

ISAIAH 5:2-7 and 27:2-6
Let's Hear the Whole Song of Rejection and Restoration

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The two Chinese words transliterated as "six, four" may not mean anything to Westerners. To the Chinese, however, these two words represent the military crackdown on the Democratic Movement at Tiananmen Square on June the Fourth 1989. The so-called "Beijing massacre" does mean national shame and disgrace to many Chinese. To many Chinese Christians, the event also triggers the question of whether God has forsaken us, if not allowing judgment to fall upon us. June Fourth shocks our conscience; it causes Chinese Christians to wonder whether our sinfulness has terminated the faithfulness of God. This paper seeks not answer to the *why* and *how* of the event itself,¹ but the divine utterance many Chinese Christians need to deal with their emotional despair caused by the tragedy.

Despite the fact that answers to these questions are not explicitly and readily available, I turn to the Scripture for a timely and paradigmatic message. I believe that the Word of God does speak to the June Fourth event in the hermeneutical reading/hearing of the text in which readers are conscious of their horizon as well as the horizon of the text.

¹See 陳一諮著,《中國:十年改革與八九民運——北京六四屠殺的背後》(臺北:聯經出版事業公司,民國七十九年);大衛·艾克敏著,丁連財等譯,《未完成的民主運動——〈時代雜誌〉詮釋的六四事件》(台北:時報文化出版企業有限公司,民國七十九年)。

Isaiah 5:2-7 and 27:2-6 are such texts that speak not only to the original audience but also to modern Chinese Christians concerning divine providence and promise.²

Three Hermeneutical Hearings

To understand the meaning of the text, I shall first provide a translation of the pericopae from the Massoretic Text; then, observe Isaiah 5:2-7 and 27:2-6 (not 27:2-9)³ within the overall conceptualization of 5:1-27:13 so that the message of judgment and restoration will be held in tension. The overwhelming message in June Fourth is national affliction; what we need is national hope of restoration. But is the latter message found in Isaiah, or is that only the hope of the reader? The selected pericopae are explicit in providing an answer, and the following readings will argue that Isaiah 5 and 27 cannot be heard apart from one another.

I render the English translation of the pericopae as:

5:1 Now let me sing⁴ for my beloved [friend]
 a song of my beloved about his vineyard.
 There was a vineyard (of) my beloved

²See the initial response of some Hong Kong Christians to the event, Helena P.W. Wong edited, *Some Christian Reflections on the June 4 Massacre and the Democratic Movement*, Hong Kong Christian Institute Church and Society Series 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Christian Institute, 1990); the collection of essays mention events in the book of Jeremiah and Isaiah, but not Isa 5:1-7 and 27:2-6.

³All commentators agree that 27:2-6 is modeled on 5:1-7, but there is no consensus on whether this unit should end in verse 5 or 6 or 9 or 11. Vv.2-5 is strictly an unit with verse 6 as the important annotation of vv.2-5. Note the differences between vv.2-6 and vv.7-13: (a) the theme change from vineyard to slaying of peoples; (b) the change of perspective from future to past; (c) verse 7 begins with an interrogative indicating a new sub-unit; (d) ending at v.6 seems to correspond with the song we have in 5:1-7; (e) the positive subject matter of vv.2-6 and the negative one in vv.7-11. (Cf. D.G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 61 [1988], 85.) Therefore, I see this shortest intact unit is composed of vv.2-6 as far as the restored vineyard theme, the time perspective, and the grammatical-literary considerations are concerned.

⁴אֲשִׁירָה is an "emphatic statement of a fixed determination" of a cohortative strengthened by the particle. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (E. Kautzsch; R. A. E. Cowley ed.; 2nd. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §.108b, 319. So "I will sing" or "let me sing." G.R. Williams ("Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 [1985], 459-460) interprets as a "song in praise of".

- on a fertile hill.⁵
- 2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones,
he planted it (with) choice-vines.⁶
Then he built a watch-tower in the midst of it,
and also a winepress he cut out in it.
Then he waited for (it) to yield grapes
but it yielded wild-grapes.
- 3 Now inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
Judge, I pray you, between me
and my vineyard.
- 4 What (was there) more to do for my vineyard
than I did not do to it?⁷
Why did I long for (it) to yield grapes
but it yielded wild-grapes?⁸
- 5 And now let me tell you
what I am going to do with my vineyard:
I will take away its hedge and it will be destroyed;
break up its wall and it will be trampled.
- 6 So I will make it a wasteland;
it will not be pruned nor hoed,
it will grow briar and thorn.
And to the clouds I will command

⁵קֶרֶן means a "horn" in OT, but here it is used to describe a piece of land. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford U. P., 1907), 901-902 lists this word in Isa 5:1 under both meanings of "horn" and "hill." The Hebrew בֶּרֶךְ "is used poetically of things without life." (*GKC*, §.128v, 418)

⁶שֵׂרֵקִי is used in the OT for place names (Jud 16:4; Gen 36:36; 1 Chr 1:47, which apparently were proud of their vineyards. Cf. J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 24 (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 55.

⁷Several MSS have לו "to it" rather than בו "in it". LXX has αὐτῷ. Here, the interrogative governs two coordinate clauses; however, strictly speaking, it only affects the second. Cf. *GKC*, §.150m, 476.

⁸בְּאֵשֶׁת is obscure. LXX has ἀκάνθας "thorn, thistles"; Vg has *labruscas* "wild vines"; *BDB* relates it to בֹּאֵשׁ; "have a bad smell, stink"; *Gesenius' Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. F.P.W. Buhl (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1915) notes a Coptic word *bees* "unripe fruit" and conjectures with Vg "grapes with a bitter, sour taste"; G.R. Driver (*Studies on OT Prophecy* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950]), 53 note 6 suggests "spoiled by anthracnosa" following 'A σαπρίας "decayed, rotten." Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 55 and E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah 1-18* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 199, n.4.

from⁹ raining rain upon it.

