**WOE, ASSYRIA?**

Isaiah 10 against the background of the Assyrian empire



MASTERTHESIS GEMEENTEPREDIKANT

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Assyrische soldaat met gedeporteerden. Kalksteen, vindplaats Irak, mogelijk uit paleis koning Sanherib.

Picture on cover: taken with permission in National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Assyrian warrior with deportees. Limestone tablet, found in Iraq, possibly from king Sennacherib’s palace.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The early eight century, the time of the prophet Isaiah, was the time of the Assyrian empire. Although there is agreement among most scholars that the book of Isaiah is a product of editing of several centuries, the existence of a real prophet Isaiah behind the oracles in First Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39) has always been maintained, and has recently had strong support through comparisons with Assyrian prophets from roughly the same period.[[1]](#footnote-1)

From the Biblical information we gather that the prophet Isaiah seems to have had access to the court and seems to have been involved in Judean politics between 734 and 701.[[2]](#footnote-2) Oracles in which the prophet responds to political events seem to have been scattered all over First Isaiah. Isaiah 7-8 and 17, e.g., are about the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis of 734-732 and Isaiah 20 about the Ashdod rebellion in 711.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Recent archeological and textual discoveries have made the events of the early eight century much clearer to us. It would therefore be a worthwhile endeavour to investigate one of the chapters in First Isaiah to see if it could be determined against which historical background it may have been written. This would make the passages more understandable for us to read. A similar research was done on the historical background of Micah very recently, enlightening the reading of Micah.[[4]](#footnote-4)

For this reason, I would like to investigate Isaiah chapter 10, since it seems to have been written against the background of the fall of Samaria in 722, considering 10:9-11:

*Is Calno not like Carchemish? Is Hamath not like Arpad? Is Samaria not like Damascus? As my hand has found kingdoms of idols and their graven images greater than Jerusalem and Samaria. Shall I not as I have done to Samaria and her idols do to Jerusalem and her images?*

It would be interesting to find out whether these verses really reflect the fall of Samaria, and against which historical background the other passages in Isaiah 10 have been written.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

**My research question is: which events are at the background of the oracles in Isaiah 10? Is there a single historical background behind the oracles, or can we find several time frames?**

1.2 STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Among most scholars there is agreement that First Isaiah was written against the background of the Assyrian Empire. In his commentary of 1892 B. Duhm developed the theory of First, Second and Third Isaiah, and ever since most twentieth-century exegetes treated First Isaiah (chapters 1-39) as separate from the rest of Isaiah because of this background. A distinction was made in Isaiah 1-39 between ‘authentic’ and ‘unauthentic’ material, since material was found from later stages. In his book of 1977 H. Barth considered these passages as a redaction of earlier Isaianic texts; the redaction was made, according to him, during the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC) and he called it the *Assur Redaktion* (Assyria Redaction). Many scholars, such as M.A. Sweeney, J. Blenkinsopp and W.A.M. Beuken have built on this theory.[[5]](#footnote-5)

An important shift was made by O. Kaiser and U. Becker, who saw the book of Isaiah as a product from the post-exilic period. This could be criticized because of the two hundred-year gap that should now exist between the Isaianic material and the first redaction.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Other scholars look at the book as a synchronic literary structure and see two basic parts: Isaiah 1-33 (judgment and restoration) and Isaiah 34-66 (after the judgment, restoration at hand). Recently there has been a paradigm shift and the book is seen as a redactional unit, although scholars do not agree on which theme or concept is central to the book of Isaiah.[[7]](#footnote-7)

As mentioned above, in very recent works it is maintained that there must have been a real prophet Isaiah behind the oracles in Isaiah 1-39.[[8]](#footnote-8) M. de Jong shows that Isaiah was a court prophet, much like the Assyrian prophets from his days, and that Isaiah’s messages to the king were encouraging, like those of his Assyrian ‘colleagues’.[[9]](#footnote-9) De Jong explains how several later redactions applied Isaiah’s words to new historical contexts.

1.3 AIM OF MY STUDY

Although I am not looking for the ‘authentic Isaiah’, my main assumption will be that behind the oracles there is a real prophet Isaiah, prophesizing during the late eight century. His prophecies were kept, probably because he became a highly estimated figure in the seventh century, associated with the announcement of the rescue of Judah and the death of Sennacherib.[[10]](#footnote-10)

My main interest is not reconstructing how Isaiah 10 came to be, since this has proven to be a difficult endeavour in the past and scholars hardly agree.[[11]](#footnote-11) I will also not go into the connection of First Isaiah with the rest of the book. This would ask for a different approach and a different study. I will not try to find the ‘original message’ of Isaiah, although I might mention sometimes what the messages seem to be. Since my main focus is not the messages, I will not go into the different genres (such as salvation oracle, judgment oracle, etc.) either.

My main interest is with the historical background of the oracles in Isaiah 10. Of course, while I am trying to reconstruct this, there will be some mention of redaction criticism, since my assumption is that Isaiah 10 was made up from several oracles against a particular historical background and that the oracles have been connected by a redactor later, for a different purpose.

This is what may have happened: Isaiah mentions ‘binding up’ his words among the disciples (8:16; 30:8). This might imply the binding of a scroll; maybe disciples or others wrote the oracles down.[[12]](#footnote-12) The oracles were then kept somewhere in an archive, like the Assyrian oracles were in Assyria,[[13]](#footnote-13) and a redactor later made a selection and rearranged the oracles. The redactor may have altered texts, or extended them. It is clear that the oracles are not put in chronological order. Oracles from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, for instance, or from the time around 701, can be found all over Isaiah 1-39.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Some people say that it is not interesting to find out about the times when the Biblical texts were written. The texts are ancient and cannot be understood anymore. We should read the texts synchronically and let it have its impact on us, as modern readers, since the texts were written to survive their own times.[[15]](#footnote-15) I do not agree. The fact that the texts were written or spoken by real people in real situations, situations which sometimes can be retrieved, makes the texts so much more interesting in my view.

Moreover, if we read Isaiah 10 synchronically, we have a problem: on the one hand, Assyria is presented as a powerful enemy, on the other hand it has become powerless. We can only explain this by the difference in historical circumstances and the revision: in the eight-century material Assyria is a rod that strikes, in the revision Assyria is struck by YHWH.[[16]](#footnote-16) Furthermore, some of the passages do not make any sense if they are intented to refer to the Assyrians, such as the military march in 10:28-32: the Assyrians would never have used this route.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Of course, the Bible was not written as a history book. It is all about theology.[[18]](#footnote-18) B.S. Childs sees in the end form of the book Isaiah the theological process that Israel went through. ‘Indeed, the loss of an original historical context has given the material an almost purely theological shape.’ The words have not been collected because one was interested in history, but in order to design a theology of lasting value of the divine word.[[19]](#footnote-19)

But it is not theology that is unrelated to real events.

Isaiah was a real person. The people in Israel, Judah and Assyria were real. The events were real.

For me, knowing about the events behind the oracles makes it easier to understand God YHWH, who is also my God. As a minister of His Word, I need this information when I preach. I need it for myself, when I worship.

It is my hope that this thesis will bring more understanding about the time in which the prophet Isaiah lived, of his message, and of His and our God. It is also my hope that it will give a new impetus to the research on the book of First Isaiah, since I am using a fresh approach that could probably be applied to the other chapters in First Isaiah as well.

1.4 METHOD

My method will be to divide Isaiah 10 into units, translate the text, and then discuss the historical background of these units. Of course, I realize that there are centuries between the ‘original’ oracles and our earliest manuscripts and I do not maintain that my units are one on one with the ‘original’ oracles. I do believe, however, that they might come close to them, since there seem to be different passages in Isaiah 10 which seem to have been connected somehow, and since the connected texts have such an obvious theme (woe Assyria).

Part of my fresh approach is that the divisions will be made based on the delimitations used by the Masoretes. Their system should be taken into account, according to me, because their major delimitations (*petuhah* and *setumah*) are already present in older manuscripts, such as the Qumran manuscripts, and were also used by translators like Jerome. Some minor delimitations can also be found in older manuscripts than those of the Masoretes, like the Septuagint.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The Masoretic external text delimitation, however, does not always agree with the internal division markers, and since the Masoretes were also exegetes and interpreters and the manuscripts were used liturgically, we should apply the method critically.[[21]](#footnote-21) For Isaiah 10, a critical study of the Masoretes’ delimitation has recently been made by W.M. de Bruin, and I will thankfully apply his findings, including his internal and thematic delimitation.[[22]](#footnote-22)

For the delimitation, I will also take into account what the redaction may have done to the original oracles, by looking at the way the oracles have been connected, e.g. by catchwords. I will note words and phrases that are often used to introduce a passage, since these also indicate that two passages have been connected. I will look at whether the passage is in prose or poetry. When relevant, I will discuss the ideas of redaction criticists.

For my translation, I will use dictionaries, concordances, Bible translations and commentaries. Textual criticism will be taken into account.

In order to determine the historical background of the passages, we need a good grip on the history of the Assyrian empire, Israel and Judah. I will use history books, books on Isaiah and commentaries for this, and also the Bible, realizing, of course, that the Bible is not foremost written as a history book. I will also apply translations of Assyrian documents that have survived. These will be viewed critically, since some of them were written as propaganda and are not always historically reliable. I found these in books and in the online *State Archives of Assyria*.

To determine which historical background most likely goes with which passage, I will study relevant Hebrew words, their possible translations and connotations: do they suggest a specific time frame? I will analyze the implications of the passages: what kind of situation do they refer to, and when was such a situation the case? I will investigate particular events that are mentioned (such as the conquests of the cities in 10:9 and the military march in 10:28-32) and try to determine if there is a real historical background that matches the texts. I will look at theology (such as the Zion theology). And finally, I will weigh the arguments of scholars, taking all the above mentioned into account.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 THE SOURCES

We can be very precise with dating events, because the Assyrians left us so called *limu* lists: a record of 264 years with brief notes of remarkable events, named after the officials presiding over the state cultic functions for a year in Ashur (a *limu).* Since a solar eclipse is mentioned, and astronomers know in which year this took place, all 264 years can be dated. We also have the Assyrian king list, which includes the king’s name, his father’s and the length of his reign. The first full year was regarded as his first year and the Assyrian year started in the spring, therefore Assyrian dates overlap with our calendar and we should actually say e.g. 722/721 (but I will use one number instead, as is common practice).[[23]](#footnote-23)

Many documents from the Assyrian empire have survived, which help us to establish the history of the Assyrian empire. There are accounts of military campaigns, presented by kings to their god Ashur, who was believed to claim world-wide dominion. These accounts were buried in the foundation of the buildings. Some royal inscriptions were inscribed on bas reliefs, along the palace walls, or on guardian statues of bulls and lions, or on royal monuments at the borders of the conquered countries. As already mentioned, these sources are not always reliable, because they were used as propaganda and selected by the kings. There was e.g. never mention of an Assyrian defeat.[[24]](#footnote-24)

There are also many letters in Assyrian, such as state correspondence between the king and others, letters from the king’s experts in magic and divination, and letters from state officials. Furthermore we have economic documents, including royal grants of land, sale documents, marriage settlements, work contracts and court decisions.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The texts were found at excavations of the ancient palaces, temples and other buildings. These excavations began around 1840 AD. The most famous find was the so called Kuyunlik library in Nineveh: here, many texts were found, collected by king Ashurbanipal (668-627), from two main libraries, one from the palace and one from the temple. There are about a 1000 to 1200 original tablets, but there are also many duplications, and the texts are in fragments.[[26]](#footnote-26)

2.2 THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE FROM 745 TO 681 B.C.

The Assyrian homeland was a small country (4000 km2) in the north of what is now modern Iraq. To the south of Assyria was Babylonia. The name Ashur can apply to the city, the country as a whole or to its principle god.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Every aspect of life, international, political, military and religious, was linked to the Neo-Assyrian kings. Their power was absolute. From the surviving texts we see that the kings were involved in almost everything. This is an example of a report from the Western provinces:[[28]](#footnote-28)

 *To the king, my lord: your servant Adda-hati. Good health to the king, my lord!*

*My [guard] is in excellent condition, the who[le dist]rict of [Hamath] iswell. [The king], my [lord], can be glad.*

*We have not heard anything s[pecific] about the [Ara]bs si[nce the king], my lord, [went] to [...]; all is well.*

Even deserters were sent to the king for questioning:[[29]](#footnote-29)

*To the king, [my] lord: your servant Qurdi-Ašš[ur]. Good health to the ki[n]g, my lord!*

*Ṣallaya, Burua-[...], Babe-šumki,Waru; in all four deserters (whom) [I am herewith sen] ding [t]o the king, [my lord. Let the king, my lord, question th]e[m].*

The kings were priest-kings and had a special connection with the city Ashur. They lived in an *ekallu*: a big governmental building, the state’s main center of government. The king was surrounded by taboos and not many people had access to him.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The king was normally guided by his scholars. The Assyrian king employed a large number of religious specialists, specialized in astrology, extispicy and exorcism. Assyrian prophets enjoyed a high status. Priest and diviners had a great influence on affairs of the state.[[31]](#footnote-31)

There were thousands of gods, ordered by the Assyrian scholars, but the main gods were Ashur (closely linked to the king), Ishtar (goddess of sexual activities and war), Shamash (god of justice), Sin (moon), Adad (weather), Ea (wisdom), Nergal (death) and Ninurta (war and hunting). The images of gods were seen as images and not as the divine reality itself.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The temples were as old as the cities and the gods had their own households: subsidiary deities with chapels attached to the temple of the main god. There were many rituals in the temple. It was a state religion and many of the temple rituals centered around the king.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Assyria was a merchant state at first, and the military expansion came as a result of economic advantage and the quest for security, after the fifteenth century. Their philosophy of warfare was that the best defense was a good offense; their cities are not built for defense. The Assyrian kings often mention their divine mission. Assyria in the ninth century was the first world empire. The empire’s cohesion was provided by the ideology of absolute kingship, the long-distance relay postal service (fresh horses ready 24 hours a day) and the empire-wide ‘resettlement program’.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The Assyrian population was too small for an army, and each war men were lost. Therefore foreigners were recruited from conquered countries or vassal states. One way of recruiting was to conscript deportees. The Assyrian army was therefore composed of different nationalities. The army, called the ‘hosts of the god Ashur’ in the royal inscriptions, was the engine of Assyria’s expansion and wealth. The kings supported tens of thousands in the standing army.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The Assyrian forces engaged in guerilla warfare in the mountains, in set battles in open ground or in sieges of a city. One of their main forms of warfare was siege and they were the most expert at it in the Ancient Near East. It was highly organized, with covered battering rams, mining tools and ramps, special storm troops, regiments of combat engineers, and fire. Outside the city would be a fortified, well-defended camp. They would cut the city off from supplies, and that way, if cities did not fall from assault, they would do so because of famine.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Prisoners were sometimes treated very cruelly, but this only occurred if they had seriously rebelled against the Assyrians, not if they were conquered for the first time.[[37]](#footnote-37)

2.2.1 *Tiglath-pileser III (745-727)*

During the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, who is regarded as the founder of the Assyrian empire, the Assyrian empire started to expand again. Tiglath-pileser probably came to the throne due to a coup.[[38]](#footnote-38)

There were several states that were not part of the Assyrian empire, but that paid tribute and were assured in return of the backing of the Assyrian empire in case of internal revolution or external attack. These vassal states surrounded Assyria and functioned as a buffer. In them, representatives were appointed to safeguard Assyrian interests. The vassal states paid tribute since perhaps 740, but definitely since 738. The goal of the Assyrian empire was to gain as much wealth as possible from these areas. To pay this tribute the kings had to tax their people, which would not have made them very popular in their own countries. The payment of tribute led to suffering in the vassal states. This is probably why they rebelled.[[39]](#footnote-39)

