

Let us Go up to Zion

Essays in Honour of H. G. M. Williamson
on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday

Edited by

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THE SEPTUAGINT OF ISAIAH AND PRIESTHOOD

Arie van der Kooij

The book of Isaiah is well known for its focus on the holy city, Jerusalem/Zion, and its temple, but it does not display a great interest, at least not explicitly so, in priests and priesthood. The passages referring to priests are small in number; see 8:2; 24:2; 28:6; 37:2; 61:6, and 66:21, the latter instance being the only place where also the term 'Levites' occurs.¹ The Septuagint of Isaiah (LXX Isaiah), however, displays a different picture as there are several instances where, different from MT, its vocabulary reflects an interest in priests and priesthood.² The first place to be mentioned is 40:2, since here the LXX offers the term 'priest' where MT (cf. 1QIsa^a, 1QIsa^b, 4QIsa^b) does not: 'O priests, speak to the heart of Jerusalem, comfort her.' The Greek version makes explicit who, to the mind of its translator, are the ones that are being addressed.³ In his view, 'priests' are the appropriate authorities to comfort the people of Jerusalem.

Another passage which is of great interest is to be found in ch. 22: it contains a prophecy (vv. 15–25) about Sebna and Eljakim who in MT are presented as high officials of the court, fully in line with Isa 36–37, but who in LXX turn out to be priestly leaders.⁴ Furthermore, there is reason to believe that LXX Isa 9:5–7 (MT, vv. 4–6) allude to priestly leaders as well—to illegitimate high-priests in v. 5, and to a legitimate high-priestly leader to be expected, in vv. 6–7.⁵

¹ But see also 43:28 ('the princes of the sanctuary').

² In Isa 8:2 ('Uria, the priest'), on the other hand, LXX has no equivalent of 'priest.'

³ Compare the explicitation in *Tg. Isa 40:2* ('prophets').

⁴ See Arie van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches. Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte des Alten Testaments* (OBO 35; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981), 56–60.

⁵ See Arie van der Kooij, "Wie heisst der Messias. Zu Jes 9,5 in den alten griechischen Versionen," in *Vergegenwärtigung des Alten Testaments. Beiträge zur biblischen Hermeneutik. Festschrift für Rudolf Smend zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Christoph Bultmann, Walter Dietrich, and Christoph Levin; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002), 156–69; idem, "The Septuagint of Isaiah and the Mode of Reading Prophecies in Early Judaism. Some Comments on LXX Isaiah 8–9," in *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006* (ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008), 597–611. For different suggestions as to LXX Isa 9:6–7, see John J. Collins, "Isaiah 8:23–9:6

In this contribution I will deal with two other instances in LXX Isaiah, which, in my view, also testify to a strong interest in priesthood: 6:13 and 29:22.⁶

I. ISAIAH 6:13 (LXX)

And the tenth is still/again on it, and it will again be for plunder, like a terebinth, and like an acorn when it falls from its husk.

(MT: And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump [RSV])

LXX offers a text which is shorter than MT (and 1QIsa^a). There is no rendering of several words found in MT. On the basis of the version of Theodotion (σπέρμα ἄγιον τὸ στήλωμα αὐτῆς) it was thought that the final clause of v. 13 was the part missing in the Greek.⁷ However, scholars have pointed out that, since the word αὐτῆς ('its [husk]') plausibly shows that the last word in Hebrew (מצבתה) was read, the words not translated are וְשֵׁן זֶרַע בַּם מַצְבַּת.⁸ The minus can be explained as due to homoiarkton.⁹

The clause 'And the tenth is on it,' interestingly, uses a present tense, ἐστὶ—MT has a non-verbal clause—whereas the context of v. 12 and the remainder of v. 13 is in the future. How should one interpret the present tense in the first part of the verse? Troxel is the only one who has dealt with this issue, and according to him, this feature is best explained in the

in its Greek Translation," in *Scripture in Transition. Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Rajja Sollamo* (ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta; Supplements for the Journal for the Study of Judaism 126; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 205–21; Rodrigo de Sousa, "Problems and Perspectives on the Study of Messianism in LXX Isaiah," in *The Old Greek of Isaiah: Issues and Perspectives* (ed. Arie van der Kooij and Michaël N. van der Meer; CBET 55; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 135–52.