- 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel,
and people of Judah are the garden of his delights;
he longed for justice but behold bloodshed;¹⁰
for righteousness but behold cry of distress.

...

27:2 In that day

a vineyard of wine, sing¹¹ of her.

- 3 I the LORD am watching over her;¹²
every moment I water her.

Lest she is harmed,
night and day I guard her.

- 4 I have no wrath;¹³
who would give me briar and thorn,¹⁴
in the battle¹⁵ I would march¹⁶ against her
I would burn her up¹⁷ together.

- 5 Or (rather)¹⁸ let him take hold of my protection,

⁹מִן is used here to negate the verb הַמְשִׁיר thus rendering as "not raining rain upon it." Cf. *GKC*, §.119y, 382.

¹⁰מִשְׁפָּח is an obscure word. LXX translates ἀνομία "lawlessness"; Vg has *iniquitas* "iniquity" while *BDB* (973) has "bloodshed."

¹¹Young (*Isaiah 19-39*, 237-8) follows Alexander's and Gray's arguments to translate this word ענה as "afflict" : "The thought is that through the prophet God commands those who are hostile to His people to afflict Jerusalem. They may do their worst, but because God is with His people, He will triumph." But this meaning seems to be inconsistent with context. *BDB* has "sing" (772-777.)

¹²לָהּ "to her".

¹³LXX τείχος and Syr swr' apparently read חֵקֶה "wall" instead of MT חֵקֶה "anger" or "wrath." MT is right. The whole verse is problematic.

¹⁴I am following MT's שָׁמִיר rather than שׁוֹמֵר 's. That is, of the three *BDB* (1036-39) meanings of שָׁמֵר : I(v) "to keep, guard"; II (n) "dregs"; III (n) "thorns", I use the third one. Cf. *GKC* (§.117x) for this construction.

¹⁵בַּמִּלְחָמָה "in the battle" is placed in the first line by MT; *BHS* finds it obscure and wants to eliminate it altogether or draw it into the second line. Note also these nouns have accusative meaning because of the לִי מִן־הַיְהוּדִים (*GKC*, §.151b, 477). Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 347; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39* (2nd edition. Tr. R. A. Wilson. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 225.

¹⁶אֶפְשָׁעָה in *BHS*. *GKC* (§.10h, .54, 130) suggests אֶפְשָׁעָה because of the influence of the guttural.

¹⁷אֶפְשָׁעָה is to be read אֶפְשָׁעָה as *BHS* and *GKC* (§.71, 193) suggest, because of the y being assimilated into the x.

¹⁸"Rather" or "or" is an emphatic adversative conjunction. *GKC* (§.162a, 500) seems to

let him make peace with me¹⁹

let him make peace with me.

6 In days to come Jacob shall take root,²⁰

Israel will bud and blossom,
and fill the whole world with fruit.²¹

Why does the present writer place Isaiah 27 alongside Isaiah 5? The answer is, the context and the conceptual literary matrix of the text demand such a reading. Concerning the context, Professor Roth rightly argues that the Isaiah scroll must be seen in its integrated "conceptual literary matrix": the LORD's deliverance of Jerusalem.²² This matrix moves through the scroll and holds the prologue (1:2-4:6), the main body of three parts (5:1-55:13), and the epilogue (56:1-66:24) together.²³ In the first part (5:1-27:13), the song of the vineyard is set in the context of the six reproaches (5:8-23) of Israel's failure to be faithful to the word of the Lord and to cultic and social righteousness. We note on the other hand 27:2-6 is set in the context of the Syria-Ephraimite attack on Judah,²⁴ with the sure and glorious promise on the future Israel.²⁵ What frames the first part (5:1-27:13) then is precisely this

suggest an introduction of another case unlike that mentioned before. Young (*Isaiah 19-39*, 241) translates "unless." Note the transition of *Hiphil jussive* to two imperfects in the circumstantial clauses. Here, repetition gives emphasis; the object placed first in the second clause gives extra emphasis on "peace."

¹⁹LXX ποιήσωμεν εἰρήνην αὐτῷ "let us make peace with him." But note MT has the speaker as Yahweh. My translation follows the MT.

²⁰שָׁרַשׁ plene form. Cf. *BDB*, 1057 which sees this as a denominative verb "deals with roots." Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 347. Jacob is mentioned here to indicate the whole nation of Israel is in the plan and promise of God's restoration.

²¹R.E. Clements (*Isaiah 1-39*, NCBC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 220) sees this verse 6 as a later interpolation. Kaiser (*Isaiah 1-12*, 224) sees vv.2-6 as a later addition which is "badly preserved." I take vv.2-6 as an authentic unit.

²²Roth, *Isaiah*, 4, 7, 17. For example, the scroll points out the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Aramean-Ephraimite coalition in 733 BCE (7:1-17), from the siege of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (36:1-37:38) [cf. also the deliverance of Hezekiah from illness (38:9-20)], from the Babylonian (cf. 13:2-14:23; 21:1-10).

²³Many commentators do not see the whole picture of the scroll as Roth does. At this point, I am following Roth's overall argument quite closely. Roth summarizes on page 9 in his commentary that Isa 1-66 is to a large extent in its longer and shorter text units molded by the pattern "From Threat and Castigation to Deliverance and Assurance."

²⁴At 734/733 BCE when Ahaz sought the help from Assyria instead of the Holy One of Israel. Whether chapters 5-27 were written then (as Clements, *Isaiah*, 57-58) or composed later (e.g. Roth's view) varies in opinions among scholars.