2.2.2 *Mass deportations*

Tiglath-pileser III started to deport peoples from conquered territories to Assyria, and replaced them by peoples from other conquered territories. Mass deportation was known and used before Tiglath-pileser III, but it now became a regular feature in the Neo-Assyrian Empire.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The deportation system was one of the cornerstones of the Assyrian empire. Oded guesses there were four and a half million deportees during three centuries. When people from a certain area were deported, normally not all residents were deported, only part of them.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Some deportees were settled in cities as a labor force or a source of craftsmen. Other went to rural areas to work on the fields. Some went to underpopulated or depopulated areas to populate them again. Mass deportation was thus an integral aspect of the Assyrian economy.[[42]](#footnote-42)

2.2.3 *Campaigns by Tiglath-pileser in Syria-Palestine*

In 738 Tiglath-pileser moved into South Syria, because some of the remoter states in Syria and Palestine did not pay tribute. Several rulers submitted to Assyria and started paying tribute. This was probably the occasion that Menahem of Israel paid tribute, as is told in 2 Kings 15:19,20.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Around 736, other rulers rebelled, led by Rezin (Razyan) of Damascus. With king Pekah of Israel Rezin wanted to force Ahaz of Judah to take part in an anti-Assyrian coalition: this is called the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. Ahaz refused to join the coalition and asked Tiglath-pileser for help. Tiglath-pileser beat Rezin and his allies. Tiglath-pileser turned Damascus and parts of Israel into provinces, but the central part of Israel remained under the native king Hoshea, installed in place of the rebellious Pekah.[[44]](#footnote-44)

In 729 Tiglath-Pileser became the king of Babylonia. He died in 727 and left an empire which extended from the Persian Gulf to the borders of Egypt, and ran up into Cilicia and Anatolia through North Syria.[[45]](#footnote-45) It was surrounded by vassal states that paid tribute yearly and were a buffer against attacks from outside of the empire.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Here I present an inscription by Tiglath-pileser about the replacement of Pekah by Hoshea:

*I carried off [to] Assyria the land of Bīt-Humri (Israel) [… its] auxiliary [army,”] […] all of its people, […] [I/they killed] Pekah, their king, and I installed Hoshea [as king] over them. I received from them 10 talents of gold, x talents of silver, [with] their [possessions] and [I car]ried them [to Assyria]*.[[47]](#footnote-47)

2.2.4 *Shalmaneser V (726-722) and Sargon II (721-705)*

Shalmaneser V succeeded Tiglath-pileser III.According to Shalmaneser’s successor Sargon II in the *Ashur Charter*, Shalmaneser tried to impose forced labor in the city Ashur. The citizens rebelled and put Sargon II on the throne instead.[[48]](#footnote-48)

During Shalmaneser’s rule the vassal states also rebelled and stopped paying tribute. Shalmaneser and his successor Sargon II acted forcefully. It cost Hoshea his throne and what was left of Israel became the Assyrian province Samerina. Most likely Shalmaneser V is the king who conquered Samaria in 722. During Sargon II’s reign about a quarter of the people from the Northern state Israel were deported to Assyria and remote parts of the Assyrian empire.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Sargon II’s name in Akkadian, *Šarru-kēnu* (*Sharrukin),* the same name as the founder of the Akkadian dynasty,means ‘true king’. However, he was a usurper. Sargon built a new administrative capital, Dur-Sharrukin (fort Sargon). The money needed came from campaigns; construction probably started in 717. People from all parts of the empire were transported here to populate the new city.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Merodach-baladan seized the throne of Babylonia with Elam as his ally. Sargon’s army defeated the king of Elam, but had to turn to Syria next, where Hamath, Arpad and Samaria formed a new anti-Assyrian coalition (720). It was put down and Hamath was put under direct provincial rule. The Assyrians were unable to conquer Babylonia and left Babylonia undisturbed until 710.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Sargon conquered several wealthy cities, such as Carchemish, which was conquered in 717.[[52]](#footnote-52)

In 716 the Assyrian forces marched to Philistia, when the city of Ashdod rebelled; Sargon replaced the king by his own brother. However, the brother was not accepted, and Ashdod rebelled again. There was a new campaign against Ashdod again in 711; it is not clear whether Sargon himself went as well. The ruler of Ashdod, Yamani, fled to Egypt, but its Cushite ruler extradited Yamani back to Sargon. Judah is mentioned in the rebellion, but they probably did not take part in it and therefore the Assyrians did not take action against Judah.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Sargon died in 705, fighting Cimmerian invaders in North Syria, or perhaps he died on the battlefield of Anatolia. He was never buried, which was seen as a disgrace.[[54]](#footnote-54)

2.2.5 *Sennacherib (704-681)*

Sargon II’s son Sennacherib was his successor. He was an experienced administrator and soldier. He tried to find out through extispicy what the reason might be for his father’s fate:[[55]](#footnote-55)

*"**Was it because [he esteemed] the gods o[f Assyria too much], [placing them] above the gods  of Babylonia [......, (and was it) because] he did no[tkeep] the treaty of the king of gods, [that Sargon my father] was slain [in the enemy country and] was not b[uried] in his house?"*

He may have thought it best to move from Dur-Shurrakin and he made Nineveh his new capital.[[56]](#footnote-56)

With Sennacherib’s accession, the vassal states decided to rebel again. Hezekiah of Judah had joined an insurrection of coastal cities, Sidon, Byblos, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Edom and Moab, which were backed by Egypt. Sennacherib dealt with the revolt in the West in 701. Sennacherib’s army conquered the coastal cities and repelled the Egyptians. The first target appears to have been Sidon and the submission of eight rebellious kings. Next, Philistia was invaded and the king of Ashkelon had to submit; the royal family was deported to Assyria.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Sennacherib then overran Judah, pillaging forty-six cities, and blockaded Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17ff. and Sennacherib’s inscriptions). Hezekiah paid tribute and Jerusalem was spared; miraculously according to the Bible.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Sennacherib conquered and destroyed Babylon in 689. He died in Babylon in 681, murdered by two of his sons, according to 2 Kings 19:37.[[59]](#footnote-59)

3 DISCUSSION OF PASSAGES AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 ISAIAH 10:1-4 – SOME TIME AFTER 732, WHEN ISRAEL WAS DEFEATED BY TIGLATH- PILESER AND JUDAH HAD BECOME A VASSAL STATE

ה֥וֹי הַחֹֽקְקִ֖ים חִקְקֵי־אָ֑וֶן 1aA

Woe, those that decree decrees of evil

וּֽמְכַתְּבִ֥ים עָמָ֖ל כִּתֵּֽבוּ׃ 1aB

The writers who are writing mischief

לְהַטּ֤וֹת מִדִּין֙ דַּלִּ֔ים 2aA

To turn the poor from judgment

וְלִגְזֹ֕ל מִשְׁפַּ֖ט עֲנִיֵּ֣י עַמִּ֑י 2aB

and rob the humble of my people

לִהְי֤וֹת אַלְמָנוֹת֙ שְׁלָלָ֔ם 2bA

So that widows will be their spoil

וְאֶת־יְתוֹמִ֖ים יָבֹֽזּוּ׃ 2bB

and they plunder orphans.

וּמַֽה־תַּעֲשׂוּ֙ לְי֣וֹם פְּקֻדָּ֔ה 3aA

And what will you do on the day of punishment[[60]](#footnote-60)

וּלְשׁוֹאָ֖ה מִמֶּרְחָ֣ק תָּב֑וֹא 3aB

and devastation that comes from afar?

עַל־מִי֙ תָּנ֣וּסוּ לְעֶזְרָ֔ה 3bA

To whom will you flee for help

וְאָ֥נָה תַעַזְב֖וּ כְּבוֹדְכֶֽם׃ 3bB

and where will you leave your rich burden?[[61]](#footnote-61)

בִּלְתִּ֤י כָרַע֙ תַּ֣חַת אַסִּ֔יר 4aA

Save that one will bow down among the prisoners[[62]](#footnote-62)

וְתַ֥חַת הֲרוּגִ֖ים יִפֹּ֑לוּ 4aB

and they will fall among the slain.

בְּכָל־זֹאת֙ לֹא־שָׁ֣ב אַפֹּ֔ו 4bA

In all this his anger has not turned away

וְע֖וֹד יָדֹ֥ו נְטוּיָֽה׃ ס 4bB

and his hand is stretched out still.

3.1.1 *Delimitation*

Based on the delimitations from the ancient texts, De Bruin takes Isaiah 10:1-4 as a unit. Several ancient manuscripts have a *petuhah* or *setumah* after verse 4. In these verse-lines, iniquity and oppression are condemned. It functions as the conclusion of canto 9:7-10:4. Grammatically, the subcanto is connected by the returning combination of an exclamation and a sentence with a finite verb, forming a line parallelism.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The word הוֹי (verse 1) is used in Isaiah as an introductory exclamation and directly follows major divisions (14 times) and minor divisions (5 times).[[64]](#footnote-64) Here, it follows a major division (the *setumah* in 9:20).

This text is often connected by scholars to the Song of the Vinyard in Isaiah 5, since we find woe-oracles there. Isaiah 10:1-4 might then be the beginning or the continuation of Isaiah 5:8-14: a sequence of seven woe-oracles.[[65]](#footnote-65)

The concluding phrase: ‘For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still’ is also found in Isaiah 5:25 and 9:12,21. This suggests that the texts at one time stood together. But the original connection has been broken by the insertion of an older collection, Isaiah 6:1-8:21 and probably 9:7.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Korpel makes the following divisions: 10:1-2; 10:3-4, not including v4b; 10:5-6. Like De Bruin, she points out the divisions through the *setumot*, before 10:1 and 10:5. She proposes, however, to include 10:5-6 in the woe-oracles; since 10:5 also starts with הוֹי (like 10:1), she finds no good reason to exclude it from the composition, and the keywords שלל and בזז (spoil and plunder) recur: they have made widows into spoil and plundered orphans (v2), so they will become spoil and plunder (v6). This is, according to Korpel, characteristic of the Song of the Vinyard in Chapter 5, so we should not detach 10:5-6 from 10:1-4. Korpel sees 10:1-6 as a subcanto consisting of three canticles (10:1-2, 10:3-4, 10:5-6), each consisting of two strophes. They share themes with the Song and the woe-oracles.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Korpel assumes that 5:8-10, 5:24c-25 and 10:4b are later expansions. What remains has a highly regular structure: all canticles have two strophes, just like the Song, and every subcanto contains three canticles. The Song has four canticles and canto 5:11-30 and 10:1-6 (with the exclusion of 5:24c-25 and 10:4b) has four subcantos. This suggests a well-planned composition.[[68]](#footnote-68)

In this approach, we have to delimit 10:1-6, which also has its effect on which historical background we connect with these verses. However, I do not agree with Korpel that verse 5 and 6 belong to this unit. I will explain this in 3.2.2.

3.1.2 *Historical background*

The word הוֹי in verse 1 is often translated by ‘woe’ in this verse by Bible translators (*New International Version, King James Version, English Standard Version, American Standard Version*). The use of the word in this sense derives from funeral practices and is used in mock mourning by the prophet: these people are as good as dead. It is an uncommon word to use, aimed at the attention of the listener.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Many commentators, as mentioned above, see a link with the ‘woe’ sequence in Isaiah 5:11-23 (or 24). Isaiah 10:4b is a refrain, which we find in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9. This refrain, according to Korpel, originates from the redactor responsible for the transposition of the last two woe-oracles to Chapter 10. Hays proposes that it is a literary device by a later compiler to give unity to Isaiah’s warnings, especially since phrases like ‘all this’ and ‘still’ are used, which seem to indicate a wider historical vista.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The accusation of the Song is elucidated, according to Korpel: ‘the government enriches itself at the expense of the poor, the widows and the fatherless’.[[71]](#footnote-71)

When did this happen?

Remarkable in these verses are the words used in verse-line 2c: שָׁלָל (spoil) and in verse-line 2d the verb בזז (‘to plunder’). Both words remind us of the name of Isaiah’s child in Isaiah 8:3: ‘Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz’ and the explanation in vers 4: ‘For before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.’[[72]](#footnote-72) The names of Isaiah’s children function again in Isaiah 10 (vs. 6b, 21-22), but no where else in Isaiah’s later ministry. There is a connotation, therefore, with the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, which led to the conquest by Assyria of Damascus and Samaria.[[73]](#footnote-73)

A word from the same stem, *š*-*l-l*, ‘to take forcibly’, is used in Assyrian for booty or spoil: the noun *šallatu*.[[74]](#footnote-74) Time and again, the Assyrian kings state in their annals, when they have captured people: ‘I counted them as spoil’. Sargon II e.g. states in one of the Nimrud prisms:

*[The inhabitants of Sa]merina, who agreed [and plotted] with a king [hostile to] me, not to do service and not to bring tribute [to Aššur] and who did battle, I fought against them with the power of the great gods, my lords.* ***I counted as spoil*** *27,280 people, together with their chariots, and gods, in which they trusted.[[75]](#footnote-75)*

Was the prophet Isaiah familiar with texts like these? Machinist assumes Isaiah indeed knew the Assyrian expressions and the propaganda. In the Bible, we find specific Assyrian idiom, especially in the texts ascribed to the prophet Isaiah in First Isaiah. This idiom was not used before the Neo-Assyrian advance on Palestine in the eight century. Machinist assumes the prophet Isaiah may have come to know these expressions from official Assyrian literature at court, and also because, after all, it was propaganda.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The text in 10:2b therefore, using the word with the stem *š*-*l-l,* seems to make a connotation with the Assyrians. The ‘devastation that comes from afar’ in 10:3aB also seems to indicate the Assyrian threat.

Tull points to the fact that a parallel is drawn, by using the words ‘spoil and plunder’, between the way Judah’s poor are treated with the way Israel had become spoil and plunder for the Assyrians.[[77]](#footnote-77)

It is therefore possible, according to me, that the text is about Assyria and the Judean and Israeli administrators, some time after 734.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Between 734 and 732, Tiglath-pileser III aimed to gain control over the Mediterranean coast from Phoenicia to the Egyptian border and to remain in control in Southern Syria and Palestine.[[79]](#footnote-79)

In 734, Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel attacked Judah and Jerusalem, after Ahaz ascended to the throne, forcing him to join their side against the Assyrians, or in order to replace him with another king (the Syro-Ephraimite crisis). Ahaz asked Tiglath-pileser for help. Tiglath-pileser campaigned against Israel, turned parts of it into provinces, and deported the inhabitants – among them the elite, the leaders. Archeological evidence shows that Galilee and Trans-Jordan were completely disrupted and depopulated. Some of the people fled to Judah. The central part of Israel remained under the native king Hoshea, who became king over a reduced and subdued Israel.[[80]](#footnote-80)

In Israel, the leaders had been particularly unjust, as we know from the prophecies of Amos.[[81]](#footnote-81) The attack could therefore be seen as God’s punishment on the leaders of Israel.

