

Isaiah's Oracle (4:2-6; 11:1-9): Hope for the Congolese if they Benefit from the **נָמָץ Meaningful senses**

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ABSTRACT

*Isaiah's oracle (4:2; 11:1-2) respectively on **נָמָץ** and **הַשְׁעָר** (נָצֶר) is meaningful in the social situation of hopelessness in Judah. This hopeless socio-religious¹ situation in Zion-Jerusalem elicited Isaiah's oracle in order to challenge the leaders as regards their exercise of authority. In a literary style (the synonymous and repetitive parallelisms) the oracle relates **נָמָץ** from its literal usage (germination of the plants) to its metaphoric sense (the sprouting forth of a rightful leadership) from the Davidic line. This twofold meaning of **נָמָץ** in Isaiah's message had challenged the Judean leadership as regards its moral values improvement which would have led the people of the time to enjoy the wealth of the land. This paper, firstly, analyses twofold meaning of **נָמָץ** in Isaiah's oracle. Secondly, it discusses the leadership's exercise of authority and its managerial responsibilities of the wealth of the land in the Democratic Republic of Congo (thereafter DRC). Thirdly, an appropriative reading of **נָמָץ** texts in their contexts provides the leadership in the Congo with insight on how to take advantage of the land fertility.*

A INTRODUCTION

Isaiah's oracle on the emergence of "a true leader" is introduced by the phrase **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** "in that day" (3:18; 4:1). On this day people change their minds and God installs "a loyal leader" who will obey his instructions and do people justice (4:1-2). It is then obvious that the circumstances under which the "true leadership" emerges is the disobedience of the current Davidic kings to God's instructions. God's instructions played a constitutional role in ruling over the people of God. In this connection the socio-political and religious contexts are taken together with regard to the aforementioned conditions of ruling over the

¹ In this paper the socio-religious life of the Judean people includes all aspects of their life so far as everything of their concern was drawn from the Temple organisation. This had been perceived after the Temple was destroyed in 587 B.C.E. "The loss of the Temple had compelled the Judeans to seek other forms of worship." Furthermore, the destruction of the sanctuary foregrounded "the downfall of the Davidic dynasty." This meant that the socio-economic and political life of the Judean people had now to be maintained in integrating "other nations' cultures," especially their religions. Joseph N. Mavinga, "The Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah: An Experience for Judean People," *JSem* 17/1 (2008): 243.

people of God. The Judean kings were supposed to promote peace, prosperity and security in the community. Isaiah's use of *מִזְבֵּחַ* in 4:2-6 is taken literally so far as this concept of branch is in synonymous parallelism with the "fruit of the earth." Once the first passage (4:2-6) is compared with the second one (11:1-9), a royal ideology is dealt with through a literary style (poetry) of the two aforementioned passages. Isaiah (vv. 1-5) emphasises moral values that would empower "a good leader" in order to enable him not only to do people justice but also to exploit the land fertility for the common good in society.²

The Davidic kings had missed the point in ruling over Judah as they turned away from God's instructions. The "tree imagery" in 11:1-9 symbolises not only the release of the current Davidic kings³ but also the "sprouting forth" of "a rightful leadership" (11:1-3a).⁴ African countries, especially, the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC), are in dire need of efficient and loyal leadership to achieve this twofold purpose consisting of the establishment of social justice and the exploitation of the wealth of the land for the people's prosperity.⁵

This article intends to demonstrate that putting Isaiah's *מִזְבֵּחַ* twofold meaning into application would bring about socio-economic, political and religious prosperity in the Congo. The article focuses on the failure of social justice as administrated by the Judean leadership in Zion-Jerusalem. The latter became unable "to maintain its vocation of" ruling over the people "on behalf of Yahweh."⁶ Similarly, this is happening in the DRC so far as the ruling classes do not apply the State Constitution in their exercise of authority. In this respect, I analyse the *מִזְבֵּחַ* texts in Isaiah duly considered in their respective con-

² John D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1985), 169.

³ Considering that Isaiah's words in chs. 1-11 are almost completely from the time of Ahaz, the king of Judah, it is then obvious that the prophet foresaw the removal of the Judean leadership later on. Joseph Jensen and William H. Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2005), 231.

⁴ Here fits in the concept of "remnant of the people" in Judean history. That concept of remnant (v. 3) is expanded to include "the remainder" in Zion and the separated portion in Jerusalem. I focus on the "remnant of the people" who survived from the threatening of seventy-year stay in Exile. This time had been a learning experience that brought the remnant of the people back to the obedience of God's instruction. "The Exile played an educative role which helped (not only Judean leaders but also the people) to change direction and return to obeying God and practicing his instructions." (Mavinga, "The Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah," 262-263).

⁵ Shah M. Tarzi would say that the Congolese should slave away at their potentially rich state and promote agricultural and farming activities to ensure the food security of the people (4:2b). (Shah M. Tarzi, "International Norms, Trade, and Human Rights: A Perspective on Norm Conformity," *JSPES* 27/2 (2002): 187).

⁶ Mavinga, "The Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah," 241.

texts. Secondly, I discuss the way the Congolese ruling class tries to administer social justice in the DRC. Thirdly, an appropriative reading of the texts on the "shoot" will provide the ruling class and people with insight on how the government should draw up a budget from the land production in the DRC.

