

## Present or Future Eschatology in Psalm 96 in the Light of Deutero-Isaiah

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### 1. Introduction

This article deals with the translation and the meaning of Psalm 96:12b-13, which has the following words in Hebrew (BHS). The English translation below is following the English Standard version, published in 2009.

12b אָז יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂמְחוּ לְפָנָיו  
13a לְפָנָיו יִשְׂמְחוּ לְפָנָיו כִּי אֵל אֱלֹהִים  
13b אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט בְּצֶדֶק וְיִשְׁפֹּט  
בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ

12b Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
13a before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth.  
13b He will judge the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

In the recently published “Thai Standard Version” (THSV) of 2011 Psalm 96:12b+13 are translated as follows:

12b แล้วต้นไม้ทั้งสิ้นของป่าไม่จจะร้องเพลงด้วยความยินดี  
13a เฉพาะพระพักตร์พระยาห์เวห์ เพราะพระองค์เสด็จมา  
เพราะพระองค์เสด็จมาพิพากษาโลก  
13b พระองค์จะทรงพิพากษาโลกด้วยความชอบธรรม  
และจะทรงพิพากษาชนชาติทั้งหลายด้วยความซื่อสัตย์ของพระองค์

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The twice repeated Thai words **เสด็จมา** (“come”)<sup>1)</sup> in v. 13a leave some questions open: As Thai verbs are without inflection, this passage does not indicate, whether **เสด็จมา** refers to an event that is happening, or one that has already happened or one that will happen in the future. So: Is Yhwh coming? Or has he come already? Or will he come in the future – this issue has important implications and has to be discussed.

However, if we look at v. 13b, the second half of the very same verse has two verbal forms, which because of the prefix **จะ** (marker for future tense) certainly refer to the future: **จะทรงพิพากษา** (“he or she will judge”). So Yhwh’s judgment over the earth is more likely to be understood as a future event. As both events are closely interconnected (v. 13a **เสด็จมาพิพากษา**, “[Yhwh] comes in order to judge [the earth]”), a few questions arise:

Are the coming of Yhwh and his judgment two independent events, which we should assume have a certain amount of time between them? One of them in the past (e.g. the coming of Yhwh), the other one in the future (Yhwh’s judgment) and in the middle the time of the psalm?

Or if these events cannot be separated, when are both, the coming of Yhwh and his judgment supposed to happen? Does this psalm show future or present eschatology? Or is no specific eschatology implied?

In this article, I hope to clarify these issues in the following manner: First of all, I will examine the relationships between Psalm 96 and Deutero-Isaiah more closely, because the very beginning of the psalm (v. 1a) is a direct quotation of Isa 42:10a. This will be followed by a discussion of the priority in time of either Deutero-Isaiah or Psalm 96. The third section will examine the overwhelming joy of Psalm 96 more closely and that will help us to decide, whether Yhwh is coming, has come, or will come. A section about the cultic perception of reality in Psalm 96 will follow. The final section will return to examine the Thai Bible translation and compare it with other modern versions of the Thai Bible. I finally will give my own suggestion for a translation of Psalm 96:13 into Thai.

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1) This word consists of **มา** “come” and **เสด็จ** “go”; the latter verb is often combined with other words of motion, especially when used of a king, members of the royal family and high officials. **เสด็จ** is part of “ratchasap”, the royal Thai language and the combination **เสด็จมา** means “come”.

## 2. Psalm 96 and Deutero-Isaiah

As we have already stated above, the start of Psalm 96 (v. 1a) ליהוה שיר חדש “sing to Yhwh a new song” is a quotation of Isa 42:10a. Both verses have in common, that this new song shall be sung all over the world. The phrase כל-הארץ “all the world” (Psa 96:1b) parallels מקצה הארץ “from the end of the world” (Isa 42:10b). Thus, both verses share a global perspective.