Judah became a vassal state at the end of 734 and had to pay a large tribute to Tiglath-pileser. King Ahaz plundered the temple and the royal treasury and probably put a heavy taxation on the nation, in order to pay this tribute. It appears, however, that the royalty and trading classes profited from the trade brought by the Assyrian empire. Judah exported its grain to the Assyrian provincial cities. The measure *sē’ āh* was even used in Nineveh. The Judean weights have been found in many neighboring countries and were probably the basic units of measure for trade. The Assyrian yoke would not have been felt very keenly in these days by the royalty and trading classes, then, although the tribute that had to be paid was substantial.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Very likely the poor people were ‘plundered’ instead in order to pay the tribute. The decrees in 1aA apparently involved land and property claims. The woe seems to be directed against those who have twisted the legal claims of the humble people with some possessions, and those (widows and fatherless people) who needed an advocate because they had no rights. The cause of justice for the needy was finally in the hand of the king, or of a legislative body formed by the upper classes of Jerusalem, in the name of the king. It was their Godgiven duty to protect the poor against exploitation.[[83]](#footnote-83)

In that case 10:1 and 2 are a woe on the leaders of Judah, who exploit the poor and helpless, and at the same time these verses bring the fate of the leaders of the Northern state into remembrance. The Judean leaders know the fate of the leaders of Israel, because some of them have fled to Judah. The unjust Judean leaders can expect the same fate as the unjust leaders from Israel: the ‘devastation that comes from afar’ (3aB): a divine punishment in the form of a political-military disaster.[[84]](#footnote-84)

If there is an attack from Assyria (ordered by YHWH), the Judean leaders cannot flee anywhere (‘where will you flee for help?’) and will have no helper. They cannot turn to Egypt since Egypt has been under attack by the Assyrians as well at this time: Hanunu of Gaza fled to Egypt in vain in 734.[[85]](#footnote-85) The Judean leaders will have to ‘bow down among the prisoners’ and ‘fall among the slain’.

This passage, which may have been part of the Song of the Vinyard, was probably placed here by a redactor, because the following passage explains that Assyria is the rod in YHWH’s hand – the instrument of God’s punishment.

Because of all this, I now place these verses some time after 732.

3.2 ISAIAH 10:5-7 – 733 OR 732: AFTER THE DEFEAT OF DAMASCUS AND CAPTURE OF ISRAELITE TRIBES IN GALILEE AND TRANS-JORDAN, FOLLOWING THE OVERTHROW OF SEVERAL NATIONS IN THE AREA SINCE 738

ה֥וֹי אַשּׁ֖וּר שֵׁ֣בֶט אַפִּ֑י 5aA

Ha Assyria is the rod of my anger[[86]](#footnote-86)

וּמַטֶּה־ה֥וּא בְיָדָ֖ם זַעְמִֽי׃ 5aB

he is a staff, in their hand is my indignation.[[87]](#footnote-87)

בְּג֤וֹי חָנֵף֙ אֲשַׁלְּחֶ֔נּוּ 6aA

I send him to a godless nation[[88]](#footnote-88)

וְעַל־עַ֥ם עֶבְרָתִ֖י אֲצַוֶּ֑נּוּ 6aB

and to the people of my fury I command him,[[89]](#footnote-89)

לִשְׁלֹ֤ל שָׁלָל֙ וְלָבֹ֣ז בַּ֔ז 6bA

To plunder, plunder, and to spoil, spoil,

וּלְשִׂימֹו מִרְמָ֖ס כְּחֹ֥מֶר חוּצֽוֹת׃ 6bB

and trample him like clay in the streets.

וְהוּא֙ לֹא־כֵ֣ן יְדַמֶּ֔ה 7aA

But he does not imagine it thus

וּלְבָבֹ֖ו לֹא־כֵ֣ן יַחְשֹׁ֑ב 7aB

and his heart does not think so,

כִּ֚י לְהַשְׁמִ֣יד בִּלְבָבֹ֔ו וּלְהַכְרִ֥ית גּוֹיִ֖ם לֹ֥א מְעָֽט׃ 7bA

for to destroy is in his heart and to cut off nations, not a few.

3.2.1 *Delimitation*

De Bruin takes these verses as a unit, based on delimitation in Antiquity. According to De Bruin, the subject אַשּׁוּר connects the following strophes, as the instrument to punish a godless nation, whereas Assyria itself does not realize it is only an instrument.[[90]](#footnote-90)

As mentioned above (3.1.1), the word הוֹי (here in verse 5) occurs in Isaiah after major divisions (14 times) and minor divisions (5 times) as an introductory exclamation.[[91]](#footnote-91) Here it follows a major division (the *setumah* after 10:4).

In 7bA, De Bruin considers this a unicolon, because of the unity of the infinitives which surround the closely related בִּלְבָבֹו, and the appositional character of the final two words.[[92]](#footnote-92)

As mentioned above, under 3.1.1, Korpel takes the verses 10:1-6 as a unit, since she sees these verses as a continuation of the Song of the Vinyard in Chapter 5.

Redaction criticists have found many other possible delimitations. Most of them take 5-15 as a unit.

De Jong also looked for the historical background, and in Isaiah 10:5-34 he found three oracles from the eight century: 10:5-9.13-15, 10:24-25 and 10:27b-32. De Jong claims that there would have been a revision in the seventh century, with commentaries and extensions: 10:5-9.13-15 was extended by 10:11, according to him, and 10:16-19, 10:24-25 with 10:26-27 and 10:27b-32 with 10:33-34. Then 10:33-34 is continued by 11:1-5, which concludes 10:5-11:5 as a whole.[[93]](#footnote-93)

De Jong does not take structural analysis into account, however, and the arguments for his findings seem a bit circular, since he assumes that Isaiah’s oracles, just like the oracles by his Assyrian ‘collegues’, were always encouraging to the king, be it Ahaz or Hezekiah, and that if the oracles are not encouraging, they must have been from a redactor. De Jong also ignores the fact that there are no Assyrian prophecies left from the time of Isaiah, that the prophecies that are left are few, and that some of the prophecies were not encouraging.[[94]](#footnote-94)

Because De Jong fits everything into his theory, we cannot always trust De Jong’s delimitations, although it is worthwhile to take his findings into account, especially since he writes about the historical background.

3.2.2 *Historical background*

Korpel, taking 10:5-6 as part of Isaiah 10:1-6, as a continuation of the Song of the Vinyard in Chapter 5, assumes that a post-exilic redactor chose to interpret אַשּׁוּר הוֹי as a woe-oracle over Assyria, since he witnessed Assyria’s defeat.[[95]](#footnote-95)

I agree it is possible that a redactor had this intention. According to me, these verses are not a woe-saying originally. First of all, the unit is not a standard woe-oracle. הוֹי is a vocative exclamation,[[96]](#footnote-96) so the woe has to be intended against whoever is mentioned next, which is Assyria (not Judah). There is, however, no clear announcement of judgment of Assyria in the following verses, and it is not a short saying in which the address contains the accusation, and the woe itself the announcement of coming disaster.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Second, the word הוֹי is often used as a ‘grievous threatening cry of the prophets’[[98]](#footnote-98), but it can also be encouraging, as in Isaiah 18:1 and other texts, and have the meaning ‘ah’ or ‘ha’.[[99]](#footnote-99) Several Bible translations do indeed not translate הוֹי in 10:5 with ‘woe’, but with ‘ah’.[[100]](#footnote-100)

According to me, הוֹי means ‘woe’ in 10:1 but an encouraging ‘ha’ in 10:5, because the main notion of the following verses is that Assyria is the rod in God’s hand, not that it will come to harm itself. Several Bible translations also have different translations for הוֹי in 10:1 and 10:5.[[101]](#footnote-101) The notion that Assyria will be punished was most likely put in by redactors who joined several passages in Chapter 10 to make all the oracles appear to be about Assyria and God’s punishment of Assyria. The notion of punishment is lacking in 10:5-7, however.

It appears that a redactor used הוֹי as a catchword, which is probably why 10:1-4 was moved here, to be connected to 10:5-7, even though הוֹי in 10:1 and in 10:5 originally may have had two different meanings.

From which time could the original oracle be? Mark 6bA with the words שָׁלָל and בזז, which were also used in 2b, as mentioned, but here they are so close together that they cannot but remind us of the name of Isaiah’s child in Isaiah 8:3: ‘Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz’, which again makes the connection with the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis.[[102]](#footnote-102)

Nations were ‘cut off’ as it says in 7bA. The political ambition of Assyria was to dominate ‘the four rims of the earth’. This is often stated in royal tablets.[[103]](#footnote-103) Since the time of Tiglath-pileser there were mass deportations, which weakened recalcitrant countries and removed obstacles for expansion. The purpose was purely imperialistic. The deportees were hostages in Assyria, which stopped rebellions and the conquered areas were repopulated with Assyrian soldiers and citizens.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The nations that were cut off were indeed ‘not a few’ (7bB). Tiglath-pileser first asserted Assyrians rights on the Border with Babylonia and defeated Urartu. He then turned to North Syria. He attacked Arpad in 743 and moved into South Syria in 738, because some of the remoter states in Syria and Palestine did not pay tribute. He defeated Unqi and Hamath. After the rebellion around 736, led by Rezin (Razyan) of Damascus, Tiglath-pileser, as mentioned above, turned Damascus and parts of Israel into provinces. In 734-732 he also conquered Gaza, Ammon, Moab, Ashkelon and Edom and gained control over the routes to Egypt.[[105]](#footnote-105)

The Annals from 733 mention Rezin’s defeat, the siege of Damascus and the annexation of his land:

*The wide [land of Bit-]Haza’ili (Aram) in its entirety, from [Mount Leb]anon as far as the cities of Gile[ad, Abel …] [on the bor]der of Bit-Humria (Israel) I annexed to Assyria. [I placed] my eunuch [over them as governor].* [[106]](#footnote-106)

Another fragment deals with Israel:

*[the land of Bit-Humria], all of whose cities I had [devastated] in my former campaigns, […] its livestock I had despoiled and had spared the city of Samaria alone, … they overthrew (Peqah) their king.[[107]](#footnote-107)*

Israel’s territories in Galilee and Trans-Jordan (Gilead) were occupied and annexed, after which all of the inhabitants were deported, as archeological evidence shows. Pekah was killed and succeeded by Hoshea; Hoshea paid tribute.[[108]](#footnote-108)

It is therefore possible that the ‘godless nation’ in 6aA refers to Israel, and the ‘nations, not a few’ are a reference to the other nations that were beaten by Tiglath-pileser.[[109]](#footnote-109)

In this time, Assyria became a major threat to the area. People may have started asking questions: why is this happening? This passage provides an answer.

If the oracle is from around 733, the oracle is warning Judah that Assyria is attacking godless nations, ordered by God to do so, and they should probably ask themselves: are we a godless nation?

Therefore my conclusion is that the historical background to this text is 733 or 732: the defeat of Damascus and capture of Israelite tribes in Galilee and Trans-Jordan, following the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, and the submission of several nations in the area since 738.

3.3 ISAIAH 10:8-11 – BETWEEN 715-711, WARNING HEZEKIAH NOT TO REBEL

כִּ֖י יֹאמַ֑ר 8aA

For he says:

הֲלֹ֥א שָׂרַ֛י יַחְדָּ֖ו מְלָכִֽים׃ 8aB

Are my commanders not altogether kings?

הֲלֹ֥א כְּכַרְכְּמִ֖ישׁ כַּלְנ֑וֹ 9aA

Is Calno not like Carchemish?[[110]](#footnote-110)

אִם־לֹ֤א כְאַרְפַּד֙ חֲמָ֔ת 9bA

Is Hamath not like Arpad?

אִם־לֹ֥א כְדַמֶּ֖שֶׂק שֹׁמְרֽוֹן׃ 9bB

Is Samaria not like Damascus?

כַּאֲשֶׁר֙ מָצְאָ֣ה יָדִ֔י 10aA

As my hand has found

לְמַמְלְכֹ֖ת הָאֱלִ֑יל 10aB

kingdoms of idols

וּפְסִ֣ילֵיהֶ֔ם מִירֽוּשָׁלִַ֖ם וּמִשֹּׁמְרֽוֹן׃ 10bA

and their graven images greater than Jerusalem and Samaria.

הֲלֹ֗א כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר עָשִׂ֛יתִי לְשֹׁמְר֖וֹן וְלֶאֱלִילֶ֑יהָ 11aA

Shall I not as I have done to Samaria and her idols

כֵּ֛ן אֶעֱשֶׂ֥ה לִירוּשָׁלִַ֖ם וְלַעֲצַבֶּֽיהָ׃ ס 11aB

do to Jerusalem and her images?

3.3.1 *Delimitation*

Based on delimitations in ancient manuscripts, De Bruin considers these verse-lines a unit. In several ancient manuscripts, there is a *petuhah* or *setumah* after verse 11. Here the king of Assyria is speaking. Not nations, but cities are mocked.[[111]](#footnote-111)

3.3.2 *Historical background*

Oswalt believes that verse 8 is to the point, since the chieftains of the little city states along the Mediterranean coast would all call themselves ‘kings’.[[112]](#footnote-112) However, there is also a pun in verse 8, where the Assyrian king asks: ‘Are my commanders not altogether kings?’ The Assyrian word for king was *šarru*, but the related Hebrew word *sar* means commander, or a subordinate official. The boast here is that the Assyrian commanders are equal to kings. The commanders are probably the Assyrian governors, who were appointed by the Assyrian king, who lived in the main cities and also had palaces. There is a bulla with a king handing over a bow with arrows to the ‘commander of the city’- this king might be Ahaz.[[113]](#footnote-113)

To which actual situation does the text apply? Let us look at the histories of the cities mentioned in this verse: Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad and Damascus. They are mentioned in the order an Assyrian army would encounter them in a march to Southern Palestine, implying a threat to Jerusalem. When did they fall? Calno was near Arpad and conquered by Tiglath-pileser III in 738. This was a crucial conquest and it probably happened in the same year king Menahem of Israel gave tribute to Tiglath-pileser. Carchemish (now in Turkey, close to the Syrian border) had been a vassal state of Urartu but was conquered by 732 by Tiglath-pileser. It rebelled and was conquered again in 717 (or 712) by Sargon II. Arpad was conquered in 738 and Damascus in 732. Samaria, however, was not conquered until 722, and Hamath until 720.[[114]](#footnote-114)

Perhaps the text is not just about conquests, but also about submissions as vassal states. There is one time when all these cities had been conquered or submitted by Assyria. That is by 732. By this time, Carchemish, Calno, Arpad, and Damascus had been conquered by Assyria, and Samaria and Hamath had been submitted and paid tribute.[[115]](#footnote-115)

The king that is speaking is then Tiglath-pileser III and the text would be from around 732, from just shortly after the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. If this is an oracle by Isaiah for Ahaz, it is a warning that the Assyrian king might subdue Jerusalem, and that Ahaz should not have looked for help in these quarters (as he, however, did). It is a warning against the danger of Assyria.

In the text, however, mention is made of the idols of Samaria. It is possible, of course, that Tiglath-pileser took the idols away from Samaria when the city was subdued, although it is not mentioned anywhere particularly.

It is mentioned by Sargon II, however:[[116]](#footnote-116)

*[The inhabitants of Sa]merina, who agreed [and plotted] with a king [hostile to] me, not to do service and not to bring tribute [to Aššur] and who did battle, I fought against them with the power of the great gods, my lords. I counted as spoil 27,280 people, together with their chariots,* ***and gods,*** *in which they trusted.*

This text could be propaganda, but it is known that in the Assyrian empire the images of gods were regularly deported, as a religious humiliation. The Assyrians did not impose their god Ashur on other nations, but idols would be taken away and were held as hostages to insure the loyalty of the surpressed populations.[[117]](#footnote-117)

In this text we see that the idols (gods) were taken away from Samaria when the city was conquered by Sargon II in 722. It would be more logical, then, that the text is from after 722, the fall of Samaria.

There is, however, a marked threat to Jerusalem in the text. Because of that, other scholars assume the text must be from 701, when the Assyrians were threatening Jerusalem.[[118]](#footnote-118)

However, why would these six cities be mentioned and not the 46 cities that had been destroyed in Judah by Sennacherib? (See 3.8.2.)

