A key problem in the interpretation of the Parable of the Tenants in Mark 12:1-12 is the question of whether Isa 5:1-7 is integral to the fabric of the parable. The stakes are high. If, for example, the allusion to Isa 5:1-7 is fundamental to the construction of Mark’s parable, it is natural—virtually inevitable—to read the parable’s characters intertextually in relation to Isaiah’s vineyard: the owner is God, the vineyard is Israel or some part of it, and the fruit is some behaviour, response, or virtue that God expects of Israel. This will be the case whether the parable used a Hebrew text of Isaiah and derives from the historical Jesus, or whether it used the Septuagint and is an early Christian creation placed on Jesus’ lips. If on the other hand, the Isaian allusions are secondary, the result of later tradents importing biblical allusions, we are left with two questions: how to interpret the parable in the absence of an explicit allusion to Isaiah; and how to account for the connection of the parable with Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Synoptic stream of tradition.

The issue of the parable’s relationship to texts of the Tanak became a pressing one with the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas, whose version of the parable (saying 65) lacks any allusions to Isa 5:1-2, 5.1 What is more puzzling about the Gos. Thom. is that while the parable proper has no reference to Ps 118:22, the very next saying (66) alludes

1 Gos. Thom. 65. ‘He said: ‘A [usurer] owned a vineyard. He gave it to some farmers so that they would work it (and) he might receive its fruit from them. He sent his servant so that the farmers might give him the fruit of the vineyard. They seized his servant, beat him (and) almost killed him. The servant went (back) (and) told his master. His master said: ‘Perhaps <they> did not recognize <him>’. He sent another servant, (and) the farmers beat that other one as well. Then the master sent his son (and) said: ‘Perhaps they will show respect for my son’. (But) those farmers, since they knew that he was the heir of the vineyard, seized him (and) killed him. ‘Whoever has ears should hear’.”
to the Psalm: “Jesus says: ‘Show me the stone that the builders rejected. It is the cornerstone’.” What is different in the *Gos. Thom.* is that Ps 118:22 is presented as an entirely separate saying, having no grammatical or logical relationship to the previous saying. The existence of this alternate version of the parable naturally raises the questions of whether the Synoptic or the Thomasine version is the earlier one, and how the quotation of Ps 118:22 related to the original form of the parable.

But the relationship of texts of the Tanak to the Markan Parable of the Tenants in fact arose quite independently of any knowledge of the *Gos. Thom.* Even before the discovery of this gospel, critics had observed both the poor fit between the quotation of Ps 118:22-23 and the parable proper and that the details in Mark 12:1 that are drawn from Isaiah 5 are irrelevant to the plot of the parable. That the owner built a palisade and a tower, and dug a vine vat has no real bearing on the plot or the outcome of Mark’s story. Indeed, Luke omitted most of them, perhaps precisely because they are irrelevant.

A generation ago it was standard to observe that the Isaiah allusion in Mark 12:1 was Septuagintal and undoubtedly secondary. In the first editions of *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (1947; 1952; 1954, ET 1955) Jeremias already seems to have regarded the quotation of Isa 5:2 as secondary, since he suggested that Luke 20:10-12, which lacks most of the Isaiah elements, retained “the features of a simple story.”\(^2\) In the later editions of *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (\(^3\)1970, ET 1972), after Jeremias had taken the *Gospel of Thomas* into account, his conclusions were bolder: as it stands, the parable is a pure allegory. “The connection with Isa 5 must therefore be due to secondary editorial activity.”\(^3\) The main ground for this conclusion was Mark’s use of περίτεθηκεν φραγμόν, in agreement with the LXX’s φραγμόν περίτεθηκα, a feature that is completely lacking in the MT of Isa 5:1-2.

Recently the wind has shifted and more critics are inclined to see the Isaiah allusion as basic to the architecture to the parable. The fact of the Septuagintal nature of Mark 12:1 has been mitigated variously.

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\(^2\) J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955 (from *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, \(^4\)1954]) 56. Jeremias, however, later seems to imply that the Isaiah allusions are original (*Parables*, 124).

It is pointed out, for example, that the MT of Isa 5:5 mentions “its hedge ( )”; thus the element that the LXX shares with Mark is not completely unanticipated in the MT. And it could be imagined that pre-Markan traditions of the parable merely assimilated the “original” Isaian allusions to a Septuagintal form. Still others argue that in the early first century Isa 5:1-7 was already being construed in much the same way that Mark 12:1 does, that is, with reference to the Temple and its administration. This being so, there is no reason to think that the Isaianic allusions are not primary and basic.4

From the point of view of logic, the final point is a non sequitur. The fact that the parable, with its Isaian elements, would be intelligible to a first-century audience does not decide the issue of whether the Isaian elements are primary or secondary since in any event, they are intelligible at the Markan level. The discovery of a first-century allegorizing interpretation of Isa 5:1-7 only shows that any stipulative argument apropos of Mark 12 fails. For example, an argument that Mark 12:1-9 cannot originally have used Isaiah in an allegorizing fashion because allegorical interpretations of Isa 5 are “late” obviously runs aground on 4Q500.5 But these are not in fact the main grounds for thinking that the Isaian citations are secondary.

There are several bases for concluding that Isaiah is secondary to the parable. I have argued elsewhere on the basis of an examination of the legal and horticultural aspects of ancient viticulture that the scenario presented by Mark is economically and legally incoherent and that this incoherence is principally a function of the Isaian elements in Mark 12:1. By contrast, the version of the parable in the Gospel of Thomas is consistent with what we know of the operation and management of ancient vineyards.6

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6 J.S. Kloppenborg Verbin, “Isaiah 5:1-7, the Parable of the Tenants, and Vineyard
In this paper I wish to argue the case in detail that the Isaian elements in Mark 12:1, 9 are Septuagintal. The argument has primarily to do with the LXX’s reconceptualization of Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard and, in part, the influence that Egyptian viticultural practices have exerted on the LXX’s rendering. It is this reconceptualization and these influences, and not those of the MT, that are found in Mark. Hence, there is no reason to think that there are subterranean elements of a Hebrew or Aramaic citation lying beneath the Septuagintal surface. If one adopts the reasonable supposition that the historical Jesus spoke mainly Aramaic (and, conceivably, Hebrew) and if the parable is authentic, it is doubtful that the original parable alluded to Isaiah 5 in the manner that Mark’s version does. Of course, it is possible that the parable is nonauthentic, as many critics have argued, but pre-Markan. But in that case too, the Septuagintal allusions and citations can only have been attached as the parable circulated in Greek.

**Isaiah 5:1-7 in the MT and the LXX**

In both the MT and the LXX, Isaiah’s song of the vineyard has the form of a juridical parable. As in the case of Nathan’s parable of the ewe (2 Sam 12:1-12), the force of the juridical parable rests on its realism, a realism that provokes the hearers to render a judgment in the case cited, unaware that in so doing they condemn themselves. Isaiah’s song, as Yee has persuasively argued, is addressed to a Jerusalemite audience. Its story of a non-productive vineyard and its eventual destruction is a thinly disguised reference to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Tiglath-pileser in 734-32 B.C.E. As Yee notes, it is a reasonable supposition that the audience would immediately identify the vineyard with Israel, the Northern Kingdom, since at the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem, the vineyard had been a metaphor predominantly associated with Israel (Hos 9:10; 10:1; 14:8; Psalm 80). But Isaiah’s application of the parable in v. 7—“for the vineyard of YHWH is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are its delightful planting”

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extends the metaphor of God’s vineyard to the Southern Kingdom and thus threatens Judah with the same judgment that they had just seen visited upon their northern neighbours.