The cause for singing the hymn of Isa 42:10-12 is to be seen in the salvation of Israel out of exile (v. 7), and this makes it likely, that the salutary intervention of Psalm 96:2-3 (ישועתו: “his salvation” v. 2b / כבודו / “his glory” v. 3a / נפלאותיו / “his marvelous deeds” v. 3b) might refer to Yhwh’s bringing the Babylonian exile of the Israelites to an end, Cyrus’s edict from 539 BC (Ezr 1:1-4) playing a major role in the termination of Israel’s captivity. This is even more probable, because the verb בשר (“proclaim”, Psa 96:2b) is used in Deutero-Isaiah as key term<sup>2)</sup> for proclaiming the good news of the end of exile and the kingship of Yhwh (cf. Isa 40:9f; 42:12b; 48:20; 52:7+9<sup>3)</sup>).

That the כבוד (“glory”) of Yhwh should be proclaimed to all nations (Psa 96:3a) parallels passages in Deutero-Isaiah, namely Isa 40:5; 42:8.12 and 48:11. The Deutero-Isaiah passages proclaim, that in the liberation of Israel Yhwh’s כבוד will become known to all flesh (Isa 40:5; 52:10; cf. 48:20; 42:12)<sup>4)</sup>. This is one more sign, that Psalm 96:1-3 is triggered by the end of the Babylonian exile. This mighty deed of Yhwh is to be proclaimed all over the world.

Yhwh’s superiority (Psa 96:4a.5b.6) especially above all the gods of the

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2) J. Goldingay, *Psalms vol. III: Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Ada: Baker Academic, 2008), 103.

3) The image here is Yhwh leading the procession of Israel out of the exile through the desert to mount Zion, were Yhwh will reign as king. Commonly this motif is called the “new or second exodus” motif, because the picture is taken from the (old or first) exodus out of Egypt. In both exoduses Yhwh is leading his people through the desert. The motif of the new or second exodus can be found in Isa 40:3-5.10+11; 43:16-19; 48:21; 51:10; 52:12 as well; cf. G. v. Rad, *Old Testament Theology Vol. 2: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, D. M. G. Stalker trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 244ff.; J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, WBC 25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 609f and F. Förg, *Die Jahwe-König-Psalmen und die Apokalypitik* (Dortmund: LIT-Verlag, 2012), 89ff.

4) G. v. Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. 2*, 243f, 248f.

peoples (vv. 4b.5a) is a central topic in the theology of Deutero-Isaiah<sup>5)</sup>, which Psalm 96 is taking over. In addition to that, the worship of Yhwh by the families of the peoples (vv. 7ff) in the frame of the temple-worship on Mount Zion (v. 8), shows how close Psalm 96 is to Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>6)</sup>

One motif that Psalm 96 shares with other enthronement Psalms (Psa 47; 93; 97-99), is that Yhwh is reigning as king, a point that has now become obvious and which is to be proclaimed to all nations over the world (v. 10a). We have to bear in mind, that this motif is most important for exilic and post-exilic prophecy.

A core theme of the theology of Deutero-Isaiah is that Yhwh will soon return to Mount Zion (Isa 40:9-11; 52:8b+12c) and will establish his kingdom there (52:7). For Ezekiel, the motifs of Yhwh's future dwelling on Mount Zion and his reign as king, as well as the temple-cult on Mount Zion are tightly interwoven. For that reason, Ezekiel proclaims that the center of the salvation era will be a kingdom of Yhwh in which the cult is playing an important role (Eze 20:33.40-44; cf. 43:5-7): "Ezekiel had drawn the blueprint for the future kingdom of God. It will be a nationalistic, political kingdom of all the tribes of Israel with a temple in its center in Jerusalem."<sup>7)</sup> Also for Haggai and Zechariah the erection of the kingdom of Yhwh is thought to happen immediately (Hag 1:8; 2:3.7.9; Zec 2:4; 8:3). G. von Rad states:

The prophetic message of Haggai and Zechariah also culminates in the approaching advent of Jahweh and the imminent establishment of his kingdom, but (...) this message is linked most closely to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem which has been destroyed by the Babylonians.<sup>8)</sup>

Drawing from my findings in my dissertation, I would like to add, that within the second temple and its cult can be experienced as a present event.<sup>9)</sup> Psalm 96

5) Isa 40:12-25; 41:23f, 29; 44:6-20; 46:1f, 5-7.