All in all, it seems most probable that the text is from after 722, the fall of Samaria, and after 717, the fall of Carchemish, and that the intention of the oracle is to warn for the threat to Jerusalem. This was the case in the time of the accession of Hezekiah in 715,[[119]](#footnote-119) as Blenkinsopp argues.[[120]](#footnote-120) The reason for the oracle might lie in the Syrian uprising in 720, since in 720, Hamath, Arpad, Damascus and Samaria were involved in the revolt against Assyria.[[121]](#footnote-121)

This is the text about the rebellion in Syria:

*In my second regnal year, when I had sat on the royal throne and had been crow[ned] with the crown of lordship, I smashed the forces of Ḫumbanigaš, king of Elam; I decisively defeated him. Il[ubi’di of] Hamath, not the rightful holder of the throne, not fit (?) for the palace, who in the shepherdship of his people, did [not attend to their] fate, [but] with regard to the god Aššur, his land (and) his people he sought evil, not good, and he treated contemptuously. He gathered Arpad and Samerina, and he turned (them) to his side […] h[e] kil[led] [a]nd he did not leave anyone alive […] I raised [my hand to Aššur]; and in order to conquer H[a]math […] [… of the extensive the land of Amurru]. I prayed; and Aššur, the [great] god … heard [my prayer] and received my supplication […] I caused [my forces] to take [the way to the land of Amu]rru. Ha[math] […] earlier times, who had learned fame […] I subdued [the inhabitants of the land of Amu]rru. […] I brought [them t]o my [c]ity, the city of Aššur, a[nd …][[122]](#footnote-122)*

After this, Carchemish fell in 717. Oswalt, Clements and other scholars believe that the text must have been from after 717, the renewed fall of Carchemish, and Becker adds that many scholars believe in that case it must be from before 711, the siege of Ashdod.[[123]](#footnote-123)

In this text, then, famous conquests are mentioned: Calno (738), or very recent conquests: Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, Samaria after the Syrian uprising in 720, and Carchemish (717) as a warning for Jerusalem. The oracle seemt to be intended to warn king Hezekiah against the threat of Assyria, and to move him not to rebel as well, and might be from between 715 and 711.

3.4 ISAIAH 10:12-14 – 13-14 ARE FROM THE TIME OF TIGLATH-PILESER. 12 MIGHT BE FROM AROUND 701, 681 OR LATER (BY A REDACTOR, WHEN THE ASSYRIANS WERE STILL IN CHARGE).

וְהָיָ֗ה כִּֽי־יְבַצַּ֤ע אֲדֹנָי֙ אֶת־כָּל־מַֽעֲשֵׂ֔הוּ 12aA

And it will be that the Lord will finish all his work[[124]](#footnote-124)

בְּהַ֥ר צִיּ֖וֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלִָ֑ם 12aB

in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem

אֶפְקֹ֗ד עַל־פְּרִי־גֹ֨דֶל֙ לְבַ֣ב מֶֽלֶךְ־אַשּׁ֔וּר 12bA

I will punish the fruit of the greatness of the heart of the king of Assyria[[125]](#footnote-125)

וְעַל־תִּפְאֶ֖רֶת ר֥וּם עֵינָֽיו׃ 12bB

and the glorying of the haughtiness of his eyes.

כִּ֣י אָמַ֗ר בְּכֹ֤חַ יָדִי֙ עָשִׂ֔יתִי 13aA

For he says: I did it with the strength of my hand

וּבְחָכְמָתִ֖י כִּ֣י נְבֻנ֑וֹתִי 13aB

and with my wisdom for I had understanding

וְאָסִ֣יר׀ גְּבוּלֹ֣ת עַמִּ֗ים 13bA

and I removed the boundaries of nations

וַעֲתִידֹתֵיהֶם שׁוֹשֵׂ֔תִי 13bB

and I have plundered what they had stored up

וְאוֹרִ֥יד כַּאבִּ֖יר יוֹשְׁבִֽים׃ 13bC

and like a mighty man I brought down the inhabitants.[[126]](#footnote-126)

וַתִּמְצָ֨א כַקֵּ֤ן׀ יָדִי֙ לְחֵ֣יל הָֽעַמִּ֔ים 14aA

Like a nest my hand found the wealth of the nations

וְכֶאֱסֹף֙ בֵּיצִ֣ים עֲזֻב֔וֹת 14aB

and as one gathers forsaken eggs

כָּל־הָאָ֖רֶץ אֲנִ֣י אָסָ֑פְתִּי 14aC

so I have gathered all the earth

וְלֹ֤א הָיָה֙ נֹדֵ֣ד כָּנָ֔ף 14bA

and there was no one fluttering a wing[[127]](#footnote-127)

וּפֹצֶ֥ה פֶ֖ה וּמְצַפְצֵֽף׃ 14bB

and no one opening a mouth or chirping.

3.4.1. *Delimitation*

This text is seen as a unit by De Bruin because of the delimitations in the ancient texts. It is an elaboration on the arrogance of the king of Assyria, but he will be punished by the Lord.[[128]](#footnote-128)

It is possible, however (see 3.4.2) that verse 12 is a later addition by a redactor.

Verse 12 is rendered in prose.[[129]](#footnote-129)

3.4.2 *Historical background*

In verse 12 it is stated that the Lord will finish the work of the Assyrian king in Mount Zion and Jerusalem. Since it is a prophecy, it would make most sense if the text were from the time when the Assyrians were still in charge. The text might even be Isaianic, because the finishing of the work of the Assyrians in Jerusalem reminds of the events of 701. Furthermore, the haughtiness brings Sennacherib to mind, who was much more haughty than his predecessors. According to Oded, the Assyrians had a specific attitude towards the people from other nations they deported: he mentions the phrase *itti nišē kurAššur amnūšunūti,* which means‘I counted them with the people of the land of Assyria’. This phrase is lacking, however, from the time of Sargon II onwards. The absence of the phrase after Sargon II reflects a shift in the Assyrian attitude towards deportees and foreign nations: Assyria was seen as victors, overlords, and other nations as inferior**.** This contempt for other nations we find in inscriptions since Sennacherib.[[130]](#footnote-130) The text might therefore refer to 701.

It is also possible that the text was put in later, shortly after the death of Sennacherib in 681 which was seen as YHWH’s punishment on him, as a testimony that the Lord indeed has punished this haughty king.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Clements looks at the theology, in order to establish from which time this verse might be. The theology is, according to him, that Jerusalem is protected by God. The Zion tradition, however, that Jerusalem could not be hurt, came from the time of Josiah, according to Clements, as an interpretation of what happened in 701. Contra other scholars, Clements believes that Isaiah did not know this tradition yet.[[132]](#footnote-132) According to Clements verse 12 must then be from a much later time than the surrounding verses. Clements assumes the text might even be from after the defeat of Jerusalem in 587.[[133]](#footnote-133) Of course, due to Clements’ theory that Isaiah did not know the Zion tradition, it stands to reason that Clements will not acknowledge texts that fit into that tradition to Isaiah and therefore he treats this text as a later addition.

Many other scholars also believe it is a later addition, however, since verse 12 is in prose. It might have been added by a scribe who found the blasphemy of the Assyrian king too much and breaks in.[[134]](#footnote-134)

Interestingly enough, verse 12 seems to summarize the entire Chapter 10 as it is now (read synchronically): although the Assyrian king is haughty and thinks it is his doing, it is really the Lord’s work, and He will punish the Assyrian king in Jerusalem. For this reason the text might also be from the redactor who edited (part of) Chapter 10, according to me, during a time the Assyrians were still in charge.

Verse 12 might then be Isaianic from 701, from a scribe or redactor shortly after 681, or from a redactor from a later time, when the Assyrians were still in charge.

In 13-14 the Assyrian king says that the nations were unprotected (forsaken eggs). Therefore I believe verses 13-14 refer to the time of Tiglath-pileser, when the nations were more or less conquered or subdued by surprise. After Tiglath-pileser, the countries were on their guard and often rebelled against Assyria. But during his time ‘no one fluttered a wing’.

In the following inscription, in which Ahaz is also mentioned as one of the rulers who submitted to Assyria and paid tribute in 734, we see how Tiglath-pileser III boasts about the wealth he found (‘Like a nest my hand found the wealth of the nations’):[[135]](#footnote-135)

*[I received the tribute] of (a long line of names, MG), … Sanipu, Ammonite, Salamanu, Moabite, […] [Mi]tinti, the Ashkelonite,* ***Jehoahaz, the Judahite****, Qaušmalaka, the Edomite, Muṣ[…, the …] (and) Hanunu, the Gazaean: gold, silver, tin, multi-colored garments, linen garments, red-purple wool, [all kinds of] costly articles, produce of the sea (and) dry land, the commodities of their lands, royal treasures, horses (and) mules broken to the yo[ke …].*[[136]](#footnote-136)

The verses 13-14 also bring to mind again the name of Isaiah’s son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (‘Spoil-Speeds-Prey-Hastes’) from Isaiah 8:1, from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and the time of Tiglath-pileser, considering how swiftly the wealth of the nations are gathered by the Assyrians.[[137]](#footnote-137)

The arrogance of the Assyrian kings is condemned here by Isaiah. They were indeed very arrogant, as far as we know. It is remarkable that the kings, when portrayed with the gods, are not even aware of the gods, but the gods show awareness of the king. Saggs concludes that the Assyrians ‘knew that they were right, and so they took it for granted that the supreme divine power was up there supporting Assyrian interests’. The new Assyrian view was that the gods had a plan, and that Assyria was the principal agent in that plan.[[138]](#footnote-138)

Tiglath-pileser removed the boundaries of nations, plundered them and brought down the inhabitants. Mass deportation became an integral aspect of the Assyrian economy. As already mentioned, the political ambition of Assyria was to dominate ‘the four rims of the earth’. Tiglath-pileser was accountable for changing the political map, since he divided up kingdoms and turned them into provinces of Assyria. The Assyrians consciously used terrorism and torture as a means of psychological warfare.[[139]](#footnote-139)

Because of all this, 13-14 must be from the time of Tiglath-pileser, according to me. Clements assumes Isaiah must have known the Assyrian victory descriptions, where it becomes clear that the king of Assyria believed in his own power.[[140]](#footnote-140) As mentioned in 3.1.2, Machinist believes the prophet was familiar with the Assyrian expressions and the propaganda.[[141]](#footnote-141)

3.5 ISAIAH 10:15 – CAMPAIGN OF TIGLATH-PILESER AROUND 734

הֲיִתְפָּאֵר֙ הַגַּרְזֶ֔ן 15aA

Does the axe boast against

עַ֖ל הַחֹצֵ֣ב בּוֹ֑ 15aB

who cleaves with it

אִם־יִתְגַּדֵּ֤ל הַמַּשּׂוֹר֙ עַל־מְנִיפֹ֔ו 15bA

or the saw magnify itself against who moves it to and fro?

כְּהָנִ֥יף שֵׁ֨בֶט֙ וְאֶת־מְרִימָ֔יו 15bB

as if the rod moves who lifts it[[142]](#footnote-142)

כְּהָרִ֥ים מַטֶּ֖ה לֹא־עֵֽץ׃ 15bC

as if a staff lifts what isn’t wood.[[143]](#footnote-143)

3.5.1 *Delimitation*

According to De Bruin ancient delimitation sets these verse-lines apart. There is a *petuhah* or *setumah* in several ancient manuscripts after 15. It is a transitional part. De Bruin interprets it as a prophetic question to the audience, because of the new pictures of axe and saw. The verse is then turned in a different direction by the use of the pictures of rod and staff, as a transition to verse 16: the Assyrian king is no more than the enemies he has beaten.[[144]](#footnote-144)

3.5.2 *Historical background*

De Jong believes 10:5-9.13-15 refers to a time in which there was an Assyrian campaign around or in Judah. De Jong assumes these verses refer to Sargon’s campaign of 720.[[145]](#footnote-145) I have already mentioned that according to me it is more likely that most of the preceding texts are older and refer to Tiglath-pileser’s times and the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis.

The idea is that the axe/saw/rod/staff which is Assyria is used by God to punish the people God needs to punish. Tiglath-pileser works for God, but does not realize that. I therefore believe the historical background of this passage is around 734.

3.6 ISAIAH 10:16-19 – 734: AN ORACLE AGAINST ISRAEL DURING THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITE CRISIS

לָ֠כֵן יְשַׁלַּ֨ח הָאָד֜וֹן יְהוָ֧ה צְבָא֛וֹת בְּמִשְׁמַנָּ֖יו רָז֑וֹן 16aA

Therefore the Lord YHWH of hosts will send wasting among his portly people[[146]](#footnote-146)

וְתַ֧חַת כְּבֹדֹ֛ו יֵקַ֥ד יְקֹ֖ד כִּיק֥וֹד אֵֽשׁ׃ 16aB

and under his glory will burn a burning like the burning of fire.

וְהָיָ֤ה אֽוֹר־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ לְאֵ֔שׁ 17aA

And the light of Israel will become fire

וּקְדוֹשֹׁ֖ו לְלֶהָבָ֑ה 17aB

and his holy one a flame[[147]](#footnote-147)

וּבָעֲרָ֗ה וְאָֽכְלָ֛ה שִׁיתֹ֥ו וּשְׁמִירֹ֖ו בְּי֥וֹם אֶחָֽד׃ 17bA

and it will burn and consume his thorn-bushes and briers in one day.

וּכְב֤וֹד יַעְרוֹ֙ וְכַרְמִלֹּ֔ו 18aA

And the glory of his forest and garden-land

מִנֶּ֥פֶשׁ וְעַד־בָּשָׂ֖ר יְכַלֶּ֑ה 18aB

soul and body he will destroy

וְהָיָ֖ה כִּמְסֹ֥ס נֹסֵֽס׃ 18bA

and it will be as the wasting away of a sick.[[148]](#footnote-148)

וּשְׁאָ֥ר עֵ֛ץ יַעְרֹ֖ו מִסְפָּ֣ר יִֽהְי֑וּ 19aA

And the rest of his forest will be a number[[149]](#footnote-149)

וְנַ֖עַר יִכְתְּבֵֽם׃ פ 19aB

and a child could write them.

3.6.1 *Delimitation*

According to De Bruin, these verses are a unit due to ancient delimitation. Before verse 16 and after verse 19 several ancient manuscripts have a *petuhah* or *setumah*.[[150]](#footnote-150)

The passage begins with the word לָכֵן which usually starts a new passage.

De Jong sees this text as a unit, too: as an extension from the seventh century.[[151]](#footnote-151) Roberts looks at the imagery and assumes that the original conclusion to Isaiah 10:5-15 is to be found in 10:24-27a and that 10:16-23 has been placed here secondary.[[152]](#footnote-152)

3.6.2 *Historical background*

Scholars do not agree on the historical background of this text. The text has sometimes been seen as a prediction of the fate of Sennacherib’s army in 701, because of the references to the wasting away of a sick in 18bA.[[153]](#footnote-153) This would refer to the story in Isaiah 37:36-38 (which is 2 Kings 19:35-37), the story about how an angel of the Lord killed the entire Assyrian army.

Clements also believes the text refers to 701; he does, however, believe that 10:16-19 is not Isaianic, but more like a midrash, from the time of Josiah.[[154]](#footnote-154)

Tull assumes the text is used to apply to Assyria: that a child can wander through its forest and count the trees with ease makes a mockery out of the boasting of the Assyrian king.[[155]](#footnote-155) But this is the meaning of the text after a redactor has put it here; it does not tell us what the original historical background might have been.