Isaiah’s song exists in two significantly different forms, one in the Hebrew Bible (MT), and another in the Septuagint (LXX). Since there are important differences between the two, it is possible to determine whether Mark’s reference to the text is to the MT or the LXX. (Significant departures of the LXX from the MT are underscored).

Isaiah 5:1-7 (MT)

1 Ἄίσω δὴ τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ
ἀσμα τοῦ ἁγαπητοῦ τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου.
ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ
ἐν κέρατι ἐν τόπῳ πίνιν.

2 καὶ φρεγγίον περιέβηκα
καὶ ἕγαράκοσσα
καὶ ἐφύτευσα ἀμπελὼν σωρῆς
καὶ ἕκοδύμησα πύργον ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῦ
καὶ προλήψιον ἄρεξῃ ἐν αὐτῷ.
καὶ ἐμείνα τοῦ ποιῆσαι σταφυλῆν,
ἐποίησαν δὲ ἀκόνθας.

3 καὶ νῦν, ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ιουδα
καὶ οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες
ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ,
κρίνατε ἐν ἐμόι καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀμπελῶνός μου.

4 τί ποιήσω ἐτί τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου
καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησα αὐτῷ;
διότι ἐμείνα τοῦ ποιῆσαι σταφυλῆν,
ἐποίησαν δὲ ἀκόνθας.

5 νῦν δὲ ἀναγελῶ ὑμῖν
τί ποιήσω τῷ ἀμπελῶνι μου;
ἀφελῶ τὸν φρεγγίον αὐτοῦ
καὶ ἔσται εἰς διαρπαγήν,
καὶ καθελῶ τὸν τοίχον αὐτοῦ
καὶ ἔσται εἰς καταπάτημα,

6 καὶ ἀνήσω τὸν ἀμπελῶνα μου
καὶ οὐ μὴ τιμῆθη οὐδὲ μὴ σκαφῆ,
καὶ ἀναβίσθηται εἰς αὐτόν ὡς εἰς γέρσσον ἀκανθᾶ.
καὶ ταῖς νεφέλαις ἐντελοῦμαι τοῦ μὴ βρέξαι
εἰς αὐτὸν ψεῦτον.

7 ὁ γὰρ ἀμπελῶν κυρίου σαβασθ ὁ ὁ Ἰσραήλ ἔστιν
καὶ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ιουδα νεόφυτον ἡγαπημένον;
ἐμείνα τοῦ ποιῆσαι κρίσιν,
ἐποίησαν δὲ ἄνομίαν
καὶ οὐ δικαιοσύνην ἄλλα κραυγήν.
The Hebrew Version (MT)

General Structure

Isaiah’s song of the vineyard in the MT consists of three stanzas, vv. 1-2, vv. 3-6, and v. 7, with constantly shifting grammatical perspectives. The first stanza is particularly complex. It begins in the first person as Isaiah’s declaration of his intention to sing to or for his friend: “I will sing to my friend ( ).” The song itself, however, seems to be his friend’s song, for it is introduced as “my beloved’s song for his vineyard” ( ). One might therefore expect that what follows would be framed as a first person speech of the friend to his vineyard. Instead, v. 1b offers a third person narrative: “my friend had a vineyard” and this perspective continues throughout the rest of vv. 1b-2, which describes the friend’s preparation and planting of the vineyard and his disappointment at its unexpected unproductivity.

In the second stanza (vv. 3-6) the fictive vineyard owner, Isaiah’s friend, steps out of his story and, as it were, addresses the inhabitant of Jerusalem and the “man” of Judah directly:

And now, you who dwell in Jerusalem and you man of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more can I do for my vineyard? And what did I not do for it?

After restating his case in the briefest terms—“I expected it to produce grapes, but it produced stinking grapes”—, the speaker then describes his remedy: he will abandon the vineyard, destroy its hedge and walls, and cease to tend it, with the result that it will be overrun by thorns and become a wasteland. Isaiah himself returns in the final stanza (v. 7) and offers in third person perspective the interpretation of the key elements of the parable: the vineyard is Israel and Judah; the expected produce were justice (mišpāh) and righteousness (sedāqāh); and the actual results were bloodshed (mišpāh) and an outcry (seṭāqāh).

Isa 5:1-7 thus comprises three levels of discourse: Isaiah’s introduction (v. 1a) and interpretation (v. 7); a story of the vineyard owner’s efforts and expectations (vv. 1b-2); and embedded in this, the owner’s direct address to Israel and Judah (vv. 3-6). Even before Isaiah’s own unequivocal interpretation of the parable’s key elements in v. 7, the hearer would guess that Isaiah’s “friend” was in fact YHWH. The description of the destruction of the vineyard in vv. 5-6—the removal of its hedge and wall, apparently metaphors of God’s protection, and
its being overrun by thorns—would in the context of late eighth-century Judah evoke the destruction of Shechem and the Northern Kingdom. Isaiah’s interpretation (v. 7) confirms this identification, but extends the application of the parable to Judah.

Notes

5:1: (on a fertile horn): The MT describes the location of the vineyard as , “on a fertile horn.” The precise meaning of qeren () is unknown, since it is used only here in the Tanak in relation to a topographical formation. Budde suggests “spur” (of a mountain), which appears to suit the context well, since vineyards were normally located on terraced hillsides.10

5:2: (and he broke up the clods and cleared the stones): The MT uses the two verbs יָאֶזַּז qēḇū ( ) and וָאָשֶׁאֲקָל lēḇū ( ), probably best rendered respectively “to break up”11 and “to clear of stones.” As such, the two verbs describe the initial labour required to transform a plot of land from a previously uncultivated state into a state suitable for the cultivation of vines.

5:2: : After the plot has been prepared it is planted with soreq, probably a red varietal grape.13

9 K. Budde, “Zu Jesaja 1-5,” ZAW 50 (1932) 38-72, 55; KB 1068: “Ausläufer eines Berges.”
12 O. Borowski (Agriculture in Iron Age Israel [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987] 104), citing Puchačevsky (“Explanation of Biblical Words Relating to Agriculture,” Sefer hashana shel Eretz Israel [Tel Aviv: Agudat Hasofrim Haʾivriyim and Dvir, 1924] 43-45), suggests that the most logical meaning is “clear of brambles,” basing this on the Arabic name ‘ajjaq for the mastic or lentisk (pistacia lentiscus), a common bush in the Judean mountains.
13 KB 725: Piel: (1) “mit Steinen (be)worfen” 2 Sam 16:13; 16:6; (2) (a) “von Steinen säubern” Isa 5:2; (b) “Steine wegräumen.”
14 This grape is mentioned also in Gen 49:11 and Jer 2:21. That the soreq is red in colour is suggested by Zech 1:8, where the word appears in parallel with אדום (red), and by Gen 49:11, where it stands in parallel to the phrase bedam-ʾanābib, “blood of grapes.” According to Judg 16:4 Delilah came from the Nahal Soreq (LXX: Αλεξωρη), presumably a grape-growing valley. For a discussion of other grape varieties, see G.H. Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina (Deutsches evangelisches Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem, Schriften 3/1-2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1928-42) 4:320; Borowski, Agriculture in Iron Age Israel, 104.
5:2: Pressing installations: The vineyard is also furnished with a watchtower (migdal) and “even” (gam) a winepress (yeqeb). The use of “even” (gam) draws attention to the fact that a vineyard need not have a press. The building of a press, which involved the excavation of the vats from hard limestone and the construction of a pressing mechanism, represented a considerable investment of effort and capital and would be unnecessary if commercial or communal presses were available nearby. The term yeqeb has a variety of connotations: it can refer to the vat or trough that holds the must or to the entire winepress, which includes an upper vat for treading (Amos 9:13; Isa 63:2), a lower vat for collection of the must (connected by a sinnor, a groove), and the pressing equipment.\textsuperscript{14} Since yeqeb is the object of the verb “to quarry,” the substantive must refer to the treading or collecting vat, which is excavated from stone. But since the phrase stands in parallel to the description of the building of the watchtower, the other main structure of a vineyard, it seems likely that the “vat” refers by metonymy to the entire pressing installation.