6) Isa 45:14b; 49:7, 23; 55:5.

7) R. L. Smith, *Michah-Malachi*, WBC 32 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 149.

8) G. v. Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament Vol. 2*, 281.

9) F. Förg, *Die Ursprünge der alttestamentlichen Apokalyptik* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 231, 251.

(as well as Psa 93; 95; 97-99) adopts this motif of the kingdom of Yhwh and gives the kingdom of Yhwh a central position.

This underscores the fact, that the kingdom of Yhwh (v. 10) is the trigger of the worldwide joy in v. 11ff. The greatness of Yhwh (v. 3) and his superiority above the God of the nations (v. 4) are just variations of Yhwh's kingdom and they are the reasons<sup>10)</sup> for the joy and worship of Yhwh in vv. 1–3. That Yhwh is king also motivates the families of the peoples to ascribe glory to him, to bring offerings and to worship him (vv. 7–9).

The reader will find many words and themes common to both Deutero-Isaiah and Psalm 96, therefore the words of C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch are true: “the key-note of the Psalm is even deutero-Isaianic.”<sup>11)</sup> One of these themes is the overwhelming joy, which one can find in Psalm 96. This will be discussed at greater length in the fourth section of this article. For now, it is important to note the fact that all the issues of Psalm 96, which are in common with Deutero-Isaiah, suggest that either Deutero-Isaiah was inspired by the words of the psalm, or Psalm 96 picked up words and motifs from the unknown exilic prophet.

### 3. Which was first – Deutero-Isaiah or Psalm 96?

For several reasons it is implausible though, that Psalm 96 and the other enthronement psalms precede Deutero-Isaiah in time.

First of all, as C. Westermann<sup>12)</sup> has stated, it is difficult to imagine, that the strict monotheism of Psalm 96 (v. 5; cf. Psa 97:7b.9b) would have occurred in times before Deutero-Isaiah. But one can only speak of monotheism in the strict sense after the collapse of Israel from exilic times on.<sup>13)</sup>

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10) Cf. כִּי “for” in v. 4a, 5a.

11) C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms 84-150*, Commentary on the Old Testament, F. Bolton, trans. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 90 and J. Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen. Israels Begegnung mit dem kanaanäischen Mythos in den Jahwe-König-Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht: 1987), 121.

12) I have taken the following points from C. Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), 111f.

13) L. W. Hurtado, “Monotheism”, K. J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2005), 520f.

Secondly, in Isa 52:7 Yhwh is king over Israel, but in Psalm 96 and the other enthronement psalms, Yhwh is king over the world with all its peoples and its deities. C. Westermann clearly points out that Yhwh was first understood as king over Israel and only then as king over the peoples as well. In this sense, the enthronement psalms come after Deutero-Isaiah.

The third point seems very convincing to me. If we look at Psalm 98, which is very close to Psalm 96, then Psalm 98:3b and Isa 52:10b look very much the same – except for one small, but important change.

Isa 52:10b וְרָאוּ כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ

“all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God”

Psa 98:3b רָאוּ כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ

“all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God”

In Isa 52:10b the Hebrew the very first word is וְרָאוּ “they will see” and this clearly is a future tense, which means all the people of the world will (in the future) see the salvation of God. In Psalm 98:3 the Hebrew words are the same, but as first word they have רָאוּ ”they have seen” or “they see”. This is not a future tense, but a past tense, that corresponds to a thing that has begun to happen and is still going on in the present:<sup>14)</sup> According to Psalm 98:3, the people of the world have seen or are seeing the salvation of the world.

So, what is more plausible, that an event, that is already experienced as present (Psa 98) is becoming an event that is supposed to happen in the future (Isa 52)? Or the other way around: Has an event that has been issued to happen in the future, now finally come into existence?

As the second option is way more plausible, in case of Psalm 98, a neighboring Psalm of Psalm 96, this psalm takes an utterance which was made by Deutero-Isaiah over and holds that the prophesied fact has now come true.<sup>15)</sup>

14) P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew. Part Three: Syntax, Paradigms and Indices*, Subsidia Biblica 14/II (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, <sup>2</sup>2005), 360-362.

