

WHO EATS AND WHO IS EATEN IN ISA 25:6–8? THINKING ABOUT THE 'ESCHATOLOGICAL BANQUET' WITH A LOOK INTO THE LXX

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Abstract. This paper shows one example of why it is essential for biblical scholars of all fields to be familiar with the LXX and its exegesis. The study is conducted with regard to Isa 25:6–8, the so-called ‘eschatological banquet’ on Zion. The MT and LXX texts are compared and important differences between both versions are pointed out before the question is asked what the differences mean for an intertextually informed exegesis of the accounts of Jesus’ last supper in the Synoptic Gospels. The paper argues that reading Isa 25:6–8 in its LXX version as an intertext for the stories of the last supper changes the undertone set by the intertextual connection. It is not the motif of the celebratory banquet anymore that is in the foreground but instead the expectancy of triumph over the enemies and hope for consolation.

Keywords: last supper, eschatological banquet, kingdom of God, book of Isaiah, intertextuality.

1. Introductory Thoughts

It may seem adventurous to write about the LXX to honor a specialist in the field such as Erik Eynikel. Who better to notice any flaws or unanswered questions? And yet, what could be more fitting than taking up a research interest so close to Erik’s heart when honoring his many years of service to the guild and his contributions to biblical studies (and beyond)?

In this spirit of congratulation and appreciation my paper offers one small example of why LXX studies are not just a fascinating area of research in and of themselves but also of tremendous importance for New Testament studies (my own primary field of research).¹

¹ Regarding the impact of LXX studies for understanding the New Testament see also the foundational article by Tobias NICKLAS, “Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Neuem Testament: Dimensionen der Bedeutung der Septuaginta für die Exegese des Neuen Testaments,” *Septuagint Vocabulary: Pre-History, Usage, Reception*, ed. Eberhard BONS & Jan JOOSTEN, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 58 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2011), 189–206.

To accomplish this, I will briefly talk about intertextuality as one cornerstone of a linguistically informed and canonically mindful New Testament exegesis. This theoretical background will then be put to the test with regard to Isa 25:6–8, which will be discussed in its MT as well as its LXX version.² The paper will finally ask what consequences these observations have for reading the accounts of Jesus' last supper as depicted in the New Testament writings in light of Isa 25:6–8. Who eats and who is eaten in this eschatological celebratory banquet/violent judgment for the nations?

2. Texts Connected to Other Texts: Intertextuality

The various connections and ties that exist between different texts have been at the focus of the study of literature for many decades. Since the 1960s they have been discussed under the term *intertextuality* (coined by Julia Kristeva),³ which has gained more and more influence also beyond the field of literary theory ever since. In biblical studies, too, works that explicitly analyze and/or utilize intertextuality in the interpretation of scripture have become firmly settled within scholarly mainstream.⁴

² For a helpful overview of other textual traditions of Isa 25:6–8 see Thomas HIEKE, “‘Er verschlingt den Tod für immer’ (Jes 25,8a): Eine unerfüllte Verheißung im Alten und Neuen Testament,” *BZ* 50/1 (2006): 31–50.

³ See e.g., Oliver SCHEIDING, “Intertextualität,” in *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft: Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, ed. Astrid ERLI and Ansgar NÜNNING, *Media and Cultural Memory* 2 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 53–72, esp. 53, or the introduction to the English translation of Julia Kristeva's work by Leon Roudiez, who emphasized the influence of Kristeva's term and the concept of intertextuality itself already in 1980 (Leon ROUDIEZ, introduction to *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, by Julia KRISTEVA, trans. Thomas GORA, Alice JARDINE and Leon ROUDIEZ [New York: Columbia University Press, 1980], 1–20, here 15).

