‘FOR BEHOLD, I AM GOING TO CREATE A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH ...’

The Place and Meaning of Isaiah 65:17 in its Context

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Abstract
In this study, the author defends the following view: (1) Isaiah 65 consists – taking into account the messenger formulas – of three parts: (a) vv. 1-7; (b) vv. 8-12; (c) vv. 13-25. (2) Isaiah 65:17, (nor 65:16e) is not the beginning of 65:17-25, but the end of the first part of the third oracle (vv. 13-17), ending with a threefold *kī*, in which the former is opposed to the new. (3) Translation of Isaiah 65:17a-b ‘For behold, I am going to create a new heaven and a new earth’ shows that we are dealing with a presentic eschatological text. (4) Isaiah 65:17 does not speak of the creation of a whole new world, including the disappearance of the old one, nor is it about the renewal of the world. These views do not take into account the fact that there is not only mention of a new earth, but also of a new heaven. Heaven is about the sphere of God, earth about the sphere of men on earth. For the content of the new with regard to heaven, the reader should bear in mind the immediately preceding verse (16e-f), and for the content of the new with regard to the earth, the reader should consider the next verse (17c-d).

Key Words: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Prophets, Isaiah, New Heaven and New Earth

Introduction

YHWH’s statement ‘For behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth’ (Isa 65:17, KJV) is one of the most hopeful expressions in the Old Testament. The saying is unique within the Hebrew Bible – apart from its repetition in 66:22.[1] However, with regard to the question as to what this statement is actually intended to express, there is significant difference of opinion in the research into this final part of Trito-Isaiah (TI). Is it about the creation of a whole new cosmos, and with it the disappearance of the created cosmos of Genesis 1? Is it about the renewal/transformation of the existing created world? Or is it about a new creation that will take shape in a new Jerusalem?

This is preceded by the equally knotty question of how the Hebrew phrase: כִּי־הִנְנִי בוֹרֵא שָׁמַיִם חֲדָשִׁים וָאָרֶץ חֲדָשָׁה should be translated. The translation of the participle בּוֹרֵא requires special attention. Does the participle express continuous action (‘I am creating’) or is it an expression of an imminent action? (‘about to create’)? Or does the participle function as a noun (‘creator’)?[2]

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[1] W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B* (POT), Nijkerk 1989, 81, who also points out that this statement has become an important theme in intertestamental literature and in the New Testament.

[2] For these three possibilities, see C.H.J. van der Merwe *et al., A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (BL:H, 3), Sheffield 1999, 162-163.

No less attention should be paid to the place of Isaiah 65:17 in the context (i.e. Isa 65:13-25). Many scholars are of the opinion that Isaiah 65:17 is the beginning of a new pericope.[3] This consideration returns in the translations (NRS and KJV). Other interpreters see a new beginning in 65:16.[4] It seems entirely logical to see the creation of a new heaven and a new earth as a new beginning of the concluding pericope. But is that as logical as this would suggest?

I will begin this study with a consideration of the structure of Isaiah 65:1-25 and will then pay attention first to the translation of Isaiah 65:13-25, and then to the place of Isaiah 65:17 in its context. I will conclude with final conclusions about the meaning of the 'new' in Isaiah 65:17.

The structure of Isaiah 65:1-25

That Isaiah 65 forms a unit is evident from the fact that God is speaking throughout this passage, demonstrated by the regular occurrence of the 1st person singular: as subject 'I', as object 'Me', and with the suffix 'mine'. In the immediately preceding passage 63:7–64:12, He (= YHWH) is addressed by an 'I' as 'Thou'. This passage is referred to as 'the prayer of a penitent', and it is this prayer to which God returns an answer in the passage that follows 65:1-25.[5] The chapter ends with the image of a paradisiacal situation on 'my holy mountain' (vv. 24-25). That this divine speech finds its conclusion here is evident from the final words: 'says YHWH'. The ruling motif of this chapter is: He can be found by those who do not call on Him (v. 1), He calls, but they do not answer (v. 12) and even before they call, He will answer (v. 24).[6]

