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Arie van der Kooij

## The Old Greek of Isaiah and Book III of the Sibylline Oracles: Related Pieces of Jewish Literature in Ptolemaic Egypt

### 1. Introduction

This contribution is a sequel to the papers I delivered at the Wuppertal conferences of 2006 and 2008.<sup>1</sup> In the first one I argued that the Old Greek of Isaiah (LXX Isaiah) testifies to the mode of reading prophecies characteristic of Ancient Judaism, a mode of reading according to which ancient prophecies were seen as predictions, which in specific circumstances were understood as being fulfilled in one's own day, or were expected to come true soon.<sup>2</sup> In my second paper I pointed out that within Ptolemaic Egypt LXX Isaiah as translation and publication of ancient oracles does not represent an isolated phenomenon. Native Egyptian oracles, such as the Oracle of the Potter and the Oracle of the Lamb, also attest to a great interest in ancient prophecies and their contemporary application because these texts were held oracles predicting events in the political history of the second century BCE.

In this essay I would like to deal with another piece of oracular literature in relation to LXX Isaiah – Book III of the Sibylline Oracles (Sib Or III).<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Egyptian oracles just mentioned, Sib Or III is of Jewish provenance, the main corpus dating to the second century BCE.<sup>4</sup> Since this is also true of LXX Isaiah it would be interesting to see whether and if so in which way these two pieces of prophetic literature are related to each other.

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<sup>1</sup> VAN DER KOOIJ, "The Septuagint of Isaiah and the Mode of Reading Prophecies," and idem, "The Old Greek of Isaiah and Other Prophecies."

<sup>2</sup> This view has been criticized by TROXEL, *LXX-Isaiah*, and WAGNER, *Reading the Sealed Book*. For comments, see VAN DER KOOIJ, "'Do you understand what you are reading' (Acts 8:30)."

<sup>3</sup> As I promised in my "The Old Greek of Isaiah and Other Prophecies," 84.

<sup>4</sup> COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 33: he dates the main corpus (97–349 and 489–829) to the middle of the second century BCE. Sib Or III as a whole is of a later date; see e.g. BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 126–130 (ca 50 BCE).

Things would be even more interesting if the place of origin of both texts were the same, namely, Ptolemaic Egypt. It is commonly assumed that LXX Isaiah was produced in Egypt, but although usually Sib Or III too is considered to be of Egyptian provenance, Buitenwerf, in his stimulating and detailed contribution to the study of Sib Or III, has advanced the theory that Book III was written in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> Beside the question of whether Book III should be regarded composite or as a literary unity (so Buitenwerf), a very important issue concerns the references to the “seventh king”. According to Buitenwerf the number “seven” is probably meant here in a symbolical way, reflecting a strong interest in a certain period of time rather than in a particular Ptolemaic ruler. Below I shall deal with one of the passages involved (608–610), arguing that the number “seven” is to be understood as referring to a particular king in Egypt, which in turn favours the idea of Egypt as place of origin.<sup>6</sup>

On the assumption then that SibOr III, just like LXX Isaiah, was written in Ptolemaic Egypt, the question arises in which Jewish milieu these texts might have been produced. Do they stem from different circles of literate Jews in Egypt, or alternatively from the same milieu?

Scholars usually think of ‘the Jewish community’ in Alexandria as the milieu in which books of the Septuagint and other pieces of Jewish literature originated.<sup>7</sup> However, data about the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt suggest that one should distinguish between two groups of intellectual Jews:

(a) A group of highly educated Jews in Alexandria, including scholars like Aristobulus and the author of the Aristeas’ Letter, being marked by a strong and fairly exclusive focus on the Old Greek of the Pentateuch as Scripture, and by a philosophical reading of the Law (cf. Philo of Alexandria in the first century CE);<sup>8</sup>

(b) The group, or party, of Onias, member of the high-priestly family, who fled from Jerusalem to Egypt (Alexandria) in the first part of the second century BCE, and built at a later date a Jewish temple in the nome of Heliopolis (in Leontopolis).

Instead of regarding the Jewish community in Alexandria as the place of origin, Collins has argued that the main corpus of Sib Or III “was written in the circles associated with the priest Onias, founder of the temple of Leontopolis.”<sup>9</sup> In his view, the great interest in the temple of Jerusalem,

<sup>5</sup> BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 130–133.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. COLLINS, “The Third Sibyl Revisited,” 96–97.