B ISAIAH'S ORACLE IN ITS CONTEXT

Isaiah's oracle (4:2-6; 11:1-9) presents a twofold meaning of פָּרָץ, רֹאשׁ and נָצֵר. The first meaning explains an imagery of "a rightful leadership" emerging from the line of Jesse (4:4; 11:1-2).⁷ The second meaning refers to the emerged leadership and its commitment to exploiting the land for the common good in society (4:2). This is fully explained through a literary style (4:2), namely synonymous parallelism pertaining to imageries in the book.⁸ The oracle (4:2-6) is about Jerusalem after the days of judgment.⁹ The phrase, "at this time," refers to the planting of Yahweh which shall flourish in Israel (v. 2).¹⁰ In exploring the meaning of the oracle duly considered in its contexts, I discuss the socio-religious situation of the dynastic oracle in 4:2 and 11:1-2.

1 Isaiah4:2-6

The unit 4:2-6 belongs to a shorter collection in chapters 2-4 ending on a note of hope which was fulfilled only after Isaiah's lifetime.¹¹ Historically that was a

⁷ פָּרָץ (growth) in 4:2 "is in parallelism with 'fruit of the earth.' The literary style here underlines that פָּרָץ is taken literally, not as a figurative term for the sprouting forth of 'a rightful leadership' as we read it in 11:1-2, 3-5, 6-8; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12." Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233, 237-238. The unit (11:1-9) uses the "tree" imagery so common to royal houses in the Ancient Near East. "A loyal leader" was expected to uphold justice and righteousness (Jer 23:5-6; Ps 72). He was to bring forth justice when the Lord's Spirit came on him (Isa 42:1, 3, 4). (Margaret Barker, "Isaiah," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* [eds. James D. Dunn and John W. Rogerson;] Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 509.

⁸ The use of the related verb פָּרָץ in Isaiah also supports this broader connotation, the literal and metaphoric senses of פָּרָץ; Isa 42:9; 43:19; 44:4; 45:8; 55:10; 58:8; 61:11. (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [London, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000], 203).

⁹ The passage in 4:2-6 refers to a time of suffering in Jerusalem which just has passed. The city and its people have been purified under the Lord's special intervention. Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

¹⁰ The "fear of the Lord" refers to "a favourite quality in the wisdom tradition (Prov 1:7)." Verses 3-5 present a model of leadership's moral values enabling them to administer social justice in favour of the poor and needy. Isaiah foresaw the restoration of right judgment as a condition for a better future (1:26). The achievement of social justice in the community brings about peace, prosperity or well-being in the land (11:6-8, 9). Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 172; Barker, "Isaiah," 509; Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 238.

¹¹ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

time of learning experience for the Judeans who went into the Exile. The "branch of the Lord" would emerge in order to restore the survivors of "the land and its remnant" (v. 2). To the latter is referred directly by the adjective קדושׁ "holy" whereas, in the exalted phrases of v. 2, similar expressions are applied to the fruit of the land, not to the people.¹² The phrase, "the branch" of the Lord" (v. 2), in its literal sense, refers to the "productivity of the land" in order to promote social prosperity in the country. The phrase, "the day of the Lord," is repeated for the third time in the section.¹⁴

The other two verses (3:18; 4:1) suggest the Judean destruction. But, the oracular phrase (v. 2) בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא "in that day," introduces for the first time in the book, a formula that has not announced bad news. The prophet oversaw a future as splendour of the "shoot" planted by Yahweh; alluding to the previous collapse of the Judean State. מַחְמָץ is used as a metaphor for the sprouting forth of a "loyal king" from the Davidic line.¹⁵ The promise then encapsulates hope for an eventual restoration for a better future in the community. It uses an imperfect verb יְהִי meaning "it will be." Despite the Hebrew syntax which does not differentiate the present from the future, nevertheless, the "loyal king" points to the coming days. The future is thus preferred instead of the present. The two major units of the section (vv. 3-4 and 5-6) are introduced by perfect verbs with converse וְ, וְהִי and וְבָרָא which respectively mean, "and it will be"; "and [הִ] will create." In these units, the use of imperfect and perfect verbs with converse וְ sustains the time viewed in the future.

That special time is pictured in the usage of words: לְאָזֶן "a majesty"; וְלִתְפָּאָרָת "and glory, honour." The term לְאָזֶן meaning "a beauty" is also used in Isaiah (28:1, 4, 5).¹⁶ The Hebrew phrase וְלִכְבּוֹד meaning "and for weight" has

¹² Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 50.

¹³ The LXX translates it as a light shining out, as it does in the Aramaic version. It means that the LXX takes the meaning of "shining forth" rather than "springing forth" from the ground, hence ἐπιλάμπει ὁ θέος (from ἐπιλάμπω "shine forth," cf. Syr צמָה אָ and meaning "brightness"). Other early Greek translations make the same translation, rendering מַחְמָץ as ἀνατολή which means "the east, rising of the sun, or another heavenly body in its ascendancy." This is similar to the LXX in Zech 3:8 and 6:12 translated as ἀνατελί "shining or rising." See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 203; Barker, "Isaiah," 501.