How has this passage been structured? My teacher Henk Leene is of the opinion that Isaiah 65 consists of two parts: verses 1-16 and verses 17-25.[7] The first part sketches 'the bitter reality

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[3] H. Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde, slotakkoord van het boek Jesaja,* Amsterdam 2002, 4,5; J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde: De doorwerking van Jesaja 65:17 in de intertestamentaire literatuur en het Nieuwe Testament*, Sliedrecht 1990, 41; Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B*, 81; K.W. Weyde, ' "For I am About to Create New Heavens and a New Earth": Prophecy and Torah in Isaiah 65:17-25', in: H. Hagelia & M.P. Zehnder (eds), *New Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, Piscataway NJ 2014, 209-229; J. Moskala, 'Does Isaiah 65:17–25 Describe the Eschatological New Heavens and the New Earth?' in: J. Moskala (ed.), *Meeting with God on the Mountains* (Essays in Honor of Richard M. Davidson), Andrews University 2016, 187-210; J. Irmiya, 'Eschatology as Transformation: A Textual Analysis of Isaiah 65:17-25', *The Journal of Biblical Theology* 8/1 (2025), 263-287, although on p. 189 he assumes 65:13-25.

[4] Van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde*, 45; This view differs from his view on the division into smaller units (p. 41). U. Berges, 'Der neue Himmel und die neue Erde im Jesajabuch: Eine Auslegung zu Jesaja 65,17 und 66,22', in: F. Postma & K. Spronk (eds), *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy* (Fs. H. Leene) (ACEBT.SS, 3), Maastricht 2002, 9-15, esp. 12; W. Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 65-66: Eine Untersuchung zu den literarischen Bezügen in den letzten Kapitel des Jesajabuches* (BZAW, 225), Berlin 2012, 134.

[5] For an elaboration of the relationship between 63:7–64:12 and 65:1-15, see H. Leene, *Newness in Old Testament Prophecy: An Intertextual Study* (OTS, 64), Leiden/Boston 2014, 123-125,128-129; E.U. Dim, *The Eschatological Implications of Isa 65 and 66 as the Conclusion of the Book of Isaiah* (BiH), Bern 2004, 50.

[6] Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B*, 58; Van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde*, 43.

[7] Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 4-5; Dim, *The Eschatological Implications*, 49,50,103-104; Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B*, 59: 'The primary caesura of this chapter occurs between vs. 16b and 17a' (tr.). In

in which the text finds its readers today'.[8] The second part speaks of 'the creation of a completely new reality'.[9] The divine-speech formulas play no role in the determination of the structure in Leene's work. On the basis of the messenger formulas ('Thus saith YHWH' in v. 8 and 'Therefore, thus saith YHWH' in v. 13) I arrive at a different division: (1) 65:1-7, (2) 65:8-12 and (3) 65:13-25.[10]

In the *first* divine speech (vv. 1-7) YHWH criticizes the whole people (vv. 1,2,3) and announces that He will repay their hurtful behaviour.

In the *second* divine speech (vv. 8-12) YHWH lets it be known that the people do not form one whole - that there is indeed also juice ('my servants)' in the bunch of grapes ('people'), which does not deserve to be lost. In the second part of the divine speech, the others, 'you, leavers of YHWH', are critically addressed and their fate is communicated to them.

The *third* divine speech (vv. 13-25) begins with a sharp contrast between the future of the 'you' group and that of 'my servants'. Four times he begins with 'my servants' and then comes to 'you'. The fifth time, the order is reversed. The 'you' group is mentioned first (v 15a-b) and then 'his servants' are spoken of (vv. 15c-16d). This sends a first signal of the reversal that is about to take place. In 65:16e-17d there is the foundation for this reversal (a threefold foundation: 'for').

These last two divine speeches (vv. 8-12 and vv. 13-25) are contrasted with each other, as becomes particularly clear when one looks at the end of both divine speeches. The first looks back on the past (v. 12) and the second divine speech evokes the future (v. 25). Notice how the words 'answer', 'call', 'hear', 'speak', and 'do evil' in 65:12 are repeated in 65:24-25.

