

LITERARY FUNCTION AND LITERARY HISTORY OF ISAIAH 34

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It is well known that Edom assumes a role in the prophetic literature that goes far beyond its possible role in history. Edom appears to be a type, a symbol for the nations in general. The prophets present Edom as the representative of the nations, acting over against Israel. This is especially clear in Isaiah 34. In a recent article in the *Biblische Notizen*, B. Gosse pointed to the particular position and function of the oracle against Edom in the book of Isaiah.¹

In the present article I shall examine Edom's function in Isaiah 34 as representative of the nations and Israel's opponent more closely. First, the literary function of this chapter will be described (section 1).² Next, its literary history and the question of its date will be considered (section 2). (In my view, synchronic and diachronic literary methods can very well complement each other, but must not be mixed up.)

1. LITERARY FUNCTION

1.1. Form

Already the oracle itself makes it clear that in Isaiah Edom serves as "the representative of the nations, acting over against Israel". In the first four verses the complete annihilation of all the nations is announced (to the nations! - v. 1). The next verses depict the extermination of one

¹ Gosse (1990b).

² Section 1 is largely a summary of some main results from the chapter on Isa. 34 in my dissertation (Dicou 1990, chapter 9, pp. 96-122). Of course, liberal use was made there of the findings of other authors, who, however, will not be named here.

nation in particular, Edom (vv. 5-7). After these verses, the name of Edom does not recur (RSV inserts it in v. 9: "the streams of Edom", with the note: "Heb *her streams*").

The oracle can be divided in two parts: vv. 1-8 and vv. 9-17. The theme of the first part is: YHWH slaughters the nations and Edom. The theme of the second: the stricken land turns into a desolation, only inhabited by desert animals and demons. I have argued elsewhere³ that the annihilation of Edom serves as an illustration of the annihilation of the nations as described in vv. 2-4. Note the thematic and idiomatic similarity between vv. 2-4 and 5-7 and the absence of Edom's name in the second part of the oracle. Edom is not only the representative "of the nations" but also of "the nations, acting over against Israel". See v. 8, which concludes the first part of the oracle and gives the reason for the slaughter: "For the LORD has a day of vengeance, / a year of recompense (קִלְקִל) for the cause of Zion".

This activity of YHWH recurs in the next chapter, which is a kind of mirror image of ch. 34, especially of its second part. The desert will come to life (35.1-2, 6-7). The weak and the fearful are told that God "will come with vengeance, / with the recompense (קִלְקִל) of God" (35.4), which in this chapter have a positive nature. "He will come and save you" (35.4); "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, / and come to Zion with singing" (35.10). The chapters 34 and 35 together fully develop the opposition Israel - (the representative of) the nations.

We will now discuss the position of ch. 34 in the context of the book of Isaiah.

1.2. Position in the book

The position of ch. 34 in the book of Isaiah is singular. The text is situated outside the collection oracles against the nations in chs. 13-23. Together with ch. 35, it is located at the conclusion of the first part of Isaiah (Proto-Isaiah). The second part of the book (chs. 40-66; Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah) begins in ch. 40. The two parts are connected by chs. 36-39: stories about the prophet Isaiah. Subject of these stories are the

³ Dicou (1988), 24; cf. (1990), 82.

threat of Assur, Israel's enemy in the first part of the book, and the forthcoming threat of Babylon, the land of Israel's exile in the second part of the book. Even before Israel's exile is announced (ch. 39), we hear a prophecy on the returning of the exiles (ch. 35). YHWH is mighty over all the nations (ch. 34) - including Assur and Babylon.

The first part of the book concludes as it begins: with a summons to listen.

34.1	1.2
Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it.	Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:

(A similar formula opens the book of Joel [1.2] and the book of Micha [1.2]. Compare in particular Isa. 34.2 and Micha 1.2).

Chapter 34 can also be looked upon as a new beginning. The message in the first part of the book is the condemnation of Israel (see already 1.3ff!). The chapters 34-35 give a picture of Israel's restoration - and its consequences for "the nations". Likewise as in 34.1, the nations are invited in 41.1 and 49.1 to hear the message of Israel's salvation.