²⁵Roth also mentions at least three ways in this part the promised is couched: "in the celebration of King Hezekiah's birth (9:1-6), in the vision of King Josiah's exemplary loyalty to the Lord's law (11:1-6), and in an announcement of a future banquet on Mount Zion for all

highly poetic-prophetic song of the vineyard (which also appears in the prologue [1:2-9] and the epilogue [65:21-23]).

Thus, it is the thesis of this paper to show the coherence of the message and the dynamic of 5:1-7 and 27:2-6 at work as we take these pericopae in relation to one another as a whole.²⁶ In the first part (5:1-7) of the song, we see the vineyard is destroyed by the faithless keepers who lack loyalty in cultic and social life; in the counterpart (27:2-6), we see a restored vineyard which is "purified of idolatry and divinely protected, its vines deeply rooted and abundantly watered. At peace with its divine master and with itself, it reaches out and covers the world with its tendrils and its fruit."²⁷

To explicate this thesis, we shall *hear* the whole song; not just the first part, but also the counterpart. We shall attempt to hear the whole song in three *voices*,²⁸ i.e. three layers of interlocking meanings: from the vineyard owner, from the bridegroom, and from the LORD (though at times not as distinct as we would like them to be). More clearly, we shall hear the whole song in three rounds (perspectives), i.e. form-contextual, poetic-structural and literary-analytical so that the central message of the pericopae concerning God's enduring love for his people will not be missed by modern audiences.

First Round: Form (Genre)-Contextual Reading

This first round of listening to the song in terms of its form-contextual perspective will help us determine the number of *voices* (or layers of meaning) in 5:1-7. The song has a brief introduction (v.1a), a song proper in three stanzas (vv.1b-2, 3-4, 5-6) and an interpretation (v.7).²⁹ The poet-prophet-singer recalls the events (for his bridegroom-friend or

peoples (25:6-8)." (Roth, *Isaiah*, 39)

²⁶Here I do not argue that these two pericopae are originally found in a song. I am suggesting that as we look at these pericopae (which are intentionally placed where they are) as a whole, then we discover why they are placed where they are. Then we begin to appreciate the dynamics at work in relation to the first part (5:1-27:13) of the scroll.

²⁷Roth, *Isaiah*, 18.

²⁸I could have used the three voices of the poet-prophet, the vineyard owner and the LORD of the song as three perspectives. But I am using "voices" here as three layers of meaning the pericopae. In the paper if the word voice is used it refers to the person in the pericope, then it is used without quotation marks; if it is used to mean "layer of meaning", "voice" is used.

²⁹Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 59.

beloved³⁰, possibly at vintage festival³¹), which led up to this song in vv.1b-2. It contains an accusation against the bride. The vineyard's owner who is the bridegroom,³² then recites his response demanding a judgment in verses 3-4 before the Judaites and Jerusalemites. At verse 3 one hears that Yahweh's voice has emerged. More clearly in verses 5-6, Yahweh's voice, by means of a hermeneutical bridge, uses that vineyard-song to accuse and castigate the unfaithful Judah. In verses 5-6 the bridegroom's voice and Yahweh's voice (commanding the clouds³³) are intermingled with harsh announcements of rejection. It looks like the plaintiff here becomes the judge too. The poet-prophet concludes the song in verse 7 with a crescendo that reinforces the lesson of the whole song and that identifies the roles of the person in the song.³⁴ The song does not really end here, for after a long interval (5:8-27:1), it reappears in 27:2-6 when the LORD himself rounds it up with sure and sharp notes of restoration.

In terms of the literary context, we observe that the sixfold ׀וֹי "woe" (5:8-23) sets the song in its lament and judgement setting. A love-song with funereal mood? Yes, the first part of the song is a love story that ends in a funeral. Therefore, the whole song begins with a song of lamentation using a vineyard as a strong image. Then, the imagery at 27:12-13 finally ends the song with triumph, hope and celebration.

"Song" שִׁיר is the intentional style of the pericopae. It is used perhaps as a means of catching the attention of hearers or the audience. The function of this literary-dramatical device is noteworthy. The piece begins with a familiar, harmless, joyful, romantic note. The vineyard

³⁰There are at least three translations of this word ׀וֹי: bridegroom-friend, or bride or fertility deity. For more, see Holladay, *Isaiah*, 62; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 60; and Watts, *Isaiah*, 54-56.

³¹The context on which the song is sung is difficult to construct. Kaiser however argues that "the choice of the material for comparison and the presence of the inhabitants of Jerusalem assumed in v.3 suggests that the universally observed harvest and vintage festival was the actual occasion on which this prophecy was uttered (cf. Lev 23:34-43; Deut 16:13-15)." (*Isaiah 1-12*, 59). So also O. Eissfeldt (*The Old Testament: An Introduction* [New York: Harper, 1965], 88-89). However, A. Graffy ("Literary," *Biblica* 60 [1979], 409) disagrees with them.

³²Note that ׀וֹי in Song of Songs is used only by the young woman in speaking of the man she loves. But here I am not suggesting the vineyard as the bride because vv.3-6 seem to suggest it is the bride (it cannot be the bridegroom) who is barren and unfaithful.

³³Command of the clouds can only be done by a divine being. So I believe the poet is using metaphorical language here.

³⁴Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 53-54; Clements, *Isaiah*, 58; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 58 who also see the same sub-division of the song.

is a common image to all Isaianic contemporary audiences. The theme of the love song means also that it is entertaining. But, the song moves into incisive indictment of Israel.³⁵ In verse 3 the song shifts its thematic expectation.³⁶ That is, it turns into a "lawsuit." Verse 4a gives the judgment and rejection. Worse still, in verse 7 the accusation is pointedly given against Israel. So the effect of this song at this point is to disappoint and frustrate the listeners and the owner as much as the vineyard-Israel disappoints and frustrates the LORD. Another subtle point is that the audiences are asked to judge (v.3) and to accept the judgement and rejection of God (vv.5-7). No doubt, the woes (vv.8-25) that follow are most fitting.