> *65:12*
> I will ordain you to the sword
> You all will have to kneel down to be slaughtered,
> because you did not *answer* when I *called*
> and did not *hear* when I *spoke*,
> but *have done* what is *evil* in my eyes
> and have chosen what displeases me.

Newness in Old Testament Prophecy, 117, Leene takes as his point of departure four 'stanza's': 1-7, 8-12, 13-16 and 17-25. Irmiya, 'Eschatology as Transformation, 267; M.A. Sweeney, 'Prophetic Exegesis in Isaiah 65-66', in: *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (FAT, 45), Tübingen 2005, 46-62, esp. 49-50, uses a different dichotomy: 65:1-7 and 65:8-25, where he had previously (p. 48) said that he would be guided by the messenger formulas.

[8] Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 5.

[9] Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 5.

[10] E.C. Webster, 'The Rhetoric of Isaiah 63-65', *JSOT* 47 (1990), 98-102, esp. 96, reflects another tripartite division: (1) vv. 1-7 ('the rebellious'[people]); (2) vv. 8-16 ('the chosen and the rebellious compared') and (3) vv. 17-25 ('the chosen'); D.J. Stulac, 'Rethinking Suspicion: A Canonical-Agrarian Reading of Isaiah 65', *JTI* 9/2 (2015), 185-200, esp. 186. Almost identical: U. Berges, *Jesaja 55-66* (HThKAT), Freiburg im Breisgau 2022, 547: (1) vv. 1-7; (2) vv. 8-16a and (3) vv. 16b-25; Van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde*, 41, is of the opinion that chapter 65 consists of five parts that alternately contain announcements of judgment and salvation: (1) vv. 1-7, (2) vv. 8-10, (3) vv. 11-12, (4) vv. 13-16 and (5) vv. 17-25.

65:24-25
And it will happen: before they *call*, I will *answer*,
[while] *they* are still *speaking*, I will *hear*.
The wolf and the lamb will feed as one,
the lion will eat straw like the ox,
the snake has dust for its food.
They will not *do evil*, they will not cause ruin.
on all my holy mountain.

But perhaps it would be better to say that a reversal is taking place. The first divine speech (vv. 8-12) shows that He receives no answer to his call, no one hears him speak. In the second divine speech (vv. 13-25) He therefore announces that He will now follow a different path: for the answer that He has not had, He Himself will provide, even before they call. He will even hear, while they are still speaking. And He will make sure that they can do no evil, because this is what they are doing when they do not answer His calls.

The translation of Isaiah 65:13-25

Before I present my translation of the third divine speech (65:13-25), I will elaborate on the translation of Isaiah 65:17, כִּי־הִנְנִי בוֹרֵא שָׁמַיִם חֲדָשִׁים וָאָרֶץ חֲדָשָׁה, a translation that has received remarkably little attention in research so far. In the introduction I have already indicated that the participle בּוֹרֵא requires further study. Translations often render this with 'I create' (KJV, NIV, RSV). In my opinion, this does not do justice to the participle. In his grammar Van der Merwe gives three possibilities for a participle:[11] (1) It can express continuing action: 'I am creating'. But it can also be the expression of an imminent action: 'I am about to create' or 'I am going to create'. The participle can also function as a noun, 'Creator'. In Deutero-Isaiah (DI), the same participle (בּוֹרֵא) occurs in several other places (40:28; 42:5; 43:1; 43:15; 45:7 [2x]; 45:18; 57:19), where it is either rendered with the noun 'Creator' or as '[He] who created'. In this case, 65:17 could be translated as follows: 'Behold, for here I am [the] Creator of a new heaven and a new earth.' Does the poet perhaps choose this participle in order to connect with the image of God as 'Creator of heaven and earth'? This construction of הִנְנִי with a participle is more common (Gen 6:17; 9:9; Ex 10:4; Isa 43:19), often meaning that 'He is going to act'. In my opinion, this is the meaning of the construction in 65:17, 'For behold, I am going to create a new heaven | and a new earth'. This construction of הִנְנִי with a participle makes the translation of הִנְנִי – as with the twice occurring הִנְנִי in 65:1c – with 'Here I am' less plausible.[12]

13 Therefore, thus says my lord YHWH:
'Behold, my servants shall eat,
but you will hunger.

[11] See note 2.