1.3. "The nations" destroyed (34.2-4)

Why are the nations destroyed? Below, I will discuss the reason given in 34.8. Here we will confine ourselves to vv. 2-4. According to v. 2, YHWH "is enraged against all the nations, / and furious against all their host". In the first twelve chapters of the book, YHWH's rage is mainly directed against his own people, Israel, because of its sins. The subject of ch. 13 (the first chapter of the oracles against the nations, chs. 13-23) is how YHWH in his wrath (13.3, 5, 9, 13) will devastate the whole earth. After YHWH has destroyed his own people as well as the entire world (cf. also ch. 24; 26.20-21), he turns about and comes with rage (10.25; 30.27-30) against the former instrument of his rage. He had used Assur, Babylon,

the nations from afar, or the nations in general for the execution of his judgment.⁴ Chapter 51 illustrates this movement. Jerusalem has "drunk at the hand of the LORD/ the cup of his wrath" (v. 17; cf. vv. 18-21); now he takes the cup from Jerusalem (v. 22) to "put it into the hand of your tormentors" (that being Babylon, considering the context in Deutero-Isaiah) (v. 23).

In 29.7-8 we meet, just like in ch. 34, "all the nations". These nations threaten Jerusalem - when and because YHWH threatens it (29.1-4) - but YHWH promises they will be no more than a dream. Another important example of YHWH's "rage" against the nations in general is 63.1-6 (see vv. 3, 5, 6). YHWH "has trodden the wine press" and "trampled" the peoples. The context suggests that the trampling of "the peoples" in this text means the annihilation of Israel's foreign enemies (see in particular 59.9-15).⁵ Noteworthy is the place of the nations' annihilation: Edom! (v. 1).

So we have found two elements that explain the background of 34.2-4. Firstly, the rage against the nations in ch. 34 is in accordance with ch. 13 (and with chs. 13-23): YHWH is enraged against the whole earth and all its inhabitants (= all the nations, chs. 13-23) will experience his wrath. Secondly, besides Assur and Babel, "the nations" in general appear as the destroyers of Israel or the earth.

We can conclude that the conception in ch. 34 has two aspects: on the one hand YHWH is annihilating the nations in general, on the other hand, the enemy nations in particular are being destroyed; the latter are destroyed, although their hostile activities against Israel had originally been ordered by YHWH.

Regarding the closer context of ch. 34, we see that the second aspect - "the nations" as Israel's enemies - must be dominant in this chapter. We have already noticed the relation with chs. 36-39. In ch. 33 the annihilation of "the nations" in general (vv. 3.12) takes place within the framework of YHWH's dealing with the oppressor: the "destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed;/ you treacherous one, with whom none has

⁴ See for an overall picture: Dicou (1990), 116, 117-118.

⁵ Cf. Dicou (1990), 109-113; Gosse (1990a).

dealt treacherously" (v. 1; cf. vv. 18-19). Several idiomatic lines from ch. 33 to chs. 34-35 confirm that these chapters must be read together.

1.4. Edom as a type for the (enemy) nations (34.5-7)

The conclusion that most probably "the nations" in ch. 34 are to be interpreted as the nations that threaten(ed) Israel, brought us nearer to the "acting over against Israel" part of Edom's representative role. A comparison with the oracles against the nations (chs. 13-23) as well as with the "Isaiah Apocalypse" (chs. 24-27) throws more light on this role. Edom is a nation that is absent in the collection oracles against the nations in chs. 13-23. In a certain sense, chapter 34 could, considering vv. 5-7 (and possibly vv. 9-17), be described as an oracle against Edom. However, this chapter is definitely out of tune with the oracles in chs. 13-23. We have already observed the remarkable opening line of the prophecy. Most oracles in chs. 13-23 open with $\text{כְּבִי$, "The burden of ..." (KJV). Further differences are the complete lack of geographical names and details in ch. 34, whereas in chs. 13-23 most oracles make plentiful use of such details; the connection of the nation's doom with Israel's fate (34.8 and ch. 35) and with the fate of "earth" and "heaven" (34.2-4), both absent in most oracles against the nations.

