? Certainly these statements need clarification.

To give another example of far-reaching statements needing clarification, Landy touches on the matter of genre, stating that the Song of the Vineyard parable conforms to the genre of prophetic trap, as exemplified in 2 Sam 12:1-4. Following this, he states that Isaiah's prophetic role is not just to proclaim judgment against the king, but to predict the end of the kingdom, thereby ending the prophetic tradition. Then he writes:

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<sup>198</sup> Landy, "The Parable of the Vineyard," 149.

Accordingly, the genre is radically transformed, from a rhetorical device with a particular point, to bring the king to self-awareness, to one whose referent, such as social injustice, may be illustrated by the following sequence, but is not exhausted by it. From a narrative within history, in some sense restorative of history, it becomes one that presages the end of history and of meaningful narrative. It is a parable about the loss of meaning and thus contradicts the overt parabolic goal of providing an explicative paradigm.<sup>199</sup>

How is this parable in some sense restorative of history? How does this narrative presage the end of history? Perhaps it presages the end of the Judean Kingdom, but how does it presage the end of all history? How does it presage the end of meaningful narrative? Is this parable really about the loss of meaning? How does he arrive at such conclusions?

As the article progresses, Landy suggests numerous allegorical images for *qeren*, *kerem*, and *ben-šāmen*, particularly focusing on sexual images drawn from intertextual references in the Song of Solomon and other passages. He synthesises his thoughts in the following paragraph. The quotation is longer than I would normally include in a thesis, but I think it is helpful to illustrate the difficulties this article presents:

The vineyard is “within” the horn, in *Qeren-ben-Shamen*. The conflation of horn and vineyard is indicated by the approximation of the words that signify them: *qeren* and *kerem* are linked through alliteration and assonance. The conjunction of male and female, the vineyard—that figure of intoxication, loss of control and desire—contained within the horn, with its phallic, royal and sacred/sacrificial associations, suggests a dialectic of male and female, a subversion of the phallus from within. The vineyard is nestled, nested within, and cultivated by the

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<sup>199</sup> Landy, “The Parable of the Vineyard,” 148, 149.

patriarchal social and linguistic order, sustained by political and divine authority. But this enclosure dissimulates the matrix, and a primary dependence on its nourishment. This may be exemplified by another centre, an “off-centre.” The union of qeren and kerem, vineyard and horn, is itself contained, framed, by the song, which is a feminine noun, *šîrâ*. The song is a displacement of the vineyard, a projection of it outside. The song paronomastically repeats the gesture of the singer, his/her solicitation of it/her, as expressed through the jussive: *šîrâ...’šîrâ*. The female song (*šîrâ*) is an alternative, in language, to the phallic discourse represented by the horn and YHWH’s speech.<sup>200</sup>

Landy proceeds through the passage, suggesting sexual allegorical meanings for each phrase. I will not examine them here; however, I quote his conclusion. In reference to Isaiah’s last words, the “cry” that is heard instead of righteousness:

The cry is presumably the consequence of unrighteousness, an associated commonplace with rich biblical resonance, but nonetheless it is not the opposite of righteousness. Each produces an effect of displacement, one into metaphor, the other into metonymy, which is magnified by the off-rhyme. The conclusion is not all that conclusive.<sup>201</sup>

I think that Landy needs to explain many of his statements and, once explained, to justify them. Otherwise I would see this interpretation as divorced from the text in such a way that it could be viewed as little more than a mirror of the interpreter’s subconscious.

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<sup>200</sup> Landy, “The Parable of the Vineyard,” 152.

<sup>201</sup> Landy, “The Parable of the Vineyard,” 200-201.



#### 1.4.7 Story

The most recent peer-reviewed article on Isaiah 5:1-7 at the date of this writing was written in 2009 by J. Lyle Story.<sup>202</sup> This article covers three intertextually related passages: the apocalyptic passage of Isaiah 27, the parable of the tenants of Matthew 27, and the Song of the Vineyard. Story's purpose is "to develop the theme of a paradoxical hope in contexts of tragedy sent through the imagery of the vine/vineyard."<sup>203</sup> Although he mentions the problem of genre in the Song of the Vineyard and cites the major views, he does not engage in that discussion since it is not germane to his purpose. He conducts a brief structural analysis of each of the three passages, but again only to the furtherance of his purpose.

Story concludes his brief study of the Song of the Vineyard with the observation that YHWH expects "responsible social conduct from whomever," even the people who have been the recipients of the divine blessing. But then he adds in the very next line of the same paragraph:

Yet, the Eschatological Song of the Vineyard (Isa 27:2-6) says that judgment is not Yahweh's final word. The threats remain, but are conditional to men's acts in response to them. They will come to pass, or be retracted according to what he desires. God, for his part, is always ready to retract them.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> J. Lyle Story, "Hope in the Midst of Tragedy (Isa 5:1-7; Matt. 21:33-46 par.)," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* (2009).

<sup>203</sup> Story, "Hope in the Midst of Tragedy," 179.

<sup>204</sup> Story, "Hope in the Midst of Tragedy," 184, in part quoting Orbiso (1960), 17.

Story asks, then, why the change from the warning of destruction in the Song of the Vineyard to the word of promise in Isaiah 27? He finds the clue to the answer in the eschatological expressions “in that day” and “in the days to come,” expressions which refer to that time “after indignation has run its course” (quoting Isa 26:20). Story sees the Isaiah 27 passage as the Song of the Vineyard now recast as a song of hope.<sup>205</sup>

Story then moves to the third passage, the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matt 27), which he sees as building on the language of the two Isaian passages. As with the earlier passages, he conducts a brief analysis of the structure before concluding, “Isaiah’s two Songs (5:1-7; 27:2-6) and Jesus’ parable are united in the truth that hope is still to be found in the midst of tragedy and destruction.”<sup>206</sup>

The article begins with a statement of purpose, and the author keeps to his purpose throughout, mentioning related matters such as genre, but not engaging in them unnecessarily. He set out to develop the theme of paradoxical hope in the passages considered, and he does that. He concludes that YHWH is a god of hope even in the midst of tragedy, one who is ever-willing to restore his people who return to him..

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<sup>205</sup> Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy,” 185.

<sup>206</sup> Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy,” 195.

#### 1.4.8 Other Works

The Song of the Vineyard is discussed in varying lengths in a multiplicity of works. Many of these works are cited later in the thesis, though I wish to particularly note a few of these works here.

Any comprehensive work on agriculture or nature imagery in ancient Israel is likely to reference Isaiah 5:1-7. I refer to a number of these works in the chapter on socio-cultural texture. However, two works are particularly significant because of their comprehensiveness and detail. The most comprehensive work on vine-growing in the biblical world is the book by Carey Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*.<sup>207</sup> Another significant though brief work is גת, גפן, גת, גתות ויין בעת העתיקה,<sup>208</sup> a publication of the Eretz-Israel Museum that describes vine-growing and wine production in the ancient world. This work is a general work about vines and vineyards, but it gives a helpful perspective on the Song of the Vineyard.

There are a few other works not related to agriculture or nature that I have chosen not to include in this review. I wish to mention Leah Frankel's extensive article<sup>209</sup> on the Song of the Vineyard. I am not including it in the general review because her goal is not to produce original

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<sup>207</sup> Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*, (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

<sup>208</sup> Raphael Frankel and Eitan Ayalon, *גת, גפן, גת, גתות ויין בעת העתיקה*, (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 1988).

<sup>209</sup> Leah Frankel, "אשירה נא לידי," In *דרכים חדשות בפרשנות: פרקים במקרא* (Tel Aviv: World Zionist Organization, 2001).

scholarship, and she is not cited in any later literature that I have seen. Her article is worth mentioning because of her purpose in writing, which is to aid educators in the Israeli school system in teaching the passage. The last section of the article is dedicated to teaching methodology and questions to ask students. This work and the two works whose goal is to aid translators reviewed above<sup>210</sup> are the only ones in which the primary goal is to be of practical help. Frankel's article is the only work that seeks to aid in the teaching of the passage.

### 1.5 Summary

Major shifts in biblical interpretation take place in the hundred and ten year period between the appearance of the first article on the Song of the Vineyard and the most recent, 2009, article in this survey.<sup>211</sup> Yet from the survey of the literature it appears that there is a trend throughout the period *vis-à-vis* the characterisation of YHWH; the question is of little interest, rarely considered, and even when it is considered, then only tangentially or as a by product, as it were, of a study with a different focus.

Of the thirty articles considered,<sup>212</sup> none state that their purpose is to examine the question of the characterisation of YHWH, although some of these studies make implications relevant to this question. For example, numerous writers consider the meaning of the words *dôd* and *yadîd*. A

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<sup>210</sup> Emerton and Clark.

<sup>211</sup> I consider the history of biblical interpretation and its relevance to the research question in the chapter on methodology.

<sup>212</sup> I only write on twenty-nine of the thirty; I did not write about Leah Frankel's article in the World Zionist Organization publication.

wide variety of meanings are possible for these two words, and each meaning implicitly suggests a different characterisation of YHWH. Yet these implications are a by-product rather than the focus of the studies. The *raison d'être* of the studies is to determine genre or examine some other facet of the text; the characterisation of YHWH is a secondary or even inconsequential matter. To give an example, Herbert Junker<sup>213</sup> considers the matter of the speaker of the song, concluding that he is the friend of the bridegroom. Such a statement has implications concerning the characterisation of YHWH, but Junker does not consider what those implications might be; such a discussion is outside the scope of his work.

A few scholars do touch on the characterisation of YHWH, generally as part of their conclusions. One, Tbófilo Orbiso,<sup>214</sup> does not state the purpose of his study, and I had trouble deducing it from the article itself; it is mostly a commentary considering textual questions. Yet at the end he makes a significant statement concerning YHWH as a god of goodness who is faithful and who restores. Daniel Lys<sup>215</sup> conducts a highly detailed study of the structure of the passage, yet ends with a conclusion similar to that of Orbiso. In both cases, the concluding observations are significant, but they are somewhat detached from the body of the argument. Tziporah Gil'ad and Abraham Heschel portray YHWH as a god who grieves when confronting the injustice of his people. Robert Carroll<sup>216</sup> considers food and drink in the prophetic writings, including the Song

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<sup>213</sup> Junker, "Die Literarische."

<sup>214</sup> Orbiso, "El Cántico."

<sup>215</sup> Lys, "Le Vigne."

<sup>216</sup> Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes."

of the Vineyard, and concludes that YHWH is a “berserker” god while Marvin Chaney,<sup>217</sup> apparently in response to Carroll, arrives at a completely different conclusion. Chaney studies the political and economic environment of the presumed setting of the passage and in that context sees YHWH as the defender of the oppressed. In an intertextual study, Lyle Story<sup>218</sup> sees hope in the midst of tragedy and, by implication, he pictures the god of Israel as a god of hope.

I do not know that it is possible to precisely determine why the question of the portrayal of YHWH in this passage has received so little attention. That question in itself could be the basis of a significant research undertaking as it may be due to a number of factors. Perhaps one reason is related to the underlying assumption of the reader/interpreter. It may seem obvious how YHWH the husbandman is portrayed, so the question need not be considered; the assumption creates an interpretive blind spot. It may appear clear to the reader that the owner of the vineyard, YHWH, is portrayed as a god who ultimately judges wrongdoing, even the wrongdoing of his own precious “vineyard”/people. Why consider the matter further?

In the last number of decades the horizons of biblical interpretation have widened greatly, and this trend is evidenced in the literature on the Song of the Vineyard. Pluralism has opened the possibility for the consideration of a wide range of textual readings, yet that development may not necessarily result in increased consideration of the sacred in the text;<sup>219</sup> articles on the Song

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<sup>217</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?”

<sup>218</sup> Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy.”

<sup>219</sup> I discuss the growth of pluralism and the expanding horizons of biblical scholarship in the next chapter.

of the Vineyard of the last few decades, for example, do not evidence greater interest in the topic than those written previously. As thought provoking as the above suggestions might be, however, it is not the purpose of this thesis to delve deeply into the questions of the history of scholarship *vis-à-vis* the sacred or the role of pluralism on that aspect of biblical interpretation. Rather, it is to examine the aspect of the sacred in one limited passage, the Song of the Vineyard, to discover in it the potential breadth of characterisations of YHWH through the use of diverse interpretive lenses.

## **2.0 Methodology**

*A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other.*<sup>220</sup>

*Hans-Georg Gadamer*

### **2.1 Introductory Comments: Research Questions and Methodologies**

Approaching a text with a research question in mind necessarily raises the question of methodology. According to Sandra Marie Schneiders, “A research project does not begin by classifying the methodological approaches, choosing one, and attempting to operate according to its canons;”<sup>221</sup> rather, a research project should start with a question, and the question then determines the most appropriate methodology for its investigation.

If the purpose of a study is to interpret a passage through a specific methodological lens for example, to conduct a rhetorical analysis for the sake of understanding the rhetoric then the “question” is the method itself: How does the passage read if I use this particular lens? Will this lens illuminate or highlight aspects of the text as yet unseen? For example, Irsigler conducts a speech-act theory analysis of the Song of the Vineyard for the sake of using the methodology,

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<sup>220</sup> Hans G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 2006), 347.

<sup>221</sup> Sandra Marie Schneiders, *Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 151. Schneiders notes that starting with a question and letting the question guide the choice of methodology is contrary to the procedure in vogue and taught in biblical studies programs. In school, students learn methods, and those methods then determine what questions are legitimate or academically respectable, 111-112.



not to answer any specific research or interpretive question.<sup>222</sup> This type of approach has value, both in refining a methodology as well as in providing a new interpretive lens through which to study a passage. However, if a research project is driven by a question of investigation, broader paradigms of interpretation through integration of diverse methodologies will increase the probability of a wider spectrum of results.<sup>223</sup> Any one paradigm, with the boundaries inherent in its approach, may not be adequate to delve thoroughly into the question. As Schneiders notes, a methodology for pursuing a research question “of necessity will be pluralistic” and will be unique to the specific project, even though the methods used are common to biblical scholarship.<sup>224</sup> Schneiders is not alone in her observation. According to Gowler, “The nature of texts themselves requires that a protean approach be taken, because different lenses refract

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<sup>222</sup> Hubert Irsigler, “Speech Acts and Intention in the ‘Song of the Vineyard’ Isaiah 5:1-7,” *OTE* 10 (1997): 39-68.

<sup>223</sup> H. J. Bernard Combrink, “The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries: A Perspective on Socio-Rhetorical Criticism,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 40 (1999): 18-30,

<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/combrink/ChallengeBoundSRC.pdf>, (accessed September 5, 2011). Combrink notes that “[t]here is a certain fixation of boundaries in the historical-critical approaches (which do not adequately incorporate other approaches), but the same is true of any method.” Historical-critical approaches alone, even though they comprise many facets, limit the boundaries of investigation by the very fact that they do not incorporate others. While Combrink singles out historical-critical approaches, he notes that the same is true for any methodology when used alone.

<sup>224</sup> Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 151.

different colours of the spectrum inherent in and through these texts.”<sup>225</sup> In 1974, as literary methods of interpretation began to be more commonly used in biblical studies, E. D. Hirsch concluded “No [one] critical approach of any sort can properly make essentialistic claims upon literature.”<sup>226</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to research the question of the characterisations of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah 5:1-7. Since the late eighteen hundreds, no less than thirty articles or essays, using a variety of methodologies, have been written on the passage; yet only a few consider the portrayal of YHWH in the passage, and even then such consideration is usually tangential and not the motivating factor behind the study.<sup>227</sup> However, the hypothesis of this thesis is that there is a wide spectrum of differing characterisations of YHWH that will come to light when the passage is examined through a variety of interpretive lenses. Such an investigation requires a methodology that incorporates a number of different approaches to the biblical text.

For my investigation, I have chosen to use socio-rhetorical criticism, a methodology developed in the last two decades primarily by Vernon K. Robbins. Socio-rhetorical criticism attempts to

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<sup>225</sup> Vernon K. Robbins and David B. Gowler, *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 1. See also Eugene Botha, “Reading Texts More Comprehensively: Assessing a New Methodology,” *Scriptura* 64 (1998): 51-52.

<sup>226</sup> E. D. Hirsch, “Intrinsic Criticism,” *College English* 36 (December 1974): 453.

<sup>227</sup> Two notable exceptions are Mario Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?: The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 105-123; and Robert P. Carroll, “YHWH’s Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible,” *Semeia* 86 (1999): 113-131.

integrate diverse methods into a multi-faceted interpretive approach, utilising older methods while integrating newer ones. Robbins' approach did not develop in a vacuum, nor is it a radical break from interpretive methods of previous generations. Rather, it is the outcome of the historical process and philosophical context in which it developed.

## 2.2 Historical and Conceptual Background of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

*It is inevitable that our categories of interpretation are deeply influenced by and in large part informed by the modes of culture in which they are practiced, as in every generation.*

Walter Brueggemann<sup>228</sup>

### 2.2.1 Dogmatic Criticism<sup>229</sup>

Textual criticism is a relatively recent development in the history of biblical interpretation. Jewish and Christian interpreters of Scripture in the early centuries were not concerned with the question of methodologies but rather with matters of theology and dogma. That is not to say that there were no methodologies; rather, the scientific approach with the questions it raises had not yet developed. In the church, there were two primary approaches to interpretation: the allegorical, represented by the Alexandrian School, and the grammatical, represented by

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<sup>228</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 1.

<sup>229</sup> Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 6. "Dogmatic Criticism" is Krentz's terminology.

Antioch.<sup>230</sup> According to Benson, although the fourth and fifth century school of Antioch did demonstrate an interest in the literal sense of the text, the centuries prior to the Reformation were “seriously defective” in the development of critical methodologies.<sup>231</sup> The “development of critical methodologies” is itself a post-Enlightenment concept, and if by his comment Benson means that there were no methodologies, as it seems that he does, then Thistleton would see such a generalisation as a mistaken view. There were differing approaches to Scripture, although research questions and questions of methodologies as we know them today were not part of that world. Krentz describes this period as the age of “dogmatic criticism,”<sup>232</sup> and although Thistleton

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<sup>230</sup> Craig Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1998), 7. See also, Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 142. Thiselton attributes main representatives of the two schools as being Origen (c.186-254), Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.350-428), and John Chrysostom (c. 347-407).

<sup>231</sup> John E. Benson, “The History of the Historical-Critical Method in the Church: A Survey,” *Dialog* 12 (1973): 95. Benson briefly surveys the development of the historical-critical method throughout church history. He sees the two “decisive stimuli” of the historical method as textual criticism and deism that arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the wake of Luther’s two primary beliefs concerning Scripture, that “Scripture interprets Scripture,” and that the literal interpretation of a text must be its primary interpretation.

<sup>232</sup> Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 6. Krentz charts the development of the rise of historical criticism up to the time of his writing in 1975 (pages 6-32), dividing this rise into six stages: (1) Dogmatic criticism; (2) First rustles of criticism: Renaissance and Reformation; (3) The rise of methodical doubt (early seventeenth century through Spinoza); (4) The

does not use this term, the various methodologies he details from that period are mostly doctrinal or allegorical, derived from a pre-held theological position.<sup>233</sup>

### 2.2.2 Baruch Spinoza: The Foundation for the Historical-Critical Approach

Baruch Spinoza (1622-1677) is generally credited with making the philosophical breakthroughs that challenged the hegemony of the dogmatic approach and ultimately gave rise to a scientific, critical approach to Scripture.<sup>234</sup> Prior to his time, religion was the dominant authority over reason, the prevailing view being that reason must be subject to the divine revelations as interpreted through church dogma. Spinoza's philosophy, however, inaugurated a "springtime of rationalism," at a time when reason was rising to a position superior over religion.<sup>235</sup>

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advent of historical criticism: The Enlightenment; (5) Historical method set free 1820-1920; and (6) The new factor: Theological confrontation between world wars.

<sup>233</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 142. In addition to these approaches, Thiselton notes the use of *lectio divina*, a devotional-meditative approach in use particularly in the monasteries. Thiselton sees the pre-modern approach to Scripture as being similar in some ways to that of the post-modern period, in contrast to the intervening modern period of scientific methodologies; in those two periods, texts are viewed more as processes than as static realities with room for variability and multiple levels of meaning, 143.

<sup>234</sup> Richard Briggs, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?," *HeyJ* 47 (2006): 58. Two of Spinoza's most influential works were *Korte Verhandeling van Gott, de mensch en deszelvs welstand* (A Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being), 1660; and *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (The Ethics), 1677.

<sup>235</sup> Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 14.

Spinoza's view was that methodologies used for the study of the Bible should be the same as those used for any other historical writing. He challenged the religious absolutes of his day,<sup>236</sup> including the interpretation of Scripture by church dogma or tradition. Most notably, his radical view of the inspiration of Scripture had major implications for biblical interpretation:

For Spinoza, the excommunicated Jew who never became a Christian, the idea of inspiration was simply another shackle constricting the exegete. No longer need exegesis take place within the believing community. Scripture must be followed wherever it leads, come what may. The author of a biblical text will be the person who wrote it; its meaning will be what that person meant, not what God means, and no intellectually responsible exposition of it can take place without locating the text unshakably within the historical circumstances of its composition.<sup>237</sup>

If inspiration and theology were no longer shackles constricting interpretation, then one was free to examine the Scripture in its historical context to search out its timeless truths.<sup>238</sup> Spinoza's view was that reason should not be subject to church dogma, while simultaneously acknowledging the tension between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, in the debate over

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<sup>236</sup> Jonathon Israel, *Radical Enlightenment; Philosophy and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 159.

<sup>237</sup> Jon Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, Old Testament and Biblical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>238</sup> Briggs, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?," 58.

scriptural interpretation.<sup>239</sup> Beginning with Spinoza, reason trumps faith and dogma as the primary hermeneutic mode of biblical interpretation.

### 2.2.3 Immanuel Kant

At the end of the eighteenth century, as the Age of Enlightenment continued, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) expounded on the philosophy of analytic and synthetic reasoning.<sup>240</sup> Spinoza had explored the role of reason as opposed to faith as the primary mode of interpretation, while Kant inquired into the delimitations of reason:

For Kant the human mind is the ultimate source of meaning and understanding: objective reality can only be known as it conforms to the structures of the knowing mind. In this way Kant acknowledges both the value and limitations of reason. The world can never be known as it is in itself, but only through the point of view by which it is perceived.<sup>241</sup>

As Spinoza maintained that scriptural interpretation should not be constrained by church dogma, so Kant thought that faith could not be a constraint upon our understanding of existence. To Kant, the knowable can be known, and faith should be subject to reason. Along with that view,

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<sup>239</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 11. For Spinoza's view on the role of universal rules for the interpretation of the language of Scripture, see Baruch Spinoza, Samuel Shirley, and Seymour Feldman, *Theological-Political Treatise* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 88.

<sup>240</sup> Kant is most noted for his work, *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1781). He is also known for his works on teleology, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*The Critique of Judgment*), 1790, and his work on ethics, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (*The Metaphysics of Morals*), 1797.

<sup>241</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 12.

however, was the recognition that the external world can only be perceived through the human mind. This philosophical view both affirms the direction initiated by Spinoza in the quest for the historical as over the dogmatic, while at the same time forming a philosophical basis for Schleiermacher's understanding of the psychological aspect of text production. The influence of Kant's philosophy can be seen also in later postmodern interpretive approaches that reject scientific-objective views of text reception for basically the same reason Kant did: that knowledge can only be known through the mind of the recipient.

#### 2.2.4 Friedrich Schleiermacher

A key figure in the development of the modern historical-critical method,<sup>242</sup> the primary interpretive mode in biblical studies until the late twentieth century, is Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).<sup>243</sup> "What the Kantian criticism is to the history of philosophy so is the content of [Schleiermacher's works] *Reden* and *Glaubenslehre* to that of post-Reformation theology."<sup>244</sup> Put otherwise, "The hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and the Romantics that would follow afterwards represents a complete and radical break from the older tradition. With

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<sup>242</sup> Also called the historic method.

<sup>243</sup> Schleiermacher's earliest work, *Reden über die Religion* (On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers), 1799, is one of his most influential. His chief theological work is *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche* (The Christian Faith According to the Principles of the Protestant Church), 1822, revised 1831.

<sup>244</sup> Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism: Studies in Early Nineteenth Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 56.



Schleiermacher, modern hermeneutics begins.”<sup>245</sup> With Schleiermacher, biblical interpretation becomes a general science of textual interpretation, considering the relationship between the text and the interpreter.<sup>246</sup> Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic included both the psychological and philological aspects of producing and reading a text, understanding that these two factors operate together even though they differ from each other. A text is a communication that originates from an individual in a cultural setting with recognised forms of expression, yet is given expression through linguistic forms. As such, an interpreter may focus on one of these aspects, the psychological or philological, but never to the total exclusion of the other. This philosophical development laid the foundation for the historical approaches that developed in later centuries.<sup>247</sup>

Schleiermacher’s work raises an important hermeneutic question that is still relevant today. In consideration of the psychological and cultural aspect of the text, Schleiermacher highlights that there is a world of authorial experience underlying the production of the text. Yet the text is a philological expression, the language of which also can be studied without reference to the world of production. This duality raises the question of the locus of meaning: Is the meaning of a text to be found in its language or in the world of its writer? Or does the meaning reside in the interplay of the two?<sup>248</sup> One of Schleiermacher’s contributions to the philosophy of biblical

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<sup>245</sup> Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to Present* (New York: Continuum, 1985), xi.

<sup>246</sup> Briggs, “What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?,” 59.

<sup>247</sup> Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*. Schleiermacher’s contribution to hermeneutics is discussed on pages 4-12.

<sup>248</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 206.

interpretation is his understanding of the role of the author's experience and intent in text production. Yet one of the criticisms of his work is that he tends to make that ultimately unknowable aspect, the author's intent, a focus of his interpretive approach.<sup>249</sup>

#### 2.2.5 Modernity and the Historical-Critical Method

By the end of the nineteenth century, historical criticism had become the accepted hermeneutic approach to Scripture. The term "historical criticism" is a broad one, encompassing the various aspects of textual criticism and the investigation of the historical setting of the text's production and its recipients. It is historical in that the praxis of interpretation is historical and not theological. It is critical in that it subjects biblical interpretation to the modern scientific worldview.<sup>250</sup>

The church's view toward the historical-critical method has been an ambivalent one; it is alternatively viewed as destructive and creative, damaging to faith or grounding the faith solidly in history. Krentz expresses this ambivalence, maintaining that the "[h]istorical method is at best not hostile to theology, at worst a threat to the central message of Scripture." He goes on, however, to make the case that theologians can and do justify the case for the use of the historical method, and that this method is not incongruent with the message of Scripture. More than that, historical criticism places the Bible in an historical setting and by doing so highlights

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<sup>249</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 16.

<sup>250</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 58.

the Christian message.<sup>251</sup> On the other hand, this approach shifts the realm of interpretive authority from the church to the secular-academic world, and as a result has been perceived by many as a threat to faith, to the authority of Scripture, and to the authority of the church.<sup>252</sup> A common view is “that modern historical scholarship on the Bible is rooted in the eighteenth century rational attacks upon Christianity.”<sup>253</sup> Others, however, dispute that view and see historical scholarship as the fruit of Luther’s work and the Reformation.<sup>254</sup> Both those who held to reason over faith, such as Spinoza, and those whose primary goal was the affirmation of faith, such as Luther, contributed to modern scientific methodologies of biblical interpretation.

In 1989, the Catholic Church established the Pontifical Institute Biblico Commission (hereafter, IBC) to study the methods of biblical interpretation in the Catholic Church. This commission described the approach:

The historical-critical method is historical “above all because it seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which gave rise to biblical texts . . . At the different stages of their production, the texts of the Bible were addressed to various categories of hearers or readers,

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<sup>251</sup> Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 61. Bartholomew criticizes Krentz’s view in “his reluctance to see faith and the historical-critical method as in conflict, thereby privatising faith . . .” Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 82.

<sup>252</sup> Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 3-4.

<sup>253</sup> Robert Morgan and John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>254</sup> Travis Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 200-201; 235.

living in different places at different times” (I.A.2.b). The method is critical “because in each of its steps...it operates with the help of scientific criteria that seek to be as objective as possible” (I.A.2.c). The historical-critical method analyzes the biblical text in the same way it would study any other ancient writing, “as an expression of human discourse” (I.A.2.d). Yet in its final step . . . the method helps the exegete “to gain a better grasp on the content of divine revelation” (I.A.2.d).<sup>255</sup>

From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, the historical method in its diverse forms was the accepted and virtually unchallenged approach to biblical interpretation, and it is in common use even to this present time. Yet beginning in the mid- to late twentieth century, new methodologies and theories developed, and methodologies already in use in other fields began to be applied to biblical interpretation. These new approaches were in two main realms: the literary and the social. Literary approaches, such as speech-act, reader-response, and rhetorical analysis, began to appear in biblical scholarly literature. Social science research methods, whether anthropological, economic, political, and, to a lesser extent, psychological, began to be recognised as valid hermeneutic options in biblical interpretation.

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<sup>255</sup> Peter S. Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church"* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblica, 2001), 222. The IBC also described the procedures of the approach, outlining seven distinct aspects: (1) Textual criticism, (2) Linguistic and semantic analysis, (3) Literary criticism, (4) Genre criticism, (5) Tradition criticism (locating texts in the stream of a particular tradition), (6) Redaction criticism, and (7) Evaluation of historical significance of historical genres.

Evidence of these trends can be seen in the survey of literature on the Song of the Vineyard. Particularly significant during this period was the awareness of the reader's involvement in the interpretive process as a result of the work of Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, and Hans Robert Jauss.<sup>256</sup> This trend, along with the social changes of the late twentieth century that gave rise to the feminist movement and increased sensitivity to the viewpoints of other marginalised groups, opened new horizons in biblical interpretation. With the expanding of interpretive horizons also came a re-evaluation of the historical-critical method.

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's 1987 SBL presidential address<sup>257</sup> is a landmark expression of the changes and critical evaluations occurring at the end of the twentieth century. Her address focuses on the ethos of biblical scholarship, prevailing *a priori* academic theoretical assumptions, and the political and social environment in which biblical scholarship was practiced at that time. To gain perspective on the state of biblical scholarship, she reflects back on the development of the scientific method:

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<sup>256</sup> Fish is best known for his work on reader-response theory and his book *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1967). Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss together founded the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, dedicated to the development of reception theory.

<sup>257</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Disciplinary Matters: A Critical Rhetoric and Ethic of Inquiry," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 9-32.

The “scientist” ethos of biblical studies was shaped by the struggle of biblical scholarship to free itself from dogmatic and ecclesiastical controls. It corresponded to the professionalization of academic life and the rise of the university. Just as history as an academic discipline sought in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to prove itself as an objective science in analogy to the natural sciences, so also did biblical studies. . . .

Historical science was a technique that applied critical methods to the evaluation of sources, which in turn are understood as data and evidence. The mandate to avoid theoretical considerations and normative concepts in the immediate encounter with the text is to assure that the resulting historical accounts would be free of ideology.<sup>258</sup>

The scholarly world seeks to distance itself from philosophy and ideology and, as in the world of the natural sciences, to be “objective.” Yet even those who attempt to encounter the text free from ideological bias are not free from their own ideologies; they are merely unaware of the extent to which their social and theological ideologies and beliefs influence their supposed “objective” interpretive approach. Schüssler-Fiorenza depicts a scholarly world that is detached from contemporary social and political realities, centred instead in its own scientific ethos.<sup>259</sup> Her interest in acknowledging these realities is “decentering the dominant scientist ethos of biblical scholarship by recentering it in a critical interpretive praxis for liberation.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Disciplinary Matters,” 11.

<sup>259</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Disciplinary Matters,” 9.

<sup>260</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 9.

Schüssler-Fiorenza's evaluation of the state of biblical scholarship highlights two main points. A common philosophical underpinning of historical criticism is that it is purportedly objective; texts and their historical settings can be objectively examined by human reason and investigative techniques.<sup>261</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza's first point is that this scientific approach, which purports to be objective, is itself ideological, being practiced by those who hold theological, philosophical, social, and political *a priori* assumptions.<sup>262</sup> Second, while this approach may appear to be all inclusive, it is in fact socially, politically, and (others would argue) theologically exclusive. These two main criticisms have since been expressed in varying forms by others. In its 1993 report, the Catholic IBC highlighted some of these same criticisms. "Many of the [IBC] criticisms that have been raised against the historical-critical method can be understood as criticisms of an allegedly neutral practice of the method."<sup>263</sup> The IBC was concerned that this supposed neutrality in itself was an ideology. In their view, there should be a prevailing ideology

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<sup>261</sup> Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 78. Soulen and Soulen specify four basic tenets of historical criticism: (1) that reality is uniform and universal; (2) that it is accessible to human reason and investigation; (3) that all events historical and natural occurring within it are in principle interconnected and comparable by analogy; and (4) that humanity's contemporary experience of reality can provide objective criteria by which what could or could not have happened in the past can be determined.

<sup>262</sup> Krentz raised the same question, "Is the historical method used by an interpreter of the Bible the same as the method used on other documents, if the interpreter's faith determines his attitude to the Bible?" Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 67.

<sup>263</sup> Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Scripture*, 233.

underlying the approach: the “‘pre-understanding’ of Christian faith.”<sup>264</sup> According to the then Cardinal Ratzinger, the current Pope, the very notion of a scientific approach philosophically follows Kant, that all that can be known is the knowable, thus ruling out the Christian view of the supernatural and the unknowable.<sup>265</sup> A similar concern was expressed by Lewis Mudge in his introduction to Ricoeur’s *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*: biblical criticism in its intellectual approach leads to a spiritual desert, an intellectual land with no “springs of water for the spirit.”<sup>266</sup>

While one main concern of the IBC was historical-criticism’s ideological bias against Church faith and dogma, others have expressed the opposite criticism, that the method’s *a priori* orientation is influenced by church tradition.<sup>267</sup> Either way, the horizon of biblical interpretation

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<sup>264</sup> Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Scripture*, 233.

<sup>265</sup> Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Scripture*, 236. Williams goes on to note that Raymond Brown differed with Ratzinger, and the commission adopted Brown’s position. Williamson argues that the commission took too positive a view of the present practice of historical criticism and cites evidence to support his view.

<sup>266</sup> Lewis Mudge’s comment in his introduction in Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>267</sup> Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology*, trans. Robert Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001). Eta Linnemann’s book is one of the most outspoken criticisms of the historical-critical method. Linnemann was a student of Bultmann’s, but after a personal religious experience, she rejected the historical method and wrote this scathing criticism of biblical academia. See also John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 124. According to Barton, in reference to previously held convictions stemming



(to use Thiselton's term) had now reached the realization that no study or interpretation is free of ideology; the ideology of the reader is an integral element in the interpretive process.

Prior to the 1960s, the historical-critical method held an almost unchallenged hegemony in the field of biblical criticism. This hegemony was challenged from the 1960s to the 1990s by the developments and through the criticisms discussed above. The field of biblical interpretation began to open to a plethora of interpretive methods, some entirely new, and some new only to that field. Not only was the field of biblical interpretation changing, but world society was changing, and new voices were demanding to be heard. In 1998, Craig Bartholomew addressed the positive and negative aspects of this new pluralism in biblical interpretation, and his comments are relevant to the question of methodological choices for this thesis:

There is a growing sense of hermeneutical pluralism and fragmentation in OT studies . . . and there is no consensus among OT scholars about what to do in the contemporary situation. Should we retreat into the familiar grounds of historical criticism? Do we, like Brett, Morgan and Barton, deny the possibility of an integrated hermeneutic and opt for more of a smorgasbord approach? Do we, like Childs and Levenson, try and keep a foot in the historical-critical camp while increasingly shifting our weight to the foot in the literary camp? Do we wait out the present crisis until a new consensus emerges? Or do we reclaim the Bible for the Church? In typical postmodern fashion there is a plurality of responses to the fragmented situation in which OT scholars find themselves, and even advocates of a hermeneutical

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from church tradition, a critically valid reading "can be attempted only if the reader is not constrained by prior convictions about the text's meaning, drawn from an interpretative tradition."

pluralism like Morgan, Brett and Clines appear to exclude certain approaches from their smorgasbord.<sup>268</sup>

For Bartholomew, the question of pluralism in OT [sic] studies is not just methodological; it is deeply philosophical, arising from the postmodern worldview.

### 2.2.6 Postmodernism

The questionings of the historical-critical method that developed in the late twentieth century were an outgrowth of a profound shift in philosophical culture. In Thomas Kuhn's 1962 book, *The Structure of Scientific Knowledge*, Kuhn convincingly makes the point that even supposedly "objective" scientific knowledge is not objective. Knowledge is inseparable from paradigms of understanding, and paradigms can be changed. Kuhn's work is often cited as one of the key philosophical works that gave rise to the postmodern worldview.<sup>269</sup> The nature of postmodernism and the history of its development are the subject of volumes of books and articles that are outside the scope of this thesis. I will only comment very briefly, limiting my comments to those facets of the phenomenon that link the previously mentioned developments in biblical interpretation to the development of socio-rhetorical criticism.

In the decades following Kuhn's work, a questioning of supposed "objectivity" spread across disciplines, from the sciences into literature and other humanities. The field of biblical studies

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<sup>268</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 1-2.

<sup>269</sup> Brueggemann, *Texts under Negotiation*, 7-8. Brueggemann cites Kuhn's work as the most important philosophical breakthrough, but he also mentions Polanyi, Lyotard, and Rorty. Derrida's philosophy of language is often cited as a major postmodern philosophical development.

was no exception. As with many philosophical or social revolts, it may be possible to identify the sparks that finally ignite the blaze, but the underlying causes and factors are often many and hard to pinpoint. A profound and complex social change was underway worldwide, leading to questionings and dissent in many quarters, as Burke says: “The sheer scope of recent social changes denies unified understanding. And yet something clearly has happened to evoke such broad dissent.”<sup>270</sup> Alternate viewpoints, new voices, questioning of standing assumptions and norms are the ingredients of this new, postmodern worldview, which is not so much a worldview as the option to flow amongst an eclectic spectrum of worldviews. “The word [postmodernism] denotes a jumble of phenomena, or rather the altered conditions of knowing that many different people have come to recognize all around themselves.”<sup>271</sup>

This profound worldview shift and its impact on biblical studies are reflected in Bartholomew’s statement about the deep philosophical nature of the question of pluralism. Modernity, characterised by its assurance that truth was absolute and objectively knowable, yielded—or perhaps more proper to say, is yielding—to postmodern relativism. Bartholomew described the growing pluralism and fragmentation and asked what should be done in such an environment. To this question he sees no single answer.

In modernism, truth was seen to be general, universal, and objective. The cultural/philosophical shift of the postmodern era sees “truth” as necessarily contextual, therefore local and pluralistic, creating an environment in which there can be no hegemony. Instead, there is perspectivism;

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<sup>270</sup> Burke O. Long, “Ambitions of Dissent: Biblical Theology in a Postmodern Future,” *JR* 76 (1996), 277.

<sup>271</sup> Long, “Ambitions of Dissent,” 277.

everyone has a voice. Andrew Adam cites Yale scholar Cornel West in delineating three main philosophical tenets of postmodernism as being “antifoundational, antitotalizing and demystifying”:

Postmodernism is antifoundational in that it resolutely refuses to posit any one premise as the privileged and unassailable starting point for establishing claims to truth. It is antitotalizing because postmodern discourse suspects that any theory that claims to account for everything is suppressing counterexamples, or is applying warped criteria so that it can include recalcitrant cases. Postmodernism is also demystifying: it tends to claim that certain assumptions are “natural” and tries to show that these are in fact ideological projections. All these characteristics deal with one of the most common characteristics of postmodern thinking: postmodern critics characteristically problematize *legitimization*, the means by which claims about truth or justice or reality are validated or rejected.<sup>272</sup>

Postmodern thought, according to Adam, undermines the assumption of unassailable, foundational beliefs. Every foundation accepted by some will be questioned by others, so it is therefore not universally foundational, even to the point that “it may not be possible for foundations to exist at all.”<sup>273</sup>

Does this shift mean that there are no longer any absolutes? Is everything relative and “up for grabs,” so to speak? While a radical postmodern approach to biblical criticism might claim that this is the case, many scholars maintain that it is not so. For example, concerning radical

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<sup>272</sup> Andrew K. M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 5.

<sup>273</sup> Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?*, 6.

deconstructionism and its place in biblical studies, Briggs claims, “For most commentators, however they estimate its merits; deconstruction is not a hermeneutical option.”<sup>274</sup> Bartholomew acknowledges new interpretive realities and the many unresolved questions that arise from those realities, yet maintains that there will always be “philosophical i.e. epistemological, ontological and anthropological, presuppositions” underlying the hermeneutic of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>275</sup>

Burke Long, an advocate of postmodern approaches to biblical scholarship, acknowledged a tension in his own life, valuing the tenets of both modernism and postmodernism:

I stand implicated in such ambiguities, trying to honor both filiation [to modernism] and revolt. I live out of modernist pathways of study that have been very productive for biblical scholarship, and yet I am discovering added layers of scholarly endeavor that can be built on altered, but not entirely distinct, epistemological assumptions.<sup>276</sup>

Long’s approach represents a balance, recognising the value of approaches developed throughout history, yet also seeing that the postmodern approach addresses some of the weaknesses or blind spots formerly not addressed. In addition, he presents a balanced view of absolutes, while describing their limited realm of function:

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<sup>274</sup> Briggs, “What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?,” 63.

<sup>275</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 3.

<sup>276</sup> Long, “Ambitions of Dissent,” 277.

Appeals to unassailable grounds for truth will surely persist (in theology, for example, affirmations of God's objective reality), but the privilege and power of such objectivist claims to shape social formations will be contested and negotiated . . .<sup>277</sup>

Long's balanced view is similar to Robbins' approach in socio-rhetorical criticism. The modernist approach highlighted the importance of the text and the world in which it was generated. That approach recognised the importance of understanding language and semiotics as means of communication. As quoted at the beginning of this chapter, "A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other,"<sup>278</sup> and the historical-critical method contributed important methodologies toward that understanding. However, underlying these methodologies were assumptions that limited, delegitimised, and marginalised perspectives that were contrary to the assumptions and prejudices of the dominant interpretive community. Postmodernism has legitimised the participation of new perspectives and new interpretive methods that are inclusive, not exclusive, which express a "both/and" approach to biblical interpretation.

It is not surprising, then, that during the decades of the late twentieth century, as postmodernism perspectives crossed lines of academic disciplines, and new voices were heard in the field of biblical criticism. The voicing of new perspectives and an environment of deconstruction were fertile ground for the rediscovery of rhetorical analysis in biblical interpretation. This rediscovery has had, and continues to have, a major impact on the field and is a significant component of socio-rhetorical criticism.

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<sup>277</sup> Long, "Ambitions of Dissent," 285.

<sup>278</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 347.

### 2.2.7 Rhetoric and Biblical Criticism

The art of rhetoric dates back to perhaps as early as the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>279</sup> In the twentieth century its study revived and its definitions were greatly broadened. Rhetoric, as it is understood today, encompasses every form of communication (oral, written, and media in its various forms) in every realm of life, as well as encompassing every aspect of the act of communication. It has become a broad concept and therefore difficult to define. In the 1960s, Kenneth Burke described the basic function of rhetoric as “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents.”<sup>280</sup> Burke considered rhetoric as an “essential function of language itself . . . the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.”<sup>281</sup> By “essential function of language,” Burke indicated that we could not have language without rhetoric being present in some way. According to Burke, we may view all language as containing an attitude, which is an incipient act. All language sermonizes about our point of view, whether we intend to or not, and therefore it is rhetorical in nature.

In their 1985 work *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, Foss, Foss, and Trapp define rhetoric even more broadly than did Burke. They characterise it as “the uniquely human ability to

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<sup>279</sup> Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>280</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1969 ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 41.

<sup>281</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 43.

use symbols to communicate with one another.”<sup>282</sup> Moreover, since rhetoric is such a broad concept, they use the phrase “perspectives on rhetoric” rather than the terms “field” or “theory,” because of the great diversity of perspectives on the communications act, all of which are encompassed by the term “rhetoric.” To demonstrate the breadth of perspectives in the realm of rhetoric, they chose to survey the lives and works of eight major twentieth century rhetorical thinkers. Their choices were determined not only by the significance of the work done by those individuals, but also by the diverse perspectives on rhetoric that they represent.<sup>283</sup>

A decade after this jointly authored book, Sandra Foss described rhetoric in even broader terms than she and her co-authors had earlier, defining it as “the action humans perform when they use symbols for the purpose of communicating with one another.”<sup>284</sup> This broadened definition

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<sup>282</sup> Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives*, 13.

<sup>283</sup> Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives*. The eight personages they chose are: I. A. Richards, Richard M. Weaver, Steven Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, Ernesto Grassi, Kenneth Burke, Michael Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas. They chose some thinkers for their emphasis on the role of sounds, symbols, and meaning in the act of communication; some for their focus on place of values, motive, or argumentation in rhetoric. Still others they chose for their writings on the general philosophy of rhetoric. They state that their selection is not meant to be comprehensive but rather representative, and even then not representative of all the possibilities inherent in the overarching study of rhetoric (note pages 14-16).

<sup>284</sup> Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, second ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998), 4. Foss explains that her definition involves four realms or aspects: action, symbolic action, human action, and the enabling of communication. The first three aspects involve



emphasises the possibility of non-verbal actions, such as body language, to be forms of rhetoric. She defines rhetorical criticism as the study of the rhetoric of a speech-act:

Rhetorical criticism is the process of systematically investigating and explaining symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes. This definition includes three primary dimensions: (1) systematic analysis; (2) symbols as the objects of analysis; and (3) a purpose of understanding rhetorical processes.<sup>285</sup>

The definitions and descriptions of rhetoric offered by Burke, Foss *et al*, and Sonja Foss from the 1960s to 1990s illustrate the development in the field of rhetorical criticism over that time. During this same period, rhetorical criticism was “rediscovered” in the field of biblical studies. Perspectives on biblical texts expanded as a result of the renewed interest in rhetoric; no longer was the historical-critical method the only, or even the primary, approach to biblical interpretation.<sup>286</sup>

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human choice, which in turn makes the fourth, enablement of communication, possible. This broadened description includes non-verbal communication as part of the rhetoric of a communication.

<sup>285</sup> Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 6-7. Foss defines artifacts as the objects of study, a text or other form of communication, that record a speech act, 5.

<sup>286</sup> In a general discussion on the place of rhetoric in biblical interpretation, Reed Lessing made the following footnote comment: “The rediscovery and reinvention of rhetoric has made a profound impact upon Biblical studies, as seen in the growth in the number of articles, monographs, Festschriften, and conferences addressing themselves to rhetorical analysis of Biblical texts. In the last twenty years more books and articles that focus on the rhetorical method and its application have appeared than in the previous century and a half. A look at M. Minor, *Literary-Critical Approaches to*

The development of rhetorical criticism in the field of biblical studies can be traced through a series of conferences on rhetoric and biblical criticism, known as the Pepperdine Conferences,<sup>287</sup> held between 1992 and 2002. In the first conference, in Heidelberg in 1992, Wilhelm Wuellner gave a snapshot picture of the role of rhetorical criticism in the Western world:

In the last quarter of the twentieth century we are emerging at long last from an extended eclipse of rhetoric in Western culture, both Jewish and Christian, as well as later secular Western culture. This eclipse has lasted since the beginning of the hegemony of modern scientific exegesis and the rise of historical criticism.<sup>288</sup>

Wuellner's address is one of the essays often cited from the earliest Pepperdine Conference. In this address, Wuellner not only looks at the present state of rhetorical criticism but also considers the future direction of rhetoric and biblical criticism through a study of the historicity of rhetoric. He warns against simply re-establishing biblical hermeneutics with a classical approach to rhetoric. Rather, the challenge to the modern biblical scholar is to incorporate the broadened

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*the Bible: An Annotated Bibliography* (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill, 1992) confirms this impression. Of its 2,254 entries, the vast majority date after 1980 and very few were written before 1970, 66." Reed Lessing, "Preaching like the Prophets: Using Rhetorical Criticism in the Appropriation of Old Testament Literature," *Concordia Journal* 28 (2002): 395.