15) One might argue that this is correct according to Hebrew grammar. But as in poetry grammatical rules are used more flexibly, רָאוּ in Psalm 98:3b could refer to the future. This does not seem plausible to me, because in Psalm 47:9 (another enthronement psalm), the nations of the world are thought to be present in the temple. This is possible, because of the cosmic symbolism of the temple (see footnote 25 on page 9). The nations are seeing God’s kingdom in the temple. The same is true for Psalm 96 and 98 as well: The people are thought

And moreover, it calls the entire world to celebrate this fact. Because of the nearness of Psalm 98 and Psalm 96, the same can be applied for Psalm 96 as well:

Yhwh's dwelling on Mount Zion, his kingly reign from that mountain, which were prophesied by exilic and postexilic prophets, especially the fact, that the kingdom of Yhwh will be able to be experienced in the cult of the second temple (cf. Hag. and Zech. 1-6) – all these facts have now come true and Psalm 96 calls all the world, all its peoples and nature as well, to celebrate that.

Having established that Psalm 96 draws from Deutero-Isaiah and not the other way around, and keeping in mind that Psalm 96 presupposes a temple on Mount Zion (v. 6b.8b), we can conclude, that Psalm 96 must have been written in the time of the second temple. It is surely a post-exilic text.<sup>16)</sup> Its headline in the Septuagint gives more support to this assumption: Ὅτε ὁ οἶκος ᾠκοδομεῖτο μετὰ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν· ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυίδ. “when the house was built after the exile. Song. David's.”<sup>17)</sup>

#### 4. The joy of Psalm 96

One more fact that might reinforce the assumption that Psalm 96 sees the kingdom of Yhwh as a present fact in the cult on Mount Zion is the great and hilarious joy that the reader is confronted with throughout Psalm 96.

Especially in Psalm 96:11–13 there is an accumulation of verbs and nouns of joy cf. the roots שמח “to be joyful, to be glad” (v. 11a), גיל “to rejoice” (v. 11a), עלז “to exult, to triumph” (v. 12a), רנן “to shout with joy” (v. 12b). These verses are similar to Isa 44:23 and we find this gathering of nouns of joy as well in Deutero-Isaiah, especially in the hymnal sections.<sup>18)</sup> The joy in Deutero-Isaiah comes into existence because of the “rule of Yhwh (‘Yhwh has become king’), that “creates joy in Israel, the opportunity for return home from exile, and

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to be present in the temple, and that is why both psalms invite them to worship God now (not in the future), Ps 96:7-9 and 98:4-5.

16) E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms Vol. II, Psalms 73–150* (Dublin: Richview Press, 1954), 124.

17) C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Psalms 84-150*, 90; for the translation cf. J. Goldingay, *Psalms vol. III*, 102.

18) These are Isa 42:10-12, 13; 44:23; 45:8; 48:20f; 49:13; 51:3; 52:7-10; 54:1-3.

exultation among all the creatures who, by the new rule of the king, are protected from the threat of chaos.”<sup>19)</sup> The unknown exilic prophet describes this historical event of setting Israel free from the Babylonian exile with nouns like **שׁע** “salvation, deliverance, help” (Isa 45:8; 51:5a; cf. **תְּשׁוּעָה** “salvation, deliverance, victory” Isa 45:17; 46:13) and Psalm 96 does that as well (v. 2b).

One more important feature of the joy in Psalm 96 is that it fills all the earth. We can see this not only in v. 1, where the whole world is called to sing a new song for Yhwh. It is even more clear in vv. 11-12a. What we find here are two word pairs, one of them **שָׁמַיִם/אָרֶץ** “heaven / earth” (v. 11a). As mentioning the two outer ends of an area in Hebrew thinking refers to a totality, everything in between is enclosed as well. So the word pair grasps every creature in heaven, on earth and in between. In the same way, but now in a horizontal perspective, the second word pair **יָם/שָׂדֵה** “sea and field” (v. 11b+12a) refers to all creatures. Even if no humans are mentioned explicitly, they are included as well, just because of the fact that they live on earth. Psalm 96 calls the entire world to rejoice. What are the reasons for this joy?