De Bruin feels an original prophecy against the arrogant people of Samaria or Jerusalem may have been changed into the present composition that is directed against Assyria. The word ‘the remnant’ (I translated ‘rest’) in verse 19 reminds of Israel, and the writing child brings the child Shear-jashub from Isaiah 7:1-9:6 to mind.[[156]](#footnote-156) Oswalt states that the word ‘remnant’ was also used by the Assyrians, to describe the thoroughness of their conquests. Isaiah then takes the Assyrian term and shows that the remnant is in God’s hand and more enduring than the might of Assyria.[[157]](#footnote-157)

According to Roberts, the text is Isaianic, and an early text: from an early oracle against Israel during the time of the Syro-Eprhaimite War. According to him, the imagery has close parallels to the oracles against Damascus and Ephraim in Isaiah 17:1-6. In that text Isaiah also speaks of wasting away, the fatness of the enemy, and a loss of glory, and the destruction is described in horticultural imagery. The brush fire image can be found in Isaiah 9:17-18, which is also directed against Israel.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Roberts also points to the fact that there is a clever word play on the word light, אוֹר, and the word flame, אוּר: the light of Israel, God, has now become a flame to burn it (in the original oracle).[[159]](#footnote-159) Goldingay also remarks that ‘God as light can become God as devouring flame.’[[160]](#footnote-160) We do not find this particular word play in this text, however, since another word for ‘flame’ is used; we do find it in Isaiah 31:9.[[161]](#footnote-161)

Williamson also argues that the phrase ‘Light of Israel’ should be understood as a divine title, interpreting God’s light in a threatening way, unlike in any other passage. It could be a play on the Assyrian notion of *melammu*, ‘fearsome radiance, aura’ which the kings were supposed to have.[[162]](#footnote-162)

Roberts assumes Isaiah reused his own oracle later in a different context, so that the oracle now is directed against Assyria.[[163]](#footnote-163) I would rather believe that the oracles were kept somewhere, as De Jong argues[[164]](#footnote-164), and that a redactor from a later time put the oracles in this particular order, changing the meaning of the oracles by changing the context. But I do agree with Roberts that the original oracle must have been directed against Israel, during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, especially since the word ‘remnant’ (‘rest’) and the child reminds of the child Shear-jashub from Isaiah 7:1-9:6 – during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. The oracle makes clear that the light of Israel can become a fire and consume Israel. It would then date from around 734.

3.7 ISAIAH 10:20-22a – AFTER 732, THE DEPORTATIONS BY TIGLATH-PILESER, REFERRING TO AN ESCHATOLOGICAL DAY

וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא 20aA

And it will be in that day

לֹֽא־יוֹסִ֨יף ע֜וֹד שְׁאָ֤ר יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ וּפְלֵיטַ֣ת בֵּֽית־יַעֲקֹ֔ב 20aB

that no more will the rest of Israel and the escaped of the house of Jacob

לְהִשָּׁעֵ֖ן עַל־מַכֵּ֑הוּ 20aC

lean on him that smote him

וְנִשְׁעַ֗ן עַל־יְהוָ֛ה קְד֥וֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל בֶּאֱמֶֽת׃ 20bA

and he will lean on YHWH the holy one of Israel in truth.

שְׁאָ֥ר יָשׁ֖וּב שְׁאָ֣ר יַעֲקֹ֑ב 21aA

A rest will return, the rest of Jacob[[165]](#footnote-165)

אֶל־אֵ֖ל גִּבּֽוֹר׃ 21aB

to God the mighty.

כִּ֣י אִם־יִהְיֶ֞ה עַמְּךָ֤ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ כְּח֣וֹל הַיָּ֔ם 22aA

For though your people Israel may be like the sand of the sea

שְׁאָ֖ר יָשׁ֣וּב בּוֹ֑ 22aB

a rest will return with it[[166]](#footnote-166)

3.7.1 *Delimitation*

According to De Bruin, verses 20, 21 and 22 are a unit in ancient delimitation. However, he makes a division based on theme and divides between 22a and b.[[167]](#footnote-167)

The passage is in prose.

The passage begins with the expression וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא. Olley wrote a study on the structure of the book of Isaiah based on the text divisions in the Qumran scroll. He discerned five groups of introductory words and phrases: 1. The speech of YHWH; 2. Summons to hear; 3. Designation of time ביומ ההוא; 4. Exclamations הוי; 5. Oracles against the nation.[[168]](#footnote-168)

So we see thatבַּיּוֹם הַהוּא is an introductory phrase and thus connects this verse with the preceding verse.

Perhaps a redactor added verses 20 and 21 after 19 because of the catchword שְׁאָר.

3.7.2 *Historical background*

Beuken assumes that this passage, unlike the rest of the Chapter which must be from the times of Isaiah, was written after the (Babylonian) exile and presents the ‘Rest-theologie’: the theology that the rest of Israel will return after the exile.[[169]](#footnote-169) The mentioning of a rest that will return could also be a prophecy, however, regarding the Israelites that were deported to Assyria by Tiglath-pileser in 732, or by Sargon II in 722.

Roberts does not take into account that the text speaks about ‘the rest’ and ‘the escaped’. He believes that this material is from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite War, like the previous oracle, since Assyria cannot be identified in this text as the enemy. The oracle is against Israel, but spoken in Judah, according to him, to reassure the Judeans as they are being threatened by the Northern State and Syria. The oracle says that Israel should not lean on ‘him that smote him’ (20aC), which is Rezin from Damascus. They will lean on YHWH instead.[[170]](#footnote-170)

However, because a rest *is* mentioned, I believe the oracle must be from shortly after the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, when most of Israel had been conquered by Tiglath-pileser III and a great many of the people were taken to Assyria. ‘Lean on him that smote him’ would then refer to the Assyrians, since what is left of Israel now leans on Assyria as its vassal state.

‘The escaped’ most likely refers to the many refugees that fled to Judah, since it is likely that during these times many Israelites fled to Judah. These people would then have been incorporated into Judean society.[[171]](#footnote-171)

The passage is about the survivors of Israel. The word שְׁאָר, which occurs three times in this unit, may have functioned as a catchword. This refers to the name of the child in Isaiah 7:3 (Shear-jashub). The name is used literally in verse 21aA.[[172]](#footnote-172) This is another reason the text might have been written against the background of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and the deportations that followed.

As mentioned under 3.7.1, the passage begins with the expression וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא.This phrase is further used in many places in First Isaiah, and it is especially used in Chapter 2-31.[[173]](#footnote-173) Focussing on בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא in connection with וְהָיָה, we can find instances in e.g. 7:18; 7:21,23; 10:20,27; 11:10; 11:11; 17:4; etc.[[174]](#footnote-174)

What is the meaning of this phrase? Which day is referred to? In 7:18 and 21 it refers to the happy day when the king of Assyria will be put to shame and people in the land (Judah?) will eat butter and honey. In 7:23 the land (Assyria?) will not be fit for human habitation. In this verse, 10:20, a rest from the people from Israel will return and lean on YHWH, and in 10:27 the yoke (of the Assyrians?) will be broken. In 11:10 the Lord will bring back the rest of his people from Assyria and other places, and in 11:11 He will bring them together from the four corners of the earth (which reminds us of the four rims of the earth where the Assyrian kings wanted to establish their empire). In 17:4 not much of Jacob (Israel) will be left.

So it seems that the day refers to the day when YHWH will either bring blessing or curse to his people and curse to the Assyrians: the day YHWH will act. It identifies a moment when God’s hand can be seen in human history; often a hand of judgment. The passages are linked to other verses referring to an eschatological day.[[175]](#footnote-175)

The text might therefore be from after 732, the deportations by Tiglath-pileser, and it refers to an eschatological day.

Tull mentions that this phrase is typical for scribal extensions (see also 3.7.1).[[176]](#footnote-176) The phrase וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא might therefore have been added here by a redactor from a much later time, to give the oracle an eschatological twist.

3.8 ISAIAH 10:22b-23 – 734 or 722, WHEN THERE IS DESTRUCTION IN ISRAEL, OR 701, THE DESTRUCTION OF 46 CITIES IN JUDAH

כִּלָּי֥וֹן חָר֖וּץ שׁוֹטֵ֥ף צְדָקָֽה׃ 22bA

a cutting finish overflowing with rightneousness.[[177]](#footnote-177)

כִּ֥י כָלָ֖ה וְנֶחֱרָצָ֑ה 23aA

For finishing and cutting

אֲדֹנָ֤י יְהוִה֙ צְבָא֔וֹת 23bA

the Lord YHWH of hosts

עֹשֶׂ֖ה בְּקֶ֥רֶב כָּל־הָאָֽרֶץ׃ ס 23bB

is doing in the midst of the whole land.

3.8.1 *Delimitation*

De Bruin delimits the verses 22 and 23; because of the theme of destruction he makes a division between 22a and 22b. There is a *petuhah* or *setumah* in several ancient manuscripts after verse 23.[[178]](#footnote-178)

I assume the words כלה, כליון , חרוץ and נחרצה in 22bA and 23aA serve as catchwords. This might mean that a redactor put them together and that they are not a unit originally.

The passage is in prose.

3.8.2 *Historical background*

In this passage, 23 is remarkably similar to Isaiah 28:22b:

**כִּֽי־כָלָ֨ה וְנֶחֱרָצָ֜ה שָׁמַ֗עְתִּי מֵאֵ֨ת אֲדֹנָ֧י יְהוִ֛ה צְבָא֖וֹת עַל־כָּל־הָאָֽרֶץ׃**

(For finishing and cutting I heard from the Lord YHWH of hosts against the whole land)

According to Blenkinsopp, this text reflects the apocalyptic world view of Daniel (9:27; 11:36) and belongs to the final stages of the book of Isaiah.[[179]](#footnote-179) I would like to suggest, however, that this passage was an oracle by the prophet Isaiah which was used in two different contexts; we might actually see the redactor at work here, changing the text somewhat.

This text could refer to the times of Tiglath-pileser, when in the midst of Israel there was ‘destruction and cutting’ (732). However, the text could also refer to 722, when the same thing was going on in Israel. In both cases, Isaiah explains to Judah why all this is going on in Israel: it is YHWH’s work, he is cutting, but it is righteous (Israel deserved it).

If the text is about Judah, however, the text could be from the time when most cities in Judah were conquered and devastated by the Assyrians: 701, when Sennacherib overran Judah and blockaded Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17ff. and Sennacherib’s inscriptions).[[180]](#footnote-180) Sennacherib states:

*As for Hezekiah the Judean, I besieged forty-six of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number. Using packed-down ramps and applying battering rams, infantry attack by mines, breeches, and siege machines, I conquered (them). I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil.[[181]](#footnote-181)*

There are dozens of copies of this text; the oldest one dates to roughly six months after the campaign. In many sites archeologists have discovered destruction layers from this time.[[182]](#footnote-182)

If this text is from around 701, when the 46 cities had been devastated and before the blockade of Jerusalem, it says that the Assyrians are not the ones who are performing the devastations, but that it is YHWH who is doing this, with – again – the Assyrians as His rod. Apparently, Judah needed punishment.

In the palace of Sennacherib at Nineve, wall reliefs have been found that show the victory of Sennacherib at one of the forty-six cities, Lachish (where the Assyrian king had his headquarters). The palace in Nineve was begun shortly after the campaign of 701 and the victory at Lachish is featured prominently in the wall reliefs. In it we see how the Assyrians tried to show the defeat of the opponents. There goods and gods are portrayed in Assyrian style, to show the supremacy of the Assyrians.[[183]](#footnote-183)

All in all, it is not possible to determine the historical background of the text with certainty: either 732, 722 or 701.

3.9 ISAIAH 10:24-26 – SHORTLY BEFORE 701

לָכֵ֗ן כֹּֽה־אָמַ֞ר אֲדֹנָ֤י יְהוִה֙ צְבָא֔וֹת 24aA

Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH of hosts:[[184]](#footnote-184)

אַל־תִּירָ֥א עַמִּ֛י יֹשֵׁ֥ב צִיּ֖וֹן מֵֽאַשּׁ֑וּר 24aB

Do not be afraid my people, living in Zion, of Assyria

בַּשֵּׁ֣בֶט יַכֶּ֔כָּה וּמַטֵּ֥הוּ יִשָּֽׂא־עָלֶ֖יךָ בְּדֶ֥רֶךְ מִצְרָֽיִם׃ 24bA

with a rod he will smite you and he will lift up a staff against you in the way of Egypt.[[185]](#footnote-185)

כִּי־ע֖וֹד מְעַ֣ט מִזְעָ֑ר 25aA

For still a little, a few,

וְכָ֣לָה זַ֔עַם וְאַפִּ֖י עַל־תַּבְלִיתָֽם׃ 25aB

and the indignation will be finished and my anger for their destruction.[[186]](#footnote-186)

וְעוֹרֵ֨ר עָלָ֜יו יְהוָ֤ה צְבָאוֹת֙ שׁ֔וֹט 26aA

And YHWH of hosts has awoken a whip

כְּמַכַּ֥ת מִדְיָ֖ן בְּצ֣וּר עוֹרֵ֑ב 26aB

as the blow of Midian at the rock of Oreb[[187]](#footnote-187)

וּמַטֵּ֨הוּ֙ עַל־הַיָּ֔ם 26bA

and his staff over the sea

וּנְשָׂאֹ֖ו בְּדֶ֥רֶךְ מִצְרָֽיִם׃ 26bB

and he has lifted it in the way of Egypt.[[188]](#footnote-188)

3.9.1 *Delimitation*

Since there is a *petuhah* after verse 26 in several ancient manuscripts, De Bruin makes his delimitation there.[[189]](#footnote-189)

Verse 24 starts with the word לָכֵן which usually starts a new passage, even if there is no actual causal connection with the previous passage. In fact, it proves difficult to say what the ‘therefore’ refers to here.[[190]](#footnote-190)

Roberts assumes that 24-27a may have been the original continuation to 5-15, because of the imagery that is continued here.[[191]](#footnote-191)

The Masoretes delimited 24bA as one colon, according to De Bruin, stressing the unity of the metaphor. Other ancient manuscripts have a bicolon or even a tricolon.[[192]](#footnote-192)

Even though there is an atnah in 25aB, De Bruin does not make a delimitation here. De Bruin does point to the fact, however, that the Septuagint distinguished two clauses in 25aB, and interpreted the entire strophe as a tricolon.[[193]](#footnote-193)

The passage is in prose.

3.9.2 *Historical background*

De Bruin remarks that the themes in these verses link the passage with various other passages. He also points to the fact that the staff in verse 24 now refers to the instrument of the Lord with which He has saved Israel from Egypt in verse 26.[[194]](#footnote-194) This appears to be a very good observation, since the word that is used,מַטֶה , is the word used in Exodus for the staff of Mozes (e.g. in Exodus 4:2, 7:19, 8:16, etc.) and at the same time it is also the word used for tribe (e.g. in Exodus 31:2, Leviticus 24:11, Numeri 1:4, etc.).[[195]](#footnote-195) This is therefore a word with a strong connotation, especially in connection with YHWH’s miracles on behalf of his people, and His loyalty to them. I have used the translation ‘staff’ throughout for this word (see also 3.2 and 3.9.).

The word that is used at the beginning of verse 24, לָכֵן, is often used if two passages are connected, as mentioned before (see 3.9.1). This may point to the fact that 22b-23 and 24-26 are distinct oracles, and could be from different times. A redactor then put them together and thus changed the meaning of either 22b-23 or 24-26.

De Jong believes that this text, 24-26, refers to Sargon’s campaign of 720. He does not indicate to which situation 22b-23 might refer.

As mentioned above, 22b-23 could refer to the situation of 701, when 46 cities in Judah were destroyed by the Assyrians. Jerusalem, however, was spared. Putting the texts together, as the redactor has done, Isaiah is prophesizing that Jerusalem will be spared, as indeed it was in 701.