Above, the word "most" is used on purpose. The oracles against Babylon in 13.1-14.23 show many similarities with ch. 34 and differ on the same issues as mentioned from the other oracles in chs. 13-23. In addition to those subjects, the two texts share the conception of the "day of YHWH" and the conception of the "wrath" of YHWH (discussed above). Within the oracles against the nations, both conceptions do not occur outside 13.1-14.23.

In the oracles against Babylon and "the oracle against Edom" we detect two highly parallel examples of prophecies against the earth or the nations in general, symbolized by one nation in particular. In ch. 13 only vv. 17-22 are about Babylon's doom; vv. 2-16 announce the destruction of "the earth" (vv. 5.9.13) and the punishment for "men" and "mankind" (v. 12). The position of the two texts is important: one opens a section "against the nations", the other concludes a large part of the book.

Like chs. 13 and 34, ch. 24 is a prophecy against the entire world. The inhabitants of the world have sinned (vv. 5-6); "The earth mourns and

witners" (v. 4; cf. 34.4). After having desolated the earth, YHWH will restore not only his own people, Israel, but all peoples of the world (25.6-9).

In chs. 34-35, two regions were in opposition, one illustrating YHWH's condemnation of the nations, the other illustrating the salvation of Israel. In chs. 24-27, two cities are in opposition, "the city of chaos" (24.10), symbolizing YHWH's adversary (24.10; 25.2-3, 12; 27.10) and Jerusalem/Mount Zion (24.23; 25.6, 7, 10; 26.1-2; 27.13). Like in chs. 13 and 34, the ruin of the world is illustrated with one example. It is interesting to see that also in chs. 24-27 this example, the unnamed city, (at one place) is associated with a name: "Moab" (25.10; cf. v. 12). In ch. 25 Moab plays the same role as Israel's other neighbour nation, Edom, in ch. 34.

1.5. The cause of Zion (34.8)

In 34.8, the preceding doom is explained as being "for the cause (J'"), "lawsuit") of Zion" (as discussed above). What is this "cause": what kind of lawsuit with "the nations" is Israel involved in?

The term "cause" (J'") leads us again to 51.17-23, the passage cited above. The promise of YHWH that he will pass on the cup that Israel has drunk to its oppressors (vv. 22-23) is introduced as follows: "Thus says your Lord, the LORD,/ your God who pleads the cause of his people: ..." (v. 22). Before, YHWH had "taken his place to contend" (J'") verb) with his own people (3.13), but that is now done with (57,16). Chapter 47, an oracle against Babylon, attests that YHWH has turned about: "I was angry with my people,/ I profaned my heritage;/ I gave them into your hand,/ you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy" (v. 6; cf. 51.23!), but now he condemns and punishes Babylon (cf. also 49.25-26). The "cause of Zion" that YHWH pleads in ch. 34 is his lawsuit against the nations that threatened and devastated Israel. The other phrases in 34.8 (which will not be discussed here) point to the same conclusion.⁴

⁴ Cf. Dicou (1990), 114f, a.o. on the parallelism with 63.4.

1.6. Turning into a desolation (34.9-17)

As mentioned, the image of the land turning into a desolation, worked out in 34.9-17, is reversed in the next chapter: the desert will blossom. In ch. 34 this image illustrates the end of "the nations", as represented by one nation, Edom. In ch. 35, the opposite image illustrates the salvation and the joy of "the ransomed of the LORD", returning to Zion. We find both images - with several parallels with chs. 34-35 - in ch. 32, there both regarding to the land of Israel. Israel turns into a desolation (vv. 9-14), but afterwards, the desolation comes to life again (vv. 15-20).⁷

We learn two things. Firstly, the desert that will blossom in ch. 35 is the desert that Israel's land has become. Secondly, the changes in the stricken land from ch. 34 reflect the devastation of Israel's land. "The nations" suffer the same fate as Israel.

As for Israel's fate (as illustrated by the discussed image), it turns out that chs. 32-35 constitute the thematic middle of the book. Before these chapters, the general message is that YHWH will turn Israel's land into a desolation because of the sins of its inhabitants. The image of the desert coming to life is very common after chs. 32-35, especially in Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40-55).