⁴ For just a few examples see Ulrike SALS, *Die Biographie der ‘Hure Babylon’: Studien zur Intertextualität der Babylon-Texte in der Bibel*, *FAT* II/6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Stefan ALKIER and Richard B. HAYS, eds., *NET 10, Die Bibel im Dialog der Schriften: Konzepte intertextueller Bibellektüre* (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2005); Sandra HUEBENTHAL, *Transformation und Aktualisierung: Zur Rezeption von Sach 9–14 im Neuen Testament*, *SBB* 57 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2006); Stefan ALKIER, Thomas HIEKE and Tobias NICKLAS, eds., *WUNT* 346, *Poetik und Intertextualität der Johannesapokalypse* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Michael SOMMER, *Der Tag der Plagen: Studien zur Verbindung der Rezeption von Ex 7–11 in den Posaunen- und Schalenvisionen der Johannesoffenbarung und der Tag des Herrn-Tradition*, *WUNT* II/387 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Loren STUCKENBRUCK and Gabriele BOCCACCINI, eds., *Early Judaism and its Literature* 44, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Alma BRODERSEN et al., eds., *FAT* II/114, *Intertextualität und die Entstehung des Psalters: Methodische Reflexionen – Theologiegeschichtliche Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); and very recently Benedikt J. COLLINET, *Whom to blame for Judah's doom? A Narratological and Intertextual Reading of 2 Kings 23:30–25:30*, *Osnabrücker Studien zur Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibel* 8 (Osnabrück: V&R unipress, 2023) and Judith KÖNIG, *Die basileia tou theou im Markusevangelium*.

While there are many – sometimes conflicting – concepts of intertextuality, its most basic assumption is shared by most biblical scholars: biblical texts are from the time of their composition inextricably connected to other texts known to author(s), audience, or both. Knowledge of these connections can be helpful for a variety of scholarly endeavours connected to the bible. Especially rewarding for a synchronous reading of biblical texts are intertextual connections insofar as they help uncover depths of meaning(s) within scripture that would otherwise be lost:⁵ “Intertextual reading of biblical texts shows that the texts are richer than any singular reading thereof.”⁶

A prominent example of such added interpretive value for reading NT texts in light of other biblical texts is the Markan Passion story where only the consideration of Ps 22 in its entirety – including its second half – offers readers a perspective for hope even in Jesus’ desperate (and intra-textually unanswered!) cry for God (cf. Mark 15:34).⁷ If the second half of Ps 22 in which the praying individual starts to praise the name of the Lord because of the Lord’s help (cf. Ps 22:23–32) is *not* considered while reading Mark 15:34, readers are forced to remain within the logic on the surface of the Markan text: that God is silent, that he does not answer Jesus’ cries.

Beyond this general characteristic of intertextual ties between (biblical) texts, two additional considerations are important for the following analyses:

There can always be connections of one text with *several* other texts in intertextual relationships and it is seldom productive to try to find ‘the one’ intertext.⁸ However, it is important to identify intertextual ties that are especially productive to exegetical analyses. As Stefan Alkier puts it: “the search for plausible relations with other texts saves intertextual readings from being arbitrary exercises of little importance.”⁹ Beyond the fact that within the textual ‘cosmos’ of the ‘bible’ other texts that are likewise regarded as holy scripture by author(s) and/or

Erzählstrategien und eine Hermeneutik der Körperlichkeit, WUNT II/607 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024).

⁵ See Michael SCHNEIDER, “Intertextualität,” *Wissenschaftlich Religionspädagogisches Lexikon im Internet* (2018), doi: 10.23768/wirelex.Intertextualitt.200262, <https://bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/200262/>.

⁶ Stefan ALKIER, “From Text to Intertext: Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Reading Matthew,” *HTS* 61 (2005): 1–18, doi: 10.4102/hts.v61i1/2.421, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/421>, here 17.

⁷ See Tobias NICKLAS, „Die Botschaft vom Reich Gottes: Erziehung und Bildungsangebot im Markusevangelium,“ *JBTh* 35 (2021): 115–134, here 129, and Tobias NICKLAS, „Die Gottverlassenheit des Gottessohns: Funktionen von Ps 22/21 LXX in frühchristlichen Auseinandersetzungen mit der Passion Jesu,“ in *Aneignung durch Transformation: Beiträge zur Analyse von Überlieferungsprozessen im frühen Christentum*, ed. Wilfried EISELE *et al.*, HBS 74 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2013), 395–415, esp. 396–398.

⁸ See SOMMER, *Tag der Plagen*, esp. 13 and ALKIER, „From Text to Intertext,“ 2.