[12] J.L. Koole, *Isaiah. Part III. Volume 3 Isaiah Chapters 56-66* (HCOT), Leuven 2001, 449; S. Green, *Toward Apocalyticism: A Thematic Analysis of Isaiah 65-66*, Äbo 2020, 119-121. The full translation: 'For here am I, about to create new heavens and a new earth.'

Behold, my servants will drink,
but you will thirst.
Behold, my servants will rejoice,
but you will be ashamed.
14 Behold, my servants will rejoice out of the goodness of the heart,
but you will cry out for help from the pain of the heart
and out of brokenness of spirit you will wail.
15 You will leave your name as a curse on my chosen ones:
‘ … and my lord YHWH will kill you’,
but to his servants He will give another name;
16 he who is blessed on earth,
will be blessed by the God of Trust
and he who swears on earth,
will swear by the God of Trust,
for the former troubles are forgotten,
for they are hidden from my eyes,
17 for behold, I am going to create a new heaven
and a new earth;
the former will not be remembered,
they will not ascend to the heart.

18 But be joyful and rejoice forever
for what *I* am going to create
for behold, I am going to create a Jerusalem of rejoicing
and her people of joy.
19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and over my people in joy.
In her the sound of weeping will no longer be heard,
nor the sound of cries for help.
20 There will be no more from there
an infant of [a few] days
nor an old man who does not fill
his days,
for a boy will die as a hundred years old;
anyone who does not make it to the hundred years, must have been cursed.
21 They will build houses and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and eat the fruit of it.
22 They will not build, so that someone else will inhabit it.
They will not plant, so that another will eat of it,
for as the days of the trees are the days of my people.
and my elect will bring the work of their hands as gifts.
23 They will not exhaust themselves in vain.
They will not give birth to terror,
for descendants of the blessed of YHWH are *they*
and their offspring with them.

24 And it will happen : before they call, *I* will answer,
[while] *they* are still speaking, *I* will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb will feed as one,
the lion will eat straw like the ox,

the snake has dust for its food.
They will do no harm, they will not cause ruin
in all my holy mountain,'
says YHWH.

The place of 65:17 in its context

In my introduction I indicated that many exegetes are of the opinion that Isaiah 65:17 is the beginning of a new pericope which continues up to and including verse 25. In my opinion, there is every reason to consider not 65:17 as a new beginning, but 65:18 instead. The following arguments can be put forward for this:

(1) From verse 18 onwards, it is about a situation that lasts 'forever'. This conforms with the 'It will happen' of 65:24. The time indication, with which Isaiah 11:1-10, a passage which is resumed here (in Isaiah 65:24-25),[13] begins: 'on that day' is missing here. The situation outlined at 65:24-25 will be there forever.

(2) Compared to 65:13-17 the theme changes: in 65:18-25 it concerns Jerusalem and its people, where the first part revolved around the contrast between the 'you'-group and 'my servants'.

(3) Also the tone changes (see the motif words 'be joyful' and rejoice' in verses 18a, 18c-d, and 19a-b.[14] The 'you'-group that was first said to shout (v. 14b) is now called on to rejoice and be joyful (v. 18). And YHWH Himself also reports that He will be joyful for Jerusalem and He will rejoice for His people (v. 19).

> Wim Beuken, however, is of the opinion that with 'be joyful and rejoice forever' (2nd pers. plur.) God's servants are addressed, and thus that there is a change of address with regard to 'you' in the second part of the second speech (vv. 11-12) as well as with regard to the same 'you'-group at the beginning of the third speech (vv. 13-17).[15] That doesn't seem logical to me, given the fact that they were not addressed before. The claim in 65:13-17 always concerned the 'you'-group. A change of entitlement does not take place. The 'you'-group of 65:13-17 is called on to be joyful and to rejoice

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[13] J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, 'The Intertextual Relationship between Isaiah 65,25 and Isaiah 11,6-9', in: F. Garcia Martinez *et al.* (eds), *The Scriptures and the Scrolls*. Fs. A.S. van der Woude (VTSup, 49), Leiden etc 1992, 31-42; O.H. Steck, ' „… ein kleiner Knabe kann sie leiten": Beobachtungen zum Tierfrieden in Jesaja 11,6-8 und 65,25', in: H.J. Hausmann & H.-J. Zobel (Hrsg.), *Alttestamentliche Glaube und Biblische Theologie* (FS. H.D. Preuss), Stuttgart etc. 1992, 104-113.

