

**TORAH IN SERVANT-FORM:**  
**Torah, Servant, and Disciples in the Book of Isaiah**

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A thesis submitted to  
the University of Gloucestershire  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Media, Arts and Technology

**December 2012**



## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the concept of torah in final-Isaiah (FI) towards a construal of the *intentio operis*, understood as the model author's aim to produce model readers who are servant-disciples (Isa 54:13, 17). It develops with attention to the contribution of Marvin A. Sweeney, and asks whether the prophetic book subserves Ezra's reforms or has a separate program for the restoration and reform of Judah and Jerusalem. To surmise the *intentio operis*, linguistic, literary, and rhetorical approaches are used as appropriate to a holistic theological reading of the received text. Research focuses on passages where the term תּוֹרָה appears; its range of meaning is assessed within the broader lexical and conceptual framework of FI, and associated terms, concepts, and images are handled within properly defined units as parts within the larger whole. The investigation observes profound intra-textual connections signaling a bond between prophet and disciples, and a solidarity connecting the servant, herald, and servants, concluding that the conception and use of תּוֹרָה in FI is inextricably bound to servant-discipleship and the correlative theme of righteous-suffering. Though תּוֹרָה never has a technically precise sense in FI, it has legal, didactic, and sapiential connotations (analogous to the deuteronomic model of catechesis) and refers primarily to the words and acts of Isaiah and YHWH's servant. Since תּוֹרָה does not refer to the giving or interpretation of a fixed (external) corpus, but corresponds to the Mosaic model, it is illegitimate to reduce/restrict FI to propaganda literature for Ezra's Mosaic Torah-oriented reform measures. Instead, FI urges the community taught by God to accept God's purpose and adopt God's ways according to a distinct Isaianic 'logic'. Independent of Ezra's reforms and without subordination to Mosaic Torah (or wisdom torah), FI is a prophetic guide for life suitable for interpreting Israel's traditions, fashioning its communal identity, and defining its vocation in the world. As torah in servant-form, FI summons and shapes disciples who humbly seek YHWH, abandon evil ways, and serve God in the hope of hastening the fulfillment of its programmatic vision for a day marked by international peace and cosmic order.

University of Gloucestershire

Postgraduate Research Centre

RESEARCH DEGREE THESIS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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TITLE OF THESIS

TORAH IN SERVANT-FORM:

TORAH, SERVANT, AND DISCIPLES IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my appreciation for many who played important roles in the completion of this thesis. First and foremost, without the patient dedication and constancy of my wife, Emily, and the encouragement of my children, Catherine and Thomas, I could not have seen this project to completion. Thank you for listening and responding, suffering and learning, waiting and hoping, and relying upon God with me.

My interest in the subject dates back to 2001, when I took a course on Isaiah with J. Alan Groves. After that course, I told Al I wished to pursue a doctoral thesis on Isaiah, exclaiming, "I could see giving the rest of my life to this book!" Al nodded and smiled. To my parents, Joe and Yolanda Fantuzzo, and my in-laws, Earl and Anna Mae Hixson, who assisted me and my family in countless ways while eagerly awaiting the completion of this work: here's proof that I was referring to Isaiah and *not* this dissertation!

I am grateful to Al Groves, Peter Enns, and Doug Green for writing recommendations for me to attend the University of Gloucestershire and to Michael Kelly for directing me to my first supervisor, J. Gordon McConville. I am particularly grateful to you, Gordon, for your first-rate oversight, prudent counsel, and gentlemanly example throughout the project, for your friendship and fabulous confidence in my work. Many thanks, Helen McConville, for your generosity, hospitality, thoughts and prayers, and for welcoming me into your home as if I were one of your own.

I am indebted to Gordon for introducing Mark Boda as my second supervisor and H. G. M. Williamson and Richard S. Briggs as my thesis examiners. I have benefited enormously from Mark's expert guidance and example of OT scholarship. Thanks Mark, for giving so freely of your time, for encouraging my writing, and for your astute counsel both during and after the completion of this project. I am grateful to Professor Williamson and Dr. Briggs for making my *viva voce* exam a rich and enjoyable experience; what I learned from our conversation and your criticisms and suggestions definitely improved the thesis.

I also would like to thank my Old Testament colleagues as well. Doug Green has been my mentor, advisor, defender, and friend through difficult times. Mike Kelly's kindness to me and my family has not only overwhelmed me but enabled me to complete the project. For Libbie Groves, I cannot express what your encouragement as a friend, colleague, and Al's 'other half' has meant to me. Thank you all for accepting me into the 'WTS OT family'. I am also grateful to my outstanding teaching assistants, Steve Bohannon and Julie Mills, for easing my load. Julie read the entire manuscript and offered many helpful suggestions for cleaning it up.