In the centre between Israel's devastation and Israel's restoration we find a chapter on the desolation of the land of "the nations", while this chapter, moreover, mirrors a chapter on Israel's restoration.

Looking for the background of particularly the land of *the nations* turning into a desolation, we find evidence that affirms the findings discussed above. In ch. 13 "the earth" turns into a desolation (v. 9; compare vv. 9-16 with 34.2-4!) and the largest part of the oracle against Babylon proper (see vv. 19-22) consists of desolation imagery. The list of desert animals and demons in 13.21-22 is a shorter version of the list in 34.11, 13-14 (cf. 14.23). The preceding verses (20-22) have a parallel in 34.9-10. In the oracles against the other nations the desolation imagery is uncommon (cf. only 15.6; 19.5ff).

⁷ Cf. also 33.9 and 33.16, 20-21!.

The parallels (and also the other congruences between chs. 13 and 34) induce us to see the small neighbour nation Edom and the large destroyer of the world Babylon as equivalent nations!

In chs. 24-27, which have been mentioned above for their parallelism with ch. 34, the imagery recurs: the "city" will be a desolation (24.10-12; 25.2; 27.10).

1.7. Conclusion

In Isaiah, the destruction of Edom follows the destruction of Israel and has the same pattern (language, imagery). In language and imagery it is the opposite of the oracles of restoration for Israel; Edom's destruction precedes Israel's restoration and is closely connected with it. Edom represents "the nations" and especially the nations that have threatened and destroyed Israel (summoned to that by YHWH). The end of these nations is the beginning of the new era in Israel's history.

2. LITERARY HISTORY

2.1. Isaiah 34 and Isaiah 13

The most important observation with respect to the literary history of Isa. 34 is that there is a very considerable similarity with ch. 13. Several themes, as observed, only occur in these two chapters (and not in the other oracles against the nations in chs. 13-23), and, moreover, parts of the two texts are highly parallel. Chapter 34 is not an oracle against a nation like the others, it has another function. Together with ch. 13 it constitutes the frame of a part of the book of Isaiah: the section "judgment on the nations", or, as R. Lack²⁰ describes it, the section "the day of YHWH" (see 13.6, 9; 34.8). Apart from the correspondences, the fact that both chapters call down the doom upon all inhabitants of the earth confirms that they must be interpreted as the frame of such a section. We

²⁰ Lack (1973), 60.

find the same pairing of the two nations Babylon and Edom as in Isa. 13 and 34 in Psalm 137.7-9⁷ and in Jer. 46-51.¹⁰

The diachronic consequence is that chs. 13 and 34 are to be regarded as an editorial product, written in order to frame a section of the book. Chapter 34 therefore must be looked upon as a rather late feature of the Isaianic corpus.

The composition date of chs. 13-34 as a collection (in one form or another) is not certain. However, we have another clue for the date of ch. 34. That is the connection this chapter has with ch. 13.

It is generally acknowledged that the writer of the list of animals inhabiting the deserted land in 34.11a, 13b-15 used the list in 13.21-22, while adding to it from other sources.¹¹ Therefore, it is quite probable that the other similarities can be likewise explained as caused by the use of ch. 13 by the author of ch. 34.¹²

Most scholars agree that the prophecy against Babylon in ch. 13 does not stem from the prophet Isaiah, but must have been written in the period of the breakdown of the neo-Babylonian empire. The time after Nebuchadnezzar can be thought of, when the collapse of the empire seemed near,¹³ or, alternatively, the time when that had just happened.¹⁴ It is also possible that the prophecy originated some time after the collapse, when

⁷ Cf. Steck (1985), 56.

¹⁰ These data show Wildberger's interpretation of Isa. 34 to be invalid. In his view, it is an actual oracle against Edom, which could equally well have been situated within chs. 13-23 - Wildberger (1982), 1331f, 1350f and (1984), 149, 178; cf. discussion in Dicou (1990), 120f.

¹¹ See e.g. Kellermann (1975), 189, 197; Vermeylen (1977), 440f.