Are these pericopae songs and/or poetry? Scholars have not considered them to belong to the song or poetry genre.³⁷ Clements, Kaiser, Yee, Williams, Sheppard, Fohrer speak of 5:1-7 as a "legal indictment parable" or "lawsuit."³⁸ Graffy calls it a "self-condemnation parable."³⁹ Roth calls it a "parable."⁴⁰ Willis identifies it as a "parable ... [with its] contents as a parabolic song of a disappointed husbandman."⁴¹ Targum, Roche, Korpel put this unit in the category

³⁵This is not a song of the poet's beloved but of the poet's friend concerning his friend's love affair. Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 55; and R.E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids, 1981), 177.

³⁶The shifting of positive theme into a negative theme is a poetic literary device that is commonly used by Isaiah (5:1-7), Jeremiah (2:2-3; 4:29-31; 6:1-5; 11:16; 12:13; 13:12-14, etc.) and Hosea (9:14). See Louis Dorn, "The Unexpected as a Speech Device: Shifts of Thematic Expectancy in Jeremiah," *The Bible Translator* 37 (1986), 216-22.

³⁷Exception of Watts who seems to use "requiem ... love-song" (*Isaiah*, 55).

³⁸Clements, *Isaiah*, 57-59; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 59; G.A. Yee, "A Form-Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Song and a Juridical Parable," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981), 37-8; G.R. Williams, "Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985), 462; Gerald T. Sheppard, "More on Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Juridical Parable," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982), 45-47; G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja*, Bd. I (Zürcher Bibelkommentäre 1966), 75; Michael de Roche ("Yahweh's *rib* Against Israel: A Reassessment of the So-Called 'Prophetic Lawsuit' in the Pre-exilic Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 [1983], 563-574) argues that *rib* should not be translated as "lawsuit" because most prophetic *rib* are simple complaints and not lawsuit involving third party.

³⁹Adrian Graffy, "The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," *Biblica* 60 (1979), 400-409; Cf. Willis, "The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 351-352.

⁴⁰Roth, *Isaiah*, 39.

⁴¹John T. Willis, "The Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 337-362. Willis takes the most natural interpretation of the vineyard as a piece of land, not as the bride in a love song.

of "allegory."⁴² I think we have missed the point by using western and modern self-defined terminology to characterize the Hebraic understanding of *mashal* (literally "to be like")⁴³ which can refer to allegory, parable or fable. *Mashal* is inclusive of all the above types of genre.⁴⁴ In other words, the ancient Hebrew writers did not have these literary-compositional categories (e.g. parable, fable, allegory, etc.) to limit them. Therefore, it is incorrect for modern scholars to import modern categories and to force the ancient text into those molds.⁴⁵ Since Isaiah 5:1-7 is a *mashal*, it has affinities (to certain extent) with all the above. In short the genre of 5:1-7 is a *mashal*, which in this instance is poetry-song.

Since it is poetry-song, it has at least three layers of meaning: one literal (referring to a vineyard at least up to v.6) and two metaphorical meanings.⁴⁶ Whether the relationship between the vineyard and the owner here is that of "friends" or "erotic lovers" or "uncle-nephew" may seem difficult to judge at first.⁴⁷ But, it is very likely the intended

⁴²J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 16; M.D.Roche, "Yahweh's," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983), 563; M.C.J. Korpel, "The Literary Genre of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7)," *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry*, ed. by Willen van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 74 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 155.

⁴³*Mashal* can refer to a variety of verbal figures, including proverbs (1 Sam 24:13; Ezek 18:2-3), riddles (Ps 78:2; Ezek 17:2-3), taunts (Isa 14:4; Ezek 16:44), wisdom sayings (Prov 10:1, 26), allegories (Ezek 17:2-3), oracles (Num 23:7; 24:3) and others like metaphors, simile. Cf. Otto Eißfeldt, *Der Maschal im Alten Testament*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft XXIV, Giefzen, 1913).

⁴⁴The Greek word παραβολή means "to place beside" or "compare"; it is an extended metaphor or simile. Modern scholars differentiate precisely the meaning of allegory from parable: (a) allegory differs from a parable in that each metaphorical element of the allegory represents a corresponding reality, whereas the parable conveys a single truth; (b) allegory reads into or finds in an ancient historical event, story or literary production, meanings that were not originally intended. Cf. F. Büchsel, "ἀλληγορέω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (1964), 260-261; J.D. Crossan, "The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971), 462; Willis, "Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 353-362; E. E. Nourse, "Parable (Introductory and Biblical)," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics IX* (ed. James Hastings; NY: Scribner's, 1922), 630; Hauck, "παραβολή," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 5 (1967), 746; and most importantly, J. D. Crossan ("Parables as Religious and Poetic Experience," *JR* 53 [1973], 334) who criticizes the distinction between allegory and parable on philosophical grounds.

⁴⁵For example, M.C.A. Korpel ("Literary," *Structural*, 119) immediately dismisses 5:1-7 as a parable because his definition of parable only allows one point of comparison.

⁴⁶Since it is poetry, I am emphasizing the metaphorical meaning for the following reasons: (a) Nobody is asked to judge the literal vineyard. (b) The OT sees the relationship between the people of Israel and the LORD as precisely that of marriage covenant. Cf. Hos 1:9-2:4; Ezek 16:8, 59-60; Mal 2:14, Jer 2:2.