[14] The reason for choosing Isaiah 65:17-25 as the Old Testament reading for the third Sunday of Advent (on December 17, 2023) in addition to John 3:22-30 for the ecumenical reading schedule, will have to do with the theme of joy that is discussed in John 3:29. In that context, it would have been more logical to choose Isaiah 65:18-23.

[15] Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B*, 83; R. Kratz, 'Too Many Hands? Isaiah 65-66 and the Reading of the Book of Isaiah', in: S.L. Birdsong & S. Frolov (eds), *Partners with God: Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney* (Claremont Studies in Hebrew Bible and Septuagint, 2), Claremont, CA 2017, 169-187, i.h.b. 182; K. Pauritsch, *Die neue Gemeinde: Gott sammelt Ausgestossene und Arme* (Jesaja 56-66) (AnBib, 47), Rome 1971, 174-175, is of the opinion that from verse 17 'das Problem der Scheiding in Frevler und Gottesfürchtige zurückgetreten ist, und nur mehr vom heilvollen Geschick des endzeitlichen Gottesvolk geredet wird'.

> forever what He is going to create. If the call had been addressed to the servants, it would be a superfluous call, as is clear from verse 14a. After all, it has already been said there *that* they will rejoice. A call is then unnecessary. No, it is the people who will supposedly cry out for help in the old dispensation, who will be called on to be joyful and rejoice in the new dispensation. The call concerns the joy and the rejoicing about what He is creating. The object of this verb is learned by the reader in the motivation: 'for I am going to create a Jerusalem of rejoicing and its people of joy.' This motivation is sandwiched in exactly between the call to the 'you'-group on the one hand and the announcement that He will rejoice over Jerusalem and be joyful with His people on the other. So we see three, actually four parties here: (1) the 'you'-group, (2) a rejoicing Jerusalem, (3) a joyful people and (4) 'I' announcing that – after the creation – He will rejoice over Jerusalem and its people. The reason for this rejoicing and joy is found in the sequel, 65:19c-23. It consists of two elements: one tells about the situation in Jerusalem (vv. 19c-20),[16] the other about the people (vv. 21-23).

I can substantiate my thesis that 65:17 is the end of 65:13-17 as follows:

(1) In Isaiah 40–55, the former/former [things] is/are always directly opposed to the new/new [things] (42:9; 43:18-19; 48:3-11). I see no reason to suppose that the connection between the two is absent in Isaiah 55–66 , in the sense that the former things and the new must be spread over two units. In the text a distinction is made, but then it is about the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, at the end of 65:13-17 and the creation of a rejoicing Jerusalem[17] at the beginning of 65:18-25.

(2) For my second point, I have to start with the structure of 65:13-17. This part begins with four occurrences of a pointed contrast between 'my servants' and 'you': 'Behold, my servants ..., but you ...' (vv. 13b-c, 13d-e, 13f-g and 14a-b). The 'you'-group are referred to at the end of the first divine speech: 'you who leave YHWH, who set a table for Gad and pour a mixed drink for Meni.' That they will hunger and thirst in contrast to 'my servants' has to do with that course of action. That will be their reward.

It has always been first 'my servants' and then 'you'. But now on this fifth time (vv. 15-17) the order is reversed. The 'you'-group is mentioned first (vv. 15a-b) followed by 'his servants' (vv. 15c-16d). This sends a first signal of the reversal that is about to take place. That 65:17 belongs to the previous verses (vv. 13-16) is also evident from the fact that the word 'behold', which occurs four times (vv. 13-14), once in each statement, is not absent in the fifth statement (vv. 15-17). This time, however, it is found not at the beginning as in the first four occurrences, but at the end ('for see ...' in v. 17a).