<sup>287</sup> Pepperdine University was one of the primary sponsors of the conferences.

<sup>288</sup> Willhelm Wuellner, "Biblical Exegesis in Light of the History and Historicity of Rhetoric and the Nature of Rhetoric in Religion," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 492-513.

horizons of contemporary rhetoric that embrace not only the classical elements but also social, cultural, ideological, argumentative, gender, and other elements.

Wuellner was concerned that if biblical scholars insisted on using only older forms of rhetorical analysis, the result would be ongoing and increasing fragmentation in the field. He called for a move into a blending of modes that would integrate rather than divide.<sup>289</sup> He saw the need in biblical exegesis to overcome a rhetorical analysis of duality, of thought versus feeling, language versus action, or orthodoxy versus religious experience. These divides had arisen in history and still prevailed. His presentation of the historicity of rhetoric also challenges the notion of a universal rhetoric as proposed by George Kennedy and the subsequent movement of the New Critics. Rhetoric cannot be universal, since it is influenced by culture and is inseparable from it.<sup>290</sup> Moreover, those who study it, whether ancient or modern, are also influenced by culture, having their own cultural influences and ideologies. Wuellner points out that little attention had been paid to the cultural dimension of rhetoric, specifically noting the role of cultural ideologies

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<sup>289</sup> Wuellner, "Biblical Exegesis," 501. In 2002, Robbins noted that this concern, the need to move beyond older modes of biblical interpretation, was the topic of six of the twenty-seven essays at the 1992 conference. Vernon K. Robbins, "From Heidelberg to Heidelberg: Rhetorical Interpretation of the Bible at the Seven 'Pepperdine' Conferences from 1992-2002." in *Rhetoric, Ethic and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Thomas. H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 335-377.

<sup>290</sup> Wuellner, "Biblical Exegesis," 502-503.

in the rhetoric of a text. In considering the cultural elements of rhetoric, “rhetorical criticism and ideological criticism converge . . . like two sides of one coin, distinct but inseparable.”<sup>291</sup>

In 1992, matters addressed by Wuellner were new to the world of biblical criticism. By 2002, however, the situation had significantly changed. In the volume of essays published after the last of these conferences, the second Heidelberg Conference in 2002, Vernon Robbins traced the movement of rhetorical criticism as it had progressed in that ten year period:

The seven rhetoric conferences from 1992 to 2002 exhibit a remarkable movement from the application of formal categories from Greco-Roman literary rhetoric to modes that interweave multiple practices informed by strategies of people as they interact with one another both within bounded social, cultural and political spheres and across ethnic, national, cultural and religious boundaries.<sup>292</sup>

The issues addressed by Wuellner had become forefront issues in biblical interpretation in the decade subsequent to his presentation.<sup>293</sup> One of Wuellner’s main concerns, fragmentation in the field of biblical interpretation, was one of the primary motivators for Robbins to develop his integrative methodology of socio-rhetorical criticism. Wuellner foresaw this fragmentation as resulting from outmoded dualities and categories in the philosophy of rhetoric. Another source of potentially divisive diversity was the new voice of formerly marginalised communities who challenged long-held basic assumptions. It was, as Robbins notes, a time of revolution, and

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<sup>291</sup> Wuellner, “Biblical Exegesis,” 499.

<sup>292</sup> Robbins, “From Heidelberg to Heidelberg,” 336.

<sup>293</sup> Robbins, “From Heidelberg to Heidelberg,” 337.

revolutions are times of disunity and fragmentation.<sup>294</sup> In this social and philosophical environment, Vernon K. Robbins developed the socio-rhetorical method: not so much a new methodology as a unique way of combining both old and new methodologies in the hopes of allowing diversity, marked by unity rather than fragmentation.

Not only is the aim of socio-rhetorical criticism to bring unity in diversity, it is an integrative and invitational approach that goes a long way to answer the need presented at the beginning of this chapter. The research question of this thesis is one of breadth: how broad are the possible characterisations of YHWH and readers' perspectives of YHWH in the brief pericope? This question calls for a method that allows for breadth and diversity of views. As noted earlier, no one method can do that; rather, only an integration of methods, as imperfect as that integration may be, will allow for greater scope than any single method.

## 2.3 Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

### 2.3.1 Description of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

Socio-rhetorical criticism, primarily developed through the work of Vernon K. Robbins, is a work in progress, growing with time and critical input from the scholarly community. David Gowler succinctly describes the journey that produced socio-rhetorical criticism in the first paragraph of his introduction to the 1994 anthology of Robbins' work, *New Boundaries in Old Territories*:

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<sup>294</sup> Robbins states that this fragmentation was one of the major challenges that led to his integration of methods into socio-rhetorical criticism. Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1.

To sketch the development of socio-rhetorical criticism is to chronicle a scholarly journey that was grounded upon the historical-critical foundation of such scholars as Bultmann, Dibelius, and Perrin. The result of this scholarly journey, however, would shake those foundations and would cause a reconsideration of the “assured results” of those scholars. Yet, in significant ways, socio-rhetorical criticism incorporates the accomplishments of past scholars.<sup>295</sup>

As others before him, Robbins saw both the value and shortcomings of the historical-critical approach and its sub-methods. In developing socio-rhetorical criticism, Robbins sought to create an environment for biblical criticism to be a “liberating venture,” bringing the text with its multiplicity of possibilities to the modern reader, since answering historical and theological questions through historical methods alone could not explore the texts as discursive communication.<sup>296</sup>

Socio-rhetorical criticism attempts to integrate traditional historical-critical methods, such as exegetical and textual studies, with social and rhetorical approaches to create a multi-faceted tool

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<sup>295</sup> Vernon K. Robbins and David B. Gowler, *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 1. Gowler’s introduction charts the development of Robbins’ work from 1973 to 1992. He cites Robbins’ articles that are pivotal points in the development of different aspects of the method. Gowler cites Robbins’ 1995 work on Luke as marking the first development, the recognition that a well-known social convention could influence the rhetoric of a narrative. In 1982, Robbins’ studies led to intertextual considerations and from there to anthropological considerations. Gowler summarises that Robbins’ approach is one of “adapting and adopting constructive aspects from diverse methodologies, seeking to pursue the interpretation of these texts both with precision and a manner of coherence,” 3.

<sup>296</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 8.

for delving into the richness of texts. The name “socio-rhetorical” points to the two main thrusts of the approach: the social worlds of the writer, text, and its recipients, and the language and rhetoric of the text itself. In the introduction to his 1992 *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, Robbins reflects on the development of the approach and briefly explains these two aspects:

A revisitation of the beginning place for socio-rhetorical criticism brings an awareness that the method is a call for biblical interpreters to work consciously at two tasks at once: (a) reading the text; and (b) opening the world of the text. . . . The term rhetorical asks the interpreter to hear the text of Mark as a story, to listen to all of the voices in the story, including the narrator’s voice, and to look around at all that is happening. The prefix “socio-” asks the interpreter to open the text to the past, present, and future world we see, hear, and imagine as twentieth-, and soon twenty-first-, century people. It may seem unnecessary to emphasize the importance both of the text and of the world of the text, but most interpreters establish strategies of interpretation that limit both dimensions of Mark.<sup>297</sup>

The starting point is the text itself in its language and its historical setting, thus incorporating the strengths of the historical-critical approach. Yet the approach goes beyond these dimensions and focuses on values, convictions, and beliefs of the world of the text, also moving interactively into this present world.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xxiii.

<sup>298</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1. References cited in the quotation are: “Socio-Rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth, and the

Not only is socio-rhetorical criticism interactional between worlds, it is also dialogical between methods. A pictorial image to describe its dialogical nature might be that of scholars of a variety of disciplines and perspectives sitting around a table with the text in the centre. The scholars interpret the text from their various perspectives and dialogue with each other. The goal of the method is not that all will agree, but that there might be cooperation amongst even those who disagree.<sup>299</sup> In this kind of approach, there is almost certain to be a dynamic disequilibrium, but the result of the dialogue is a richer, multifaceted view:

Socio-rhetorical interpretation is interactionist. It seeks to integrate the study of religion and humanistic, theological, and socio-scientific disciplines. It places dialogue at the center of reading and interpreting a text. It generates dialogical interaction between multiple disciplinary strategies for reading and interpreting a text. Socio-rhetorical hermeneutics is also grounded in an ethnography of orality, writing, and reading. The content of the text is not the subject of interpretation per se, but the interaction between the content and its mode of production.<sup>300</sup>

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Magnificat as a Test Case,” 1994; “Divine Dialogue and the Lord’s Prayer: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts,” 1995; *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*, 1996.

<sup>299</sup> Combrink, “The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries,” 4. Combrink acknowledges that this goal may be idealistic, but that nevertheless it is a worthwhile goal.

<sup>300</sup> Duane F. Watson, “Why We Need Socio-Rhetorical Commentary and What it Might Look Like,” in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 130-157. This interactional, dialogical approach is demonstrated in an essay on teaching comparative religions in Laurie Patton and Vernon K. Robbins, *Comparative*



Each of these disciplines' approaches is worthy of consideration, yet any one method alone is excessively limiting because of the necessary boundaries that each method or perspective imposes. Boundaries are inevitable since a method is in part defined by its boundaries, yet to expand the potential readings of a text, boundaries must be expanded.<sup>301</sup> This expansion of boundaries is particularly important when the purpose of a study is to examine the potential breadth of interpretive possibilities, such as is the case in this thesis.

The expansion of boundaries through the incorporation of a variety of techniques has its benefits, but it is not without its challenges. One major challenge is to bring together diverse methodologies under one broad methodological umbrella. Another challenge is that no single interpreter can ever use all the methods together exhaustively. The purpose of the methodology is not to be a one-stop, all inclusive exhaustive method, but rather "is to build an environment for interpretation that provides interpreters with a basic, overall view of life as we know it and language as we use it. Within this environment, interpreters can decide to work especially energetically on one or two aspects of a text."<sup>302</sup> One of the methodological considerations for this thesis is the delimitation of textures to be studied and approaches in researching the question at hand; this matter is considered later in this chapter, section 2.4.

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*Sacred Texts and Interactive Interpretation: Another Alternative to the "World Religions" Class* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009).

<sup>301</sup> Combrink comments on "the necessity of creating and dismantling boundaries in and around texts as a necessary step in the process of interpretation," and in his view, Robbins' approach both respects the boundaries of others but also is not limited by them. Combrink "The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries," 1.

<sup>302</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2. See also Robbins, *Tapestry*, 3.

### 2.3.2 Criticism of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

While many of the reviews of Robbins' work have been favourable, a number of criticisms of the methodology have been raised. One of the main criticisms voiced is that the method is not clearly defined, or is defined differently by different people, as one scholar writes:

Nowadays, the integration of narrative criticism with social-scientific criticism is referred to as "socio-rhetorical interpretation." However, the term "socio-rhetorical" is currently used in significantly different contexts, and different scholars are pursuing somewhat different goals with various strategies they consider to be socio-rhetorical in nature . . . Some clarification of these terms is therefore urgently needed.<sup>303</sup>

David Gowler, however, sees this loosely defined quality of socio-rhetorical criticism as a strength:

In fact, one of the criticisms of socio-rhetorical criticism is that no one could put a handle on it and put it to use. You couldn't pour in data, turn the crank, and get "results." That so-called weakness, however, is actually one of its strengths. Socio-rhetorical criticism is not a "methodology" in the sense that it becomes an interpretive matrix imposed upon biblical texts like a strait-jacket. Socio-rhetorical criticism . . . [is] not *imposing* a method but investigating and adapting this approach to the complexities of those texts.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Ernest van Eck, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Theoretical Points of Departure," *HvTSt* 57 (2001): 594.

<sup>304</sup> Robbins, *New Boundaries*, 1.

The criticism of the method's looseness of articulation is not unique to socio-rhetorical criticism, however. Clifford Geertz, for example, sees this problem with every interpretive method:

The besetting sin of interpretive approaches to anything—literature, dreams, symptoms, culture—is that they tend to resist, or to be permitted to resist, conceptual articulation and thus to escape systematic modes of assessment.<sup>305</sup>

The reason Geertz gives for this resistance to articulation, however, is that each interpretive method presents itself as self-validating; you either accept it or you don't. It is this very self-validating aspect of interpretation that Robbins attempts to address by combining interpretive methods. Combining methods, all of which may tend to be self-validating to some extent, into a dynamic dialogue will necessarily result in fluidity, an ebb-and-flow that will be difficult to articulate precisely.

The comprehensive use of any methodological approach in an interpretation is a large undertaking. Robbins himself noted that “any broad-based interpretative approach contains at least two to three hundred strategies and techniques for analysis and interpretations.”<sup>306</sup> Robbins' approach combines methodologies, making the task that much more difficult. In his review of *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, Eugene Gallagher wrote that the enormity of the task led him to wonder if Robbins was recommending a method or just encouraging “an encompassing attitude of open-mindedness and an eagerness to engage in cross-disciplinary

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<sup>305</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 24.

<sup>306</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 44.

conversations.”<sup>307</sup> Gallagher acknowledges the helpful nature of the discussion of the various textures of the text, but nevertheless feels that Robbins’ proposed methodology “sometimes threatens to collapse into the simple exhortation to study a text from every conceivable point of view.”<sup>308</sup>

Bernard Scott reviewed Andersen and Robbins’ paper “Paradigms in Homer, Pindar, the Tragedians, and the New Testament.” To Scott, it was not clear where “rhetorical analysis fits into the overall conception of a unifying method.” Scott then suggests that it belongs to the “elementary tier that attempts to bridge authorial intention . . . and reception.”<sup>309</sup> With these comments, Scott raises the question of placement, of putting the pieces together into a unified whole. David Jasper expressed a similar question concerning the role of rhetoric and the starting point of textual analysis in his reflections on the 1995 London Conference on the Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture:

Professor Vernon Robbins proposes that we look for the textures of discourse, citing four master tropes of inner texture, inter-texture, social texture and cultural texture. I suggest rather that we need initially to recognize the textuality of texts, that is, that which we relate to in the text without recourse to contextual dependency. In other words, we need to identify the space

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<sup>307</sup> Eugene Gallagher, “Review of The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse,” *History of Religions* 38 (1999): 409.

<sup>308</sup> Gallagher, “Review of The Tapestry,” 409.

<sup>309</sup> Bernard B. Scott, “The Chinese Box: Method Within Method,” *Semeia* 64 (1993): 278.

within which reading takes place, and the arena which constitutes the exchange between reader and text.<sup>310</sup>

Jasper's point may express a legitimate concern, but it should be noted that he also expresses a general suspicion of the role of rhetorical analysis in general: "Rhetoric will always be ready to catch us off-guard in order to assert its power—power rather than truth being its real business."<sup>311</sup>

I noted previously that one of Robbins' goals in the development of socio-rhetorical criticism is to retain the benefits of the earlier historical methods while broadening boundaries to include new perspectives. This inclusive approach results in a shift of emphasis away from some categories that have been emphasised in the past. R. Alan Culpepper expresses dismay at the lack of reference to the familiar interpretive ground of genre determination in Robbins' work, observing that the word "genre" does not even appear in the subject index of Robbins' 1996 two books on socio-rhetorical criticism.<sup>312</sup> For Culpepper, a discussion of genre is essential, since

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<sup>310</sup> David Jasper, "Reflections on the London Conference on the Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 476-482.

<sup>311</sup> Jasper "Reflections on the London Conference," 409.

<sup>312</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, "Mapping the Textures of New Testament Criticism: A Response to Socio-Rhetorical Criticism," *JSNT* 70 (1998): 74. The term "genre" in Robbins' work is even rarer than Culpepper notes. The only work written by Robbins in which the term appears in the title is his 1980 work on Mark's Gospel, "Mark as Genre," *SBL Papers* 19 (1980): 371-399. The term is mentioned a few times in another of his early works, "Prefaces in Greco-Roman Biography and Luke-

“generic conventions and relationships of a text are fundamental to its intertexture. Authors and readers both approach texts of different genres in different ways.”<sup>313</sup> Robbins responded to his criticism:

[W]e need to move beyond discussions of literary genre into rhetorical genres. Literary genres are second-order social, cultural and ideological genres. . . . We need to analyze and interpret the rhetorical genres that have been woven together to create the literature available to us today.<sup>314</sup>

Robbins has described his integrative approach as the interpretive equivalent of weavers weaving a tapestry.<sup>315</sup> Weavers follow a master pattern that clearly depicts each shuttle of the loom so that all the threads correctly join together. To some scholars, the master pattern for weaving together the textures of the text in Robbins’ method is not so clear. Gallagher touches on this point in his critique of Robbins’ work:

Also, although Robbins sees many of his colleagues in New Testament studies moving toward or adopting discrete elements of a socio-rhetorical approach, he provides few compelling examples of its successful use in the mass of contemporary scholarship that he summarizes. In

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Acts,” *PRSt* 6 (1979): 94-108. Both these works appeared before Robbins developed socio-rhetorical criticism.

<sup>313</sup> Culpepper, “Mapping the Textures,” 74.

<sup>314</sup> Robbins, “Response,” 103.

<sup>315</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 18.

fact, the very open-endedness of his interpretive program seems to make it especially difficult to accomplish.<sup>316</sup>

In R. Alan Culpepper's reviews of Robbins' two 1996 books on socio-rhetorical criticism,<sup>317</sup> he makes a similar basic criticism. He is "unsettled" by the conclusion to *Tapestry*, in which Robbins explains the three main areas of promise for socio-rhetorical criticism: "(1) it 'offers programmatic correlation of multiple textures of texts', (2) it offers systematic attention to individual textures, and (3) it 'offers resources for writing a new account of first-century Christianity'." Culpepper thinks "the books do not offer a programmatic correlation of the multiple textures." He further suggests that the sequence of chapters seem to operate independently to help discern various ideologies and discourses, but do not weave together to form a "grand theory." He concludes:

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<sup>316</sup> Gallagher, "Review of The Tapestry," 409. R. Alan Culpepper voices a similar concern. While considering the integrative nature of socio-rhetorical criticism he writes, "No doubt its reach is too broad to support its arch." He does not further explain the comment, however. Culpepper, "Mapping the Textures," 72.

<sup>317</sup> Robbins' major work on socio-rhetorical criticism, *The Tapestry of Christian Discourse*, was published in 1996. Later that same year he published a brief manual, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. This latter work is a "how-to" manual with practical, simple examples of the application of socio-rhetorical criticism to a biblical text. I do not know if this guide was published in response to criticism of the difficulty of using socio-rhetorical criticism, or if Robbins himself saw the need for such a guide.

To fulfill the potential of socio- rhetorical criticism, I would encourage Robbins to take the next step and show how the method works, not just in the serial treatment of the various textures but in their correlation and in their critical dialogue with one another.<sup>318</sup>

One of the most notable criticisms<sup>319</sup> of Robbins and socio-rhetorical criticism is that of Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. At the 1994 Pretoria conference on rhetoric, Scripture, and theology, Schüssler-Fiorenza strenuously criticised the New Rhetoric, which includes Robbins' work. In her view, biblical studies as a discipline had become stuck in a "rhetorical half-turn," not taking into account the contributions of Feminist and Liberationist scholarship.<sup>320</sup>

Schüssler-Fiorenza claims that she does not wish to argue for the superiority of her approach to the reading of a text over that of others, but rather that she wants to illustrate her contention "that rhetorical criticism in biblical studies remains in captivity to an empiricist-positivist scientism" which characterise both biblical and classical studies and which are "modern gentlemen

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<sup>318</sup> Culpepper, "Mapping the Textures," 76.

<sup>319</sup> I suggest that her criticism is one of the most notable for several reasons. First, the criticism was made in an address at a major conference on Rhetorical Criticism, the 1994 Pretoria Conference. Second, for many years Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza has been recognised as one of the foremost scholars in the field of biblical criticism. Finally, her criticism is more comprehensive and articulated in more detail than the criticisms of reviews in journals.

<sup>320</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn: Feminist and Rhetorical Criticism," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 28-50.



disciplines.”<sup>321</sup> This captivity, according to Schüssler-Fiorenza, explains why the New Rhetoric is only a half-turn. She maintains that rhetorical criticism in biblical studies has not developed “critical epistemological discourses and a hermeneutics of suspicion,” and that through its empiricist scientific approach, it veils the reality of its own rhetoric.

She singles out Robbins’ interpretation of the Markan anointing story to illustrate how even socio-rhetorical analysis, which expresses an awareness of gender issues, in the end “resorts to a positivist social-scientific approach in order to validate its interpretation.”<sup>322</sup> She opens her criticism of Robbins’ approach with a general comment on his delineations of textures of texts, asserting that by casting ideology as one texture of a text, he fails to recognise that all reading of Scripture is ideological:

[B]y positing so-called ideological criticism as one method among others rather than understanding it as a dimension of all interpretative methods and strategies Robbins implies that only ideological criticism is concerned with and determined by ideology insofar as it seeks to prevent other approaches that do not reproduce the ideological texture of the Markan account or their own preconstructed frames of meaning.<sup>323</sup>

Schüssler-Fiorenza cites Robbins’ comments concerning the Mediterranean setting of the anointing story as an example of using preconstructed frames of meaning. She accuses Robbins of uncritically accepting Mediterranean cultural models as a scientific fact, which she claims is

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<sup>321</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn,” 32.

<sup>322</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn,” 33.

<sup>323</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn,” 33.

“hermeneutically naïve.”<sup>324</sup> According to her, while claiming to be aware of gender issues and ideological readings, he has resorted to positivist-scientific readings that are kyriocentric.<sup>325</sup>

As a final example of Robbins’ kyriocentrism, she writes:

Finally, Robbins does not question his own reconstructive kyriocentric frame of reference which makes it seem ‘common sense’ that in preparation for burial, it would be *appropriate for a woman* to anoint *every part of a man’s body* (emphasis added [by Schüssler-Fiorenza]) with ointment’. Although Robbins ostensibly wants to undermine traditional Western male culture that shuns the body, he ends up by reinscribing the malestream Western sex/gender system that associates body and care for the living and the dead with women but attributes naming, defining, and leadership activities to men.<sup>326</sup>

Six years after Schüssler-Fiorenza’s essay was published, Robbins responded. Robbins’ response included a critique both of the content of her essay as well as the rhetoric of her presentation. After outlining the thread of her argument, he responds point by point to her assertions. He clarifies his position concerning scientific explanation versus humanisitic interpretation. Describing his position as “interactivist,” he states his position that both approaches, the

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<sup>324</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn,” 34.

<sup>325</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza coined the word to describe male-dominated systems.

<sup>326</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn,” 35.

scientific and humanistic, are important and the two need to be considered together and interactively.<sup>327</sup>

Schüssler-Fiorenza asserted that Robbins naively accepted the Mediterranean cultural model as a fact, and thereby created a construct for interpretation. In response, Robbins noted that by flatly rejecting such a model, she herself had created her own interpretive context:

If Schüssler-Fiorenza had admitted that she also had constructed a context for interpretation, she could have opened a most interesting discussion about ‘creating contexts’ for interpretation of the variant versions of the woman who anointed Jesus. Instead, she closed the door with oppositional rhetoric. . . . Rather than choosing a strategy that put both of our constructions of the context on an equal playing field for discussion, she chose an oppositional strategy that closed the door to that discussion.<sup>328</sup>

With these comments, I think that Robbins highlights one of the weaknesses of Schüssler-Fiorenza’s argument. He welcomes a dialogue on the matter of constructs; inviting dialogue of differing approaches is one of his clearly stated purposes of socio-rhetorical analysis. Welcoming differing approaches has been central to Robbins’ development of socio-rhetorical criticism from its earliest days, as he perceived the need for a widely embracing interdisciplinary model. Two years before Schüssler-Fiorenza’s criticism of Robbins, David Gowler wrote that Robbins

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<sup>327</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, “The Rhetorical Full-Turn in Biblical Interpretation: Reconfiguring Rhetorical-Political Analysis,” in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis Stamps (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 48-60.

<sup>328</sup> Robbins, “The Rhetorical Full-Turn,” 50.

approach is “dialogical; he wants his reading strategy to open doors that other New Testament interpreters labor to slam shut.”<sup>329</sup>

While Schüssler-Fiorenza ardently criticises him for blindly accepting old models and shutting off debate through “kyriocentrism,” Robbins highlights the contradiction that is present throughout Schüssler-Fiorenza’s criticisms; the very things of which she accuses him, she herself does through her accusations. Robbins states his view on her approach:

Characterizing my work as objectivist, scientific, empiricist, and malestream, versus her work as open, free, and based on equality, she took a political half-turn that set her work in opposition to mine in a manner that did not invite any further deliberation about the issues involved. Thus, there is a deep antipathy in Schüssler-Fiorenza’s essay between what she says and what she does.<sup>330</sup>

In a review of socio-rhetorical criticism, H. Bernard Combrink considered Schüssler-Fiorenza’s argument. He so completely agrees with Robbins’ assessment of her criticisms that he feels no further comment on his part is necessary. He is quite direct and brief in his evaluation of the substance of her argument: it “does not hold water.” As to her rhetoric, he also agrees with Robbins that she “seems to be closing down the debate with her oppositional discourse, rather than opening it up.”<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Robbins and Gowler, *New Boundaries*, 3.

<sup>330</sup> Robbins, “The Rhetorical Full-Turn,” 51.

<sup>331</sup> Combrink, “The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries,” 15-16.

In summation to his rebuttal, Robbins ends on a positive note using an image proposed by Schüssler-Fiorenza herself, that of a dance. In this complex dance of biblical interpretation, clumsy participants may step on each others' toes, but progress will be made as long as each sees the other as an equal participant in this dangerous and difficult dance.<sup>332</sup>

## 2.4 The Textures of the Text and the Song of the Vineyard

### 2.4.1 The Five Textures

As an integrated critical approach to interpretation, socio-rhetorical criticism five realms of textual inquiry, which Robbins calls “textures.”<sup>333</sup> He likens each texture to the threads in a tapestry, the sum of which make up the text in the same way that the sum of the threads in a

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<sup>332</sup> Robbins, “The Rhetorical Full-Turn,” 56. The discussion did not end with Robbins’ response to Schüssler-Fiorenza. She took up the topic in her keynote address at the 2002 Heidelberg conference: Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Disciplinary Matters: A Critical Rhetoric and Ethic of Inquiry,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 9-32. In her address, she criticised Robbins for labelling her oppositional discourse as adversarial rhetoric.

<sup>333</sup> Prior to Robbins, others used the term “textures” in relation to texts. See Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), and Stephen A. Tyler, *The Unspeakable: Discourse, Dialogue, and Rhetoric in the Postmodern World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 35. Michael Halliday refers to language as textures: Michael Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Arnold, 1984).

tapestry make up the whole.<sup>334</sup> This multi-textured approach allows the interpreter to consider differing facets of a text, integrating meaning and arriving at interpretive possibilities. Textures are interwoven “networks of signification and communication” that represent the “cognitive, emotive, social, and material meaning potential in texts.”<sup>335</sup>

In Robbins’ view, interpreters have viewed texts either as windows or mirrors; the windows give insight into the historical world outside, while the mirrors reflect the inner nature of the text. Robbins does not view texts through this dualistic either/or approach, but rather as both/and, a flowing between:

The metaphor of windows and mirrors reflects a polarity between literature and history that is part of the dualism between mind and body in modern thought and philosophy. This approach overlooks the nature of language as a social product, possession and tool. Language is at all times interacting with myriads of networks of meanings and meaning effects in the world.

Texts exist in the world, and we exist in the world.<sup>336</sup>

It is this flowing between inner and outer realms that gives rise to the concept of individual textures of the text that are woven together to comprise the whole. In the earliest work in which Robbins explains his view of the textured nature of texts, he identifies four distinct textures: the innertexture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture.<sup>337</sup> Later in that

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<sup>334</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*.

<sup>335</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, xxvii. In choosing the term “texture,” Robbins was influenced most by Geertz’s concept of a “web of human significance.”

<sup>336</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 19.

<sup>337</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 24.

same year in his brief guide to the use of socio-rhetorical criticism, he added a fifth texture, the sacred texture.<sup>338</sup> The text is a communication, and it is through the interaction of the differing inner and outer textual realms that it becomes so. “A text is both a text unto itself, but it is also necessarily in the world.”<sup>339</sup>

A socio-rhetorical analysis of a text involves studying each of the textures independently, yet the textures interact, each contributing to the whole. In this thesis, these various textures are studied, but textural study is not an end in itself. The focus of the investigation is to answer the research question concerning the potential characterisations of YHWH that emerge through reading the text. Each texture is studied individually, but each also serves as a participant in an interdisciplinary and multi-perspectivist approach.

Following is a description of each texture and a brief overview of the methodology within each texture that will be used in the analysis of the Song of the Vineyard. A more detailed explanation of the methodology of each texture is included in the individual chapters. As Robbins points out, it is not possible for an interpreter to exhaustively analyse each texture,<sup>340</sup> even in so short a passage as the Song of the Vineyard and a work as comprehensive as a thesis. Discerning delimitation is an important part of the research process.

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<sup>338</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.

<sup>339</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 19.

<sup>340</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2.

### 2.4.2 The Problem of Separating Textures

Just as it is not possible to exhaustively analyse each texture, it also can be difficult to isolate the individual textures one from another since they make up a tapestry and are interwoven. Culpepper notes that the innertexture and intertexture worlds may interweave when dealing with historical persons or events.<sup>341</sup> Other aspects of the text also involve an interweaving of textures. For example, numerous critics have pointed out elements of irony in the Song of the Vineyard,<sup>342</sup> and I think that this trope may be particularly significant in considering the characterisation of YHWH. The question is, however, in which textural study should irony be included? The rhetorical trope of irony may be just a matter of innertexture, perhaps in structure of the passage, sounds of words or repeated formulae but with unexpected changes in meaning. As Robbins notes in discussing the innertexture, a text may have a sensory or aesthetic quality that may evoke emotion.<sup>343</sup> Irony in a text can evoke shock, surprise, or even delight, and therefore would be part of the innertexture of the text. Ironic rhetoric may also be a matter of intertexture, ironic only in light of its intertextual use. Perhaps an irony is only evident when structure, intertexture, and the social values of the world of the text are considered together. While there is a benefit to considering each texture separately, to some extent such a consideration is either artificial or not entirely possible.

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<sup>341</sup> Culpepper, "Mapping the Textures," 73.

<sup>342</sup> In particular, note Gary R. Williams, "Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation," VT 35 (1985): 459-465.

<sup>343</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 30.



### 2.4.3 Innertexture

The study of the innertexture of the text focuses on the language of the text itself. This stage of analysis considers the words of the text, their sounds and narrational structural patterns, prior to its meanings. In addition, it considers the “aesthetic” of the text, the emotive effect of its narration.<sup>344</sup> In his 1998 response to socio-rhetorical criticism, Culpepper suggests that the world of the text is not limited to the above mentioned parameters but also includes the entire range of features of the world of the text, such as narrator, discourse, themes and motifs, and rhetorical tropes.<sup>345</sup> I would agree with Culpepper, since there is no other texture in which these elements might best fit. I would add that this texture also should include as preliminary matters the basic questions of the text, questions of textual delimitation, textual criticism, and grammar.

#### 2.4.3.a Preliminary Matters: Textual Criticism, Variant Versions

Earlier works on the Song of the Vineyard, those written when the historical-critical method was the accepted method of biblical interpretation, focused extensively on questions of the text, including textual variations<sup>346</sup> and the textual setting of the passage in chapter five of First Isaiah. I note textual variations and their possible significance in relation to the research question considered.

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<sup>344</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7-31.

<sup>345</sup> Culpepper, “Mapping the Textures,” 73-74.

<sup>346</sup> Textual variation is a major consideration of Cersoy’s 1899 article, “L’Apologue du la Vigne,” *Revue Biblique* 8 (1899): 40-49. Cersoy’s article is the earliest modern work on the pericope that is referred to by later scholars, apart from larger commentary works.

#### 2.4.3.b Grammar and Structure

The earliest works on the Song of the Vineyard often consisted of extensive grammatical studies, as do some modern commentaries on First Isaiah.<sup>347</sup> The focus of these studies generally is for the purpose of textual criticism rather than for analysing rhetoric. Since grammar forms the foundation of speech units, I think it is an element that cannot be ignored. Not only can grammar clarify or obfuscate meaning, variations in grammar from norms can be significant. For example, word placement may indicate emphasis, while prepositional use may determine the force and direction of a line. Unusual grammatical constructs may hint at intertextual passages that affect the interpretation of a passage. In the case of the Song of the Vineyard, does the grammar of the text have bearing on possible characterisations of YHWH? To what degree does grammar limit or allow for diversity of possible views of YHWH in the text?

As is the case with grammar, the structure of the Song of the Vineyard has been extensively considered. Chiastic and poetic structure are common forms of expression in the writings of the Hebrew Bible and are important vehicles of communication. The structure or rhythm can point to the climax of a passage or can highlight similarities or differences between sections of a passage. In the case of the Song of the Vineyard, a vineyard is built and then torn down. The structural relationship between the wordings of these two acts may be significant and embody part of the meaning of the text. Lys is particularly detailed on the grammatical structure of the passage, and Korpel extensively considers structural analysis as a tool for redaction criticism. These two scholars suggest a chiastic structure for the pericope, but within the limits of their questions of

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<sup>347</sup> For example, Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Scripture*.

research.<sup>348</sup> I will consider their structural analyses as well as suggest another alternative, one that focuses on the structure's contribution to the aesthetic of the text and its representations of YHWH.

#### 2.4.3.c Metaphors

Metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this. . . . metaphor tells us something about one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A.<sup>349</sup>

Language is a construct of symbols expressing perceptions of reality. When we consider that fact along with Burke's statement quoted above, one could say that all language is by nature metaphorical.<sup>350</sup> However, it is not incorrect to distinguish metaphorical language, whether written, spoken, or even acted out, as opposed to other types of communication. It is clear that the Song of the Vineyard is a metaphor; "The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel": A=B.

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<sup>348</sup> Daniel Lys, "Le Vigne et le Double Je: Exercice de Style sur Isaie," in *VTsup* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 1-16; and Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism: The Example of Isaiah 5 and 10:1-6," *JSOT* (1996): 53-71.

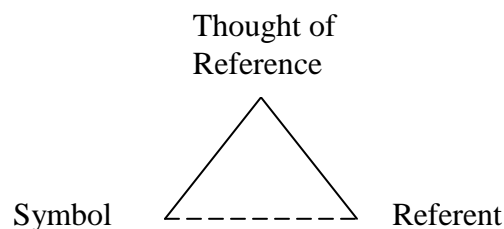
<sup>349</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1969 ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 503-504.

<sup>350</sup> Foss essentially states this: "We do not stand apart from the world and perceive reality and then interpret it or give it meaning. Rather, we have or know a reality only through the language by which we describe it. We constitute reality through our use of symbols." Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 358.

Yet there may be sub-metaphors within the greater metaphor. For example, can the term  $\gamma\eta\gamma$  be considered a metaphor, and if so, how does that understanding affect the projections of the person of YHWH in the passage?

Metaphors allow for a variety of perceptions of an object. While Burke's equation  $A=B$  is the basic description of a metaphor, the possibilities that arise are not such a simple equation. Richards' semantic triangle and model of communication demonstrate the heightened diversity of emotive and conceptual images that may result from the use of metaphor:

Richards' Semantic Triangle



**Richards' Model of Communication<sup>351</sup>**

*Source experience* → *Source Mind* → *Environment* → *Destination Mind* → *Destination Experience*

Richards' theory is a theory of all language use, not just metaphorical use. Yet when metaphor is used, the distance between the source and destination experience is increased, since the distance

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<sup>351</sup> For a discussion on Richards, see Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives*, 24-28.

between the symbol and referent<sup>352</sup> is increased. For example, the phrase “The people of Judah”<sup>353</sup> is a symbol that expresses the *ethnos* living in a certain territorial region. Not all who hear or read this term will have the same response to it, but the range of responses will certainly be different, and narrower, than when the term “vineyard” is used to describe the same; “vineyard” will present a greater range of images to the reader or hearer and may evoke a greater emotive response. This characteristic of metaphorical language, the broadening of image and emotive responses, is particularly useful in the consideration of the breadth of possibilities for characterisations of YHWH, the main agent, in this metaphorical pericope. Multiplicity of perspectives allows for viewing different facets of the same reality:

It is customary to think that objective reality is dissolved by such relativity of terms as we get through the shifting of perspectives (the perception of one character in terms of many diverse characters). But on the contrary, it is by the approach through a variety of perspectives that we establish a character’s reality. If we are in doubt as to what an object is, for instance, we deliberately try to consider it in as many different terms as its nature permits . . .<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> In metaphor, the terms *tenor* or *principle subject* may be used for the referent, and *vehicle* or *secondary subject* for the symbol. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 360, following Black. I use the terms *subject* and *vehicle*.

<sup>353</sup> In this explanation, I use the term to mean what it says in English, the entire *ethnos*. The Hebrew expression in the Song of the Vineyard, אִישׁ יְהוּדָה, may actually mean something different. I discuss this phrase as part of the consideration of the identity of the hearers in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture.

<sup>354</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 504.

Foss briefly outlines the process of metaphoric criticism that I will use in the analysis of the passage.<sup>355</sup> First, the critic must identify the metaphors. For example, earlier I posed the question concerning 717: is it a metaphor? Second, after identifying the metaphors of the passage, the critic then suggests the emotive effect the metaphor may have on the audience. This aspect of the metaphor is not only part of the aesthetic of the text, but also a function of the social setting or its intertextual relationships. For this reason, the question of the emotive value of the term “vineyard” will be discussed in more than one texture. As mentioned before, textures are interwoven, and it is not possible to separate them entirely.

To suggest the possible range of emotive values, Foss recommends the use of any of the following questions. She notes that not all questions will be relevant for any particular question under consideration, and I have only included those most relevant to this study:

- What ideas are highlighted, what ideas are masked through the use of the metaphor?
- What images of the principle subject are conveyed?
- How are the metaphors organised?

In addition to these questions, Foss poses other questions relevant to this thesis, but whose consideration lies in the realm of the ideological, since “[m]etaphors contain implicit assumptions, points of view, and evaluations.”<sup>356</sup>

- What does the metaphor suggest about the worldview of the rhetor?

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<sup>355</sup> Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 364, which includes the questions listed below.

<sup>356</sup> Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 360.

- What attitudes and values underlie the metaphor and how do these attitudes direct the attitude of the audience?

The analysis of metaphorical language is not just a matter of innertexture; it also is relevant in the realm of the intertextual. How does this metaphor of the vineyard compare with similar metaphorical uses in other writings in the Hebrew Bible? I will consider this aspect of the metaphor in the chapter on intertextuality.

#### 2.4.3.d The Aesthetic of the Text

One of the most important aspects of the innertexture of the text is its aesthetic nature. “The sensory-aesthetic texture of a text resides primarily in the range of senses the text evokes . . . and the manner in which the text evokes or embodies them.”<sup>357</sup> This aspect of the innertexture touches on the emotive element of the text. The locus of the emotive element is in other textures as well; an intertextual reference evokes associations and an emotional response on the part of the hearer, for example. Yet the text itself carries an emotive value through its mode of communication. One of the primary values of genre studies is that they provide some degree of insight into this aspect of the text. The question of genre has been one of the most researched and discussed in the interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard, with no less than twelve distinct genre possibilities having been suggested.<sup>358</sup> Yet for the most part these studies have not focused on the emotive or sensory response evoked by the text.<sup>359</sup> In the Song of the Vineyard, what

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<sup>357</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 29.

<sup>358</sup> John Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 337-362.

<sup>359</sup> For example, Korpel, “Structural Analysis,” 53-71. Korpel conducts a literary analysis of the text, not for the purpose of analysing the aesthetic of the text, but rather as an aid to determining

emotive responses are derived from the poetic description of both the construction and destruction of the vineyard in relation to YHWH, the one who is doing the building and destroying?

The aesthetic of the text touches on the question of the oral-written texture of the text. Susan Niditch extensively examines the question of discerning oral aesthetic textures in redacted texts, while John Foley focuses his study on the speech-act of presenting an “oralpoem.”<sup>360</sup> Margaret Dean specifically addresses the applicability of socio-rhetorical criticism to orality in texts.<sup>361</sup> The orality of the text is part of its aesthetic, and an important element in its rhetorical communication.

#### 2.4.4 Intertexture

No text exists in a vacuum; texts precede it and surround it. The writer of any text brings with his or her writing this surrounding textual world in its references, nuances, word usages, and communication of values and ideologies.<sup>362</sup> The text is a communication from a presumed world

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genre. Determination of genre in such studies is the end goal, not determination of genre for the purpose of delving into the sensory-emotive aspect of the text.

<sup>360</sup> Foley combines the words as they are here.

<sup>361</sup> Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996). John Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Champaign, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Margaret E. Dean, “Textured Criticism,” *JSNT* 70 (1998): 79-91.

<sup>362</sup> Michael Worton and Judith Still, ed., “Introduction,” in *Intertextuality: Theory and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 1-2.



of the event to the world of the reader, and each of these worlds carries with it a “matrix” of other texts. In intertextual theory, texts function “as generative matrices of further meaning projected by other texts through a textual network or textual grid.”<sup>363</sup> Not only do authors bring this surrounding world with them, but so does the reader. The reader may or may not share the same matrix world as does the author, for the author may know of texts the reader does not know, and vice versa.<sup>364</sup>

In the case of the Song of the Vineyard, as with most biblical texts, the passage is assuming a world in which events occur, the “world of the story.” This world is, among other things, an intertextual world, a multi-faceted world of culture, language, and natural environments which

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<sup>363</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 39.

<sup>364</sup> Culpepper, “Mapping the Textures”; Worton and Still, “Introduction,” 1-2. Two anecdotal examples: My children were raised in Israel and Africa and had little contact with the United States. On a visit to that country when they were teenagers, they were invited to a party of their peers. On their return, when asked how the party was, their response was that the other teens were very nice, but that they (my children) couldn’t understand what their new friends were talking about. When I asked why, they responded that the teens’ conversation to a great extent was derived from references to television advertisements. Since my children had never seen the ads, they didn’t have a common “intertextual” frame of reference from which to derive understanding. The “authors,” the other children, had a matrix of texts that my children did not have.

On the other side of the dynamic, I once described life in Southern Sudan to a friend of mine, and he said that it sounded like things just had a way of falling apart. The comment was richer to me in meaning than my friend had even intended it to be, for he had no knowledge of Chinua Achebe’s classic African work, *Things Fall Apart*.

form the assumed background to the speech event. In this world, words are important, not just in terms of how they appear in the text but how they are used in relationship to their usage in the story-world setting through other texts.

This interplay of texts is an important element in the consideration of the Song of the Vineyard, since two other vineyard passages appear in First Isaiah: Isaiah 3:13-16 and 27:2-6. In addition, First Isaiah is not the only place in the Hebrew Bible that metaphorically depicts the relationship between YHWH and Israel as that of a husbandman and his vineyard (or vine). In Psalm 94, the psalmist likens the people of YHWH to a vine, then asks why YHWH, who planted the vine, has now “broken down its wall.” The phraseology uses the same two words as in Isa 5:5 (פֶּרֶץ, גֹּדֶר), though in a different tense. In the prophetic writings, Jeremiah (12:10-12) uses the phrase, “my vineyard,” כֶּרְמִי, as it is used in the Song of the Vineyard. The comparison of these passages may shed light on the Song of the Vineyard and its characterisations of YHWH.

Robbins divides intertexture into four different realms: oral-scribal, cultural, historical, and social.<sup>365</sup> The first realm, oral-scribal intertexture, involves the use of language references from other texts either in an oral communication or a written text.<sup>366</sup> Yet texts describe worlds, so Robbins expands the concept of intertextuality to intertexture. Intertextuality is limited to references to texts, either explicit or implicit. Intertexture more broadly considers the worlds which those texts represent. Cultural intertexture, for example, may be the locus of community-held concept patterns or symbols. Social intertexture differs from cultural in that it is not an inner-held knowledge, but one that is publicly visible by behaviour and readily accessible to

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<sup>365</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 40-64.

<sup>366</sup> In the rabbinic world, this method of teaching, known as *remez* (hinting), was common.

all.<sup>367</sup> Historical intertexture is, as the name implies, a reference to a known historical event or time.

L. Gregory Bloomquist, a practitioner of socio-rhetorical criticism, differs somewhat from Robbins in his understanding of intertexture. Bloomquist acknowledges that Robbins makes a case for distinguishing between social and cultural intertexture on the one hand and a socio-cultural texture on the other, but he thinks that this distinction is artificial. His main reason is that a text only intersects with a part of a larger cultural and social world. This intersection only deals with specific features of that world, revealing only a “slice” of the social and cultural norms. Any “slice” that is depicted in the text must naturally and significantly exclude “huge tracts of social and cultural ‘land’ . . .” From this he concludes that it is artificial to define intertextuality as Robbins does.<sup>368</sup> On the one hand, Bloomquist is right that texts are only “slices” of culture, and the broader consideration needs to be dealt with elsewhere. In socio-rhetorical criticism, there is a difficulty in isolating textures or in placing *topoi*<sup>369</sup> in textures. From a practical perspective, however, while one interpreter may see a topic or theme in the intertextual texture and another in the socio-cultural texture, in socio-rhetorical criticism the differing perspectives are all considered and interact creatively.

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<sup>367</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 58, 62.

<sup>368</sup> L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament Texts,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment* (New York, London: T&T Clark, 2010), 122-123.

<sup>369</sup> In literary terms, a *topos*, (pl. *topoi*) is a rhetorical convention or literary theme.

Two references to vineyards in the Song of Solomon, Song 1:6 and 8:11-12, exemplify the blended border between the intertextual and the socio-cultural texture. The use of agricultural imagery as sexual metaphor is a broad social phenomenon in the ancient world. The texts in the Song of Solomon are a small “slice” of that social world. Even if the Song of Solomon is a later composition than the Song of the Vineyard, the passage is still relevant intertextually because of the window of insight that it gives to that socio-cultural world.

#### 2.4.5 Socio-Cultural Texture

In the opening sentence to the previous section, I wrote, “No text exists in a vacuum; texts precede it and surround it.” It is also true that no text exists in a social vacuum; a world of social and cultural values and norms surrounds both the writer of a text and the world that text portrays. As Steven Greenblatt notes, “a full cultural analysis will need to push beyond the boundaries of the text, to establish links between the text and values, institutions, and practices elsewhere in the culture.”<sup>370</sup> These cultural values are implicit, comprised of understandings, assumptions, social modes of life, and cultural values, yet they may be significant factors in the production of the text. Still they can be easily overlooked and accepted without question by the modern reader, or even be unknowingly and erroneously interpreted in light of modern socio-cultural values.

The investigation of the social and cultural texture may explore both the social and cultural aspects of the text itself as well as the world that the language of the text creates.<sup>371</sup> The text

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<sup>370</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture.” In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 226.

<sup>371</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 71.

evolves from a world and creates a world. In the case of the Song of the Vineyard, the world from which the text evolves and which the text evokes is an agrarian one; YHWH and the nation are depicted as husbandman and vineyard. Since growing grapes is an agricultural activity, some knowledge of that agricultural world is an important factor in consideration of the socio-cultural texture: How does the depiction of the building of the vineyard compare to Iron Age Judean viticulture practice? Are there departures from the normal procedure for constructing a vineyard, or is the normal procedure followed? Either way, comparison of known practice with the text is important. This background to the world of the text is one that would have been a focus of the historical-critical method of interpretation. Modern biblical interpretation has moved away from the historical-critical method to literary, rhetorical, and ideological studies, and much good fruit has come from the expansion. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, socio-rhetorical criticism endeavours to keep the valuable aspects of the older method while integrating the new.