The text itself, however, seems to indicate that Jerusalem will be smitten by the Assyrians: ‘with a rod he will smite you’. The text indicates that the Assyrians will come and fight Jerusalem, and conquer them, but that it will only be for a short time. Furthermore, in the text ‘in the way of Egypt’ seems to infer that the people might be made slaves.

Was Jerusalem ever conquered by the Assyrians for a short time only, in a period where deportees were used as slaves?

During Tiglath-pileser III and the Sargonides there were deportations and repopulations on a large scale. The aim of these deportations was punishment for rebellion. Deportation was a serious punishment, a calamity for the individual as well as for the community.[[196]](#footnote-196)

How were these deportees treated? Were they made slaves? In reliefs we can find the methods of deportation depicted, as a means of glorifying the king. Sometimes we see the deportees barefoot or naked in the reliefs – this is probably due to the imagination of the sculptor. It could also be propaganda.[[197]](#footnote-197) The numbers of deportees were registered and the king received reports on the deportees until they had reached their destination. Prisoners-of-war and deportees were cared for rather well, because they needed to benefit the Assyrian empire economically or in terms of security. The deportees were accompanied by soldiers and the governors of the areas they travelled through had to ensure the safety of the deportees and provide for them.[[198]](#footnote-198)

This is a letter from Sargon II, giving orders about how to treat deportees:[[199]](#footnote-199)

*But now the women whom [he is see]king, taking out and bringing to [...], should live with these women in Arrapha, and should be given bread to eat and water to drink until I come. The palace chariots which are bringing these women are to provide the people with bread and the team with fodder.*

As mentioned before (see 3.4.2), since Sennacherib we find contempt towards the enemy in inscriptions. Captives are now used as forced labor and the emphasis is on them as booty. The formula ‘counted as Assyrians’ is no longer used and now the deportees were treated as slaves. But not all of them. Deportees were apparently not all of the same status with the same conditions.[[200]](#footnote-200)

The threat that Jerusalem might be conquered and that the people would then become slaves can therefore only be from the time of Sennacherib; the oracle must be from shortly before 701. Recent evidence seems to indicate that Hezekiah had good connections with the Assyrian court (see 3.10.2), but that still did not stop Sennacherib from pillaging Judah and taking people captive. Hezekiah even prepared for a siege (see 3.10.2).[[201]](#footnote-201)

The prophecy was that Jerusalem would be conquered by the Assyrians, but only for a short time. In the end, Jerusalem was not conquered. The prophecy does *not* say that Jerusalem cannot be hurt, as the Zion tradition later states. As mentioned before (see 3.4.2), Clements states that Isaiah never held this theology.[[202]](#footnote-202)

The two texts, 22b-23 and 24-25 may have been connected by a redactor from the time of Josiah, when the Zion theology was designed, according to Clements,[[203]](#footnote-203) so that the text now seems to imply that Jerusalem will be spared miraculously, as indeed it was in 701.

3.10 ISAIAH 10:27 – FROM BEFORE 705 OR 630, REFERRING TO THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DAY YHWH WILL ACT, EITHER BETWEEN 705-701 OR 630-610.

וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא 27aA

And it will be on that day

יָס֤וּר סֻבֳּלוֹ֙ מֵעַ֣ל שִׁכְמֶ֔ךָ 27aB

his burden will turn aside from your shoulder[[204]](#footnote-204)

וְעֻלֹּ֖ו מֵעַ֣ל צַוָּארֶ֑ךָ 27aC

and his yoke from your neck

וְחֻבַּ֥ל עֹ֖ל מִפְּנֵי־שָֽׁמֶן׃ 27bA

and the yoke will be ruined because of the oil.[[205]](#footnote-205)

3.10.1 *Delimitation*

De Bruin takes this verse to be a unit.[[206]](#footnote-206) It concludes the word of the Lord that began in 10:24 and connects with the following verses and is thus a transitional strophe.[[207]](#footnote-207) As mentioned before, the phrase ‘on that day’ is always redactional (see 3.7.1).

27bA is often taken as a unit with the following verses.[[208]](#footnote-208) This is due to a translation begun by Duhm. He proposed to read חֻבַּל from 27bA with the preceding verse, so that 27bA now reads על מפני-שׁמן, which he wanted to change into על מפני-רמן: he came up from Pene Rimmon. Others then proposed to read שׁמרן instead of שׁמן, which then reads: he came up from Samaria. In this case, the march from 28-32 already begins in 27bA. Although this seems like a nice solution, it cannot be supported by ancient texts, and it cannot be supported by ancient delimitations either.[[209]](#footnote-209) However, the translation even made it into several Bible translations.[[210]](#footnote-210)

3.10.2 *Historical background*

This strophe begins with וְהָיָ֣ה׀ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא, just like 10:20 (see 3.7.2). This is an introductory phrase, connecting this verse with the preceding verses. As in 10:20, it refers to an eschatological day, a day on which YHWH will act.[[211]](#footnote-211)

The yoke-metaphor in 27aC seems to refer to the Assyrians. According to De Jong, the yoke-metaphor occurs more and more in the inscriptions from Tiglath-pileser III onwards, to indicate Assyria’s worldwide dominion. The yoke, *nīru,* is an important metaphor in Assyrian imperialistic ideology. In the Assyrian inscriptions the yoke is that of the king or the god Ashur, and is always depicts Assyrian dominion. In the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II and Sennacherib the yoke-metaphor is used for people who have been brought under Assyrian dominion. Since the yoke reflects Assyrian dominion and is destroyed here, it can be regarded as counter-ideology.[[212]](#footnote-212)

The word ‘burden’ is always used figuratively, as the burden of tyranny.[[213]](#footnote-213) It is therefore clear that the burden and the yoke refer to the oppression by the Assyrians. But from which time?

Clements takes 24-27 together and states that the text must have been from the time of Josiah, when the downfall of Assyria was imminent. In this text, we find the major theme from the time of Josiah, according to Clements.[[214]](#footnote-214)

De Jong sees 26a and 27a as a second layer on the original oracles, dealing with the destruction of Assyria and the restoration of Judah, and considers it a late seventh-century revision.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Since the introductory phrase is from a redactor, as mentioned under 3.7.2, it could also be from a later time. But I assume that the text is from a time during the Assyria oppression, when there was a yoke and a burden felt in Judah, since the prophecy would not make sense otherwise, even though the prophecy is turned into eschatology by a redactor.

Judah became a vassal state of Assyria under king Ahaz in 734 and the first rebellion was during King Hezekiah. It seems therefore logical to infer that during Hezekiah’s days the yoke and the burden became unbearable. During the rebellion in 705-701 the yoke was lifted (no tribute was payed).

Jerusalem, however, was blockaded in 701. There was no siege; the Assyrian king stayed at his camp in Lachish. The exits of Jerusalem, however, were guarded, as Sennacherib’s inscription mentions:[[216]](#footnote-216)

*He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthworks, and made it unthinkable for him to exit by the city gate.*

Hezekiah, however, apparently prepared for a siege. Archeological evidence shows that Hezekiah fortified the city by demolishing houses in order to construct a broad wall.[[217]](#footnote-217)

There is no mention of the surrender of Hezekiah, but there is mention of him paying a huge tribute to Sennacherib in Nineveh, so apparently he decided to pay tribute after all, in order to save his life and city.[[218]](#footnote-218)

In the Assyrian inscriptions we read: [[219]](#footnote-219)

*He, Hezekiah, was overwhelmed by the awesome splendor of my lordship, and he sent me after my departure to Nineveh, my royal city, his elite troops (and) his best soldiers, which he had brought in as reinforcements to strengthen Jerusalem, with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, (… etc.), together with his daughters, his palace women, his male and female singers.*

Jerusalem was spared. In Isaiah 1:8 it is compared to a ‘shelter in a cucumber field’ (the only thing still standing).

It remarkable that Sennacherib would accept Hezekiah’s tribute, which was forwarded and not accepted at the spot, instead of killing him and his soldiers and turning Jerusalem into an Assyrian province. New archeological evidence, however, seems to indicate that there was an Assyrian alliance with Judah in the eight century. Hezekiah may have been acting as the Assyrian agent in his area, collecting taxes and ensuring security for caravans in Philistea. At Gath and Ashdod jars were found with the Judahite *lmlk* inscription: did Hezekiah deliver victuals to Assyrian troops? That would have made him essential for the Assyrians. It is also possible that Hezekiah had a warm connection with the Assyrian court, since Judean princesses may have married Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. Another reason might be that Judah was a stable monarchy, and it was in the interest of Assyria that it should remain so. At the same time, it is also very well possible that something happened that made Sennacherib retreat, as the Biblical account in Isaiah 37:36-38 (2 Kings 19:35-37) tells. Why would a Zion theology arise if Jerusalem had not been spared miraculously?[[220]](#footnote-220)

After Sennacherib’s campaign of 701 Hezekiah and his successors remained submissive towards Assyria. Judah benefited again from the economic prosperity of the Assyrian empire. The upper classes under Hezekiah seem to have been very wealthy, as the huge tribute to Sennacherib also indicates. In this time, the landowners, however, had to pay heavy taxes, so that the tribute could be payed.[[221]](#footnote-221)

The yoke was again lifted when Assyria withdrew from Syria-Palestine. Due to the lack of Assyrian and Babylonian sources, it is not clear when this happened; probably around 630-623. Egypt now established its rule there. Assyria was finally defeated in 609, which ended the Assyrian empire.[[222]](#footnote-222)

After Assyria’s withdrawal from Syria-Palestine king Josiah of Judah expanded his territory somewhat. He made religious reforms, now that there was no loyalty oath anymore to the Assyrian king and the god Ashur. The loyalty was now exclusively to YHWH. The reforms are based on his propagation of some version of the Deuteronomic laws. They seem to subvert Assyrian hegemony, since the demands for love and faithfulness to YHWH are similar to the Assyrian oaths that demanded love and loyalty to the emperor.[[223]](#footnote-223)

Judah enjoyed relative freedom from c.630 until 610. In 610 Necho II ascended the Egyptian throne and he intensified the Egyptian rule in Syria-Palestine, killing king Josiah.[[224]](#footnote-224)

So we see that the time the burden and the yoke were lifted was around 705-701, the rebellion of King Hezekiah, and much later, under king Josiah, from 630 until 610. The text could then refer to either periods. The text, being a prophecy, must be older, so from before 705 or before 630.

3.11 ISAIAH 10:28-32 – 734, THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITE CRISIS: ISRAEL AND SYRIA MARCHING AGAINST JERUSALEM

בָּ֥א עַל־עַיַּ֖ת עָבַ֣ר בְּמִגְר֑וֹן 28aA

He has come to Aiath, he has passed through Migron,

לְמִכְמָ֖שׂ יַפְקִ֥יד כֵּלָֽיו׃ 28aB

at Michmash he deposits his load.[[225]](#footnote-225)

עָֽבְרוּ֙ מַעְבָּרָ֔ה 29aA

They have passed through the pass[[226]](#footnote-226)

גֶּ֖בַע מָל֣וֹן לָ֑נוּ 29aB

at Geba they have lodged as lodging-place

חָֽרְדָה֙ הָֽרָמָ֔ה 29bA

Ramah trembles

גִּבְעַ֥ת שָׁא֖וּל נָֽסָה׃ 29bB

Gibeah of Saul flees.

צַהֲלִ֥י קוֹלֵ֖ךְ בַּת־גַּלִּ֑ים 30aA

Cry out with your voice, daughter Gallim

הַקְשִׁ֥יבִי לַ֖יְשָׁה עֲנִיָּ֥ה עֲנָתֽוֹת׃ 30aB

give attention, Laishah, answer her, Anatoth.[[227]](#footnote-227)

נָדְדָ֖ה מַדְמֵנָ֑ה 31aA

Madmenah flees

יֹשְׁבֵ֥י הַגֵּבִ֖ים הֵעִֽיזוּ׃ 31aB

the inhabitants of Gabim seek refuge.

ע֥וֹד הַיּ֖וֹם בְּנֹ֣ב לַֽעֲמֹ֑ד 32aA

To take one’s stand still today at Nob

יְנֹפֵ֤ף יָדוֹ֙ הַ֣ר בֵּית צִיּ֔וֹן 32bA

he shakes his hand at the mountain of daughter Zion[[228]](#footnote-228)

גִּבְעַ֖ת יְרוּשָׁלִָֽם׃ ס 32bB

the hill of Jerusalem.

3.11.1 *Delimitation*

This unit ends with a *setumah* or *petuhah* in some of the ancient manuscripts.[[229]](#footnote-229)

As mentioned before (see 3.10.1), some scholars assume 27b belongs to this unit as well, [[230]](#footnote-230) ignoring the Masoretic devisions and following a translation by Duhm, which cannot be supported by ancient texts.

3.11.2 *Historical background*

A lot has been written about the march of this army. Many scholars believe the historical background should be 701. The main reason for this is that the context indicates the Assyrians as enemies, and the most well known campaign against Jerusalem was in 701; 46 cities in Judah were conquered before Sennacherib came to Jerusalem, which might explain the towns mentioned here; Benjamin was part of Judah then (see also 3.8.2).[[231]](#footnote-231) The attackers in the text come from the north, however, not from the south.

According to Clements the background might also be 713-711, the march of Sargon’s army at the time of the Ashdod rebellion. Jerusalem is not attacked in the poem; Clements believes that the advance of the Assyrian army would have persuaded king Hezekiah not to join in the Ashdod rebellion.[[232]](#footnote-232) There is, however, no historical evidence of such a march and there are no Biblical accounts either.

De Jong believes Sargon’s campaign of 720 is referred to, and Beuken and Younger share this opinion. The idea is that when Sargon II campaigned against a coalition of city states in Palestine he most likely conquered Jerusalem as well.[[233]](#footnote-233)

This would tie in with Sargon’s own claim in the Nimrud inscription where Sargon decribes himself as

*Mušakniš māt Yaudu ša ašaršu rūqu*

*(the subduer of (the land of) Judah, which lies far away)*.[[234]](#footnote-234)

It is, however, not known from which time this inscription dates, and how he submitted Judah is not mentioned.[[235]](#footnote-235)

Furthermore, there is no proof that the Assyrians threatened Jerusalem at this time. The cities that are mentioned were put under siege or destroyed at different occasions by the Assyrians.[[236]](#footnote-236)

Korpel believes the attacker is Assyrian, and that Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V or Sargon II could be intended since they all besieged Samaria and would thus have come from the north. Korpel sees Shalmaneser V as most likely, since he was deposed by Sargon II and then probably had to break off the siege.[[237]](#footnote-237) Shalmaneser died a natural death, however, and was not deposed by Sargon II according to Saggs and Younger,[[238]](#footnote-238) and furthermore such a campaign by Shalmaneser against Judah is not known from any source.

Which are the cities that are mentioned? Aiath is identified with Ai, near Bethel, to the south east. Migron was near Gibeah. Michmash (now Muhmas) is north of Geba and Jerusalem in Benjamin. Geba (now Jeba) is the northernmost city of Judah. Ramah could be several places; most likely the home of Samuël in Ephraïm, since Saul is also mentioned. Gallim is north of Jerusalem and Anatoth three miles north east of Jerusalem. Madmenah is in Benjamin, north of Jerusalem. The sites of Laishah and Gebim are unknown. Nob is probably just north of Jerusalem.[[239]](#footnote-239)

The route is strange. It is not the normal, accessible route to Jerusalem. Childs believes that there is no explanation for this route.[[240]](#footnote-240) Goldingay even suggests it is an imaginary picture of the closer advance of the Assyrians.[[241]](#footnote-241)

Roberts, however, explains that this route suggests that the army made a wide swing to the east in the vicinity of Bethel and rejoined it south of Ramah. This could have been to avoid the Judean border fortress at Mizpeh.[[242]](#footnote-242)

The Assyrians are not mentioned in the march. Because Isaiah 10 as we read it now is about Assyria and its threat, and then there is a march, it seems logical to infer that the Assyrians are implied. But the text can have been moved here by a redactor, for instance from the seventh century, and may have originally refered to a completely different enemy altogether.