First of all, we have to bear in mind, that v. 11+12 are located right in the middle between v. 10 and v. 13 – both verses being connected by the name of Yhwh (v. 10a.13a), by the word **עַמִּים** “peoples” (v. 10c.13d), by the synonym roots **שָׁפַט/דָּן** “to judge” (v. 10c.13b+c) and by the thought that Yhwh judges the world. Looking at this central position, we can conclude, that the joy of the world cannot be separated from Yhwh’s reigning as king (v. 10a) and his judging the world (v. 10b.13). Secondly, v. 13 gives a more explicit reason for the entire world to rejoice before Yhwh, who has come or is coming or will come (**בָּא** v. 13a+b).

It is not easy to decide, which is the right tense to use in the English translation. But the text itself gives us some clues. As we have seen already, v. 10 and v. 13 are interconnected in several ways. It is astonishing though, that in the section v. 10–13 there are only three forms of a qal perfect: **מָלַךְ** (from the root **מָלַךְ** “to reign as king”; v. 10a) and **בָּא** (from **בָּוֵא** “to come” v. 13a+b). It is very likely, that both forms have to be understood in the same way. So **מָלַךְ** (v. 10a) is clearly a past tense form. It refers to a past event that has certain

19) W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 247.

influence on the present as well.<sup>20)</sup> Yhwh has already begun to reign as a king, and it this fact has influence on the present time.

What hinders us to understand אב in v. 13a+b in the same way? Yhwh has come already and now he is dwelling in the temple.<sup>21)</sup> It seems convincing to me to see this as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah, who proclaimed the Yhwh will come back to Zion from Babylon leading his people (Isa 40:3-5.10f; 49:10; 52:12). That Yhwh will come back to Zion is also prophesied in Eze 43:1-7 (in Eze 11:22-24 Ezekiel announces that Yhwh will leave Mount Zion and Jerusalem). The very fact that Yhwh has come gives way to the enormous exclamations of joy all over the world. So, in order to summarize: Yhwh has come (and now is there); he has assumed his kingdom already (and now reigns as king).<sup>22)</sup>

The qal imperfect forms יִדְרֶיךָ (v. 10b) and יִשְׁפֹּט (v. 13c) do not want to announce what Yhwh will do in the future, nor do they look back to Yhwh's deeds in the past. The judgment begins with the coming of Yhwh and for Psalm 96 it is an ongoing event.<sup>23)</sup> J. Jeremias points out to the fact that Psalm 96 assumes that the religions politics of the Persian empire has (under the commandment of Yhwh) just begun to restore the order of the world. Now all the nations get justice, whereas Babylon has shown no mercy to them (Isa 47:6 ).<sup>24)</sup>

That Yhwh judges the world and brings things back to their correct order continues into the future as well, in as far as Yhwh will control the chaotic evil powers and will preserve the order of creation.<sup>25)</sup> We can see this from the fact,

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20) P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Vol. 3, 360-362. The Hebrew perfect is used to describe a completed action and keeps in mind the conclusion of that fact; cf. G. D. Pratico and M. V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 130.

21) Therefore one cannot argue that in Hebrew poetry tenses are used more flexible. For sure אב refers to a past event, that continues into the present.

22) J. Goldingay, *Psalms vol. III*, 107.

23) P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Vol. 3, 366f. Both yiqtol-forms can best be understood as expressing a durative action (p. 376). Usually the Hebrew imperfect is used to express an action, which is not completed at the time of speaking (cf. G. D. Pratico and M. V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 130).

24) J. Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen*, 131. Cyrus's edict is surely one decision that demonstrates the Persian attitude towards subordinate nations. It is referred to in Psalm 96:1-3.