A consideration of the socio-cultural context of the text begins with the study of the agrarian practices but does not end there. Not only is the physical world of agrarian activity an important social/cultural texture to consider, but so also is the social world of agrarian practices. Matters of land ownership, commerce, and cultural value systems are all socio-cultural factors of importance. Robbins' guide to the investigation of the social and cultural texture includes specific, general, and final cultural topics. The specific topic is a brief discussion of the seven basic approaches to Christianity from which interpreters approach the New Testament text. The general topics include honour/guilt societies in contrast to honour/shame societies; Dyadic legal contracts; challenge-response (riposte) interactions; and socio-economic interactions. These latter interactions involve the acquisition, exchange, and availability of goods. The final cultural

categories or topics<sup>372</sup> involve cultural groupings, such as dominant culture subculture, oppositional, or marginal groupings.<sup>373</sup>

In this section I pay particular attention to the socio-economic world of Judea in the tenth through eighth centuries B.C.E.. I consider the possibility that YHWH is portrayed as the patron in a Dyadic contract with his people. In the context of that relationship and the ancient Mediterranean social values of honour and shame, I determine if the text can be read as a challenge-response interaction initiated by YHWH because his people shamed him. Whatever the characterisation of YHWH may be in the passage, the social standing of the community of reception is an important factor in considering characterisation. This community may represent a majority or the whole of society, or it may be a sub-group to whom the message is addressed. The social standing and values of the community of reception serve as the social context of the text and may influence the reader's perception of the text's portrayal of YHWH.

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<sup>372</sup> The term "final topics" Robbins adopts from Aristotle.

<sup>373</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 72-89.

#### 2.4.6 Ideological Texture

*Texts, like dead men and women, have no rights, no aims, no interests. They can be used in whatever way readers or interpreters choose. If interpreters choose to respect an author's intentions, that is because it is in their interest to do so.*

*Robert Morgan* <sup>374</sup>

I noted earlier that in the modernist approach of the historical-critical method, the text was generally treated as an isolated entity that could be objectively understood, much as it was thought that a chemical composition could be investigated under a microscope and objectively known. Postmodernism and ideological criticism have overthrown that view. The extent to which that view has changed is illustrated by the comments of some of the foremost scholars in diverse fields of communications, such as Morgan (above), Geertz, and Iser:

. . . texts have no meanings in and of themselves. Texts contain signs to which reader-interpreters attribute meanings. On the other hand, this means that texts receive meanings as people living in social environments attribute meanings to them. In other words, every meaning perceived to be in a text is attributed to signs in that text by a reader-interpreter. The meanings in the text are dependent on the kinds of knowledge the reader-interpreter brings to the text.<sup>375</sup>

. . . the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text, or with the realization of the text, but in fact must lie halfway between the two. The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means

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<sup>374</sup> Morgan and Barton, *Biblical Interpretation*, 7.

<sup>375</sup> Geertz, "The Interpretation of Cultures," xxviii-xxix.

independent of the individual disposition of the reader—though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader.<sup>376</sup>

The idea that the world cannot be objectively known is not new. For Kant, reality could only be known as it is known through the human mind, and it was therefore the human mind that was the source of all understanding.<sup>377</sup> Yet in the recent era, the ideology of the writer and reader has become a major consideration in the field of biblical interpretation.

In socio-rhetorical criticism, “ideological texture of a text exists at the opposite end of the spectrum from analysis of the innertexture of a text.”<sup>378</sup> The innertexture of the text begins and ends with the text itself, whereas the ideological texture begins with the ideology of the reader and the writer, with the text as a guest in the conversation, as Robbins puts it. There are four areas of consideration in the socio-rhetorical criticism approach to the ideological texture: (a) ideology in traditional interpretation; (b) ideology in the text; (c) ideology in intellectual discourse; and (d) ideology in individuals and groups.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Wolfgang Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 40-69.

<sup>377</sup> Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 12.

<sup>378</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 95.

<sup>379</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 240.



Ideological criticism begins with an analysis of the individual locations of reader and writer. The text and all that surrounds it will be seen and interpreted through the eyes of the reader/interpreter and its meaning in some measure shaped by the pre-understanding and conceptual frameworks of the interpreter.<sup>380</sup> Briggs even goes so far as to maintain that the primary part of hermeneutics has more to do with the biblical interpreter than it does with biblical interpretation.<sup>381</sup> The comment is understandable, since, as Thiselton notes, a reader or biblical interpreter may be trapped in his or her own pre-formed interpretive horizons and the reading process then governed by those horizons.<sup>382</sup>

A unique aspect of socio-rhetorical criticism is the consideration of ideology as a separate texture of the text. Some, such as Combrink, see this as a strength of the methodology, since ideology is being considered in a manner that is consistent with the other textures.<sup>383</sup> Others, such as Schüssler-Fiorenza (cited above), see the allocation of ideology into a separate texture as a failure to recognize that every aspect of the act of interpretation is ideological. On the one hand, I do not see that the consideration of ideology as a separate texture necessarily indicates a failure to recognize the role that ideology plays in every interpretive act. I also do not think that consideration of ideology as a separate texture is necessarily any more artificial than considering any other texture as a separate entity. Nevertheless, I find that for me, at least, this element of interpretation is best considered as part of each texture; or to extend the weaving metaphor,

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<sup>380</sup> Briggs, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?," 57.

<sup>381</sup> Briggs, "What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?," 69.

<sup>382</sup> Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 8.

<sup>383</sup> Combrink, "The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries," 8.

ideology is part of every interpretive thread that comprises the whole. For this reason, I am not including a separate chapter on ideology in this thesis, but rather I consider it as interwoven in each of the chapters.

In socio-rhetorical criticism, a study of the ideological texture begins with the interpreter. My perspectives and assumptions as an individual do play a role in what I see in the text and what I may be reluctant to see. In examining each of the textures, I endeavour to be objective and honest about how my ideology influences my perspectives. By acknowledging that my perspectives on the characterisations of YHWH are inseparable from my ideology, I can accept someone else's differing perspective, even if I do not share their ideology. The fact that I disagree does not delegitimize their perspective.

#### 2.4.6.a Ideology of Traditional Interpretations

According to Robbins, one of the areas of ideological consideration is traditional interpretation. The Song of the Vineyard has been interpreted by both Jewish and Christian communities throughout history. In this pre-critical period, Church dogma and rabbinic tradition, and their underlying ideologies, were the interpretive lenses through which Scripture was viewed. I reflect on this aspect of ideology and the interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard in the concluding chapter on seeking the sacred.

One of the significant developments of socio-rhetorical criticism is to link the individual elements of ideology with those of the community in the worlds of the writer and readers. Individuals exist in communities with corporate ideologies that are reflected in the writing and the reading of the text. To illustrate the role of community in textual interpretation, Sandra Marie

Schneiders draws on a legal analogy, the framing and interpreting of the Constitution of the United States:

By writing the Constitution the founders of the nation created and established the norm by which future experience would be judged as validly American, or unlawful and to be rejected. However, this document can function as norm only if it is constantly interpreted, and it can be interpreted only from within and in terms of the ongoing tradition of the nation.<sup>384</sup>

The United States Constitution was written by the representatives of the community at a given point in time but functions only as interpreted by the community at the time of interpretation. The writing is a one-time event; the interpretation is an ongoing process. The Constitution is a corporately written document representing the values of a community; however, even a text written by a single individual is produced in the context of a community ideology. The individual's ideology may affirm or confront that of the community. In any case, the ideology of the individual and the community, writer and readers, must both be considered in the ongoing interpretive process.

This interplay of ideological location of the individual writer and the community forms an important element of consideration for the Song of the Vineyard, in particular in regards to the question of characterisations of YHWH. The ideology of the Judean community concerning their god and the relationship of that being to their community forms the ideological background for the text. What ideology is being presented by the singer/speaker in the text? How is it affirming or challenging the ideology of the community through the presentation of an alternative view of the deity? The ideology of the community cannot be known through sources external to the

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<sup>384</sup> Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 82.

Hebrew Scriptures, since there are no contemporary Hebrew sources; however, the biblical corpus itself sheds light on the ideology of ancient Judea. I consider the ideology of the writer's community in the context of eighth century Judea—the world of the story—in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture.

#### 2.4.6.b The Question of “Valid” Interpretations

Previously I've discussed the underlying assumption in the historical-critical school of interpretation that the meaning of the text is found only in the author's original intent. This assumption is not correct, however. Interpretation of a text is an interplay of the ideological presuppositions of the writer and the writer's community with the ideological presuppositions of the reader and the reader's community. However, in realizing that part of the interpretive interplay is on the reader side, it is possible to err on the opposite extreme of the historical-critical view. An extreme postmodern reader-response position would allow for every interpretation of a text to be a valid one. No longer is the author's intent sought, but the reader's ideology prevails, and therefore all readings are valid. With such a position, the text becomes merely a mirror for the pre-formed thoughts and ideologies of the individual or community approaching the text. Robert Morgan's comment that texts are like dead men and women, quoted above, reflects this view.

The interplay between writer, text, and reader can be seen as a spectrum. On one end is an extreme historical-critical view that does not take the reader's ideology into account. On the other is an extreme reader-response view in which all that matters is the reader's response to the text. The question is one of validity of interpretation. What constitutes a “valid” reading of the text? Are there some interpretations that are “beyond the pale,” as it were, in which the interpretation has, in essence, left the text behind and is merely a reflection of the reader's

ideology? As interesting as this question may be, its full consideration would expand the scope of this thesis beyond any reasonable bounds. In this thesis, the text is the basis for all ensuing consideration. Yet that text is seen through the lenses of different textures and perspectives and through the eyes of different interpreters, a reality that cannot be avoided or overlooked.

## 2.5 Summary: Seeking the Sacred in the Twenty-First Century

Vernon Robbins' first detailed description of socio-rhetorical criticism appeared in his 1996 book *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*. Robbins only discusses four textures in that book; the sacred texture is not included. Robbins includes the sacred texture in his manual *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, released that same year. Given Robbins' background, as born into an evangelical Christian farming family in conservative central Pennsylvania, it seems unlikely that he did not think of the Bible as a locus for seeking the sacred. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was so obvious to him that the Bible was about the sacred that initially he did not think to consider it as a separate texture. I, at least, do not know. In any case, he did include this aspect of Scripture as a separate texture in his second 1996 work.

Robbins includes seven areas of consideration in the sacred texture,<sup>385</sup> one of which is deity. This thesis focuses on that very question: how is the deity of Scripture portrayed in the brief passage, the Song of the Vineyard? All of the other textures serve as lenses or points of encounter through which this question is researched. Therefore, the final chapter on Seeking the Sacred serves as the summary and conclusion to the research work.

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<sup>385</sup> Deity, Holy person, Spirit being, Divine history, Human redemption, human commitment, and Religious community. Robbins, *Exploring*, 120-129.

In this final chapter, I provide a backdrop to the findings of the thesis by briefly reflecting on early Jewish and Christian writings and their portrayals of YHWH. I then summarise the findings produced through the study of the textures of the text. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the potential value for the modern day community of faith and on the potential value in working to bridge the gap between the needs of the pulpit and the work of the scholarly community.

### **3.0 Innertexture of the Text**

A study of the innertexture of a text focuses on the language and rhetoric of the text itself as much as possible apart from other considerations. A text creates a world of its own with its style, structure, narrative discourse, and rhetoric, and these are the primary considerations in an innertextual study. The innertextual study in this thesis is not an end in itself, but rather one of several interpretive lenses used in the investigation of the research question: the characterisations of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard. Considerations germane to the research question are the primary delimiting factors of the study. Another delimiting factor is the amount of previous work done on some aspects of the text, such as the question of redaction. There is no need to repeat prior work done or expand upon it except as such work might yield new insights to the question at hand. This study of the innertexture of the text, following Robbins,<sup>386</sup> explores the repetitive and progressive textual patterns, the narrational development, and the aesthetics of the text, specifically its nature as oral poetry.

#### **3.1 Preliminary Matters: The Text**

A comprehensive innertextual study should include preliminary matters of textual criticism, but only to the extent that they are relevant to the research question.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1996), 7-37.

<sup>387</sup> Robbins does not include these matters in his consideration of the innertextual texture.

### 3.1.1 Redaction

Many of the general commentaries from the late eighteen hundreds and early nineteen hundreds, both those mentioned in the literature review of this thesis and those not mentioned, considered the textual setting of the pericope in chapter five of First Isaiah. Most of the early commentators viewed Isa 2:6-5:30 as an unredacted block.<sup>388</sup> In many cases, their view was based on assumption rather than scholarly analysis. For example, Keil and Deilitsch write:

We may safely enter upon our investigation [of the Book of Isaiah] with the preconceived opinion that the collection before us was edited by the prophet himself. For . . . all the canonical books of prophecy were written and arranged by the prophets whose names they bear.<sup>389</sup>

Later scholars take a more critical approach to the question of redaction. Gerhard von Rad, for example, holds that the prophet himself recorded his oral prophecies, but that the ordering is the result of later editorial redaction.<sup>390</sup> One of the most detailed works on the redaction of the Song

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<sup>388</sup> As noted in the literature review, Cheyne, Duhm, Skinner, Gray, and Graham take this view. Orbiso also agrees, citing these scholars as references. Sheppard makes a case that Isa 3:13-15 was part of the original pericope. I consider the relationship between the two Isaian passages and Sheppard's view in the chapter on intertextuality.

<sup>389</sup> C. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7, trans. James Martin (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1996), 34-35.

<sup>390</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox, 1982), 40-42.



of the Vineyard is the 1977 work of Jacques Vermeylen.<sup>391</sup> Vermeylen sees the pericope as late in origin from exilic Deuteronomistic sources. He does not view chapter five as an integral whole, but as a redactional creation. Conrad L'Heureux, on the other hand, critiques Vermeylen and rejects his argument that the pericope is not authentic, although he accepts Vermeylen's view on the redaction of the chapter.<sup>392</sup> Yehoshua Gitay, on the other hand, sees the chapter as one rhetorical unit and not the product of redactional replacement. He argues that social criticism is not an end unto itself in Isaiah's discourse, but that moral misbehaviour calls forth divine reaction. Therefore the Song of the Vineyard is not an end unto itself but rather an element in this greater discourse. Gitay eschews the traditional method of redactional determination by external forms, such as the introductory, *hoy*, viewing such methods as artificial. Rather, based on analysis by discourse, the entire chapter comprises one rhetorical unit, is one address, and is not the product of redaction.<sup>393</sup>

While there is no unanimity of opinion on the matter, the tendency has been for later scholars to view the Song of the Vineyard as a redactional unit, independent of the rest of the chapter. Often unstated, this position is yet evidenced by articles on the passage that do not include later verses,

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<sup>391</sup> Jaques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique: Isaïe, I-XXXV, miroir d'un demi-millénaire d'expérience religieuse en Israël, I* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977).

<sup>392</sup> Conrad E. L'Heureux, "The Redactional History of Isaiah 5:1-10:4," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlstrom*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 99-119.

<sup>393</sup> Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and His Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991), 88-89.

clearly not seeing them as integral to the pericope. In reviewing the scholarly debate, I think that the pericope was originally spoken or composed apart from the woe oracle that follows in the rest of the chapter, and I approach it from this perspective.<sup>394</sup> Regardless of my personal view, however, a question needs to be asked concerning the other possibility: if the pericope were originally part of the woe oracles, would that fact have bearing on the research question?

The woe oracles are elucidations of injustices perpetrated in Judah. As such, they add detail to the general message of the Song of the Vineyard: instead of good grapes (deeds of righteousness), the vineyard produced the stinking grapes of injustice and unrighteousness.<sup>395</sup> Since these woes do not alter the basic message of the Song of the Vineyard but merely highlight it, I do not see that their consideration would have significant bearing on our perceptions of the characterisations of YHWH in the Song. The placement of the pericope, however, points to the redactors' interpretation and elucidation of the Song of the Vineyard, and it renders a picture of the presumed or depicted world of eighth century Judah. I consider this depiction in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture of the pericope.

### 3.1.2 Variant Versions

The Masoretic text (MT) is the standard text used in scholarly work and for translation purposes; however, it was only finalised in the seventh century C.E. There are two early variants of the text

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<sup>394</sup> I consider the question of possible oral texture later in this chapter, section 3.3.2.

<sup>395</sup> For the usage of woe oracles in the prophetic writings see Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Woe Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81, (1962): 249-263.

in which the Song of the Vineyard appears: the Great Qumran Isaiah scroll (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>); the second century B.C.E. Greek translation of the Hebrew, the Septuagint (LXX).<sup>396</sup>

### 3.1.2.a The great Isaiah scroll, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, column 4

Most of the variations between 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and the MT are minor: letters dropped, or the replacement of a final ה with א. There are two variations, though, that may be significant. In 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> line 12 (Isa 5:1), the enclitic particle נא and the word לידדי do not appear. The line reads: אשירה שירת.

דודי לכרמו

One of the issues with which interpreters have struggled is the meanings of the words דוד and ידד, and the relationship between them. This variation does not affect that question, however, since the term ידד appears in the next colon of the verse. The placement of ידד in the first colon has caused interpretive difficulties because of the preposition ל preceding it. Is this a song *of*, *to*, or *for* the beloved? This is just a problem of interpretation, however. The 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reading does

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<sup>396</sup> There is a later text, the Codex Reuchlinianus (CR), which some believe may reflect a pre-Masoretic text. The text dates from 1105, and its main feature is a system of vocalisation that is different from the Masoretic text, which some have argued that the system is pre-Masoretic, but that claim is disputed. For the purpose of this thesis, the important question is the text itself and its relation to 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, LXX, and MT texts. The wording of the Reuchlinianus Codex matches the MT exactly, and although the CR uses a different system of vocalisation notation, the reading is not affected. For more on CR see Fred Miller, *Column IV, The Great Isaiah Scroll 3:24-5:14*. 1998. <http://moellerhaus.com/qum-4> (accessed February 8, 2012); Alexander Sperber, ed. *The Prophets According to Codex Reuchlinianus (in a Critical Analysis)*, (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

present a number of textual difficulties. First, the absence of the enclitic particle and the word ידִיד changes the rhythm of the colon. Much of the Song of the Vineyard, including verse one, is poetic.<sup>397</sup> (One could make a case, however, that this first colon is an introduction to the song itself and therefore would not necessarily be in poetic rhythm.) Second, the absence of the particle נא affects the structure of the entire pericope. The major sections of the pericope may be delineated as follows:

Verse one: first person s., “Let me sing” (אשירה-נא)

Verse three: third person pl., “Now you judge” (שפטו-נא)

Verse five: first person pl., “Let me tell you” (אודיעה-נא)

These difficulties suggest that the MT is to be preferred over 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. In addition, generally a longer reading is preferred over a shorter,<sup>398</sup> since it is more likely that a scribe would drop words or simplify a passage than make it more complex. Finally, the LXX (which predates 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>) reads, ασω δη τω ηγαπημενω, a translation that is in keeping with the MT reading.

Another variation that could have bearing on the reading of the passage is in line 15 (Isa 5:4). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reads בכרמי instead of the MT’s לכרמי. As in the previous case, I would see the structure of the pericope here favouring the MT reading. Verse four asks the question, "מה עוד לעשות,

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<sup>397</sup> Some scholars would see the entire song as being poetic in form. See Paul Haupt, “Isaiah’s Parable of the Vineyard,” *AJSL* 19 (1903): 193-202.

<sup>398</sup> This is not always the case, but generally so, particularly if there is no evidence to the contrary. For an expanded explanation of methods of determining original reading, see Paul D. Wegner, *A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism: Its History, Methods and Results*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press), 2006, 120-139.

"לכרמי" and the response is in verse 5, את אשר אני עשה לכרמי. The MT reads לכרמי in both verses four and five: "What more was there to do for my vineyard" (verse 4), and "Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard" (verse 5). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, however, reads לכרמי for verse three, but בכרמי for verse 5. H.G.M. Williamson compares the two readings:

1QIsa<sup>a</sup> achieves consistency by reading the first as בכרמי whereas the versions translate the second as though it were ל, and some Hebrew manuscripts actually have לו. . . . It is likely that the versions have rendered under the influence of the parallel לכרמי so that we cannot be sure which preposition stood in their Vorlage.<sup>399</sup>

Williamson goes on to state the argument for the MT:

Conversely, were 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> correct in its reading, it would be difficult to understand where or why the ל had entered the textual tradition at all. . . . בכרמי remains a textually isolated reading, and Pulikottil, 50-51, may be right in including it with other cases of harmonization in the scroll.<sup>400</sup>

The LXX too suggests the reading of the MT, as it preserves the parallel structure of the verses, both reading τω αμπελωνι.

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<sup>399</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1-27*, in *International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 3 vols., ed. G. Davies and G. Stanton (London: T.&T. Clark, 2006), 1:320.

<sup>400</sup> Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 320.

### 3.1.2.b The Septuagint

In the review of the literature, I noted that Cersoy observed two anomalies in the opening of the Song of the Vineyard. The first is the seemingly awkward, repetitive translation of בָּקֶרֶן בֶּן שֹׁמֶן with ἐν χέρᾱτι, ἐν τοπῶ πιδόνι. Cersoy offers no credible explanation for this reading. A much more significant variation between the two texts is the place in which the shift in speakers occurs. In the MT, it comes in the third verse. The actions of verse two, the digging, hoeing, etc. are all expressed in the third person, the original singer still being the voice. It is not until the phrase in verse three, “Judge between *me* and my vineyard,” that the first person appears. In the LXX, this shift occurs in the first verse, with “my vineyard.” Williamson notes that the only other textual evidence for the first person is in the Targum, but even then not until the second verse. According to Williamson, the textual evidence for the first person shift in verses one or two is “slim in the extreme.” He notes that of all previous scholars, only Gray considered the possibility that such a reading reflects the earliest writing, and even he backs away from that conclusion. In addition, the shift to the first person so early would have a deleterious effect on the rhetoric of the passage, removing the element of surprise that suddenly develops in verse three. For these reasons, Williamson rejects the reading of the LXX, as do other scholars.<sup>401</sup>

The nature of the variations and the supporting textual evidence lead me to conclude that the MT text is the best textual preservation of the pericope. An analysis of the text involving more than one hundred years of scholarship has led H. G. M. Williamson (2006) to the same conclusion. Even if I personally were not convinced, I would yield to his view on the matter.

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<sup>401</sup> Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 318.

### 3.2 The Progressive Texture of the Text

*How can I know what I think till I see what I say?*<sup>402</sup>

*E. M. Forster*

In Vernon Robbins' brief discussion of the innertexture of the text, he notes that the texture focuses on the language of the text itself. He considers the importance of structural patterns, particularly the opening-middle-closing pattern, but does not mention the possible relevance of grammar and syntax.<sup>403</sup> Perhaps this element is overlooked because grammatical studies are so heavily stressed in the historical-critical method. Whatever the reason, grammar is an integral part of the act of communication. John Lübke finds grammar and syntax so important that he even suggests a translation of the Hebrew Bible illustrating the grammatical and syntactical arrangement of the Hebrew text through the use of a series of margins indicating verb-subject-object order.<sup>404</sup> Since grammar is a basic building block of sentence structure, a grammatical study of a passage is valuable. The grammar of the Song of the Vineyard has been extensively studied throughout the years, so a complete grammatical study would merely be a repetition of work already done by others. However, grammatical nuances or deviations from normal expected patterns may be significant in the overall rhetoric of the text, so I consider elements of grammatical construction as they are intertwined in the various textures of the text.

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<sup>402</sup> Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1927), 101.

<sup>403</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7-8.

<sup>404</sup> John Lübke, "A New Bible Translation: 'The Syntactic Translation'?" *OTE* 22 (2009): 605-617. I also present a rationale for the inclusion of a grammatical study of the innertexture in the chapter on methodology.

The poetic structure of the text is also a significant element of the rhetoric of communication. This aspect has been extensively considered by Haupt, Korpel, Lys, and others. Not only would such a study here be a duplication of their work, but a study of the poetic structure, apart from those aspects that may aid in pursuing the research question, are outside the scope of this work.

A study of the larger, chiasmic structure of the pericope is another matter, however, for several reasons. First, only Daniel Lys and Marjo Korpel have considered the larger structure, and even Lys does so only as part of his study of verbal occurrences and semantics. I consider Korpel's work below. I also study the larger structure because I see possibilities in it for broadening the spectrum of portrayals of YHWH in the passage.

### 3.2.1 Inverted Parallelism and the Rhetorical Progression

In his 1985 article on the Song of the Vineyard, Gary Williams emphasised the need to read the pericope progressively, as it would have been heard. This reading, according to Williams, uncovers a developing series of frustrated expectations, each one set up only to be later torn down.<sup>405</sup> This dynamic reading of the text's progression is an important element in its interpretation. In this section, I consider the progression of the text from the point of view of language structure, in keeping with Robbins, that the features of the innertexture lie in the language itself, as well as in the text's rhetorical progression.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Gary R. Williams, "Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 459-465.

<sup>406</sup> Robbins, *Exploring the texture of texts*, 7.



The passage's style of structure and rhetoric I present below is often called chiasm, but Kenneth Bailey notes that such a term is more applicable to Greek usage than to Hebrew. He uses the term "inverted parallelism" and notes:

Both cultures [Greek and Hebrew] constructed larger literary units by presenting a series of ideas, coming to a climax and then repeating the series backwards. The distinctive feature of Hebrew style (as compared with Greek) is this use of Hebrew parallelisms as the building blocks for such structures.<sup>407</sup>

Bailey also adds that inverted parallelism is particularly complex, since there are many types and writers may mix them to avoid using them in isolation from one another.<sup>408</sup>

I do not suggest that inverted parallelism structure depicted in the following diagram is necessarily perfect, nor is it the only possible way in which we may view the structure of the Song of the Vineyard. The passage can alternatively be viewed through the structural lens of stanzas, which I also consider below. However, the inverted parallelism structure uniquely depicts the rhetorical building of thoughts and ideas to a climax, which then, in a reverse series of actions, draws attention irrevocably to the conclusion.

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<sup>407</sup> Kenneth A. Bailey, "'Inverted Parallelisms' and 'Encased Parables' in Isaiah and Their Significance for OT and NT Translation and Interpretation," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. L. J. DeRegt, J. deWaard, and J. P. Fokkema (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 14-30.

<sup>408</sup> Kenneth A. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant AND Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke*, combined ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 49. The structure of Isa 5:1-7 is of the full clauses, sentences, or double lines type, as described by Bailey pp. 60-63.

<u>TEXT</u>	<u>STRUCTURE</u>
<p>Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard:  My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.  He dug it and  cleared it of stones, and  planted it with choice vines;  he built a watch-tower in the midst of it, and  hewed out a wine vat in it;  he expected it to yield grapes,  but it yielded wild grapes.</p> <p>And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,  Judge between me and my vineyard.  <b>What more was there to do for my vineyard  that I have not done in it?</b>  When I expected it to yield grapes,  why did it yield wild grapes?</p> <p>Now, let me tell you  <b>what I am doing <sup>409</sup>for my vineyard.</b></p> <p>I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;  I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.  I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and  it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.</p> <p>For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts  is the house of Israel, and  the people of Judah  are his pleasant planting;</p> <p>he expected justice but saw bloodshed  ” ” righteousness, but heard a cry!</p>	<p><u>אשירה-נא</u> Introduction: Song, Beloved &amp; vineyard</p> <p>action  action  action  action  Expect good  Receive bad</p> <p><u>שפתו-נא, ועתה</u> You judge me</p> <p><b>Judgment: What more for my vineyard?</b>  Expect good  Receive bad</p> <p><u>אודיע-נא, ועתה</u> I tell you</p> <p><b>Judgment: This more <i>for</i> my vineyard!</b></p> <p>action, reverse - consequence  action, reverse - consequence  action, reverse - consequence  action, reverse - consequence x3</p> <p><u>כִּי (Conclusion) Vineyard &amp; Beloved, Shout</u></p>

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<sup>409</sup> The translation change is discussed below.

The Song of the Vineyard begins with the singer requesting the audience to hear his song. The construction used, the first person cohortative verb with the enclitic particle ׀, is not unusual and would normally not be a matter for particular consideration. It is a common way to express the first person singular or plural imperative “Let me/us” and is used as an entreaty or exhortation in a submissive and modest request. The particle ׀ is used following a first person cohortative verb with the paragogic ׀ thirty-seven times in the OT, three times in this passage in Isaiah. It carries the sense in English of “Let me please...” when used in the first person. According to Swanson, the particle is understood as, “Please!, I beg you!, I pray!, i.e., a marker of emphasis, with a focus on the desire of the speaker, used to heighten a sense of urgency, intensity.”<sup>410</sup> Given the other uses of the particle in the Hebrew Bible, I think that Swanson’s interpretation catches the general idea of this construction, however it does not necessarily need to express the degree of urgency and intensity that he suggests.

There is, however, another, more important function of the enclitic particle here;<sup>411</sup> the particle marks a new movement in the rhetoric.<sup>412</sup> The first movement begins with אֲשִׁירָה-נָא and poetically describes the actions of the vinedresser. While there is alliteration and assonance

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<sup>410</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, in *Commentary on Isaiah 5:1*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997). See also Samuel P. Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Hebrew Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 523.

<sup>411</sup> The enclitic particle does not appear in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, as noted earlier.

<sup>412</sup> I use the term “movement” when considering the inverted parallelism structure, so as not to confuse with viewing the structure in stanzas.

throughout the pericope, it is most marked in this section. The first three actions of construction, ויעזקהו, ויטעהו, and ויסקלהו, all are five syllables with beginning and ending assonance and alliteration, the accent on the next to last syllable. The aural effect is impressive, particularly since the colon ends in the two-syllable word שרק, which is accented in the first syllable.<sup>413</sup> The impression it makes would depend upon the hearer, but to my ears, the repetition and accenting give the impression of hard labour, especially since the final word, שרק, with its accenting, can sound almost like a sigh of relief. While such a reading of the tone is subjective, it is clear that the actions indicated by the words are acts of hard labour.

The use of the *waw* consecutive throughout keeps the poetic narrative of the verse moving toward its climax. This poetic impact defines the rhetoric of the first “movement” of the song, giving almost a hammering affect: YHWH did this, and this, and this. The poetic string presents the build up to the “Aha!” moment in which the love song becomes a proclamation of judgment. While at this point the listener may think otherwise, the case is being made that YHWH, the beloved friend and husbandman of the vineyard, did everything on his part to ensure a quality result. In this initial movement, YHWH could be seen as a diligent husbandman, conscientious, detailed and precise, who labours hard to establish the vineyard. The first movement culminates in an irony: good grapes are reasonably expected, but bad grapes, באשים, grow instead.

Grammar, and in particular grammatical anomalies, can be important in studying the innertexture of the text. One of the potential pitfalls in a grammatical study of a passage, however, is to go too

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<sup>413</sup> Folmer is incorrect in her poetic analysis in stating that שרק is accented on the last syllable.

Margaretha L. Folmer, “A Literary Analysis of the ‘Song of the Vineyard’ (Isa 5:1-7),” in *Jaarbericht. van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux* (1987): 110.

far in building an innertextual view on a grammatical construct.<sup>414</sup> For example, I think that the nineteenth century commentators Keil and Delitzsch go too far in their grammatical reading of verse two to make the point that the beloved friend spared no effort in the building of the vineyard:

The expression “and also” calls especial attention to the fact that he hewed out a wine-trough therein . . . that is to say, in order that the trough might be all the more fixed and durable, he constructed it in a rocky portion of the ground (*châtsēb bo* instead of *châtsab bo*. with *a* and the accent drawn back, because a *Beth* was thereby easily rendered inaudible, so that the *châtsēb* is not a participial adjective, as Böttcher supposes). This was a difficult task, as the expression “and also” indicates; and for that very reason it was an evidence of the most confident expectation.<sup>415</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch maintain that the use of וגם calls attention to the cutting out of the winepress. I do not think this conclusion is justified on the basis of grammar; it is necessary for the poetic rhythm, however, which may be the reason for its inclusion.

The final line of the movement, ויקו לעשות ענבים ויעש באשים, is unusual in a number of respects. The intent does not seem to be that the vine did not bring forth grapes at all, but rather that it brought forth bad grapes. Clearly, the irony does not lie in the fact that the vine produced *no* grapes, but that it produced *bad* grapes, even though in describing the grapes YHWH expected, the word for good in the plural, טובים, is missing. Hebrew is a concise language, particularly in poetic form, so the lack of the word may not be significant, and the inclusion of טובים would ruin

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<sup>414</sup> The same can be true in the use of any interpretive lens.

<sup>415</sup> C. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 105.

the metre. The absence of the word טובים places ענבים in opposition to באשים, thereby heightening the difference between the two. The normal word for bad in the plural, רעים, in place of באשים, would not affect the metre; both are two-syllable words<sup>416</sup> with the accent on the last syllable. The word באשים, however, is a strong one, much as the English word “stink” is strong. The root, באש, properly means “to stink,” and appears in various forms with this meaning.<sup>417</sup> Its use heightens the rhetoric of the passage, especially since the phrase ends both the first and second movements. The word also may be used for reasons related to the agricultural or socio-cultural setting of the text, and I consider that possibility in the appropriate place.

The term באשים is used twice in the pericope. In this first usage (verse two), the speaker is in the third person,<sup>418</sup> but in the next usage (verse three), it is in the first person with YHWH as the speaker. A loose paraphrase of verse three could read, “I expected righteousness, but instead your deeds stink!” What picture does the use of this strong term give of YHWH? Perhaps it would not be our normal inclination to think of the divine being using such language.

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<sup>416</sup> There could be a question about the number of syllables for באשים, depending on the ancient vocalisation of the vocal šēwā’.

<sup>417</sup> Exod 7:18, 21; 8:10, 16, 20; Amos 4:10; Joel 2:20; and Isa 34:3, to name a few. In Joel 1:12, the phrase הגפן הובישה, the vine dried up, appears. The root, however, is יבש and not באש; the two could easily be confused.

<sup>418</sup> LXX first person.

The enclitic particle נָא with the word ועתה signals the next development in the rhetoric of the passage—the climax. ועתה often marks a turning point in the rhetoric,<sup>419</sup> and so it does here. It is in this rhetorical unit that we come to the middle of the inverted parallelism; and, as Bailey noted, the middle of an inverted parallelism marks the climax of the passage. Here, the climax is not just one phrase or line, but the entire second movement through the first line of the third movement (verse three through the first colon of verse five). Its structure is clear, albeit not simple:

<p><u>You (dwellers of Jerusalem and Judah)</u></p> <p><u>judge me</u></p> <p><b>What to do <u>for my vineyard</u>?</b></p> <p>Expect good Receive bad</p> <p><u>I tell</u> <u>you</u></p> <p><b>This I will do <u>for my vineyard</u>!</b></p>	<p>ועתה יושב ירושלם ואיש יהודה שפטו-נָא ביני ובין כרמי: מה-לעשות עוד לְכרמי ולא עשיתי בו מדוע קויתי לעשות ענבים ויעש באשים: ועתה אודיע-נָא אתכם את אשר-אני עשה לְכרמי</p>
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Numerous interpreters have pointed out that the pericope can be seen as a song that suddenly transforms into YHWH’s court case against the people, the turning point being at the climax.<sup>420</sup> Similar to the *rîb* pattern found in 2 Sam 12:1-7, 2 Sam 14:1-20, 1 Kings 20:35-42, and Jer 3:1,

<sup>419</sup> To cite just three examples of many, Gen 4:11; 1 Sam 12:7; and Isa 36:8. For ועתה as a turning point, see H.A. Brongers, “Bemerkungen zum Gebrauch des Adverbialen we’attāh im Alten Testament (Ein Lexikologischer Beitrag),” *VT* 15 (1965): 289-299.

<sup>420</sup> I discuss the question in more depth and cite specific scholars and positions in the literature review.

the “prosecutor” (in this case YHWH and not a prophet) places the burden of judgment upon the people themselves. YHWH challenges the people as if to say, “You yourselves judge; I did everything possible, so I am justified in what I am about to do. I will destroy the vineyard; I will tear down all I have built up.”

In this common reading, the  $\text{ל}$  of verse five is taken to mean “to” in the sense of “against”: “I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.” When the  $\text{ל}$  is read this way, the husbandman appears as the vineyard’s former friend who now has had a change of heart toward the vineyard and become its enemy intent on destroying it. YHWH may appear as a vindictive god; having not received his due, he will now give vent to his wrath.

Can we say, along with Robert Carroll, that this god is a “berserker god?”<sup>421</sup> I think not, at least not from this passage. Someone who is berserk, or goes berserk, behaves in a random fashion, destroying without reason. That is not the case here; a clear reason is given for the subsequent actions. The destructive acts are in response to the production of  $\text{באשׁים}$ , yet there is a strange irony about the act. Is it reasonable that one who has planted a vineyard would so thoroughly uproot it? Does this not appear to be the act of a mentally unbalanced person, overly hasty and unnecessarily harsh in deed? That would be one way to read this passage. Another would be to see it as a strong statement on the serious consequences of disobedience and unrighteousness on the part of the people of YHWH. Yet even with this latter reading, YHWH may appear as an overly harsh parent who has yet to learn gentleness and patience with his children. In this

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<sup>421</sup> Carroll, Robert P. "YHWH's Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible." *Semeia* 86 (1999): 113-131.



pericope, no reason is given for such harsh measures; it seems, though, that later redactors explain the reason with their placement of the verses that immediately follow (5:8-30).

There is another possible reading of this climax based on its parallel structure and the order of events that follow. In the diagram above, I have translated the second use of לַכְרָמִי (verse five) the same as the first usage (verse four), “*for* my vineyard.” The lines now read:

- What more                      could I have done      for my vineyard? . . . (5:4)
- Now, let me tell you    what I am doing      for my vineyard . . . (5:5)<sup>422</sup>

This English translation keeps the present tense, reflecting the Hebrew verb usage in the MT text. The preposition translated “for” is the letter ל, which has a broad range of meanings, including to, toward, among, on, into, in order to, in order that, about, belonging to, or on behalf of. The same preposition is used twice in verse one, אֲשִׁירָה-נָא לִידֵי שִׁירַת דָּוִד לַכְרָמִי, which illustrates the fluid nature of the particle and the different possibilities it may yield. Is the song “for” the beloved, “to” the beloved, or “on his behalf”? It could be any of those, and scholars have taken different views on the matter. This debate reflects the wide range of possibilities for this preposition.

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<sup>422</sup> The verse is translated in the future tense and with the preposition ל meaning “to” in all thirty-two English translations that I checked (except Young’s literal translation), and in every other language that I checked: Afrikaans, Arabic, Dutch, French (2), German (2), Italian, Latin Vulgate, Russian, Spanish (3), Swahili, and Vietnamese. Young’s literal translation (YLT) reads, “And now, pray, let me cause you to know, that which I am doing to my vineyard.” Young’s translation keeps the present tense and translates the preposition ל as “to.”

Turning to the parallel usages in question here, in verse four, the ל means “for,” in the sense of “on behalf of,” or even “for the welfare of”: “What more could I have done for—on behalf of—my vineyard?” Prior to this verse, YHWH elucidates all the steps taken in preparing the vineyard, then as husbandman asks what more he could have done “for” his vineyard. In verse five, the preposition certainly can be understood as it reads in every translation, “to my vineyard.” That reading portrays YHWH as discussed above. However, if we understand the preposition as meaning “on behalf of,” as both the preposition itself and the structure in which it appears suggests it may, then we arrive at a different picture. Having done all, having a justifiable expectation, having proven a legitimate case against the vine, the vinedresser still has one thing more that can be done *on behalf of the vineyard* if by chance the vine might ultimately bear good fruit. The actions that follow describe a *progressive* tearing down of the vineyard, beginning with the least damaging event and culminating in the ultimate disaster—no rain.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> The order of the tearing down is as follows: removal of the hedge, tearing down of the wall, failure to prune, failure to cultivate, drought. The hedge refers to a row of thorny weeds placed on top of the wall. This hedge is easily and quickly placed and easily taken off. It prevents small animals from jumping over the low wall and causing damage to the vineyard. The wall is made of stone and rocks removed from the small plot. Tearing down the wall involves significantly more effort than taking off the hedge and allows for larger animals to gain access to the vines. Failure to prune guarantees a fruitless season and failure to cultivate allows weeds to grow that may take several seasons of subsequent cultivation to totally remove. Extended drought eventually may kill the vine. The order of these actions results in progressively severe damage to the vine, the least damaging and most easily remedied being the first, and the irreversible step being last.

The passage ends with a great contrast that heightens the sense of distance between the vinedresser's expectations and the reality of the "harvest." The contrast is achieved through juxtaposition of נטע שעשועי (his pleasant planting, v. 7) and משפה (bloodshed). The contrast is not just in concepts, but one could say, even visual. A delightful garden or plant evokes one visual image, while bloodshed quite another. This contrast is also highlighted the alliteration and assonation parallels of משפט and משפה. These contrasts are relatively easy to spot since they are in close proximity, all being in verse seven. The inverted parallel structure, however, brings out another, less immediately obvious contrast. The song begins: שירת דודי . . . , yet ends with צעקה. No matter how one understands the first phrase, there is a blatant contrast: the pericope begins with a song but ends with a shout.

The most frequently held view is that the phrase שירת דודי should be read and understood according to the vocalisation of the MT, שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי. The resultant translation is "my beloved's song," or "a song of my beloved." P. Cersoy, however, suggested that the passage could be understood as *širat dôdaî* instead of *širat dôdî*.<sup>424</sup> In other words, instead of the MT vocalisation of *hireq* in דּוֹדִי, it should be *patach*. This emendation involves just a minor vocalisation change and no change in the text itself. He translates the verse, "Je vais chanter à mon ami mon chant amical à propos de sa vigne."<sup>425</sup> According to Cersoy, this reading is more in keeping with the grammar of the construct phrase שירת דודי and also removes the awkward repetitive expression לידדי שירת דודי. The reading proposed by Cersoy heightens the contrast between beginning and

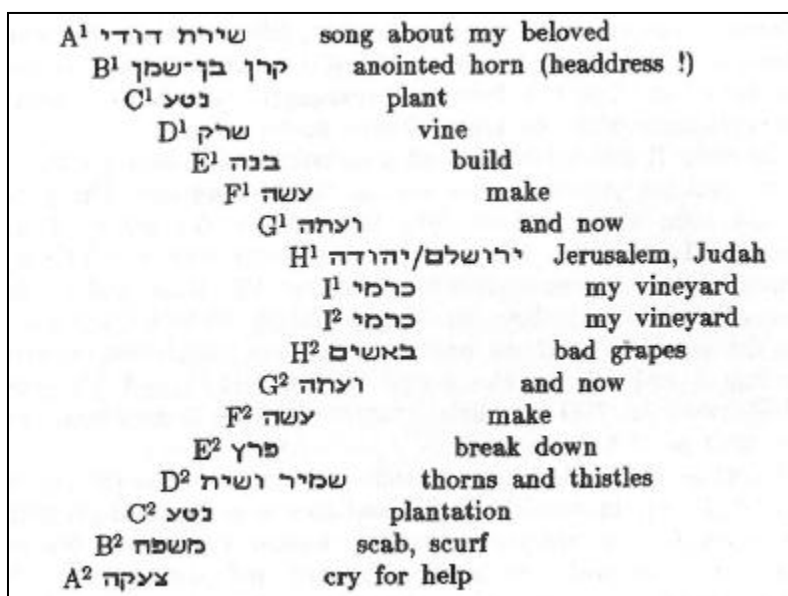
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<sup>424</sup> P. Cersoy, "L'Apologue du la Vigne," *Revue Biblique* 8 (1899): 40-43.

<sup>425</sup> I will sing to my friend my friendly song about his vine.

end of the song even more than the MT reading; the *širat dôdaî*, begins as an amorous<sup>426</sup> song, but ends in a צעקה, a shout.

Earlier I noted that the chiastic structure of the passage could be presented a number of different ways. Of the thirty articles cited in the review of the literature, only Marjo Korpel suggests a chiastic structure, as follows:<sup>427</sup>



There are some differences between Korpel's structure diagram and my proposed pattern, but the basic outline is the same. In this structure, Korpel places the climax at the repeated phrase "my

<sup>426</sup> The noun form of the word means *mandrakes*, which are associated with the arousal of sexual desire. Cf. Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1996 ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 187b.

<sup>427</sup> Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism: The Example of Isaiah 5 and 10:1-6," *JSOT* 21 (1996): 148.

vineyard,” as I also suggest, and in A1-A2 she places the song and the shout in parallelism. In H1-H2, she parallels the באושים with the people of Judah and Jerusalem. While placing these two in parallel is in keeping with the rhetoric of the passage, it does not account for the repeated phrase לעשות ענבים ויעש באשים. Korpel’s parallelism between משפח and קרן בן-שמן is problematic.

Her parenthetical note is that the קרן בן-שמן is a headdress. It is not clear how she derives that interpretation, unless it is related to her comments on anointing oil.<sup>428</sup> In addition, her parallel structure is based on one possible root derivation of the word משפח, which most scholars reject and which may or may not be correct. The word is *hapax legomenon*, whose root could be either of two possibilities: שפח or טפח.<sup>429</sup> Another problematic parallelism would be that of C1-C2. The word נטע in C1 is appropriate; however, for the word נטע to appear in C2, an entire colon must be skipped: ועל העבים אצוה מהמטיר עליו מטר. Despite these problems, the structure Korpel proposes catches the flow and development of the rhetoric of the pericope.

The Song of the Vineyard is complicated structurally. It can be viewed as an inverted parallelism, albeit with certain problematic features. From the study of the structure and related grammatical features, a picture emerges, one relevant to the research question. The second part of the pericope, the inversion, is a step-by-step undoing of the first, parallel in structure and opposite in meaning. The things that are built are torn down. The song becomes a shout. However, it is in the very precision of the structure and wording that an unexpected portrayal of YHWH arises. The vinedresser who did so much *for* the vineyard now has one more thing that he can do *for* his vineyard; he can progressively, step by step, undo the good that has been done.

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<sup>428</sup> For my comments on that topic, see the review of the literature.

<sup>429</sup> For a discussion on the root, see Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 324.

Undoing good that has been done may not sound at first like a benefit, something *for* or *on behalf of* the vineyard. However, the vineyard is not an inanimate object; it represents people who can make choices. Orbiso touches on this idea in his analysis of the passage. He sees the passage as being left open-ended: the people themselves have judged the case against them; now how will the matter end? Will they repent or not?<sup>430</sup> From the structure I would see the ending as more developed than Orbiso suggests and giving a fuller and more nuanced characterisation of the vinedresser. YHWH will (or, according to the grammar, is already) progressively taking away the provision he has made for his people. Perhaps they understand and turn from *משפח* to *משפח*. At least one other passage in First Isaiah portrays this idea of progressive destruction hopefully leading to a return to YHWH: Isa 22:1-13. In this passage, the devastations of the Assyrian army are portrayed as being both the result of a turning away from YHWH and a call to return back.<sup>431</sup>

### 3.2.2 Structure by Stanza and the Rhetorical Progression

The structural pattern of the text can be viewed not only as inverted parallelism, but also as a series of stanzas. To avoid confusion, I referred to these stanzas only briefly when considering the chiasmic structure, calling them *movements*. Their primary marker, as outlined above, is the enclitic particle *נא*. The second and third stanzas also include the rhetorical marker *ועתה*. A fourth

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<sup>430</sup> Tbófilo Orbiso, “El Cántico a la Viña del Amado (Isa 5:1-7),” *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 34 (1960), 730.

<sup>431</sup> The political-military background to the world of the story, eighth century Judea, is discussed further in the chapter on intertexture.

stanza, which is the conclusion, is marked by the word כי in verse seven, כי כרם יהוה צבאות בית ישראל.

The stanzas can be arranged as follows:

1. אשירה-נא (Introduction): Song, beloved & vineyard

Actions

Frustrated expectations

2. שפתו-נא, ועתה You judge me.

Judgment: What more for my vineyard?

Frustrated expectations

3. אודיע-נא, ועתה I tell you

Judgment: This more *for* my vineyard!