Roberts points to the fact that there is only one march against Jerusalem during Isaiah’s lifetime that comes from the north, and that would be Syria and Israel’s attack on Jerusalem during the Syro-Ephraimite War. The natural road would have been from Shechem to Jerusalem, following the spine of the central ridge and with deviations that belong to the strategies of the Syrian-Israelite objectives.[[243]](#footnote-243)

The lodging place is Geba, which is only six miles from Jerusalem: to pitch camp here as the attacking force indicates that the tactical situation is completely mastered and that there is confidence that the defenders in Jerusalem will be demoralized and without power. Pitching camp in a prominent place was always done before a siege, so a siege of Jerusalem is intended.[[244]](#footnote-244)

It would have been a surprise attack, isolating Jerusalem, breaching its defenses quickly, in order to capture Ahaz and replace him with a different king. The clauses give the impression of reports from messengers, one after the other.[[245]](#footnote-245)

This seems convincing, since we have already encountered other parts in Isaiah 10 that seem to be from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. I therefore propose to date this passage to around 734.

3.12 ISAIAH 10:33-34 – UNKNOWN

הִנֵּ֤ה הָאָדוֹן֙ יְהוָ֣ה צְבָא֔וֹת 33aA

Behold the Lord YHWH of hosts

מְסָעֵ֥ף פֻּארָ֖ה בְּמַעֲרָצָ֑ה 33aB

lopping off boughs with a crash[[246]](#footnote-246)

וְרָמֵ֤י הַקּוֹמָה֙ גְּדוּעִ֔ים 33bA

and the exalted heights are being cut off

וְהַגְּבֹהִ֖ים יִשְׁפָּֽלוּ׃ 33bB

and the high ones will become low.

וְנִקַּ֛ף סִֽבְכֵ֥י הַיַּ֖עַר בַּבַּרְזֶ֑ל 34aA

And he will strike off the thickets of the forest with iron

וְהַלְּבָנ֖וֹן בְּאַדִּ֥יר יִפּֽוֹל׃ ס 34aB

and the Lebanon with the majestic will fall.[[247]](#footnote-247)

3.12.1 *Delimitation*

This unit is delimited by a *petuhah* or *setumah* in ancient manuscripts.[[248]](#footnote-248)

It is also separated from the previous passage by הִנֵּהwhich is used by Isaiah to introduce an independent oracle, mostly a threat.[[249]](#footnote-249)

Several scholars, among which are De Jong, believe this text is continued by 11:1-5, which concludes 10:5-11:5 as a whole.[[250]](#footnote-250)

Korpel believes 33-34 is part of a unit consisting of 10:33-11:10. She sees it as a text in which ‘a young Davidic scion is expected to rule justly’. The ancient tradition seems to support taking Isaiah 11:1-9 as a unit, according to Korpel. Structurally 11:1-8 belong together.[[251]](#footnote-251)

For the outer boundaries, Korpel points to the fact that Isaiah 10:28-32 describes the advancing of an enemy; there are no connections with 10:33ff. There are delimitation markers before v. 33. Not all ancient manuscripts have a delimitation marker before 11:1; 1QIsaa and MT do, though. The inclusion between 11:1 and 11:10 points to closing this unit after v. 10.[[252]](#footnote-252)

3.12.2 *Historical background*

Korpel believes we should read this text together with 11:1-10, because of parallelisms and the tree metaphor imagery in Isaiah 10:33-34 that links up with Isaiah 11:1-10.

Korpel assumes 11:1-10 reflects social criticism, since an allegorical interpretation of the animal imagery is that lamb and ox are elected servants of YHWH who will survive the exile, as in Isaiah 65:25, and in that case, other animals, such as wolf, lion and snake refer to people who do not obey YHWH.[[253]](#footnote-253)

Isaiah 10:33-34, however, according to Korpel, is directed against the king and his entourage in Jerusalem, who are represented as tall trees, as in Isaiah 1:30; 2:11-13; 17; 7:2. The Lebanon was a nickname for the royal palace, e.g. 1 Kings 7:2.[[254]](#footnote-254)

It is true that the trees in 10:33-34 have been understood figuratively from early times on.[[255]](#footnote-255) Vermes points to the fact that ‘Lebanon’ is mentioned in about sixty passages in the Hebrew Bible, and that almost half of these passages are symbolical.[[256]](#footnote-256) Nielsen states that there are seventy references, and that two-third show a figurative use.[[257]](#footnote-257) E.g. we see that the Lebanon is used as a symbol in Ezechiel 31, where Assyria is mentioned as a beautiful tree, like a cedar of the Lebanon, but cut down by a violent other nation.

Most scholars believe that the trees in 10:33-34 refer to people. The scholars are mainly divided between Assyria as intended by the trees, or Israel, Judah or Jerusalem.[[258]](#footnote-258)

In more than half of the passages, however, or in at least a third, the Bible writers speak of real trees when they mention the Lebanon, see e.g. 1 Kings 4:29-33, about Solomon: ‘He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall.’

The trees of the Lebanon (pine, fir, cypress, cedar and other trees) were highly valued. Cutting the timber was a monopoly for the coastal cities, and later of the monarchs of the conquering empires. The wood was also used for the temple in Jerusalem.[[259]](#footnote-259)

By the time of king Hezekiah the forests of the Lebanon had suffered depredation by the hands of the Assyrian monarchs, as we can see in Isaiah 37:24 (2 Kings 19:23).[[260]](#footnote-260)

The Assyrians, however, would not only cut the trees because they were now the monarchs of the area; they would also destroy the environment they conquered. The Assyrians proudly recorded their devastation of local flora and fauna; they hunted the Syrian elephant to extinction. In the summer of 714 e.g. Sargon II looted Urartu after his victory and destroyed the environment, cutting down trees and burning them.[[261]](#footnote-261)

This is probably why it says in Isaiah 14:8 that even the cedars of the Lebanon are happy because ‘no one will chop us down anymore’.

Because of this, I assume real trees that were really chopped down are at the historical background of this oracle. Since all Assyrian kings did this, it is not possible to determine to which time frame the text may have belonged originally.

The difficulty in the text remains that it is hard to explain why the text states that ‘the Lord YHWH of hosts’ would cut down real trees. Most likely this phrase is therefore an addition by a redactor, who applied the text in this new context to the fall of the Assyrians, which is why the name of YHWH as used in 16a, 23b and 24a is repeated here.

The new context might also be the connection with 11:1-10, as Korpel suggests; in that case, not the Assyrians, but the king and his entourage in Jerusalem are intended by the redactor.[[262]](#footnote-262)

4 CONCLUSION

When we looked at the most probable historical background for Isaiah 10, we discovered two time frames that kept coming back: first and foremost the period of Tiglath-pileser, from around 748 to 732, which includes the time of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, and secondly the period of Sennacherib, around the blockade of Jerusalem in 701.

Passages from the time of Tiglath-pileser seem to be 10:1-4, 5-7; 13-14; 15; 16-19; 20-22a, perhaps 22b-23 and 28-32.[[263]](#footnote-263)

And the passages from the time of Sennacherib appear to be 12, 24-26, and perhaps 22b-23. (Verse 12 might also be from a redactor.)

Verses 22b-23 could be from either 732, 722 or 701.

There appears to be one passage from between 715 and 711, which is 8-11. Verse 27 cannot easily be placed, but seems to be from either before 705, or before 630. Verses 33-34 could be from anytime during the Assyrian empire.

When I started my research, my preconception was that the entire chapter 10 had been written against the background of the fall of Samaria. My research, however, came up with a very different outcome.

Now that I have found this particular outcome, I find it remarkable that the main time frames I found are the same time frames as in the narrative parts in the book of Isaiah: chapter 6-8 (around 733) and chapter 36-39 (around 701). It leads me to believe that the prophet may have been especially active during these two periods, and that the oracles in chapter 10 were spoken and collected in these times, and edited later.[[264]](#footnote-264)

The question is: what is the idea behind the redaction of chapter 10? When we read the separate passages diachronically, there appear to be different messages, such as a warning for the Judean leaders not to exploit the poor (10:1-4), a warning to Hezekiah not to rebel (10:8-11), and a warning that Jerusalem will be conquered by the Assyrians for a short time (10:24-26).

Reading Isaiah 10 synchronically, however, after the redaction, the message seems to be that Assyria is used by God to punish His people, but Assyria will be punished as well, because they overstep their bounds: ‘Woe, Assyria’. According to me, this was the intention of the redactor and this is why the passages were connected as they are now. Interestingly enough, this ‘woe’ for Assyria cannot be found when we look at the separate passages and their historical background (apart from 10:12, which might be a later addition, perhaps from the redactor).

A few questions remain. First of all, it is surprising to me that the fall of Samaria is not mentioned in Isaiah 10. (Verse 9 most likely refers to the rebellion of 720, not the fall of the city in 722 and the deportations.) As far as Isaiah 10 is concerned, there are no oracles about the fate of the people of Israel in connection with the events of 722. (Verses 22b-23 might refer to this, or might not.) It would be interesting to find out where and how these events are mentioned elsewhere in the book of Isaiah.

Another question is: what is the historical background of the other passages in Isaiah 1-39? This would be a valuable research, since this might tells us more about the ministry of the prophet Isaiah.[[265]](#footnote-265)

It would also be interesting to compare the prophesies of Isaiah with those of Micah from around the same time.[[266]](#footnote-266)

However, all of this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

5 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND METHOD

With my method, I was able to establish the historical background of many of the passages, but not all of them. On the one hand, it may simply not be possible anymore to retrieve all the historical backgrounds with the information we now have. On the other hand, more research might be needed.

The advantage of my approach was that I started with the text, divided into passages. I did not divide the text into passages myself but I used the divisions made by W.M. de Bruin, who used delimitation criticism in order to establish the units. Redaction criticists often divide passages on the basis of their own theory. That way, the outcome of their research will usually match that theory. In my case, I did not have a theory about the outcome beforehand, and I was actually surprised at my own findings. Therefore, I think the method could be applied on other texts in Isaiah and might check the ideas of redaction criticists.

Dividing the text into passages and establishing the historical background of the separate passages also gave insight into the way the redactor(s) might have worked. There was a clear distinction between the messages of the passages, which suited specific historical backgrounds, and the message of the passage as a whole, which was a theological message. It would be interesting to see how this would work in other parts of Isaiah, since there is still so much disagreement among redaction criticists.

The problem with establishing the historical background is the reliability of the texts. The Bible texts are not intended as history but as theology, and the Assyrian royal inscriptions were used as propaganda. The royal inscriptions have to be counterbalanced with archeological findings and other texts, such as Assyrian state correspondence. I tried to do this as much as I could, but it is not always possible.

All in all, I think my method was helpful in establishing the historical background of Isaiah 10, which was the aim of my research. I was able to answer my research question: there are several time frames behind the oracles in Isaiah 10. Moreover, the exploration helped to clarify much of Isaiah 10.