⁴⁷This has to do with the translation of "vineyard." Williams says vineyard is "used as

audience would understand this song as a love song concerning a bridegroom (the singer's friend) and a bride (vineyard).⁴⁸ Because (a) the word דוד is not used as a divine name *Dod* in the OT and (b) the most natural meaning is that of friend or beloved one, we accept the one literal and the two metaphorical meanings and reject the notion that this song is a "satirical polemic against Palestinian Fertility Cults"⁴⁹

Second Round: Poetic-Structural Hearing

The literary style is so poetic that these pericopae can be heard as a song. The effect of the song is achieved most powerfully here with its poetic-rhetorical device in that the indictment is passed onto the accused not by the third party but by the audience themselves, because the accused and the judge are one and the same.⁵⁰

In terms of the aesthetic composition of this song, especially its first part, Delitzsch aptly describes: "The winged rhythm, the euphonic music, the sweet assonance of this appeal cannot be reproduced."⁵¹ In 5:1 alone, we have assonances of כָּרֶם - לְכַרְמוֹ; קָרְנָן - כָּרֶם; נָא לַיְדִידִי - כָּרֶם; בְּנֵי שָׂמֶן - קָרְנָן; we have repetitive parallelism of אֲשִׁירָה - שִׁירָה; we have alliterative parallelism of דְּוִי - לַיְדִידִי.⁵² Then in verse

metaphors for love making and the female sexual partner." ("Frustrated," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 [1985], 460 n. 7) B.Z. Luria ("What is the Vineyard in Isaiah's Parable," *Beth Mikra* 31 [1985/1986], 289-292) interprets the literal meaning of "vineyard" as "worked land".

⁴⁸Often "vineyard" refers to the bride (cf. Songs 2:15, 4:16f, 6:1f, 8:11f). Perhaps this song which uses the vineyard motif is similar to that in Song of Songs. Ugaritic, Egyptian and Akkadian literature also use the vineyard as a metaphor of sexual love. Cf. Williams, "Frustrated," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 460; Willis, "Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 345-6.

⁴⁹Willis gives various commentators who advocates this interpretation, and how they argue on the basis that: (a) דוד is a divine name on the Moabite Stone (*Mesha* Inscription); (b) Akkadian divine names of *Dadi-ilu*, *Abu-dadi*, *Dadiya* and OT proper names like *Dodai* (I Chr 27:4), *Dodo* (Jud 10:10:1; 2 Sam 23:9 [Qere], 24; I Chr 11:12, 26) are related to the Palestinian fertility deities; (c) Isa 5:1-7 is modeled after Songs 8:11-12 and Isaiah satirizes the potentially harlotrous Yahwism that here, they were practicing by using the divine name *Dod* for Yahweh; (d) the reference to "pruning" (ז מ ר) the vines in v.6 betrays fertility cult language. Cf. Willis, "Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 338-340; W.C. Graham, "Notes on the Interpretation of Isaiah 5:1-12," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 45 (1928/29), 167-168.

⁵⁰A. Gaffry makes the point forcefully, and calls it a "self-condemnation parable." Cf. A. Gaffry, "The Literary Genry of Isaiah 5:1-7," *Biblica* 60 (1979), 408.

⁵¹Franz J. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentaries on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. J. Martin (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 120.

⁵²For more on ancient Hebrew poetry, see Hans Kosmala, "Form and Structure in Ancient Hebrew Poetry, A New Approach," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964), 423-445 and *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1966), 152-180; S.A. Geller, *Parallelism in early Biblical Poetry* (Missoula, 1979); Y. Avishur,

2a [נִישְׁעוּהוּ וְיִשְׁקְלוּהוּ וְיִשְׁעוּהוּ שְׂרָק], Korpel remarks that "this verse is marked by repetitive parallelism creating the assonance and striking rhyme (3ms suffix)."⁵³ In verse 2b, we have the end rhyme and repetitive parallelism בּוֹ - בְּחוּכוֹ . In verse 3a, there is parallelism of אִישׁ יְהוּדָה - יוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם but without any rhythm. What happens at this point? Korpel rightly observes that the song "strikes a false note"⁵⁴ to indicate the seriousness of the appeal. That is, what begins as an entertaining piece has turned into an indictment that demands judgement. The indictment resumes the rhyme (בִּינִי - בְּרַמִּי) in 3b. Verse 4 shows again the assonance of the song focusing on the following words עֵשָׂה - וַיַּעַשׂ - לַעֲשׂוֹת - עָשִׂיתִי - לַעֲשׂוֹת (לַעֲשׂוֹת) and the rhyme בְּאֲשִׁים - בְּעֵבִים. The repetitive use of עֵשָׂה expects the listeners to know how to respond to Yahweh's covenantal love. In verse 5, Yahweh says what he is going to do (עֲשֵׂה) with the Israel-vineyard. Throughout verse 7 end-rhymes are still maintained.⁵⁵ Then in verse 7a, chiasmic parallelism is seen in כִּי כָרַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בַּיַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה נָטַע שְׁעִשְׂוֵעִיו

This chiasmic structure shows that (a) the house of Israel is not contrasted but equated with the people of Judah; (b) the vineyard is equated with the Lord's planting; (c) a is equated with b. Furthermore in 7b, what Israel is doing and what is expected of them is contrasted in the poetic pun of alliterative assonance

לְמִשְׁפַּט וְהִנֵּה מִשְׁפָּח לְצִדְקָה וְהִנֵּה צָעָקָה⁵⁶

Here, the first part of the song reaches its crescendo. But note, in the midst of this poetic beauty lies harsh judgment and great comfort. Comfort? Yes, because despite what Israel (Judah) has done, Israel is still *נָטַע שְׁעִשְׂוֵעִיו* "the garden of his [Yahweh's] delight". This high note of the song entices the listener to listen more. Sure enough, as we hear

Stylistic Studies on Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984); W.G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to its Techniques*, JSOTS 26 (Sheffield, 1984); A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, 1985).

⁵³Korpel, "Literary," *Structural*, 126.