The particulars of vv. 1b-2 touch on the motifs of fertility, expense, permanence, and the expectation of high productivity. The location of the vineyard was ideal for viticulture, on a hillside, presumably with good drainage; and the area was fertile, which probably meant well-watered. It was, nevertheless, still uncultivated and therefore required a good deal of preparatory labour on the part of the owner. Vv. 1b-2a thus underscore the efforts that the owner expended in creating a vineyard from where there was none. The permanent and expensive structures mentioned in v. 2b emphasize the owner’s high expectations. Instead of erecting a temporary hut (sukkah, Isa 1:8; 4:6) or creating a small shaded area (melunah, Isa 24:20), the owner built a stone tower. Instead of relying on local presses, the owner built his own. Such elements imply that the owner expected to create a stable and productive vineyard that merited permanent installations.

5:2: (stinking [grapes]): All of these elements of preparation and expectation combine to enhance the contrast with the actual result, the production of be’ušîm rather than of grapes. The term has sometimes been translated as “wild grapes,” but this is hardly appropriate. A good quality domestic varietal of \textit{vitis vinifera} L. never produces a non-domesticated variety. \textit{Vitis vinifera} L. appears to have been domes-\textsuperscript{14} For descriptions of the pressing mechanisms, see R. Frankel, \textit{Wine and Oil Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries} (JSOT/ASOR Monographs 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).
ticated in Northern Syria and the Aegean and is found in Early Bronze sites (3200-3000 B.C.E.) in Jericho, Arad, Lachish, Ta’annek, Bab edh-Dhra, and Numeira. No remains of the wild grape (*vitis silvestris*) have been found in Canaan. Hence *be’ušim* cannot be rendered “wild grapes” but should be translated as “stinking (or diseased) grapes.” It is not a matter of the contamination of a plot of land with some foreign plants, but of the corruption of what had been planted.

5:5: The viticultural metaphor is maintained throughout vv. 4-6, where several other features of the construction and care of vineyards are mentioned. V. 5 notes the presence of a hedge (*mesûkkâh* or *mesûkkâh*), probably an enclosure made of thorns. Such hedges are still used by Beduin for creating rough enclosures around sheepfolds. The MT also mentions a wall (*gadêr*), probably constructed at least in part from the stones removed from the field.

5:6: Verse 6 adverts to the activities of pruning ( ), normally done twice, immediately after the harvest and during the summer, and hoeing ( ) to keep down the thorns (*šâmir wâšâyiṯ*). Both are essential activities if yields are to be maximized. And of course, rain ( ) is essential.

5:7: Only in v. 7 does the author’s application of the parable appear. Isaiah’s interpretation depends on a double word play: God sought for justice (*mišpâh*) but found only bloodshed (*mišpâh*), and for righteousness (*sedâqâh*) but found only an outcry (*se’âqâh*). These themes are major preoccupations of Isaiah of Jerusalem, who complains of the oppression of the poor by the rich and of avaricious practices of the élite (Isa 3:12, 13-15; 5:8-24; 10:1-4). *Mišpâh* ( ) is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible but seems to mean “bloodshed.” *Se’âqâh* (“outcry,”

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18 The Qumran Isaiah scroll reads , cf. Mic 7:4, where stands in parallel with , briers.
20 The phrase appears to be a hendiadys (Zohary, *Plants of the Bible*, 153). Compare Isa 7:23-25 for a similar threat of land being overrun by thorns (*šâmir wâšâyiṯ*) for lack of hoeing. The pair of *šâmir* and *sâyiṯ* is also seen at Isa 9:17; 27:4.
the word play on $\text{sedāqāh}$ ("righteousness," ...), occurs only here in Isaiah, but appears in other contexts in the MT having to do with complaints against injustice (Gen 27:34; Exod 3:7, 9; 11:6). Accordingly, Isaiah’s parable of the vine in the MT concerns God’s expectations for Israel and Judah, that they would produce a society characterized by justice and freedom from abuse, but that it had just the opposite results.

The Septuagint (LXX)

Although the translators of the LXX refrained from effecting major rearrangements, additions, or deletions, their choice of Greek terms and a few free adaptations significantly transformed the parable.

**General Structure**

The MT displays confusing shifts in perspective, from the first person (v. 1b), to the third (vv. 1b-2), then back to the first (vv. 3-6), and finally to the third (v. 7). Some of these shifts are due to the basic rhetorical structure of the speech: Isaiah’s speech (vv. 1a, 7) contains a “parable” told in the third person (vv. 1b-2), followed by the fictive owner’s challenge to the audience to judge the situation outlined in the parable (vv. 3-4) and then the owner’s response (vv. 5-6). A similar structure is seen in 2 Sam 12:1-12, which moves from a parabolic story told in the third person (2 Sam 12:1b-4), to David’s reaction to the story (2 Sam 12:5-6), and then to Nathan’s oracle, delivered in the first person (2 Sam 12:7-12).

The LXX translators rationalized the speech, presenting it as first person discourse throughout, except in v. 1b where the MT’s third person is preserved: “(my) beloved had a vineyard on the horn (of a hill) in a rich place.” The LXX’s shift to the first person in the following cola entailed the conversion of the verbs in v. 2 (περιβόθηκα, ἐξαράκωσα, ἔφυτεσσα, φιοδόμησα, ἔμεινα) and 7 (ἔμεινα). But it also meant that the structure of the juridical parable is effaced. The speaker (Isaiah) still sings his beloved’s song, introducing the song with a parenthesis about the vineyard (v. 1b). But the remainder of the unit (vv. 2-7) now becomes the beloved’s song, including what in the MT had been the friend’s address to Jerusalem (vv. 3-6) and Isaiah’s interpretation (v. 7). The first verse, nonetheless, remains rather confusing. Rather than “I will sing to my beloved, (my) beloved’s song for my vineyard; my beloved had a vineyard,” one might more reasonably
expect τῷ ἀμπελόνι αὐτοῦ (“for his vineyard”) and ὁ ἐγενήθη ἀμπελῶν (“who had a vineyard”).

Notes

5:1: ἐν κέρατι ἐν τόπῳ πίονι: In the LXX the vineyard is located on a κέρας or “horn,”22 which seems generally to correspond to the MT’s qeren. The MT’s “fertile” ( , lit. “son of fatness”) is rendered ἐν τόπῳ πίονι, “in a rich (or fertile) place.”

5:2: καὶ φραγμὸν περιέθηκα (and I surrounded it with a palisade): A more significant alteration concerns the description of the labours of the owner. While the MT stresses the initial labour required to convert virgin hillside into a productive vineyard, the LXX takes the initial preparations for granted. Like the MT, the LXX indicates that the “vineyard” was already in the speaker’s possession (ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ ἡγαστημένῳ). But the LXX, by dispensing with the verbs having to do with the breaking and clearing of the ground, implies that the plot had already been prepared for planting. What was required, however, was a palisade (φραγμὸς)23 and furnishing the plot with stakes or props for the vines. Thus the LXX seems to envisage the conversion of existing agricultural land into a vineyard.