(3) Isaiah 65:16 ends with a double כִּי ('for'[18]) in verse 16e and verse 16f. A third כִּי follows in verse 17. These three כִּי-sentences belong together; they are held together by the theme of the former and the new: 'the former (troubles)' and 'a new heaven and a new earth':

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[16] 'In her', i.e. in the city (v. 19c-d); 'from there', i.e. coming from the city (v. 20).

[17] In the research, 'a new Jerusalem' is regularly spoken of. However, the word 'new' is missing here. Instead of the word 'new', TI uses the word 'rejoicing'.

[18] I see no reason (contra Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 2) to translate the second כִּי (v. 16f) differently, and that with 'yes', when both 65:16e and 65:17a can be properly translated with 'for'('because'). The second כִּי sentence forms the foundation of the sentence before it.

a for the *former* troubles are forgotten,
for they are hidden from my eyes,
b for behold, I am going to create a *new* heaven
b' and a *new* earth;
a' the *former* will not be remembered,
they will not ascend to the heart.

The scheme above shows that the three כִּי sentences form a chiasm: the new in b and b' is embraced by the former things (a and a').[19] In the research of this pericope , little attention has been paid to the fact that both terms occur twice, just as there has been little recognition of the repetition of 65:16e ('for the former troubles are forgotten') in 65:17c ('the former shall not be thought ...'). What is the reason for these repetitions? For the answer to that question, 'the former troubles' (v. 16e) must be linked to 'a new heaven' (v. 17a), and 'a new earth' (v. 17b) must be linked to 'the former' (v. 17c).[20] To continue with my reading of this text, it is necessary to first pay some attention to the expression 'heaven and earth'. This expression is understood by many interpreters as a merism,[21] and therefore seen as a description of the cosmos.[22] The mere fact that the poet uses a bicolon: a new heaven in the first and a new earth in the second colon should make the reader aware that this pair does not refer to the cosmos. We are dealing here with two different spheres: one, heaven is the sphere of God, the other, the earth is the sphere of man (Ps 115:16). Characteristic of the new heaven is that the former troubles have been forgotten by God,[23] and it is characteristic of the new earth that 'the former [things]' will not be thought of by man on earth.[24] In short, the newness of heaven is expressed in the immediately preceding verse (v. 15e-f), the newness of the earth is expressed in the immediately following verse (v. 17c-d). Finally, attention should be paid to the second הָרִאשֹׁנוֹת ('the former', v. 17c). Exegetes and translations tend to give substance to this. Leene translates with 'the former things'.[25] NLT translates 'the old ones' and NIRV describes it with 'things that have happened before'. Given the corresponding verse 16e, a reader will be inclined to fill it in with הַצָּרוֹת ('troubles').[26] Is this noun lacking here, because they are also 'hidden' from the eyes of

[19] Leene's chiasm, in: *Newness in Old Testament Prophecy*, 119, omits both v. 16e-f and v. 19a-b.

[20] In 65:16e-17 the old and the new creation are not contrasted, as K. Schmid, 'New Creation Instead of New Exodus: The Innerbiblical Exegesis and Theological Transformations of Isaiah 65:17-25', in: H. Barstadt *et al*. (eds), *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66* (FRLANT, 255), Göttingen 2014, 180-198, esp. 5,10, believes.

[21] Berges, 'Der neue Himmel und die neue Erde im Jesajabuch', 13; Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 65-66*, 136; D.K. Bediako, Isaiah's "New Heavens and New Earth" (Isa 65:17; 66:22), *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11/1 (2008), 1-20, esp. 12; M.J. Chan, 'Isaiah 65-66 and the Genesis of Reorienting Speech', *CBQ* 72/3 (2010), 445-463, esp. 458.

[22] In that case it would have been more logical to say: 'A new heaven and earth'.

[23] The verb occurs again in TI, in 65:11 'But you, leavers of YHWH, who forget my holy mountain'.

[24] A similar build-up as in 65:16e-17d occurs in 65:18a-19b. Here it begins with 'the you' group ('be joyful and rejoice') and ends with 'I', YHWH, ('I will rejoice and be joyful') and the creation of YHWH of Jerusalem and its people in between (cf. Berges, 'Der neue Himmel und die neue Erde', 12).