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8. E.g. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets;* J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. De Jong seems to disregard the fact that not all Assyrian prophecies were encouraging. There is e.g. a prophecy where Ishtar is angry with king Esarhaddon and tells him she needs food. C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches, A Sourcebook for the comparative study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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32. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 200-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ibid., pp. 204-209. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
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39. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 85; M. Weippert*, Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament,* p. 286; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, pp. 45, 47, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid., pp. 19-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
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46. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 92; M. Weippert*, Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament,* p.287. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Summary inscription 4 (2.117C), translated by K. L. Younger, Jr. , lines 15’b-19’a, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, II,* p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 93; M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 201; A.K. Grayson, ‘Mesopotamia, history of (Assyria)’, p. 744. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. M. Weippert*, Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament,* p. 296; M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 81; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 48; A.K. Grayson, ‘Mesopotamia, history of (Assyria)’, p. 744; G.N. Knoppers, ‘In Search of Post-Exilic Israel: Samaria after the Fall of the Northern Kingdom’, in: Day, J. (ed.), *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel,* p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 93, 97- 98; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 48; A.K. Grayson, ‘Mesopotamia, history of (Assyria)’, p. 744; G. Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, p. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 93; M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 210-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 221-223; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 224-225; H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *State Archives of Assyria* (serie), online: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus>: SAA 03 033 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 98-99; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 100-101; M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 226-227; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 101; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 102-103; A.K. Grayson, ‘Mesopotamia, history of (Assyria)’, p. 745. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. פְּקֻדָּה can have the meaning of ‘commission’, ‘watch’, ‘supervision’, ‘administration’ or ‘vengeance’/‘punishment’; in Isaiah 10:3 it has the meaning of ‘punishment’. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. כָּבֹד has the meaning 'heaviness’, ‘burden’, but can also mean ‘glory’. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. It conveys the power of wealth, according to Oswalt, who translates with ‘abundance’. J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 258. In the context of fleeing ‘burden’ might be a good translation. I translated with ‘rich burden’ to cover both meanings and to indicate that the refugees cannot take their wealth with them. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. תַּחַתmeans ‘under’: apparently the persons to whom the ‘woe’ applies, formerly mighty, will now take their place among the captives and the slain. This is why I translate with ‘among’, as do the *New International Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible* and many other Bible translations. 4aA is absent from the LXXB but (partially) present in Qumran manuscripts. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. De Bruin, W.M, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity*, pp. 80-81, 134-135, 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. J.W. Olley, ‘“Hear the Word of Yahweh”: The Structure of the Book of Isaiah in 1QIsaa’ , p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism: the Example of Isaiah 5 and 10:1-6’, pp. 53-55; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 211; H.G.M. Williamson, ‘”An Initial Problem”: The Setting and Purpose of Isaiah 10:1-4’, in: R.J. Bautch & J.Todd Hibbard (eds.), *The Book of Isaiah, Enduring Questions Answered Anew*, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. P.L. Redditt, ‘Editorial/Redaction Criticism’, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism’, pp. 67-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid., p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches,* p. 271; J. Jeremias, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, p. 170; Y. Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience, The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12*, p. 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches,* p. 272; De Jong, M., *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets,* pp. 123-126; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39,* p. 211; M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism’, p.67. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism’, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Translation by *The New International Version*. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis,* p. 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. M.H. Feldman,‘Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as a Self-Portrayal of Empire’, in: B.E. Kelle e.a., *Interpreting Exile, Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Times,* p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Nimrud prisms D & E (2.118D), translated by K. L. Younger, Jr. , from iv.25-41, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, II, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah’, pp. 725-726, 729. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. P.K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Cf. Y. Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience,* p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 89; B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, pp. 5-17; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 48; G.N. Knoppers, ‘In Search of Post-Exilic Israel: Samaria after the Fall of the Northern Kingdom’, pp. 153, 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 191; J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’, p. 198; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, pp. 49; 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. C.R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 91; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39,* p. 61; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12,* p. 227; U. Berges, ‘*De armen van het boek Jesaja*’, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cf. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39,* p. 62; Y. Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience,* p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 193-194. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. הוֹי can be translated by ‘woe’, but also by ‘ha’ or ‘ah’. I will discuss my choice here in 3.2.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. U. Becker believes ‘in their hands’ is a gloss by a redactor who did not want to see Assyria itself as the rod. U. Becker, *Jesaja – von der Botschaft zum Buch*, p. 202. J.J.M. Roberts says that הוּא serves as a copulative, to indicate that both lines are nominal clauses, which we can see in the Syriac translation. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. חָנֵף֙ means ‘godless’ as in alienated from God. The word is used in Isaiah 9:16 and in various other places. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*. No nation was without a god, of course. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. The verbs ‘send’ and ‘command’ are quasi-official: the invasion is the will of God. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis*, p. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity*, pp. 81, 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. J.W. Olley, ‘ “Hear the Word of Yahweh”’, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. W.M. De Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity*, p. 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. As mentioned before, there is also a prophecy where Ishtar is angry with king Esarhaddon and tells him she needs food. C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches,* p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘Structural Analysis as a Tool for Redaction Criticism’, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah,* p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12,* p. 230. Mark that Kaiser does translate with ‘woe’, however. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament;* J. D.Brown, e.a., *Lexham Bible Dictionary.* [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Such as the *New Revised Standard Version* and the *Lexham English Bible.* [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Such as the *King James Version* and the *American Standard Version*. Roberts translates 10:5 with ‘hey’. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah,* p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. B.S. Childs, *Isaiah*, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 43; 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 89; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, pp. 47- 48; M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 193-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Tiglath-pileser 186-187, translated by Tadmor, as quoted in M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Tiglath-pileser 202-203, translated by Tadmor, as quoted in M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 196-197; G.N. Knoppers, ‘In Search of Post-Exilic Israel’, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Cf. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis*, p. 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Literally: is not like Carchemish Calno? [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp. 82, 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 165; P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah’, pp. 734-735; H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 85, 147-149; J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’, p. 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis*, p. 260; H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 87-88; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 47; J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 166; S.A. Meier, ‘*Calneh*’, in: D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Achor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 823. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. De Jong, M., *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets,* p. 129; J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 166; B.S. Childs, Isaiah, p. 91; W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Nimrud prisms D&E (2.118D), translated by K. L. Younger, Jr. , from lines iv.25-41, in W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, II,* p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. A.K. Grayson, ‘Mesopotamia, history of (Assyria)’, p. 754; B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, p. 31. I do not know, however, if images of other gods have ever been found in Assyria. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Mentioned by U. Becker, *Jesaja – von der Botschaft zum Buch,* p. 205. Becker himself assumes the text should not be read in these historical contexts, but that the text refers to the Zion tradition. Kaiser also suggests that the texts do not refer to specific historical situation, but are ‘purely a literary construction’. Obviously, I do not agree with them. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, pp. 230, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. The year 715 as the year of Hezekiah’s accession is supported by most scholars; some German scholars prefer 726/7. The problem lies in the inconsistent dates in the sources of 2 Kings 18:9-10 and 2 Kings 18:13. J. Rosenbaum, ‘Hezekiah king of Judah’, in: D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Achor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. J. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, pp. 253-254. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. De Jong, M., *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets,* p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. The Aššur ‘charter’, (2.118C), translated by K.L. Younger, Jr. , lines 16-28, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, II*, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 262; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 110; U. Becker, *Jesaja – von der Botschaft zum Buch,* p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. בצע in the pi means ‘to cut off’, ‘to finish’, ‘to bring to fulfillment’, ‘to injure’. Here it means ‘to finish’ according to Koehler and Baumgarten. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Since פְּקֻדָּה in verse 3 was translated by ‘punishment’, the verb here is translated by ‘to punish’. The LXX has third person singular here, but according to me first person singular does not present a problem. In the Bible there are often switches between third and first person singular when the Lord is speaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Blenkinsopp remarks that of the ancient translations only the Vulgate has a line similar to this line, so the text is probably corrupt. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. The participia in 14bA and 14bB belong to an implicit subject. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp. 82-83, 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12,* p.278. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Cf. M.H. Feldman, ‘Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as a Self-Portrayal of Empire’; B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 8, 82-91; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 165; 190-193; B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 82-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Contra e.g. J.J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah,* p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* pp. 15, 44, 94, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. P.K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 191; W.A.M. Beuken presents a similar text in *Jesaja 1-12*, p. 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Summary inscription 7 (2.117D), translated by K. L. Younger, Jr. , from lines 7’-13’, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, II, p. 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. C.R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 147-149, 264-265; K.Radner, *Ancient Assyria*, p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 248, 263-264; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, pp. 65, 76; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah’, pp. 725, 729. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. This phrase is omitted by the LXX. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. There is a parallelism between 15bB and 15bC and therefore לֹא-עֵץ has to be an object. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp. 83, 257-258. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. M. De Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets,* pp. 446-447. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. ‘leanness in his fatnesses’. מִשְׁמָן is ‘fat, portly people’ in this verse, according to Koehler and Baumgarten. In the plural, however, it can also mean ‘fat, rich areas’, as in Daniel 11:24. L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*. Perhaps this should also be its meaning here, considering vs. 17 and 18? ‘Therefore’ is misread in the LXX as ולא כן and translated as ‘and not so, rather’, but 1QIsaa supports the reading of MT. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah,* p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. ‘His’ can refer to the people of Israel, since ‘people’ is masculine in Hebrew. לְ is not translated, but marks the transition. This is done by many translations, such as the *New Revised Standard Version* and the *English Standard Version*. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Blenkinsopp remarks that no ancient versions render this verseline the same, so it may have been ‘damaged beyond repair’. Blenkinsopp, J., *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. שְׁאָר has the meaning ‘rest’, ‘remnant’. I have translated it as ‘rest’, also in 20aB and 21aA. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. J.J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. C.R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* pp. 41-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. P.K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Idem. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. H.G.M. Williamson, ‘A new divine title in Isaiah 10.17’, in: M.C.A. Korpel & L.L. Grabbe (eds.), *Open-mindedness in the Bible and beyond, A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, pp. 319-320. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. שׁוּבalso has the meaning ‘to repent’. In the Targum this is made explicit by the addition: ‘that have not sinned and they that have turned from sin’ after ‘a rest will return’. J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. בּוֹ refers to Israel as a people, not to the country. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp. 85, 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. J.W. Olley, ‘ “Hear the Word of Yahweh” ’, pp. 19-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. W.A.M. Beuken, Jesaja 1-12, p. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 270; W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp. 85, 258; Y. Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience,* p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. J.W. Olley, ‘ “Hear the Word of Yahweh”’, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. G.V. Wigram, *The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament.* [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. J.W. Olley, ‘ “Hear the Word of Yahweh”’, p. 33; J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. P.K. Tull, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. כלה and כליון in 22bA and חרוץ and נחרצה in 23aA are related words, that is why I use the same words in translation, even though L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*, give ‘annihilation’ as a translation for כליון in this verseline. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* pp.85, 258-259. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 101; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Part of ‘Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem’, (2.119B), translated by Mordechai Cogan, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, II, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 91; C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches,*p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. M.H. Feldman,‘Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as a Self-Portrayal of Empire’, p. 136; 143, 146; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 51, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. אֲדנָי is omitted in the LXX and the Targum, so the MT is probably influenced by verse 23bA. J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 268; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 240, footnote 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרָיִם ‘in the way of Egypt’ has a double connotation: as in English, ‘way’ can be used figuratively or literally (‘road’ or ‘manner’). L. Koehler & W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Study edition*. In verseline 26bB it is used as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Most translations interpret that God’s anger towards Israel will end and that He will direct himself against Assyria instead. E.g. *New International Version*: Very soon my anger against you will end and my wrath will be directed to their destruction. In my opinion, this is not what is said: I believe it says that God’s anger, that leads to destruction, will soon end; this means that Assyria will no longer attack Israel or Judah commissioned by God. ‘Their’ refers to Israel or Judah, according to me. The LXX does not give an interpretation but renders the verses as they are in Hebrew: ετι γαρ μικρον και παυσεται η οργη, ο δε θυμος μου επι την βουλην αυτων. In Daniël 11:36 we find the same phrase, כָלָה זַ֔עַם, meaning: until the time of wrath is completed. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 255. I use the word ‘finish’ instead of ‘end’ because I used ‘finish’ before for כלה and כליון in 22bA and 23aA. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. According to J.J.M. Roberts and O. Kaiser, Isaiah refers here to the incident in Judges 7:25 about the death of two Midianite leaders. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 172; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. נְשָׂאֹו is a qal perfect. Since the preceding verb is also a perfect, I see no reason to translate with a future, as many Bible translations do, e.g. *King James Version, English Standard Version* and *New International Version*. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 272; J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. W.M. De Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity*, p. 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Idem. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. G.V. Wigram, *The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 27, 28, 30, 41-43; B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. But compare Isaiah 20, where the prophet walks around nakes to indicate the fate of the deportees from Egypt and Cush. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 33-40; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. *State Archives of Assyria* (serie), online: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus>: SAA 01 010 [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. B. Oded, *Mass Deportations and deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,* pp. 8, 82-91; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 64; M.H. Feldman, ‘Assyrian Representations of Booty and Tribute as a Self-Portrayal of Empire’. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. S. Dalley, ‘Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh’, pp. 393-394. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Idem. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. NB: ‘from your shoulder’ and ‘from your neck’ (27aC) are both masculine singular. סֹבֶל, ‘burden’, is always figuratively: the burden of tiranny. J.D. Brown e.a.*, Lexham Bible Dictionary* (digitaal). [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. In LXX we read: ‘his yoke will be broken from off your shoulder’ and Targum: ‘The nations will be destroyed from before the anointed one.’ J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 268. See 3.10.1 for the translations ‘he has gone up from Rimmon/Samaria’. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Ibid., p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 44. E.g. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 126; S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis*, p. 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Such as the *New International Version* and *New Revised Standard Version*. *The New International Version* translates: He has gone up from Rimmon. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Cf. J.W. Olley, ‘ “Hear the Word of Yahweh”’, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 375, with footnotes 87 and 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. See footnote with my translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 447. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. S. Dalley, ‘Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh’, p. 392; Part of ‘Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem’, translated by Mordechai Cogan, from: The Context of Scripture, II, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’, p. 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Ibid., p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Part of ‘Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem’, translated by Mordechai Cogan, from: The Context of Scripture, II, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. C.B. Hays, *Hidden Riches,* p. 228; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 19; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 94; S. Dalley, ‘Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh’, pp. 388, 391-393; J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’, p.203. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 365; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, p. 49; S. Dalley, ‘Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh’, p. 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 367. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Ibid., pp. 368-371; Hays, C.B. & P. Machinist, ‘Assyria and the Assyrians’, pp. 55, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 371-373. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. With *לְ* the verb means: ‘to deposit’. J.D. Brown e.a.*, Lexham Bible Dictionary* (digitaal). Others take כְּלִי as weapon, as in Gen. 27:3, Judges 18:11,16 and then the meaning could also be: he examines his weapons. The picture is of preparing for battle. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 119. The verb פקד, however, only means ‘inspect’ or ‘examine’ in the qal, and this is a hif‘il. Cf. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Eprhaimite Crisis,* pp. 274, 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. 1Q1sa, LXX and S read the singular. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Following the Syriac translation, and 1QIsaa, this could also be read as ‘answer her, Anatoth’ instead of ‘poor Anatoth.’ J.N. Oswalt, *The book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, p. 273; J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. In several Qumran manuscripts and translations such as the LXX instead of בֵּית (house) the reading is בַּת (daughter). J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 260. For this reason, and because of the parallelism with Jerusalem, I translated ‘daughter’. Many Bible translations have ‘daughter of Zion’, such as the *English Standard Version* and the *King James Version* (and the translation by Blenkinsopp). The *New International Version* has, more correctly, ‘daughter Zion’. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. E.g. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 126 and R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. C.R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 95; J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem,* p. 30; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 118; 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. M. De Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets,* p. 447; W.A.M. Beuken, Jesaja 1-12, p. 295; K.L. Younger, Jr., ‘Recent Study on Sargon II’, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Nimrud inscription (2.118I), translated by K. L. Younger, Jr. , from lines 7-12, in: W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture, II,* p. 298; referred to in M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, p. 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘The Messianic King: Isaiah 10:33-11:10’, in: G. Eidevall, e.a.: *Enigmas and Images: studies in honor of Tryggve N.D. Mettinger,* p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, p. 93; K.L. Younger, Jr., ‘Recent Study on Sargon II, King of Assyria’, in: M.W. Chavalas & K.L. Younger, Jr., *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, p. 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. J.D. Brown e.a.*, Lexham Bible Dictionary* (digitaal); J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. B.S. Childs, *Isaiah*, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Ibid., p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 119; T.R. Hobbs, *A Time for War,* p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, p. 175; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. According to Blenkinsopp, all three words are hapax legomena. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 260. R.E. Clements points out that Targum has ‘with an axe’, reading bema‘a ṣāḏāh in Hebrew. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. בְּאַדִּיר is translated in many different ways; many Bible translations assume that God is intended here: to the Mighty One (*New Living Translation*), before the Mighty One (*New International Version*), by the Mighty One (*New American Standard Bible/Lexham English Bible*). Blenkinsopp translates ‘in his majesty’, although אַדִּיר is never used as a substantive. He feels it fits the context better than making YHWH the subject. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 260. According to me, ‘with the majectic’ refers to the majestic cedar trees. Cf. The *New Revised Standard Version*: with its majestic trees. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. B.S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘The Messianic King: Isaiah 10:33-11:10’, pp. 147, 149-150; 156-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Ibid., p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘The Messianic King: Isaiah 10:33-11:10’, pp. 148, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Ibid., p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Ibid., p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. G. Vermes, ‘The Symbolic Interpretations of Lebanon in the Targums: The Origin and Development of an Exegical Tradition,’ *JTS NS9,* p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. K. Nielsen e.a., *There is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah,* p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 120-121. De Bruin remarks that if we combine these verses with 10:18-19, Jerusalem would be the object of the threat. But Assyria might be intended as well. W.M. de Bruin, *Isaiah 1-12 as Written and Read in Antiquity,* p. 260. Seitz believes an oracle against Judah would be out of place since the emphasis has been on Assyria. C.R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 95. De Jong also feels this text is about the destruction of Assyria. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, p. 447. Kaiser opts for Jerusalem: the undergrowth as the common people, the cedars of Lebanon the great men of Zion. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. R. Houston Smith, ‘Lebanon’, p. 269, in D.N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, p. 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Ibid., p. 270. P.K. Tull, ‘Consumerism, Idolatry, and Environmental Limits in Isaiah’, in: R.J. Bautch & J.Todd Hibbard (eds.), *The Book of Isaiah, Enduring Questions Answered Anew*, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 262; H.W. Saggs, *The Might that was Assyria*, pp. 93, 95, 258-260. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. M.C.A. Korpel, ‘The Messianic King: Isaiah 10:33-11:10’, p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Cf. S.A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis*, p. 255. Irvine suggests that Isaiah 10:5-27c is an Isaianic unit, against the background of the Syro-Epraimite Crisis. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Cf. the question put by Berges: Why are the events of 701 in the centre of the book, when the exile should have been the centre? U. Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja*, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. De Jong states that four moments are highlighted in First Isaiah: Tiglath-pileser’s campaigns to Philistia and Syria-Palestine in 734-732 and the Syro-Eprhaimite crisis; Sargon’s campaigns against the West in 720, including an expedition against Judah after which Sargon claimed to be the subduer of Judah; Sargon’s campaign against Ashdod in 711; Judah’s rebellion against Assyria in 705-701 and Sennacherib’s campaign in 701. M. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, pp. 453-454. It would be interesting to check these findings. I did not agree with all of his findings in chapter 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Cf. J.C. de Moor, ‘Jerusalem: nightmare and daydream in Micah’. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)