Such conversions, it might be noted, probably reflect practices in Egypt, where agricultural lands were often redesignated from one use to another, owing to the desires of their owners or to the availability of water through the maintenance of a system of dikes and canals. The failure of the irrigation system might mean that certain plots, once used for irrigation-intensive crops (e.g., vines, melons), might have to be converted for grain growing or pasturage. Alternatively, the creation of a dike system allowed owners to re-seed dry or marginal lands with high-yield crops. In Palestine under the Ptolemies, the conversion of plots for field crops into vineyards and olive and fruit orchards was driven by an interest in export crops and in maximizing the yield of the land.24

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22 LSJ 941, V.6 “mountain peak,” “spur” (Xenophon, Anabasis 5.6.7; Lycochron 534: προῦχουσα χερσαίου κέρας, “Mazusia jutting from the horn of the dry land”).

23 Vulgate: saepivit, “surround with a palisade, enclose.”

Where the MT names digging and stone-removal as the preliminary activities of vineyard preparation, the LXX mentions the building of a palisade (φρασμός). Two issues are of importance here: first, the meaning of the LXX’s term, and second, the significance of its mention as an initial activity.

1. While the MT makes no mention of a hedge in 5:2, it emerges from v. 5 that a hedge had been present, where mešūkkāh appears in poetic parallelism with gadēr (wall, LXX: τοῖχος). While mešūkkāh is probably a hedge formed of thorny bushes, the φρασμός of the LXX (5:2, 5) is more likely a wooden palisade or a low stone wall. To be sure, the context of Isa 5:5 LXX indicates that the φρασμός is less substantial than the τοῖχος (stone wall):25 the φρασμός is merely “taken away” or “removed” (ἀφέμι), while the wall is “taken down” or “razed” (καθαρισμόν).26 This corresponds generally to the MT’s mešūkkāh, which is removed ( ), and the wall (gadēr), which is destroyed ( ).27 But an examination of other instances of φρασμός, both in the LXX28 and in contemporary Greek literature, indicates that the word normally referred to a wooden fence or palisade.29 In Egyptian papyri and a

### Notes

25 For τοῖχος in connection with vineyards, see PPhyl II 157 (135 C.E.); PRossGeorg II 19 (141 C.E.); PStras VI 539 (290/91 C.E.): PWind Sol 8 r.31 (325 C.E.).

26 For τοῖχος in connection with vineyards, see PPhyl II 157 (135 C.E.); PRossGeorg II 19 (141 C.E.); PStras VI 539 (290/91 C.E.): PWind Sol 8 r.31 (325 C.E.).

27 Similarly, Ps 80:13: , “Why did you destroy its [the vineyard’s] walls?” Note, however, that the LXX renders this as ὡς τά καθελές τῶν φρασμάτων σωτήριον, “as a recompense for our saving their walls from ruin”).

28 In all cases where the connotation of φρασμός can be determined, it is used of solid enclosures, either palisades around vineyards, or city walls: Num 22:24 (wall of a vineyard, solid enough to pin Balaam against it); 1 Kgs 10:22 (walls of Jerusalem); 11:27 (walls of the city); 2 Esdras 9:9 (wall of Jerusalem); Ps 61[62]:4 (a tottering fence); Ps 79[80]:13 (destroying [καθελές] a vineyard wall); Ps 88[89]:41 (city walls); Prov 24:31 (stone fences); Isa 58:12 (city walls); Mic 4:14 (city wall?).

29 φρασμός: Theocritus, Idyll 5.108 (a fence around a vineyard); Lycurgus, Frag. 10-11.14 apud Harpocration, Lexikon [I C.E.] 215.14: ὅρκαν· μήποτε φρασμός, τούτοτε τὸ περίφρασμα καὶ ἡ αἰμασία, οὖτω καλεῖται, παρὰ τὸ έρκειν ἡ παρὰ τὸ έρκος εἶναι, “harkane, perhaps a palisade (phragmos), that is the fence and (stone) wall, so called from ‘to hold in’ (eriktein) or from ‘fence’” (harkos); Philo, DET. 105 (ἀντὶ τεῖχους φρασμοῦ εἶναι, “to be a fence as [strong as] a wall”); Agr. 19 (a palisade of wood); Moses 1.271 (αἰμασία καὶ
few other texts φραγμούς refers specifically to a palisade that surrounds
an agricultural plot or a vineyard. The choice of φραγμός to render mesûkkâh in v. 5 was probably motivated by the fact that the LXX translators, with Egyptian agricultural practices in view, assimilated Isaiah’s vineyard to vineyards more familiar to them in Egypt.

2. The second issue concerns the reasons for the LXX mentioning the building of a palisade in the initial stage of preparing a plot for vines. This probably has to do with the likelihood, noted above, that the LXX envisages the conversion of an existing agricultural plot in an intensively cultivated area into a vineyard rather than the MT’s conception of the breaking of virgin hillside. The palisade was a key part of a vineyard, for both legal and practical reasons. In areas of intensive cultivation, the palisade served as a boundary marker used in surveys and land registers (e.g., P N e s s I I I 31 [VI C.E.]), marking off one plot falling under one tax regime from contiguous plots that might be taxed quite differently. The palisade, moreover, protected a newly planted vineyard from damage by humans and animals, which might use the plot for grazing or as a short-cut. Finally, the palisade protected the maturing fruit from ravages by animals, especially foxes and boars, and (along with a guard in the watchtower) from theft by humans. In later Palestinian agricultural practices, the palisade had

φραγμόι, “[stone] walls and palisades” that are strong enough to repel an attack; Strabo 13.4.14 (a fence of stone); Plutarch, Pericles 9.2.6 (τὸν τε χωρίον τοὺς φραγμούς ἀφαιρήσαν, describing the removal of palisades around an orchard); Plutarch, Cimon 10.1.4 (τὸν τε γάρ ἄγραν φραγμούς ἀφεῖλεν, describing the removal of palisades around fields).  

BGU IV 1119 (6/5 B.C.E.) (palisade around a vineyard); PGiss. 56 (V C.E.) (palisade around a vineyard); P N e s s I I I 31.11, 16, 31, 51, 55, 60 (VI C.E.) (palisades marking vineyards). M. Schnebel (Die Landwirtschaft im hellenistischen Ägypten. Erster Band: Der Betrieb des Landwirtschafts [Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte 7; München: C.H. Beck, 1925] 244) doubts that Egyptian φραγμοί were made of wood, since wood was relatively rare and expensive, and suggests that they were (stone) walls.

This explanation seems preferable to that given by J. Fischer (In Welcher Schrift lag das Buch Isaias den LXX vor? Eine textkritische Studie [BZAW 56; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1930] 20), according to whom φραγμον περιθήκος was a “free” translation which took to be related to , “ring” (which however, appears only as a proper name in the Hebrew Bible). (”signet”) is attested only in Aramaic (Dan 6:18). R. Gundry (The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope [NovTSup 18; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967] 44) rather implausibly suggests that the LXX, Peshitta and Vulgate understood as “to build a (stone) fence” and argues that this is unrelated to the of v. 5. But as I have argued above, this is more likely a hedge of thorns. See below, n. 38.

Cf. P M i c h V 229 (48 C.E.), a complaint about damage to a vineyard caused by ass-driver.

Prov 24:31 treats the stone wall (, LXX: οἱ φραγμοὶ τῶν λίθων) as an
an additional function: since Deut 22:9 prohibited the intercultivation of vineyards with other (cereal or vegetable) crops, care was taken to demarcate the vineyard from adjoining fields that were sown to other crops. A wall ( ) or reed fence ( ) served as a valid way to divide one area from another so as to comply with the laws of mixed seeds.