¹² One author appears to dispute the dependence of 34.20-21 on 13.20-21: Lust (1989), 284; "Both scenes appear to be free elaborations of a common theme". This view, however, is unlikely to be correct. All animals and demons of 13.20-21 reappear in 34.13b-14a, with the exception of one: the hapax legomenon NK , probably an owl, for which other owls appear in 34.11. Four of the five other shared animals and demons are fairly rare in the Old Testament (resp. six, four, two, and one other occurrences). In 34.13b-14a the animals and demons of 13.20f constitute (with no other animals added) the middle part of a longer list (34.11a, 13b-15), of which the other animals are known and probably derived from other texts; cf. Vermeylen (1977), 441. Besides, the preceding verses 34.9-10 are parallel to the preceding verses in ch. 13 - see Vermeylen (1977), 440f; Dicou (1990), 103f.

¹³ So Wildberger (1978), 511 and (1984), 150f.

¹⁴ Begg (1989), 124f.

Babylon had been taken by Cyrus but the Babylonians nevertheless continued to be dangerous.¹⁵ Another possibility is that it was written later on during the Persian empire: the time after the destruction of Babylon by Xerxes in 482 BCE.¹⁶

In Isa. 13.17 we read: "Behold, I am stirring up the Medians against them, ...". Some authors hold the opinion that the mentioning of the Medians means that the prophecy should be dated in the time before 539 BCE: only then could this nation have been expected to bring down the Babylonian empire.¹⁷ Others dispute this point of view: e.g. Gosse¹⁸ asserts that while the oracle may contain historical elements, it is in fact an eschatological text; the "stirring up the Medians" need not be interpreted as referring to a historical event.¹⁹

Chapter 34 being dependent on ch. 13, we now have a terminus post quem date for this chapter, although that date cannot be named more specifically than "some time near the collapse of the Babylonian empire or the destruction of Babylon".²⁰ Gosse²¹ thinks of the time of Xerxes. J. Vermeylen, giving a later date for ch. 13, situates ch. 34 after the time of Nehemiah: fourth century BCE.²²

Both in ch. 13 and in ch. 34 a part of the oracle is devoted to the nations in general (13.6-16; 34.2-4). In the opinion of O.H. Steck, these parts are secondary.²³ As for ch. 34, he contends that vv. 5-7 contain exactly the same message as vv. 2-4, and that furthermore the destruction of the nations (vv. 2-4) is improbable after a summons for the nations to listen

¹⁵ So Gosse (1985), 205-214 and (1988), 247f, 271f: the time of Darius.

¹⁶ Vermeylen (1977), 286-292, 711f and (1989), 33).

¹⁷ See e.g. Wildberger (1978) 511 and (1984), 150f.

¹⁸ Gosse (1988), 167, 271.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.* pp. 157f.

²⁰ Cf. discussion and conclusion in Wildberger (1982), 1334-1341.

²¹ Gosse (1988), 269.

²² Vermeylen (1989), 49-51; cf. (1978), 735-743. Kellermann (1975), 198: "frühestens in der Mitte des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr."

²³ Steck (1985), 52-54.

(v. 1). He concludes is that ch. 34 was originally an actual oracle against the Edomite kingdom. Only at the end of the Persian empire the fate of "the nations" came to be connected with Edom's fate.²⁴

I cannot agree with Steck's view. I do not consider the similarity between vv. 2-4 and 5-7 to be evidence for vv. 2-4 to be an addition: in my view, the author of the text may well have consciously paired the fates of "the nations" and "Edom" by using the same vocabulary and images. As for Steck's other objection: if indeed the original combination of v. 1 and vv. 2-4 is improbable, will it not be equally improbable that an editor inserted these verses exactly here? The other way about, it is not at all clear why the nations at large should be summoned to listen when just one of them - moreover, a small nation - is being condemned. Furthermore, both the supposed original part of the oracle and the addition resemble ch. 13 (its supposed original part resp. addition).²⁵ Although this can be explained by presuming that 34.1, 5ff used 13.1-5, 17-22 and that one author added both 13.6-16 and 34.2-4,²⁶ a more simple explanation is that the writer of ch. 34 in its entirety was acquainted with ch. 13 as a whole. Another argument in favour of this view: correspondences exist between the supposed originally unconnected parts of the two oracles (cf. 13.3, 5/34.2: YHWH's rage; 13.8, 9/34.8: YHWH's "day" of judgment).