⁹ ALKIER, „From Text to Intertext,“ 2.

readers are especially relevant while searching for plausible intertexts, it is possible to categorize the links between texts based on how explicitly one text references another. Sandra Huebenthal, for example, has offered a helpful differentiation in her *Habilitationsschrift*. She distinguishes a verbal *citation* in which phrases or whole verses are quoted verbatim (potentially while slightly rearranging the word order within the citation) from *allusions* and *echoes*.¹⁰ While echoes contain only faint traces or memories of the referenced intertext, allusions are more easily recognizable. But they, too, require a certain knowledge of the referenced intertext to make the connection.¹¹

From this theoretical background we can now move on to the discussion of our sample text: Isa 25:6–8, a pericope that is mentioned (among other texts) as one possible intertext for the narrative accounts of Jesus' last supper within the Synoptic Gospels¹² because it is the “parade example”¹³ of the ‘eschatological banquet’.

3. Eating and Drinking on Zion: Isa 25:6–8

3.1. Isa 25:6–8 in the Hebrew Bible

The three verses under special consideration here are part of a bigger section of the book(s) of Isaiah often called the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’ (Isa 24–27).¹⁴ After chapter 24 had first described the desolation of the earth after the divine judgement (cf. Isa 24:1–20) and the imprisonment of both the hosts of heaven and of the kings of the earth (cf. Isa 24:21–22), it closes with the promise that God will be king on Zion (cf. Isa 24:23). The first five verses of Isa 25 then directly address God in a

¹⁰ See HUEBENTHAL, *Transformation und Aktualisierung*, 51 (including discussion of older secondary literature). In the German original the terms are *Zitat*, *Anspielung* und *Echo*.

¹¹ See HUEBENTHAL, *Transformation und Aktualisierung*, 54 and 57–58.

¹² See e.g., Peter HÖFFKEN, *Das Buch Jesaja: Kapitel 1–39*, NSK.AT 18/1 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993), 184, Joseph BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19 (New York et al.: Doubleday, 2000), 358–359, Brant PITRE, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 447 and Peter-Ben SMIT, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament*, WUNT II/234 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), who states, however, “that the connection [...] is more phenomenological than literary” (23).

¹³ SMIT, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 23.

¹⁴ See e.g., HIEKE, “Er verschlingt den Tod,” 34, Roland KLEGER, “Die Struktur der Jesaja-Apokalypse und die Deutung von Jes 26,19,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 526–546, and Evangelia G. DAFNI, „Jesaja-Apokalypse,“ *Wissenschaftliches Bibellexikon im Internet* (2013), <https://bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/22404/>. – Christopher B. Hays has, however, recently offered a different background as crucial for Isa 24–27. He explains the images of destruction in the text without an apocalyptic focus (see Christopher B. HAYS, “Make Peace with Me: The Josianic Origins of Isaiah 24–27,” *Interpretation* 73/2 [2019]: 143–157, esp. 147–148).

“psalm of thanksgiving”¹⁵, praising him for the destruction of ‘the city’ (cf. Isa 25:2) and for providing shelter for the needy (cf. Isa 25:4).

Isa 25:6 then offers a change in the narrative voice: instead of addressing God directly, he and his deeds are now *spoken of*. Brevard Childs translates Isa 25:6–8 as follows:

“[6] On this mountain the Lord of hosts will prepare a rich feast for all peoples [לְכָל־הָעַמִּים], a banquet of choice wines, fat meat full of marrow, and of rich wines well strained. [7] And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is draped over the faces of the peoples, the covering spread over all the nations. [8] He will swallow up [בִּלְעַן] death [הַמָּוֶת] forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will end the reproach of his people in all the earth, for it is the Lord who has spoken.”¹⁶

The majority of OT/HB scholars today read this pericope as a celebratory banquet, in which God is not only king on Zion (cf. Isa 24:23) but also host for the nations (לְכָל־הָעַמִּים), who take part in an eschatological celebration with fat meat and wine. Having said that, the details are up for discussion, encouraged by the fact that the Hebrew text is open for quite contrary interpretations in several places due to both semantic and grammatical ambiguity in the non-vocalized Hebrew text.¹⁷

What is the ‘shroud’/‘covering’ that blankets the nations in v. 7? ¹⁸ Is the ‘shroud’/‘covering’ swallowed in v. 7, or are the nations swallowed, or death (as

¹⁵ Brevard S. CHILDS, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 183.