25) J. A. Motyer is right, when he emphasizes that “judging” means “setting everything to rights”

that in Psalm 96 (unlike Psa 93:3b); there is no more threat of chaos looming in the future. The overflowing joy of Psalm 96 can be explained by the fact that the turn to salvation lies behind the writer already, by the fact the Yhwh has come already and is now present and is reigning as king, and by the fact, that Yhwh's judging over the world and its people has just begun. Thus now the time has come for creation (which is thought to be present in the temple because of the cosmic symbolism of the temple)<sup>26</sup>) including all people to acclaim Yhwh and worship him. A future eschatological understanding of Psalm 96 has therefore to be rejected.

To sum up: The center of Psalm 96 is the kingdom of Yhwh that exilic and post-exilic prophecy waited for. The enormous joy of Psalm 96 points to the fact, that the kingdom of Yhwh was experienced as a present fact in the temple and its cult. The kingdom of Yhwh covers all peoples, all the earth and all the deities in the transcendent realm as well. Because Yhwh is king and he is about to judge the world (which means that he is about to reestablish a just order in it), Psalm 96 calls the entire world to rejoice.

## 5. Cultic or empiric conception of reality in Psalm 96?

In the cultic space in the second temple, this is believed against that kind of reality, that can be seen the human eyes. In the face of Persian and later Greek sovereignty over Israel, we cannot say, that Yhwh alone is king over all the earth and all the people. There are still kings and rulers on this earth that claim power over their people and (in the case of Persia and Greece) over Israel. We cannot even say that these nations are about to accept the sovereignty of Yhwh (v. 7ff) or to sing a new song before Yhwh (v. 1); these people still revere mighty gods. The ancient world after the exile does not look like a world, that Yhwh is

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(cf. J. A. Motyer, "Judgement", T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [Leicester and Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press 2000]), 614. J. Jeremias understands Yhwh's judging as his restoring invention. It is necessary, when the order of the world is endangered or partly destroyed (cf. J. Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen*, 129).

26) J. M. Lundquist, "Temple", D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers, A. B. Beck, eds., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1280f.

reigning over as king. Furthermore, the joy of the creature, that characterizes Psalm 96, cannot yet be heard in nature. If we look at the world like it is until now, it gives us no clue, that Yhwh has come already or that he is judging the earth.

Therefore we have to assume, that Psalm 96 is not describing an everyday experience, nor does it refer to a future event. Psalm 96 rather shows a conception of reality that is not orientated in the visible world. We can call it a cultic or temple orientated perception of reality. That comes from that fact, that within the temple the borders are dissolving between the visible and the invisible world, as well as between the empiric and the transcendent realms.<sup>27)</sup> We can see an example of this in Isa 6, where the prophet on the one hand is standing in the visible, inner worldly structure of the temple (Isa 6:1+4). But on the other hand he is able to grasp the throne of God in the heavenly realm (vv. 1-3).

If we come back to Psalm 96, we can say, this Psalm is not only sung out of an inner worldly perspective. It is sung in the temple in the presence of Yhwh and therefore its present eschatology does not have to respect all the pressures of the world outside. But we can assume that it hopes that what is true in the temple already, will once become true outside as well. But Psalm 96 does not say this explicitly. It is consistently written from an inner-temple perspective and concentrates on present eschatology.

## 6. Psalm 96:13 in modern Thai Bible translations

Let's take a fresh look at the translation of Psalm 96:12b+13 in the “Thai Standard Version” (THSV)! In vv. 13a+b **เสด็จมา** (“come”) is not fixed in tense according to Thai grammar. If we consider the Hebrew text though, it is clear, that it should be understood as a past event: Yhwh **เสด็จมา** (“come”) already: He has come and in the temple-cult, he reigns as king. In v. 13b **เสด็จมาพิพากษา** (“he or she will judge”) the Hebrew **יִשְׁפֹּט** is correctly translated as **พิพากษา**

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27) “In Isa. 6:1ff. as well, the cube-shaped room is rent open, and above Yahweh’s earthly throne the heavenly world is revealed in all its nearness” (H.-J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, K. Crim, trans. [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986], 76). Ps 24 shows a similar conception about the temple.