[25] Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde,* 2.

[26] So K. Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie im Tritojesajabuch: Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie* (WMANT, 62), Tübingen 1990, 170: '16b Ende der alten Not, 17a der Schöpfer der neuen Welt, 17b Ende der alten Not.'

men on earth (cf. v. 16f)? Various exegetes have pointed to the connection with Isaiah 43:16-21, in particular with the call 'Remember not the former ...' (43:18).[27] Leene sees a contrast between Deutero-Isaiah's 'Do not remember the former things' and the Trito-Isaiah's 'the former [things] are not remembered', in the sense that DI would evoke the history of salvation, more specifically the passage through the Sea of Reeds, with 'the former [things]', while here TI has the history of doom, the troubles, in mind.[28] But then I don't really understand why TI alludes to Isaiah 43:16-21 in this way. Why does he make this contrast? What happens is this: Israel is called upon in 43:18 not to remember the former [things]. The reader had not hear that the people were doing that. Now at the end of Isaiah we hear that the call will be heeded: 'The former [things] shall not be remembered.'

This brings me to a second point. Leene complements 'the former' with 'things'. In my opinion, the noun has been deliberately withheld after the adjective ('the former'). And that is not surprising when one sees what it is that 'the former' refers to. Indeed, it is the image of the crossing of the Reed Sea that is invoked, but beware, that crossing of the Reed Sea had two outcomes: the liberation of Israel, but the destruction of the Egyptians.[29] And it is that destruction that is referred to in 43:16-17:

> 'Thus says YHWH,
> who is making a way through the sea
> and a path through mighty waters,
> who let chariot and horse go out,
> armed forces and heroes together;
> they lie down, they do not rise again,
> they are extinguished, quenched like a flax candle.'

It is the word 'troubles, distress' that remains hidden in 43:18, even from the reader's eyes. What now happens at the end in Isaiah 65:13-17 is that what was hidden there is now revealed, for here at the end the reader hears the word 'troubles' that was not mentioned in 43:18.

There is a third point with which to conclude this relationship with Isaiah 43:16-21. What has not been formulated in 43:16-17 is how it is that the army and heroes lie down together, that they do not rise again, that they are extinguished, quenched like a flax candle. From Exodus 13:17–14:31, the reader knows that 'my lord YHWH' – to use the name from Isaiah 65:15b – is responsible for their death (Ex 14:30). It is precisely that word 'kill' that was not mentioned in 43:16-17, but is heard in 65:15b. That it is a curse for 'my chosen ones' and for every reader, does not seem strange. Finally, it touches on one of the most difficult to digest points of the story of the passage.

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[27] Van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde*, 54-59, however, he does not come to an interpretation of this relationship; Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel III B*, 81-82; Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 7,8; K. Schmid, 'New Creation Instead of New Exodus: The Innerbiblical Exegesis and Theological Transformations of Isaiah 65:17-25', in: H. Barstadt *et al.* (eds), *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66* (FRLANT, 255), Göttingen 2014, 180-198, esp. 5-10.

[28] Leene, *Een nieuwe hemel en een nieuwe aarde*, 8.

[29] H. Leene, 'Denkt niet aan het vroegere: Methodologische overwegingen bij de uitleg van Jesaja 43:18a', in: M.H. van Es *et al*. (red.), *Loven en geloven* (FS Nic. H. Ridderbos), Amsterdam 1975, 55-76. Also the fact that we are dealing with a plural: 'the former' gets no attention in Leene's work. This would concern both the downfall of Babylon (43:14-15) and the downfall of the Egyptian armies (43:16-17).

In conclusion, I want to dispute the contrast that Leene makes between Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah, on this point. The poet of chapters 56-66, who is called Trito-Isaiah, continues the theme that was begun in Deutero-Isaiah.[30] He makes public that which has previously remained hidden.