¹⁶ CHILDS, *Isaiah*, 181–182.

¹⁷ See HIEKE, „Er verschlingt den Tod,“ 35–36. A helpful overview is offered e.g., in Willem A. M. BEUKEN, *Jesaja 13–27*, HThKAT (Freiburg, Basel and Vienna: Herder, 2007), 342.

¹⁸ See CHILDS, *Isaiah*, 184–185, BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah*, 359, and Michael P. MAIER, “Festbankett oder Henkersmahl? Die zwei Gesichter von Jes 25:6–8,” *VT* 64 (2014): 445–464, here 454–456. – The two most often discussed options for interpreting the shroud are spiritual blindness that is removed from the nations and grief which is taken away and thus ended. While the former explanation follows a more spiritual reading of Isa 25:6–8, the latter draws upon the history of religion and the observation that covering one’s head and/or face is part of many mourning rituals in ANE contexts. Michael Maier and Sigurður Örn Steingrímsson offer a third and fourth option: Maier interprets the fabric covering the nations as a protective drape. To remove this protection means to remove “die Barrieren [...], die sie von dem Gott Israels trennen, insbesondere [...] das militärische Potential, das sie aufgebaut haben, um sich selbst zu schützen und andere anzugreifen“ (MAIER, „Festbankett oder Henkersmahl?“, 456; see also Michael P. MAIER, *Völkerwallfahrt im Jesajabuch*, BZAW 474 [Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2016], 232–233). Steingrímsson on the other hand suggests to read the fabric as the temple curtain which is removed to end the division between the place where God is revealed and humans (see Sigurður Ö. STEINGRÍMSSON, *Im Lichte des Herrn: Literaturwissenschaftliche Beobachtungen zur Redaktion von Jes 2,2–25,10a**, ATS 85 [St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 2008], 117). A similar idea can already be found in Irmtraud Fischer’s book *Tora für Israel*. Fischer points out the similarity between מַסְכָּה in Isa 25:7 and מַסַּךְ, the *terminus technicus* for the fabric covering the ark of the covenant and its tent. Fischer asks if this could indeed be a coincidence. If it is not, the removal of the fabric in Isa 25:7 might allude to a new

the phrase is usually understood)?¹⁹ And should בלע in v. 8 even be translated as referring to a future event?²⁰

However, as stated above, despite these questions most modern exegetes read Isa 25:6–8 as a feast of universal celebration in which the nations are served food and wine and join in the joy of God who reigns as king on Zion:²¹ “*all peoples* are invited to the banquet, the mantle of mourning will be removed from *all nations*, and the tears will be wiped from *every face*, unconditionally, with no restrictions or reservations.”²²

3.2. Celebratory Banquet turned Horror for the Nations? Isa 25:6–8 in the LXX

Being familiar with Isa 25:6–8 on the basis of the MT and its translations, readers of Isa 25:6–8 expecting a literal translation of the Hebrew text into Greek are in for a surprise. Comparing the text in both languages, substantial differences can easily be noted:

“[6] Lord Sabaoth will also act on this mountain toward all the nations [πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν]. They will drink happiness; they will drink wine. [7] They will anoint themselves with perfume [χρίσονται μύρον] on this mountain; deliver all these things to the nations, for this plan is toward all the nations [ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη]. [8] Having power, death swallowed [κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ισχύσας]; and again Lord God

relationship between the nations and Israel’s tora (see Irmtraud FISCHER, *Tora für Israel – Tora für die Völker: Das Konzept des Jesajabuches*, SBS 164 [Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995], 30).

¹⁹ See MAIER, “Festbankett oder Henkersmahl?,” 457. Hieke points out that the ambivalence regarding the question who swallows whom in the Hebrew version is caused by the possibility to read the unvocalized המות as nominative *or* accusative, and בלע in an active *or* passive voice. See HIEKE, „Er verschlingt den Tod,” 37.

²⁰ See e.g. the discussion in HIEKE, „Er verschlingt den Tod,” 35–37.