5:2: καὶ ἑξαράκωσα (and I staked it): What is completely new in the LXX is the use of χαρακῶσα, used in Ptolemaic- and Imperial-period papyri in connection with the staking of vines. This may be another essential part of a vineyard, as does Sir 36:25: οὐ οὐκ ἔστιν φραγμός, διαταγήσεται κτῆμα, “wherever there is no fence, the property is plundered.” Damage to vineyards from animals and humans is noted in Ps 80:13-14: “Why did you destroy [the vineyard’s] walls, so that every passerby plucks its fruit, wild boars gnaw at it, and creatures of the field feed on it?”; Cant 2:15: πάσατε ἡμῖν ἀλόπεκας μικροὺς ἀφανίζοντας ἀμπελόνος, “catch us little foxes, that spoil the vineyards”; Theocritus, Idyll 1.45: “And but a little removed from master Weatherbeat there’s a vineyard well laden with clusters red to the ripening, and a little lad seated watching upon the fence [τις κώρος ἀφ’ αἰμισσαίσι φυλάσσει]. And on either side of him two foxes; one ranges to and fro along the rows and pillers all such grapes as are ready for eating, while the other sets all his cunning at the lad’s wallet”; Theocritus, Idyll 5.112-13: μισέω τὰς δασικέρας ἀλόπεκας, οἳ τὰ Μίκωνος σιτεί φοιτῶσας τὰ ποθέσπερα ῥαγίζοντι, “I hate the brush-tail foxes, who ever come creeping to their vintaging amid Mikon’s vines.” For the fable of the Fox and the Grapes, see Babrius 19; Phaedrus 4.3.

These prohibitions are explicated in the Mishnah. In m. Kil. 4.1, a space of 12 cubits (16 according to Beth Shammai) must be allowed between the outer row of a vineyard and a seeded crop. A wall, however, formed a valid partition between plots of land. Hence, the Mishnah assumes both that walls are a normal part of a vineyard and that vines could extend up to the wall, thus occasionally trailing over the wall and infringing on a neighbour’s grain crop (m. Kil. 7.4). According to m. Kil. 4.3, a wall of ten handbreadths high constitutes a valid partition. Likewise a reed fence is a valid partition: “A partition of reeds ( —if between reed and reed be less than three handbreadths sufficient for a kid to enter,—counts as a valid partition [and one can sow seed on the other side]. And a palisade that is breached up to a space of ten cubits is considered as an entrance, if it be more than this, opposite the breach is forbidden [to sow seed]” (m. Kil. 4.4).

34 Two biblical prohibitions lead to concern over the space that must be allowed between crops of different kinds, and the types of partitions that validly separate two crops. Deut 22:9-11 (from D) speaks specifically of vineyards: “You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, else the crop—from the seed you have sown—and the yield of the vineyard may not be used [lit.: becomes holy]. You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together. You shall not wear a mingled garment, wool and linen together.” A later text (from P) speaks more generally: Lev 19:19: “You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.”

35 P Cair Zen 59 229 (253 B.C.E.); PSI VI 595 (III B.C.E.): ὑπόνυμημα Ζήνωνι παρὰ Νίκωνος εἰς τὴν μὲν σκαφήν καὶ χαράκωσαν, ὀστερ καὶ συ ἐγδέδωκας, προσδέξομαι; P Zen Pestman 64.14, 18 (= PSI VI 624; III B.C.E.); POxy IV 729.23 (Oxyrhynchus; 137 C.E.): τι κεκαρακωμένα καὶ τὰ [τὸ]ὸ κτήματος χώματα ἐστεγασμένα καὶ ὕδροτεφυ- λακημένα, “. . . staked and the embankments of the vineyard firm and watertight”; PRyl
instance of the influence of Egyptian viticultural practices on the LXX translators, but the training of vines on trellises, palisades, and trees is also attested in early Israelite agriculture. In any case, the LXX translators have reconceived the scenario imagined by the MT, shifting the emphasis from the labour of making virgin soil suitable for agriculture, to the particular preparations characteristic of viticultural practice, namely, the erection of a palisade or wall and the staking of the land with trellises.

5:2: ἄμπελον σωρῆς (a vine of soreq): In the description of the planting of the vines, the LXX also differs from the MT. Whereas the MT specifies a particular variety of grape, soreq, a term unattested outside the Hebrew Bible, the LXX uses the phrase ἄμπελον σωρῆς ("a vine of soreq") as the object of ἐφύτευσα. Although the LXX preserves
soreq through a simple transliteration, it seems probable that the term was not sufficiently well known in Egypt to be self-explanatory and so ἀμπέλον was added to make its general meaning clear.\footnote{I.L. Seeligmann (The Septuagint Version of Isaiah: A Discussion of Its Problems [Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap “Ex Oriente Lux,” Mededelingen en Verhandelingen 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1948] 33), however, drawing attention to the sevenfold repetition of ἀμπέλον in Isa 5:1-7 (and in 1:8 and 3:14), suggests that ἀμπέλον is secondary. He also observes that “from 7.23 onward ἀμπέλον is used with the same regularity (eight times in succession) as ἀμπέλον previously.”}

5:2: προλήπνιον (vat): Verse 2b describes the excavation of the yeqeb, which the LXX renders as προλήπνιον (vat). The usual translation of yeqeb is ληνός and this normally refers to the entire pressing installation.\footnote{Num 18:27, 30; Deut 15:14; 16:14; 2 Kgs 6:27; Hos 9:2; Joel 2:24 (in all instances, paired with goren, threshing floor); Prov 3:10 (paired with ’asam, barn); Jer 48:33 (LXX 31:30); Lam 1:15. Ληνός is used to translate gat at Judg 6:11; Neh 13:15 (= 2 Esdras 23:15); Isa 63:2; Joel 4:13. See further, J. Ziegler, Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaias (Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen 12/3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1934) 179.} In a few instances it is rendered by ὑπολήπνιον, that is, one of two vats (one for treading and the other to collect the must).\footnote{Isa 16:10 (the treading vat); Joel 4:13 (treading vat or the collecting vat); Hag 2:16 (the collecting vat); Zech 14:10 (the king’s winepress).} Προσλήπνιον, the LXX’s choice of translation, is unattested in Greek literature until fourth century Christian citations, where, commenting on the LXX Isa 5:2, Eusebius, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret interpret Isaiah’s προλήπνιον as the altar before the temple.\footnote{Eusebius, Commentaria in Psalmos on Ps 8 (MPG 23:125): προλήπνιον τὸ πρὸ τοῦ ναοῦ θυσιαστήριον. Athanasius, Expositiones in Psalmos on Ps 8 (MPG 27:80): πάλαια μὲν ἐν τῇ νομικῇ λατρείᾳ ἐν προλήπνιον, τὸ θυσιαστήριον δηλοῦντο τὸ ἐν τῷ ναῷ. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam (MPG 70:137): ὑποκόμησα δὲ, φησί, καὶ πῦργον ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ προλήπνιον ὄρυξα ἐν αὐτῷ… τέθεται δὲ θυσιαστήριον ἐν αὐτῷ; John Chrysostom, Interpretatio in Isaiam Prophetam 5 (MPG 56:58): et aedificavi turrim, et torcular in medio eius: quidam turrim interpretantur templum, et torcular altare; quia illic fructus virtutis cuiusque congregabantur; Theodoret, Commentaria in Esaiam 2.470 (ed. Guinot, 1.230). W.J.C. Weren (“The use of Isa 5,1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12,1-12; Matthew 21,33-46),” Bib 79 [1998] 9 n. 24) erroneously states that προλήπνιον occurs also in Oda 10:2, not realizing that this is Isa 5:2.} In the context of Isaiah 5, however, προλήπνιον must refer to a collecting or treading vat and is probably therefore equivalent to ὑπολήπνιον.\footnote{The distinction between ληνός and ὑπολήπνιον is observed by the anonymous Geoponica (Geoponica, sive Cassiani Bassi scholastici De re rustica eclogue, ed. Heinrich Beckh; Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1895) 6.1.2-4: δεὶ τοῦν τὴν ληνὸν πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν συγκομιζόμεθα μελλόντων καρπῶν οἰκοδομεῖν… ἔστω δὲ ἡ ληνὸς θερμή, καὶ ἐχέτω φῶς πλείστον πάντοτε, τὸ δὲ ὑπολήπνιον ἔστω πλατύστομον, καὶ μετὰ τὴν χρῆσιν πλυθήστω ἡ θαλάσση ἡ ἄλλη θερμή. Ziegler (Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta, 179) suggests that prolē̱nion might refer to a special kind of wine press, “vielleicht eine “Vorkelter” im Gegensatz zur Hauptkelter (ληνός). In der Papyrusliteratur ist das Wort προλή̱νιον, bis jetzt m.W. nicht aufgetreten; aber sicher war die “Vorkelter” dem alexandrinischen Leser bekannt.”} It seems probable...
that the choice of προλήψιον over ληνός is a function of the verbs, (“to hew”)/ἀρνξα (“to dig”), which suggest the excavation of a vat rather than building of the entire pressing installation.