Finally, I wish further to acknowledge my debt to Al Groves. Al's ideas about Isaiah and his disciplined approach to exegesis continue to influence my work. Since his untimely death on February 5, 2007, not a single day has passed without my recollection of the godly witness and edifying instruction I received as Al's student. His faithful testimony as an instructor despite prolonged and intense Christian suffering continues to astonish me and to shape my own life. Indeed, like a disciple, I have sought, imperfectly, to emulate his teaching model, his self-sacrifice for colleagues and friends and service to students, his deep love for his wife and children, and his commitment to Christ. Al Groves left an indelible mark on my mind and heart because he was not a reader of Isaiah only: Al spoke and acted as one taught by God. This thesis is dedicated to his memory.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AUS	American University Studies
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AB	Anchor Bible
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Edited by J. B. Pritchard
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>BHRG</i>	<i>Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament. Edited by M. Noth and H. W. Wolff
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart, 1983
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Continental Commentary
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
EJL	Early Judaism and its Literature
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Etudes bibliques</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>

FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2.ed. Oxford, 1910
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HALOT	Köhler, L., W. Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and Edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2010
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IB	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951-1957
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IBHS	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990
JCPS	Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series
Joüon	Joüon, P. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Subsidia biblica 14/1-2. Rome, 1991
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JPS	<i>JPS Torah Commentary</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LHB/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NASB	New American Standard Bible



NCB	New Century Bible
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.</i> Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Version of the Holy Scriptures
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
<i>Proof</i>	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue de sciences religieuses</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SMRSL	Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Lundensis
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
<i>Siphrut</i>	<i>Siphrut, Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
StPB	Studia post-biblica
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation
STR	Studies in Theology and Religion
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>TBT</i>	<i>The Bible Today</i>

<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. Translated by M. E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass., 1997
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>ThWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Stuttgart, 1970—
TNIV	Today's New International Version
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WC	Westminster Bible Commentaries
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUANT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word &amp; World</i>
<i>ZABR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare

General Abbreviations and abbreviations for primary sources follow those set forth in the *SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Sources*. Edited by Patrick H. Alexander, et al; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999.

## CONTENTS

Abstract	i.
Acknowledgments	iii.
Abbreviations	v.
 Chapter 1	
Introduction: תּוֹרָה/ ‘Torah’ in Isaiah and Old Testament Study	1
 Chapter 2	
“Let Us Walk in YHWH’s Light”: The Role of Isaianic Torah in Judgment and Salvation	57
 Chapter 3	
“Your Eyes Will See Your Teacher”: The Portrait of Isaiah as YHWH’s Witness and Disciple	97
 Chapter 4	
“The Coastlands Wait for His Torah”: Fashioning a Servant for YHWH’s Agenda	143
 Chapter 5	
“Listen to Me, Coastlands”: The Servant’s Testimony and Life as Torah	199
 Chapter 6	
“Servants Who Tremble at God’s Word”: Justice and Righteousness as Concomitants of Prophetic Fulfillment	267
 Chapter 7	
Conclusion: The Book of Isaiah as Torah for Disciples	323
 Appendix A	
The Law of the Prophet: Deuteronomic Analogies Illustrated by Deuteronomy 18:15-22	331
 Appendix B	
Translation of Select Passages: Isa 1:10-17; 2:2-5; 6:1-13; 8:16-23; 30:8-22; 40:1-11; 41:8-16; 42:1-12; 42:18-25; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-11	335
 Bibliography	369



## Chapter 1

### Introduction: תורה / 'Torah' in Isaiah and Old Testament Study

Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words. The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold...he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes.<sup>1</sup>

These lines from Emerson's essay depict poet as prophet with indispensable words to guide the authentic and active life of humanity. The finished book of Isaiah (henceforth, final-Isaiah), with its own concern for the correspondence of prophetic speech and actions, identifies the words of the prophet as the "instruction [תורה] of our God" (Isa 1:10; cf. 8:16; 30:9). Since this identification appears in the introductory chapter of the book, it could function as an invitation for readers to assess everything that follows as תורה, involving regulations for reformation (1:10-17) founded upon the promise of purification from moral impurity due to past sin (vv.18-20; cf. vv.2-9). Exhortation and admonishment are grounded in God's grace for the penitent, bolstered by blessings for obedience (vv.21-27) and the threat of disaster for disobedience (vv.28-31). Hence, at the outset, תורה, understood as God's words mediated by a prophet (1:2, 10, 20), is front stage. What follows this introduction (in chs.2-66) could therefore amount to a grand summons for readers to respond to the whole vision as תורה. This basic observation provides the impetus for the following study of תורה in Isaiah. It also raises methodological questions about how to understand תורה in Isaiah.