²¹ See in this manner e.g., CHILDS, *Isaiah*, 184–185, HÖFFKEN, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 182–183, BEUKEN, *Jesaja*, 347–351, J. J. M. ROBERTS, *First Isaiah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 322–323, HIEKE, “Er verschlingt den Tod,” esp. 34–35, Jaap DEKKER, “Salvation for Israel and the Nations: Disputing the Interpretation of Isaiah 25:6–8 as an Announcement of Doom,” *BBR* 31/2 (2021): 154–166, and PITRE, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 449–450. – Michael Maier has recently argued in a different direction. He reads Isa 25:6–8 also in the Hebrew version as a veiled prophecy of doom for the nations on Zion (see MAIER, “Festbankett oder Henkersmahl?,” esp. 461). For a critique of Maier’s argument see DEKKER, “Salvation for Israel”. – For an overview over the ancient reception history of Isa 25:6–8 (including the LXX and θ versions) the overview in HIEKE, “Er verschlingt den Tod,” 37–48 is very helpful.

²² BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah*, 359–360 (Italics in the original).

took away every tear from every face; he took away the reproach of the people from all the land, for the mouth of Lord has spoken”²³.

Several details are noteworthy: The fat/oil from v. 6 MT (commonly interpreted there as fried food) is oil for anointing in the LXX version (μύρον);²⁴ the reference to the blanket/fabric covering the nations found in v. 7 MT is completely missing in the LXX; also, in the LXX version the nations actually do drink the wine (an element of the story that is curiously missing from the MT)²⁵.

The most important change, however, concerns the matter of death in the LXX version.²⁶ Death is no longer the one who is swallowed (by God), but instead it seems to be quite strong, and it does the swallowing. As Ken Penner’s careful translation of the LXX text into English above shows, the object of the sentence, however, is missing. Whom or what death swallows remains unsaid.

The usual inference, however, is that the *nations* are the ones swallowed up by death. The *NETS*, for example, translates Isa 25:8a LXX as follows: “Death, having prevailed, swallowed *them* up”²⁷. The German translation of the LXX edited by Wolfgang Kraus and Martin Karrer similarly in v. 8 LXX adds a personal pronoun referring back to the nations (cf. Isa 25:7 LXX).²⁸ Such an addition is backed up by proximity of the word ‘nations’ in the sentence, which makes it the most likely candidate for the missing object in v. 8 LXX.²⁹ The decision to add the nations as an object of death’s swallowing is furthermore often made in connection with a negative interpretation of ἐπί in v. 7 LXX, indicating that God not only has a plan *for* the nations, but that it is a plan directed *against* the nations.³⁰ A third

²³ Translation of Isa 25:6–8 from Ken M. PENNER, *Isaiah*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 149. The Greek text follows the edition of Joseph Ziegler prepared for the Göttingen Septuagint series (*Isaias*, ed. Joseph ZIEGLER, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 14 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd ed. 1983]).

²⁴ Wilson de Angelo Cunha classifies this as a “free translation” (Wilson DE ANGELO CUNHA, *LXX Isaiah 24:1–26:6 as Interpretation and Translation: A Methodological Discussion*, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 62 [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014], 97).

²⁵ See BEUKEN, *Jesaja*, 348 and MAIER, *Völkerwallfahrt im Jesajabuch*, 229.

²⁶ See e.g., ANGELO CUNHA, *LXX Isaiah*, 100.

²⁷ *New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under that Title*, ed. International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), <https://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>.

²⁸ See Isa 25:8 in *Septuaginta Deutsch: Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. Wolfgang KRAUS and Martin KARRER (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2nd ed. 2010).

²⁹ See HIEKE, “Er verschlingt den Tod,” 37.

³⁰ See Isa 25:7 in the translation of *NETS* (italics: J. König) and ANGELO CUNHA, *LXX Isaiah*, 173–175. Penner opts for the neutral translation “toward” because while “the preposition [...] tends to indicate opposition rather than benefit [...], the favourable meaning is also attested” (PENNER, *Isaiah*, 493).

argument for inferring that the nations are swallowed up by death in v. 8 LXX is a possible negative connotation of drinking wine in relevant intertexts.³¹

If the nations are said to be swallowed by death, however, the whole outlook of the pericope changes compared to the MT version:

“The reference to the nation’s banquet (25:6b–d) must be read as temporary. The nations will, for a while, hold banquets on Mount Zion, even while the translator’s group is thirsting under their oppression (Isa 25:5). However, the Lord will deal with them by carrying out his βουλή (25:7) against them. [...] While death swallows the nations up, God, on the other hand (πάλιν), has started to take away every tear from every face.”³²

For a while the nations will plunder and feast on Zion – but only until they are swallowed up by death and God ultimately comforts those who cry.³³

4. Jesus’ Last Supper Read in Light of Isa 25:6–8

While both the MT and LXX version of Isa 25:6–8 certainly leave room for interpretation, they do differ in terms of their focus. Universal salvation and the participation of all nations in an eschatological celebratory banquet on the occasion of God reigning on Zion do not seem to lie at the heart of Isa 25:6–8.

What does this mean for a possible intertextual relationship of Isa 25:6–8 and the Synoptic Gospels’ accounts of Jesus’ last supper?

That Isa 25:6–8 might be helpful for interpreting the scene of Jesus’ last supper in the Synoptic Gospels has been suggested frequently during the last decades.³⁴ Even more references are made to the general trope of ‘eschatological

³¹ Angelo Cunha points to Obad 16 and Targ. Isa 25:6 (see ANGELO CUNHA, *LXX Isaiah*, 173–174). Examples from Isaiah itself could be added, e.g., Isa 5:8–14.22; 22:12–14; 28:7.

³² ANGELO CUNHA, *LXX Isaiah*, 175 (insertions in parentheses in the original).

³³ See HIEKE, “Er verschlingt den Tod,” 37–38 and the comments reg. Isa 25:6 LXX in *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament*, ed. Martin KARRER and Wolfgang KRAUS (vol. 2: *Psalmen bis Daniel*; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), here 2568.

³⁴ See e.g., HÖFFKEN, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 184, BLENKINSOPP, *Isaiah*, 358–359, PITRE, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 447, SMIT, *Fellowship and Food*, 23, Adela YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 657, Luzia SUTTER REHMANN, “Verräterische Konflikte. Abendmahlsgestaltungen im Gespräch mit neutestamentlichen Traditionen,” in *Eine gewöhnliche und harmlose Speise? Von den Entwicklungen frühchristlicher Abendmahlstraditionen*, ed. Judith HARTENSTEIN, Silke PETERSEN and Angela STANDHARTINGER (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 296–319, here 298, and Joachim GNILKA, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKK II/2 (vol. 2: *Mk 8,27–16,20*; Zurich, Einsiedeln and Cologne: Benziger Verlag, 1979), 246.

banquet' as background for the last-supper-narratives.³⁵ Usually, however, the big differences between Isa 25:6–8 MT and LXX are not mentioned. I think this is unfortunate, because being aware of the divergences between both versions could lead to a more thorough consideration of *how* Isa 25:6–8 works as an intertext for the accounts of Jesus' last supper.

To be precise: the intertextual relationship between the stories of the last supper in the Synoptic Gospels and Isa 25:6–8 remain in the area between allusion and echo. No verbal quotation of any of the known Greek versions of Isa 25:6–8 can be detected and also no verbatim translations of the Hebrew text into Greek. However, several motifs can be considered as connecting Isa 25:6–8 intertextually to Mark 14:17–25, Matt 26:20–29 and Luke 22:14–23. These motifs are relevant for both the MT version of Isa 25:6–8 and Isa 25:6–8 LXX as well as all three synoptic stories. (1) The motif of God reigning as king (cf. Isa 24:23 MT and LXX; Mark 14:25; Matt 26:29; Luke 22:16), (2) the motif of death (cf. Isa 25:8 MT and LXX; Mark 14:21; Matt 26:24 Luke 22:22), (3) and the motif of a meal/banquet (cf. Isa 25:6 MT and LXX; Mark 14:18; Matt 26:20–21; Luke 22:15).

If one regards these motifs as sufficient to constitute an intertextual relationship that makes Isa 25:6–8 echo within the stories of the last supper— even though the specific constellations of these motifs differ in the texts thus linked —, interesting questions follow close at hand.