⁵⁴Korpel, "Literary," *Structural*, 130.

⁵⁵E.g. the assonance and rhyme in verse 5: אַתְּ - אֲתַכֶּם - לְמַרְמָס - לְכַרְמִי - וְהִנֵּה - לְכַרְמִי in verse 6: עָלְיוֹ - עָלְהֶיחַל - עָלְיוֹ.

⁵⁶This verse is not only the finale of this song, but also the crescendo as the word play between English "justice" and *מִשְׁפָּח* "bloodshed," and *צִדְקָה* "righteousness" and *צָעָקָה* "cry of distress" so poetically grasp the attention of audience. The Hebrew poetic pun is beautiful; this English rendition tries to convey that characteristic: "For measures he looked, but lo massacres! For right, but riot." (Holladay, *Isaiah*, 64).

צָעָקָה is used elsewhere in the OT as the cry of those afflicted by political and social violence (cf. Gen 27:34; Exo 3:7,9; 11:6, Ps 9:13). Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 56.

its counterpart (27:2-6), it becomes clearer that this critical song speaks also about Yahweh's gift of hope, promise and deliverance to Israel.

Because this is poetry and not prose, we must move from the literal meaning to the metaphorical meanings of the song. In other words, we have to focus on the two layers of the metaphorical meaning: marriage on the human level (bridegroom-bride) and divine level (Yahweh-Israel).⁵⁷ We can infer then from 5:1-7, as Williams does, the first metaphorical meaning:

the removal of the hedge and/or wall and the destruction of the vineyard through the grazing and trampling of animals suggest that the poet will cease to help his wife. More specifically, he will cease to protect her from those who might take advantage of her. The chaos in the vineyard (v.6a) perhaps represents the problems which will engulf her. The curse of drought (v.6b; cf. 2 Sam. 1:21) may represent a curse of barrenness, the opposite of the wedding blessing of Gen. 24:60.⁵⁸

By the time we come to verse 7, the first layer of interpretation proves inadequate. The friend of the poet is not just his human friend, but more so his best friend -- Yahweh. On the second layer, קָרַן בְּדֹשָׁן can be a reference to the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey. The ploughing up of the ground and the clearing of stones (v.2a) perhaps represents the expulsion of the Cannanites (cf. Ps 80:9-10). The planting of the choice vines would recall the noble generation of Joshua (cf. Jer. 2:21, Deut 32:23, Ezek 19:10; Hos 10:1, 14:8). The removal of the wall (v.5) may imply that Judah will no longer enjoy divine protection. The devouring and trampling can refer to enemy invasions, and the infinitive לְבַעַר "to destroy" suggests similar effect.⁵⁹ The growth of the thorns and thistles, resulting from discontinued hoeing (v.6), suggests long-term desolation after military destruction.⁶⁰ יִזְמַר "he/she/it is/will be pruned

⁵⁷Here allegorical meanings are visible. But I am not making a clear cut distinction between parable and allegory (see notes 43-44). We cannot assign meaning to all details in an allegorical sense. I am more interested in reconstructing, if possible, how images in the pericope are received by the listeners or readers. And of course, imagination and creativity are often at work in the ancient listeners' mind as well as in mine.

⁵⁸Williams, "Frustrated," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985), 461-62; and so Korpel, "Literary," *Structural*, 125-127. Cf. also Willis, "Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 355 for his critique of this interpretation.

⁵⁹For more detailed uses of this word, see H. Ringgren, בער, *TWAT* 1 (1973), cols. 727-31, Eng. tr. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 2 (1977), 201-5.

⁶⁰Cf. Isaiah 1:7, 7:23-25, 32:12-14, 34:13. For a technical understanding of this problematic

or cultivated" means Judah will not be protected nor praised in song.⁶¹ Readers or listeners might immediately call to mind the covenant curses upon Israel for they are reminded of the military threat and drought.⁶² This interpretation is consistent with the counterpart of the song where we see clearly the LORD "redeems" and restores his "bride" Israel, even filling the whole world with Israel's "fruit."

Third Round: Literary-Analytical Hearing

The first two rounds give us the overall picture of the song. The third round will help us probe deeper into the text. The word רֵדָה is used almost exclusively in the OT as *friend* or *beloved* of God⁶³. In this pericope (5:1-7), it represents the owner of the vineyard, then Yahweh himself. "Vineyard" is a common metaphor for a beloved woman in the ancient Near East.⁶⁴ The relationship between Israel and the LORD is portrayed in this song as "marriage-love" relationship, as the ancient writer clarifies for the readers in verse 7. Here in verse 1, the poetic and creative play on the word בְּרֵן־שֶׁמֶן is used to describe בְּרֵן־כַּרְמֵן of Canaan's fertility and the perfumed oil used in sacred marriage.⁶⁵ The vineyard owner's preparation of the ground is thorough so he has high expectation of the best fruit. In other words, he wholeheartedly worked at his vineyard to ensure the best harvest of fruits -- justice and

phrase see Korpel, "Literary," *Structural*, 136-138.

⁶¹For various uses of this word, see C. Barth, זכר, *TWAT* 2 (1977), cols. 603-12, Eng. tr. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 4 (1980), 91-8.

⁶²Both military threat and drought are covenant curses found in the Mosaic Law: Lev 26:16-36; Deut 28:23-42.