Reverse actions

4. כי (Conclusion): Vineyard & beloved, shout

3.2.2.a Marjo Korpel's structuring into canticles (stanzas)<sup>432</sup>

In her work on the structure of the Song of the Vineyard, Marjo Korpel arranged the passage both according to parallelism, as above, and also according to stanzas. Her arrangement of the stanzas, which she calls canticles, is similar to the arrangement above, with some variation:

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<sup>432</sup> Marjo C. A. Korpel, "The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7)," in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, ed. Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 142-143.

## Introduction: אשירה-נא

- 1.1 כרם היה
- 1.2 ויבן מגדל
- 2.1 ועתה יושב
- 2.2 מה לעשות
- 3.1 ועתה ועדיע
- 3.2 ואשיתהו
- 4.1 כי כרם
- 4.2 ויקו למשפט

Korpel's division of the canticles is based on their internal structure.<sup>433</sup> Each canticle follows the pattern: internal parallelism, external parallelism, separation up, separation down. The parallelism she notes is a parallelism of structure or sound, not of meaning. For example, in the first section of the first canticle, the internal parallelism consists of the assonance between כרם and קרן and the third person masculine endings of ויטעהו ויסקלהו ויעזקהו. The separation up, the structural feature that separates the section from the one that precedes it, is the emphatic positioning of the word כרם. The downward separation is the repetitive structural parallelism of the three verb endings. The important point for this thesis, however, is not the detail of the internal structuring. Rather, it is how the overall structure compares with the structures I suggest and the one proposed by Gil'ad below, and how these structures might nuance or change the portrayal of YHWH. Korpel divides the passage into four canticles, with the first verse as an introduction. My division into stanzas is the same, though I have the introduction as part of the first stanza.

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<sup>433</sup> Korpel, "The Literary Genre," 143-144.



### 3.2.2.b Tsipporah Gil'ad's structuring into stanzas<sup>434</sup>

Tsipporah Gil'ad opens her study by stating that on first reading, the passage seems to be a simple parable following the common form of פתיחה, משל, נמשל (introduction, parable, interpretation of the parable). Gil'ad maintains that while the parable can be read in that way by using different criteria, an alternate structuring can be seen. She divides the “song” into four stanzas, including the introduction with the first stanza. These stanzas are the same as in my proposed structure above. Her reasoning for the breakdown of stanzas is based on the rhetorical placements of ועתה and נא. She notes that initially it might seem that the first verse is an introduction, outside the structural pattern, but she then demonstrates why she thinks it is part of the overall structure.

Gil'ad sees a natural connection between the first and third stanzas, in that both are pictorial, written to evoke images and emotions, albeit totally contrasting ones. This type of evocative writing differs greatly from the second and fourth stanzas, which she sees also as related in language and style, not being pictorial, but rather speaking in the realms of reason, power, and judgment. However, the first and last (fourth) stanzas have the very important elements of both speaker and content in common, the prophet serving as the third person speaker in both. In the first verse, the prophet sets out a parable (משל), and in the last he explains it (נמשל). These stanzas, then, can stand on their own as משל and נמשל without any need for intervening verses.

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<sup>434</sup> Tsipporah Gil'ad, “משל הכרם,” in *מבחר מתוך עיוני החוג לתנך לזכר ישי רן*.

הגות במקרא (Tel Aviv, Am Oved), 1979. accessed through:

<http://mikranet.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=5240>, March 23, 2010.

The second and third stanzas, however, in which YHWH is the speaker, cannot stand alone. From this, Gil'ad maintains that the intervening stanzas are a song interpolated into the משל-נמשל structure to expand and deepen the parable.

Gil'ad's explanation for the four stanza structure is intriguing. One of the major questions concerning the Song of the Vineyard is a possible verbal *Vorlage* underlying the text as we have it. With Gil'ad's division, it may be possible to see two original pericopes, one a simple parable and the other a song. These two are then later joined together in the process of redaction. The addition of the song being adds emotional content to the simple משל, נמשל parable format.

Gil'ad moves from a consideration of structure and genre to the presumed intent of the passage. The interpolated song is pictorial, written to draw on the emotions, and there is no threat of judgment in the משל-נמשל. In addition, the rhetorical thrust of the passage is expressed in the repeated phrase, ויקו לעשות ענבים ויעש באשים. According to Gil'ad, the text's rhetoric is designed not to awaken fear at impending judgment, but rather to awaken an emotion of grief at the injury done to the caring vinedresser who hoped for such good things but found these hopes dashed. This grief, then, was to lead the nation to repentance. Many factors can motivate repentance, and grief at causing a loved one sorrow is certainly one of them. This awakening of grief toward repentance, according to Gil'ad, is the intent of the passage.

One may, of course, question Gil'ad's thoughts concerning this intent. A passage does not have an intent, *per se*; an author does. However, it is not possible for a reader to know the intent of a non-living author. Nevertheless, I think that Gil'ad's point is well taken: the text does have a strong emotive element, with one possible reading pointing to the grief of YHWH, the vinedresser. Gil'ad's insights into the structure of the passage lead to an interesting observation

concerning the characterisation of YHWH. This god is a god who grieves for his people and for their immoral and unjust deeds. This characterisation presents quite a different picture from that of a god who calls down judgment and wrath when provoked.

### 3.3 The Emotive Texture of the Text

*The unique feature of religious sympathy is not self-conquest, but self-dedication; not the suppression of emotion, but its redirection.*

Abraham Heschel<sup>435</sup>

Tsipporah Gil'ad combines structure and the emotive element of the text to arrive at her conclusion, a portrayal of YHWH as a caring vinedresser. Abraham Heschel makes a similar observation concerning the emotive element of the Song of the Vineyard, although not based on any structural considerations:

God's sorrow rather than the people's tragedy is the theme of this song.

The song contains a gentle allusion to the grief and the disappointment of God. He feels hurt at the thought of abandoning the vineyard He had rejoiced in, and in which He had placed so much hope and care.<sup>436</sup>

Both Gil'ad and Heschel think that the primary rhetorical thrust of the passage is to communicate an emotive value, the grief of the vinedresser. In the thirty articles reviewed for this thesis, not one makes the emotive element of the text its primary focus. Gil'ad treats this element along

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<sup>435</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*, ed. Fritz A. Rothschild, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 126.

<sup>436</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Harper Collins, 1962; third reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 2000), 1:85.

with structure, and it is important in her consideration. Other than that exception, however, genre determination, meanings of words and grammar, and literary style are the primary topics of debate and study. None of the articles directly consider the question of the portrayal of YHWH, while only a few do indirectly, as noted earlier in this thesis.

### 3.3.1 The Prophet, the Friend, and YHWH: Narrative Progression and Identification

One of the distinctive elements of the Song of the Vineyard is the shift in speakers.<sup>437</sup> This shift may be viewed in a number of different ways. Gil'ad suggests that the combining of two different passages, the מִשְׁלֵּ--נִמְשָׁל and the interjected song, accounts for the shift. Many other scholars suggest that part of the surprise and irony of the passage is in the hiding of the vinedresser's identity through the use of the non-identifying term "friend."<sup>438</sup> Abraham Heschel considers a completely different aspect, that of the identification of the prophet with YHWH.

Heschel maintains that one of the key elements characteristic of the biblical prophets was their keen sense of sympathy with the divine being:

Sympathy is a state in which a person is open to the presence of another person. It is a feeling which feels the feeling to which it reacts—the opposite of emotional solitariness. In prophetic

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<sup>437</sup> This element is distinctive, but not unique to this passage. To cite one other example, in the first chapter of Micah, the speaker shifts from Micah to YHWH and back to Micah. Heschel also cites numerous examples, Heschel, *The Prophets*, footnote 3, 1:90.

<sup>438</sup> One exception to the scholarly-held opinion that the speaker in the first verse is the prophet is Sigmund Mowinckel. He holds that the speaker is YHWH speaking to his bridegroom. Sigmund Mowinckel, *Profeten Jesaja: En Bibelstudiebok* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1925), 35-37.

sympathy, man is open to the presence and emotion of the transcendent Subject. He carries within himself the awareness of what is happening to God.<sup>439</sup>

This sympathy is reflected in the prophet's personal attitude:

It [the prophet's attitude] is first the prophet's love of God, Who is called "my Friend" and for Whom he sings "a love song concerning His vineyard." He neither rebukes the people's ingratitude nor bewails their prospect of ruin and disgrace. The prophet's sympathy is for God Whose care for the vineyard had been of no avail.<sup>440</sup>

This identification with the divine being explains the shift in speakers:

It is such intense sympathy or emotional identification with the divine pathos that may explain the shifting from the third to the first person in the prophetic utterances. A prophecy that starts out speaking of God in the third person turns into God speaking in the first person.<sup>441</sup>

Heschel observes that the Song of the Vineyard begins with the prophet in identification with YHWH as "friend," and claims that this emotional identification is not limited to the opening line of the passage but continues throughout.<sup>442</sup> We can expand the investigation on the

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<sup>439</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 1:89.

<sup>440</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 1:85.

<sup>441</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 1:89-90.

<sup>442</sup> Kenneth Burke elucidated the principle of identification in rhetoric as a means of defining identities, and thereby establishing group identities and divisions. See the summary of Burke in Foss, Foss, and Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric*, (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1985), 158-160.

rhetorical trope of identification/division to include the progression of identification of YHWH in relationship to the vineyard. In other words, is there a rhetorical progression of identification of “friend/not friend” involving prophet, vinedresser, and vineyard throughout the pericope?

I think there are at least two ways of viewing this rhetorical progression in the Song of the Vineyard:

Rhetorical progression of “friend/not friend,” reading #1:

Let me sing for my beloved	<u>Friend</u> : Prophet friend of vinedresser
My beloved had a vineyard	<u>Friend</u> : Prophet friend of vinedresser
He dug it, cleared it, planted, hewed out	<u>Friend</u> : Vinedresser’s loving care
Judge between me and my vineyard	<u>Not friend</u> : Antagonistic relationship
I will remove, I will break down, I will make it a waste, no rain	<u>Not friend</u> : Tear down to destruction
Vineyard is House of Israel. Justice expected, cries of pain received	<u>Not friend</u> : Explanation of the change

Before discussing the table, I want to explain a term that I will use: the “presumed intent” of the passage, the presumption being on the part of the reader. A non-living author cannot be queried about his or her intent in writing, and a text has no intent *per se*. However, in many cases a text seems to make a clear statement for an obvious reason. The statement it appears to make and the reason behind the statement would be the “presumed intent” of the passage. In the Song of the

Vineyard, the “presumed intent,” would be the statement of impending judgment from the hand of God of Israel as a consequence proceeding from the nation’s unrighteousness.<sup>443</sup>

The reading in the chart above, then, reflects the presumed intent of the passage. The prophet sings about his “friend” who does everything possible to ensure proper conditions for his שֶׁרֶק, his choice vine. But then, when disappointment strikes, the “friend” is no longer a friend but an adversary in court. Loving actions are replaced by the acts of an antagonist. In this model, the final verse explains the radical change in the relationship. An example of a reading that follows this pattern is Meir Malul’s comparison of the destruction of the vineyard to the stripping of the woman in Hosea 2:3 and to other biblical and extra-biblical passages.<sup>444</sup> YHWH is likened to a jealous husband who shames his wife for her unfaithfulness. I would agree with Malul that this characterisation can clearly be seen in the text.

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<sup>443</sup> To list a few examples from early church and rabbinic sources, all cited in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament: 10*, ed. Steven McKinion (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2004), 39-40: “He cultivated [his] vineyard, but he destroyed the vineyard that gave sour grapes. Blessed be the one who uproots!” Ephraem the Syrian, “Hymns on the Nativity 18:21,” 39. “[God] calls us to produce much fruit so that we will not be cast into the fire because we do not. He constantly compares human souls with vines. He says, ‘My beloved has a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place.’” Basil the Great, “On the Hexaemeron 5.6,” 39. “. . . God does not forsake without cause or judgment those whom he has abandoned. For when he sends the rain for the vineyard and the vineyard bears thorns instead of grapes, what else will God do except order the clouds not to sprinkle rain on the vineyard?” Origen, “Homilies on Jeremiah 1.4,” 40.

<sup>444</sup> Meir Malul, “מה בין פריצת הגדר במשל הכרם לבין הפשטת האישה העירומה במקרא,” *Beit Mikra*, (2005): 11-24.

Another possible reading of the rhetorical progression would be as follows (reading #2):

Let me sing for my beloved	<u>Friend</u> : Prophet friend of vinedresser
My beloved had a vineyard	<u>Friend</u> : Prophet friend of vinedresser
He dug it, cleared it, planted, hewed out	<u>Friend</u> : Vinedresser's loving care
Judge between me and my vineyard	<u>Friend</u> : Disappointment, lament
I will remove, I will break down, I will make it a waste, no rain	<u>Friend</u> : Warning: tear down
Vineyard is House of Israel. Justice expected, cries of pain received	<u>Friend</u> : Explanation of grief and warning

Walter Rast observes that there is a three-fold repetition of an expression of disappointment, the uses of the verb “to hope” in verses two, four, and seven. In verses two and seven it takes the form of וִיִּקוּ לְ . . . . This expression is found in eight other passages identified by Rast that follow the same formula; however, only in this passage is the expression used for YHWH.<sup>445</sup> In the other passages, it is an expression of the speaker or the community. Rast suggests that this formula was a frequently used rhetorical formula for the expression of disappointment:

What is apparent in this cluster of passages, then, is that we are dealing with a speech pattern which could allow the disappointment of expectation to be easily and readily communicated.

All language systems have accessible formulae and stock phrases which can serve in moments

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<sup>445</sup> Walter E. Rast, “Disappointed Expectations in the Old Testament,” *Perspective* 12 (1971): 136-137.



of pressure when concentrated thought is difficult, and when the speaker is forced to fall back on a verbal reserve. Assuming that this kind of language about the disappointment of hope has some ultimate setting in the common stresses of real life, we may conclude that it is language well-hammered out and widely available to the people of the ancient world.<sup>446</sup>

Rast observes three main emotive expressions indicated by this usage: disappointment, lamentation, and prophetic warning. Nowhere is it used as an expression of anger or a declaration of destruction.

In the Song of the Vineyard, this formulary expression is found at the beginning of the song, a variation of it at the turning point or climax, and again in the conclusion. If this formulary is understood as an expression of disappointment, grief (lamentation), or prophetic warning, the phrase then can be read as the expression of a friend: “I am grieved, for you have disappointed me,” and “I must warn you what will happen if your behaviour doesn’t change.” The latter statement would be said in the spirit of a parent warning a child, or as expressed in the slogan, “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk.” Heschel is of the view that one of the primary emotive aspects of the text is the prophet’s identification with the grief of YHWH over the injustice in Judah; the primary rhetorical thrust is not threats of judgment but grief.

The narrative progression of identification in the pericope leads to two very different characterizations of YHWH, the vinedresser. In the one, the “presumed intent” of the text, the vinedresser’s primary objectives seem to be to vindicate himself, prove his innocence, and exact punishment on the offending vine. The other reading characterizes the vinedresser as a faithful

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<sup>446</sup> Rast, “Disappointed Expectations,” 138.

friend or parent grieving over the behaviour of his beloved and in sorrow warning of the inevitable consequences that will follow such behaviour should there be no change.

### 3.3.2 Orality and the Emotive Texture

#### 3.3.2.a The question of orality and ancient biblical prophecy

John Willis concludes his extensive study on the genre of the Song of the Vineyard with the observation that each of the scholars he surveys attempts to define the genre according to one of four criteria: content, occasion, purpose, or literary type. He then states, “Indeed, these four concerns are inseparably connected with the problem of genre. The scholar’s primary goal should be to determine and define the genre of a text in such a way as to comprehend all that is in that text.”<sup>447</sup> Willis’ survey and his concluding remarks point to an assumption underlying the scholarly efforts to determine genre. First, since the passage is read as a text it is viewed as a *literary* creation. Second, the very act of determining genre assumes that there is a set form, a “package” or a combination of “packages” into which this passage will neatly fit. Even scholars who consider the setting in which the song was presented, such as at a wedding<sup>448</sup> or a vintage festival,<sup>449</sup> would view the song as originally having been presented orally, and yet they still relate to the text as a literary creation without considering the possible significance of the underlying oral texture.

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<sup>447</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isa 5:1-7,” 359.

<sup>448</sup> Herbert Junker, “Die Literarische Art von Isa 5:1-7,” *Biblica* 40 (1959): 259-266.

<sup>449</sup> Thomas K. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1 (New York: Thomas Wittaker, 1884). Willy Schottroff, “Das Weinberglied Jesajas, Jes 5:1-7: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Pabel,” *ZAW* 82 (1970): 68-91.

One of the questions concerning many prophetic passages, including the Song of the Vineyard, is the question of its original form: was it first spoken then written, was the order reversed, or was it ever spoken at all? In the year 2000, the SBL published papers from a symposium on writing and speech in ancient Near East prophecy. One of the questions considered in the symposium was the composition of the ancient Israelite prophetic texts and their compilation into scrolls. Phillip Davies argued that the texts were scribal creations arranged in some sort of filing system, attributed to a prophet, then later compiled into a scroll.<sup>450</sup> John Van Seters took issue with Davies' position, calling it "clearly spurious."<sup>451</sup> For our purposes here, Van Seters' conclusion is particularly significant:

I think there was an increased tendency towards the literary creation of prophecy from the exilic period onwards. Yet we must not think in terms of someone writing a book, but rather of a series of compositions for oral presentation.<sup>452</sup>

Van Seters does not hold to a late composition date for eighth century prophetic works as Davies does, yet he goes so far as to state that even those later writings were written for the purpose of

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<sup>450</sup> Philip Davies, "Pen of Iron, Point of Diamond (Jer 17:1): Prophecy as Writing," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, vol. 10, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Michael Floyd, and Christopher R. Matthews (SBLSymS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 65-81.

<sup>451</sup> John Van Seters, "Prophetic Orality in the Context of the Ancient Near East," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, vol. 10, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Michael Floyd, and Christopher R. Matthews (SBLSymS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 85.

<sup>452</sup> Van Seters, "Prophetic Orality," 88.

oral presentation. Rosalind Thomas, in her study of ancient Greek poetry, arrives at the same conclusion, “Even where a written text existed, it was read aloud.”<sup>453</sup> Susan Niditch notes that despite the evidence of some literate classes, ancient Israelite culture was an oral culture, and its oral/written elements are part of a continuum.<sup>454</sup>

Karel van der Toorn takes the same position concerning all the writings of the Hebrew Bible:

The fact that the civilizations of antiquity were oral cultures had an impact on the texts that were committed to writing. In Babylonia and Israel, writing was mostly used to support an oral performance. The native verbs for "reading" literally mean "to cry, to speak out loud . . .

These verbs [Hebrew and Akkadian] reflect the way texts were used.<sup>455</sup>

The significance of the oral nature of these texts is that “texts were an extension, so to speak, of the oral performers. This is not to say that all texts were in origin oral artifacts, but that the oral delivery of the texts determined their style.”<sup>456</sup>

In studying oral poetry from a number of different cultures, John Miles Foley makes a similar observation, stating that whether a poem is originally spontaneously delivered orally, written and

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<sup>453</sup> Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>454</sup> Niditch, Susan. *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 45.

<sup>455</sup> Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 11-12.

<sup>456</sup> Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 14.

then delivered orally, or written as if to be an oral poem, it falls into the broad category of oral poetry.<sup>457</sup>

Foley classifies oral poetry as falling into one of four categories:<sup>458</sup>

<u>Category</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Performance</u>	<u>Reception</u>
Oral performance	Oral	Oral	Aural
Voiced text	Written	Oral	Aural
Voices from the Past	O/W	O/W	A/W
Written oral poems	Written	Written	Written

All biblical prophetic poetry falls into the category of “Voices from the Past.” These are poems from the ancient past whose settings and circumstances of original production and presentation have been lost to us. Such works were once of one of the three other types, but which type can no longer be known. The key issue, however, is that no matter whether the piece was originally a spontaneous oral creation or a text written with an eye to oral delivery, it still is “oral poetry” and needs to be considered as such:

What we can say—and here is the crucial point—is that all of the poems in this category were composed according to the rules of the given oral poetry. They bear a telltale compositional

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<sup>457</sup> John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Champaign, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

<sup>458</sup> Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 39.

stamp. Whatever the exact scenario of their commission to textual form and their history since that moment, they remain oral poetry.<sup>459</sup>

One implication of this observation is that the attempt to designate the genre of a passage through literary forms is inappropriate, given their oral nature. Using a catchy proverb to summarise this point, Foley states, “Oralpoetry<sup>460</sup> *is a Very Plural Noun*.”<sup>461</sup> He explains:

[W]hen dealing with the genres of oralpoetry, expect a cornucopia. Don’t model everything on any single genre any more than you would fixate on one kind of poetic line. Examine all defining features of each oralpoem according to its idiosyncrasies rather than according to a prepackaged set of expectations. It may be that productive comparisons can be made across genres or traditions once due calibration is made, but care must be exercised to “read” each oral genre on its own terms first. Oralpoetry adopts different guises by genre as well as by tradition.<sup>462</sup>

The Song of the Vineyard is a שיר, an oral poem, which has been acknowledged by scholars in the past, but the significance of which has been in part overlooked. For example, in Willis’ article on the genre of the Song of the Vineyard, he notes in his conclusion that the word שיר should be considered carefully in a study of the passage.<sup>463</sup> His reasoning is that a study of this

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<sup>459</sup> Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 47.

<sup>460</sup> Foley uses the term “oralpoem” or “oralpoetry” as one word.

<sup>461</sup> Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 128.

<sup>462</sup> Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 36.

<sup>463</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isa 5:1-7,” 359-360.

word may render clues as to the setting and style of the presumed original presentation. On the one hand, he acknowledges that the designation “song” is important, but perhaps in part misses the significance of that fact in his work to determine genre (and he is not alone in that). Yet he does note that the designation “song” is significant in that it points to a setting and presumably an event, i.e. a performance. One of Foley’s pithy proverbs on oral poetry is, “Performance is the enabling event, tradition is the context for that Event.”<sup>464</sup> Setting is crucial to a full understanding of a text, particularly one that is oral poetry. Ideally, we would go back in time, learn the culture and rhetorical forms of that era and hear the speech event for ourselves, catching its nuances in light of the culture. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reconstruct the initial event (implied or real), but we are alerted to relate to the written document as an oral artifact in written form.

Although knowledge of the setting of the real or implied performance event would be helpful, there is an aspect of oral poetry quite appropriate to consider as part of the innertextual texture of the text even without this knowledge. All of the scholars cited above except Davies see ancient poetic texts as speech now in written form. If this is the case, it perhaps casts into doubt the appropriateness of the use of a literary interpretive model like socio-rhetorical criticism to such texts. In 1998, Margaret Dean reviewed Robbins’ methodology with that question in mind:

[T]he model of text as speech is fully compatible with socio-rhetorical criticism’s goals and methods. Socio-rhetorical criticism’s great strength is its appreciation of texts as rhetoric. For Robbins, the primacy of rhetorical theory requires attention to all three components of the

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<sup>464</sup> Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 130.

rhetorical transaction: speaker, speech and audience. These are united by sound: a speaker communicates with an audience by uttering a literary composition out loud.<sup>465</sup>

Dean notes that analysing a text as speech will encompass all the textures of the text, but analysis should begin with the innertexture, focusing on the sounds and their auditory reception:

Socio-rhetorical criticism correctly begins with a text's 'inner texture,' or verbal signs. But these should not be analysed as visual signs but auditory signals. A text's most basic patterns are not created by word arrangement, whereby written words trigger abstract concepts, but by sounded syllables which evoke a vast array of associations. Repetition is the fundamental tool of auditory reception, as socio-rhetorical criticism properly asserts. But in a rhetorical model of text as speech, repetition should be analysed at the level of the syllable rather than the word.<sup>466</sup>

An evaluation of the aural impact of the Song of the Vineyard is relevant only if the piece was presented orally or written with the intent that it would at some point be presented. In pursuing the question, I acknowledge my assumption that this is the case. I base this assumption on the work of the scholars mentioned above as well as my own reading and view of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. I don't necessarily maintain that an eighth century individual named Isaiah penned these words as we have them, but in order for my assumption and the following study to be valid, I don't need to. The text as we have it may have been spontaneously presented at a festival and later edited; it may have been written in advance, presented and possibly later edited; or it could even have been written at a later date, though with the presumed setting and

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<sup>465</sup> Margaret E. Dean, "Textured Criticism," *JSNT* 20 (1998): 81.

<sup>466</sup> Dean, "Textured Criticism," 82.



audience of the eighth century B.C.E. In any of those cases, the oral element and its auditory effect are relevant aspects of consideration.

### 3.3.2.b The oral presentation of the song and its aural impact

One of the difficulties of entering into the oral world of a text is that we cannot hear the tone and inflections of the presenter. For example, the written phrase, “Are you sure?” could mean two very different things if the speaker originally inflected it, “Are you *sure?*” versus, “Are *you* sure?” So, admittedly, any “hearing” of a written text is to a great extent subjective. It is this subjectivity that gives rise to a spectrum of characterisation possibilities for YHWH, which I discuss below.

Nevertheless, there are auditory clues that guide the interpretive process, especially in “hearing” written poetry. Commonly recognised clues are assonance and alliteration, which can give a linking and flowing effect. Korpel, for example, utilises the assonance of כרם and קרן and the poetic flow of בִּין . . . בִּין as markers in her structural division of the Song of the Vineyard. As concerns the inflection of the text, the accent marks of the Masoretes give an indication of their inflective reading of the text. While these marks preserve ancient readings, they only serve as a suggestion to how the text might have sounded in its earliest performance. The pronunciation of the text is subject to the same limitation; although Semitic languages today can give an indication of ancient pronunciation, we have no way of being certain as to exactly how the language was pronounced.<sup>467</sup> Finally, an important aural element is the phonetic value of

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<sup>467</sup> Even today, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Hebrew pronunciations differ. This limitation is basic to the study of Biblical Hebrew linguistics. In his essay on Hebrew Generative Phonology, Edward Greenstein notes the problem of Biblical Hebrew being a “dead” language and states, “There is reason to believe that, although the Bible’s Hebrew is literary, its main linguistic features reflect colloquial

consonants.<sup>468</sup> Plosive consonants such as כ and פ, communicate force and depending on positioning may stop the flowing of sound (example, כָּתוּב), while their labiodental equivalents, ב and פ are softer, more flowing, encouraging the forward moving of sound (example, וּבִין).

The following interpretation is how my ears hear this passage, which, while admittedly subjective, is not random. My aural interpretation of the text is based primarily on the elements noted above: assonance and alliteration, inflection and phonetics.

The first movement begins with the phrase אֲשִׁירָה-נָא and ends with באושים:

1 אֲשִׁירָה-נָא לִידִידִי שִׁירַת דָּוִד לְכַרְמֹ  
 בָּרַם הָיָה לִידִידִי בָּקְרוּ בּוֹ-שָׁמוֹ:  
 2 וַיַּעֲזָקֵהוּ וַיִּסְקָלֵהוּ וַיִּטְעָלֵהוּ שָׂרָק  
 וַיָּבֹן מִגְדָּל בְּתוֹכֹוּ וְגַם-יָקֹב חָצַב בּוֹ  
 וַיִּקְוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים וַיַּעַשׂ בָּאֲשִׁים:

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language. The Lachish letters and other epigraphic materials—which are the best testimony to colloquial ancient Hebrew that we shall ever have—display a Hebrew closely resembling that of, say, the Book of Kings. Nevertheless, since the Bible had undergone considerable phonological development by the time we get any vocalized texts, it is precisely in the area of phonology that we lack direct evidence of Hebrew in the ancient periods. Any synchronic phonological analysis must be based substantially on reconstruction and is accordingly a risky enterprise. Edward Greenstein, “An Introduction to a Generative Phonology of Biblical Hebrew” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* ed. Walter R. Bodine (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 34.

<sup>468</sup>For a phonetic chart of Hebrew consonants see *Balshanut*.  
<http://balshanut.wordpress.com/essays/introtolinguistics/phonetics/> (accessed July 10, 2012).

This first movement poetically describes the actions of the vinedresser. The opening phrase אשירה-נא is a polite entreaty in meaning and gentle in sound. The next word in the hemistich, לידי, is also gentle in sound, beginning with a flowing lateral approximate consonant (ל) and its three syllables all ending in a vowel sound. The plosive force of the ך is suppressed by the vowel that follows. The second hemistich of the first colon and the second colon are similar in their auditory impressions: flowing and gentle. This gentleness of sound is matched by the meanings of the words: ידיד (friend), דוד (uncle, beloved, or lover), as well as *song*, *vineyard*, and *fruitful hill*. The auditory quality of this introductory verse is quite different from that of the verse that follows.

While there is alliteration and assonance throughout the pericope, it is most marked in this first movement. The first three actions of construction, ויעזקהו, ויטעהו, and ויסקלהו, all are five syllables with beginning and ending assonance and alliteration with the accent on the next to last syllable. The effect is impressive when heard, particularly since the colon ends in the two syllable word שרק, which is accented on the first syllable. To my ears, the repetition and accenting have a pounding affect, giving the impression of hard labour. I think this impression is intensified by the contrast with the final word, שרק. The sibilant consonant with open “o” vocalisation (*śōrēq*) sounds like a sigh, particularly since the emphasis is on the first syllable:

<i>wayê'azqēhû</i>	Pound <i>wayê— qēhû</i>	וַיַּעֲקֹהוּ
<i>wayêsaqlēhû</i>	Pound <i>wayê— qlēhû</i>	וַיִּסְקָלְהוּ
<i>wayittā'ēhû</i>	Pound <i>wayi— 'ēhû</i>	וַיִּטְעֵהוּ
<i>śōrēq</i>	Sigh <i>śōrēq</i>	שָׁרַק

Marjo Korpel notes the assonance and alliteration of the verbs and then asks how hearers would have understood their meaning. Her answer focuses on the words themselves and the hard labour they indicate, not on the effect of the sounds themselves. Korpel is addressing the question of genre, asking if the hearers could have interpreted the song as a love song. She brings evidence in both directions, on the one hand noting that such verbs are not used in OT love songs, but then noting that verbs like ploughing are used in other ancient Near East cultures as a metaphor for sexual activity.<sup>469</sup> I would suggest that the hearers of this oral poetry are not actively engaging themselves in the question of genre as they are listening but taking in the auditory impressions: pound—pound—pound, sigh.

The auditory impression continues in the first movement, although in a somewhat different form:

וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל בְּתוֹכָו וַיִּסְמְּקֵב חֶצֶב בּוֹ.

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<sup>469</sup> Korpel, “The Literary Genre,” 126.

The two hemistiches end with the same vocalisation, ו--; in addition, the final words of both hemistiches begin with the consonant ב and have the same meaning. The letter ב, like the English letter B, is a bilabial plosive consonant, produced by forcing air between the lips, giving it a slight explosive sound. This feature heightens the auditory impression of pounding and hard work.

The final line of the first movement continues the poetic narrative. Although the hard work is over, the movement of the oral poem is connected and forwarded by the *waw consecutive*: בְּאֵשִׁים וַיִּקְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲנָבִים וַיַּעַשׂ. The *waw consecutive* is not just a grammatical feature but also an aural connector. Hearing it would give much the same impression as hearing a small child relate a story with the connector “and then . . . and then . . . and then.” It draws the hearer onward in the oral event. At this stage, the oral event comes to an abrupt end both in meaning and in aural impression with the word באשִׁים.

There are two aural features about the word באשִׁים that heighten its effect. First, the word begins with the plosive consonant ב that emphasises the abruptness of the ending. A second is the role of the letter א, which has no sound; rather, it represents a glottal stop created by completely constricting the throat, cutting off the air flow, and then releasing. The release makes a slight popping sound. Since the letter has no sound, it is always accompanied by a vowel.<sup>470</sup> The throat constriction of the א makes a slight hesitation before its following vowel, and that hesitation is

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<sup>470</sup> I learned this in a class taught by Chaim Rabin, former Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Hebrew University. For the phonetics of all Hebrew consonants See <http://hebrewgrammar.sbts.edu/page3/files/Grammar%20Chapter%201.pdf>

In particular note the phonetics of the letter א, table 10, p. 6.

represented by its linguistic designation, the apostrophe: *b ūšîm*. This is not just a grammatical fact or linguistic nuance. It means that the word באושים would sound almost identical to a word without the א: בושים, *bûšîm*, which means shameful things. from the root בוש. In many passages in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH's enemies or the enemies of YHWH's people are those who are ashamed, as well as those who abandon their trust in YHWH and turn to their own devices.<sup>471</sup> One of the enigmas concerning the Song of the Vineyard is the use of the term באושים. Why is this word used when it is not used in this form anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible nor in any ancient literature on agricultural produce? I consider the question from an agricultural perspective in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture. However, perhaps the answer, or at least one possible answer, is to be found in its auditory function: the word begins with plosive consonant, giving force to the word, while sound of the entire word would remind hearers of the word “shame.” This aural similitude, באושים — בושים, greatly strengthens the force of the message.

The second movement begins with the word ועתה. This word serves not only as a rhetorical marker, as noted above, but also has an auditory effect. The accent is on the last syllable, which begins with the alveolar plosive consonant ת. The effect is one of abrupt transition, stronger than the English “and now.” In terms of its auditory effect, it would be more like, “And **T**ake this.” The “T” sound adds a plosive force to the word. This movement is begins with this abrupt rhetorical/auditory marker yet is much less auditorially forceful than either the preceding or

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<sup>471</sup> To cite just a few examples: Psa 6:10, the psalmist prays that his enemies will be ashamed; Psa 83:17, those who want to take over God's inheritance will be ashamed; Psa 22:5, Isa 49:23, those who trust in YHWH will not be ashamed; Jer 2:36, those who trust in Egypt will be ashamed.

following movements. The identical sound of the endings of **ביני** and **כרמי** in the phrase **שפטו-נא** would heighten the sense of comparison between the vinedresser and the vineyard, as also would repetition of the word “בין,” “ביני ובין.” There is nothing special about the phrasing; it is the normal way of expressing the concept of comparison, much as does the phrase in English, “Judge between me and my vineyard.” Yet the phrase in Hebrew makes an auditory impression through its repetition.

The third movement begins as does the previous movement, with the rhetorical/auditory marker **ועתה**, yet the auditory sense of this movement is similar to the sense of the first movement, with verbal repetitions and an abrupt stop:

הסר משופְּתוֹ וְהִיָּה לְבָעֵר פָּרִץ גְּדֵרוֹ וְהִיָּה לְמַרְמָס:  
וְאַשִּׁיתָהּ בָּתָּה

The first colon has a repetition and rhyme that gives a sense of progression:

הסר . . . —והיה ל--	פרץ . . . --והיה ל--
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The **ו** consecutive and the particle **ל** move the oral poem forward both grammatically and orally.<sup>472</sup> The plosive consonant **פ** in **פרץ** aurally highlights the “plosive action,” so to speak, of breaking down the vineyard wall. This plosive consonant at the beginning of the second-syllable accented word also gives a sense of pushing the narrative forward.

<sup>472</sup> The **ו** is a labiodental fricative and the **ל** an alveolar lateral approximant. Both letters are formed by a slight expelling of air without a stop. When these letters are at the beginning of a word, they make for a smooth transition forward, particularly when they are particles, as they are here.

The forward motion comes to an abrupt halt in the first hemistich of the next line with the word **בתה**, a front accented word with two plosive consonants, rendering the sound as abrupt as the meaning. The forward progression of the previous colon and this sudden, plosive ending give an auditory impression of abruptly running into a wall.

פרץ . . . --והיה ל--	הסר . . . —והיה ל--
ואשיתהו בתה	

The choice of the word **בתה** is an interesting one. The word appears in the Hebrew Bible only here and in a closely related form in Isa 7:19 and its basic meaning is “desolation.” Another possible choice of words in this verse would have been **שממה**, a barren, desolate desert. This word would have fit the context of the passage, since the acts of destruction conclude with the withholding of rain. We cannot know why the word **בתה** was chosen, but we can see the effect of the choice. The word **שממה** has a much softer sound than the word **בתה** because of its lack of plosive consonants. As it stands, the auditory effect of the verse is quite strong.

The repetition continues in the sixth verse, but in a different form:

לֹא יִזְמַר וְלֹא יַעֲדֹר וְעָלָה שְׁמִיר וְשִׁית  
וְעַל הָעֵבִים אֲצִוָּה מִהִמָּטִיר עָלָיו מָטָר:

As in the first stanza, the repetitive ו consecutive and the ל in the adverb of negation **לא** carry the force and movement of the cola. The repetitive use of **לא** emphasizes the negation of the former actions and renders a hammering effect similar to that of the first movement. The first and third movements are related both by content and by sound. The actions of the first and third



movements are opposites—building up and tearing down. Auditorially, they are related by this sense of pounding repetition (which is lacking in the second movement), and through assonance and alliteration in reverse order:

ועלה	ולא	לא
עליו		ועל

Many scholars have commented on the alliteration and play on words in the final phrase of the song, וַיִּקְוָה לְמִשְׁפָּט וְהִנֵּה מִשְׁפָּח לְצִדִּיקָה וְהִנֵּה צַעֲקָה. Although the alliterative effect of the four nouns has been the subject of much comment, the interjection והנה is significant, and I do not think that translations generally catch the tone it may imply. This is a case in which it would have been very helpful to hear a recording of the tone of the presentation. One means of presentation would be to place the emphasis on והנה with a slight pause afterward. The effect would be, “He hoped for justice, but look! Bloodshed! For righteousness, but look! A shout!” The MT, however, does not put a pause after the interjection.

The word הנה is commonly used, fifteen other times in First Isaiah alone. While often used as an interjection with no special implications, it is also used from time to time to abruptly attract attention (for example, Isa 6:17 and 7:14). In this last verse of the Song of the Vineyard, והנה draws attention to the contrast of expectation and reality, as do the rhyming words. For that reason, I think a stronger translation of the word is called for, rather than the simple English negative comparative “but.” Translating the interjection as “but look!” also helps highlight the negative parallelism between the two parts of the phrase. This is particularly helpful, since the

alliteration between משפּט and משפּח in Hebrew cannot be replicated in English and many other languages.

### 3.3.2.c The aural impact and perceptions of the vinedresser

A study of the aural texture of the passage as a general matter of rhetoric may be of interest as a topic unto itself. However, the aural elements (alliterations, phonetic force) all combine to build a portrayal of the characters and events. Alliterations and phonetics are preserved in a text, but they are part of the creation of the tone of the presentation, and for the reader, tone is much more a matter of subjective interpretation. The question of tone is an important one, since attitudes such as irony, sarcasm, spite, anger, or any number of other emotions may be communicated more by tone than by direct wording. These attitudes are an important aspect of the characterisation of the speakers whose words are preserved in the text. The communication of character through tone is not just a cognitive communication; to a great extent it is emotive, forwarded by the auditory suggestions, and therefore the impressions are largely subconscious and subjective. An audience at a presentation can hear the tone of the presenter, which readers cannot do. The reader is left to interpret the aural clues in the text as to the tone and the meaning that the tone conveys. This interpretive act is subjective and therefore allows for a wide range of interpretive possibilities. Two readers may “hear” the tone of the passage differently and as a result perceive its characters and the nature of the events in very different ways.

In the Song of the Vineyard, the central feature of the first movement is the pounding alliteration and assonance of the verbs describing the hard work of preparing the vineyard. A gentle introduction precedes these cola, but they are followed by a hard statement concerning the contrast between the vinedresser’s expectation and reality. The reader is led into the first movement through the introduction, which is gentle both auditorially and through word choice.

Affection and care are the primary emotive values communicated. The first movement ends, however, with the abrupt sounding באושים. If it is the auditorially abruptness of this last word that gives the emotive impression of the first movement, along with the meaning of the word itself, then perhaps one would interpret the movement as expressing YHWH's anger or righteous indignation. The hard work with its pounding resonance would be seen as justifying and intensifying that response. If, however, the emotive tenor of the passage is carried by the warmth of the introduction, then love, sorrow, and disappointment come to the fore instead. The tone of באושים will be interpreted as an expression of sorrow more than of anger. In an oral presentation, the presenter would have the option of emphasising the plosive consonant ב to express anger, or to utter it in such a way as to de-emphasise its plosive force. The text only suggests the possibilities.

The second movement has a completely different feel to it than the first. It does not begin softly nor end ambiguously. The primary auditory impressions are formed by the introductory plosive ועתה, the phrase . . . בין . . . ובין, and the bracketing word באושים. The plosive sense of these words plus the meaning of the word שפט leave little question as to the forcefulness projected in this movement. The one moderating or ambiguous element is the presence of the particle נא. This particle softens the overall impression, both in sound and in meaning. Is this to be understood as irony, as in, "Oh, so *please* do (if you dare)"? Or should we understand this as a genuine effort at slightly softening the blow? We cannot hear this Voice of the Past in its presentation, so we cannot know which tone may have been projected. Both readings are possible, however, and each gives a different impression as to the character of the speaker (YHWH). How a reader will "hear" this movement depends in some measure both on how one heard the first movement, as well as the subsequent, final movement.

The final movement pounds to a forceful conclusion through assonance and alliteration and acts of destruction. And yet, in the midst of the movement, just before the conclusion, the term שעשוע is used. Although it is an intertextual matter, I think it is appropriate to note here that there is only one other use of this word in the Hebrew Bible in relation to people, in Jeremiah 31:20:

Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he the child I delight in? As often as I speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore I am deeply moved for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord.

The use of the term שעשוע in the Jeremiah passage is used in the context of a strong rebuke to his people, called Ephraim. Yet even in the midst of rebuking his people, YHWH expresses his love for them. The use of the term in the Song of the Vineyard can be seen in this same way. However, in light of its juxtaposition with משפח and משפח it could be read as a sarcastic irony.

The auditory components of the Song of the Vineyard and the emotive responses they may engender point in two widely differing general directions in regards to the characterisation of YHWH. One response is to see YHWH the vinedresser as a god of great affections, investing much caring effort, a god who is disappointed and even grieved because of the state of the people, his שעשוע upon whom he lavishes this love and care. In contrast, the vinedresser can be perceived as angry and incensed, almost spitting out the word באושים, declaring that he will reduce the vineyard to בתה. Within these two general directions are nuances of possibilities. For example, the alliteration of the hard work in building the vineyard can emphasise the care and labour involved in preparing the vineyard or lend strength to the portrayal of a self-justifying vinedresser, pounding home the fact that he is above reproach. The use of the enclitic particle נא

may be viewed as softening the blow of the multiplicity of plosive consonants and the force that they carry or as an element of sarcasm.

Since tone cannot be unambiguously communicated in a black-and-white text, ultimately the determination that any reader or community gives to the tone of the passage will be as much a function of their ideology as of the text itself.

### 3.4 Innertextual Metaphor

Sonja Foss outlines basic procedures for conducting rhetorical analysis of metaphors in her practical book on rhetorical criticism. The first procedure is to identify the metaphors.<sup>473</sup> In many cases the metaphors in a passage are clear, while in other cases, they may be hidden, not obvious, or easily overlooked.

There is one very obvious metaphor in this passage, that of the vineyard as the people: “The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.” A complete consideration of that metaphor, however, requires an investigation into the intertextual use of the imagery, so I put off a consideration of this metaphor for a later chapter.

There are at least two more possible metaphors. The first is the word נִיחַ. The second is the visible human presenter as a metaphor of the unseen YHWH.

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<sup>473</sup> Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, 1998), 364.

### 3.4.1 Identification of Metaphors: the word דוד

The word דוד appears fifty-eight times in the Hebrew Bible, and the root means “swing, rock, dandle, fondle, love.”<sup>474</sup> Thirty-eight times the word is used with the meaning “beloved,” and all of those occurrences are in the Song of Solomon, except in The Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah 5:1.<sup>475</sup> The use of the word in the Song of Solomon denotes an intimate or even erotic love relationship. The plural, דודים, is used twice in the prophetic writings in an erotic sense, in construct form meaning “time of love” (Ezek 16:8) or “bed of love” (Ezek 23:17). The most common other meaning of the word is “uncle” and the translation of שירת דודי as “an uncle’s song” was suggested by a number of early scholars, but this reading generally has been rejected by more recent scholarship.<sup>476</sup> The phrase שירת דודי presents a certain difficulty. The construct form ת- connecting שיר and דודי is grammatically clear but leaves room for two possible understandings. The first possibility is, “my beloved friend’s song,” meaning the song *belonging to* my beloved friend, which is the usual translation. However, a construct form more often expresses the idea of a compound noun: my “friend-song,” which presents some difficulties. Cersoy rejects this reading on the basis of the grammatical construct and suggests instead that the

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<sup>474</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1996), 187.

<sup>475</sup> Harris R. Laird, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Watke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:84.

<sup>476</sup> For a full discussion see Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 337-338.

phrase should read either *šîrat dôdim* as Cheyne suggested<sup>477</sup> or, as he prefers, *šîrat dôdaî*, both roughly translated “love song.”<sup>478</sup> If the word דודי should be amended to read as *dôdim* or *dôdaî* then there is no question that the word is descriptive, an adjective or a noun describing love, and therefore not a metaphor. However, if the word דודי is to be understood as pointing to the same referent as ידיד, then it might be a metaphorical picture, since the ידיד is later revealed to be YHWH.

The word beloved, ידיד, appears seven times in the Hebrew Bible and in related forms four times.<sup>479</sup> The word is derived from the assumed root דד, although there is no record of verb usage for that root in ancient Hebrew. The root דד appears in Ugarit and related roots in other Semitic languages.<sup>480</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, the word ידיד is used for the recipient of the special care of YHWH in the form of deliverance (Ps 60:5, 108:6), protection and provision (Deut 33:12, Ps 127:2), or selection (Jer 11:15). Nowhere other than in Isaiah is the term used for YHWH. Botterweck, though, gives grammatical evidence for ידיד being YHWH: “The prep, l’ associated here with the vb. šîr is elsewhere always (with the sole exception of Ps. 137:3) associated with a

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<sup>477</sup> Thomas K. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah: A New Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1 (New York: Thomas Witteraker, 1884), 29.

<sup>478</sup> Cersoy, “L’Apologue du la Vigne,” 43. Cersoy translates the phrase in French, “chante amicale.”

<sup>479</sup> *yēdīdōt*, Psa 45:1; *yēdīdūt*, Jer 12:7; *yēdīdāh*, 2 Ki 22:1; *yēdīdyāh*, 2 Sam 12:25.

<sup>480</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringrenn, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 446. Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 333.

divine designation or with an appropriate suffix (outside the Psalter) always with the Tetragrammaton.”<sup>481</sup>

Given the usage of the word ידִּי in ancient Hebrew, one would not expect the singer to be referring to YHWH. Olivier suggests that the word ידִּי expresses a “relationship between persons of unequal status,”<sup>482</sup> and in this passage it means “patron.” He then states that ידִּידי is the same person as ידִּי. In his consideration of ידִּי, he notes that the word can mean *uncle* and—both for philological and sociological reasons—can also mean *protector* or *patron*. From this Olivier then concludes that this is the correct understanding for the word ידִּי and therefore, by extension, also for ידִּידי. Although the word ידִּי is never used as a term for Israel’s god in any other place in the Hebrew Bible, it is generally accepted that it is used thus here.

In conclusion, I do not see the term ידִּי functioning as a metaphor, as a specific symbol pointing to a referent. Even if one conclusively makes the case that ידִּי is the same as ידִּידי, who is YHWH, the term is still not metaphorical. As noted in the chapter on methodology, all language is to some extent metaphorical, since language is by nature a series of symbols representing objects and ideas. Yet for ידִּי to be a metaphor, we would need to see a metaphorical correlation, such as is the case in this passage for vineyard metaphorically representing the people.