<sup>7</sup> On this issue in general, see COOK and VAN DER KOOIJ, *Law, Prophets, and Wisdom*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. HENGEL, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture*, 76; for the phrase “philosophical reading”, see BARCLAY, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 150ff.

<sup>9</sup> COLLINS, “Sibylline Oracles,” 355; see also his *The Sibylline Oracles*, 51–52 (“from the land of Onias”).

which is so typical of Sib Or III, “is obviously highly compatible with a follower of the priest Onias”.<sup>10</sup>

Some scholars have expressed doubts about this proposal,<sup>11</sup> but although it lacks concrete evidence, it nevertheless makes good sense.<sup>12</sup> In this regard it is of note that the tradition about Onias as presented by Josephus contains evidence that Onias was interested in the meaning of ancient prophecies for the present, in particular as far the book of Isaiah is concerned.<sup>13</sup> This feature fits the idea that, whatever its *place* of origin in Egypt, Sib Or III originated from a literate *milieu* such as the Oniad group, because it seems unlikely that a work marked by oracles being significant for the time of the author(s) was written by Jews belonging to highly educated circles characterized by a fairly exclusive focus on the Law.

So, if indeed Sib Or III stems from the Oniad group, its milieu of origin would be the same as that of LXX Isaiah, because, as I have argued elsewhere, there are a number of data, both internal and external, which “strongly point to a relationship between the Oniad group in Egypt and the Old Greek of Isaiah”.<sup>14</sup> The aim of this essay is to see whether Sib Or III contains specific agreements with LXX Isaiah, textual or conceptual, which might strengthen the idea of a common background in Egypt.

## 2. Sib Or III and LXX Isaiah

Sib Or III being a composite text rather than a literary unity,<sup>15</sup> is a collection of oracles, most of them dating to the second century BCE (see above). The literary style of the book resembles the hexameters of Homer.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, the author was someone who belonged to the well-educated, literate people among the Jews of his days.

The book can be divided in the following sections: 97–161; 162–195; 196–294; 295–488; 489–829.<sup>17</sup> In this paper I will concentrate on the last section, lines 489–829 which roughly speaking has the following structure:

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<sup>10</sup> COLLINS, “The Sibylline Oracles,” 367; see also his *The Sibylline Oracles*, 52.

<sup>11</sup> For references, see NEUJAHR, *Predicting the Past*, 215 note 61.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. NEUJAHR, *Predicting the Past*, 215: “very little speaks against it”. One could argue that Sib Or III does not contain a reference to the temple of Onias, but this problem can be solved by dating most of Book III before the temple was built (COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 53).

<sup>13</sup> See VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Septuagint of Isaiah,” 82.

<sup>14</sup> VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Septuagint of Isaiah” (for the quotation, see p. 85).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of this issue, see COLLINS, “The Third Sibyl Revisited,” 83–87, and NEUJAHR, *Predicting the Past*, 210–218.

<sup>16</sup> BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 322. For a reference to Homer, see Sib Or III, 424–425.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. BUITENWERF, *Book III*; except l. 97 instead of l. 93.

- Introduction (489–491);
- Predictions against Phoenicia, Crete, Thrace, and Gog (492–509);
- Predictions against Greece (520–544);
- First admonition and prediction of God’s future intervention (545–623);
- Second admonition and prediction of God’s future intervention (624–731);
- Third admonition and prediction of God’s future intervention (732–761);
- Fourth admonition and prediction of God’s future intervention (762–808);
- Concluding part (809–829).

Several passages in this section are of interest for our subject matter<sup>18</sup> but given the constraints of this contribution, I limit myself to two passages, which are part of the ‘eschatological’ predictions of it: 608–610; 767–795.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.1. *Sib Or III 608–610*

(This will happen) when the young, seventh king of Egypt reigns over his country, counted from the reign of the Greeks, which the Macedonians, unspeakably great men, will found.