⁶ It is a great pleasure to contribute to this volume in honour of Hugh Williamson who has contributed significantly among other things to the study of the book of Isaiah.

⁷ See e.g. Joseph Ziegler, *Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaías* (ATA 12/3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1934), 48.

⁸ Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja* (BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), 234; John A. Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiash vi.13," in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible. Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal* (ed. John A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif; University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 32; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 85–118 (89); Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*. Tome 2. *Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations* (OBO 50/2; Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 42.

⁹ Emerton, "Translation and Interpretation," 89; Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 42. Ronald L. Troxel ("Economic Plunder as a Leitmotif in LXX-Isaiah," *Bib* 83 [2002]: 375–91 [387 n.]) suggests that "G's *Vorlage* had suffered parablepsis."

light of the context, i.e., vv. 11–13. In order to understand his explanation it is necessary first to have a look at the preceding verses, 11–12. In the Greek version, both verses read as follows (in English translation):

v. 11: Then I said, How long, O LORD? And he said:
 Until cities become desolate because they are not inhabited,
 and houses, because there are no people,
 and the land will be left desolate.
 v. 12: And after these things, God will put the men far away,
 and those who have been left will be multiplied on the land.

This version differs from MT (and 1QIsa^a) in v. 12 in particular. ‘After these things’ (μετὰ ταῦτα) in v. 12 is a plus indicating a situation after the events, the desolation of the land, announced in v. 11. Unlike MT, where v. 12 provides a description in line with the desolation of the land as announced in v. 11, LXX v. 12 refers to a new situation, to a period *after* the desolation of v. 11.

In the phrase ‘God will put the men far away’ MT refers to the deportation of people from the land, in line with v. 11. However, since LXX refers to a later situation, v. 12a in Greek is likely to be understood in a different way. This is even more plausible in light of the rendering of v. 12b. MT has it that ‘the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land,’ again alluding to a situation in line with v. 11. LXX, however, reads, ‘and those who have been left will be multiplied on the land.’ The Hebrew עֲזוּבָה has not been taken here in the sense of a desolation of the land, but it has been interpreted as referring to a group of people that had been left.¹⁰ Seeligmann speaks of a “community left behind and spared.”¹¹ In line with this interpretation, Hebrew רַבָּה has been read in the sense of being numerous; hence the rendering: ‘(those who will be left) will be multiplied.’ So, instead of desolation, LXX v. 12b is about a growing population, thus conveying the notion of salvation.

From this perspective, the removal of ‘the men’ in v. 12a is likely to be understood as a reference to the occupiers of the land, as has been proposed by Baer,¹² and not in the sense of a depopulation, as in MT. For ‘the

¹⁰ Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 233; Troxel, “Economic Plunder,” 385; David A. Baer, “It’s All about Us”: Nationalistic Exegesis in the Greek Isaiah (Chapters 1–12),” in *As Those who are Taught. The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL* (ed. Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull; SBLSymS 27; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 29–48 (37).

¹¹ Isaac Leo Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah. A Discussion of its Problems* (Mededelingen en verhandelingen Ex Oriente Lux 9; Leiden: Brill, 1948), 116.

¹² Baer, “Nationalistic Exegesis,” 37. Troxel (“Economic Plunder,” 386) sees ‘the men’ as equivalent to the (bad) rulers in 3:12.

men' in the sense of oppressors, LXX Isa 25:4a, 5 may be compared. The verb μακρύνω is also found in 49:19, where it is also used in connection with enemies ('those who swallow you up').