¹⁴ "The day of the Lord" is generally understood to mean judgment but here the phrase introduces change of the social situation of the Judean people. The phrase "the glory of the survivors" suggests a better future opening up, even though the shadow of the past still hangs over the present. Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 203; Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

¹⁵ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 49.

¹⁶ Jeremiah describes God's land as לְצֹבֵי נֶהָלָת which means "the inheritance of beauty." Ezekiel speaks of Canaan as distinguished from the nations by its "beauty" (20:6, 15). Daniel calls Israel's land that is, "in the beautiful land in Zion, missing in the Hebrew!" and לְבָרֶץ-צֹבֵי קָדוֹשׁ which means "in the mountain of

the connotation of "importance and respect" (Isa 4:2).¹⁷ It implies a time which is fulfilled (v. 2) by "the branch" emerging forth. Verse 2 presents a synonymous parallelism of צמַח "the growth" with פְּרִי הָאָרֶץ "and the fruit of the earth." This parallelism indicates that צמַח is taken in both senses, literally and metaphorically. The "branch," at the same time, symbolises the growth of the plants and the sprouting forth of a "loyal king" to come.¹⁸

The land of Israel can be called "her majesty" as well as "her beauty" (Nah 2:3). The prophets spoke of Yahweh alone as Israel's majesty (Amos 6:8; Hos 5:5; 7:10). Both words are appropriated to Babylon, referring to the pride and majesty of the Chaldeans (Isa 13:19). Other texts call Yahweh alone יְהָוָה לְאַלְמָנָה "YHWH alone will be your [Israel's] glory" (Isa 60:19; 63:15). This infers that the country will be the subject of praise in contrast to the long period of difficulty Israel has erstwhile experienced. The promise is for the "surviving remnant of Israel," שְׁאֵלָל פְּלִיטָה (v. 2) which includes the remainder in Zion and the separated portion in Jerusalem (v. 3).¹⁹

The term קָדוֹשׁ "holy" is applied directly to the remnant people while the exalted phrases of v. 2 are applied to the fruit of the land. It expresses that those who remain are not simply "escapees" but have been designated as "holy," as the Lord is (6:3).²⁰ Therefore, v. 3 has to do with the people who would inhabit God's city.

Verse 4 is characterised a repetitive parallelism בְּנוֹת־צִיּוֹן וְאֶת־דְּמִי יְרוּשָׁלָם meaning the "sexual materials of Zion's daughters and blood-guilt of the city."²¹ These materials symbolise the impurity of the people which has to be washed away by the Lord.²² These literary styles (the synonymous and repetitive parallelisms) in this section play a key role. First, they relate צמַח from its literal usage (germination of the plants) to its metaphoric sense (the sprouting forth of a "loyal leadership") from the Davidic line. Second, they emphasise the process undertaken by the Lord to cleanse Zion and her inhabitants.²³ The

holy beauty." The expression characterises the Holy Land and describes the future fulfilment of God's purpose for Israel in the land. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 49-50.

¹⁷ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 50.

¹⁸ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

¹⁹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 50.

²⁰ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

²¹ Paul Procter (ed.), *International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 519.

²² Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 48; Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

²³ "The passing allusion to the purification of Jerusalem probably does not refer to the tirade against women in 3:16-26 but rather takes menstrual blood as a type of anything that is rendered unclean (cf. Lev 12:1-2; 15:19-30). Some terms such as נַטָּה, "filth," usually "excrement" are named in Isa 28:3; 36:12 and 2 Kgs 18:28, and form a hendiadys construction with בְּנֵי דָם "the blood" matching or washing (רַחֲץ and אַדְם)

"daughters of Zion" represent the remnant²⁴ of the people who are cleansed and freed from the disaster of the Exile (v. 4).

Verse 5 seems to recapitulate the Israelite history of the exodus. It is expressed in the phrase לְבָבָה אָשָׁר עַנְּנָן יוֹמָם וּנְשָׁן וְנִגְהָה which means "a white cloud by the day and a sign of fire by night." This refers to a new, different exodus from that of Egypt. The mentioned signs (v. 5) were recognised as proof of Yahweh's presence.²⁵ Verse 6 has the form of a repetitive parallelism, meaning "it will be a shelter and shade." In this specific context, the "rightful leader" to come will bring about social justice, peace and security as the means of hope for a better future in the community.²⁶

2 ISAIAH 11:1-9

This section 11:1-9 evokes the "rightful king" to come. It is subdivided into three units. The first unit (vv. 1-3a) is about "the tree imagery," meaning "and will emerge forth a shoot." It speaks of רוח יהוה "spirit of the Lord," which comes upon the "loyal leader" to empower him to be efficient to his task (v. 2). This "leader" to come will be obedient to the Lord (v. 3a). The tree "branches" are cut off, symbolising the Davidic kings who are removed "in favour of" the arrival of the "true king" (v. 1).²⁷ The second unit (vv. 3b-5) gives the moral values of the "loyal leader" to come. He will "administer justice in favour of" the poor and needy in the community.²⁸ The third unit (vv. 6-9) underlines social justice which brings about peace, security or prosperity in society. All these contribute to the "knowledge of the Lord" (v. 9).²⁹ These

which means "rinsing." These last terms are used in cultic contexts (Ezek 40:38; 2 Chron 4:6)." Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 204.