As noted above, it is a matter of dispute whether “the seventh king of Egypt” (Αιγύπτου βασιλεὺς [...] ἑβδόμος) should be understood as reference to a specific Ptolemaic king, or rather to be taken as symbolical, indicating a full period of time. Most scholars subscribe to the first option, whereas a few prefer the second one.<sup>20</sup> True the number seven is an ideal one, carrying the notion of fullness of time, or otherwise, but this does not exclude the possibility that at the same time it might refer to something specific.<sup>21</sup> The fact that the phrase “the seventh king of Egypt” is followed by the clause “counted from the reign of the Greeks” strongly suggests the latter option because of the note on “counting”. According to Collins, either Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–164 and 163–145 BCE) or Ptolemy VIII Euergetes is the seventh king “depending on whether or not one counts Alexander the Great as the first of the seven”.<sup>22</sup> However, the clause “counted from the reign of the Greeks, which the Macedonians [...] will found” explicitly indicates that Alexander the Great should be considered the first one. 1 Macc 6:2 offers a nice parallel in this regard: Ἀλέξανδρος [...] ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ Μακεδῶν, ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν πρῶτος ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλησι.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Sib Or III, 601–615, 652–656, 767–795. Other passages of interest are to be found in Sib Or III, 300–322.

<sup>19</sup> These passages are quoted in the English translation of BUITENWERF, *Book III*.

<sup>20</sup> BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 188–189, 265. See also GRUEN, *Heritage*, 272ff.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Collins in his discussion with Gruen and Buitenwerf on this issue (“The Third Sibyl Revisited,” 88–90).

<sup>22</sup> *The Sibylline Oracles*, 29; see also his “The Sibyl and the Potter,” 201.

<sup>23</sup> For the same way of counting, see Demetrius fr. 6 (“Ptolemaios the fourth” as reference to Ptolemy III). Compare also Dan 8:21.

Hence, it is safe to assume that the phrase “the seventh king of Egypt” alludes to Ptolemy VI Philometor.<sup>24</sup>

The king is also called “the young (νεός) one”. If taken in the sense of “young”, it too would fit Ptolemy VI firstly because he was quite young when he came to the throne,<sup>25</sup> and secondly because he was designated the “younger” (νεώτερος) Ptolemy over against the “elder” Ptolemy (see Polybius, *Histories*, xxxi 10. 1–10; 17–18).

The passage on “the seventh king of Egypt” has no parallel in LXX Isaiah, but the reference to Ptolemy VI in Sib Or III is most interesting considering the fact that the accounts about Onias in the works of Josephus (*War* and *Antiquities*) point to good relations between this king and Onias and his followers. It favours the idea of associating Sib Or III with the Oniad group.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2. Sib Or III, 767–795

(a) And then he will raise a kingdom forever among all people, he who once gave a holy law to the pious ones. To them all, he has promised to open the earth, the world, and the gates of the blessed. (He promised them) all sorts of joy, immortal understanding and eternal happiness. From every country, incense and gifts will be brought to the temple of the great God. There will be no other temple among the people, even among other generations, that will be heard of, save the one that God gave to trustful men to honour. (767–775)[...]

(b) For universal peace will come upon the land of the good. Prophets of the great God will take away the sword, for they will be judges and righteous kings of the mortals. There will also be righteous wealth among the people. For this will be the judgement and the reign of the great God. (780–784)

(c) Rejoice, maiden, be glad! For the One who created heaven and earth gave you eternal happiness. He will dwell in you. You will have immortal light. (785–787)

(d) Wolves and lambs will eat grass together in the mountains. Leopards will feed together with kids. Bears, roaming about for food, will share their habitat with calves. The carnivorous lion will eat straw from a manger like a cow. Children, still very young (παῖδες μάλα νήπιοι), will take them out on the lead. For he will tame the wild beasts on earth. Serpents and asps will sleep together with babies (σὺν βρέφουσιν) without harming them (κούκ ἀδικήσουσιν). For the hand of God will be upon them. (788–795)

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<sup>24</sup> The number “seven” relating to Egyptian/Ptolemaic kingship is also found in other sections of the book: Sib Or III, 192–193 (“until the seventh kingdom, over which an Egyptian king of Greek descent will rule”), and Sib Or III, 318 (“the seventh generation of kings”). The three passages are marked by variation, which raises the question of how to explain the differences.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Collins has advanced the intriguing theory that the phrase “king from the sun” in Sib Or III, 652 testifies to the expectation of an Egyptian (Ptolemaic) saviour king (*The Sibylline Oracles*, 41). However, his interpretation of that passage is disputed; see e.g. BARCLAY, *Jews*, 222–223; GRUEN, *Heritage*, 275, and BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 273.