J. Lust partially follows Steck, but maintains that in ch. 34 *three* oracles have been united.²⁷ In his opinion, vv. 8-15 were originally an oracle against Zion.²⁸ This hypothesis, however, is based upon an uncommon and, moreover, rather unlikely interpretation of the "year of recompense for the cause of Zion" (34.8) as directed *against* Zion.²⁹ Reading 34.8 in the context of the book of Isaiah (cf. section 1.5), we must exclude such an interpretation. Besides, in view of the correspondence between vv. 2-3 (and 4) and vv. 5-7, I consider it highly unlikely that these parts once existed independently of each other, as Lust argues (p. 282f).

²⁴ Cf. scheme Steck (1985), 80.

²⁵ Cf. Vermeylen (1977), 440f; Dicou, 1990, 106-108.

²⁶ Cf. Steck (1989), 56f n. 36.

²⁷ Lust (1989), 279f.

²⁸ Ibid. pp. 279-282.

²⁹ Cf. Dicou (1990), 63 with n. 196.

Chapter 34 may have once been the ending of a "book of Isaiah" (Proto-Isaiah), as several authors suppose.³⁰ The fact that parts of ch. 34 correspond to ch. 1 confirms this surmise: the chapters could have served as a frame for the book.³¹ Therefore Vermeylen's assumption³² that ch. 34 was added after the formation of the entire book of Isaiah appears to be less likely. But other observations undermine this conclusion: vocabulary and other affinities with chs. 40-66, as discussed by M. Pope,³³ seem to confirm Vermeylen's view. The author of ch. 34 must have known more from the book than just chs. 1-33.

Steck voices his doubts about the significance of the evidence.³⁴ In my opinion, however, literary interdependence between chs. 34 and 40-66 has been positively proven by Pope. Steck does not in any way dispute this evidence in detail, but only remarks in general that "in most cases" the links with chs. 40-66 are also links with other prophetic texts. This unproven general remark does not convince me, but Steck³⁵ may be right in supposing that the author of ch. 34 might have known chs. 40-66 before they were connected to chs. 1-33.

Interesting in this context is the mentioning of a "book" in 34.16: "Seek and read from the book of the LORD:/ Not one of them shall be missing; ...", although it does not prove anything more than that a book of Isaianic prophecies already existed when this prophecy was written.³⁶

2.2. Isaiah 34 and 35

Although already within ch. 34 Edom is "acting over against Israel" (see v. 8, "a year of recompense for the cause of Zion"), the opposition is most powerfully illustrated by the pairing of this chapter with the next, an

³⁰ Steck (1985), 56f and Lust (1989), 284f; Kellermann (1975), 199f and others (see *ibid.* n. 88): together with ch. 35.

³¹ 34.1 cf. 1.2, 10; 34.4 cf. 1.30; 34.5f cf. 1.20; 34.6f cf. 1.11; 34.8 cf. 1.24; 34.9-10 cf. 1.7, 9; 34.16 cf. 1.20.

³² Vermeylen (1977)8, 735-743; cf. (1989), 34 n. 96.

³³ Pope (1952).

³⁴ Steck (1985), 50 n. 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Versus Steck (1985), 52 with n. 29; "schwerlich anderes als ein protojesajanisches Jesajabuch".

oracle on Israel's salvation (34.8//35.4). Particularly the opposition of the two "landscapes" shows that Edom and Israel are each other's counterparts.

The diachronic relation between the two chapters has always been a moot point. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that there are significant vocabulary and thematic correspondences between the two chapters. On the other hand, they differ very much with respect to their style. So, both the original unity of chs. 34 and 35 and their original independence have been maintained.

In view of this state of affairs, a solution as given by Steck seems to be quite plausible.³⁷ Steck demonstrates that the writer of ch. 35 used texts from Deutero-Isaiah as well as the last chapters of Proto-Isaiah (also chs. 32-33). He used language and themes from both books in order to build a bridge between them and to connect their themes.³⁸

2.3. Isaiah 34 and 63.1-6

The diachronic relation between Isa. 34 and Isa. 63.1-6 might tell us something more about the date of ch. 34 (cf. section 1.3 for a discussion of the synchronic connection between the two texts).