The term ידִּי has an important function in the Song of the Vineyard, albeit not a metaphorical one. As discussed above, its emotive value helps set the tone of the song. It also hints at the amorous, an important question of consideration in the intertextual texture of this passage.

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<sup>481</sup> Botterweck and Ringrenn, *Theological Dictionary*, 14:636.

<sup>482</sup> J. P. J. Olivier, “Rendering ידִּי Benevolent Patron in Isaiah 5:1,” *JNSL* 22 (1996): 59.



### 3.4.2 The Prophet/Presenter as Metaphor

In the chapter on methodology, I briefly discussed Burke's description of metaphor, in which he states, "Metaphor tells us something about one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A."<sup>483</sup> I would suggest that in the Song of the Vineyard, we can see "B" as being the implied presenter, the prophet,<sup>484</sup> and "A" as being YHWH. In other words, the prophet-presenter himself becomes a metaphor for the unseen main character, the vinedresser, who is YHWH.

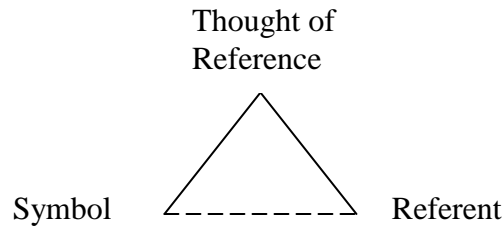
I suggest that "B," the prophet, can be seen as a representative perspective upon "A," YHWH, based on the concept of identification discussed earlier. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible often identified with and represented YHWH through their actions. Hosea marries a prostitute; Ezekiel lies on his side. The man becomes the embodiment of the message and as such is a metaphorical expression of YHWH, the author of the message. The narrative flow of the text with its shift from third to first person suggests this kind of identification. The prophet-presenter begins by singing the song of/for his יד, but then presents in the first person, as if becoming one with him.

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<sup>483</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1969 ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 503-504.

<sup>484</sup> I use the term "presumed presenter," recognising that the actual time of composition is unknown to us. By using this term, I am stating that although one might presume that the prophet was the presenter, that may not be the case. For the purposes of the discussion here, it does not matter. The important issue is that the passage is constructed as an oral poem for performance.

Another way to consider this idea of the prophet as a metaphor is through Richards' model of communication:



The referent in this metaphor is an intangible, non-physical entity and therefore subject to a wide diversity of thoughts of reference. Individuals' views of the deity and the deity's relationship to the people are likely to cover a wider spectrum than would be the case for a tangible, physical object. When the prophet becomes the symbol, then at least everyone is hearing and seeing the same symbol, not just hearing words that are more likely to be interpreted in light of their pre-held frames of reference. The man as symbol becomes the visual representation of the unseen referent.

Sonja Foss states that one of the principle questions we should ask in the consideration of a metaphor concerns the images that are conveyed of the principle subject (referent).<sup>485</sup> If a man acts as a metaphor of YHWH, then his tone also communicates something about the referent. I would want to see the body language and know the relationship between the presenter and those present. Unfortunately, this is impossible with a "Voice from the Past." Apart from the tone, though, there is one other aspect of the referent YHWH that is highlighted by the identification metaphor of the presenter, and that is the very fact of the identification, as evidenced by the shift

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<sup>485</sup> Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 360.

from third person to first person speech. That shift speaks of the imminence of the unseen referent in the person of the prophet.

### 3.5 Summary

The study of the innertexture of the text logically begins with the text itself, its various versions, and its setting in the body of literature. The relationship between the MT, LXX, and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has been thoroughly considered by others, so that work was not repeated here, except as might be relevant to the research question.

The grammar of the passage has also been thoroughly considered by those who have gone before, as have certain aspects of the poetic structure. Yet a consideration of the grammar along with the chiasmic structure of the passage has shed light on possible interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard. These two elements when viewed together can yield a portrayal of YHWH as reluctant to bring judgment on his people. He takes a series of progressive actions, starting with the least damaging, in the hopes that his people will understand and will turn from their ways. In this sense, YHWH acts on behalf of the welfare of his people with the actions he takes.

A variety of literary interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard have been published, particularly in the last thirty years. During that time, and earlier as well, some researchers considered the question of the setting for the implied (or, for some researchers, assumed) event. Yet the significance of the Song of the Vineyard as an “oral poem,” a written work whose basic characteristic is oral, has perhaps been overlooked. The study conducted here reveals an aurally impressive creation that heightens the work’s emotive effect. The emotive aspect of the innertexture is an important vehicle for its message and in particular for its portrayal of the vinedresser.

Finally, innertextual metaphors were considered. Metaphor would generally tend not to be a matter of innertexture, since metaphorical referents exist in an intertextual and socio-cultural world. Yet the emotive aspect of a word or the Hebraic metaphor of the prophet as symbol for the referent YHWH can be considered in the realm of the innertext. While there is much we cannot know about the prophet as metaphor since we cannot see or hear him, his very first-person enactment of YHWH speaks of the imminence of Israel's god to his people.

The innertexture of the text is just one lens of several through which a text can be viewed. Yet even in this limited interpretive mode, it is possible to see a wide diversity of characterisations for the main character, the vinedresser. An innertextual study of the pericope could stand alone as an interpretive work. Even if the work ended here, we still would have seen YHWH in a diverse panorama of personifications, from stern judge of unrighteousness to compassionate friend giving warning. This innertextual study does not stand alone, however, but is complemented and highlighted—and perhaps challenged—through the interpretive lenses of the other textures of the text, which are considered in the chapters that follow.

## **4.0 The Intertextural World of the Text**

*No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe;  
every man is a peece of the Continent,  
a part of the maine.*

*John Donne, Meditation XVII*

### **4.1 Introduction**

Around the turn of the seventeenth century, the Jacobean poet John Donne recognized that no human being exists as an isolated entity but is interwoven with the entirety of humanity. In 1967, Julia Kristeva expressed the same idea in relation to texts; no text exists unto itself, but is an interweaving of worlds of texts and references. Kristeva called this phenomenon “intertextuality.” Since Kristeva’s first coinage of the term, the concept has been broadly used in literary interpretation, including the field of biblical studies. The term “intertextuality” refers to the fact that “just as no text comes into being independently of other texts, so do we never read any text independently of other texts. Each and every text forms part of a network of texts from which it derives its meaning.”<sup>486</sup>

Texts do not exist in a vacuum for two reasons. First, they are written by authors who are bathed in a world of signs, symbols, and ideologies: “texts” that may or may not be written but that exist

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<sup>486</sup> Kirsten Nielsen, “Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible,” in *Congress Volume: Oslo, 1998*, ed. André Lemaire et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 17.

as part of the socio-cultural mindset and ideology. Secondly, every reader is bathed in his or her own environment and imports their own “texts” into their reading.<sup>487</sup>

Intertextuality has come into widespread use as an interpretive lens, but it is used in a number of different ways. For some, intertextuality is primarily an ideological drawing upon prior texts or discourses that are interwoven into the meaning of the text under consideration. These prior texts provide the ideological background to the text in question and thereby emphasise, affirm, or refute its values: “Intertextuality is not some neutral literary mechanism but is rather at root a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation.”<sup>488</sup> For others, the primary element of intertextuality is linguistic, drawing language parallels from earlier texts.<sup>489</sup> For many it is a combination of both those factors, as well as factors of social intertexture, the interweaving of the greater context of the social world of the text.

Any concept that is broadly understood, such as the concept of intertextuality, will also have diverse methodologies associated with it. The question of methodology for the study of intertexture is a complex one. In the case of a biblical passage, the modern interpreter cannot ask

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<sup>487</sup> For further discussion, see Michael Worton and Judith Still, “Introduction,” in *Intertextuality: Theory and Practice*, ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 1-2.

<sup>488</sup> George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips, “Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis,” *Semeia* 69/70 (1995): 9.

<sup>489</sup> See Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 38, for further discussion. The emphasis on earlier texts and discourses follows the work of Jonathan Culler, while the linguistic emphasis follows Michael Riffaterre.

the creator/writer/redactor about his or her intent; the text is a written remnant of a “lost voice.” The reader may see a connection between the text and other biblical or extra-biblical passages, yet is it a legitimate interpretive procedure for every reader to allow the imagination free reign to make whatever connections he or she wishes and call that “intertextuality”? If so, the reader doesn’t really need the text; all readers can create their own “text,” independent of the passage in question. A methodology for considering intertexture on the one hand must allow for interpretive freedom, yet on the other must set parameters and guidelines for the establishment of such relationships.

The approach to the study of intertexture needs to be one of questioning and hypothesising rather than one of hardened, mechanical determination. In some cases, an historical intertextual relationship can be clearly established between texts when an earlier text is directly quoted by a later text. Yet for many texts, an intertextual relationship exists in the mind of the reader independent of any historical relationship between the two passages. He or she sees a connection that may not be historically related and that others may not see, but at least for that interpreter, the relationship enhances the meaning of the text under study. Since the reader plays such an active role in the process, and since it is not possible to firmly establish what constitutes an intertextual relationship (apart from a clear historical referencing), I think the best approach to the problem is to suggest possibilities, give the evidence, and leave the matter a bit open-ended.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> An excellent example of this type of approach is Kirsten Nielsen’s suggestion that the story of Naboth’s vineyard may be intertextually related to the Song of the Vineyard. I discuss her work in a later section of this chapter.

In his 2006 intertextual study on Isaiah 24-27, James Hibbard wrestled with the question of methodology. As part of his process of arriving at a working methodology, he posed three questions:

- What criteria must be established to determine whether the text under consideration is accurately considered an intertext?
- How should we think about the reappropriation of the earlier text on the literary level?
- What is the exegetical significance of each example of intertextuality (i.e. how do individual cases of intertextuality contribute to the meaning of the text)?<sup>491</sup>

From these three questions, Hibbard derives three criteria that must be met for texts to be viewed as intertextually related:

- There must be shared vocabulary between the two passages;
- There must be a degree of thematic coherence;
- The intertextual relationship must be meaningful in some way.<sup>492</sup>

Hibbard acknowledges that there are certain problems in the application of these criteria. Concerning shared vocabulary, what level of sharing must there be before suggesting that an intertextual relationship exists? For example, in the case of the Song of the Vineyard, is the use

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<sup>491</sup> James Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 4.

<sup>492</sup> For the questions as well as the following discussion about the criteria, see: Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 5.



of the rare Hebrew word שעשוע in another passage sufficient to determine (or at least suggest) an intertextual relationship, if there is no other shared vocabulary? Hibbard sets no minimum but notes that the more shared vocabulary the better, particularly if the words are rare words.

According to Hibbard, no one criterion alone is sufficient to suggest an intertextual relationship. In addition to a congruence of language, there must also be thematic coherence. In some way the two texts must both be exploring the same concept or problem. For Hibbard, two texts in intertextual relationship must share both a common theme and common elements of language:

I have opted for what I regard as the safest possible course, which means that thematic coherence will need to be accompanied by shared vocabulary in order to qualify as an example of intertextuality. This limits the options in certain cases, but it is a necessary limitation in my view.<sup>493</sup>

Hibbard's third criterion is that an intertextual relationship must be meaningful, which he concedes "involves a degree of subjectivity on the part of the exegete; nevertheless, one must ask the question and attempt to answer it."<sup>494</sup> There is no way to avoid the subjective element. Indeed, the very nature of intertextuality implies subjectivity on the part of the reader. In reading a text, every reader will make associations, but those associations will differ from reader to reader. Nevertheless, I think Hibbard's basic approach is sound; there are parameters, to my mind reasonable ones, while allowing room for the subjective insights of the reader.

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<sup>493</sup> Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 5.

<sup>494</sup> Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 5.

I think that Hibbard's approach represents a balanced, honest attempt at positing intertextual relationships, and I follow his procedure in this chapter. I suggest relationships—some more likely than others—and attempt to be honest about the uncertainties. Through these relationships, I endeavor to see the portrayals of YHWH in a broader textual framework than in the innertextual world.

Hibbard adds one more criterion to the above: that the intertextual relationship must be chronologically possible, i.e. that an earlier text cannot refer to a later one. Certainly this would be true in relation to historical intertextual dependency. It is not possible for an earlier text to be dependent upon or intentionally referring to a later one. However, intertextuality in the mind of the reader is not limited by this factor, as expressed by Kirsten Nielsen:

My fourth and final thesis is that responsible exegesis requires the acceptance that also future texts will have consequences for textual interpretation. In which case each and every scholar's interpretation should be regarded as an inspiration to a dialogue.<sup>495</sup>

I think that both positions are valid in their own spheres. It is clear that an earlier text cannot refer to or be historically dependent upon a later text. However, a later text becomes part of an ongoing intertextual world of markers, socio-cultural understandings, and the ideologies of later interpreters. This understanding is particularly important when considering a question of research, such as portrayals of YHWH in Scripture. On the one hand, it is helpful to have some idea of the historical progression of thought, to the extent that it can be determined. On the other hand, all interrelated texts speak to the question, regardless of their historical relationship. In consideration of the portrayals of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard, the primary question

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<sup>495</sup> Nielsen, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible," 31.

being asked is not, “What did they think back then?” but rather, “What can we see in the interrelated world of the texts today?” The historical questions are an important part of the unraveling of the latter question, but only a part. The modern interpreter in his or her context is an active participant in this dialogue.

## 4.2 YHWH, the Planter of Israel

The metaphor of YHWH as the one who plants the people of Israel in the land can be found throughout the Hebrew Bible. Apparently its origins are quite ancient, since hints can be found as early as the Song of the Reed Sea (Exod 15:17-20) and Jotham’s parable (Jud 9:7-15), as well as in writings that probably date much later, such as Ps 44:2; Jer 11:17 and 45:4, to name a few. The vineyard metaphor “appears to be a specific development of the more general metaphor of the nation as Yahweh’s planting . . .”<sup>496</sup> The most obvious texts to consider for possible intertextual references are those that thematically deal with a vine or vineyard as the planting of the Lord; however, other passages that utilise the planting metaphor may also be possibilities.

### 4.2.1 The Song of the Reed Sea, Exodus 15:1-18

Perhaps the first reference to YHWH planting the nation in the land is in the Song of the Reed Sea, Exod 15:1-18.<sup>497</sup> Thematically, the passage develops as follows:

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<sup>496</sup> Conrad E. L’Heureux, “The Redactional History of Isaiah 5:1-10:4,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlstrom*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 103.

<sup>497</sup> If one assumes an early date for Exodus, then it would be the first reference.

VersesTopic

1-3	Song of praise
4-10	Adversaries destroyed
11-12	Song of praise
13-17	Dwellers driven out, Israel planted
18	Closing praise

At first there may not seem to be much intertextual congruence between the Song of the Reed Sea and the Song of the Vineyard, apart from the common theme of planting. There is no reference to vines or vineyards that would trigger a language or thematic association; the only exact word parallel is the word “to plant,” and even then the word is in somewhat different forms in the two passages. On closer investigation, however, in the conclusion of the Song of the Reed Sea (verses 17-18), there are suggestive congruencies between the two passages:

In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode (Exod 15:13).

נְחִיתָ בְּחֶסֶדְךָ עַם־יְיָ גִּאֲלָתָּ נְהַלְתָּ בְּעֹזְךָ אֶל־נְוֶה קִדְשֶׁךָ:

You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your inheritance, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever (Exod 15:17-18).

תִּבְאֲמוּ וְתִטְעֲמוּ בְּהַר נַחֲלָתְךָ מְכוֹן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ פָּעִלְתָּ יְהוָה מִקֶּדֶשׁ אֲדָנִי כּוֹנֵנוּ יְיָ:

יְהוָה | יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:

In the Song of the Reed Sea, YHWH drives out the adversaries to plant his people in his pleasant and holy dwelling, his mountain (or hill) of his inheritance. The word נוה (translated abode, (vs. 13) is commonly used for “dwelling,” but its root meaning is “pleasant.” This combination of words, אֶל־נֹה קֹדֶשׁ . . . בְּהָר , literally, “to a pleasant, holy place . . . on a mountain,” suggests a congruency with the phrase קָרַן בֶּן שֶׁמֶן . There is much debate about the phrase קָרַן בֶּן שֶׁמֶן in the Song of the Vineyard, but קָרַן most probably means a hill and קָרַן בֶּן־שֶׁמֶן a very special or fruitful one. Though the wordings are different, both expressions, אֶל־נֹה קֹדֶשׁ . . . בְּהָר and בְּקָרְנוֹ יְוֹשְׁבוֹ and indicate a mountain of pleasantness.<sup>498</sup>

In both these passages, YHWH’s first action is to prepare the land by removing obstacles, before “planting” his people. In the Song of the Reed Sea, those obstacles, so to speak, are the tribes already dwelling in the land. In the Song of the Vineyard, the beloved digs the land and removes rocks. In the Exodus passage, YHWH is portrayed as working (פָּעַל) and preparing (כִּוֵּן) with his

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<sup>498</sup> There is another possible congruency between verse seventeen and the Song of the Vineyard.

In the Song of the Reed Sea, the people are planted “on the mountain of your inheritance.” The idea that YHWH’s people are his inheritance as expressed in the Song of the Reed Sea is appears repeatedly throughout the Hebrew Bible. In the Song of the Vineyard, this idea is communicated through the metaphor of a vineyard: inheritance in the ancient Near East was usually in the form of land; a vineyard was not just a possession, but was often an inherited plot and therefore of particular value. In the Song of the Vineyard, the beloved has a vineyard in a particularly good location on a mountain, an idea very similar to that expressed in the Song of the Reed Sea, verse seventeen. I think the connection is worth mentioning, but it is not a strong connection so I have not included it in the body of the argument.

hands to ready the land for his people. In the Song of the Vineyard, the working and preparing is spelled out in detail.

The final phrase in the Song of the Reed Sea is a statement of praise: YHWH will reign forever. However, it also can be read as a statement of purpose: YHWH drove out the enemy/current inhabitants to establish his people, in order for him to reign forever. If one reads the Song of the Vineyard as hinting back to the Song of the Reed Sea, an important irony becomes evident. In both passages, the people are planted in the land. The Song of the Reed Sea declares that YHWH shall reign forever, but in the Isaian passage, the peoples' deeds give evidence that something has gone terribly wrong; YHWH is not *de facto* reigning. The nation he planted is behaving no differently from the nations he removed.

Following in table form are the congruencies noted above:

<u>Reed Sea (vss. 17, 18)</u>	<u>Vineyard</u>	<u>Congruence</u>
אֶל־גִּגֵּה קְדוֹשׁ . . . בְּהָר	בָּקְרוּ בְּיוֹשָׁמוֹ	Brought to special resting place: on/to mountain
תְּבַאֲמוּ וְתִטְעֲמוּ בְּהָר	וַיַּעֲזֹקֵהוּ וַיִּסְקֵלֵהוּ וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שִׁירָק	Action: driving out obstacles Word: plant
פָּעֲלֶתָ יְהוָה מְקֻדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כִּינְנוּ יְדִיד	וַיַּעֲזֹקֵהוּ וַיִּסְקֵלֵהוּ . . . וַיִּבְנוּ . . . חֲצִב	Action: his hands prepare and establish
יְהוָהוּ יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:	וַיָּקֹוּ לְמִשְׁפָּט וְהִנֵּה מִשְׁפָּח	Irony of conclusion in Song of the Vineyard: purpose corrupted

There is also more structural congruency between the two passages than may be initially evident, a congruency that demonstrates an ironic twist:

<u>Reed Sea</u>	<u>Vineyard</u>
(1-3) Song of praise	(1) “My beloved”

(4-10) Adversaries destroyed	(2) Stones removed from land
(11-12) Song of praise	(3-4) YHWH shows himself as just
(13-17) YHWH drives dwellers out of land, Israel planted	(6, or 5-6) Land now removing dwellers—the people of YHWH
(18) Closing praise	(7) Peoples' lives—no praise

I will be the first to admit that the structural parallel is not precise, yet I would say that it is suggestive. In light of this structural parallel and the language congruencies, I see an intertextual relationship between the two passages. The relationship is meaningful as it points to the fact that YHWH was not capricious or unjust in establishing his nation on the land; he did so for a purpose, but that purpose was thwarted through the actions of his nation. This fact lends justification to the rest of the Song of the Vineyard, in which YHWH threatens to tear down what he has planted.

Aichelle and Phillips, quoted earlier, state that intertextuality is not a mechanical literary device but “a means of ideological and cultural expression and of social transformation.” The intertextual relationship between the Song of the Reed Sea and the Song of the Vineyard is a demonstration of that reality. The relationship between the two highlights the gap between the portrayal of YHWH’s purpose for placing the people in the land—that they live in such a way as to render praise to YHWH—and the nation’s failure to fulfill it. This intertextual relationship with its ironic gap also demonstrates what it means to render praise to the god of Israel—to pursue justice.

#### 4.2.2 The Song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1-43

An intertextual relationship between the Song of Moses and some passages in Second Isaiah has been commonly noted;<sup>499</sup> however, that is not the case in relation to First Isaiah. Since at least the end of the nineteenth century, the majority scholarly view has been that no passage in First Isaiah references the passage from Deuteronomy,<sup>500</sup> nor can it, since Deuteronomy is late in composition.<sup>501</sup> It is outside the scope of this thesis to consider extensively the question of the dating of the Book of Deuteronomy, and I hold to no assumptions concerning that matter. However, I think that Christiaan Brekelman makes a salient point concerning possible deuteronomistic influence in the Song of the Vineyard:

. . . in reading the deuteronomistic history, it seems clear to me that the one and only guilt of the people which led to the great disaster [the fall of Jerusalem] was indeed idolatry and syncretism. In the most important texts of Isaiah, however (see eg. 3,12ff, ch. 5 and 10,1-4),

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<sup>499</sup> Thomas Keiser, “The Song of Moses a Basis for Isaiah’s Prophecies,” *VT* 55 (2005): 486. Keiser briefly cites a number of scholarly works on the relationship between the Song of Moses and Second Isaiah.

<sup>500</sup> Ronald Bergey, “The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:1-43) and Isaianic Prophecies: A Case of Early Intertextuality,” *JSOT* 28 (2003): 33-34. Bergey cites A. Keunen and S.R. Driver as two nineteenth century scholars who were influential in forming this view.

<sup>501</sup> For a brief discussion of the shifting positions in the scholarly world on this question, see Christiaan Brekelmans, “Deuteronomistic Influence in Isaiah 1-12,” in *The Book of Isaiah—Le Livre D’Isaïe: Les Oracles et Leurs Relectures Unité et Complexité de L’Ouvrage*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 167-168.



the threats are directed against the leaders of the people not because of their idolatry, but because of their social injustice, their luxury, the corruption of processes of law, and their trust in alliances. The famous song of the vine, which now introduces the rest of ch. 5, expresses these same ideas. . . . When all these texts were created under the influence of the deuteronomistic movement, it seems difficult to explain, why the emphasis of these texts is not on idolatry and why it is not even mentioned.<sup>502</sup>

I think that Brekelman's approach to deuteronomistic influence on First Isaiah is a helpful one. After stating that he cannot find a deuteronomistic redaction in the text, he adds,

I am inclined to think that we ascribe too many things to the deuteronomistic movement. The reason for this may be that we seem to know exactly what deuteronomic or deuteronomistic means, whereas we seem to know ever less about the prophets . . . My intention was to react in my own way against a kind of pandeuteronomism which is pervading nowadays quite a number of Old Testament studies.<sup>503</sup>

In an article published in 2003, Ronald Bergey considers the possible intertextual relationship between the Song of Moses and First Isaiah, claiming that parallels exist between the Song of

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<sup>502</sup> Vermeylen maintains that the *rîb* lawsuit in general is deuteronomistic in origin and that the Song of the Vineyard, a specific case, was created by the deuteronomistic school. Jacques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à L'apocalyptique: Isaïe, I-XXXV, Miroir D'un Demi-Millénaire D'expérience Religieuse en Israël, Volume 1* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1977), 160-162. Brekelmans argues against this position, "Deuteronomistic Influence," 170-171.

<sup>503</sup> Brekelmans, "Deuteronomistic Influence," 177.

Moses and Isaiah chapters 1, 5, 28, and 30.<sup>504</sup> Bergey's article is brief, and the evidence he brings is therefore minimal. As concerns the Song of the Vineyard, Bergey's evidence is minimal in the extreme; he only notes the word congruence of "grapes." Certainly not every passage in the Hebrew Bible that mentions grapes is intertextually related to the Song of the Vineyard. However, there is an expression in the Song of Moses, in verse 32, involving the word grapes, עֲנַב־רֹשׁ, that is unusual and significant:

Their vine comes from the vine-stock of Sodom, from the vineyards of Gomorrah;  
their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter

כִּי־מִגֶּפֶן סֹדֶם גִּפְנֵם וּמִשְׁדָּמַת עֲמֹרָה עֲנַב־מֹ עֲנַב־רֹשׁ אֲשַׁכֶּלֶת מְרֹת לָמוֹ:

The word רֹשׁ is used twelve times in the Hebrew Bible, three of which are in Deut 32:32-33. It is a poisonous plant<sup>505</sup> that does not bear any fruit—much less grapes—and one of the

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<sup>504</sup> Bergey, "The Song of Moses," 33-54.

<sup>505</sup> Moldenke and Moldenke identify the plant as *Citrullus Colocynthis*, an intensely bitter "drastic cathartic." Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 49 and figure 54. Yehuda Felix suggests that it may be henbane, *Nature and Man in the Bible* (London: Soncino Press, 1981), 55. The word has also been translated "hemlock." Biblical botanists generally reject these identifications. In recent years, as the result of the work of Nogah HaReuveni of Neot Kedumim, the Israel Biblical Botanical Gardens, and of others, it has been identified as Mother Die, *Conium Maculatum*, of the *Apiaceae* family. Unlike רֹשׁ, most members of that family are not poisonous and do not give off a foul smell. *Wildflowers of Israel*, <http://www.wildflowers.co.il/hebrew/plant.asp?id=744> (accessed May 15, 2012), also in personal communication with Neot Kedumim.

characteristics of the plant is that it gives off a repulsive smell. The unusual phrase and these characteristics are reminiscent of the באושים, the stinking fruit, of the Song of the Vineyard.

The expressions ענבי-ראש and באושים are suggestive of a possible intertextual relationship, but not more than suggestive. Yet this is just one of a number of congruencies between these two passages that, taken on their own, are little more than suggestive; but when considered together, in my view, they make a strong case for an intertextual association.

The use of the word מטר (rain) is significant. The word itself is used as completely synonymous with גשם, and both are used about the same number of times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>506</sup> The significant element is the placement of the word in the two passages, as well as the connotation that that placement evokes. The Song of Moses begins with the call for heaven and earth to hear and bear witness, then continues with the phrase, “May my teaching drop like the rain (מטר).” This phrase is followed shortly by a description of YHWH and his people (vss. 4-5):

The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just [משפט].

A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he;

Yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,

a perverse and crooked generation.

The near juxtaposition of the words מטר and משפט in conjunction with the corruption of the people of YHWH is also found at the end of the Song of the Vineyard, where YHWH judges his people because of their perverse ways (vss. 6b-7):

I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain [מטר] upon it.

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<sup>506</sup> מטר is used 38 times; גשם appears 35 times.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice [משפט] but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness, but heard a cry!

Both passages are reminiscent of Deuteronomy 11:13-17, in which YHWH withholds the rain from the land, מטר, if the people turn to worshipping other gods:

If you will only heed his every commandment . . .  
then he will give the rain [מטר] for your land in its season . .  
Take care, or you will be seduced into turning away, serving other gods . . .  
for then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and he will shut up the  
heavens, so that there will be no rain...

There is another suggestive, though not obvious, word congruence between the Song of Moses and the Song of the Vineyard. Deuteronomy 32:6 in English reads “Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?” There is no apparent wording congruence to the Song of the Vineyard, although one could see a thematic connection. The Hebrew, however, reads, “קָנָה ה' אֶתְּךָ הָאֵלֹהִים יִכְנְנֶךָ.” I am a fluent Hebrew speaker, and as I read the passage in Hebrew I immediately saw a connection between the two passages in the word יִכְנְנֶךָ, a connection that does not translate well into English. English translations of Deut 32:6 use the word “formed” or “established” (as in the NRSV, above). The root כננ, however, means “to prepare.” In the Song of the Vineyard, that word would be the most appropriate term to describe the work of YHWH in preparing the plot (vs. 2). In the Song of the Moses, YHWH is the one who “forms” [כננ] the people; in the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH prepares [כננ] the plot.

A similar suggestive wording relationship exists between the two passages in the words חלק and נחלה (vs. 9): כִּי חֶלֶק יְהוָה עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבְלֵי נַחֲלָתוֹ (the Lord's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share.) A portion of land is called חלקה. Land portions were an important part of the inheritance, the נחלה: so much so that any inherited land sold was to be returned in the year of Jubilee. When I read or hear these words, חלק and נחלה, together in the Song of Moses, my Hebrew-tuned ears “hear” a connection to the metaphorical planting of the nation, YHWH's inheritance (נחלה), in a choice location (חלקה).<sup>507</sup> It is not a strong connection and is difficult to explain in English, but the combination of words did trigger the association in my mind. Perhaps I “hear” associations because I am looking for them and in doing so stretch the parameters for intertexture beyond reasonable limits. This may be the case for the example I cite immediately above. However, I think the multiplicity of intertextual possibilities makes a strong case for seeing the two passages as related.

One of the most intriguing intertextual possibilities is the grammatical structure of the verbs of Deut 32:10 and Isa 5:2. As YHWH is establishing [כונן] his people, he “shielded him, cared for him, guarded him.” In the Song of the Vineyard, the vinedresser “dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it.” In Hebrew:

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<sup>507</sup> “Hearing” and making associations is a matter of subjectivity. There is no way to prove or disprove such an association. Therefore, it is appropriate to offer the association as a possibility rather than as a provable fact. I appreciate Kirsten Nielsen's comments on hearing Hebrew in her discussion on Naboth's vineyard. She acknowledges that a Hebrew speaker might hear connections that a non-Hebrew speaker, though a scholar, might not. Nielsen, *Intertextuality*, 25.

Song of Moses

יִסְבְּבֵנָהּ יְבוֹנְנֶהּ יַצְרֶנָּהּ

Song of the Vineyard

וַיַּעֲזֹקֵהוּ וַיִּסְקֶלֶהוּ וַיִּטְעֵהוּ

The same number of verbs is used and their endings are the same: הֵּוֹ—. These two passages are the only ones in the Hebrew Scriptures in which a string of three verbs appears together with this ending,<sup>508</sup> and both are in the context of YHWH “establishing” his people. The phenomenon is not just a grammatical one; the repetitive assonance when repeated orally would heighten the likelihood that the hearer would make an intertextual association.

In addition to the language congruencies between the two passages, there may also be a congruence of structure/genre. Numerous scholars have written on the structure of the Song of the Vineyard as a *rîb* oracle, though the passage presents certain difficulties and anomalies.<sup>509</sup> Scholars likewise have seen the *rîb* genre in the Song of Moses, also with problems and elements

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<sup>508</sup> I am indebted to my friend Yohanan Stanfield for pointing out both this correspondence and the fact that such a usage appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>509</sup> These works are covered in the Literature Review chapter.

that are difficult to explain.<sup>510</sup> It is possible that original, spoken versions (to the extent that there were such) preserved the *rîb* structure more clearly.<sup>511</sup>

Finally, the Song of Moses ends on the note of justice and judgment (vs. 41), as does the Song of the Vineyard:

. . . when I whet my flashing sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment [משפט]; I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will repay those who hate me.

One of the difficult aspects of the Song of Moses is the identification of the “enemies,” as Keiser points out:

An interesting rhetorical feature of the song [of Moses], and one which is commonly noted, is that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish just who Yahweh’s enemies are and who are his servants. This phenomenon first appears in the revelation of the Lord’s judgment on his enemies and deliverance of his people, and continues in the finale of the song where the

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<sup>510</sup> For a brief review of these works, see John M. Wiebe, “The Form, Setting and Meaning of the Song of Moses,” *SBT* 17 (1989): 119-163. Also, see note above on Vermeylen’s position and Brekelman’s response.

<sup>511</sup> The *rîb* genre in general is problematic. Bovati notes that there are different forms that are classified as *rîb* oracles, and that the terminologies used are not homogeneous. In addition, there is no general agreement as to the *Sitz im Leben* of the form, whether it relates to civil or religious jurisprudence or, more importantly, if there even is a standard way of determining this particular genre. Pietro Bovati, “Le Langage Juridique du Prophète Isaïe,” in *The Book of Isaiah—Le Livre D’Isaïe: Les Oracles et Leurs Relectures Unité et Complexité de L’Ouvrage*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 178-180.

general terminology “servants” and “enemies” seems to purposefully raise the nagging question: “But who really are his servants, and who are his enemies?”<sup>512</sup>

The intertextual relationship between the Song of Moses and the Song of the Vineyard sets up an irony that undoubtedly would be a shock to the assumed hearers/readers of the Song of the Vineyard: the people of YHWH, or at least some amongst them, have become YHWH’s enemy.

Following is a table listing the suggested congruencies discussed above:

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<sup>512</sup> Keiser, “The Song of Moses,” 487.



<u>Song of Moses</u>	<u>Song of the Vineyard</u>	<u>Note</u>
יֶעֱרֶף בְּמָטָר 2	אֲצִיָּה מִהֶמְטִיר עָלָיו מָטָר	Proximity of מָטָר to מִשְׁפָּט in both passages.
אָמוּנָה וְאֵין עֹל צְדִיק וַיֵּשֶׁר הוּא: הַצּוֹר תָּמִים פָּעִלָּו כִּי כָל־דִּרְכָּיו מִשְׁפָּט אֶל 4	וַיְקוּ לְמִשְׁפָּט	Description of YHWH: מִשְׁפָּט. Word use, מִשְׁפָּט.
קִנְיָה הוּא עֲשֵׂה וַיִּכְנֹג 6	Field work preparing for the vine	Possible association with קִנְיָה
כִּי חֶלֶק יְהוָה עָמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חִבֵּל נִחֲלָתוֹ: 9	שרק, Special vine planted in owner's plot, "חלקה."	Vine as special possession, people as inheritance. Possible hint בְּקֶרֶן בֶּן־שֹׁמֶן to "חלקה?"
יִסְבְּבֶנָּהוּ יְבוֹנְנֶהוּ יַצְרֶנָּהוּ כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינָו: 10	וַיַּעֲזֹקְהוּ וַיִּסְקֶלְהוּ וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שָׂרֶק	וַיַּעֲזֹקְהוּ — thrice repeated verbal ending, unique to these two passages.
כִּי־מִגֶּפֶן סֹדֶם גִּפְנִים וּמִשְׁדָּמָת עַמָּרָה 32 עֲנִיבָמוּ עֲנִיב־רוֹשׁ אֲשַׁכֵּלֶת מְרֹתָ לָמוֹ:	שרק as opposed to סֹדֶם	שרק as opposed to סֹדֶם. עֲנִיב־רוֹשׁ unusual expression, as is בְּאֲשִׁים. Both emphasise abhorrence.
		Form: <i>Rîb</i> lawsuit, but with modifications (?)
אִם־שְׁנוֹתַי בְּרֶק חֲרָבִי וְתֹאחֲזוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט 41 יְדֵי אֲשִׁיב נָקָם לְצָרִי וּלְמִשְׁנָאֵי אֲשֵׁלָם:	Judgment of YHWH upon his own people.	Irony of ending in light of intertextual relationship. Exactly <i>who</i> are the servants, and who are the enemies?

This table of intertextual associations highlights the fact that there are many points at which an association between the two passages may be made. A number of these possible associations are not strong, or perhaps one might even say a bit far-fetched, for example, the association between חלקה and קרן בן-שמן. Yet the associations listed include multiple possibilities in the categories described in Hibbard's methodology, shared vocabulary and thematic coherence. In addition, an intertextual relationship between the two passages adds meaning to both. As for this last category, the meaningfulness of the relationship, the parallel themes of the two passages highlight the irony of the ending of the Song of the Vineyard.

While the Song of Moses leaves some room for questioning exactly who YHWH's adversaries are, it is easy to assume when reading the passage that these enemies are a threat from outside the nation. The Song of the Vineyard leaves no room for doubt, however: in that passage, the adversaries are those *within Judah* who are perverting justice. Whether this is to be understood as referring to the entire nation or some sub-group within the nation is a matter that I discuss later both in this chapter and in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture of the passage. In both passages, YHWH is portrayed as a just god, expecting justice and recompensing those who are corrupt or unjust. Yet in the Song of the Vineyard, we see clearly that this god is not a tribal god acting always on behalf of his people. He acts on behalf of the just and against the unjust, even—or perhaps even especially—amongst his people.

### 4.3 YHWH and Israel the Vine(yard)

#### 4.3.1 Literary Progression and Rhetorical Functions

There are numerous references to grapes, vines and vineyards in the Hebrew Bible, some directly likening the people of YHWH to a vine or vineyard, others only tangentially so. In First Isaiah,

there are two significant vine passages in addition to the Song of the Vineyard: Isaiah 3:13-15 and 27:2-6. In the Book of Jeremiah, there are both major and minor references; in a passing comment, the devastations of the enemy upon Israel are likened to one passing through a vineyard gleaning the remnant of grapes (Jer 6:9). A similar comment is expressed in Micah 7:1-2.<sup>513</sup> Of more major significance in the Book of Jeremiah, however, is Jeremiah 2:21, which directly likens Israel to a vine planted by YHWH that then becomes defiled. Psalm 80:8-18 laments the destruction of the vine that YHWH had formerly loved and planted. Hosea 10:1-2 and Jeremiah 12:7-17 speak of the coming judgment on the vine for iniquity, while Ezekiel 19:10-14 relates to that judgment as an accomplished fact.

I stated previously that an earlier text cannot be historically dependent on a later one, intentionally drawing its images and meaning from a text that does not yet exist; yet intertextuality extends beyond the question of historical dependency. If late authorship of Isa 5:1-7 is accepted, as posed by Vermeulen and others, then the Song of the Vineyard could be historically dependent upon the above-cited texts for its images and meaning.<sup>514</sup> However, if

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<sup>513</sup> In his brief survey of minor passages, Howard Wallace also includes Jer 8:13, Hos 9:10, and Deut 32:33. Howard N. Wallace, "Harvesting the Vineyard: Development of Vineyard Imagery in the Hebrew Bible," in *Seeing Signals, Reading Signs: The Art of Exegesis*, , [not sure what the 'JSOTSup' refers to, but it shouldn't be necessary; you have all the elements needed already for an article in an anthology.] ed. Howard N. Wallace and Mark A. O'Brien (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 118.

<sup>514</sup> The use of intertextuality to determine historical dependency of texts is problematic, particularly in a society in which only a very small percentage of the populace were literate. The development of a working model to determine such relationships, if it is possible even to develop such a model, would be a complex undertaking well outside the scope of this thesis.

some or all of the above passages are later than the Song of the Vineyard, the relative dependencies, to the extent that they exist, would work in the reverse order. Entering into a lengthy discussion in this thesis of the dating of each of the relevant passages is not feasible, yet arbitrarily affixing dating order based on personal ideology is also not acceptable. Rather, I will take a literary approach, considering the rhetorical functions of the vinedresser-vineyard/vine imagery, and from those functions suggest a range of possible portrayals of YHWH resulting from the intertextual texture.

The rhetorical functions of the major YHWH-vineyard/vine passages can be arranged in the following schemata:

Rhetorical Portrayal 1: Judgment on the NationPassage(s)

YHWH plants vine(yard) became corrupt	Jer 2:21
YHWH plants vine(yard) became corrupt warning of judgment to come	Jer 12:7-17, Hos 10:1-2, though no mention of planting
YHWH plants, vine(yard) became corrupt, judgment came	Eze 19:10-14
YHWH plants Vine became corrupt judgment came (YHWH then defends against enemies.)	Deut 32 (Song of Moses)
YHWH plants Judgment came: Why? Pleas for restoration	Ps 80
YHWH defends and protects, promises restoration	Isa 27:2-6

Rhetorical Portrayal 2: Ruling elite IndictedPassage

YHWH defends against enemies.	Deut 32 (Song of Moses)
YHWH defends vine(yard), the common people, against enemies (the leaders)	Isa 3:13-15

The Song of Moses fits into the first schema of rhetorical progression, except for the question of the identity of the enemies, as discussed above. Isa 3:13-15 does not seem to fit into the first schema at all, as there is no mention of an enemy destroying the vineyard. On the contrary,

YHWH is characterised as the defender of the vineyard against the depredations of its own leaders. There is no mention of planting or of impending judgment, except that YHWH's "judging" (i.e. defending) the people implies judgment upon the leadership. These two passages, the Song of Moses and Isa 3:13-15, have in common the identity of the "enemies": they are not the nation as a whole (albeit with some question concerning the Song of Moses). These two passages together, then, can be seen as forming a second schema that gives rise to a different interpretive direction from the first. In the first, the passage is directed at the nation as a whole, with the topic being the pending or past judgment by YHWH upon the nation. The second directs the focus to the leadership.

While my interest is in the matrix of literary intertextual associations and their rhetoric, I think that a brief word about dating and dependency is in order. The passages in the schema that refer to judgment having already come depict a period, or periods, later than the world of the story of the Song of the Vineyard, which is the eighth century B.C.E. prior to the Assyrian invasion. The passages in the Book of Jeremiah that warn of judgment to come give their warning in reference to the Babylonians, not the Assyrians. The probable dating of the Book of Jeremiah would also indicate that if there is an historical intertextual dependency, it is because passages in that book draw upon the Song of the Vineyard.<sup>515</sup> Psalm 80 depicts a post-judgment world, asking why

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<sup>515</sup> I am stating a personal position on the relative dating of the two books. I think that the discovery of the Gamaryahu ben Shaphan bulla (along with bullae mentioning other personages referred to in the Book of Jeremiah) in the City of David Area G excavations is a significant indicator that the Book of Jeremiah was written not earlier than shortly before the Babylonian destructions of Jerusalem. Yigal Shiloh and David Tarler, "Bullae from the City of David," *BA* 49 (December, 1986): 204. In addition, I hold that the Song of the Vineyard as we have it today reflects an earlier *Vorlage*

YHWH has broken down the walls and allowed the enemy to destroy the vine. Judgment threatened or in progress, as depicted in the Song of the Vineyard, is now a past action, and the psalmist pleads for restoration.

The relationship between Isa 27:2-6, the vineyard passage in the Isaian Apocalypse (Isa 24-27), and the Song of the Vineyard, has been widely considered. In that passage, YHWH is portrayed as the defender of the nation whom he is restoring to fruitfulness, implying that judgment has passed. According to Hibbard, it is “almost universally accepted by exegetes” that the Song of the Vineyard and the Isaian Apocalypse are intertextually related, the latter drawing on the earlier Song of the Vineyard.<sup>516</sup> A common view is that Isa 27:2-6 is a “late theological reflection”<sup>517</sup> and a “direct reversal of the original Isaianic vineyard song.”<sup>518</sup> There are exceptions to this view, of course. For example, Vermeylen maintains that the Song of the Vineyard is of deuteronomistic composition. In this view, the Song of the Vineyard could

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and does not date as late as the Book of Jeremiah, though it may have gone through redaction after that time.

<sup>516</sup> Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 176-177. See footnote 42, p. 176 for an abbreviated list of scholars in addition to standard commentaries who hold to this position.

<sup>517</sup> Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39, New Century Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980): 219.

<sup>518</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, “New Gleanings from an Old Vineyard: Isa 27 Reconsidered,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, ed. Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 50. According to Sweeney, the Song of the Vineyard is generally viewed as Isaianic, while the Isaian Apocalypse dates to the post-exilic period.

conceivably postdate the Isaian Apocalypse. Nevertheless, the generally held position is that the Apocalypse passage draws on the Song of the Vineyard.

In Isa 27:2-6, YHWH undoes and restores much of the tearing down depicted in the Song of Vineyard passage. In the Song, YHWH tears down the wall of protection so any passing through may damage the vineyard. He allows briars and thorns to grow and ultimately does not send rain. In the Apocalypse, YHWH undoes each of these actions; he guards the vineyard day and night, goes to war against the briars and thorns, and waters it continually. The post-exilic world of the Isaian Apocalypse, if in fact the passage is post-exilic, provided a setting in which the writer could characterise YHWH as a restorer. The pre-exilic world would not be a setting in which such a characterisation would come to mind. The combination of these two texts highlights the role of setting in the formation of perceptions of YHWH. When the storm clouds of war are looming, YHWH is perceived as a righteous god bringing judgment for unrighteousness. When the setting is the dawning of new hope, this same god is perceived as a defender and restorer.

Isa 58:12 possibly may also be seen as part of the rhetoric of restoration related to the Song of the Vineyard. One of the judgments on the vineyard in the Isaiah 5 passage is that YHWH will break down (פרץ) the wall (גדר). The passage in Second Isaiah promises that if the nation will do righteousness—relieve oppression and break oppression and injustice—then the breaking down of the wall proclaimed in Isaiah 5 will be reversed: “You shall be called repairer (גדר) of the breach (פרץ) (Isa 58:12).” In this passage, as in Isaiah 27, one can see how the circumstances of the time of composition<sup>519</sup> become an important part of the perception of the character of YHWH.

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<sup>519</sup> This is assuming that Second Isaiah is post-exilic in composition.



The wording parallels and the thematic reversal of judgment in Isa 27:2-6 and 58:12 pointedly lead the reader to an intertextual association. These criteria—wording and thematic parallels—are two of Hibbard's three essential criteria for an intertextual relationship. The third is that the association must be meaningful, subjective though that determination may be. These two passages do lend further meaning to the Song of the Vineyard, particularly for the research question of this thesis. YHWH restores from judgment those who turn away from unrighteousness. In Isaiah 58, YHWH, who tore down the wall and destroyed the vineyard for producing stinking fruit, promises to watch over it and restore it that it may bloom and bear good fruit, providing that the condition of behavioural change is met. Tbófilo Orbiso's theological reflection on the Song of the Vineyard (discussed in the literature review) led him to a similar characterization of YHWH, apart from this intertextual consideration. He saw the song as open-ended, a call to repentance that judgment may be averted.<sup>520</sup>

The passage in the Isaian Apocalypse, however, states no prior condition; restoration is a sovereign divine act with no explanation or reason given. The reader is left to his or her own conclusions, which will be the product both of text and of personal ideology.

#### 4.3.2 Indictment of the Vineyard and Associations with Sodom

##### 4.3.2.a Associative Intertextual Relationships

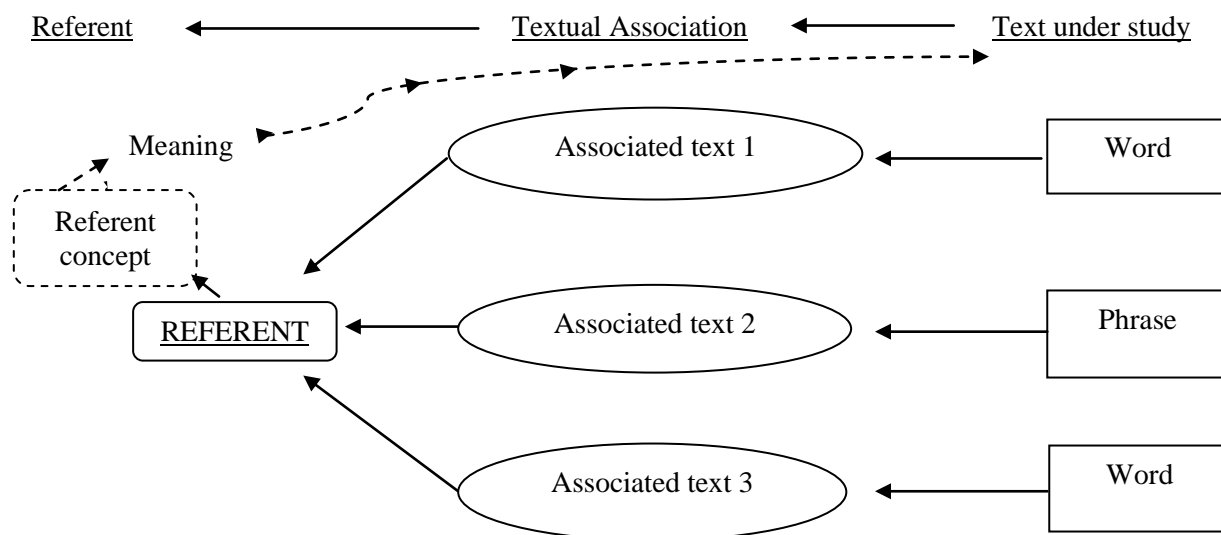
Intertextual possibilities extend beyond the technicalities of wording congruencies and demonstrable thematic agreements; they can also operate in the realm of the associative. A

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<sup>520</sup> Orbiso, Tbófilo. "El Cántico a la Viña del Amado (Is 5,1-7)." *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 34 (1960): 715-731.

combination of words or expressions can trigger associations that may at first not seem obvious, but which are operative either at the conscious or subconscious level. An intertextual possibility of this nature is just a possibility—it cannot be proven, and the words may not trigger the same associations for every individual.