This passage is characterized by the following motifs and themes: an everlasting kingdom among all people; gifts brought to the temple of the great God by the nations; universal peace; the rule of prophets of the great God, being also judges and righteous kings of all men; righteous wealth among all people; a call to rejoice addressed to the maiden (Jerusalem) because God will dwell in her and she will have immortal light; wolves and lambs will eat grass together. How does all this relate to LXX Isaiah?

As I shall argue, the four parts of this section under discussion contain elements, which are typical of LXX Isaiah.

To begin with part (d), “Wolves and lambs will eat grass together etc.”, this passage immediately reminds one of LXX Isa 11:6–9:

The wolf shall graze with the lamb, the leopard shall rest with the kid, the calf and the bull and the lion shall graze together, and a little child (παιδίον μικρόν) shall lead them. The ox and the bear shall graze together, their young shall be together; and together shall the lion and the ox eat husks. The young child (παιδίον νήπιον) shall put his hand over the hole of asps, and on the lair of the offspring of asps. And they will not hurt (καὶ οὐ μὴ κακοποιήσουσιν) or be able to destroy anyone on my holy mountain; because the whole earth has been filled to know the Lord like much water to cover seas.

In the preceding part (c) the term “maiden” (κόρη) is best understood as a reference to Jerusalem (compare παρθένος for Sion in LXX Isa 37:22).<sup>27</sup> She is exhorted to rejoice and to be glad because God who will “dwell in” her and she will have “immortal light”. LXX Isa 60:1–2 is of interest here:

Shine, shine, O Jerusalem, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you [...] the Lord will appear upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

God will “appear”, and “come” (cf. the “coming” of the Lord to Sion in LXX Isa 4:5 and 35:4), the result being that he will “dwell” in her. Related passages are LXX Isa 24:23 and 52:7 where it is said that God will reign as king in Sion (βασιλεύσει κύριος ἐν Σιων 24:23; cf. 52:7). Furthermore, the phrase “immortal light” (ἀθάνατον φῶς) has a close parallel in LXX Isa 60:19: the Lord will be to you (i.e., Sion/Jerusalem) an “everlasting light” (φῶς αἰώνιον), and the expression “eternal happiness” (εὐφροσύνη αἰώνιος) is also found in LXX Isaiah (35:10 and 61:7).

As to parts (a) and (b), the former is about a *kingdom* among all people, and refers to the *temple* to which the nations (every country) will bring incense and gifts, while the latter predicts “prophets” of God who as “judges” and “kings” of all men will “take away the sword”, the result being “universal peace”.

The temple of the Jews plays a most important role in Sib Or III,<sup>28</sup> and the same is true of LXX Isaiah. The idea that it will be the only one

<sup>27</sup> Cf. BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 291.

<sup>28</sup> See COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 44–47.

(“There will be no other temple among the people”), reminds one of passages such as LXX Isa 2:2 (“the house of God on the top of the mountains [...] and all the nations shall come to it”) and 56:7 (“my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations”). Furthermore, both texts share the idea that the nations will bring all kind of gifts to this temple. For “incense and gifts” (λίβανον καὶ δῶρα) in Sib Or III, 772 see LXX Isa 60:6 which speaks of “gold and incense” (χρυσίον καὶ λίβανον).

The “kingdom forever (βασιλῆιον εἰς αἰῶνας)” of our passage (III, 767), which is related in one way or another to the notion of God’s kingship, alludes to a Jewish kingdom on earth.<sup>29</sup> The idea expressed here is the same as attested in the book of Daniel: after the four kingdoms – Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece –, a Jewish kingdom will eventually arise, which in Dan 7:27 is called “an everlasting kingdom” (LXX Daniel: βασιλείαν αἰώνιον).<sup>30</sup>

The rulers of this kingdom are said to be “prophets of the great God” who as “judges” and “righteous kings” of all men “will take away the sword”. What to make of this? This picture of leadership is intriguing in particular as far the term “prophets” is concerned. According to Buitenwerf, the author of Sib Or III does not seem “to be interested in the precise political structure of this new Judaean kingdom” (291), but this remains to be seen.

As is clear from the context, the temple of Jerusalem will have a most important role to play in the coming kingdom. Hence the rulers referred to must be related to the temple. Given the fact that the rulers are presented in the plural, i.e., as a group of people, the type of leadership involved is not that of kingship in the sense of monarchy. Otherwise one would have expected a reference to a king in the singular as e.g. in III, 652. One could argue that “the Jewish people” will rule and judge other peoples,<sup>31</sup> but this does not explain the terminology (prophets, judges, and kings) employed in III, 781–782. Moreover, since strictly speaking the Jewish (Judean) people as a whole cannot be regarded rulers over others, one should rather think of leading men within the Jewish nation to act as rulers.