Final conclusions

In the research conducted with regard to the creation by YHWH of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:16e-17d) there are broadly speaking five views: (1) According to the interpreters what TI wants to say with these verses, is that YHWH creates a whole new cosmos, which entails the disappearance of the created cosmos.[31] (2) Others are of the opinion that these verses are about a 'renewal'/'transformation' of the existing created world.[32] (3) Still other researchers believe that these verses refer to the dawn of a new era, in which things are completely different from the way they were before.[33] (4) And still others are of the opinion that this creation of a new heaven and a new earth is not really the heart of this passage, but rather that this passage is about the transformation of the people of Israel.[34] (5) Allied to this is the view that the creation of a new heaven and a new earth will take its concrete form in the creation of a renewed Jerusalem.[35]

Characteristic for these views is that Isaiah 65:17 is seen as the beginning of a new episode, resulting in the loss of the connection between the past and the new. Maintaining this coherence is necessary for an appropriate interpretation of 65:16e-17d. The former and the new cannot be separated from each other. The question of what exactly the new is has received too little

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[30] Leene's view, in: *Newness in Old Testament Prophecy*, 137: 'Isa. 43 was misunderstood by the author of Isa. 65' is therefore incorrect.

[31] H. Leene, *De vroegere en de nieuwe dingen bij Deuterojesaja*, Amsterdam 1987, 20; 'In view of the meaning of the word, there is no reason not to think of 'new heaven' and 'new earth' as a heaven and earth that will replace the well-known' (tr.). O.H. Steck, 'Zu jüngsten Untersuchungen von Jes 56,1-8; 63,7-66,24, in: *Studien zur Tritojesaja* (BZAW, 203), Berlin 1991, 229-265, i.h.b. 254-255. On the other hand, J. van Ruiten, 'The Influence and Development of Is 65,17 in 1 and 91,16', in: J. Vermeylen (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah. Le livre d'Isaïe: Les oracles et leurs relectures. Unité et Complexité de l'ouvrage* (BETL, 81), Leuven 1989, 161-166, esp. 161: 'The creation of a new heaven and a new earth does not imply that the existing heaven and earth have to be destroyed, and replaced by totally new creations.'

[32] Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie*, 171; Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 65-66*, 136; A. Groenewald, 'A New Creation and a New City Overcome Trauma: Prophecy and Torah in Isaiah 65:16b-25', in: M. Häusl (Hrsg), *'Denkt nicht mehr am das Frühere'; Begründungsressourcen in Esra/Nehemia und Jes 40-66 im Vergleich* (BBB, 184), Göttingen 2018, 93-111, esp. 95,97,103,105; Green, *Toward Apocalyticism*, 122,123,124,125; M.B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal? The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation* (WUNT, 2/307), Tübingen 2011, 27; Irmiya, 'Eschatology as Transformation, 263-287, esp. 277ff.; Moskala, 'Does Isaiah 65:17-25 Describe the Eschatological New Heavens and the New Earth?', 192, believes that God renews heaven and earth according to his original purpose; S. Green, 'Jerusalem as the Centre of Blessing in Isaiah 65–66 and 1 Enoch 26:1–2'. in: A. Laato (ed.), *Understanding the Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Three Abrahamic Religions*, Leiden/Boston 2019, 41-70, esp. 43,44.

[33] P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalpytic*, Philadelphia 1975, 156.

[34] Beuken, *Jesaja: Deel IIIb*, 94; Bediako, 'Isaiah's "New Heavens and New Earth"', 9.

[35] Van Ruiten, *Een begin zonder einde*, 51; Weyde, '"For I am about to Create"', 209, 220.

attention in the research. And that also applies to the fact that the word ‘new’ occurs twice, each time with a different noun. In order to get a good view of the new, both with regard to heaven and with regard to earth, the surrounding verses are needed. The novelty of the ‘new heaven’ is that the former troubles have not only been forgotten by YHWH, but also hidden from his sight. The novelty of the ‘new earth’ is that the call of Isaiah 43:18 has been answered by the addressees: the former [things] will not be remembered of and they will not ascend to the heart of the addressees.[36] It may be clear that a close reading of these verses shows that the interpretation must be sought in a different direction than has been done so far in the research.

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[36] Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie*, 172, and Bediako, ‘Isaiah’s New Heavens and New Earth’, 7, are of the opinion that the new heavens and the new earth are described in 65:19b-25 and 65:17-25 respectively.

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