In the chapter on methodology, I referenced Richards' theory of communication in relationship to metaphors, including a diagram of his semantic triangle. In that diagram, the symbol of a metaphor is connected to the referent through a thought of reference. A similar principle is operative in an associative intertextual relationship. The text may be any kind of writing, not necessarily a metaphor. Various words or phrases in the text bring to mind other texts that at first may seem to be completely unrelated, but each of which triggers an association. The matrix of these triggered associations gives rise to a referent. The intertextual relationship with that referent imparts meaning to the text, either by way of explaining the text or by giving added interpretive possibilities. In diagram form:



**Schema of Scattered Intertextual Relationships with One Referent**

#### 4.3.2.b Matrix of Associations with Sodom

The diagram above shows three different words or phrases that raise associations with three different texts. All of these texts, however, point to one referent idea. Whereas any one of the texts may spark the association in the mind of the reader, the matrix of the three strengthens the associative connection. In the Song of the Vineyard there is a matrix of associations with Sodom.

In the Isaian passage, YHWH's accusation against "בית ישראל ואנשי יהודה"<sup>521</sup> is that they have produced באשים, "stinking" grapes. The stinking grapes are explained a few verses later by the word "צעקה," an outcry, or shout. This word is first used in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah,

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<sup>521</sup> I leave this untranslated at this point because I want to consider its meaning later in this discussion.

where it is repeated three times.<sup>522</sup> The outcry is because of the “grave sin” of Sodom, and it comes to YHWH, who then checks into the matter. Upon reading the word “outcry,” a hearer/reader may readily make the association with Sodom because of this repeated usage in the Genesis narrative. This association would be the strongest in the matrix of associations between the Song of the Vineyard and Sodom, but not the only one.

If the word צעקה alone does not trigger the association between the Song of the Vineyard and Sodom, then the metaphorical expression for the outcry, the “stinking grapes,” may do so. Earlier I suggested that the phrase “grapes of poison” in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:32) was an unusual expression, like the unusual word, “stinking grapes,” that pointed to an intertextual relationship between the two passages. In the Song of Moses, the “grapes of poison” are in parallel construction with the vines and vineyards of Sodom and Gomorrah:

    Their vine comes from the vine-stock of Sodom,  
    from the vineyards of Gomorrah;  
    their grapes are grapes of poison,  
    their clusters are bitter.

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<sup>522</sup> Of the three references to the outcry of Sodom, the first is the verb זעקה, not צעקה. The lead consonants are very near equivalents in sound. Both are alveolar, meaning that the tongue is placed just behind the teeth at the alveolar ridge. The letter ז is non-fricative, meaning that the tongue does not touch the ridge, while the letter צ is fricative, making contact with the ridge. It is possible that the two words originated from one Proto-Semitic source word as a result of differing localized pronunciations, but that suggestion cannot be proven. According to *BDB*, 277, the words are parallel and interchangeable in meaning.

Thus, the phrase “grapes of poison” may bring to the mind of the reader the “vine-stock of Sodom.” Any reference, particularly one of an unusual nature, may provoke a string of associations, one association leading to the next. In this case, the word “stinking grapes,” באושים, associates with “grapes of poison,” אנבי-רוש. The “grapes of poison” are in parallel construction with the vine(yard)s of Sodom and Gomorrah, thus forming an association with Sodom via that intermediate passage:

Song of the Vineyard

Song of Moses

My Vineyard → “stinking grapes” = “grapes of poison” → Vine(yards) of Sodom

There is another indirect wording association that points to Sodom that forms part of this matrix of associations. As part of the verdict against the indicted vineyard, the wall is to be trampled. The Hebrew verb translated *trample* is not a commonly used one<sup>523</sup> but appears eight times in First Isaiah, most significantly in chapter one, verses 10 and 12:

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom!

Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! . . .

When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand?

Trample my courts no more . . .

This passage is a scathing indictment of the leaders of Jerusalem, certainly the priesthood and likely also the civil leadership. The ministrations and visitations to the holy temple are described as trampling, and the rulers doing the trampling are called the rulers of Sodom. Upon hearing or

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<sup>523</sup> The verb טָמַס in its various forms is used 26 times in the Hebrew Bible.

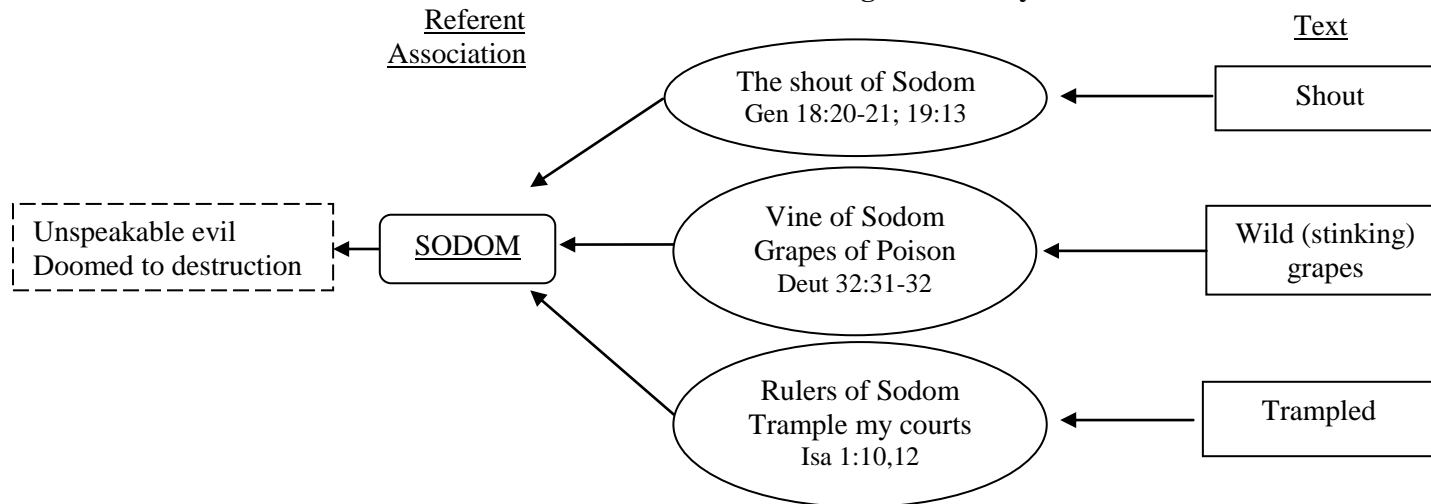
reading the word “trampling,” מרמס, in the Song of the Vineyard, it is possible that it would spark an association with this other First Isaian passage.<sup>524</sup>

The top diagram on the next page illustrates the matrix of the three associations between the Song of the Vineyard and Sodom. This basic matrix of associations can then give rise to a series of secondary associations, which are illustrated in the bottom diagram:

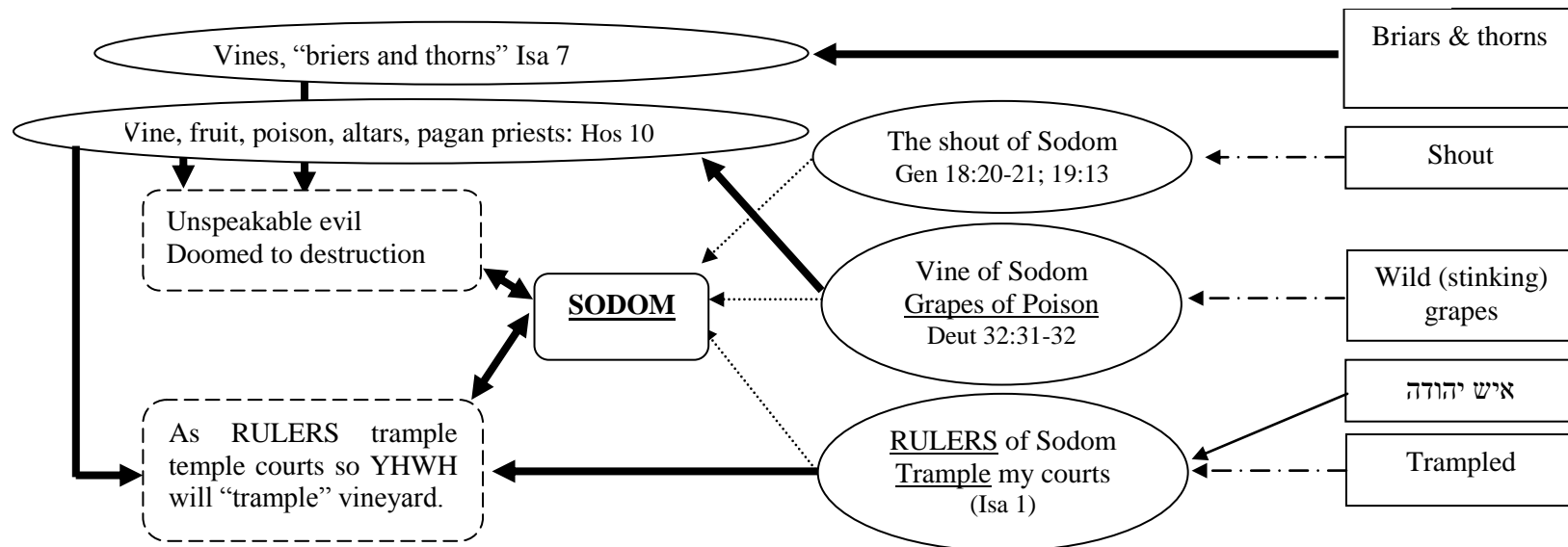
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<sup>524</sup> Nielsen notes that another possible association with the word מרמס is Isa 10:6, in reference to the King of Assyria trampling other nations. Kirsten Nielson, *There is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1989), 106.

### Associations: Song of the Vineyard & Sodom



### Song of the Vineyard & Sodom: Expanded Associations



The initial set of associations with Sodom leads to the thought of total destruction due to corruption. That idea resonates with another phrase in the Vineyard text, “briers and thorns,” שמיר ושית, and its intertextual associations. This expression is only used six other times in the Hebrew Bible, all in First Isaiah, and three of those six occurrences are in Isaiah 7:23-25.<sup>525</sup> The congruency between the two passages is much more robust than just the sharing of one unusual phrase, however. Both passages consider a common theme and share three wording elements:

Isaiah 5:5-6

Isaiah 7:23-25

<p>And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. . .</p> <p>I will break down its wall, and it shall be <u>trampled</u> down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or <u>hoed</u>, and it shall be overgrown with <u>briers and thorns</u> . . .</p>	<p>On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become <u>briers and thorns</u> . . . .</p> <p>all the land will be <u>briers and thorns</u>; and as for all the hills that used to be <u>hoed</u> with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of <u>briers and thorns</u>; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep <u>tread</u> (trample).</p>
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The context of Isaiah 7:23-25 is the invasion the king of Assyria as sent by YHWH to bring devastation upon the land. As noted earlier, YHWH is not portrayed as a tribal god who will defend his own people against every other tribe at all times. On the contrary, this is portrayed as

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<sup>525</sup> Kirsten Nielsen sees the expression as always carrying political overtones: “ A common feature of the figurative use of שמיר ושית is that a political code lies behind the use in all cases.” Nielson, *There is Hope for a Tree*, 106. I would differ with her interpretation based on her own argument, but the matter is not relevant to the discussion here.



having authority to call forth other tribes to mete out the same judgment upon his beloved vineyard that was meted out upon Sodom.

The association between Sodom and the Song of the Vineyard is significant because of the apparent place Sodom held in the mindset of the ancient Israelites. Sodom in Scripture stands as a representation of a situation in which the degree of moral depravity is so great that it calls forth the judgment of YHWH, and from time to time in the biblical corpus is referred to in that light. For example, the Book of Judges describes the corruption of the people of Israel in the time period before the kings, a depth of corruption that culminates in the sordid events of Judges 19:12-29. The passage appears to be intentionally worded as to be reminiscent of the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.<sup>526</sup> The event culminates in the death of a concubine as a result of repeated rape and abuse, leading ultimately to a civil war between the tribes of Israel. In a later period as well, the prophets on numerous occasions use Sodom as the example of moral depravity calling forth judgment.<sup>527</sup> The intertextual associations to Sodom in the Song of the Vineyard therefore bring forth two messages. First, the moral situation in the land is abominable, and second that unless there is a change, judgment is inevitable.

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<sup>526</sup> Compare Genesis 19:2-5 with Judges 19:18-22.

<sup>527</sup> In addition to the references in Isaiah cited above, see also Isa 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:45-50; and Amos 4:4-11. In a much later period, Jude 7 makes a similar reference. Although much later, it is possible that Jude preserves a very ancient tradition. For Sodom as a symbol of social injustice and moral depravity, see Niels-Erik Andreasen, "Town and Country in the Old Testament," *Encounter* 42 (1981): 268.

I discussed earlier in this thesis the “presumed intent” on the part of the reader as to the meaning of a passage: when a text seems to make a clear statement for an obvious reason, the reader assumes that he or she knows the intent of the writer. In the Song of the Vineyard, the “presumed intent” would be that the passage is a declaration of impending judgment from the hand of the god of Israel as a consequence of the nation’s unrighteousness. The intertextual relationships between the Song of the Vineyard, Sodom, and Isaiah 7:20-25 are in line with this presumed intent.

#### 4.3.3 Indictment of the Ruling Elite: YHWH Defends the People

The diagram of expanded associations in the Song of the Vineyard reveals the possibility of an interpretation of the passage that differs from the presumed intent. The word “trample” raises an association between the trampled vineyard (Isa 5:5) and the “rulers of Sodom,” who “trample” YHWH’s temple courts (Isa 1:12). The “rulers of Sodom” are a reference to the religious elite (and possibly also the administrative elite) class of Jerusalem.<sup>528</sup> In the review of the literature, I noted that Chaney argues that the term *אֵישׁ יְהוּדָה* is not to be understood as a general collective reference to the nation, but rather a reference to the ruling elite of Jerusalem.<sup>529</sup> If the phrase *אֵישׁ יְהוּדָה* is understood in this way, the association between the trampling in the Song of the Vineyard and the rulers trampling the courts of YHWH is strengthened. This reading places YHWH’s indictment in the Song of the Vineyard primarily, if not exclusively, on the ruling elite. Adding additional strength to the association is Hosea 10:1-8. In that passage, the prophet uses

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<sup>528</sup> The reference to sacrifices (1:11) and the courts (*הֶחָצֵר*) point to the priesthood.

<sup>529</sup> Marvin L. Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?: The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 109-112.

the imagery of “briars and thorns” growing on altars to depict the coming judgment. The primary indictment in this passage is against a corrupted religious system and corrupt civil leadership, citing pagan altars, idolatrous priests and unjust litigation. While the prophecy is directed at the northern kingdom and not Judah, as evidenced by the references to Samaria, Beth Aven, and Ephraim in the verses that follow;<sup>530</sup> yet it is clearly directed at the ruling elite of Judah’s sister nation.

#### 4.3.3.a Isaiah 3:13-15

13 The Lord rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples.	13 נָצַב לְרִיב יְהוָה וְעָמַד לִדְיֹן עַמִּים:
14 The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.	14 יְהוָה בְּמִשְׁפָּט יָבֹא עִם־זִקְנֵי עַמּוֹ וְשָׂרָיו וְאַתֶּם בְּעֵרְתֶּם הַכֶּרֶם גִּזְלַת הָעֲנִי בְּבֵתֵיכֶם:
15 What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.	15 מַלְכֶם תִּדְכְּאוּ עַמִּי וּפָנֵי עֲנִיִּים תִּטְחֲנוּ נֹאֵם־אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ס

The interpretation above that the Song of the Vineyard is an indictment of the elite is by intertextual associative inference, not by explicit statement. Isaiah 3:13-15, however, explicitly declares that YHWH has a *rîb* with the leaders of the people. The thematic congruence between the two passages is obvious, as evidenced by the common elements, YHWH and a vineyard that is precious to YHWH; a common form, a *rîb*; and word congruencies, משפט and בער. The

<sup>530</sup> Chaney maintains that אנשי יהודה are the leaders of Judah, while בית ישראל refers to the entire northern kingdom. Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes,” 116.

apparent primary difference between the two passages is significant: the passage in Isaiah 3 explicitly states that the vineyard is specified as the common people, and the enemy is the leadership class.

Isaiah 3:13-15 does not follow the normal *rîb* pattern, however, opening with an indictment, followed by an interpretation, and closing with the judicial sentence.<sup>531</sup> Gerald Sheppard's explanation for this structural anomaly is that Isaiah 3:13-15 and Isaiah 5:1-7 were originally one passage but later separated in the Assyrian Redaction. In table form, Sheppard's reconstruction is as follows:<sup>532</sup>

Isaiah 3:13-15 and 5:1-7 according to Sheppard

<u>Verses</u>	<u>Function</u>
5:1-2	Parable
judgment	(implied on part of the audience)
3:13-14	Interpretation
3:15	Indictment
5:7	further interpretation
5:3-4	summons to judge in light of the interpretation
5:5-6	Sentence

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<sup>531</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, "The Anti-Assyrian Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1-39," *JBL* 104 (1985): 45.

<sup>532</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Juridicial Parable," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 45-47.

Sheppard's reconstruction is possible, though there are certain weaknesses in his argument.<sup>533</sup> In his reconstruction, Sheppard sees Isaiah 3:15, the portion detached from the Song of the Vineyard, as the explanation of the meaning of the Song. In other words, Sheppard would see meaning imparted to the Song of the Vineyard not through an intertextual relationship with Isaiah 3:13-15, but rather through the fact that they were originally one passage. In Sheppard's reconstruction, the interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard is unambiguous: the accusation in a *rib* is against the leaders, a message that is not clear when Isaiah 5:1-7 is viewed alone.

Sheppard's explanation is not the only possible view of the meaning of the Song of the Vineyard in light of the intertextual relationship between these two Isaian passages. Marvin Chaney considered the Song of the Vineyard from a variety of perspectives and arrived at the same conclusion as did Sheppard, that the indictment is against the leaders of the people, not the nation as a whole. Chaney included Isaiah 3:13-15 as one of many Isaian passages that point to the people being the victims and the leaders as the perpetrators of manifold evil.<sup>534</sup> One of his main arguments that the Song of the Vineyard is to be understood in this way is from a lexicographical perspective:

The morphologically singular **יָשָׁב**, **אִישׁ**, and **בֵּית** can all carry a collective sense, as a glance at any of the full-dress lexica will demonstrate. The terms' collective meanings in certain other passages have allowed to go unchallenged their being so understood in Isaiah's parable. But

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<sup>533</sup> See full discussion in the Literature Review chapter.

<sup>534</sup> Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes," 109-112.

perusal of the more recent lexica reveals another, equally significant fact—each of the terms in question can and does refer to royal and/or elite figures.<sup>535</sup>

The literary setting of the Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah 5:8-10, would indicate that the redactors of the chapter also understood the indictment in the Song in this same way, as an indictment against the ruling class. In these verses, the wealthy class is disinheriting the common people, assuming their lands to make large agricultural estates. However, if the accusation of the Song of the Vineyard is directed at the leadership elite, then why do other passages that almost certainly draw their imagery from the Song of the Vineyard (Jer 2:21, Jer 12:7-17, Ps 80, Ezek 19:10-14) use that imagery to bewail corruption and judgment on the nation as a whole?

Kirsten Nielsen points out that a characteristic of the interpretation of the prophetic message is that it is subject to re-interpretation at different times under different circumstances:

The central apophthegm, often worded in imagery, can be reused in new situations, exposed to reinterpretation of various kinds, and in individual cases give grounds for a production of new text.<sup>536</sup>

The writings of Jeremiah, Psalms, and Ezekiel all represent later periods and different situations from the pre-Assyrian invasion of Israel and Judah. According to Chaney, the primary new situation that arises at the time of later writings and redaction is the prevailing emphasis on the national identity:

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<sup>535</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes,” 112.

<sup>536</sup> Nielson, *There is Hope for a Tree*, 253. By “new text,” Nielsen means Isa 27:2-6.

[T]he polemical focus of the text's (re)composition—in the face of strong, countervailing forces—was upon national identity and unity. Under such circumstances, earlier prophetic judgments were understood to presage and explain the fall of the monarchic nation-states of Israel and Judah.<sup>537</sup>

Chaney further notes that as modern-day readers, the dominance of nation-states has made it “congenial” for us to read the passage as a statement directed toward the nation as a whole.<sup>538</sup> I would agree with Chaney's assessment.

#### 4.3.3.b Naboth's Vineyard

In her 2000 essay “Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible,” Kirsten Nielsen explored the possible intertextual relationship between the Song of the Vineyard and the account of Naboth's Vineyard.<sup>539</sup> According to Nielsen, a possible clue that the two may be related is the common introduction, כִּרְמֵם הִיא לֵ. Nielsen additionally maintains that the word “vineyard” often carries a significance beyond just an agricultural plot; often, it is a “marker,” alerting the reader to intertextual associations with other vineyards. She then states that the physical location, close to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria, suggests proximity to the hills of Samaria. Here her argument breaks down somewhat. While it is true that Ahab's palace (today, Tel Jezreel) is close to the mountains of Samaria, it is in the plain of the Jezreel Valley. The outstanding feature of the area is the low-lying, flat plain, not the nearby mountains. The palace in Jezreel was Ahab's secondary, winter palace; the main palace was in the capital city Samaria, nestled in the heart of

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<sup>537</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes,” 118.

<sup>538</sup> Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes,” 118.

<sup>539</sup> Nielsen, “Intertextuality,” 23-26.

the northern mountains. If any association with mountains was intended, then the main palace would have been a more appropriate location for the account narrative.

Nielsen then makes a connection via wordplay between the mountains of Samaria and Isaiah 5:1:

In Isaiah chapter 5 verse 1 the vineyard is localised to “a fertile hillside,” קרן בן-שמן. From the depiction of Samaria in Isaiah chapter 28 verses 1 to 4 we know that the valleys of Samaria were indeed “fertile” “גיא שמנים.” Again at this point a dialogue arises between the text of Naboth’s vineyard, which lies close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria and Isa 5:1, where the locality of the vineyard, via a wordplay, can give associations with Samaria.<sup>540</sup>

The phrase גיא שמנים refers to the valleys of Samaria, however the Jezreel Valley, the site of Naboth’s vineyard, is not generally considered a Samaritan valley. Though politically part of the Kingdom of Israel, whose capital was in Samaria, it is a geographic region of its own forming the northern boundary of Samaria and the southern reaches of Lower Galilee. The geographic reality does not quite match with Nielsen’s assessment. I think that a greater problem, however, is drawing a parallel between גיא שמנים and קרן בן-שמן, and I would not see it as evidence of one passage hinting toward the other; to me the language association is too weak. Yet I do appreciate the spirit in which she offers the suggestion: as she says, “[t]o what extent we can use this observation I am not honestly sure.”<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> Nielsen, “Intertextuality,” 25.

<sup>541</sup> Nielsen, “Intertextuality,” 25.



On the one hand, I would not see a scribal intertextual relationship<sup>542</sup> between the texts in light of the two weaknesses that I point out above. Nevertheless, I think Nielsen has a salient point in her conclusion. She sees the Ahab-Naboth incident, along with Isaiah 5:8 (joining house to house), as interpreting the meaning of the expression “wild grapes,” the seemingly unrequited misappropriation of peasants’ lands by the rich and powerful. This phenomenon apparently was common in both the ninth century northern kingdom as well as the Kingdom of Judah, a century later.<sup>543</sup>

The narrative of Naboth’s Vineyard depicts the character of monarchical reign in two different ways, pointing toward what a monarchy should be versus what it is in reality. Ahab wants the vineyard; he is the king, and kings generally can do whatever they please. But Ahab does not take the vineyard by force when it is refused to him. In this, he exemplifies what a monarchy should be. However, Jezebel takes the vineyard for him, committing murder in the process. Although Jezebel commits the act, Ahab, as king, is guilty for allowing the act, or for not bringing her to justice after the fact. The unjust appropriation of land does not need to be accomplished by the hand of the monarch for its shared guilt to be laid at the monarch’s feet. The appropriation of the vineyard and in particular the means by which it is appropriated, illustrate monarchy as it had become in reality.

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<sup>542</sup> The term “scribal intertextual relationship” means one existing between written texts, and it is this sense in which I have been using the term “intertextuality” throughout this chapter (see the chapter on Methodology for further discussion).

<sup>543</sup> I discuss latifundialization in the chapter on socio-cultural texture..

I stated above that the misappropriation of lands was “seemingly” unrequited, but it is in just this point that we gain insight into a characterisation of YHWH in both the narrative of Naboth’s Vineyard and the Song of the Vineyard. Jezebel acquires the land on Ahab’s behalf through false accusation and murder. At first, perhaps, she seems to get away with it since the king does not call her to account. However, Elijah comes with a message from YHWH that the deed has not gone unnoticed, that she would pay with her life for her evil, and that she would be disinherited, as it were, even from a decent burial. YHWH does not overlook her evil. The Song of the Vineyard renders the same characterisation of YHWH as a god of justice: there will be a direct correspondence between evil done and recompense received, though that recompense may be somewhat slow in coming.

#### 4.4 YHWH the Lover/Husband of Israel

##### 4.4.1 The Problem of Ideology

The ideology of the interpreter is an important factor in every perceived portrayal of YHWH, but perhaps nowhere more so than in the portrayal of YHWH as lover/husband. For example, ideological perspectives lead one female scholar to view the prophets’ portrayal of YHWH as an abusive husband for whom “physical abuse is God’s way of reasserting his control over the woman,”<sup>544</sup> while another female scholar maintains that such a view is “unacceptably

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<sup>544</sup> Cheryl J. Exum, *Plotted, Shot and Painted: Cultural Representation of Biblical Women* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996): 112.

simplistic.”<sup>545</sup> I cite two female authors to highlight that the problem in this case is not gender-based at its root, but ideological, although it is true that ideological positions generally may tend to fall along gender lines.

While on the topic of ideology, it would be academically dishonest of me to be silent on the role my own personal ideology plays in my approach to the topic. I hold to a view of the God of the Bible as being utterly good and the source of all goodness. In my view, any vision that we as humans may have of a perfect lover/husband in his selfless caring for the woman is but a shadow of the character of the God of the Bible. (In the same way, I see the mother-female aspect of the God of the Bible as being perfect in care and love.) Because of this belief, I would have a predisposition to reject out of hand a characterisation of YHWH as a wife-beater or as anything less than perfectly good in his relationship to women. I recognise this pre-existing ideology, confessing that it necessarily influences my view of the biblical text. Yet having done so, I recognise the need to be open to other viewpoints.

YHWH is described as both lover and husband to Israel explicitly and implicitly and through a variety of images throughout the Hebrew Bible. This portrayal has been recognised and discussed by countless scholars from a multitude of perspectives. The question under discussion at present is the portrayal of YHWH as lover/husband of Israel in the Song of the Vineyard as

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<sup>545</sup> Peggy L. Day, “Yahweh’s Broken Marriages as Metaphoric Vehicle in the Hebrew Bible Prophets,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 119-120.

other intertextually related passages shed light on it. The main passage that does so is the Song of Solomon.<sup>546</sup>

#### 4.4.2 YHWH as Lover: The Song of Solomon

Let me sing for my beloved (יְדִידִי)  
my love-song (שִׁירַת דָּוִד) concerning his vineyard (Isa 5:1)

##### 4.4.2.a Interpretive Modes

Many commentators have written on the usage of the terms יְדִידִי and דָּוִד in the Song of the Vineyard, and that question has been considered earlier in this thesis. Some scholars take the words to have different meanings, while others see the two terms as synonymous.<sup>547</sup> Regardless of the difficulties involved in these two words, the opening line of the Song of the Vineyard leads the reader to an intertextual association with the Song of Solomon through the use of the word דָּוִד, where the word appears thirty-nine times. In the rest of the Hebrew Bible, the word is

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<sup>546</sup> Another major passage that portrays YHWH as the husband of Israel is Hosea 2:1-13. Meir Malul sees a parallel between the tearing down of the vineyard and the stripping of the woman, “מה בין פריצת הגדר במשל הכרם לבין הפשטת האישה העירומה במקרא?” *Beit Mikra* (2005): 11-24. There is no language congruence between the two passages, however, shame and honor is a background theme in both. I consider that theme in the chapter on the socio-cultural texture of the text.

<sup>547</sup> For those who have taken the words to have different meanings, see John T. Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 337-362. Carrie Walsh, on the other hand, sees them as synonymous, Walsh, *Viticulture*, 91, citing *TDOT* 3:143.

used almost exclusively to mean “uncle,”<sup>548</sup> but in the Song of Solomon it is used solely in a romantic context. A further intertextual association between the two passages comes through the use of the term “my vineyard,” כרמי. The expression appears three times in the Song of Solomon (1:6 twice, 8:12). The only other usages are 1 Kings 21:6, Naboth’s refusal to sell Ahab his vineyard, and Jer 12:10, a reference to armies trampling the vineyard of YHWH.

Many interpretive positions have been taken as regards the Song of Solomon. The Jewish and Christian worlds historically have read the work allegorically, depicting the love between YHWH and Israel or Jesus and the church. Others have seen the work as a wedding song, or a collection of wedding songs praising the bride,<sup>549</sup> or the depiction of a divine-royal wedding.<sup>550</sup> Others, particularly more recently, have interpreted it as an expression of delight in human

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<sup>548</sup> Nineteen of the remaining twenty-one usages of the word נון mean “uncle.” The three times it carries another meaning, apart from Isa 5:1, refer to sexual love: Prov 7:18; Ezek 16:6, 23:17. Only in the Song of the Vineyard does the word (apparently) refer to YHWH.

<sup>549</sup> Helmer Ringgren likens these poems to the Arabic *wasf*, “The Marriage Motif in Ancient Israelite Religion,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 422.

<sup>550</sup> For a survey of this topic, see Martti Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 173-218.

sexuality.<sup>551</sup> Regardless of how one views the piece, there is sufficient internal evidence to claim that the relationship depicted is between lovers, not husband and wife.<sup>552</sup>

#### 4.4.2.b Sacred (Divine) Marriage and Human Love

In the Song of the Vineyard, the owner of the vineyard, the יידי of the singer, is a divine being, while the object of the song (the vineyard) belongs to him. This portrayal points to the image of cultic marriages, the marriage between god and goddess or between the divinity and a human party.<sup>553</sup> In this latter case, the divinity is portrayed as the male partner and the human as the female. The nature of the relationship in both these cases mirrors the human in patriarchal societies, with the male being dominant. Yet in this relationship the female “is not a passive and submissive object of the male deity’s sexual needs but a partner in a mutual love affair, often

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<sup>551</sup> Carey Ellen Walsh is particularly explicit in her portrayal of the sexual imagery in her book *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Solomon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 81-94; 129-132.

<sup>552</sup> David M. Carr and Colleen M. Conway, “Constructions of Gender and ‘Bodies’,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 281-282. Carr and Conway cite the following evidences: the lover and beloved do not live together, are not able to appear together in public, and their love is depicted as forbidden and therefore intense. In addition, the terms used are terms for lovers, not the terms for husband and wife.

<sup>553</sup> Although the Song of Solomon portrays lovers rather than a married couple, the background of the Near Eastern cultic marriage provides a background framework through which such a relationship between deity and human can be understood.

taking the initiative and speaking with her own voice as the subject of her own desires.”<sup>554</sup> This imagery fits the love poetry of the Song of Solomon in which the female openly expresses her yearnings. “Within the poetic world of the Song of Songs, the erotic partnership involves a mutual belonging: Woman belongs to man *and* man to woman.”<sup>555</sup>

It would not be correct to categorically state that the cultic wedding genre is the proper interpretive lens through which to view the Song of Solomon. On the contrary, as Nissinen points out,

[t]oday sacred marriage theory is presented by many as an obsolete curiosity in the Song of Songs’ history of research. In its classic appearance, the theory of the origin of the Song of Songs in the Sumerian-Canaanite sacred marriage can indeed be seen as a discarded point of view. However, the problem of the Song of Songs and the sacred marriage is not yet solved.<sup>556</sup>

Although the Song of Solomon perhaps cannot be strictly classed as an ancient Near East cultic marriage, the love imagery between the two parties and the social intertextual background of this cosmic view is relevant to its intertextual relationship with the Song of the Vineyard. According to Nissinen, the sacred marriage ritual between the divine and the human had an important social function as “a symbol of an intimate connection between the divine and human worlds,” a connection that secured blessings for both parties.<sup>557</sup> This

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<sup>554</sup> Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” 161-162.

<sup>555</sup> Carr and Conway, “Constructions of Gender,” 281.

<sup>556</sup> Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” 193.

<sup>557</sup> Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” 202.

cosmic relationship, whether between god and goddess or god and human agent, is not just a reflection of the viewpoint of gender and erotic sex in a patriarchal society:

Rather, sex and love are the best possible metaphors for divine-human communication and union, on an institutional as well as an individual level. Because love in itself is a metaphor for this union, love poetry does not need to employ religious vocabulary or to explicitly mention divine actors to be read as a description of the relationship between God and people especially if a long-standing cultural memory supports a reading of this sort.<sup>558</sup>

The human sexual relationship is an appropriate expression in a number of ways to depict a metaphysical union between the divine and the human. As Carey Walsh puts it, “Sexuality projects us into the world as living participants and we, since we are not alone, always have to negotiate our spacing with others. From this condition stems desire, the urge to go beyond oneself.”<sup>559</sup> Sexual union can, of course, be a supreme expression of selfishness: the “other” is the object one uses for one’s own pleasure. Or, sexual union can be a supreme expression of selfless love, a reaching out toward the other for the sake of the other. In this latter case, both benefit.

In the Song of the Vineyard, the deity is depicted as the husbandman of the vineyard. I use the term husbandman here rather than vintner, vinedresser, or owner, because I think it most accurately portrays the image projected by the passage. The term implies more than just a farmer or employee working land, but rather a more intimate and meaningful relationship. In addition, in light of the patriarchal society in which this Song was constructed and the social background

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<sup>558</sup> Nissinen, “Song of Songs and Sacred Marriage,” 215.

<sup>559</sup> Walsh, *Exquisite Desire*, 89.



mentioned above, I think it is reasonable to read the text with this male-female portrayal. The verb tenses of the passage also indicate such a reading. Beyond that technical matter, however, is the very picture that is portrayed, a picture of care on the part of the initiating party, the husbandman, and the response of the vine. The Song of the Vineyard is not the only passage that portrays a male-female type relationship between vines and vintners. In her study on viticulture, Walsh discerns a male-female aspect between vines and their keepers in the deuteronomistic commandments. Citing the three cases in the Torah for which a man may be exempted from military service—having a new home, a new vineyard or a new wife<sup>560</sup>—and considering the use of the word ללל in these and other passages, she concludes:

A vineyard, in other words, might be considered just as virginal as the new wife a farmer would enjoy. Enjoying its fruit for the first time is an anticipated pleasure and even human right, along with enjoying one's new house and wife. All three pleasures are grounds for military exemption and become targets of threat in punishment oracles.<sup>561</sup>

The term “husbandman,” as I use it, implies care, not ownership. The picture of husbandman and vineyard is not one of owner to donkey, for example; rather, that of the caring one who lovingly tends and the vine which (or, in the metaphor, who) responds to that care. A vineyard is not like a field that is just plowed, planted and harvested; nor is a vine like grain that is sown, harvested, then dies. A vineyard is cared for, and the vines grow and develop in return. The result of this husbandman-vineyard relationship is to the benefit of both parties: the vine flourishes under the husbandman's care and therefore freely yields its (her) fruit that he desires. In the Song of

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<sup>560</sup> Deut 20:6-7.

<sup>561</sup> Walsh, *Viticulture*, 74.

Solomon, the female says that her vineyard is her own to give (8:12); she is not forced, but willingly and freely she gives it to the one whom she loves because of his care of her.<sup>562</sup>

The Song of Solomon, though perhaps not a cultic wedding poem, a deity uniting with a human, is reflective of that social background and can, to a certain extent, be viewed in that light. It can also be viewed as an erotic relationship between a man and a woman. The Song of the Vineyard depicts the male-female relationship in terms of deity as husbandman and nation as vineyard. These interpretive modes are very different in their approaches, but they are similar in one important aspect. In all these interpretations, the male is the initiator, the female the respondent, yet the relationship expresses mutuality—both parties have a voice,<sup>563</sup> both parties desire the relationship, and both parties benefit when the relationship is in order.

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<sup>562</sup> One of the characteristics of a vine that makes it appropriate for its metaphorical use as the female partner of a union is its responsiveness to tending or lack thereof. I would disagree with Weems, who suggests that the vine is used metaphorically to depict Israel because of its stubborn and uncontrollable nature, and therefore, “A statement such as ‘Israel is a vine’ is able to picture Israel as uncontrollable and pretentious in a way that no other metaphor can.” Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 24. The chief irony of the Song of the Vineyard is that the vine behaves contrary to the nature of things: though it was tended, it did not respond but produced באושים.

<sup>563</sup> The fact that both parties have a voice and the female freely expresses her desire is easily discernible in the text. However, The Song of Solomon should not be viewed as a reflection of a typical male-female relationship in the ancient Near East. In terms of textual preservation of that ancient culture it is an exception and not the rule.

#### 4.4.2.c Tearing Down the Vineyard from a Sacred Marriage Perspective

Carey Walsh's Harvard series monograph on viticulture is the published version of her Harvard PhD. thesis and is probably the most extensive work on viticulture in ancient Israel ever written. Her only comment concerning the tearing down of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7 is that it is "an expression of passion disappointed."<sup>564</sup> It certainly is that. Yet it is more than that; there is something fundamentally, even cosmically, wrong about the relationship described in the pericope when viewed from the perspective of a sacred marriage. Is it conceivable in the deity-human union that the human should spurn the initiative and the goodness of the deity and despise the relationship, as evidenced by the באושים she produces? Is it conceivable that in the romantic/erotic love scenario, the recipient of such love should demonstrate such despite for everything the lover values? Well-tended vines respond and produce sweet grapes and fragrant wine; it is contrary to nature that a vine should do otherwise. In light of these images, the behaviour of the vine in the Song of the Vineyard is beyond reprehensible; it is inconceivable. In a certain sense, there has been a destructive violation of cosmic order. Such "wrongness" can only lead to chaos and destruction, almost as if the tearing down of the vineyard was an accomplished fact by virtue of the behaviour of the vine, even before the husbandman himself tore it down.

I have left myself open to the accusation of a male-gender ideological reading, placing all blame on the female party, the vine. I acknowledge that it would be possible to read my comments as justifying violent male behaviour while blaming the female partner for the male's violence. I also acknowledge (in the footnote below) the dangers of the metaphorical picture of a male deity and

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<sup>564</sup> Walsh, *Viticulture*, 90.

a female Israel.<sup>565</sup> It is not at all my intent in this rather “risky” metaphorical picture to present a

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<sup>565</sup> The divine-human/male-female marriage metaphor is problematic and, to use Renita Weems’s terminology, risky. It is outside the scope of this thesis to enter into detailed discussion of the question, but it should not be ignored. Weems states the problem in her work on Gomer: “[E]levating the marriage metaphor, or any other metaphor for that matter, to the level of ‘super model’ presents serious problems for biblical and systematic theology. . . Does the fact that the marriage metaphor is ‘only a metaphor’ and the motif of sexual violence ‘only a theme of the metaphor’ insulate them from serious theological scrutiny? . . . For in order for the metaphor to make sense, to be exegetically meaningful, the exegete must discern some thread of similarity between the metaphor and the thing signified. . . . The problem arises when the metaphor ‘succeeds,’ meaning that the reader becomes so engrossed in the pathos and the details of the metaphor that the dissimilarities between the two are disregarded. . . . In this case, a risky metaphor gives rise to a risky deduction: here, to the extent that God’s covenant with Israel is like a marriage between a man and a woman, then a husband’s physical punishment against his wife is as warranted as God’s punishment of Israel. It is the risk of oversimplification and rigid correspondence. It is a risk that we ought always be on guard against. In fact, while the strength of the marriage metaphor is its ability to tell us about YHWH’s love, anguish, jealousy, and forgiving nature, it is not capable of shedding any light on the question of divine retribution.” Renita J. Weems, “Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor,” *Semeia* 47 (1989): 100.

Peggy Day concludes that those who read in the metaphorical marriage texts a justification of violence in the marriage relationship do so by making the error that Weems warns against. Such interpretations are “unacceptably simplistic,” are derived from “misunderstandings of the figurative nature of the language of the texts in question,” and are a “hermeneutically disastrous literalization of the figurative language of these passages.” Day, “Yahweh’s Broken Marriages,” 219-221.

justification or condemnation of any male-female behaviour. Rather, my point is to depict a situation in which the tearing down of the vineyard is much more than “an expression of passion disappointed.” If the husbandman were to tear down the vineyard simply because of disappointed passion, I would see the action as verging on the berserk and as male passion spun wildly, violently out of control. It is unquestionably true that such things did (and do) happen, and even ancient deities were not exempt from such behaviour. Robert Carroll characterises YHWH as a bezerker god from the imagery of food and drink in the prophetic writings,<sup>566</sup> and one could make a case based on the tearing down of the vineyard that this characterisation is an appropriate one. The portrayal I am describing is that of a cosmic violation that has occurred, triggering inevitable results. In that light, when we judge between the husbandman and the vineyard, we must ask, “What more could he have done that was not done?” So what must now *inevitably* happen? The issue is not passion; it is inevitability. Because YHWH is a deity of justice, the ongoing despising of his initiating love through prolonged injustice will inevitably result in destruction. It cannot be otherwise.

#### 4.5 Summary

The Song of the Vineyard is built on the basic metaphor of YHWH as husbandman and Israel as vine(yard). The agricultural setting of the ancient Israelite world and the metaphor-rich literature of that world give rise to a colourful and rich portrayal of the metaphysical relationship between YHWH and the nation, a portrayal that is repeated in various ways throughout the Hebrew Bible. The metaphor depicts an intimacy that goes beyond mere sowing and harvesting, instead

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<sup>566</sup> Robert P. Carroll, “YHWH’s Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible,” *Semeia*, 86 (1999): 113-131.

describing an ongoing relationship that endures year after year. The husbandman plants, defends, tends, and cares for the vine, as one familiar with viticulture would well know. However, in the Song of the Vineyard, the husbandman tears down the vineyard, an act that seems virtually incomprehensible.

YHWH as the planter of Israel is a repeating theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, with perhaps the earliest reference being the Song of the Reed Sea. This passage follows a thematic development that parallels that of the Song of the Vineyard: YHWH drives out obstacles (enemies), then plants and establishes his people, that they might bring honour to the one who has done these things. In light of this development, the end of the Song of the Vineyard is particularly ironic—and tragic. The nation that was planted and tended did not bring honour to their god; rather, through injustice, they defamed him.

The theme of YHWH as the planter of Israel is also central to the Song of Moses. In addition to that basic theme, multiple word and form congruencies exist between that passage and the Song of the Vineyard. In the Song of Moses, as in the Song of the Vineyard, the nation, YHWH's planting, produced fruit, but the fruit was vile: "grapes of poison" from the "vines of Sodom." In the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH promises judgment upon those who produce such fruit. However, a study of the intertextual relationship between the two passages leads to two possibilities as to the party of reference: it may be the entire nation, as seems to be the "presumed intent" of the passage, or it may be the upper social strata within the society and not the nation as a whole. It is not completely clear whether the enemies in the Song of Moses are external or internal; if internal, is it the entire nation or a certain sector of society within it? Similarly, it is not clear who the indicted parties are in YHWH's *rîb* in Isaiah 5. Isaiah 3:13-15,

on the other hand, is unambiguous; YHWH's indictment is against the social elite who are oppressing the common people.

One possible reading of the Song of the Vineyard leaves the matter of judgment open-ended. It is not a foregone conclusion; judgment will be inevitable if the situation is not rectified, but the vineyard, metaphorically, may choose to repent of its production of bad fruit. Other than that possibility, however, there is no ray of hope in the Song of the Vineyard, and there is no hint of a future restoration. On the contrary, the intertextual hints and associations with Sodom portray a picture that is bleak in the extreme. In the Hebrew Bible, Sodom stands as a symbol for the deepest depths of depravity that call forth the judgment of YHWH. There is no escaping this judgment, and there is no restoration following it; it is total and final. Various words and phrases in the Song of the Vineyard weave a web of associations with Sodom that seem to give no hope. Yet when the intertextual associations with passages of restoration, Isaiah 58:12 and Isaiah 27:2-6, are incorporated, the picture takes on a more hopeful cast.

The imagery of deity as husbandman and vineyard producing fruit sweeps the reader into textual and social intertextual association with cultic and romantic love. The relationship is fraught with an emotional load that transcends a mere theological reading. Love is passionate. When all is well in a relationship, the passion is pleasant to a point almost defying description. Tragically, in real human relationships, however, when all is not well, violence can be one of the passions in a love-gone-bad relationship. That human reality is used as a metaphorical picture to communicate the depth of displeasure and the subsequent actions of YHWH toward his beloved vineyard. While this metaphor has been read by some to depict a male-gone-wild god imagined by a patriarchal society, it may be seen as a rhetorical trope to express YHWH's reaction to the horrors of injustice. How can a god not only allow his people to be trampled by an enemy, but

even *invite* the enemy to do so? Such is the inevitable action of a just and even loving god in response to the horrors of injustice committed by his own people, since destruction and pain are inevitable consequences of such ongoing behaviour.

Historically, judgment came upon Judah in the form of the Assyrian invasions, and later writers responded in various ways to that event. The writer of Psalm 90 is confounded, asking how YHWH could allow his beloved vine to suffer such devastations and pleading for restoration. The writer makes no connection between the devastations that have occurred and the reason for them. The writer of Isaiah 27:2-6 proclaims that that hope of restoration will be fulfilled, in keeping with the tone and meaning of the passage in which it is set, the “Isaian Apocalypse.” In this passage of hope, YHWH is again seen as a defender of the nation. Any indictments that the deity had against his vineyard are long past. Once again, the vineyard is his beloved, and he is hers.



## **5.0 The Socio-Cultural Texture of the Text**

בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד-מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכַלְמָה

*Psalms 4:2*

A written text establishes its own world, created through the use of rhetoric, sounds, and the symbolic value of words. In addition, as noted in the last chapter, no text exists in a vacuum, but is interwoven in a world of texts which precede it, are contemporary with it, and, from the reader's perspective, follow it. Yet texts are also cultural artifacts and representative of the culture in which they are produced. They "are cultural by virtue of social values and contexts that they have themselves successfully absorbed," and may be incomprehensible or misunderstood when divorced from their surroundings.<sup>567</sup>

As a human creation, a text implicitly incorporates social and cultural values and norms within itself, as well as reflecting the values and norms of the historical time and place it represents. "Given that language signifies social functions, it is constitutive of social communication . . . Every text is a socially symbolic act and assumes certain social and cultural norms."<sup>568</sup> Therefore, the investigation of the social and cultural texture of the text "includes exploring the

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<sup>567</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture," in *Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 226.