If neither the Jewish people as a whole, nor the figure of a king (monarchy) suits the rulership as depicted in our passage, the alternative left is the idea of priestly rule. This form of government would go with the fact that the temple plays a major role in the passage of Sib Or III under discussion. The concept of priestly rule I have in mind, concerns the leadership of a

<sup>29</sup> Cf. BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 288–289.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. COLLINS, “Sibylline Oracles,” 379. The term βασιλῆιον (cf. βασιλῆιον), ‘kingdom’, is also employed in the Old Greek (LXX) of Daniel (e.g. 7:22); it does not occur in Theod Daniel. For βασιλῆιον, see also Sib Or III, 159.

<sup>31</sup> NIKIPROWETZKY, *Sibylle*, 172–173; BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 291.

particular group of priests, namely, the body of the chief priests under the direction of the high priest.<sup>32</sup>

How to explain then the threefold terminology of Sib Or III, 781–782? To begin with the phrase “prophets of the great God”, one wonders which meaning this expression might convey. As Collins states, “[t]he idea that prophets will rule in a kingdom at the end-time is unusual”.<sup>33</sup> This is true if read from the perspective of Jewish literature of the time. However, as I would suggest the term “prophets” makes perfect sense if interpreted in the light of non-Jewish documents from Ptolemaic Egypt: In texts relating to Egyptian temples the term *προφήτης* is used to designate priests of the highest order.<sup>34</sup> Understood this way, Sib Or III, 781–782 alludes to leading priests, the chief priests of the Jerusalem temple.

This also sheds light on their role of being “judges” because these priests were not only responsible for the temple cult, but were also appointed “to be judges in all major disputes”.<sup>35</sup> Their role as judges is related to a major institution of the time: the High Court in Jerusalem. This was composed of three groups, – priests, Levites, and lay leaders of the people –, the first of which, i.e., the chief priests together with the High Priest, represented the highest authorities.<sup>36</sup>

The plural “kings” as reference to a body of rulers seems strange, but is not without parallel in Greek sources of the time. For example, Aristotle showing a great interest in constitutions and laws of several people, informs his readers that the constitution of Carthage was composed thus: the kings, the council of elders, and the popular assembly, the body of “kings” (leaders) making up the highest authority. As Jewish sources indicate, the constitution of the Jews in Jerusalem was quite similar as it was composed thus: the body of leading priests (chief priests under the supreme direction of the High Priest), the council of elders, and the “people”, i.e., the popular assembly of the Jews. So just as with the term “prophets” the designation “kings” for leading authorities would be understandable for an audience of

<sup>32</sup> For details, see VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Septuagint of the Pentateuch,” 42–52.

<sup>33</sup> “Sibylline Oracles,” 379.

<sup>34</sup> See OTTO, *Priester und Tempel*, 75–83; VAN DER HORST, *Chaeremon*, 61; DIELEMAN, *Priests, Tongues*, 205–207. So e.g. the Greek version of the Rosetta Stone, par. 6, and of the Decree of Canopus, par. 2 (for these documents, see WALLIS BUDGE, *The Rosetta Stone*). This usage of “prophet” is also attested in Jewish and related sources dating to the early Roman period: Didache 13.3 (“the prophets, for they are your chief priests”), and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (see VAN DER KOOIJ, “Josephus, Onkelos and Jonathan,” 262–265).

<sup>35</sup> Thus Hecataeus of Abdera; see STERN, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> VAN DER KOOIJ, “Scholars and Officials,” 201–202.



educated Greeks.<sup>37</sup> At the same time though the designation “kings” for leading priests is not without basis in Jewish concepts of the time. I have in mind here the phrase “a royal priesthood” (*βασιλειον ιεράτευμα*) in LXX Exod 19:6 which refers to the body of leading priests as having royal status.<sup>38</sup> Seen from this perspective, it makes perfect sense to designate the leading priests as “kings”.<sup>39</sup>

Turning to LXX Isaiah, I would like to draw the attention to two passages, which are of interest to our discussion of Sib Or III, 781–782. First of all, LXX Isa 9:6–7 (MT 9:5–6):

For a child was born to us [...], and his name is called ‘Messenger of great counsel’.  
For I will bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health to him.  
Great is his sovereignty, and his peace has no boundary,  
upon the throne of David and his kingdom.