⁶³Cf. Deut 33:12; Jer 11:15; Ps 60:5; 108:5; 127:2. Clements (*Isaiah*, 58) and Watts (*Isaiah*, 55) prefer the translation "friend" rather than "beloved." Vg translated "uncle" (*patruelis mei*) and was followed by Luther; Aquila's translation is πατραδέλφου μου. Cf. Young, *Isaiah* 1-18, 193; Willis, "Genre," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977), 337. Whether this word has sexual connotation (as in Jer 11:15; Ps 65:1) or not (as Deut 33:12; Ps 60:7, 127:2) is difficult to determine here. But the most natural meaning of רֵדָה here seems to be "beloved, darling, friend" as most biblical and Canticle passages tend to suggest. For more on these three meanings ("uncle", "friend", "beloved" with erotic sense) in the OT and other Near Eastern sources, see Sanmartin-Ascaso, רֵדָה, *TWAT* 2 (1974), 152-167 and Williams, ("Frustrated," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 [1985], 460, n. 6). I tend to see the relationship between the singer and the vineyard's owner as "intimate friends" and not lover.

⁶⁴Cf. Songs 1:6; 2:15; 8:11, 12. And for evidence in Sumerian, Egyptian and Ugaritic texts of this similar usage of "vineyard", see S.N. Karter, *The Sacred Marriage Rite* (London, 1969), 81, 100; J.B. White, *A Study of the Language of Love in the Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry* (Missoula, 1978), 176-177.

⁶⁵Korpel, "Literary," *Structural*, 125-26.

righteousness. First he chose the fertile site on a hillside.⁶⁶ Then he loosened the ground by ploughing it (רִעַזְקוֹהוּ).⁶⁷ He then cleared all stones, because the stones might possibly hinder the growth of the vine. He used the choicest vine (וַיִּטְעֵהוּ שֶׁרֶק); built a watch-tower (וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל),⁶⁸ and a wine-vat (יָקֵב הַצֵּב). The owner expected (יָקֵר) good grapes (עֲנָבִים). Instead, the fruit it produced was a terrible disappointment -- בְּאֲשִׁים.

In *verses 3-4* the listeners from Judah and Jerusalem are asked to judge (שִׁפְטוּהֶנָּה)⁶⁹ the case because the owner is utterly disappointed by his vineyard: וַיֵּעַ שְׂבֵאֲשִׁים. Of course, the guilty ones are the judge, as the verdict makes obvious in verse 7 (cf. 2 Sam 12:1-6. David the judge is the guilty one). There is nothing else the owner could have done for the vineyard. The same is true of the LORD with Israel in his electing, making, and protecting the choice vine (cf. Jer 2:1-2). But, the result is most disappointing. So in *verses 5-6* the owner is determined to dismantle the protective walls and abandon all care. The vineyard will be trampled, burnt, dried up to be overgrown with thorns and briars, becoming a wasteland (literally "end" or "desolation" בְּתָה). The owner wants the listeners to know, as the causative cohortative with the precative particle אֲדַעֲכֶם אִי־יֵדְעֶהנָּה אֲחִיכֶם shows clearly: "I pray you, let me cause you to know". Who is this owner? Watts says, "The owner is unmasked in this speech. He is Yahweh."⁷⁰ In case the reader or listener misses the point, it is made clear in *verse 7*. The chiasmic arrangement of *verse 7* shows that Yahweh is the owner; Israel is the vineyard; justice and righteousness are the best-grapes; bloodshed and cry of distress are the wild-grapes. Note that three times (vv. 2,4,7) קוּה is used to stress God's patience. But Israel, the favorite garden of Yahweh, has broken the covenantal love relationship.⁷¹

⁶⁶The hill is described literally as "son of fat (oil)" to show its fertility.

⁶⁷עוֹק "dig" or "plough" appears only here in OT. The LXX's rendering of φράγμεν περιέθηκα "put around it a fence" and the Vg *saepivit* "enclose" do not do justice to the meaning. Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 55; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 60.

⁶⁸A watch-tower (מִגְדָּל) is needed for the protection of the vineyard. The owner is so anxious for a good harvest that the final preparation is to build a winepress (יָקֵב).

⁶⁹שִׁפְטוּהֶנָּה is an imperative with the particle to express strengthened admonitions of "ironical challenge (often including a threat)" (*GKC*, §.110a, 324).

⁷⁰Watts, *Isaiah*, 56.

⁷¹Refer to "Second Round" for the artistic indictment of Yahweh by using word-play and poetic devices.

However, this is not the abrupt end of the song of accusation, nor is it the end of Israel. For in 5:7, despite the harsh indictment, Israel is still being portrayed as the "garden of [Yahweh's] delight". Whatever happens, Israel remains Yahweh's vineyard. Furthermore, in 27:2-6, we hear again the final note of the song which reverses the verdict given in the first half.

Between 5:2-7 and 27:2-6 is a history of 70 years when God decides the fate of Leviathan the Dragon (23:17, 27:1). Then in v.2 of chapter 27, the Song of the Vineyard reappears. It is now more than the counterpart of the previous song, but a new version of the old. The subject matter is the same, but the musical notes and mood are all re-written. In that day, God will be watching over his vineyard (i.e. Israel) because she will be a fruitful vineyard of wine or delight.⁷² In fact, Israel will be gathered from exile⁷³ to worship the LORD in Zion. Israel will be restored. Israel will be protected and cared for personally by the LORD. Israel will even be a worldwide community. Most precious about this part of the song is that it is sung by Yahweh throughout untainted by the voice of the poet-prophet's voice or bridegroom's voice. It is Yahweh's song for the people!