Let us return to the issue of the present tense in the first part of v. 13. Troxel offers the following explanation: "While all the actions of vv. 11–13 are yet future in the MT, the LXX, after describing desolation (v. 11) and portraying a day beyond that desolation (v. 12), turns to what it regards as *current* troubles, as indicated by its choice of ἐστὶ in translating the non-verbal clause." Thus, the tenth part "must envision conditions before the desolation augured in v. 11."¹³ In this view, the troubles indicated in the first part of v. 13 are to be seen as referring to the time before the disaster announced in v. 11, that is to say, to the time of the prophet (cf. vv. 1–10). However, the difficulty with this reading of the first clause of v. 13 is that it does not do justice to the fact that this clause is embedded in the whole of vv. 12–13, i.e., the passage introduced by 'after these things.' It therefore is more plausible to read this clause as part of this context, and not as referring to a state of affairs preceding that of v. 11. Moreover, ἐπ' αὐτῆς in v. 13 is clearly related to ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς 'on the land' in v. 12. The use of the present tense expresses a durative sense: in the time after the desolation (v. 11), when the oppressors will be put away, and the ones who had been left will multiply—in this period there will be a tenth part, continually.¹⁴

Turning to the word 'the tenth', according to MT, a tenth, a small part, will be left in a situation as described in v. 12. "Even though a fraction of the population, a tenth, is left behind in Judah when YAHWEH exiles the rest (v. 12a), it will not escape, but it too must be exterminated."¹⁵ Things are different, however, in the Greek version. As v. 12b in LXX depicts a positive situation—the remaining ones will grow in number in the land (of Judah)—it follows that 'the tenth' should not be understood in the light of MT. Moreover, since the tenth is considered, in the Greek, to be present continually (cf. the present tense), one gets the impression that this part is to be distinguished from the growing number of people in v. 12b. The latter will grow, while the former is there constantly.

An important question in this regard concerns the meaning of the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew for '(the) tenth': ἐπιδέκατον. This term

¹³ Troxel, "Economic Plunder," 386.

¹⁴ For other cases of a present tense embedded in a context alluding to the future, see LXX Isa 9:6; 13:19 (καλεῖται in both cases).

¹⁵ George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 1–27* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 111.

is commonly understood as the tenth part of the population, in line with MT.¹⁶ However, the difficulty is that a reading based on MT does not fit the meaning of v. 12 in Greek (see above). Moreover, elsewhere in the LXX τὸ ἐπιδέκατον always refers to *the tithe*.¹⁷ If ‘the/a tenth part’ would have been the intended meaning, then one would expect τὸ δέκατον in Greek.¹⁸ It therefore is more correct to render the first clause of v. 13 as follows: “and the tithe is again on the land.”¹⁹

This raises the question of what this text might mean. The tithe was something which was to be offered in the temple. According to Num 18 this was important for the sons of Levi, since they were the ones who should receive the tithes offered by the Israelites, because, as is stated in v. 21: “I have given to the sons of Levi every tithe in Israel for an inheritance for their services” in the temple. The tribe of Levi did not receive a portion of the promised land—God is their portion and inheritance (v. 20)—and that is why the tithes should be given to them. Instead of having a landed inheritance, the priests and Levites receive the tithes offered by the Israelites to the LORD.

If read from this perspective one could say that the beginning of v. 13 is about the offering of tithes to the priests in the temple in the period after the desolation. However, I would propose another interpretation, which is more plausible in the light of the simile at the end of the verse (on this, see below). According to Num 18, there is a close link between the tithes and the tribe of Levi, the priests; but interestingly, writings at the time of LXX Isaiah—Jubilees and Aramaic Levi—contain a story about Levi which provides a clue for another understanding of the term ‘tithe.’ In *Jub.* 32 we are told that Levi had a dream at Bethel that he had been made a priest (v. 1). “V. 2 then has it that Jacob tithed all of his belongings and his children to complete the vow he had made at Bethel (Gen 28:22). Verse 3 offers an explanation of how Levi could be the tithe-son among Jacob’s twelve male offspring.”²⁰ As to this explanation, “the composer of Jubilees

¹⁶ Cf. Richard R. Ottley, *The Book of Isaiah according to the Septuagint (Codex Alexandrinus)* (vol. 1; London: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 85; Seeligmann, *Septuagint Version*, 45; Troxel, “Economic Plunder,” 385; *The New English Translation of the Septuagint*; Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 271.