5:2: ἀκανθὰ (thorns): The LXX dramatically reconceives the failure of the vineyard. Whereas the MT contrasts the owner’s expectation of grapes (ἀναβήμ, ) with the actual produce, “stinking grapes” (βε‟υσίμ), the LXX introduces a new contrast, using ἀκανθὰ (“thorns”) as the second member of the pair. The contrast of grape/thorn is neither a fixed parallel pair in Hebrew nor does it appear in the MT or elsewhere in the LXX. The pair in fact is barely attested in the Hellenistic period, appearing only in Matt 7:16 and Gos. Thom. 45 and, much later, in b. Pessa. 49a.

The LXX’s choice of “thorns” seems to be a function of two factors. First, the focus of the LXX has shifted from the vine to the vineyard. While the MT repeats the term “vineyard” (κερη, vv. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), the complaint is about the vine itself, which produced rotten fruit. In the LXX, by contrast, the focus has shifted from the vine (despite ἀμπέλος σωρης) to the vineyard (ἀμπέλων), which yielded thorns instead of grapes. Second, the LXX’s choice may be a function of other texts of the Tanak which indicate that thorns were a constant encroachment on agricultural lands, signalling neglect (Isa 7:23-25; 32:13) and presenting a danger of fire (Exod 22:6 [LXX 22:5]). Thus where the MT locates the failure in the unexpectedly corrupted growth of a good quality vine, the LXX thinks of the failure as that of the

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46 The word appears only twice in the MT (Isa 5:2, 4), while (“stinking”) is found three times: Isa 34:3 (LXX: ὡςμη, smell), Joel 2:20 (LXX: ὡςμη, stench) and Amos 4:10 (construed by the LXX as , ἐν πυρί).
48 Gos. Thom. 45:1: Jesus says: “Grapes are not harvested from thornbushes, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not produce fruit.”
49 b. Pessa. 49a: “Let a man always sell all he has and marry the daughter of a scholar, and marry his daughter to a scholar. This may be compared to [grafting of] grapes of a vine with grapes of a vine [which is] a seemly and acceptable thing ( ). But let him not marry the daughter of an ‘am ha-`areg; this may be compared to [grafting of] grapes of a vine with berries of a thorn bush [which is] a repulsive and unacceptable thing” ( ).”
50 “Ἀκανθὰ is also used of acacia trees, often found on the embankments of vineyards: see P:\xy VI 909 (225 C.E.), an agreement to uproot and sell the acacia trees (ἀκανθὰ) in a vineyard, and PLond II 214 (270-75 C.E.).
plot itself and, presumably, of those who should have cared for it. Good and well-tended land should have produced a valuable crop; instead it produced only worthless thorns. The LXX apparently already has in view the failure of human subjects who tend the vineyard, in distinction from the MT, which studiously maintains its focus on the vineyard itself until the identification with Israel and Judah in v. 7.

5:3-6: There are several modifications and adaptations of the MT by the LXX in these verses, but not all are consequential for the issue of Mark’s relation to Isaiah 5. The addressees of v. 3 are reversed in the LXX: the MT has “the one who dwells in Jerusalem” ( ) and then “man of Judah” ( ) (both, curiously in the singular), which the LXX reverses: “man ( ἄνθρωπος) of Judah” and “inhabitants (οἱ ἐνοικούντες) of Jerusalem.” The LXX renders the MT’s idiom (“judge between me and you”) rather woodenly as κρίνατε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀμπελώνος μου (judge with me and in the midst of my vineyard).51

5:4: In v. 4 the LXX translates the MT’s impersonal idiom (“what more is to be done”) as a first-person future: “what more shall I do?” The word-pair σταφυλῇ/ἀκάνθα is repeated in v. 4, again modifying the MT’s ‘αναβίμ (“grapes”) and βέ’υσίμ (“stinking grapes”).

5:6: καὶ ἀνήσω (I will abandon): The influence of Ptolemaic agricultural practice is again visible in v. 6, where the LXX translators have rendered the MT’s (I will make [it] a waste [?]),52 as καὶ ἀνήσω τὸν ἀμπελώνον μου (I will abandon my vineyard). As Ziegler notes, the LXX’s verb ἀνιέναι is a technical term used in Ptolemaic papyri used in connection with land left untilled.53

5:6: ὡς εἰς χέρσον (on a dry plot): In the same verse the phrase (“and thorns and brambles will grow up”) is translated as καὶ ἀναβήσεται εἰς αὐτὸν ὡς εἰς χέρσον ἀκάνθα (“and thorns will spring

51 The LXX often renders the idiom as κρίνειν ἀνὰ μέσον NN καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον NN (Deut 1:16; Judg 11:27; 1 Sam 24:16) or more simply as κρίνειν ἀνὰ μέσον NN καὶ NN (Gen 16:5).
52 The meaning of is suggested only from the context. The etymology is unknown. See KB 159.
53 PTebt I 60.81-81 (118 B.C.E.): καὶ τοῦ ὧ(ν)εμένου εἰς νομάς καὶ | χο(ρ)το(ν)ο(μάς) καὶ, “and 24 (arourai) of land left untilled for pasturage and grassland”; PTebt I 72.35-36 (114/13 B.C.E.): καὶ τῆς ἐν τῶι γῆ (ἐντει) προσαχθείσης ἐν Ἀλεξάν| δρείαι ἀνείσθαι εἰς νομάς. See also PTebt III/2 827.4 (170 B.C.E.). Ziegler notes that the LXX of Isa 27:10 renders (homesteads deserted) with τὸ κατοικούμενον ποιόνν ἀνεμένον ἔσται.
up on it as on a dry plot”).54 The use of χέρσος also points to an Egyptian agricultural context, where the term regularly designates land once used for agricultural production but which had become unproductive. Such failures were normally due to a collapse of the irrigation system or to low levels of the Nile inundation.55 But the term means more than “dry land.” Χέρσος implies that the land was economically unproductive, since in Egypt it was exempt from taxation.56 Vineyards were particularly susceptible to failure because they depended on a constant supply of water. So common in fact was the failure of a vineyard that the term χερσομπέλεος was coined to refer to vineyards that had become unproductive.57 The LXX’s use of χερσος fits the context, since the next colon refers to God’s stopping up of the clouds so as to withhold moisture. Hence, in addition to the MT’s general image of a field being overrun by thorns, the LXX employs a term that would be recognized immediately by the Egyptian reader as referring to a specific class of unproductive agricultural land.58

5:7: νεόφυτος: In the concluding verse, the LXX has rendered the MT’s neta (“planting”) by νεόφυτος, a technical term used in Egypt for newly-planted vineyards.59

5:7: κρίσις, ἀνομία, δικαιοσύνη, κραυγή (justice, lawlessness, fairness,
outcry). It proved impossible to replicate the MT’s wordplays $\text{mišpāt}/\text{mišpāh}$ and $\text{sedāqāh}/\text{sêdāqāh}$. Instead, the LXX simply used the standard renderings of $\text{mišpāt}$ as $\text{κρίσις}$, $\text{sedāqāh}$ as $\text{δικαίωσιν}$, and $\text{sêdāqāh}$ as $\text{κραυγή}$. The hapax legomenon $\text{mišpāh}$ may have presented the translators with a problem, but they rendered it with the vague term $\text{όνομία}$ (lawlessness).