²⁴ "The remnant of the people" is a significant notion in prophetic messages in the Old Testament which originated in disasters which some prophets witnessed. Disasters were perceived as God's judgment upon the chosen people. The fact that the judgment had not exterminated the whole people meant that the people's election was not reappraised. In this connection, "the remnant of the people" had been a divine grace which required a response from those whom it benefited. After the disaster of the exile, "the remnant of the people" referred the Judean people who survived and returned from the exile. They were those who historically enjoyed the Lord's favour in rebuilding the sanctuary of the Lord in Zion-Jerusalem. Later in Isaiah's prophecy, the judgment referred to the final event at the end of the world. Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 232-233.

²⁵ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233; Barker, "Isaiah," 502.

²⁶ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 233.

²⁷ See Mic 5:1 for a similar "return to origins." Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237; Jacob Stromberg, "The 'Root of Jesse' in Isaiah 11:10: Postexilic Judah, or Postexilic Davidic King?" *JBL* 127/4 (2008): 656.

²⁸ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 169-170; Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237-238.

²⁹ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237-238.

social conditions reflect from good governance by a "loyal leadership."³⁰ The unit of vv. 6-9 sets off and relates to the preceding section by **וְיְהִי** "and it will be" (v. 5). Even though the unit does not add the phrase "in that day," nevertheless, it relates to the preceding description of "branch."³¹ In fact, the "loyal king" to come was expected to uphold justice and righteousness (Jer 23:5-6; Ps. 72) in contrast to the rule of the previous Davidic kings.³²

The lack of justice or righteousness during the rule of the previous Davidic kings elicited the oracle on the "loyal king" to come. The reference to justice, righteousness and other related qualities occur at total of five times in the unit 11:1-9.³³ These leaders' moral and cultural values would bring about a just order in which the poor and powerless could enjoy equal rights in the community. In this section, a royal ideology is underlined, by the use of a literary style (poetry). Most of vv. 1-5 are written in repetitive parallelism emphasising what the "loyal leader" to come would be and how he would deal with the community.³⁴

In v. 2, two metaphors are used, "offshoot of the stump"³⁵ and "sprout from the root," in a repetitive parallelism (v. 1). The metaphor of the stump is closely connected with the end of chapter 10 (vv. 32-34).³⁶ Metaphors used in Isa 11:1 refer to a person as indicated by the use of the masculine singular pronouns in the verse. These pronouns refer to an offspring of David's royal family, the Son of Jesse.³⁷

Isaiah 11:1-9 focuses more on **וְיְהִי** than on **רוּחַ** which is found solely in v. 2. The question arises how one could remove this impression of the emphasis on **וְיְהִי** in disfavour of **רוּחַ**? In my view, the impression is removed when one considers that the emphasis is upon Yahweh's spirit (v. 2), and the fear and

³⁰ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 168.

³¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 263.

³² Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 169; Barker, "Isaiah," 508.

³³ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 169.

³⁴ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 169.

³⁵ "The Septuagint translation only speaks of how the Lord of hosts will mightily confound the glorious ones; and the haughty in pride shall be crushed, and the lofty ones shall be brought low. And the lofty ones shall fall by the sword, and Lebanon shall fall with his lofty ones, apparently, this is referring to high and mighty men, perhaps including the kings. Against this background it is understandable that the translator did not use an equivalent for **אָז** which means 'stump,' but repeated the Greek word **πίζα** meaning 'root.'" Cf. Raija Sollamo, "Messianism and the 'Branch of David': Isaiah 11:1-5 and Genesis 49:8-12," in *The Septuagint and Messianism* (ed. Michael A. Knibb; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 360.

³⁶ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237.

³⁷ Sollamo, "Messianism and the 'Branch of David,'" 360.

knowledge of Yahweh (v. 2) which are all key expressions within the text.³⁸ Verses 4 and 5 become clearly directed and may be understood as being applied to Yahweh as a "loyal king." Therefore, these expressions refer to חַמְלָא as well.³⁹ Righteousness and faithfulness were basic characteristics required of a "loyal king" who would be honoured by Yahweh, the God of Israel.

The term רָשָׁת "branch" only occurs here and in Prov 14:3. The רָשָׁת "shoot" or נָצֵר "branch" does not spring forth from new ground (a new dynasty).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it sprouts forth from an old stump or root. This implies that Jesse's offspring would take on new life.⁴¹ John B. Job uses the same words to picture the growth of an apparently dead tree.⁴² The term רָשָׁת is translated here as "shoot" or "branch." But נָצֵר "branch," appears only here in the literature pertaining to the royal Davidic lineage. The Hebrew word נָצֵר meaning "blossom," "sprout" or "offshoot" appears four times in the OT. Three of these occur in the book of Isaiah (11:1; 14:19 and 60:21), and once in the book of Daniel (11:7).⁴³ Isaiah 11:1 has verbs in the perfect tense with converse נָצַר and נָצֵר which respectively mean "he shall grow out" of his roots and "he shall emerge out." Both verbs describe the "branch" as a symbol of a "loyal king" sprouting forth from the line of Jesse.⁴⁴

Verse 2 has the phrase רִוחַת יְהֹוָה which means "the spirit of the Lord."⁴⁵ Yahweh's spirit is his strength provided to human beings to enable them to achieve their purpose. The divine strength is often beyond them, as in the case of Moses (Num 11:17), the judges (Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), prophets (Mic 3:8), David (1 Sam 16:13), and others. The mentioned qualities describe Isaiah's experience with Ahaz and Hezekiah. They provide kings with wise hearts and insights that can bring them back to obey God's instructions (Isa 5:21; 9:5; 29:14).⁴⁶

³⁸ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 170.