¹⁷ See Num 18:21, 26; Deut 12:11, 17; 14:23, 28; 26:12; Amos 4:4; Mal 3:8; 2 Chr 31:5, 6, 12.

¹⁸ Cf. the variant reading attested in Eusebius’s Commentary on Isaiah (GCS 9): τὸ δέκατον.

¹⁹ Cf. *Septuaginta Deutsch* (“der Zehnt”). ‘Again’ is to be preferred to ‘still’ because the clause refers to the period after a desolation (v. 12).

²⁰ Robert A. Kugler, *From Patriarch to Priest. The Levi-Priestly Tradition from Aramaic Levi to Testament of Levi* (SBLEJL 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 164–5.

has Jacob count his sons from the youngest up, beginning with Benjamin, still in the womb. Counting upwards in this way the 10th son is Levi [...], who becomes Jacob's tithe to the LORD."²¹ In the light of this evidence—Levi as the tithe-son of Jacob—"the tithe" in v. 13 can be interpreted metonymically as a reference to Levi/the priesthood.²² This also sheds light on the difference between v. 12b and v. 13a, noted above: the former then is about the lay-people of Judah, whereas the latter passage refers to another part of the nation, namely, the priesthood.

In the clause, 'And it will again be for plunder like a terebinth, and like an acorn when it falls from its husk, contextually, 'it' is best understood as referring to 'the tithe.'²³ As for the phrase 'for plunder' (εἰς προνομίην), in LXX Isaiah the Hebrew root בָּעַר is usually rendered in the sense of burning (see e.g., εἰς καύσιν in 44:15 for לְבַעַר), but in this case, as well as in 5:5 (εἰς διαρπαγήν), it has been interpreted differently.²⁴ According to our verse, it will be for plunder 'like a terebinth.' It is not clear what is implied here, but in the light of LXX Isa 1:30, the only place in the book where the same comparison occurs, it may well be that it should be understood as 'like a terebinth that had shed its leaves.'²⁵ The second simile of our verse is more explicit: 'like an acorn when it falls from its husk.' Greek βάλανος can refer to an oak-tree, but, as has been pointed out by Troxel, here it is the 'acorn' because in 2:13 the tree is designated as 'the tree of the acorn' (for the same Hebrew word as in 6:13 [אֵלֶּיךָ!]).²⁶ The verb ἐκπίπτω with ἄπό, is used here as the equivalent of Hebrew שָׁלַח, just as in Job 15:33

²¹ Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 77.

²² One may wonder whether the expression קָדַשׁ זֶרַע, if present in the underlying Hebrew text, has triggered this interpretation.

²³ Ronald L. Troxel (*LXX-Isaiah as Translation and Interpretation. The Strategies of the Translator of the Septuagint of Isaiah* [Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period Supplements Series 124; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 271) holds that 'it' refers to 'the land', but it seems more plausible to regard the subject of 'it will be' the same as that of the preceding clause of the verse ('the tithe').

²⁴ It may well be that the rendering of 'plunder' is based on the meaning 'to graze' (for which, see LXX Exod 22:4).

²⁵ As to the relationship between 6:13 and 1:30 in the Hebrew text, see H. G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 6,13 and 1,29–31," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah. Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (ed. Jacques van Ruiten and Marc Vervenne; BETL 132; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 19–28. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in antiquity there was a tradition of rendering the Hebrew שָׁלַח in v. 13 as referring to the shedding of leaves (Targum and Symmachus).

²⁶ Troxel, "Economic Plunder," 387 n. See also Emerton, "Translation and Interpretation," 89.

(‘But may he [i.e. the impious] [...] fall off like an olive blossom’). This expression is to be taken in the literal sense (‘to fall from’), just as in LXX Deut 19:5 (‘and the iron slips from the wood’).