For some reasons, I tend to regard 63.1-6 as the oldest one of the two, the one that has been the source of inspiration for the other.³⁹

First, the image of YHWH victoriously arriving from Seir or Edom (63.1) is a well known Israelite tradition,⁴⁰ while the slaughter in Edom (34.5-7) is not. Therefore, the appearance of Edom in 63.1-6 is easier to explain than in ch. 34.⁴¹

Further, the most conspicuous element shared between ch. 34 and 63.1-6 is the "time" of the judgment on Edom/the nations: the "day" and "year" of YHWH's vengeance (34.8//63.4).

³⁷ Steck (1985).

³⁸ Cf. Davies (1989), 113f, 117, 119 on Steck's thesis.

³⁹ With a.o. Kellermann (1975), 159f.

⁴⁰ Kellermann (1975), 150f; Axelsson (1987), 48-55.

⁴¹ Cf. Dicou (1988), especially p. 25.

34.8

For the LORD has a day of
vengeance, / a year of recompense for
the cause of Zion.

63.4

For the day of vengeance was in my
heart, / and the year of my redeemed
has come.

Now, this element fits in very well with the context of Trito-Isaiah. See 59.18-20: "He put on garments of vengeance for clothing ... According to their deeds, so will he repay, / wrath to his adversaries, / requital to his enemies ... And he will come to Zion as Redeemer". See also 61.2f: "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, / and the day of vengeance of our God... to grant to those who mourn in Zion ...".

Furthermore important in this connection is that Trito-Isaiah is a concentric composition with 59.15bff and 63.1ff balancing each other and ch. 61 as its axis.⁴² Especially so because the word "vengeance" (נָקָם) in Trito-Isaiah only occurs in these texts.

Besides, the words used in 34.2 for the "anger" of YHWH against the nations in general (the same theme being central in 63.1-6) are characteristic of chs. 40-66 and almost absent in chs. 1-33.⁴³

Steck, however, denies the significance of this evidence. As for the "anger" element, he posits that 32.2-4 is a harmonizing addition to an earlier version of ch. 34. I discussed (and rejected) this view above. Further, he argues that the "day of vengeance" in the other relevant passages in Trito-Isaiah must be a later feature, inspired by 34.8. He pays special attention to 61.2. Because ch. 61 contains no negative elements which could be called "vengeance" (נָקָם), he argues that the word נָקָם is secondary; it must have replaced another word.⁴⁴

Steck's view on 61.2 would undermine the hypothesis of the background of 63.4 (and so 34.8) in Trito-Isaiah, but it requires an unattested change of the Massoretic text. The necessity of the change is - rightly, I believe - contested by W.A.M. Beuken.⁴⁵ The word "vengeance" is a not very accurate

⁴² Lack (1973), 125-134; cf. Kellermann (1975), 158; Dicou (1990), 111-113.

⁴³ נָקָם: 54.8; 60.10; verb (qal): 47.6; 54.9; 57.16, 17; 64.4, 8; נִמְנָם: 27.4; 42.25; 51.13[2x], 17, 20, 22; 59.18; 63.3, 5, 6; 66.15.

⁴⁴ See Steck (1986); cf. id. (1985), 51f and (1987), 53f.

⁴⁵ Beuken (1989), 421-424.

translation of D^7J , the meaning of which is not confined to just the destruction of enemies.

Therefore, I maintain my conclusion that the writer of ch. 34 used 63.1-6, and not the other way about. The date of 63.1-6, however, is uncertain; possibly it is later than (namely, a reaction to) 59.15ff and 61.2. It would lead us too far afield to discuss these questions.⁴⁶

2.4. Conclusion

We can draw the following conclusions:

- the connection between "the nations" and "Edom" in ch. 34 is to be considered as original and is probably inspired by 63.1-6;
- the writer of ch. 34 was acquainted with the other oracle against one nation as representative of all the others in ch. 13;
- the opposition Edom/the nations over against Israel, already present in ch. 34 (v. 8), was later worked out by the writer of ch. 35.

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