³⁹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 170.

⁴⁰ The Hebrew terms are rarer than the equivalents employed by the translator. The fresh growth is described in the Greek version, as ράβδος, "shoot" or "branch." Sollamo, "Messianism and the 'Branch of David,'" 360.

⁴¹ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 171.

⁴² John B. Job, *Jeremiah's Kings: A Study of the Monarchy in Jeremiah* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 24.

⁴³ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 171; Sollamo, "Messianism and the 'Branch of David,'" 360.

⁴⁴ Stromberg, "The 'Root of Jesse' in Isaiah 11:10," 655-656.

⁴⁵ Isaiah 11:1-2 LXX speaks of ράβδος meaning 'the coming forth from the stump of Jesse' upon whom πνεύμα βούλης will rest. As a result, he will be filled with "the spirit of the fear of Yahweh." Joachim Schaper, "Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophecy and The Orality/Literality Problem," *VT* 55/3 (2006): 375.

⁴⁶ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237; Schaper, "Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophecy," 375.

Isaiah 11:3-5 gives a "model of kingly virtues which characterise the 'loyal leader' who should do people justice and care for the poor and needy."⁴⁷ Prophetic ideals have operated to transform expectations which spring from the dynastic oracle (29:18-19), although such idealisation has parallels in the royal psalms (Ps 72:1-4, 12-14). In vv. 6-8, justice brings about peace in the community. This social condition depicts a return to paradise as an image of perfect restoration. Verse 9 attributes to the transforming power through the *אֶת-יְהֹוָה* "the knowledge of the Lord." It contrasts with the way the leadership and people have behaved before the disaster of the Babylonian exile.⁴⁸

3 A Conclusive Meaning of Isaiah 4:2 and 11:1-2

The connection of both senses (literal and metaphoric) regarding *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* suggests first, God's providence in the sprouting forth of a "loyal leader" and the growth of plants and people, even their healing.⁴⁹ Being in a synonymous parallel construction with the "fruit of the earth," *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* is an image of prosperity of the land. The emerging of a "loyal leadership" to come will exclusively depend on Yahweh. As a result it will promote a sense of social justice and prosperity in the community. The majestic way a "shoot" emerges forth, is for the escapees of Israel, a sign of new hope for a better future in the public life of the people.

The term *שָׁדֶךָ* which means "holy," underlines a particular favour received by the escaped remnant. The growth of the plants reveals God's splendour in his creation as it should be promoted by a "rightful leadership" to come in the community. Therefore, those who remained were not simply "survivors" but they were also designated as "holy." They participated in many of activities which restored the land. In my view, these events would have taken place as follows:

⁴⁷ Isaiah 11:3-5 (LXX) has seven terms instead of six (using the repetition of fear of the Lord), and from this come the "seven gifts of the Holy Spirit" essential to the religious or State leadership (vv 3-5). Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 238.

⁴⁸ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 237-238.

⁴⁹ "The *hiphil* forms of the verb *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* are used several times in the literal sense. Ezekiel describes Zedekiah as a vine that Nebuchadnezzar, portrayed as an eagle, plants and that 'sprouts' forth with branches but then stretches out its roots toward another eagle, Egypt (Ezek 17:6). This disloyalty can only lead to disaster; the vine is pulled up by its roots, and its sprouting shoots wither where it once grew forth, *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* (vv. 9-10). In a more general (metaphoric) sense, *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* refers to the growth of hair (Lev 13:27; Judg 16:22) or of healing skin (Isa 52:8). In a purely metaphoric sense, *תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ* can also be said of people. One person dies, and another springs forth from the earth (Job 8:19), which asserts that the generations are like leaves sprouting forth on trees: one dies and another matures, *לְמַגֵּשֶׁ*." Cf. Helmer Ringgren, "תִּמְגַּשֵּׁ," *TDOT* 12: 410-411.

- (i) The disaster had been an opportunity for the people to be cleansed from idolatrous acts. This allowed the return from the foreign land to Zion-Jerusalem (vv. 5-6).⁵⁰
- (ii) At that time, *תְּרוֹמָה יְהֹוָה* "shoot of the Lord" would be both pleasant and majestic.
- (iii) The survivors in Israel would enjoy prosperity in the land (vv. 2-3).
- (iv) Peace, well-being, health and security would be established through the "loyal leader" (v. 6).

This "loyal leader" to come is given power and wisdom to fulfil his task (v. 2). Under this condition, the leadership would receive ability and competency to promote social justice, righteousness, peace, harmony and prosperity in the community (vv. 3-5). In this regard, Joachim Schaper⁵¹ argues that a wise heart and insight help a "leader" to be efficient to achieve his/her responsibility.