<sup>568</sup> David B. Gowler, "Text, Culture and Ideology in Luke 7:1-10," in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 91.

social and cultural ‘location’ of the language and the type of social and cultural world the language evokes or creates.”<sup>569</sup>

A text is a cultural artifact of its time and place; yet the natural tendency is for an interpreter to read the text in light of the norms and values of his or her culture rather than in those of the world of the text. The analysis of the socio-cultural texture of the text challenges the interpreter to go beyond his or her own world, as Vernon Robbins notes:

Analysis and interpretation of the common social and cultural topics in a text may take an interpreter beyond his or her own presuppositions into the foreign social and cultural world of the text. When this happens, a deeper level of the social and cultural texture of the text begins to emerge as well as a clearer understanding of implications in the text about living a committed religious life in the world.<sup>570</sup>

The twenty-first century world of the modern interpreter differs significantly from the ancient agrarian world depicted in First Isaiah. One of the more obvious differences is the physical reality in which most modern interpreters live. We generally are not farmers or vintners living in an agrarian-based society, for example. These physical differences are obvious and immediately

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<sup>569</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 71. For an overview and critique of the use of social sciences in the field of biblical studies, see Philip F. Esler, “Social-Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in its Social Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 3-14; and Philip F. Esler and Anselm C. Hagedorn, 15-32, in the same book.

<sup>570</sup> For this and the following topics, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 75-85.

apparent. It is also apparent that the economic world in which we live today, the systems of exchange and distribution of resources, is significantly different from that of the eighth century Judean world portrayed in the Song of the Vineyard. Less obvious are the differences between social and cultural value systems of the world of the text and the world of the interpreter. An investigation of the socio-cultural texture of the text involves both the tangible physical setting with its occupations and socio-economics as well as the intangible realm, the cultural value systems.

Finally, a socio-cultural investigation of the text may consider the question of the social perspectives of the world portrayed by the text. How the YHWH will be perceived by the hearers of the presumed presentation will depend in great measure to who the hearers are. The text may paint a portrait representative of the mainstream cultural view, a minority view, or perhaps even a counter-cultural perspective acting as a rebuttal to the mainstream view. Definitive determinations of the identity of the hearers may be difficult, but that difficulty then gives rise to numerous possible characterisations of YHWH in the social fabric of the text.

The focus of the socio-cultural investigation in this thesis is the characterisation of YHWH in light of the social realities and value systems of the world depicted by the author in the text. YHWH is the beloved, the vinedresser, and a socio-cultural investigation of the text examines the social aspects of the relationship between this vinedresser and the vineyard. The focus is not on the social realities themselves; they serve as the backdrop, the framework for the investigation of the research question.

## 5.1 The Israelite Agrarian World

The close association of the ancient Near Eastern peoples with the natural world had a formative effect on their worldview, culture, and the development of their socio-economic systems. While environment did not necessarily fully determine the direction of these socio-cultural elements, it set limits and parameters within which they developed.<sup>571</sup>

### 5.1.1 The Physical Setting

The Song of the Vineyard is set in the vine-growing regions of biblical Judea and possibly Samaria. The extensive Nahal Sorek drainage system of the central Judean region was particularly noted for vine-growing, as indicated by its name, “Sorek.”<sup>572</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, over fifty percent of this region had man-made terraces, and scores of ancient winepresses have been excavated, some of which may date back to the Israelite period. Throughout history, the growing of vines that flourish in the rocky *terra rosa* soil of this region has been a major industry.<sup>573</sup> In the Late Bronze and Iron Age, vines and olive trees were the two primary agricultural products grown in the Judean Hills.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the World View of Israel* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 18.

<sup>572</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1976; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 977.

<sup>573</sup> Menashe Har-El, *Landscape, Nature and Man in the Bible: Sites and Events in the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2003), 106. Excavations in the Mevessaret Yerushalaim region showed 50% terracing and yielded pottery evidence of first construction in the eighth century B.C.E. Gershon

Viticulture requires a substantial investment of time, effort, and money, with a lead time from planting to first harvest. In her monograph on viticulture in ancient Israel, Carey Walsh asks why, in light of this fact, the Israelites did not grow grain for beer, which would have required less effort and would have produced a harvest in the same year of planting. She proposes that beer required too much water to produce in the semi-arid regions of Judea, whereas the vine produced its own liquid, thereby increasing the supply of that precious resource.<sup>575</sup> Another possible reason is that the small plots bounded by stone walls on steep, terraced hillsides were particularly suited for the growing of vines<sup>576</sup> but less suitable for wheat and other grains that required larger plots for efficient planting and harvesting.<sup>577</sup>

The description of the physical setting of the vineyard in the Song of the Vineyard, the “קרן בן-שמן” (literally, a horn the son of oil) fits the rich vine-growing Judean region. This expression

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Edelstein and Mordechai Kislev, “Mevasseret Yerushalayim: The Ancient Settlement and its Agricultural Terraces,” *BA* 44 (1981): 56.

<sup>574</sup> Raphael Frankel and Eitan Ayalon, *גפן. גתות ויין בעת העתיקה*, (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 1988), 3.

<sup>575</sup> Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*, (Winona Lake, WI: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 21, 26.

<sup>576</sup> Menashe Har-El claims that the shallow soils of the Judean Hills were not suitable for olive trees; however, many can be seen in the region today. Har-El, *Landscape, Nature and Man*, 106.

<sup>577</sup> The Shephelah of Judah, at the foot of the Judean Hills, was (and is today) a major grain-growing area, as was the relatively flat region around Bethlehem, from which Bethlehem (house of bread) apparently derived its name.

has no parallel in the Hebrew Bible, though the use of the word *horn* to mean “a hill” is paralleled in Arabic, قرن.<sup>578</sup> Many suggestions have been offered as to the use of קרן and the meaning of the phrase. Menashe Har-El and Yehuda Felix, after considering both the language and the interpretations in the Mishnah and Talmud, both conclude that the setting is a corner where two terraces meet on the fold of a steep hillside, producing a thick, rich layer of soil.<sup>579</sup>

Vinedressing in the Judean Hills is referenced in a number of places in Scripture, but particularly significant in considering the socio-economic setting of the Song of the Vineyard is 2 Chronicles 26:10. The passage lists the four regions controlled by the eighth century monarch Uzziah, naming the Judean Hills as being a place of vinedressers and royal vineyards:

He built towers in the wilderness and hewed out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the Shephelah and in the plain, and he had farmers and vine-dressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

In his study of the place names of the *lmlk* seals, Anson Rainey notes that numerous town names of the region testify to the growing of grapes<sup>580</sup> and concludes that the four town names appearing on the seals are all from royal vineyards in the Judean Hills.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> George Buchanan Gray, *Critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Isaiah, I-XXXIX* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 85.

<sup>579</sup> m. *Kil.* 6:7; T.Y. *Pe'ah* 11, 17a. Menashe Har-El, *Landscape, Nature and Man*, 106. Yehuda Felix, *Nature and Man in the Bible* (London: Soncino Press, 1981), 74.

<sup>580</sup> Anson Rainey, “Wine from the Royal Vineyards,” *BASOR* 245 (1982): 59.

<sup>581</sup> Rainey, “Wine,” 61.

Rainey's work not only confirms the importance of viticulture in the Judean Hills, it also raises an economic question, which Rainey himself asked but did not answer: How did the king acquire these royal vineyards? This question leads to a broader consideration: the agricultural economic environment and matters of land ownership in the eighth century B.C.E, the time depicted in the Song of the Vineyard.

### 5.1.2 Socio-Economic Setting

The Iron Age II Israelite world consisted primarily of small community villages, towns, and cities.<sup>582</sup> In its early period, communities and villages were for the most part subsistence-level producing units whose economic stability and security was enabled by local kinship relationships.<sup>583</sup> Archaeological evidence indicates that during this period, IA II, these

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<sup>582</sup> Michael Kolb and James Snead identify three key elements that define a community, "the first being social reproduction. The role of the local community as a particular node of social interaction appears universal, forming a principal arena in which sociopolitical relationships are negotiated or played out.... Secondly, subsistence production is a central element of community life. . . . The third common element of community structure is self-identification. Michael J. Kolb, and James E. Snead, "It's a Small World after All: Comparative Analyses of Community Organization in Archaeology," *AA* 62 (1997): 609-628, 611.

<sup>583</sup> Marvin Chaney surveys the development of the Israelite agrarian state, calling its social structure in its earliest phase a "polemic obverse" of the Canaanite patrimonial and prebendal estates. Chaney maintains that as Israelite society developed, it ceased being an egalitarian obverse and became like the Canaanite system it had replaced. Marvin Chaney, "Systematic Study of the Israelite Monarchy," *Semeia* 37 (1986): 60-62. See also Bernhard Lang, "The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty in Ancient Israel," *JSOT* 24 (1983): 47-63. Lang describes the patrimonial, prebendal, and

subsistence units began producing cash crops,<sup>584</sup> and by the time of the rule of Uzziah, transit and international trade developed.<sup>585</sup> The development of trade—along with social stratification resulting from the strengthening of monarchical reign—brought about significant changes in the local economy: “[f]oodstuffs produced by the peasant majority were exported. Luxury goods and arms utilized by the elite minority were imported. . . . and exports competed directly with peasant sustenance.”<sup>586</sup>

The production of cash crops and development of trade were not only important economic developments; they brought with them significant social change. Prior to this development, crops raised were all available for subsistence living and could be sufficient for the community in

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mercantile systems and maintains that the idyllic, egalitarian society of the early years of the Judean Kingdom portrayed by some interpreters is more “wishful thinking than characteristic of the earliest Israel,” 48. See Roland Boer’s discussion (p. 35 and following) on the key nodes of the ancient Israelite economy, among which he cites village commune, temple-city complex and the rise of a despotic state. Roland Boer, “The Sacred Economy of Ancient ‘Israel’,” *SJOT* 21 (2007): 29-48.

<sup>584</sup> Avraham Faust, “The Rural Community in Ancient Israel during Iron Age II,” *BASOR* 317 (2000): 28-29, 32.

<sup>585</sup> David C. Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” in *SBLSem* 22, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 195. See also D. N. Premnath, “Latifundialization and Isaiah 5:8-10,” *JSOT* 40 (1988): 30-32.

<sup>586</sup> Marvin L. Chaney, “Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth Century Prophets,” in *Reformed Faith and Economics*, ed. Robert L. Stivers (Lanham, Mass.: University Press of America, 1989), 19.



times of widespread agricultural hardship (or if any single member of the community fell on hard times). When crops are used as cash crops in trade, however, some or perhaps even most available surplus to meet community needs in hard times is diverted into the economic activity of trade. In good years, trade may enable the community to prosper, but when hard times come, the lack of surplus may drive many into debt. The level of debt may quickly become so great that there is no escape, other than selling lands to the wealthy elite.<sup>587</sup> Peasant debt was one of the conditions that encouraged latifundialization,<sup>588</sup> as peasants needed to sell lands to meet their debts while the social elite had the resources to purchase, converting small landholdings into larger estates.

The economic and social changes that arose from trade were not the only significant social developments in the early years of the Israelite kingdoms. Politically, the Israelite Period began with the Israelites as an aggregate of loosely aligned tribal units, but these developed into a monarchical state. According to Gerhard Lenski, with only a few historical exceptions, monarchical states develop when “either the state was small, or it existed when agrarianism was still relatively new in the region in which it is located, or it was located in a mountainous region.”<sup>589</sup> All of these conditions characterised Israel and Judah in their formative years. Lenski further maintains that a major impetus for forming a monarchical state is the question of military

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<sup>587</sup> Lang, “The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty in Ancient Israel,” 48-52.

<sup>588</sup> D. N. Premnath, “Comparative and Historical Sociology in Old Testament Research: A Study of Isaiah 3:12-15,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 17 (1985): 33-34.

<sup>589</sup> Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 197.

security, since a monarchical state is better equipped to provide security in a small agrarian society than a government of locally-based councils. However, once the society grows and a monarchy with its supporting elite develops, it becomes more difficult for the local style of government, which is characteristic of a small community in agrarian society, to survive.<sup>590</sup>

By the eighth century B.C.E, Judea had become a mature agrarian society<sup>591</sup>, one with a central government with large land holdings, and whose towns and villages had been established for many years. The Israelites had made the transition from a loose confederation of wandering tribes, through early agrarian settlement, to a settled people with a centralised authority. According to Gerhard Lenski, mature agrarian societies are marked by significant differences in

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<sup>590</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 197.

<sup>591</sup> Marvin Chaney uses a systemic approach to sketch the development of agrarian Judea and Samaria in the Late Bronze and Iron Age up to the eighth century. He argues that the process of latifundialization and the development of large estates “is mirrored in the oracles of the eighth-century prophets—many repeatedly.” He further cites 2 Chr 26:10, *NAB*, as evidence for the existence of large, monarchical estates by the time of Uzziah. Marvin Chaney, “Systemic Study of the Israelite Monarchy,” *Semeia* 37 (1986): 73-74. Anson Rainey claims, “[T]he evidence from Lachish Str. III is now virtually overwhelming in favor of a late 8th century B.C. date for the lmlk stamps in the Judean kingdom.” Rainey, “Wine,” 57. Nadav Na’aman gives evidence that Sennacharib annexed to his realm the cities of the Shephelah, including Socoh, one of the city names appearing on the lmlk stamps. From this he concludes that these stamps could not date later than 701 B.C.E.. Nadav Na’aman, “Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah and the Date of the LMLK Stamps,” *VT* 29, (1979): 61-86. The dating of the lmlk stamps along with 1 Chr. 26:10 evidence the existence of a centralised monarchical authority that held large, agricultural estates by the eighth century.

power, privilege, and honour, and governmental institutions are the primary source of that inequality.<sup>592</sup> In addition, trade develops under governmental control and with taxation. Resources formerly used for subsistence living in an early agrarian society and whose distribution was moderated through kinship relationships now become a national resource.<sup>593</sup> These resources are under the partial or full control and ownership of the monarchical government and the social elite who benefit from them. That elite group may have comprised as little as two percent of the total population.<sup>594</sup> Lenski explains the process of developing social inequality as follows:

Given the nature of man and society as defined earlier, we should logically anticipate an increase in social inequality as the economic surplus expands, as military technology advances to the point where the average man can no longer equip himself as well as certain others, and as the powers of the state increase. Furthermore, we should expect that the actions of men of power, who act in the name of the state, would be the primary source of this increase in social inequality.<sup>595</sup>

In a land of scarcity, the manner of distribution of goods is a critical matter, and scarcity of resources and unequal access to these resources were the underlying socio-economic realities in Judea and Israel. As surplus supplies were diverted to trade and produce taxed, many peasants

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<sup>592</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 210.

<sup>593</sup> By “national resource,” I mean resources that are used beyond the local area for the sustaining of the centralized elite and institutions as well as for trade with surrounding nations.

<sup>594</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 219.

<sup>595</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 210.

fell into debt. Societies that undergo this process move from being developing economies to “extensive and extractive (i.e. plundering rather than developing) economies.” In such societies, rulers attempt to control land ownership “by vesting it either in their own hands entirely or in those of fellow aristocrats, and by turning most of the peasant families into tenants.”<sup>596</sup> The politically powerful social elite attempt to gain control of the way in which land can be owned and transferred amongst kinship units.<sup>597</sup> Prior to these developments, village kinship relationships helped ensure that goods were distributed on the basis of need.<sup>598</sup> In a politically centralised system, however, distribution is determined by power.<sup>599</sup> The locus of security and

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<sup>596</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roninger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 208.

<sup>597</sup> Eisenstadt and Roninger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 208-209.

<sup>598</sup> According to Chaney, interest-free loans had their origin in interest-free survival loans in the village context. Chaney maintains that various policies of debt easement continued into the monarchical period as a result of factional power struggles. Marvin Chaney, “Debt Easement in Israelite History and Tradition,” in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 127-140.

<sup>599</sup> Premnath, “Latifundialization,” 51-52. In this article, Premnath analyses in depth the process of latifundialization and the factors that enable it.

protection shifts from the symmetrical kinship relationship to an asymmetrical relationship often described as a patron-client relationship.<sup>600</sup>

### 5.1.3 Asymmetrical Relationships: Patron-Client and Covenantal Exchange

An asymmetrical relationship is one in which the two parties in relationship have different social standings. The relationship may be highly formalised, such as in a covenant relationship between monarch and people or deity and people; or it may be a relationship that is not formalised, but whose parameters are understood by both parties. The latter type of relationship is referred to as a patron-client relationship.

Patronage in reference to the Hebrew Bible is an etic category, since the terms “patron” and “client” are not mentioned in the writings.<sup>601</sup> The use of the term is well documented in the Roman period;<sup>602</sup> nevertheless, it is an identified anthropological phenomenon in many traditional societies, both ancient and modern.<sup>603</sup> That such asymmetrical relationships existed in the ancient Mediterranean world is undisputed. However, there is dispute within the scholarly world as to whether the asymmetrical relationships of ancient Judea should be viewed as

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<sup>600</sup> The patron-client social relationship is well documented in the Mediterranean in the Roman period; the appropriateness of the term for the Iron Age Near East is discussed below.

<sup>601</sup> Ronald A. Simkins, “Patronage and the Political Economy of Monarchic Israel,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 128.

<sup>602</sup> For a selective reference to Roman writers on the topic, see David DeSilva, “Exchanging Favor for Wrath: Apostasy in Hebrews and Patron-Client Relationships,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 92-94.

<sup>603</sup> Raymond Westbrook, “Patronage in the Ancient Near East,” *JESHO* 48 (2005): 211.

patronage. Ronald Simkins, for example, is convinced that patronage is the proper lens through which to view the ancient Judean asymmetrical social structure:

. . . the economic inequalities of monarchic Israel were socially structured by the institution of patronage. Patron-client relationships were the mode by which wealth was exchanged and power was exercised. As an economic institution, patronage was embedded in the social system of monarchic Israel. It is attested repeatedly through the ideology preserved in the biblical literature.<sup>604</sup>

Zeba Crooke, however, disputes Simkins' approach:

The assumption that asymmetrical exchange equals patronage and clientage (a metonymic error) becomes even more problematic when applied to ancient Near Eastern and ancient Israelite cultures. Scholars seeing asymmetrical exchange in these other cultures will naturally assume that they are seeing patronage and clientage, because they are using a model that collapses different types of asymmetrical exchange into patronage and clientage. When these scholars see patronage and clientage in the ancient Near East, they are actually seeing another form of asymmetrical exchange—namely, covenantal exchange.<sup>605</sup>

Both the majority view, represented by Simkins, and Crooke's view emphasise that an asymmetrical relationship is characterised by the parties being of unequal status. The difference between the patron-client relationship and the covenantal exchange is that the latter has a "formal

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<sup>604</sup> Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 125.

<sup>605</sup> Zeba A. Crooke, "Reciprocity: Covenantal Exchange as a Test Case," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in its Social Context*, ed. Phillip Esler (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 83.

and legally binding oath” and makes “explicit references to obligations.”<sup>606</sup> Some types of covenantal exchange, such as the suzerain-vassal treaty, are voluntary. Unlike covenantal exchange, the patron-client model relationship is not formalised and may often be characterised as a friendship (although one between parties of unequal status). Both types of relationships are long term in nature. “The most important feature of a covenant, and the one that most distinguishes it from patronal exchange, is that it is a formal and therefore legal agreement.”<sup>607</sup>

Both parties in a covenantal exchange or patron-client relationship have obligations, and the relationships operate on an asymmetrical system of exchange.<sup>608</sup> The patron/lord<sup>609</sup> provides

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<sup>606</sup> Crooke, “Reciprocity,” 84.

<sup>607</sup> Crooke, “Reciprocity,” 83.

<sup>608</sup> For a concise description of the patron-client relationship, see Westbrook, “Patronage,” 211-212; Emanuel Pfoh, “Some Remarks on Patronage in Syria-Palestine,” *JESHO* 52 (2009): 364-365.

<sup>609</sup> I use the term “lord,” not capitalised, to indicate the more advantaged party in a covenantal exchange. The “lord” may be a deity, the king, a landlord or other party in the position to make such a covenantal exchange with another party who becomes the dependent party. I do not use the technical term “suzerain” because the covenantal exchange includes a broader spectrum of relationships than that one type of treaty. For the same reason, I use “lesser party” as the parallel term in the covenant exchange for “client” in a patron-client relationship. I acknowledge that the term may not be a particularly good one, but it avoids the confusion that the use of the term “vassal” might cause.

Pfoh notes that it is easy to mistake the ancient relationship as a medieval type of feudalism. The main difference, according to Pfoh, is that the feudal system consisted of a relationship between a lord and a group of people, whereas the patron-client relationship of the ancient Near East was a one-to-one

access to resources and/or protection. The client/lesser party may provide rent or some other tangible service. However, the cherished, limited social resource of honour is the primary resource that the client/lesser party is expected to provide. In this critical aspect, there is no difference between covenantal exchange and patron-client systems.

Crooke makes a persuasive case that the Song of the Vineyard should be viewed as a covenantal exchange relationship, as opposed to a patron-client relationship. She rejects Hannes Olivier's reading that the passage reflects a patron-client relationship because such relationships were informal, whereas the Song of the Vineyard reflects a legally binding, formal relationship.<sup>610</sup> I think she may well be correct; however, for the investigation of the portrayal of YHWH, the difference is a technical one only. In either case, YHWH is the patron/lord and the people of Israel the client/lesser party. In fulfilment of his part of the relationship, YHWH has provided what he is expected to provide, as evidenced by the diligent and complete work in preparing and planting the vineyard. He has provided the land, the investment of labour, and also its means of protection. Now the question is: has the patron/lesser party, given him the honour that they are indebted to give as their part of the relationship?

## 5.2 The Social Values of Honour and Shame

Honour and shame are supreme ideals of a society, according Jean G. Peristiany, one of the foremost early anthropologists who first developed an archetype for the values of honour and relationship. Pfoh, "Some Remarks on Patronage," 364. However, Pfoh does not consider the possibility of a covenantal exchange which may be comprised of an asymmetrical, one-to-many relationship.

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<sup>610</sup> Crooke, "Reciprocity," 88.



shame in the Mediterranean.<sup>611</sup> Bruce Malina calls it the “pivotal” value in the biblical world.<sup>612</sup> While there is agreement on the centrality of this social value system, there are differences as to the details of its dynamics both in the modern and the ancient Mediterranean worlds. Agreements and differences have coalesced and changed from the time of the first seminal works published by Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers in the mid-1960s.<sup>613</sup>

Jean Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers were the first to develop a Mediterranean honour and shame cultural archetype based on the limited data they had.<sup>614</sup> They saw this model as basically uniform and characteristic of all Mediterranean cultures. They were not the first to consider this aspect of the sociology of the ancient Hebrew world, however; Johannes Pedersen “paid full

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<sup>611</sup> Jean G. Peristiany, “Introduction,” in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. by Jean G. Peristiany (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), 10.

<sup>612</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, third ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 58. Zeba Crooke, “Honor, Shame and Social Status Revisited,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 591. John Chance states, “‘Honor and Shame’ is one of those topics on which any Mediterranean ethnographer can be expected to have an informed opinion, regardless of whether or not it has figured in his or her own research.” John K. Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 139.

<sup>613</sup> Peristiany, “Introduction,” 9-18.

<sup>614</sup> David D. Gilmore, “Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 2-21.

attention to Israel's social system" in his 1926 two-volume work on Israel,<sup>615</sup> although he did not develop a model for honour and shame. Following the seminal works of the 1960s, Jane Schneider (1971) and John Davis (1977), along with others, further refined Peristiany's and Pitt-Rivers' models.<sup>616</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s were not only a time in which anthropology was refining its understanding of the social values of the Mediterranean; it also was an era in which the hermeneutic horizon of biblical studies broadened.<sup>617</sup> Scholars began to apply these developing anthropological models to the biblical texts, primarily the New Testament. Bruce Malina's 1986 work *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology*<sup>618</sup> in particular made a significant contribution to the field. In this work, Malina presented the principles of some major categories of cultural anthropology and explained their relevance to biblical studies. Since that time, more anthropological research has been conducted and the early models nuanced, changed, and (in some areas) disputed.

With increasing sophistication in understanding Mediterranean culture in general, and the social values of honour and shame in particular, has come a greater realisation of the methodological difficulties of developing and using this anthropological model. Anthropologists and biblical scholars have pointed out numerous difficulties with the categorisation of the social values of

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<sup>615</sup> Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39 New Century Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 281.

<sup>616</sup> Gilmore, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>617</sup> See the chapter on Methodology.

<sup>618</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986).

honour and shame. Two of the more commonly mentioned problems are horizontal generalisation and vertical upstreaming.<sup>619</sup> The first involves deriving a general, trans-cultural model from data extracted from specific cultures. Honour and shame models are taken from studies of modern Mediterranean cultures, and there are variations between these cultures. Honour values of one culture do not necessarily hold in another, or may not even be held by subcultures of the dominant culture. The second difficulty is the problem of upstreaming: “how to validly project insights gained in the twentieth century—usually through ethnography—back into the distant past.” The historical evidence is “vague and incomplete, as it often is on questions of values.”<sup>620</sup>

In light of these difficulties, a model for the study of the honour-shame aspect of the socio-cultural texture of the text must be presented with caution. It must be viewed as a statement of parameters and descriptions in which there is a certain degree of uncertainty and flexibility.

To interpret the Song of the Vineyard in light of the social values of honour and shame, I first consider the parameters of a broad, generally accepted model of the Mediterranean world. This discussion includes a description of concepts of this value, its importance in the biblical world, how honour is gained or lost, and how honour and shame are related to gender. Since there is variation and flux in understanding what values are trans-cultural, not anachronistic, and therefore applicable to the biblical world, I then separate the description of concepts into two

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<sup>619</sup> See discussions in Michael Herzfeld, “Honor and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems,” *Man* 15 (1980): 339-351; and Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame,” 140-142.

<sup>620</sup> Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame,” 141-142.

categories: those that are generally accepted as applicable, and those for which there remains significant difference of opinion. The resulting table of values is the basis for my consideration of the societal values of honour and shame in the Song of the Vineyard.

### 5.2.1 The Definition of Honour and Shame

#### 5.2.1.a Honour

The definition of the terms *honour* and *shame* is problematic. It is easy to assume an ethnocentric posture that honour is understood globally as it is understood in the locus of the researcher, but that may not be the case.<sup>621</sup> In addition, the term itself is a “polysemic concept. . . [i]ts meaning and its nuances vary from place to place and even among adjacent villages.”<sup>622</sup> Malina defines honour as “basically a claim to worth that is socially acknowledged. It surfaces especially where the three defining features of authority, gender status, and respect come together.”<sup>623</sup> Since honour and shame are social values, a definition cannot fully describe the range of possible understandings of the term:

Honor and shame are values. Values are about the quality and direction of behavior. Since values are essentially qualities that inhere in something else, what that something else might be is always open to dispute within social limits, of course. Or to say this in other words, if

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<sup>621</sup> For further discussion, see Stanley Brandes, “Reflections on Honor and Shame in the Mediterranean,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 123-127.

<sup>622</sup> David D. Gilmore, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area,” *ARA* 11 (1982): 191.

<sup>623</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

honor is about a claim to worth that is socially acknowledged, the question is what, in fact, has a claim to worth.<sup>624</sup>

Honour as pertains to an individual is a value that must be affirmed by the society.<sup>625</sup> If a person claims honour but the society does not affirm it, “then the person’s action (and frequently the person him/herself) is labelled ridiculous, contemptuous, or foolish, and is treated accordingly.”<sup>626</sup> A person’s claim to honour may be based on his<sup>627</sup> actions, but ultimately honour is a societal judgment on a person’s character.<sup>628</sup> Yet “even a child is known by his actions,”<sup>629</sup> so that when a person’s actions measure up against the society’s standards, he is granted honour, or his current honour is maintained.<sup>630</sup> One of the difficulties in interpreting an ancient text in light of honour-shame is that every society differs in its value system, and we can only deduce from the world of texts of the period what those values were.

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<sup>624</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 51.

<sup>625</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams, “Symbolic Value and the Problem of Evil: Honor and Shame,” in *Interpretation in Religion*, ed. Shlomo Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharstein (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 261.

<sup>626</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 32.

<sup>627</sup> The exclusive use of the male gender is intentional due to the fact that the terms *honour* and *shame* are often understood as being gender-related. I discuss this matter shortly.

<sup>628</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. Jean G. Peristiany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 47.

<sup>629</sup> Prov 20:11.

<sup>630</sup> Adams, “Symbolic Value,” 261.

Honour may either be ascribed through antecedence by birth or acquired through having earned the position through competitive social action.<sup>631</sup> Citing Hobbes, Pitt-Rivers sees honour as a limited commodity, and therefore the need for competition arises to establish what he calls “the pecking-order theory of honour.”<sup>632</sup> The means of competition is riposte, which I discuss below.

The semantic field of the word *honour*, however, is broader than just a description of a person’s character or standing in society. It can refer to the exchange of the tangible and intangible services provided by the two parties in a covenantal exchange or patron/client relationship. Niels Lemche describes this aspect of honour through his analysis of a dialogue in the movie, “The Godfather.”<sup>633</sup> In this brief dialogue, an individual in need comes to the Godfather for help. The Godfather at first refuses to give help since the other party had not given him his honour, which is to say that he had not solely relied upon the Godfather for help (as opposed to the police and the courts) and had not been willing to be available to render the Godfather services when asked. There is a transactional exchange expected; the party needing protection is expected to “honour” the protector: that is, to be dependent upon and to render service to him. The relationship consists of an exchange of services or combination of goods and services. This depiction well describes the transactional aspect of honour. Honour is an asset, a limited resource with economic and social ramifications that is owed to the greater, providing party.

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<sup>631</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 23.

<sup>632</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 23.

<sup>633</sup> Niels P. Lemche, “Kings and Clients: On Loyalty Between Ruler and Ruled in Ancient Israel,” *Semeia* 66 (1994): 118-120.

Honour is not just an individual value or a transactional relationship between two individual parties; it may be held by a group or society,<sup>634</sup> and the honour of that society reflects on the honour of its head:

Social groups possess a collective honour in which their members participate . . . Honour pertains to social groups of any size from the nuclear family whose head is responsible for the honour of all its members to the nation whose members' honour is bound up with their fidelity to their sovereign. In both the family and the monarchy a single person symbolizes the group whose collective honour is vested in his person. The members owe obedience and respect of a kind which commits their individual honour without redress. . . .<sup>635</sup>

If an individual or society engages in behaviour that does not maintain or increase honour, it brings shame both to the community as a whole as well as to its head. This shame is a wholly negative value, the antonym of honour. Shame, however, has another, positive meaning, particularly when applied to females.

#### 5.2.1.b Shame

In its negative sense, shame indicates a decrease or denial of honour. To “have shame,” however, expresses the concern to preserve honour:

Shame, as the opposite of honor, is a claim to worth that is publicly denied and repudiated. To “be shamed” is always negative; it means to be denied or to be diminished in honor. On the

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<sup>634</sup> Gideon M. Kressel, “An Anthropologist’s Response to the Use of Social Science Models in Biblical Studies,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 155.

<sup>635</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 35-36.

other hand, to “have shame” is always positive; it means to be concerned about one’s honor.<sup>636</sup>

The shaming of a household was serious matter, sometimes involving dire economic consequences by placing that family’s lands and children in jeopardy.<sup>637</sup> A family’s honour status is much like our credit rating today: severe economic consequences can result from behaviour that affects the rating.<sup>638</sup> “Shamed households were on probation. They were out-of-place and not functioning properly,” and therefore they were not eligible for the support of the village.<sup>639</sup> In an agrarian hand-to-mouth society, this could be serious indeed.<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 107.

<sup>637</sup> Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, “Social Sciences and Biblical Studies,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 12.

<sup>638</sup> Malina, *New Testament World*, 31, 37.

<sup>639</sup> Matthews and Benjamin, “Social Sciences and Biblical Studies,” 12.

<sup>640</sup> In the conclusion to his study on gender and law code, Victor Matthews writes, “In those legal situations in which the honor of the household comes into question, primarily due to the uncertainty of chastity on the part of the wife, public demonstrations seem to be the best way to resolve the issue. Slander, rumor, and false labels can irreparably injure a household’s reputation. Swift action is necessary to prevent a complete loss of credibility and ultimately the extinction of the household when no other family will contract marriages or do business with it.” Victor H. Matthews, “Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Honor and Shame in*



An individual is shamed when the conditions for honour listed above are not met. Shame also occurs when an individual unsuccessfully engages in riposte. In riposte, there is a challenger and a party that is challenged. The challenger is shamed if the challenge fails; conversely, the challenged party is shamed if the challenge is not met. I discuss riposte more fully below. Also, as previously noted, the leader of a community is shamed if the community does not maintain “shame” in the positive sense. This is particularly the case for the male head of a household:

The honour of a household is inextricably linked to the reputation of the women who live there. Their reputation in turn is sealed by the public display of shame. Shame is an index of female reputation, just as honour is an index of male. It is related to the notion of female chastity . . .<sup>641</sup>

The shame referred to above is a positive quality, the female equivalent of honour. It primarily indicates sexually proper, chaste behaviour. “Shame is directly related to honour, in that a reduction of the shame of a household’s women becomes a direct reflection on the honour of its men.”<sup>642</sup> To the extent that the woman (or women) of the house have shame, the male head of the house is honoured.

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*Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard H. Levinson, and Tikva Simone Fryner-Kensky ( London: T&T Clark, 1998), 112.

<sup>641</sup> Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 423.

<sup>642</sup> Barnard and Spencer, *Encyclopedia*, 424.

Early models of honour and shame, including Malina's model, emphasised that honour was a male quality and shame a female quality. That gender distinction, or at least the degree to which it is expressed, has been questioned in recent years as a result of ongoing anthropological research. These studies "maintain that gender systems are multi-layered and embrace many, often diverse, patterns of interaction between women and men."<sup>643</sup> Fluidity and examination within the cultural context of the setting are required in consideration of the aspect of gender as regards honour and shame.

### 5.2.2 Gaining, Losing, and Defending Honour

#### 5.2.2.a The Challenge from Without: Riposte

In western societies, money is the principle sought-after resource, but in the traditional Mediterranean world, individuals and families seek to acquire honour.<sup>644</sup> Malina likens the importance of one's degree of honour in the Mediterranean world to that of the Western credit rating.<sup>645</sup> In the Western world, individuals and families compete for the coveted resource of money by beating colleagues for promotions at work or beating competitors in business. One wins at the expense of another, since access to money is limited. The Mediterranean world views honour in similar fashion; the gain of honour on the part of one party will be at the expense of

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<sup>643</sup> Dianne Bergant, "The Song of Songs and Honor and Shame," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 34. See also the discussion in Crooke, "Honor, Shame and Social Status Revisited," 594-596; and the criticism of Gerald F. Downing, "'Honor' among Exegetes," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 58.

<sup>644</sup> Geoffrey P. Miller, "Verbal Feud in the Hebrew Bible: Judges 3:12-30 and 19-21," *JNES* 55 (1996): 106.

<sup>645</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

another, since honour is viewed as a limited resource.<sup>646</sup> Individuals, clans, or whole societies can gain or lose honour through the challenge-response contest of riposte.

The contest begins with one party's challenge to the honour of another, who then responds in kind. Challenges may be positive (such as the offer of a gift) or negative (most commonly the delivery of a public insult), but the challenged party must respond or face a loss of honour.<sup>647</sup> Pitt-Rivers and Malina maintained that riposte is always between parties of equal honour,<sup>648</sup> because "an inferior is not deemed to possess sufficient honour to resent the affront of a superior. A superior can ignore the affront of an inferior, since his honour is not committed by it."<sup>649</sup> That claim has been challenged as being too inflexible. F. Gerald Downing, for example, cites a challenge from Jesus' disciples and their master's response as an example of a riposte between unequal parties.<sup>650</sup>

There are at least three phases to the contest: the challenge; the reception, perception of the message, and response by the challenged party; and the evaluation of the community.<sup>651</sup> The initial challenge or insult cannot be ignored, because the insult in whole or in part was widely

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<sup>646</sup> Brandes, "Reflections on Honor and Shame," 121-122; Crooke, "Honor, Shame and Social Status Revisited," 593.

<sup>647</sup> Pilch and Malina, *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 111.

<sup>648</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 35.

<sup>649</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 31.

<sup>650</sup> Downing, "'Honor' among Exegetes," 59.

<sup>651</sup> Robbins, *Tapestry*, 80.

believed in the community. Riposte deals with the challenge by returning the insult to the originating individual or group.<sup>652</sup> Honour is lost if the challenged party is unable to respond to the challenge, or if the community judges the response to be inadequate.

#### 5.2.2.b The Challenge from Within: Dishonourable Behaviour

A family or clan can also lose honour through a challenge from within the community, i.e. the dishonourable behaviour of one of its members. Since the action of one affects the welfare of the whole, it is incumbent upon every member of the group to prevent the continuation or repetition of such behaviour.<sup>653</sup> The bad behaviour of the group member provides its own challenge to the group's honour, and therefore demands a response from the group, lest honour be lost. The method of retaining the community's honour is by shaming the offending party through shaming speech, which is "a social sort of 'vocabulary of embarrassment'" to make dishonourable parties change their ways.<sup>654</sup> Unlike the riposte, this shaming speech may be in private—unless the shameful activity was public, in which case it must be played out in the public forum.<sup>655</sup> If

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<sup>652</sup> Geoffrey P. Miller, "A Riposte Form in the Song of Deborah," in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 113.

<sup>653</sup> Matthews, "Honor and Shame," 98.

<sup>654</sup> Matthews, "Honor and Shame," 99.

<sup>655</sup> Matthews cites Tamar's argument against Amnon as a case of private shaming. Matthews, "Honor and Shame," 99-100.

shaming is ineffective, then legal measures may be taken (this is true both in the case of internal and external challenges).<sup>656</sup>

### 5.3 Honour and Shame in the Song of the Vineyard

#### 5.3.1 Model for Analysis

Based on the preceding discussion, the model for analysis consists of two basic types of elements: those characteristics that are generally agreed upon with little or no dispute, and those that have been generally accepted in the past but have been questioned and re-evaluated in recent years. In the model that follows, the first three characteristics are quoted directly from John Chance's observation of the common model of the biblical scholars' works in *Semeia*, vol. 64, which was dedicated to the topic of honour and shame:<sup>657</sup>

- Honor and shame form a value system rooted in gender distinctions in Mediterranean culture. Preserving male honor requires a vigorous defense of shame (modesty, virginity, seclusion) with regards to the women of the family or lineage.<sup>658</sup>
- Honor, most closely associated with males, refers to one's claimed social status and also to public recognition of it. Shame, most closely linked with females, refers to a sensitivity towards one's reputation, or (in the negative sense) to the loss of honor.

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<sup>656</sup> Matthews, "Honor and Shame," 98.

<sup>657</sup> Chance, "The Anthropology of Honor and Shame," 142.

<sup>658</sup> Note that Chance states that the value system is "rooted in" traditional gender distinctions. More recent research has revealed that these values should not be viewed as rigidly gender-related. This comment applies to the second bullet point as well.

- Mediterranean societies are agonist, or competitive. Challenges to one's status claims (honour) are frequent and must be met with the appropriate ripostes. The ensuing public verdict determines whether honour is won or lost.
- Honour may be imputed or diminished by deeds, but it "centers, not on the evaluation of deeds, but on the sacred quality of persons."<sup>659</sup>
- Honour is a function both of a person's own view of self and the community's validation.<sup>660</sup>
- "Through demonstrations of respect and the allowance of privilege, honor is paid to a person who claims it."<sup>661</sup>
- An affront places a person's honour in jeopardy.<sup>662</sup>
- Honour and shame are not a code of rules, but "a structure of relations."<sup>663</sup>
- Dishonourable behaviour in the community dishonours the head of the community, be that patron, patriarch, sovereign, or deity.

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<sup>659</sup> Adams, "Symbolic Value and the Problem of Evil," 261. Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 47.

<sup>660</sup> Adams, "Symbolic Value and the Problem of Evil," 261. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

<sup>661</sup> Adams, "Symbolic Value and the Problem of Evil," 261.

<sup>662</sup> Adams, "Symbolic Value and the Problem of Evil," 262.

<sup>663</sup> Carol Delaney, "Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 35.

The following have been generally accepted in the past, but some aspects are disputed, or the value has been shown not to be universally true:

- Honour is a limited resource. One person gaining honour means it is taken from another.<sup>664</sup>
- Honour and shame are directly linked to availability of limited material resources. (This has been demonstrated as generally true, but not true in all cultures).
- Sexuality is a prominent feather of honour and shame (From Peristiany to the 1980s, sexuality was seen as the root of honour and shame.)<sup>665</sup>
- The term “honour” is related to the male, while “shame,” as a positive term, applies to women. (While this distinction is often true, it is not universal. In many cultures women also may have honour, not just shame. The situation is particularly not clear in the biblical world.)<sup>666</sup>

### 5.3.2 Honour and Shame in the Song of the Vineyard: Analysis

Only one of the thirty articles on the Song of the Vineyard surveyed in the review of literature considered the relationship of the vintner to the vineyard in sociological terms, and then only

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<sup>664</sup> Brandes, “Reflections on Honor and Shame,” 121-122.

<sup>665</sup> Delaney, “Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame,” 36. See also the discussion in Gilmore, “Introduction,” 8-16.

<sup>666</sup> Brandes, “Reflections on Honor and Shame,” 128.

very briefly.<sup>667</sup> None of the articles analysed the passage in light of the cultural values of honour and shame.

#### 5.3.2.a Lawsuit (*rîb*) or Vaunt-Insult?

One of the genre types commonly attributed to the Song of the Vineyard is the *rîb*. This determination of genre is primarily by structure and comparison with 2 Sam 12:1-7, 2 Sam 14:1-20, 1 Kgs 20:35-42, and Jer 3:1. The form follows the pattern: introductory formula, presentation of the case, judgment of the case, and the meaning of the *rîb*. The purpose of the *rîb* is to persuade the hearer(s) of their guilt.<sup>668</sup> The Song of the Vineyard does not exactly fit the patterns represented in the passages cited above, for which a variety of reasons have been proposed.<sup>669</sup>

In the chapter on innertexture, I noted that efforts at determining genre reflected two underlying assumptions. First, texts are viewed as literary creations, yet the texts are written artifacts of an oral world. In addition, genre categories are viewed as rather static, set forms like packages into which literary creations either fit well, fit somewhat, or do not fit at all. I suggested that, because

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<sup>667</sup> Marvin L. Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes?: The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy," *Semeia* 87 (1999).

<sup>668</sup> Adrian Graffy, "The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," *Biblica* 60 (1971): 409. For a survey of scholars who maintain that the Song of the Vineyard is a *rîb*, see John Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," *JBL* 96 (1977): 349-350.

<sup>669</sup> For example, as I noted in the chapter on intertexture, Gerald Sheppard maintains that Isaiah 3:13-15 and the Song of the Vineyard were originally one passage, which, in his view, resolves the structural problem. Gerald T. Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Juridical Parable," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 45-47.



of the orality of the culture and probable underlying oral texture of the text, a degree of flexibility in the consideration of genre would be appropriate. In the case of the Song of the Vineyard, the pericope reflects the general structure and meaning of the *rîb*. Indeed, at the heart of the song is the challenge to the people to judge: . . . שפטו נא, which would seem to point to a legal setting. While the word שפטו often is used in a strict legal sense, it can carry the meaning of determining right from wrong, “judging” what is right, without necessarily indicating a legal setting.<sup>670</sup> Its presence does not *ipso facto* give the pericope a legal cast. Even if שפטו is taken in a legal sense, the use of the legal terminology would be appropriate in a covenantal exchange relationship. The presence of legal terminology does not rule out its analysis as an honour-shame transaction.

John Willis’ commentary on the legal thrust of the passage and genre determination is particularly germane to the discussion at hand:

The view that Isa 5:1-7 contains legal elements and has a legal thrust is compelling. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is best to categorize this passage on the whole as a lawsuit, since legal matters can also belong to genres other than a lawsuit, and there are other elements in the pericope that hardly belong to the lawsuit genre.<sup>671</sup>

Willis follows this comment by observing that the introduction to the passage as a song is hardly fitting for a legal setting. In addition, the detailed description of the husbandman’s care and the vinedresser’s tearing down the vineyard “lie outside what is usually considered the basic

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<sup>670</sup> Gen 19:9, 1 Sam 12:6-8, and 2 Sam 18:19, to name a few examples. See also BDB, 1047.

<sup>671</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 350.

elements of a lawsuit” and that the pericope should be “placed within the framework of a larger genre, viz., the parable . . .”<sup>672</sup>

I think that Willis is on the right track in looking more broadly than the *rîb*; however, along with Yee, I think that the designation *parable* is not necessarily appropriate.<sup>673</sup> How might this passage be viewed in light of the honour-shame culture which produced it?

### 5.3.2.b Taunt and Parry

The passage begins as a song. Upon first thought, that might seem to rule out the possibility of the pericope being a riposte or a boast-insult story. However, the Song of Deborah is a song and yet is a riposte, according to Geoffrey Miller.<sup>674</sup> The Song of Deborah begins with a vaunt, or a boast, recording the superior skill of the vaunting group and thereby proclaiming their honour. While a vaunt often is focused on skill in battle, it is not limited to that realm; “[b]oasts could also include self-laudatory claims about one’s wealth, hospitality, ability to produce male children, and other qualities deemed desirable by the society.”<sup>675</sup> The Song of the Vineyard begins with a boast: the virtue of the vinedresser proclaimed in perfectly preparing the land for

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<sup>672</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 350.

<sup>673</sup> Gale Yee, “A Form Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Song and Juridicial Parable,” *CBQ* 43 (1981). While I agree with Yee that Willis’ genre determination is insufficient to explain the passage, I think that Yee’s explanation involves too many problems to be a credible explanation of the genre of the pericope. For my analysis of Yee’s work, see the literature review.

<sup>674</sup> Miller, “A Riposte Form in the Song of Deborah.”

<sup>675</sup> Miller, “Verbal Feud,” 107.

the vine. The boast culminates in a challenge with the phrase, “What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?”

Miller states that the Song of Deborah contains a parry formation, which is more than a mere boast of Israelite military skill; it is also a response to Canaanite claims of their military superiority and their assumed pride in it. Thus the taunt turns the Canaanite pride back on itself, contrasting the (vain) Canaanite claims with the humiliating defeat that they suffer.<sup>676</sup> If we view verses two and three of the Isaian passage as a taunt and parry, then the taunt and following insult seek to throw back the pride and self-righteousness of the hearers<sup>677</sup> through proclaiming the vinedresser’s honour—his faultlessness preparation of the vineyard—and the vineyard’s shame. After the singer boasts on behalf of the vinedresser in verse two, asserting his faultlessness in his preparations for the vine, then the vinedresser himself challenges and insults the vine—the hearers—by faulting them for producing באושים, “stinking grapes.”

From the prophetic writings arises a picture of eighth century Judah as a whole, or part thereof, confident that they were honouring YHWH, most diligent in the sacrifices of the temple cult; yet injustice, inequity, and moral degradation were the order of the day. Isaiah 1:10-20 depicts the priesthood diligently offering sacrifices in a city desperately corrupted by violence and injustice. Amos 5:10-14 gives expression to the confidence of wealthy elite that they find favour with

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<sup>676</sup> Miller, “A Riposte Form in the Song of Deborah,” 121.

<sup>677</sup> I discuss the problem of the identity of the hearers in the last section of this chapter. In this and the following paragraph, the prophetic passages to which I refer seem to indicate by the behaviours that are described that the hearers are the social elite. However, when judgment is proclaimed as a result of these behaviours, the entirety of the people seems to be indicated.