(“judge”) and is following **שֵׁדִי־יָמָא** (“come”), which expresses the final resp. purposive sense of **בָּרַךְ**. As we have seen above however, Yhwh’s judging in v. 13c is a present and a future action. Here the Thai translation follows the English translation “he will judge the world” and translates as **จะทรงพิพากษา** (“he or she will judge”) the syllable **จะ** here expressing a future action. As the THSV repeats as **จะทรงพิพากษา** in v. 13d (the Hebrew does not have a verb in v. 13d), it stresses the wrong opinion that Yhwh’s judgment will happen only in the future.

Let us consider one more modern Thai Bible translation, the “Thai New Contemporary Version” (TNCV) from 2007. Like in the THSV, in v. 13a+b the TNCV gives **שֵׁדִי־יָמָא** (“come”) for **בָּרַךְ**, which is correct, if one considers, that Yhwh has come already. In v. 13b the Hebrew **בָּרַךְ** is translated even better as **שֵׁדִי־יָמָא לְפִיּוֹקָה** (“come in order to judge”). On the other side, like as the THSV, it has **จะทรงพิพากษา** (“he or she will judge”) in v. 13c which lets the judging of Yhwh look like a future event. In v. 13d the TNCV inserts **พิพากษา** (“judge”), which is not in the Hebrew, but is surely meant to help to get a clear meaning of the sentence. As **พิพากษา** (without **จะ**) is not necessarily a future tense, v. 13b-d are not that stressed as future events, which is a small advantage of the TNCV.

## 7. Concluding thoughts and a suggestion for a translation of Psalm 96:13

The study has shown that Psalm 96 has many words, thoughts and themes that are in common with Deutero-Isaiah. This is because Deutero-Isaiah precedes Psalm 96 in time and so Psalm 96 draws from the exilic prophet. In doing so, Psalm 96 puts a strong emphasis on the joy over the fact that Yhwh has established his kingdom, as prophesied by Deutero-Isaiah and other prophets, especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai and Zachariah: That Yhwh has come already is a completed fact. His judging the earth has begun and is still going on.

On the basis on that, to emphasize that Yhwh has come already, the particle **แล้ว** (“already”) could be added after **שֵׁדִי־יָמָא** in the translation of Psalm 96:13a.

To express the fact that Yhwh is judging the world, the particles คำสั่ง and อยู่ should be used. Both indicate an ongoing action. I finally suggest the following Thai translation:

- <sup>13a</sup> เฉพาะพระพักตร์พระยาห์เวห์ เพราะพระองค์เสด็จมาแล้ว  
เพราะพระองค์เสด็จมาแล้วเพื่อพิพากษาโลก
- <sup>13b</sup> พระองค์กำลังทรงพิพากษาโลกอยู่ด้วยความชอบธรรม  
และชนชาติทั้งหลายด้วยความซื่อสัตย์ของพระองค์
- <sup>13a</sup> before the Lord, for he has come already,  
for he has already come to judge the earth.
- <sup>13b</sup> He is judging the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

<Keywords>

Psalm 96, Deutero-Isaiah, Thai-Bible, Eschatology, Joy.

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<Abstract>

## **Present or Future Eschatology in Psalm 96 in the Light of Deutero-Isaiah**

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The translations of Psalm 96:12-13 in modern Thai Bibles leave some questions open: Do these verses want to say, that Yhwh has come already, that Yhwh is coming or Yhwh will come in the future? What is the trigger for the joy that the reader is confronted not only in these verses, but also in the whole psalm? Do these verses express present or future eschatology? This article will clarify these issues by an examination of the relationship of Psalm 96 as a whole and Deutero-Isaiah. Part of this will be to decide who was first in time, the author of Psalm 96 or the exilic prophet, the result being that Deutero-Isaiah precedes Psalm 96 in time. Above all, the joy which Psalm 96 expresses, points to the fact that Yhwh has come already, which is the reason for the overwhelming joy of man and nature. This however is only true out of an inner-temple perspective and cannot be perceived in everyday life. The reader should keep that in mind, while reading modern Thai translations of the Bible.