The Septuagint (LXX) translation underlines the same meaning as in the Masoretic Text (MT) of Isa 11:1-2. The "loyal leader" to come will receive strength, wisdom and insight to bring about fairness and unity in society. "Strength" makes for good counsel while "the fear of the Lord" expresses a favourite quality in the wisdom tradition (Prov 1:7). This enables leadership to administer social justice and fairness in favour of the poor and needy. The "loyal leader" would exercise the transforming power through his *דִּעָה אֲתִיהָנָה* "knowledge of the Lord."

C THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF THE LAND WEALTH EXPLOITATION

The Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DRC) is in the centre of Africa, and is now the second largest country on the continent, after Algeria, and the first largest sub-Saharan country.⁵² The country covers an area of 2,345,410 square kilometres in the heart of Africa. During a half century of colonial rule, Belgium exploited only 30,528 square kilometres throughout the country.⁵³

⁵⁰ In my view, the idea of an eschatological remnant represented by the people of all nations and races who would enjoy God's presence at the end of the world, fits in here.

⁵¹ Schaper, "Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophecy," 375.

⁵² This new position of the Congo takes into account the current division of Sudan. Sudan had been since then the second largest country after Algeria on the continent; now, its place is taken by the DRC. Mavinga, "The Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah," 251.

⁵³ Thomas Turner, *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality* (London, N.Y.: Zed Books, 2007), 24.

From the colonial rule up to the present days, the land wealth in the DRC is not really exploited for the benefit of the people.⁵⁴ One can blame the Western powers for being responsible for the current social devastation in the Congo. Such a situation is mainly caused by the State's mismanagement of public affairs which is characterised by the lack of livestock and farming activities throughout the country. The extremely short-sighted vision on the part of state leadership prevented the development of agricultural sectors of the country. In this regard, Mavinga argues:

[A]n unfair socio-political administration has been imposed to the Congolese people since the colonial rule up to the time after the independence of the Congo. The colonial model of exploitation of the country's wealth has now been adopted by the Congolese leadership.⁵⁵

A strong desire for power and position by most leaders within the leadership creates conflict among them and within their respective political parties. This is still preventing the ruling class from planning and organising the major goals for achieving the development of the State. Cardinal Malula (a church leader in Kinshasa at the time of Mobutu's presidency) tried in vain to remind the ruling class about the right way of ruling over the State.⁵⁶

Conflict often arises among the ruling classes in the Congo so far as they focus on their individual interests which are incompatible to the common good in the community.⁵⁷ Interpersonal conflict among the community's leadership produces polarise factions and groups that mutually distrust one another.⁵⁸ This has been a root cause of bad governance reflecting from a poor State leadership. A French proverb says: *il n'y a pas de mauvaises troupes il n'y a que de mauvais chefs* meaning, "we never have bad troops but only bad warlords."

It suggests that to develop better social life in the DR Congo, the leadership has to take its responsibility in making new ways to promote better social conditions for the people. In this regard, one of the best way to succeed is to create throughout the country fisheries and farming enterprises. If the leadership's and people's abilities could be used without discriminating against one another, it would then be a way leading to a suitable State administration based on the people's rights.

⁵⁴ Emmanuel M. Katongole, "Violence and Social Imagination: Rethinking Theology and Politics in Africa," *R&T* 12/2 (2005): 148.

⁵⁵ Mavinga, "The Babylonian Exile in Jeremiah," 252.

⁵⁶ René de Haes, "Justice et développement: communautaire dans la pensée et l'œuvre du Cardinal Malula," *Telema* 97 (1999): 43.

⁵⁷ Gregory Tillett, *Resolving Conflict: A Practical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-4.

⁵⁸ Adrian Furnham, *The Psychology of Behaviour at Work: The Individual in the Organisation* (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 408.

D THE LINK BETWEEN ISAIAH'S **רְמֵץ** TEXTS IN THEIR CONTEXTS AND THE CONGOLESE LAND WEALTH CONTEXT

As a land imagery of prosperity, **רְמֵץ** connotes plants that germinate and guarantee food and security in society. This is ensured by rightful leadership as symbolised by **רְמֵץ** in its figurative sense. Isaiah announces the emergence of "a loyal leadership" which would be efficient, not only, to promote social justice in the land; but also, to install livestock and farming activities for the common good in the community. Similarly, the current land wealth situation in the Congo does not follow a twofold meaning of **רְמֵץ** as underlined in Isaiah's oracle. However, the story of **רְמֵץ** is of relevance for the emergence of a good leadership which would promote the land products in the Congo.

Isaiah's oracle on **רְמֵץ** underlines the land productivity based on its managerial exploitation as a result of good governance of the State. The emergence of "an adequate leadership" determines the development of a good society for all where everyone can feel home. The Congo's mineral resources and the fertility of its soil would guarantee the people's prosperity, security and well-being. The current social crisis in the Congo requires the application of the meaning of **רְמֵץ** in both senses.