YHWH. Apparently these elite were quite proud of their standing before YHWH, and they seemed to be confident that, because of their diligence in the sacrifices of the cult, their deity stood with them. The taunting challenge and insult that follows (see below) serve to overthrow that picture.<sup>678</sup>

It is not surprising if YHWH is portrayed as defending his honour, for honour was sought by all in the ancient Near East, human and deity alike:

Minor deities honor Yhwh (Ps 29:1-2) just as a hierarchy of honor is evident among the gods of other West Asian pantheons. . . . In short, honor and shame communicate relative social status, which may shift over time. . . . It is a commodity of value, actively sought both by deities and by human beings.<sup>679</sup>

Not only was a deity's honour to be proclaimed and his status maintained above that of surrounding deities, the deity must also be honoured by humans, much as a patron or suzerain would. "The suzerain demands and gets precedence in honor, expressed in a variety of ways for all to witness."<sup>680</sup> While it may have been the norm in the ancient Near East that the deity was

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<sup>678</sup> There is an element of the parry mentioned by Miller that is lacking in the Song of the Vineyard. In his analysis of the Song of Deborah, Miller notes that parries usually acknowledge an element of truth to the adversary's prior claim. There is neither evidence of a prior claim on the part of the people toward YHWH, nor any room for acknowledgement on the part of YHWH of the truth of any accusation of shame.

<sup>679</sup> Saul Olyan, "Honor, Shame and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment," *JBL* 115 (1996): 204.

<sup>680</sup> Olyan, "Honor, Shame and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel," 206-207.

honoured through sacrifice, the Song of the Vineyard yields a different portrayal: that of YHWH having been dishonoured through unrighteous behaviour on the part of his people.

#### 5.3.2.c Vaunt and Insult

Vaunts and insults are frequently combined: for example, in riposte. It is debatable as to whether the Song of the Vineyard can be viewed as a riposte, since it lacks many of the elements of one.<sup>681</sup> However, the declaration of the vinedresser's actions can be seen as a vaunt, while the accusation against Judah appears as an insult, an intentional dishonouring of the offending party, the vine. Miller observes that an insult may serve to point out undesirable behaviour, and a boast may serve to encourage its correction:

Part of the function of the boast appears to have been to encourage people to strive to achieve socially desirable qualities and to subject them to ridicule if they failed. . .

If a characteristic of the boast is that it claimed for the boaster desirable features far above the norm, the insult attributed undesirable features to the subject which were far below the norm.<sup>682</sup>

Shaming speech may be used to bring about behavioural change in a community to preserve the community's honour and that of its head, be that patron, patriarch, king, or deity. Hopefully, the boast and insult are effective in bringing about change in the community's behaviour, and no further remedies are necessary. However, if the shameful behaviour continues, other measures may be called for. Malina claimed that the remedies could not be legal in nature; going to court

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<sup>681</sup> See the discussion on riposte in Miller, "A Riposte Form in the Song of Deborah," 121.

<sup>682</sup> Miller, "A Riposte Form," 107.

was not an option, because it would be “dishonorable and against the rules of honor to go to court and seek legal justice from one’s equal.”<sup>683</sup> Victor Miller, however, maintains that shame and shaming speech “also function as means of social modification through the imposition of legal measure and procedures. When the shaming mechanism fails to suffice, harsher measures are then prescribed by law to ensure social order.”<sup>684</sup> The legal language in the Song of the Vineyard does not necessarily indicate that the passage should be taken as a *rîb*; it may be the underlying threat of further, legal action, should the community’s behaviour not change. The community has been challenged and threatened: you must change or severe consequences are sure to follow! The vaunting party, in this case the deity, has a claim against his people, and unless he is recompensed with the honour he deserves, harsher measures will ensue.

In the case of a deity’s honour claim against his people, the “harsher measures” may be drought and agricultural disasters. Ronald Simkins maintains that the locust plague in the days of Joel was an act of shaming the people. The verb that is used in Joel 1:12 to describe the disaster, *הוֹבִישָׁה*, is usually translated “to dry up,” but Simkins maintains that it should be “shame.”<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> Malina did not think that honour-shame feuds occurred between non-equal parties, one of the most criticised aspects of his model.

<sup>684</sup> Matthews, “Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible,” 98.

<sup>685</sup> Ronald A. Simkins, “Return to Yahweh: Honor and Shame in Joel,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 46-47. The ambiguous nature of the verb leads to the two translation possibilities. The verb used in both Joel 1:11 and 1:12 is *הוֹבִישָׁה*. It may be derived from the word *יָבֵשׁ*, dry, as reflected in most translations, or from *בּוֹשׁ*, shame. Simkins argues that the Hiphil of *יָבֵשׁ* is never used to mean “to be dried up *from* [italics original],” whereas the root *בּוֹשׁ*, with *מִיָּן*, means to be put to shame *by*

Agricultural disaster is shameful in that it testifies to the absence of God, and “[t]he absence of God within the community as attested by the devastation of the locusts, and as judged by the nations, was a source of shame for the people of Judah.”<sup>686</sup> In the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH warns that if his shameful speech—calling the deeds of the people “stinking grapes”—is not effective in bringing about a change of behaviour then the harsher measures of agricultural disaster will be instituted:

And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.  
I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.  
I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed,  
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

The repetitious nature of the shaming speech reinforces the shamefulness of the deeds that called it forth. These threatened actions certainly are harsh measures. They are more than harsh, however; they are shaming, as Simkins says concerning the plague in the days of Joel:

Such a plight is shameful because it makes a mockery of Judah’s claim to be the people of Yahweh and to enjoy the benefits of loyalty to him. If Yahweh was their God, and if the people had properly honored him through obedience to his commands, then it was incumbent upon Yahweh to bless and protect them.<sup>687</sup>

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something or someone. I think that Simkin’s argument is persuasive; the rendering of 1:11 seems to make more sense when translated in that way.

<sup>686</sup> Simkins, “Return to Yahweh,” 48.

<sup>687</sup> Simkins, “Return to Yahweh,” 51.

The Song of the Vineyard abounds in irony and the overthrow of cultural ideologies, of which the agricultural shaming is but one example. We are the people of YHWH, say the people of Judah; such devastation can't happen here. YHWH is with us. His temple is among us. These are refrains heard in various parts of the Hebrew Bible and challenged by the prophets. While there is no such direct claim in the Song of the Vineyard, the act of agricultural shaming seems to address that attitude in a most direct and (undoubtedly to many of that day) surprising way.

#### 5.3.2.d באושים as Illegitimate Children

The shaming speech of the Song of the Vineyard focuses on the phrase, ויעש באושים, “but it yielded wild (literally, ‘stinking’) grapes.” Gary Williams maintains that “grapes” was perhaps a symbol of children and באושים perhaps represented illegitimate children.<sup>688</sup> A weakness of Williams’ argument is that he gives no reason for this possible representation, other than his view that the relationship between the vinedresser and vine is a matrimonial relationship. His only substantiation for that view is the amount of care that the vinedresser puts into the vine. Williams was not the first to suggest that the Song of the Vineyard was set in a matrimonial or pre-matrimonial context. Bentzen, for example, took a similar view, maintaining that the passage should be read allegorically as the complaint of a husband against an unfaithful wife.<sup>689</sup> Willis, however, criticises this allegorical approach and rejects it primarily because he maintains that the

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<sup>688</sup> Gary R. Williams, “Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation,” VT 35 (1985): 461.

<sup>689</sup> Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1952), 33-36.



Jews took over the allegorical method from the Greeks long after the writings of the prophets, and therefore, “to speak of Isaiah as having delivered an allegory is anachronistic.”<sup>690</sup>

Williams’ argument is weak and Bentzen’s allegorical reading may be problematic, but I see no compelling reason why illegitimate children and a marital context must necessarily be ruled out as one interpretive possibility for the passage. John Willis wrote seeking *a* (i.e. one and one only) genre answer, or at most a genre answer that was the combination of two genre types, for the Song of the Vineyard. His article consists of detailed evaluations of the genre determinations of earlier scholars and the presentation of criticisms of each. In his conclusion, then, he presents his solution; the Song of the Vineyard is a parable of a disappointed husbandman.<sup>691</sup> Since the late 1970s, when Willis wrote, biblical hermeneutic<sup>692</sup> has developed, and texts are now read as presenting a spectrum of possibilities depending on the interpretive lenses used, as well as the setting and ideology of the interpreter and his or her community. In light of these realities, I see no reason why the Song of the Vineyard cannot be examined through the socio-cultural lens of honour-shame speech and the term באושים be considered as referring to illegitimate children.

Bentzen and Williams are not the only scholars who have examined the Song of the Vineyard in terms of a husband-wife (or groom-bride) relationship. Meir Malul proposed that two major biblical metaphors meet in this passage: the metaphor of YHWH as the husband of Israel, and

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<sup>690</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 356.

<sup>691</sup> Willis, “The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7,” 359.

<sup>692</sup> This development is considered extensively in the chapter on methodology.

agricultural produce—particularly the vine—as a sexual symbol.<sup>693</sup> Malul then sees the stripping away of YHWH's protection of the vine as a metaphorical parallel to the stripping of a woman/wife in other biblical passages.<sup>694</sup> The purpose of the stripping and exposing to the public is to shame, in order to defend the honour of the husband.<sup>695</sup>

Malul's argument becomes additionally persuasive when the word באושים is taken to mean illegitimate children. One of the intriguing questions concerning the Song of the Vineyard is the use of this word that appears nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. The root באש means *stink*, and its derivatives are used in only a few verses; they are never used in connection with fruit and only once referring to vegetation—a noxious weed, in Job 31:40. I suggested in the chapter on innertexture that one possible reason for its use may be the very close aural connection with the root בוש, which means shame. Illegitimate children would be shameful, and the word meaning “shameful ones” or “shameful things” in Hebrew would be בושים.

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<sup>693</sup> Meir Malul, “מה בין פריצת הגדר במשל הכרם לבין הפשטת האישה העירומה במקרא?” *Beit Mikra* 168 (2001): 11-24. I summarise Malul's article in the literature review.

<sup>694</sup> Malul points out Ezek 16:36-42 in particular.

<sup>695</sup> In both the Ezekiel passage as well as the Song of the Vineyard, the acts lead to destruction. Even to this day in Palestine and in the Bedouin regions of the Negev of Israel, occasionally young women are found murdered with the suspected motive of “preservation of family honour.” The motive behind these murders rarely can be proven, since to speak to anyone outside the community of the woman's shameful actions (shameful according to the customs of those societies) would bring shame on her family and on the entire community.

The husbandman of the vineyard shames the vineyard/wife for bringing forth stinking fruit/shameful illegitimate children. Read in that light, then the subsequent threatened actions fit the honour-shame model of the ancient Near East, as far as we know it.

The text of the Song of the Vineyard does not even hint at a motive for YHWH's punitive actions. There is a declaration of the righteousness—the undeniable right behaviour—of the vinedresser, and the unrighteousness—the undeniable wrong behaviour—of the vine. The resulting actions of the vinedresser are stated, but an explicit reason for them is not given. They are a consequence of the actions of the community, but that still does not explain the motive behind them. The condemned behaviour is desperately wrong, but why are the subsequent, extremely harsh actions taken? When viewed through the lens of the social value of honour-shame, the most likely answer to that question is that the threat is made in order to correct the offending behaviour. The threat is not a vain threat, however, and will be carried out if there is no behavioural change. The hearers/readers of this passage would understand the honour-shame transaction and the threat that is made in that context. In light of that knowledge, it would be exceedingly foolish of them not to take heed and to change their ways.

#### 5.4 Social Location: Who are the Hearers?

The physical location of the Song of the Vineyard is clear; it is set in the hill country of Judea in the eighth century B.C.E. However, in addition to the physical location, the social location is an important aspect of the socio-cultural texture. The text is directed to readers and if the text preserves an oral event, that event involved hearers. Can it be determined from the text who the hearers were? Is so, how might this information affect our reading of the socio-cultural texture of the text?

The text presents a challenge between YHWH and a second party, usually assumed to be the people of Judah. Yet eighth century Judah appears to be a bifurcated society with a social elite dwelling in the cities and the majority, the common people, in the villages and small towns. In which social context and to which social element is the passage addressed? It could be addressed to the people as a whole or just to the social elite. Or, conceivably, it could be addressed primarily to the social elite, yet implicating the wider group.

There are only two explicit indications in the text as to the intended audience. The first is the direct address to *יושב ירושלים ואיש יהודה* in verse three. The second is the explanation of the identity of the vineyard as “בית ישראל ואש יהודה.” These phrases could be understood as two parallel expressions that would equate all three terms as meaning one and the same thing:

$$\text{יושב ירושלים} = \text{איש יהודה} = \text{בית ישראל}$$

Such a parallel understanding is problematic, however. First, there does not necessarily need to be a direct one to one correspondence between the party or parties of direct address to the explanation of the identity of the vineyard. An additional and greater problem is the correspondence of all three terms. Marvin Chaney argues that the phrase *יושב ירושלים* should be understood as indicating the ruling elite of Judah,<sup>696</sup> and that is certainly possible. It is unlikely, however, that “dwellers of Jerusalem” is to be equated with “house of Israel;” the latter term

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<sup>696</sup> Marvin L. Chaney, “Whose Sour Grapes?: The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy,” *Semeia* 87 (1999): 112-116.

would almost certainly be broader. The term “house of Israel” could refer to the people of Israel as a whole,<sup>697</sup> to the Israelite people of Judah or to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Another, more likely possibility, is that each of the phrases is a parallel expression, but they are not parallel with each other:

יושב ירושלים = איש יהודה

and also, but not the same as the above:

איש יהודה = בית ישראל

In this possibility, the first phrase is the phrase of direct address, the people to whom the song is addressed. Chaney primarily uses a lexicographical argument to claim that the word יושב specifically refers to the monarchy, while איש refers to important people in general.<sup>698</sup> He argues that the combined phrase as refers to the social elite dwelling in Jerusalem. While Chaney’s argument is lexicographical, the social setting of Jerusalem itself suggests the same conclusion. Eighth century Jerusalem was the centre of the religious cult, the monarchical capital and centre of international trade. The second phrase, the indirect address that identifies the vineyard, is broader, expanding the setting beyond Jerusalem. יהודה איש refers to all the people of Judah. Whereas בית ישראל may be an exact parallel in reference to all of the Judahites, as Chaney, Yee

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<sup>697</sup> Chaney sees the term as referring to the northern kingdom. See also the discussion of Gail Yee’s article “A Form Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Song and Juridical Parable” in the literature review.

<sup>698</sup> As a point of interest, modern Hebrew uses the term איש in this way, even using a plural form, אישים, to refer to important personages.

and some others suggest, to the northern kingdom of Israel. The Song of the Vineyard is addressed to the elite in Jerusalem and the focus is on them, yet the general message of the situation and its consequences, is not limited to them.

The obvious difficulty with this second possible reading is that the phrase *אִישׁ יְהוּדָה* means two different things in the two phrases. While this difficulty exists, the explanation is plausible. The very nature of the accusation seems to fit a location of address as being the class with judicial power. Those who have the ability to do so have not ensured that justice, *מִשְׁפָּט*, has prevailed. The problem is endemic to the whole, not just a localised phenomenon. This problem suggests a social location of a centralised judiciary rather than localised counsels of family clans or villages. Yet the very act of judgment, the tearing down of the vineyard, seems to imply a wider judgment than just upon that elite class; it comes upon the whole vineyard, which is “בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.” The implication is that the locus of the address and the focus of its message is the elite class, but the message is more encompassing than just that narrow scope; it encompasses the whole society.

Niels-Erik Andreasen, citing Micah 5:6, observes that the prophets are outspokenly critical of the capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem because they are symptomatic of the problems they saw in the society at large.<sup>699</sup> Amos, chapter five, clearly depicts a message directed at the elite of Samaria., those who live in stone houses, take grain from the poor and sit in the city gate; yet for these sins judgment may “break out like a fire on the house of Joseph” (Amos 5:6), i.e. on the broader community, not just upon the elite. The lexicography, innertextual rhetoric and intertextual setting of the passage indicate that the social setting of the Song of the Vineyard is

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<sup>699</sup> Micah 5:6, “What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of the House of Jacob? Is it not Jerusalem?” Niels-Erick Andreasen, “Town and Country in the Old Testament,” *Encounter* 42 (1981): 273.

upper strata of society located in Jerusalem. The voice addressing this message is therefore a counter-cultural voice, at least counter to that level of society in which power and authority dwell. Yet this voice is not the voice “of the people” against the leadership, since the declared judgment is upon all; the society as a whole is implicated.

The above reconstruction of the social setting of the text has implications for the portrayal of YHWH. It would be a simplistic reading to perceive YHWH just as defender of the common people against the social elite, as it might appear in a socialist or Marxist interpretation. The people are oppressed and YHWH is their defender; that aspect of the deity we have seen in other textures of this passage. Yet the societal corruption is not limited to the upper classes, and the deity does not overlook the corruption of one class while condemning that of another. Just because one class of a society is oppressed does not mean that that class is righteous or guiltless. Perhaps we could say that the characterisation of YHWH that results from the consideration of the social location of the text is that of a uniformly just deity, certainly not overlooking the injustices of the powerful just because they are powerful, but also not favouring the disenfranchised just because they are oppressed.<sup>700</sup>

### 5.5 Summary

The early centuries of Israelite people were centuries of change that encompassed every aspect of life. From wandering desert tribes, they became an early agrarian community, characterised primarily by rural life in small communities. The social world was one of kinship relationships,

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<sup>700</sup> A similar idea is expressed in Exodus 23:2-3, “you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.”

which were not only the mainstay of society but of economic life. In times of difficulty, these kinship relationships helped ensure that all survived.

That world underwent radical change. Some would claim that the process started with David and significantly advanced under Solomon, while others see the process as being slower and later. In either case, by the eighth century B.C.E. a strong monarchical government had developed, along with an elite social class whom it supported. Taxation and trade were instituted, resulting in many cases in the impoverishment, indebtedness, and ultimate landlessness of many of the rural peasantry. This process was to the benefit of the urbanised wealthy, many of whom became major landholders with the former peasant landowners as tenants. Survival depended upon access to limited resources, and the key to that access was a dependency upon one who had resources. This dependent relationship of patron/lord with client/lesser party was in many ways a mutual dependency, the greater party having access to goods and protection, and the lesser party rendering the valuable “commodity” of honour.

In this world, honour and shame were essential social and even economic values, and the preservation of honour was a matter of the utmost importance. Honour was sought by all: whole communities, heads of communities, patrons, kings, and even deities. A challenge to honour must be defended, and shame brought about by an individual, a member of a community, or by a whole community toward its deity, was a situation that could not be tolerated. Shaming the offender was the inevitable response on the part of the challenged party. This shaming had two purposes, to preserve the honour of the challenged party and to correct the behaviour of the offender.



When seen in this cultural milieu, YHWH, the deity of the community of the Israelites, responds to their behaviour, whose shameful behaviour has become a challenge to his honour. The vaunt-insult transaction of the Song of the Vineyard highlights a number of facets of the relationship between YHWH and the people of Judah. As patron/lord, YHWH has defended his honour while challenging his people. He establishes his own “righteousness,” or rightness, in the relationship. He is without blame. He has kept all the obligations of the relationship, whether they be legal obligations (as in covenantal exchange) or more informal but nonetheless expected ones, as in the patron-client relationship. This proclamation of his honour puts a challenge before the hearers to prove matters otherwise. If they are unable to, then he is vindicated and his honor increased.

The vaunt can be understood as implying an insult, based on an underlying assumption held by the community. The assumption is that they, the community, are righteous, i.e. without blame in the relationship with their deity. As evidenced in other passage of Scripture, the Jerusalem temple cult abounded in sacrifices, and in the ancient Near East that was the way in which a community was to render honour to their god. Yet YHWH’s insult, the statement that they have brought forth “stinking grapes,” later explained as injustice, renders a completely different picture of how YHWH expects to receive honour from his people. Honour to this deity, YHWH, is not through sacrifice, but through justice and equity within the community.

The vaunt-insult may have a legal force or it may not; the legal terminology in the passage suggests that it does, but does not require that interpretation. Either way, the purpose of the vaunt-insult is to bring forth a change of behaviour. The deity has been shamed by the behaviour of the vine, and that situation must be rectified. YHWH spells out harsh measures that he will take against the vine if there is no change of behaviour.

How does one view YHWH as a deity who will defend his own honour by shaming his people with such harsh measures? To a great extent, that depends on the reader's ideology. One could view this deity as a jealous god in the worst sense of the word, a god whose only interest is his standing in the pantheon and whose wrath is aroused should his people shame him. Alternatively, one could see this deity as threatening dire consequences should there be no change of behaviour on the part of his people, and doing so for their own welfare. Their shameful actions are producing shouts of agony and pain in the community. Their leadership professes to honour the deity while allowing injustice to go unchallenged and its consequences to destroy. The deity threatens harsh measures in the hopes that such behaviour will change, ultimately, for the community's own good. Because of my ideology, I see YHWH in the light of the latter portrayal, but I know that not everyone would.

Finally, a question integral to a study of the socio-cultural texture is the social location, the social status, the norms, other relevant social values of the community of reception. The answer to this question is dependent upon the prior question of the identity of the community of reception. The lexicography, intertextual setting and social message of the text indicate that the passage is directly addressed to the Jerusalem social elite, but is broader in its implications since societal injustice is not limited to that stratum of society.

## **6.0 Conclusion: Seeking the Sacred**

*Who are you, Lord?*

*The Apostle Paul (Acts 9:5)*

### **6.1 Researching the Hypothesis: The World of Both/And**

In the 1971 movie *The Fiddler on the Roof*, Perchik, a member of the small Jewish community, passionately confronts his neighbors that they should pay more attention to events around them.

The following exchange takes place:

Jew from the crowd: “Why should I break my head about the outside world? Let the outside world break its own head.”

Tevye (the protagonist): “He’s right. As the Good Book says, ‘If you spit in the air, it lands in your face.’”

Another Jew: “Where does the Good Book say that?”

Perchik: “Nonsense. You can’t close your eyes to what’s happening in the world.”

Tevye: “He’s right.”

Yet another Jew: “He’s right, and he’s right? They can’t both be right.”

Tevye: “You know, you are also right.”

This colourful scene humorously depicts the worldview of both/and, which is common in the traditional Jewish world, but foreign to the either/or mindset of many westernised people.

This research thesis posits a both/and hypothesis, that one limited passage, the Song of the Vineyard, presents a wide spectrum of different and even seemingly contradictory characterisations of YHWH. It may be difficult at first for a person accustomed to an either/or mentality to grasp such a concept, particularly in a sacred text. Even the research of such a question would have been difficult in prior ages due to the monochromatic approaches to biblical interpretation. The methodology used in this thesis in many ways is a both/and approach, representing the culmination and integration of the interpretive approaches to the Bible over the last two millennia.

Until the Age of Enlightenment, church dogma and rabbinic tradition were the primary guiding ideologies and perspectives underlying biblical interpretation. However, the world of biblical interpretation was not immune to the radical worldview shifts brought about by the Enlightenment. Faith and dogma no longer had hegemony over biblical interpretive practices; rather, the biblical text was treated as other, non-sacred texts. Reason, scientific methods, and textual criticism ascended as interpretive modes. This new approach to Scripture occupied not only interpreters who rejected faith and dogma as interpretive principles, such as Schleiermacher, but also those such as Luther, whose sole interest was the interpretation of Scripture for the purpose of pursuing the sacred. Out of this changing world developed the historical-critical method, the primary interpretive modality of the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. Since that time, postmodernism and the “rediscovery” of rhetoric and the expansion of the realm of rhetorical analysis have broadened greatly the possibilities for textual interpretation, including the interpretation of biblical texts. History, textual criticism, culture, literary modes, rhetoric, ideology, and sociology were now viewed as valid interpretive modalities. Each of these realms

raises different questions, and in reference to the hypothesis of this thesis, each may render different portrayals of the deity of Scripture.

The development of diverse interpretive approaches has made this research thesis possible. Research can be conducted in a non-hegemonical environment in which multiple answers to one question are acceptable; there is no one “right” answer. In the Song of the Vineyard, there may appear to be one evident characterisation of the vinedresser,<sup>701</sup> that of a vinedresser who does not hesitate to rid his land of a vineyard that produces bad fruit. This characterisation may seem so obvious that it may preclude searching for other possibilities. Yet investigation of the research questions posed in the introduction to this thesis through the various textures of the text reveals that there are numerous possible characterisations of YHWH, the vinedresser in this brief song.

## 6.2 The Textures of the Text: Answering the Research Questions

### 6.2.1 Innertexture

The study of the innertexture of the text focuses on the text itself. The passage begins with the word אֲשִׁירָה, “I will sing,” which raises the question of genre. Is this passage a song, or should it be understood as belonging to a different genre? Is it rather a combination of genres? Or must the question be left open? The review of the literature showed that that question has been thoroughly considered, though no definitive answer can be given; it does not appear to fall into any one genre type. A few scholars who considered the question of genre also tendered suggestions for the characterisation of YHWH. Among the suggested characterisations were

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<sup>701</sup> See discussion on the “presumed intended meaning” of the text in the chapter on innertexture.

YHWH as uncle, the bridegroom or friend of the bridegroom, and YHWH as friend of the prophet.

Innertextual study extends beyond the question of genre, however. It encompasses every element of communication within the text: the grammar, structure, narrative progression, orality and emotive elements, and asking how these elements may combine to render different characterisations of YHWH. The structural analysis of the pericope in the chapter on innertexture suggests a portrayal of YHWH that is quite different from the presumed portrayal, that of a vinedresser/deity who hastens to remove the offending vine. The vinedresser may be viewed in this analysis as only reluctantly taking drastic measures. Instead of hastening to tear down his vineyard, he starts with the least drastic measures first and only brings judgment progressively. This portrayal fits not only the structure of the passage but also a certain logic, for it would seem illogical for a vinedresser to hastily rip out a vineyard into which he had invested so much care. There is cause for the vinedresser ultimately to take such action because of the bad fruit the vine produces, the באושים (משפה) instead of good grapes (משפה), yet such action would only be a last resort if the earlier actions did not resolve the problem.

A reader's first emotive impression upon reading the Song of the Vineyard might be to sense the anger of the wrathful vinedresser/deity. This passage, however, can render a very different portrayal: that of a grieving god. Tsipporah Gil'ad's reconstruction of the passage suggests that the song was originally a מִשַּׁל that had no threat of judgment. With the threat of judgment gone, the emotive emphasis of the song shifts from wrath to grief. Even without the suggested reconstruction, Abraham Heschel agrees that the theme of the song is God's sorrow rather than anger. Heschel also sees the role of the prophet in the ancient Hebrew world as identifying with

the divine sovereign of the people not only by proclaiming his coming judgment, but also empathising with him in his profound sorrow and grief.

Another important aspect of the innertexture of the text is the aural aspect, which is the impact that the spoken words would have had upon the hearers of the song and how that impact would have formed their impression of the vinedresser's actions. Since there is no recording of a presentation of the passage before an audience, presuming that there even was such a presentation, much is left to the modern day reader's interpretation of the aural impact upon a hearer. Depending upon the interpreter, the aural impact of the passage may point to a characterisation of YHWH as either a god of wrath or a god of sorrows.

### 6.2.2 Intertexture

The intertextual study expands the field of examination beyond the text as a world unto itself and into the world of texts that surround it, asking if there are other biblical texts that may influence a reader's perceptions of the Song of the Vineyard. A further question arose in the course of the investigation: by what methodology can it be determined which other texts may have such influence, if it can be determined at all? A methodology was outlined in response to this latter question, with the acknowledgement that a degree of subjectivity is necessarily involved in the investigation of intertextuality. Despite the difficulties, certain other passages of Scripture can be seen as intertextually significant to the interpretation of the passage.

In the Song of the Vineyard, YHWH is portrayed as a vinedresser who prepares a choice land to plant his special vine. Similar imagery, the metaphorical picture of YHWH as the planter of Israel in a choice land, appears in the Torah in the Song of the Reed Sea (Exod 15) and the Song of Moses (Deut 32). In addition, Israel as the vine or vineyard of YHWH appears a number of

times in the Hebrew Bible, primarily in the prophets, but also in Psalm 80. The wrath of YHWH against his enemies is a common theme in most of these passages, whether wrath to come, wrath that has come and has left devastation in its wake, or devastating wrath that has now given place to mercy and restoration. A question that arises common to a number of these passages is the identity of YHWH's enemies. Are these enemies external enemies, the nations surrounding the people of YHWH who have trampled Judea, or are they enemies within the society itself? If they are internal enemies, is it the whole of the society with whom YHWH is at enmity or only the social elite class? Some of the passages may be read as indicating either internal possibility, while some definitively point to the social elite. Either reading is possible for the Song of the Vineyard depending on how the reader interprets the passage in light of the surrounding intertextual world.

When the Song of the Vineyard is read as an indictment against the people as a whole because of the injustice rampant throughout the society, YHWH is portrayed as a god whose support and defence of his chosen tribe is conditional. This god does not support his people just because they are diligent in their cultic obligations centred in the temple. Rather, the "cultic obligation" required by their deity is societal justice, because YHWH is just. This deity does not favour a people simply because of the special relationship he has initiated with them. This god's favour is dependent upon a proper response on the part of the people to that special relationship, which is the establishment and maintenance of a just society. When the passage is read as an indictment against the social and religious elite, YHWH is still portrayed as just, yet with an additional element: this just god is a defender of the weak societal elements against the strong who oppress them.



If YHWH is a just god, then there must be consequences should his chosen vine continue to bring forth bad fruit. The consequences come in the form of YHWH's judgment, allowing other nations to assault the land. A number of biblical passages refer to other nations destroying YHWH's vineyard. Some, such as the Song of the Vineyard, depict a time frame in which such destruction is yet pending. Others, such as Psalm 80, depict the land in the immediate wake of devastation, while others, such as Isaiah 27, depict a time in which YHWH is restoring the vineyard subsequent to an earlier time of trouble. The time of writing of the various passages, i.e. the context world of the writer, enables different views of the character of YHWH. Prior to foreign invasions, which are perceived as acts of judgment, YHWH is portrayed as a god of justice who will certainly not allow injustice to continue. In the immediate wake of an invasion, the devastations of a foreign army precipitate a theological crisis for some within the community who apparently could not believe that their deity would allow such a thing to happen. As the nation recovers, however, YHWH is perceived as a god of mercy who restores his formerly devastated people and once again becomes their defender. The historical setting of the writer to a great extent determines the writer's perspective on the character of YHWH.

The characterisations of YHWH above portray this deity as one who is transcendent and fearsome, in the sense that one must be careful not to transgress his ways lest he or she enter into trouble. Yet the intertextual world of the Song of the Vineyard also portrays this deity as imminent, as intimate lover. The term לוי in the opening verse of Isaiah's song is otherwise used almost exclusively in an intimate context in the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon portrays the intimacy of lovers, the human sexual relationship serving as a metaphor for the divine-human union in its intimacy and the blessing that results from such a relationship. Yet in the Song of the

Vineyard, the human party, the vineyard, spurns the relationship by producing “באשים,” and the result is that her fence is torn down, her ground trampled, and she herself is ultimately destroyed.

The reader’s ideology plays a major role in how one views this portrayal of YHWH as husband in the Song of the Vineyard and other passages.<sup>702</sup> YHWH may be perceived as exemplifying the worst of male oppression, and by this example justifying it. The passage has been read in this way, and the fact that the text is a product of a male-dominated society may mean that such a reading is within the scope of the writer’s intent. However, that is not the only possible way to read the passage. It is a reprehensible act for the human partner in the divine marriage to spurn the relationship by being unfaithful. Such an act is a wrong that will inevitably result in loss and destruction. In this view, the vinedresser’s claim, “What more could I have done?” is justified. The human party has brought upon itself the tragedies that befall it. This metaphorical picture is fraught with danger, however. YHWH’s actions in the context of the metaphorical portrayal of YHWH as husband/lover and Israel as wife/beloved may be taken as justifications for similar actions by males in the non-metaphorical real world. Similarly, the idea of the (female) human party bringing destruction upon herself can be used as a blanket justification for male abuse of a female; i.e. justification of a “she deserved it” attitude. This danger becomes a reality when a person or society chooses to carry the divine-human metaphor into the realm of the literal human-human world.

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<sup>702</sup> For example Ezekiel 16:36-42, in which YHWH strips his wife, Israel, naked in front of Israel’s former lovers.

### 6.2.3 Socio-cultural Texture

The Song of the Vineyard is set in the agrarian world of eighth century Judea. The physical realities of that world, such as climate, topography, and the type of crops grown, gave rise to a way of life that touched every aspect of society, including the networks of social relationships and the socio-economics of the community. Since the Song of the Vineyard depicts a metaphorical relationship, the question of social values and practices is relevant to the interpretation of the text. How is YHWH relating to the vineyard (and vice versa) in this relationship, in light of the norms and values of that time and place?

The Judean way of life underwent changes over time as social structures developed. Society became more centralised and governmental structures arose, bringing with them the raising of armies, taxation, and the growth of a social elite class. This class prospered from international trade and profited from latifundialization, as smaller farmers were unable to economically sustain themselves under the burden of taxation and were forced to sell their lands.

Prior to the advent of centralisation of resources, locally-based asymmetrical relationships between a socially and economically stronger party, the patron or lord, and a dependent party, or client, were central to the socio-economic fabric of society. In general, the primary benefit that the client brought to the patron was honour, while the patron provided material help or support. In agrarian, rural communities such as ancient Judea, honour is an essential value or commodity, not just socially, but economically, its role being similar to that of the credit rating today. While the relationship between patron/lord and dependent party/client was asymmetrical in that the two parties provided different kinds of goods, it was mutually beneficial. There is some dispute as to how formal and legally binding such relationships were; however, whether formal or otherwise,

the relationship of the patron/lord with a client/dependent party provided both social and economic stability. The centralisation of power that Judea underwent in the tenth through eighth centuries weakened that social value system but did not destroy it. Honour and its converse, shame, remained critically important social values that carried with them economic implications.

When viewed in this social setting, YHWH appears as a patron/lord who has been shamed by his dependent client. The patron, YHWH, has provided land and every necessary and good thing for the client to prosper. The expected response is that the client should honour the patron, this honour being the good fruit of righteousness. The failure to render such honour is a challenge that must be answered, lest the patron suffer dishonour, a situation that no patron, human or deity, can allow to stand.

In light of the cultural values of honour and shame, the Song of the Vineyard may be seen as a taunt-parry or vaunt-insult response on the part of the patron/deity in defence of his honour. In a taunt-parry transaction, the initiating party seeks to prove that his or her position is true or just, while the adversary's claim to rightness is empty and void. In the Song of the Vineyard, the deity boasts of his own attributes, in this case his righteousness as demonstrated by the preparations made for the vineyard. He then parries by exposing the unrighteousness of the nation as evidenced by their shameful response. The parry is meant to reveal the hollowness of the nation's claim to righteousness. YHWH, the initiator of the taunt-parry transaction, has justified his own position while casting down the claims of his adversaries.

If the passage is viewed as a vaunt-insult, then the intent of the transaction is somewhat different. As in the taunt-parry, YHWH proclaims his own righteousness and exposes the shameful response of his chosen tribe. The purpose of the insult, however, is to bring about a change in the

behaviour of the shame-causing party. If the shaming speech is not effective in bringing about change, then harsher measures, tearing down the vineyard, will be taken.

The characterisation of YHWH as patron/lord and Israel as client/dependent party and the resultant social transaction portrayed in the Song of the Vineyard leaves open the question of motive. What is YHWH's motive for responding as he does to the perceived insult? There are two diametrically opposed answers to the question of motive, but both may be expressed with one phrase: YHWH is a jealous god. The reader may view this deity as jealous for his own honour, i.e. for his own sake. As a deity, he must be honoured among the deities and among humankind as well. This type of jealousy focuses on the welfare of the deity-patron, not the welfare of the client-nation. Human relationships often function this way, as do the gods of ancient societies. Yet jealousy is not necessarily a self-directed motive; it may express the desire to defend or protect the party for whom one is jealous. The motive behind YHWH's jealousy for his honour may be the welfare of the people. YHWH's honour has been challenged because of the shameful behaviour of the client, behaviour that ultimately must result in destruction should it continue. YHWH is "jealous" to guard and protect the client, exposing their shame in the hope of directing them toward the needed change.

### 6.3 Theological Implications of the Study

*It is an easier task to speak about the human than it is about the transcendent.*<sup>703</sup>

*Leo Purdue*

The problem that gave rise to this thesis' hypothesis was the observation that the characterisation of YHWH as vinedresser in the Song of the Vineyard seemed to be contradictory to the characterisations of YHWH in two other First Isaian vineyard passages. This contradiction is problematic if the Bible is read as a sacred book portraying the character of the deity who is to be served and worshipped. The Bible proclaims that YHWH is one: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4), which has been the watchword of the people of Israel for countless generations. If YHWH is one God, however, we are left with a conundrum, since this deity seems to present a multitude of faces. How can this difficulty be resolved?

Even a casual perusal of the biblical writings reveals a broad spectrum, or, as K. L. Noll terms it, a kaleidoscope of characterisations of YHWH.<sup>704</sup> The same YHWH who gathers lambs in his arms (Isa 40:11) and gathers the exiles of Israel (Isa 56:8) also subjects his people to oppression and drives them out of the land (Deut 28:33, 36); this god blesses the deceitful midwives (Exod 1:17) yet loves righteousness (Ps 33:5). There are almost countless examples that one could give. How does one account for these diverse and seemingly contradictory characterisations of the deity of Scripture?

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<sup>703</sup> Leo Purdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>704</sup> K. L. Noll, "The Kaleidoscopic Nature of the Divine Personality," *BI* 9 (2001).

Noll proposes an answer for the conundrum of a multi-faceted “one god” by suggesting that the Hebrew Bible was the product of a group of literati whose motivation was not religious, but rather socio-ideological and aesthetic.<sup>705</sup> These educated literati were free to research the varying community traditions extant in their day yet were not subject to societal pressure to conform to any particular ideology or content. Their intent was to produce an eclectic, all-inclusive anthology of traditions, not to adopt or impose the particular religious or ideological viewpoint of any one contributing community. The resultant anthology therefore reflected a wide variety of perspectives and diversity of characterisations of the deity. These diverse characterisations were not problematic so long as the text was not viewed as a sacred document. Noll proposes that only in the Hellenistic or early Roman period did the texts begin to be regarded as sacred, and editorial license to harmonize characterisations of YHWH was soon limited with the formation of canon, probably by the first or possibly second Jewish revolt (67 C.E. and 132 C.E.). The result is that the Hebrew Bible was compiled as an anthology without concern for the wide, seemingly irreconcilable differences in the characterisation of YHWH.

Once the biblical corpus is viewed as a sacred text, however, this kaleidoscope of characterisations becomes highly problematic: “[i]f one attempts to read every Yahweh of the Bible as one, the striking result is a mono-Yahweh who tends to dissolve from one vivid portrait into another.”<sup>706</sup> Noll suggests that the reader’s response to this problem is to “read into the text a

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<sup>705</sup> Noll, “The Kaleidoscopic Nature,” 3. Davies takes a similar approach, maintaining that the biblical literature was “a political-cultural product of the Jerusalem ‘establishment’.” Philip R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 2006 Continuum edition).

<sup>706</sup> Noll, “The Kaleidoscopic Nature,” 16.

series of theological assumptions designed to harmonize the inconsistencies in divine portraiture.”<sup>707</sup> Noll concludes that there is no “one YHWH”; this unity is only a creation on the part of the reading community who reconcile the diverse images of the kaleidoscopic picture.

A kaleidoscopic image is produced when an object is seen through a viewer whose lenses are so arranged as to simultaneously produce multiple perspectives. In Noll’s thesis, the lenses are the various contributing community traditions combined into one viewer, the anthology that became the Hebrew Scriptures. This research thesis on the brief Song of the Vineyard shows that the question of the diverse characterisations of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible is more complex, however, than simply a matter of compilations of differing community contributions. In Noll’s explanation of the conundrum of a multi-faceted YHWH, the variety of facets is displayed in the diverse writings of the Hebrew Bible. In the Song of the Vineyard, however, the kaleidoscopic image is produced in just a few short verses. This kaleidoscopic image cannot be produced by different contributing communities, since they are all manifest in one brief passage. In this case, the kaleidoscopic image is produced as a result of a variety of interpretive modes used in combination with the interpreter’s (or interpretive community’s) ideology.

The above discussion presents two possible ways of resolving the conundrum of the multiplicity of characterisations of YHWH. On the global scale of the whole of the Hebrew Bible, the characterisations may be the product of the contributing communities’ ideologies. On the local scale, so to speak, of a short pericope, the diversity results from the reader’s interpretive position. This discussion, however, only considers the human side of the writings: the processes through which the text historically developed and through which it now appears as readers interact with

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<sup>707</sup> Noll, “The Kaleidoscopic Nature,” 17.



it. Yet the text that is under consideration is the Holy Bible, considered a sacred writing in the Jewish and Christian worlds. This aspect of the text moves the discussion from the realm of the human/physical to the realm of the divine/metaphysical.

I began pursuing this thesis by asking if modern scholarly research, and this research in particular, had implications relevant to the community of faith, and if so, what those implications are. Is there a difference between the study of the Bible as a classic ancient text and the study of other classics? In his 1983 address to the Society for Biblical Literature, Krister Stendahl addressed the question of the biblical text as both Holy Scripture and as classic in our culture.<sup>708</sup> He maintained that the reason the Bible is a classic in our culture is *because* it is the Holy Scripture; if it were not the Holy Bible, it most likely would not be considered a classic, or at least many of its sixty-six books would not be so considered. His brief address touches upon an ongoing tension in the world of biblical scholarship. Sandra Marie Schneiders describes the two-sided nature of biblical scholarship, stating that on the one hand, the Bible is “a human document that must be approached with all the methodological sophistication at our disposal,” yet “this book is somehow different from other texts because of its role of mediation between God and the believing community.”<sup>709</sup>

In the methodology section of this thesis I traced the development of biblical interpretation from the early hermeneutic hegemony of church dogma to today’s pluralism. It is that very pluralism that has allowed for a thesis such as this, in which there are a plurality of answers to the question

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<sup>708</sup> Krister Stendahl, “The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture,” *JBL* 103 (1984).

<sup>709</sup> Sandra Marie Schneiders, *Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 12.

posed, enriching interpretive possibilities. While the development of pluralism may have brought about this advantage as well as others, it may also have brought with it a downside: obscuring the sacred, as expressed by Burke O. Long:

Pluralism has its dangers, however. Some biblical scholars . . . have abandoned talk of God altogether, preferring to construe theology as a “part of social knowledge, even ideology.”<sup>710</sup>

Social and literary criticism have brought a humanising effect to biblical studies, challenging “the sense of transcendental reality which has always lain just below the surface of most biblical research.”<sup>711</sup> Some scholars, such as Davies, see this as liberating, while for others such as Stendahl, it is a matter of concern.

Whereas in the early centuries practically the sole question of study was in the realm of the sacred, viewed through the lens of church dogma, now the search of the sacred is just one of many possibilities—and, in light of Davies’ comments, perhaps a disappearing one. There now exist entire articles, journals, and books of biblical interpretation which are not concerned at all—or minimally so—with the question of the sacred. A chasm has arisen between Church and Synagogue on the one hand and the academy on the other.

Scholarly biblical research can, however, hold theological implications for the community of faith. Are the characterisations of YHWH discussed in this thesis merely reflections of a community’s ideologies and beliefs without any transcendent reality? Are the characterisations

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<sup>710</sup> Burke O. Long, “Ambitions of Dissent: Biblical Theology in a Postmodern Future,” *JR* 76 (1996): 283.

<sup>711</sup> Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel,’* 15.

of the vinedresser in the Song of the Vineyard merely the product of interpretive lenses manipulated by an ideological interpreter? In the view of some scholars, that is all they are. The world of scholarship has made possible the hypothesising of an anthological kaleidoscope of multi-faceted YHWHs, and the discernment within the text's textures of a spectrum of vinedresser characterisations. Yet the danger exists of that same world explicitly stating, or at least implying, that there is no underlying metaphysical reality behind these portrayals. Perhaps the Hebrew Bible did come about as an anthology of community perspectives, and certainly the wide variety of characterisations of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard are the results of modern scholarly techniques. Yet for the community of faith, these understandings point to a metaphysical reality, the bedrock and reason for the existence of this literary classic, the Holy Bible.

The apostle Paul writes, "For now we see in a glass, darkly" (I Cor 13:12, *KJV*). It is true; human writings and the interpretive lenses through which they are perceived can never give us a clear, undistorted picture of the divine, because they are expressed in human language and seen through human eyes. Yet a person of faith may maintain that we are seeing an existing reality, even though as through a darkened lens. When perceived in this way, each of these characterisations has much to say to us about who the God of the Bible is and therefore the kind of people the community of faith should be.

Working through the theological ramifications of the diverse characterisations of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard most properly falls to the individual reader and to the preacher, pastor, or spiritual guide of a believing community. Certainly a full consideration is well outside the scope of this research work. Yet I think that at least one brief example should be given to illustrate the theological potential of such a consideration.

In a brief article published in 1990, Delores Williams considered the relevance of the Song of the Vineyard to the act of parenting, Williams herself being a parent.<sup>712</sup> She observes that most parents desire the best for their children and provide resources for them according to the best of their ability, regardless of their economic standing. In Williams' parenting analogy, she sees YHWH as the parent providing the best for the children; yet they went wrong, with no fault on the part of the parent. When things go wrong and a child develops as do the bad grapes in the Song of the Vineyard, parents may feel like they need to judge themselves for the failure, as, according to Williams, ancient Judah judged themselves. However, in the Song of the Vineyard, it is not Judah who examines and judges themselves; it is YHWH, the analogous parent, who examines Judah. In answering the research questions, this thesis presents a spectrum of characterisations of YHWH. Can some or all of these characterisations shed light for the frustrated parent of a "bad grape" child (to follow Williams' analogy)?

It is easy for a parent of a rebellious child to be angry, and it is not difficult to read the emotion of anger into YHWH's portrayal in the Song of the Vineyard. Williams states that a parent of a wayward child may well feel anger and be tempted to take hasty, drastic steps, possibly even expelling the child from the house. While anger at the situation is easily discernible in the text, it is not the only emotion. The study of the emotive aspect of the text's innertexture suggests that YHWH's primary response may not be anger, but deep grief. YHWH's grieving is in great part caused by the knowledge of the inevitable consequences of the peoples' (in the analogy, children's) behaviour. In addition, the structure of the passage suggests the possible

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<sup>712</sup> Delores S. Williams, "Salvation of Growth (Isaiah 5:1-7)," *Christian Century* 107 (1990): 899.

interpretation that YHWH does not respond to the wrongdoing with hasty retaliation, but rather with measured steps. Such a combination portrays a grieving though angered god restraining wrath in the hopes of correcting the situation. This portrayal can be most helpful to an angered parent frustrated over a child's behaviour, setting an example for the parent's response toward his or her wayward, rebellious child.

Not every possible characterisation of YHWH in the Song of the Vineyard necessarily would be helpful or applicable to a situation such as parenting. The above example is given merely to suggest the kind of way in which a scholarly search for the characterisations of YHWH in an ancient text may be theologically beneficial in the modern day context. Other fruitful areas of examination could include how some of the characterisations of YHWH could serve to guide a community's belief system and behaviour in the midst of an unjust society. Or, in another realm, personal benefit could result from reflection on what it means for the יְהוָה of the Song of Solomon and the Song of the Vineyard to have an intimate relationship with his people.

These very brief examples and reflections serve merely to answer to the question asked at the beginning of this thesis: "Are the findings of this research relevant and helpful for the community of faith, or is an exercise in textual scholarship of no theological import?" These findings can serve as the basis for ongoing theological reflection that may influence the faith and practice of those who look to the Bible for inspiration and truth.

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