These questions do not only touch historical aspects like that of literary dependency (Which version of the story did the authors of the Synoptic Gospels know? Did they have access to [unvocalized] Hebrew versions? To the LXX text? To Theodotion's version?).³⁶

A potential echo and the question, which version echoes in the minds of the gospels' readers is also highly interesting for the interpretation of the stories of the last supper themselves. The question which version of the story the gospels' readers were familiar with (if any) can even expand beyond the often-raised issue of who the recipients of God's comforting actions (i.e., the wiping away of tears and the ultimate defeat of death) are. The question can reach beyond the issue whether the nations are included in this positive vision or if the focus rests solely

³⁵ See e.g., Markus LAU, *Der gekreuzigte Triumphator: Eine motivkritische Studie zum Markusevangelium*, NTOA 114 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 393, Carolin ZIETHE, *Auf seinen Namen werden die Völker hoffen: Die mathäische Rezeption der Schriften Israels zur Begründung des universalen Heils*, BZBW 233 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 210, Armand PUIG I TÀRRECH, "Jesus and Jewish Apocalyptic," in *Dreams, Visions, Imaginations: Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Views of the World to Come*, ed. Jens SCHRÖTER, Tobias NICKLAS and Armand PUIG I TÀRRECH, BZBW 247 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 141–186, here 156, and Joel MARCUS, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27A (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 968.

³⁶ Hieke poses these questions with regard to 1 Kor 15:54–55, see HIEKE, „Er verschlingt den Tod,“ 44.

on Israel and its relationship to God. Surely the answer to this question has influenced the reception of Isa 25:6–8 in Jewish and Christian communities over the centuries.³⁷ But beyond the issue whether readers identify themselves with ‘Israel’ or with ‘the nations’, the LXX version has a stronger focus on the destruction of enemies that precedes the end of mourning and grief. Even within those three short verses there is a climax of seeming triumph and celebration of the enemies that ultimately ends in death for the oppressors and solace for the oppressed.

Having this specific narrative dynamic in the back of one’s mind when reading e.g., the Gospel of Mark’s account of Jesus’ last supper is quite interesting.³⁸ After all, the Gospel of Mark had alluded to a time of great distress only a few short verses before Mark 14:25 in which ‘drinking in a new way in the royal presence of God’ is spoken of: the Markan Jesus tells his disciples that he will be handed over into the realm of power of others (cf. Mark 14:18), he talks about his (broken) body and about his blood (cf. Mark 14:22.24) before he mentions drinking in a new way in the royal presence of God. This narrative sequence could be strengthened through an intertextual echoing of Isa 25:6–8. First, there will be the apparent triumph of the enemies. Then comes the solace in the presence of the lord. Maybe readers even take this sequence with them into the following chapters of the gospel of Mark. If they do, the story of God defeating the enemies on Zion from Isa 25:6–8 could be an additional hidden cause for hope within Mark’s dark passion account in which Jesus seems to be so completely at the mercy of those exercising violence. If Mark 14:25 and the following story of Jesus’ death in the gospel of Mark were indeed read with Isa 25:6–8 in mind, the young man’s message at the empty tomb (cf. Mark 16:6) might even be understood as a confirmation of Isaiah’s promise: “and again Lord God took away every tear from every face; he took away the reproach of the people from all the land, for the mouth of Lord has spoken.” (Isa 25:8b LXX)³⁹

5. Conclusion

Even this little example of reading the Synoptic Gospels’ stories of the last supper in light of Isa 25:6–8 LXX shows how much exegesis – especially exegesis of New Testament texts – can gain if more than one version of an Old Testament

³⁷ See MAIER, „Festbankett oder Henkersmahl,” esp. 462.

³⁸ I do not argue that Isa 25:6–8 LXX is the most important of intertexts for Mark 14:17–25. Exod 24 surely plays an important role and the intertextual relationship between Mark 14 and Exod 24 is clearer than it is with Isa 25:6–8 (LXX). (For a more detailed analysis see KÖNIG, *Die basileia tou theou im Markusevangelium*, esp. 315–322.) However, as stated above, intertextual analysis profits from looking into many possible intertextual relationships.

³⁹ English translation taken from PENNER, *Isaiah*, 149.

text is considered in an intertextually influenced interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁰ The LXX is so much more than ‘just’ a Greek version of the Hebrew bible’s stories. And being aware of this is of great value for biblical exegesis.

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⁴⁰ For such an overall approach see also Garrick V. ALLEN, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, SNTS.NS 168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

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