Contrasting⁷⁴ these two pericopae and seeing them as one song, we learn that 27:2-6 is a counterpart to 5:1-7. Both parts are poetry-song about Israel as God's fertile vineyard (בְּקֶרֶן בְּיַשְׁמֵן of 5:1 and כְּרֶם חֶמֶד of 27:2). Seeing both pericopae as a whole illustrates before us a thematic movement: from Yahweh's wrath in 5:5-6 to delight in 27:4; from briars and thorns over the vineyard in 5:6 to briars and thorns to be burned up in 27:4; from Yahweh's forbidding the cloud to rain on the vineyard in 5:6 to Yahweh's own watering the vineyard regularly in 27:3; from the unfaithful vineyard in 5:7 to the restored one in 27:5; from Yahweh's destroying the vineyard in 5:5,6 to Yahweh's personal guarding the vineyard night and day lest evil come upon it 27:3; from malevolent yield of wild grapes in 5:7 to the abundant yield throughout

⁷²"A vineyard of delight (wine?)" is clearly a counterpart of 5:1 "a vineyard on the fertile hill." MT (the Leningradensis text) and Φ has "vineyard of wine (חֶמֶד)". BHS, Tg and Syr read חֶמֶד "delight"; LXX has καλός. I prefer "delight." Cf. Watts, *Isaiah*, 346; Young, *Isaiah 19-39*, 237.

⁷³The context from 5:1-27:13 seems to tell us that in 5:1-7 the vineyard "Israel" is not in exile whereas in 27:2-6, Israel is. Cf. 27:12.

⁷⁴Cf. Johnson, *Chaos*, 86; Watts, *Isaiah*, 349; Jensen, *Isaiah*, 209; Holladay, *Isaiah*, 206 for more contrast.

the world in 27:6.

A Modern Hermeneutical Voice to My People

We need to hear the whole song in order to perceive the love of God for the chosen people of Israel as well as for the Chinese people. For too long the Old Testament has been in captivity in Jerusalem. Indeed what has Beijing to do with Jerusalem; what has Tienanmen Square to do with the Jewish Temple? Probably none, except for the embracing and enduring love of God for all people. Our assumptions regarding the chosenness of the people of God (Israel), have often led us to view the Old Testament as being for the Jewish people only. But is God partial in his salvation? Is God biased in his love for all people? Has God chosen the Jewish people only?

More pertinently, we who are Chinese are uncertain as to whether God continues to judge us or whether God's judgment should be seen in the light of His restoring love for us. Looking at the success of the Eastern European democracy movement in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, and the fall of Ceausescu in Romania, we are still puzzling over why we have to face the bloodstained reality of Tienanmen Square.

The June Fourth event has had a world-wide impact on all Chinese, not because it is a tragic event, but also because it is the pivotal event which serves as a strong reminder of all the tragic events in Chinese history. We have experienced civil strife throughout our rich cultural history marked by the invention of silk, writing, porcelain, and paper; we have also produced great philosophical and ethical work (e.g. Confucianism, Taoism). The Middle Kingdom at times was also named the Warring States or the Three Kingdoms. The Great Wall may have been able to keep out nomadic invasions and "barbarian" encroachments, but it cannot keep those millions of diaspora-Chinese from leaving the motherland to every corner of the world. As a self-proclaimed cultured nation, we have persecuted and killed many of the Nestorian, Franciscan, Jesuit and Protestant missionaries and rejected the message they brought

to us. As we watched the June Fourth event telecast live, many of us relived the tragic experience of the Opium Wars and the Unequal Treaties in 1839-1860, the Taiping Rebellion in 1860, the Sino-French War in 1883-1885, the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895, the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the May Fourth student antiforeign riots in 1919, the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the civil war, corruptions in 1946-1949, the Communist rule, and others.

These vineyard pericopae are especially appropriate to us because we have come to a point in present Chinese history where we need to reassess our identity and refine a vision for our future, just as the Israelites did in the juncture of their fate. Though the sonship, the glory, the covenants, and the giving of the Torah do not belong to us, through Christ we can have a similar relationship with God. Indeed, God is not the God of Jews alone, but God is the God of all.

We must not divide the two parts of the song and see them as unrelated. These vineyard pericopae serve as the opening and closure of the first main part of the Isaiah scroll. The scroll has the theme which progresses from "warning of castigation to promise of restoration" of Israel. From the comparison and contrast of these two texts (chaps 5 and 27), and the understanding of the three perspectives with three layers of meaning, we hear clearly the message of Yahweh, the Most High God. This message recalls and interprets our history (and Israel's too) in terms of our faithfulness to God. This message also consoles us, the weary, afflicted, threatened and hopeless community; we will be restored and even transformed into a world-wide community.⁷⁵ The final mood of the song is not doom, despair, desolation, and disappointment (cf. also Isa 62:2-4a) but promise, pleasantness, prosperity and God's pride. And that is the whole song we have heard, the whole song of the LORD for us the people of God.

As we find hope and identity by recalling our traditions and listening to God's message, may we find "the vision of the whole." (29:11) That vision will grant us new insight into our past, present, and even future, because history is determined by the coherent pattern of divine purpose which is explicit in the lyric of the whole song we have just heard.

⁷⁵Roth, *Isaiah*, 85-87. Observe how Roth relates 27:2-6 within the context of "apocalypse" transformation of Heaven and Earth (24:1-23), of Mount Zion (25:1-26:6) and of Israel (26:7-27:13).

ABSTRACT

Seeking to overcome the emotional despair of many Chinese Christians caused by the June Fourth tragedy at Tienanmen Square, the paper attempts to do three hermeneutical readings: that is, form-contextual, poetic-structural and literary-analytical hearings of Isaiah 5:2-7 and 27:2-6. The paper shows that these two pericopae form the whole song of judgment and restoration; it also argues that only in the vision and message of the whole, as conveyed in the song, can we find the coherent pattern of divine purpose in human history.

撮要

因為天安門發生了六四事件，許多華人基督徒都感到絕望，為了幫助他們克服這種情緒，這篇論文嘗試透過前文後理型格、詩體結構以及文學分析三個詮釋學角度，研讀以賽亞書五章二至七節及二十七章二至六節。作者認為上述兩段經文，組成了整首審判與復興之歌。文章更指出，正如詩歌所言，只有從整全的視域和信息中尋求，我們才能在人類歷史中看得見神計劃的連貫圖象。