What does this simile mean? An acorn falling from its husk evokes the idea of an object that falls from the place where it belongs. The same is true of other passages where the verb ἐκπίπτω is found. For instance, Isa 14:12: ‘How is *fallen from* heaven the morning-star.’ The falling from its place in this passage has to do with the loss of a position of power. The same is true of LXX Dan 7:20: ‘And concerning its ten horns, that were upon its head, and the one, which was growing, and three *fell out* because of it.’ Because of the one horn three horns fell out, i.e., lost their position of power (upon the head). This meaning is also attested in LXX Isa 28:1 (and see v. 4) where the loss of glory and power of particular leaders, referred to as ‘the crown of pride, the hired workers of Ephraim,’ is expressed by the image of ‘the flower that has fallen from its glory.’ Compare also Diodorus Siculus, 31, 18.2: ‘Ptolemy the king of Egypt having been fallen from the kingship (ἐκπεσὼν τῆς βασιλείας),’ i.e., having lost and deprived of the kingship (by his own brother).

Thus, the simile ‘like an acorn when it falls from its husk’ is likely to be understood in the sense of the loss of a position of glory and power. This fits the idea of ‘the tithe’ as a reference to the priesthood. The final part of v. 13 in Greek then means to say that the priesthood will lose their place and position of power.

Finally, a note on the choice of θήκη for Hebrew מצבת is in order. The Greek term fits the imagery (referring to the husk or cup of an acorn), but how does one explain this term as a rendering of מצבת? It seems to me that this Hebrew word has been taken in the sense of מצב as attested in 22:19, ‘position, office’ (LXX: ὀκονομία ‘office’), which then was applied to the image of an acorn. This would mean that the notion of position or office was indeed the underlying idea of the simile.

All in all, the imagery in LXX Isa 6:13 is quite different from that in MT. Whereas the latter is about a terebinth or oak whose stump remains when it is felled, as the verse is usually understood, the Greek speaks of a terebinth (shedding its leaves) and of an acorn when it falls from its husk. It strikes one that LXX is not speaking of two trees as in MT, but reflects a particular choice as far as the second part of the comparison is concerned—‘acorn’ instead of ‘oak.’ This choice was made, likely so, to evoke the idea of losing a position or office. Another choice made concerns the rendering ‘for plunder’ as noted above. It may be observed that,

unlike the alternative ('for burning'), this equivalent fits the similes of the verse. The notion of plunder conveys the idea of losing glory²⁷ and the position is due to an act of violence.²⁸

II. ISAIAH 29:22 (LXX)

Therefore thus said the LORD concerning the house of Jacob, which he separated from (the descendants of) Abraham

According to MT ('Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the house of Jacob, [the LORD] who redeemed Abraham') it is the LORD who redeemed Abraham,²⁹ but in the LXX the relative clause is related to 'the house of Jacob,' which fits the word order in Hebrew more easily. As a result, the Greek version does not speak of God as the one who 'redeemed' (פדה) Abraham, but as the one who 'separated' (ἀφώρισεν) the house of Jacob from Abraham, i.e., from the descendants of Abraham. The Greek verb employed here is nowhere else in the LXX used as an equivalent of פדה. How does one explain this unusual rendering?

Ziegler has suggested that the verb 'to separate' was introduced in order to express the idea of God's election of Israel from among the nations, in line with a passage such as Lev 20:26: 'You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and have separated (בדל) you from the peoples, that you should be mine' (RSV).³⁰ The difficulty of this proposal, however, is that the text in LXX Isaiah does not refer to a separation 'from the peoples,' but 'from Abraham.'

Eusebius of Caesarea read the Greek of Isa 29:22 in the light of a passage in the New Testament, John 8:39 ([Jesus to the Jews:] 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did'). In his view, God separated, in the negative sense of the word, those who are called 'the house of Jacob,' because they did not do what Abraham did, and hence could not be considered Abraham's children.³¹ Jerome interpreted the Greek version in a similar way: sic intellegi potest, quod scribas et pharisaeos, qui

²⁷ Cf. the image of a terebinth shedding its leaves.

²⁸ An interesting passage in this regard is to be found in LXX Isa 22: "you will be removed from your office and from your position" (v. 19).