A close examination of the text indicates that the translators of the LXX adjusted the imagery of Isa 5:1-7 in a variety of ways. Most obvious is the conversion of the entire unit into a first-person speech; less obvious is the reconceptualizing of the types of labour needed to create a productive vineyard, the shift of focus from the individual vine to the vineyard as a whole, and the pervasive influence of terminology that reflects the agricultural practices in Hellenistic Egypt.\(^{60}\)

Mark 12:1, 9 and Isaiah 5:1-7

It is clear that Mark 12:1 (9) alludes to Isaiah 5. What remains to be decided is whether Mark knows Isaiah via the MT or the LXX. (Significant agreements with the LXX are underscored).

\begin{align*}
\text{Isa 5:1-7 MT} & \quad \text{Mark 12:1, 9} & \quad \text{Isa 5:1-7 LXX} \\
\text{ἐμπελόνων ἄνθρωπος ἐφύτευσεν} & \quad \text{ἐμπελόνων ἐγενήθη τῷ ἡγασμένῳ ἐν κέρατι ἐν τόπῳ πίονι.} \\
\text{kai periεθήκεν φρομμίω} & \quad 2 \text{kai φρομιον περεθήκε} \\
\text{kai ὀρυζεν ὑπολήγιον} & \quad \text{kai ἔχαρακες καὶ ἐφύτευσε} \text{ἀμπελόνον σφορῆς} \text{καὶ φυδοδόμησεν πύργον} \\
\text{καὶ ὄρυξεν ὑπολήγιον} & \quad \text{καὶ ἐμεινα τοῦ ποιήσαι} \text{σφαλμήν,} \\
\text{kai ὄρυξεν ὑπολήγιον} & \quad \text{ἐποίησεν δὲ ἀκάνθας}. \ldots \\
\text{kai ὄρυξεν ὑπολήγιον} & \quad 4 \text{τί ποίησω ἐτί τῷ} \\
4 \text{9 τί οὖν ποιήσει ὁ κύριος} & \quad \text{ἀμπελόνι} \\
\text{kai ἁμπελόνως; ἐλεύσεται} & \quad \text{μου καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησα} \text{αὐτῶ;} \\
\end{align*}

\(^{60}\) Similarly, Ziegler, Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta, 178.
Despite attempts to trace Mark 12:1, 9 to a putative Hebrew or Aramaic version of the parable, it seems likely that Mark is dependent exclusively on the LXX.

First, Mark’s phrase, ἀμπελόνα ἀνθρώπος ἐφύτευσεν, continues the tendency, already visible in the LXX, to focus not on the vine but on the vineyard as a whole. It was this refocusing of the imagery of the MT that allowed the LXX to imagine thorns rather (ἄκανθαι) than rotten grapes (be’ušîm) as the product of the vineyard (5:3, 4). In Mark the object of ἐφύτευσεν (planted) is not ἀμπελός (a vine), but ἀμπελῶν (a vineyard) and in this respect, Mark’s story intersects more closely with the LXX of Isaiah 5 than it does with the MT.

Of course, the trope of the vineyard functions quite differently in Mark; Mark’s account introduces the idea of a tenancy agreement, which is foreign to both forms of Isa 5:1-7. It should be noted, however, that in indicating that the failure of the vineyard was its being overrun by thorns, the LXX implies that neglect was involved, probably a failure to hoe and weed. Egyptian vineyard contracts regularly state that the tenant is to stake the vines, perform the hoeing, trenching, and pruning, and insure that the vines are watered properly.\(^\text{61}\)

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\(^{61}\) E.g., BGU IV 1122 (Alexandria; 13 B.C.E.) POxy IV 1692 (Oxyrhynchus; 188 C.E.) lists as duties of the tenant: the cutting and transporting of reeds (for supporting the vines), sweeping up cut reeds and transporting them outside the walls, hoeing around the vines, and trenching, planting (extra) vines in the necessary places, cutting of the new reeds for the reed-work, the arranging of the reeds, breaking up the ground, picking off the shoots, pruning the leaves, disposal of the pruned shoots, thinning the foliage, and stationing guards in the field. POxy IV 1631 (Oxyrhynchus; 280 C.E.) provides a similar list of duties.
Invasion by thorns can only mean that the vineyard suffered extreme neglect from those appointed to care for it. Hence the LXX, without expressly naming tenants, has human failure in view even before v. 7. We are still, however, far from Mark’s scenario of revolt.

One could hypothesize that Mark’s parable extrapolates developments in the LXX, reconfiguring the addressees of Isa 5:3 LXX (the “person of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem”) or those of 5:7 (“house of Israel, person of Judah”) as the rebellious tenants of the vineyard, this despite the facts that both the MT and the LXX conclude that Israel and Judah are the vineyard and neither suggests that a rebellion is at stake. Or, one might suggest that a tenancy story concerning a vineyard and the rebellion of its tenants attracted the Isa 5:1-7 LXX, because it offered Mark (or some pre-Markan tradition) the interpretive possibility of construing the vineyard as Israel (or God’s domain), whose first tenants refused God his due. In any case, there is no contact with the specifics of the MT in either regard.

Second, Mark shows no knowledge of what is unique to the MT’s presentation of the preparation of the land, namely, the two initial verbs of digging (τὰ κάτακτα ἐφύτευμα) and clearing the land of stones (τὰ τεῖχος καὶ τὰ πέτρα). On the other hand, his reference to the building of a palisade (καὶ περιβάλθηκεν φραγμός) reflects a specifically Septuagintal addition to the MT and mirrors the Egyptian viticultural practice that influenced the LXX translators. The fact that the MT has μέσωκα in v. 5 does not help an attempt to derive Mark from the MT, since Mark still reflects the LXX’s choice to render μέσωκα, probably a hedge of thorns, as φραγμός, a wooden or stone fence. Dependence on the LXX is here a virtual certainty.

It is true that Mark has effected some alterations to clause and word order: he combined the initial statement of ownership (LXX: ἄμπελον ἐγενήθη τῷ ἱγαπημένῳ) with the mention of the planting of the vines/vineyard (LXX: καὶ ἐφύτευσα ἄμπελον σωρῆς) into a single clause (ἄμπελον σωρῆς ἐφύτευσεν), and inverted the order of the building of the tower and the digging of the vat. Moreover, in the final three clauses, he standardized word order: where the LXX has φραγμὸν περιβάλθηκα,
The combination of Septuagintalisms that appear in Mark 12:1 and the lack of agreement with any of the particulars of the MT make the conclusion highly probable that Mark depends on the LXX. Some resist this conclusion. In defending a case that the parable is authentic and that the Isaianic allusions are original, Gundry asserts that Mark’s ὑπολήνιον is closer to the MT than the LXX’s προλήνιον, arguing that the latter is ambiguous (presumably, like yeqeb/ληνός). But it is hardly ambiguous: προλήνιον with ὅρνξα must refer to a vat, even if προλήνιον is otherwise unattested in Greek literature of the period. The prefix προ- suggests that it is a collecting vat in front of the press. Mark’s ὑπολήνιον, moreover, is dependent on a specifically Septuagintal rendering of yeqeb. In the end, Gundry seems to agree: “in its text-form this quotation is primarily Septuagintal.”