I have argued elsewhere<sup>40</sup> that this passage reflects a type of leadership being composed of a high priest having royal status (“the messenger of good counsel” “on the throne of David”) as well as of chief priests (“the rulers”). The sovereignty is said to be “great”, and the “peace” involved “without boundary”, that is to say, universal (cf. “universal peace” in III, 780). It thus can be said that both texts, Sib Or and LXX Isaiah, share the same type of leadership.

The other passage I have in mind is LXX Isa 2:2–4, which from a conceptual point of view is also very interesting. According to Sib Or III, 781, the leading people involved (priests) “will take away the sword”. What kind of setting might be implied here? Contextually speaking they are supposed to do so in the temple of Jerusalem. The picture of leading priests (“prophets”) acting as “judges and righteous kings of the mortals” in the temple of Jerusalem makes perfect sense if understood in the light of LXX Isa 2:2–4. The latter passage has it that the nations will go to the temple in Jerusalem in order to be taught according to the law. “He shall judge between the nations”, the result being that “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,” i.e., there will be no sword any more. “He” is God, but it is reasonable to assume that the leading priests of the temple actually were the ones who would teach and judge. In doing so they “will take away the sword”.

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<sup>37</sup> In my view, Sib Or III was intended, primarily so, for a Greek audience. On the issue of audience, see e.g. COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 53–54; BUITENWERF, *Book III*, 370–376.

<sup>38</sup> See VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Septuagint of the Pentateuch,” 42–44.

<sup>39</sup> Compare also the phrase “kingdom of priesthood” in 1Q21, and the royal aspects of the priesthood in the Aramaic Levi document (see DJD XXII, 17).

<sup>40</sup> VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Old Greek of Isaiah 9:6–7,” 333–345.

### 3. Concluding remarks

In the above I have dealt with two passages from the last section of Sib Or III (489–829) – 608–610 and 767–795. Do they contain specific agreements with LXX Isaiah, which might favour the idea of a common milieu in Ptolemaic Egypt? I think they do.

The first passage is of great interest as it mirrors a particular interest in Ptolemy VI Philometor. As we know through Josephus this Ptolemaic king was the one who permitted Onias to build a temple in Egypt. The latter claimed that the building of this temple was in line with prophecies of Isaiah (esp. Isa 19:19), a claim that is also reflected in LXX Isaiah.<sup>41</sup>

The second passage turned out to be marked by a combination of expressions, motifs, and concepts, which are also typical of LXX Isaiah. The author obviously drew on motifs, expressions, and passages (esp. Isa 11:6–9) in the book of Isaiah. Of course, not all the data involved do point to a common milieu but there are three elements, which strengthen this idea: (a) the shared interest in the contemporary meaning of ancient oracles, (b) the fact that both texts share the concept of leadership which fits the priestly milieu of the Oniad party, and (c) the role of Jerusalem and the temple. In addition, it is of note that this whole passage attests to a type of eschatology, typified by Collins as “the peculiarly archaic eschatology of Sib. III”,<sup>42</sup> which is characteristic of the book of Isaiah (MT and LXX), but “which has no parallel elsewhere in Hellenistic Judaism”.<sup>43</sup>

In view of the agreements between Sib Or III, 767–795 and LXX Isaiah one may wonder whether the latter already existed when the author of the former was producing his text. One might think so but since LXX Isaiah is of a later date (ca 140 BCE) than the alleged date of the main corpus of Sib Or III this does not seem likely. More importantly, although both sources share specific ideas, any quotation of LXX Isaiah would hardly suit the Homeric style of Sib Or III. The agreements, both terminological and conceptual, rather seem to be due to a shared interest and understanding of the book of Isaiah.

In sum, there is some reason to believe that the two pieces of literature – LXX Isaiah and Sib Or III – originated in the same Jewish milieu, i.e., that of the Oniad party in Egypt. More research regarding the relationship between the two texts though is needed both as far as other passages in Sib Or III are concerned<sup>44</sup> as well as topics such as the concept of the “law” and the notion of “wealth”.

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<sup>41</sup> See VAN DER KOOIJ, “The Septuagint of Isaiah,” 83.

<sup>42</sup> COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 53.

<sup>43</sup> COLLINS, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 53.

<sup>44</sup> See note 18 above.

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