²⁹ This reading is also attested by 'the three,' Theodotus, Aquila, and Symmachus.

³⁰ Ziegler, *Untersuchungen*, 120. For a similar view, see Léo Laberge, *La Septante d'Isaïe* 28–33. *Étude de tradition textuelle* (Ottawa: chez auteur, 1978), 38.

³¹ GCS 7.

Dominum blasphemabant, separaverit ab Abraham, qui vidit diem Domini, et laetatus est. Si enim fuissent filii Abraham, fecissent opera Abraham.³²

However, in the light of what follows in LXX Isa 29:22 ('Jacob shall not be ashamed now'), the verb 'to separate' is not to be taken in a negative sense. Read from the perspective of the laws of Moses, the idea of being separated from (the offspring of) Abraham is best understood as referring to the marking out of Levi and his tribe for the priesthood. They were set apart for the service of the temple. This interpretation also explains the relationship between 'to redeem' in Hebrew and 'to separate' in Greek, because the Levites were taken from among the people of Israel instead of every first-born of this people (Num 3:11; 8:18), that is to say, the Levites were the ones who 'redeemed' the first-borns of Israel (for the notion of 'redeeming' first-borns, see Exod 13:13, 15). So the underlying Hebrew text of Isa 29:22, which was read thus: 'the house of Jacob that redeemed Abraham,' was interpreted in the light of the idea that the tribe of Levi was set apart in order to redeem the first-borns of the offspring of Abraham.

One may object, however, that it is difficult to take the expression 'the house of Jacob' as a reference to Levi/the priesthood. This is unusual indeed, but it is not impossible as soon as the term 'house' is taken in the sense of 'ruling, reigning house,' and not as referring to the people of Jacob as a whole. In this connection it is interesting to note that in Isa 22:21 and 37:31 where the expression 'the house of Judah' occurs, and clearly refers to the people of Judah as a whole, the LXX does not provide a literal rendering: in 22:21 it reads, 'those who dwell in Judah' and in 37:31, 'those who are left in Judah' (MT, 'the surviving remnant of the house of Judah'). Moreover, as we know from sources of the time, the priests were seen as the leaders of the Jewish nation. For instance, Hecataeus of Abdera (ca. 300 BC) tells his readers:

He [Moses] picked out the men of most refinement and with the greatest ability to head the entire nation, and appointed them priests; [...] These same men he appointed to be judges in all major disputes, and entrusted to them the guardianship of the laws and customs.³³

³² CCSL 73.

³³ Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judeans, Vol. I: From Herodotus to Plutarch* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 28. See also *Jub.* 31:15.

III. CONCLUSION

As I have argued elsewhere,³⁴ LXX Isaiah contains passages which reflect a strong interest in a particular group of Jews in Egypt, in the Hellenistic era. These passages are 10:24, 11:16, and 19:18–19. The first one is about their going to Egypt, the second one about their return from Egypt (to Jerusalem), whereas the third passage alludes to their stay in Egypt and the existence of a temple there. In the light of what we know through Josephus, it makes perfect sense to assume that in these places LXX Isaiah is referring to a particular group that fled from Jerusalem at the time of the crisis in the sixties of the second century BC: Onias, member of the high-priestly family, and his followers, among them priests and Levites. He got permission from the Ptolemaic king, Ptolemy VI, to build a temple in the nome of Heliopolis. The building of a Jewish temple in Egypt was legitimized on the basis of the prophecy to be found in Isa 19:19 ('There shall be an altar in Egypt to the Lord'; see *Ant.* 13.67–68). All this strongly suggests that LXX Isaiah was produced by the group of Onias, which, in my view, explains the interest in priesthood as reflected in several passages in LXX Isaiah.

³⁴ Van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen*, 52–55; idem, "The Servant of the Lord: A Particular Group of Jews in Egypt according to the Old Greek of Isaiah. Some Comments on LXX Isa 49,1–6 and Related Passages, in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (ed. Jacques van Ruiten and Marc Vervenne; BETL 132; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 383–96.