Aus strains to avoid the conclusion that Mark depends on the LXX. He makes four points. First he stresses that the use of third person singular verbs in Mark 12:1 are closer to the MT than to the LXX.

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64 Above, n. 43. For other uses of ὑπολήνιον see Julius Pollux, Onomasticon 10.130; POxy XIV 1735 (IV C.E.).
66 Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament, 44.
67 Aus, The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane (n. 4), 4-6.
This is technically correct (though the LXX’s τὸ ἡγαπημένῳ in v. 1b betrays a third person) but hardly a convincing point, given the MT’s constant shifts from the first (v. 1a) to the third (vv. 1b-2) to the first (vv. 3-6) to the third person (v. 7). And at 12:9, Mark is just as distant from the LXX as from the MT; while they use the first person, Mark has the third. If Mark displayed a complexity similar to that of the MT, that might evidence the influence of the MT; but he does not.

His second point is built on an elaborate conjecture: first, that Jesus borrowed gader from Isa 5:5 and used this to “paraphrase” Isaiah’s ; then a “Hellenistic Jewish Christian” translated gader with περιείθηκεν φροσμός, employing a phrase of the LXX. But one hardly needs so elaborate and hypothetical a solution when the LXX itself accounts for both Mark’s verb and his substantive.

Aus’s third point is that ὑπολήνιον in Mark demonstrates Mark’s independence of the LXX. There is a subtle non sequitur here: Mark’s independence of the LXX indicates dependence on the MT. But this is precisely what Aus fails to show—that Mark is dependent on the MT, which clearly he is not. As noted above, ὑπολήνιον is itself Septuagintal.

The final point concerns Mark 12:9/Isa 5:4-5. Aus notes that whereas Mark and the LXX use the future, the MT puts the speaker’s question in the present ( ). But, he argues, the MT intended the future. It is difficult to see how this amounts to a compelling argument for Mark’s use of the Hebrew version over the Greek, since whatever the MT’s intent, Mark agrees with the future of the LXX, both in 5:4 and in 5:5. Aus claims, further, that the use of (“to be destroyed”) in 5:5 may have influenced Mark’s ἀπολέσει in 12:9. This, however, is an argument that works only in English: (or the idiom , to be [destined] for destruction) is nowhere rendered by ἀπολλάναι. Thus Aus’s conjectures appear to be baseless. Despite his special pleadings, the LXX is closer to Mark than the MT.

Weren makes three points: that Mark agrees with the third person verbs of the MT rather than the LXX, the point already made by Aus. Second, Weren makes much of the fact that Mark inverts the word order of the LXX (above, p. 155). But this, like Aus’s third point, is a non sequitur: deviation from the LXX does not amount to an argument for the influence of the MT. This is especially the case,

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68 Similarly, Evans, “God’s Vineyard and its Caretakers” (n. 4), 401 n. 42; Weren, “The Use of Isa 5,1-7” (n. 4), 9.
70 Similarly, Evans, “God’s Vineyard and its Caretakers,” 401 n. 42.
since the MT lacks an equivalent for περιέθηκεν φρονήμων; Mark departs from the object-verb order of the MT = LXX in the case of the phrase concerning the excavation of the vine vat, and the verb-object order in the phrase concerning the planting of the vineyard; and Mark agrees with the LXX and the MT in the phrase concerning the tower. There are no agreements with the MT against the LXX.

Finally, Weren suggests that Mark agrees with “some nuances in the Hebrew text which are absent in the LXX”: ‘I will make it [the vineyard] a waste’ and ‘bloodshed’” as well as the question of Mark 12:9. As I have already argued, the final point about the question of Mark 12:9 is vacuous, since Mark agrees with the future of the LXX. The conjecture that mirrors no better than Aus’s suggestion concerning : since the meaning of in v. 6 can only be guessed at, it is baseless to claim that Mark’s story stands closer to the MT. The same goes for the hapax-gomenon mispah, which perhaps means “bloodshed.” Obviously, the killing of the son in Mark is a case of bloodshed. But Mark does not use the term αἷμα (blood), the usual term associated with bloodshed in the Bible. It is hard to see, then, how Mark’s story is closer to the MT than the LXX, which uses terms no less appropriate to Mark’s story—but terms also not actually attested in the story—, ὀνομαία (lawlessness) and κραυγή (outcry).

For his part, Snodgrass concedes the similarities of Mark 12:1 to the LXX, but tries to mitigate their force with the claim: “that some LXX wording was used is no proof at all [of the secondary nature of the quotation] since this may reflect only an assimilation to the LXX in either the oral or written period.” Secondary assimilation of a quotation to the LXX is, of course, a possibility. But in order to render...

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72 See above, n. 52.
73 See above, n. 21.
74 In the more obvious phrases having to do with bloodshed, the LXX regularly renders them with αἷμα: e.g., Isa 1:15: , LXX: αἷμα γὰρ χείρες ὑμῶν αἷμας πλήρεις; 4:4: ; LXX: καὶ τὸ αἷμα ἐκκαθαρίσεις; 26:21: ; LXX: καὶ ἀνακαλύψει ἢ γῆ τὸ αἷμα αὐτῆς.
likely the possibility of assimilation, one should be able to appeal to at least some elements in the text that are unassimilated, i.e., elements which agree with the MT against the LXX or which are closer to the MT or some textual development of the MT. The difficulty with the arguments of Snodgrass and Weren is that Mark fails to agree with the MT against the LXX at any point. There is then little basis for the conclusion that the Isaian allusions existed in a putative pre-Markan Aramaic or Hebrew version of the parable.

To conclude. A careful comparison of the MT of Isa 5:1-7 with the version in the LXX shows that the LXX has reconceived the scenario of Isaiah’s vineyard in various ways. For the LXX the vineyard was not created from virgin soil but probably transformed from existing agricultural land, reflecting the intensive agricultural exploitation of the Ptolemaic period. Correspondingly, the fate of the vineyard is to become χέρσος, unproductive agricultural land. For the LXX, the failure of the land has not so much to do with the initial planting going bad but with the infiltration of the vineyard by weeds and thorns. This in turn points to neglect by its caretakers. Hence, the LXX has modified the discourse of the MT, for which the vineyard is Israel and Judah; the LXX implicitly distinguishes the vineyard from its caretakers. Finally, the LXX has introduced terminology that reflects distinctively Egyptian viticultural practices: the building of a φροσιμός and the staking of the plot as initial tasks, and the use of such technical terms as νεόφυτος and χέρσος.

In comparing Mark with the two versions of Isaiah, what is clear is that Mark agrees with the LXX against in the MT, both in the use of φροσιμός and in locating (implicitly or explicitly) the failure of the vineyard in the activity or inactivity of its caretakers. Moreover, Mark and the LXX lack any indication that the vineyards in questions are newly broken plots; that is, they reflect Ptolemaic and post-Ptolemaic agricultural patterns rather than those of eighth-century B.C.E. Judah assumed by the MT. In brief, Mark agrees with the LXX, but never with the MT against the LXX. If one adopts the reasonable supposition that the historical Jesus spoke mainly in Aramaic or Hebrew and if the parable is authentic, it seems doubtful that the original parable made an explicit allusion to Isaiah 5. The allusions now in the text of Mark are purely Septuagintal.