Yahweh's providential act qualifies and provides the people with "a loyal leadership" that is efficient to manage for the better social life. Yahweh's providential act is similar to the way he causes every sort of plant to grow from the ground, **וְאֶת־הָרָקֶב** (Gen 2:9) as his creative act. Such a providential act would bring about, in the Congo's situation, a social change for the people as it had happened in Zion-Jerusalem following the return from the Babylonian Exile.⁵⁹

A renewal of the socio-situation (following the Babylonian Exile) exclusively depended on Yahweh promoting a sense of newness for the "leadership" and society. The DRC has already received several blessings in terms of its topography, presenting a major water system and a warm tropical climate. This provides the country with ample rain all the year around.

God promised his servant Israel that he would "pour water on the 'thirsty land' so that Israel's descendants shall spring up like willows by flowing streams" (Isa 44:4). God's glory is to deal with a prosperous, loyal, and hard working people who are efficient to transform their social life.⁶⁰ The current government has to setup fisheries or agricultural enterprises in order to

⁵⁹ Barker, "Isaiah," 501.

⁶⁰ Carroll Stuhlmueller, "Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy; Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2005), 336.

improve the economic life of the people.⁶¹ Under these conditions, the current governing class, in the DRC, would be efficient to provide the people with their needs.⁶²

E AN INTERACTIVE READING OF THE *מִזְבֵּחַ* TEXTS WITH THE CONTEXT

This section deals with Isaiah's texts on the "shoot" in their contests and the land wealth situation in the DRC conversing with each other. In the process, I play a supervisory role as a third pole directing the dialogue of the two contexts. "As a result, a new insight arises in order to show to the"⁶³ Congolese ruling class a way to benefit the people regarding the exploitation of the wealth of the land.

1 The *מִזְבֵּחַ* Oracle in Isaiah 4

The oracle in Isaiah suggests a stimulating and challenging response to the social poverty in the Congo. The fertile land which, once exploited, would germinate plants and produce food, able to fight against hunger in the DRC. The social crisis in the Congo "is not so much" caused by the Western interference in its internal affairs, but rather it is a leadership crisis "within the community."⁶⁴

The hope for a better future in the Judean societies was introduced by the phrase: "in that day." It was a day of social change, that of the renewal of several aspects of public life in Judah. A social change would be occasioned by a "rightful leadership" in the community. Such a leadership would be efficient to promote the land wealth through farming and livestock activities. A prevalent level of social injustice and corruption in Zion-Jerusalem hindered any social development. This was due to the leadership's disobedience to God's instructions.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Dennis A. Rondinelli, "Decentralising Public Services in Developing Countries: Issues and Opportunities," *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 14/1 (1989): 77.

⁶² Rondinelli, "Decentralising Public Services," 79.

⁶³ Joseph N. Mavinga, "Jeremiah's Royal Oracle: A Contextual Reading of 23:1-8 and 33:14-26 in the African Leadership Situation," *Old Testament Essays* 24/1 (2011): 134-135.

⁶⁴ Paul B. Decock, "The Wealth of Babylon and the Wealth of the New Jerusalem: Some Critical Questions about Robert Royalty's the Streets of Heaven," in *Poverty and Riches in the Bible: Exegetical Readings in the Context of the Church as Family of God in Africa* (ed. Jean-Bosco B. Matand, Paul Béré, André Kabasele, Mary S. Nwachukwu and Antony I. Umoren; Kinshasa: Jules Impress, 2009), 287.

⁶⁵ Mavinga, "Jeremiah's Royal Oracle," 122.

Similar situation prevails in the DRC as far as the ruling class does not put into practice the constitution of the State; but rather focuses on their personal interests. In this connection, the moral and social corruption of the leadership and people are obvious in the community. It is then argued that these disvalues have caused an "individualistic [exercise of] power" by the leadership in the DRC.⁶⁶ Because of this, the exploitation of the land wealth and its distribution among the people had been hindered since the time of the independence of African countries.

A "loyal leadership" would be efficient to encourage and promote agricultural, fishing and other productive activities in order to provide people with social prosperity in the DRC. Suitable social conditions within a community sustain and reinforce moral and cultural values among people. The disaster of the Exile intervened as a suffering experience which cleansed and purified the Judeans from their idolatrous behaviour. It opened a perspective that changed the minds of the leaders, which not only impacted on the rest of the people, but also on the development of several sectors in the country.

In Zion-Jerusalem, the leadership and people were corrupt due to the devastation of public life in Judah. The restoration of people's minds reflects on that of Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah (v. 4). Such a restoration is expected in Kinshasa, the Capital city of the DRC. Applied to "a loyal leadership," a figurative sense of "branch" suggests that it would be qualified to manage a better social life for the people. It is indeed, Yahweh himself causing every sort of tree to grow from the ground, *adamah* (Gen 2:9) as his creative act.

There is a close link between a good leadership and the improvement of social conditions in the land (country). It implies suitable governance based on an adequate administration of justice in the state. After the Babylonian Exile, the leadership's mind change brought about managerial responsibilities among the governing class and people in Zion-Jerusalem. In contrast to the current ruling class in the DRC, its managerial and patriotic responsibilities are not yet focusing on the needs of the people. Despite the unfair ruling class which remains unable to promote and install farming and livestock activities, never-

⁶⁶ Apart from the lack of cultural and moral values that causes a failure of social development in the DRC, Mavinga argues that it is also due to the leadership's reliance on a spirit world which has been intertwined over time with Western cultural spiritualities. This has brought about selfishness among the Congolese leadership up to the present days. Joseph N. Mavinga, "The Influence of the Spirit World on African Leadership: A Contextual Reading of 1 Samuel 28:1-25," *JSem* 19/2 (2010): 501-502.

theless, this negative experience generates hope for an appropriate administration of justice in the DRC.⁶⁷

2 The **תְּבִשָּׁר** and **בָּשָׂר** Oracle in Isaiah 11

The growth of the tree "branches" symbolises not so much the emergence of the "true leadership" (v. 1) as the setting up of fisheries and agricultural enterprises which the people would need in any society. A "loyal leadership" would be required for the efficient promotion of activities to the advantage for the people in the state(vv. 3b-5). The spirit of the Lord provides the leadership with wisdom that would lead to creative actions for the common good in society. Such leadership would be of relevance in the DRC. The most relevant activities expected from them in the Congo are those of fisheries, agricultures and so forth. These would improve the economic and social development of the people in the DRC. Andreas Kunz-Lübcke would refer this interpretation to everyone of us to whom is granted authority over God's creation: over fishes and animals of the earth (Gen 1:26). The human dominion over fishes and animals consists of conquering the land and subjugating oneself to the people's needs. It specifically refers to managerial responsibilities over natural and mineral resources of the state. In the same way a king would be "responsible for the welfare of his subjects, people may not just abuse animals under their control."⁶⁸

"Considering the great majority" of politicians in the DRC, most of those we know, "we may all justifiably wonder if they can ever be effective" to set up the fisheries and agriculture as State enterprises instead of their own activities.⁶⁹ Interpreting Isaiah's oracle on the "branch" in its twofold meaning, the socio-economic development in the DRC depends on the leadership's

⁶⁷ Lane says that "such experiences include the awareness of human historicity and the contingency of life as well as the realities of suffering, injustice and death itself. The experience of evil, the reality of suffering and the omnipresence of death bring the individual to the limits of life [...]. It is at this juncture that the base of hope for a better life begins to assume a religious colouration by affirming the presence and the existence of a transcendent dimension to life itself [...]. The act of hope concerns trust and self-surrender to the direction implied within the experiences of self-transcendence. Hope is about allowing ourselves to be drawn in the direction of self-transcendence in the expectation that we will not be disappointed and in the belief that there is a source animating the movement of the human spirit." It is therefore a positive attitude that brings about hope in a hopeless situation. Despite the weak and corrupt leadership in the Congo, there is hope for a "loyal leadership" that would set up social justice in the State. Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive: Stirrings in Christian Theology* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996), 61, 64, 66.

⁶⁸ Andreas Kunz-Lübcke, "Human Work from the Perspective of Creation Theology," in *Dignity of Work: Theological and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. Kenneth Mtata; Minneapolis, Minn.: Lutheran University Press, 2011), 13.

⁶⁹ Denis E. Hurley, *Facing the Crisis: Selected Texts of Archbishop Denis E. Hurley* (ed. Philippe Denis; Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1997), 124.

managerial role of the land products.⁷⁰ The administration of social justice in favour of the poor and needy would bring about social development in the DRC (vv. 6-9).

Under this *sine qua non* condition, there is hope for the Congo to be developed through the exploitation of wealth of the land. In this connection, Moltmann would say (if I adjust his words) that hope arousing by the promise of נְמַצֵּךְ, רְפָאְךָ or נְצַחְךָ does not depend only on the Judeans' behaviour, but mainly on Yahweh's actions. This issue is very complex as it also requires human cooperation. Hope is the power which motivates human actions. The promise of the "emergence of a loyal leadership" implies God's action in the DRC as it does within the Davidic line. Moltmann further says, "the story of God's hope will be fulfilled in the whole world."⁷¹ Thus, despite the current lack of agricultural enterprises and fisheries in the DRC, there is still hope to install them.

F CONCLUSION

This article dealt with "the branch of the Lord" in its twofold senses, metaphoric and literal. The fact that the two senses occur in a parallel construction in v. 2 was of relevance for the Judean people of the time as it is for the Congolese people today. It suggested that in Isaiah's days, the land productivity due to good governance was first a prerogative of the ruling class who should play a managerial role in the country. This explains the emergence of "a rightful governing class" which should be efficient enough to set up and develop fishing and agricultural enterprises in order to improve socio-economic life of the people in the community.

Apart from the exploitation of mineral resources for the benefit of the people as a whole, the rightful ruling class would focus on setting up agricultural and fishing activities to ensure food security for the people in the DRC. In that way the Congolese people could live better life and feel really at home. These are the conditions that the people of the DRC hope for and expect from leaders.

To achieve this purpose, the governing classes are challenged to change their minds in order to develop good societies for all, free of corruption, tribal disparity and selfishness. Under these conditions and with everyone's commitment to the issue, the hope for social change could be a reality in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁷⁰ Hurley, *Facing the Crisis*, 124.

⁷¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (ed. & transl. D. M. Meeks; London: SCM Press, 1975), 44-45.

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