One possible option for pursuing the question is to limit the study to passages where the word תורה appears (1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7). In some of these passages, final-Isaiah explicitly reflects on prophetic speech as תורה, the 'word of YHWH' (דבר־יהוה), the 'saying' (אמר) of the Holy One of Israel (2:3; 5:24). In addition, תורה is often connected to the Holy One's desire for 'just order' (משפט) and 'righteous conduct' (צדק) (2:2-5; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7). Elsewhere, the prophet's speech converges with YHWH's speech as a word (דבר) that is enduring (40:8), edifying (50:4; cf. 30:20-21; 59:21), effective (55:11), and unrevoked (45:23). And as far as readers are concerned, God looks with favor at those who tremble at this word (66:2, 5). Final-Isaiah clearly has a prevalent interest in תורה and דבר־יהוה. Although the term תורה itself does not appear after Isa 51:7, final-Isaiah exhibits a line of development or a conceptual

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet" in *Essays: Second Series* (1884).

trajectory regarding its aim as revelation, which is pursued within subsequent chapters. The more limited ‘concordance’ option would not perceive this conceptual development; hence, it could skew the analysis in advance, tending to preclude the possibility that the term תורה actually signals the concept ‘prophetic torah’, and may therefore require analysis of the words of Isaiah as such. Indeed, I will argue that interest in תורה and דבר־יהוה is so prominent in the book that it surpasses the concern for the profile of Isaiah ben Amoz, transcends perceived compositional boundaries, and calls for an exegetical and theological construal of the concept of ‘torah’ within the book’s broader lexical and conceptual framework of revelation. Therefore, to achieve a proper understanding of the Isaianic concept, my method necessarily involves reading the whole text of Isaiah and not just the passages that mention תורה.

I develop my holistic reading of Isaiah with special attention to the contribution of Marvin A. Sweeney, for whom final-Isaiah is ‘prophetic torah’ because it lends support to Ezra’s (Mosaic) Torah-oriented reforms.<sup>2</sup> To ground his view, Sweeney focuses on discovering the similarities that uphold the coherence of the book of Isaiah with Ezra-Nehemiah (E-N). My particular goal, however, is to articulate the import of final-Isaiah as a distinct vision. To this end, I set out to surmise the *intentio operis* by focusing heuristically on the notion that (as a received compositional unity) the text of final-Isaiah has a model author and a message oriented to model readers.

I understand the literary critical notions of ‘model author’, ‘model reader’, and ‘*intentio operis*’ in Umberto Eco’s sense as limiting concepts.<sup>3</sup> These concepts afford a balanced text-reader approach in which the *intentio operis* denotes the aim of the model author, who is the ideal counterpart in the design of a text that seeks to produce a model reader. The ‘model reader’ is the personality whose profile is designed by and within the text as an organizational whole. Regarding the *intentio operis*, my conjecture is that final-Isaiah [FI] strives to produce model readers who are servant-disciples (Isa 8:16; 30:20-21; 50:4; 54:13, 17; 66:2, 14). I take up a holistic (and sequential) reading-strategy, because the way to prove this conjecture, following Eco, is to “check it against the text as a coherent whole.”<sup>4</sup> The objective of my critical interpretation is thus to understand more

<sup>2</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> See Umberto Eco, *Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1990), 58-59.

<sup>4</sup> U. Eco, *Limits of Interpretation*, 59. For more on these literary critical notions, see Eco’s second and third essays in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (S. Collini, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 45-66, 67-88. For their application to prophetic literature, see Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (JSOTSup 376; London, New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 15-30. I do not share Conrad’s minimalist view of the debate over the use of the Bible for reconstructing Israel’s history; nevertheless, my hermeneutical goal overlaps with his concern to discover the *intentio operis*

robustly the internal textual coherence of FI as a message for an implicit audience of survivors after judgment, and to discover thereby its place within and contribution towards overturning the exilic situation of Jacob-Israel. In response to Sweeney, I question whether FI as ‘prophetic torah’ subserves Ezra’s reforms or promotes its own distinct agenda for the restoration and reformation of Judah and Jerusalem.

My proposal is that **תורה** in Isaiah does not point necessarily to either an external corpus or program of reforms, but signals the intrinsic agenda of FI as a text compiled for model readers. As expressed through its text-internal coherence in part-and-whole, my thesis is that FI should be received as ‘prophetic torah’ for shaping disciples (Isa 54:13). As torah for disciples, FI comprises a word of YHWH suitable for interpreting Israel’s traditions, guiding its restoration, fashioning its communal identity, and defining its vocation as YHWH’s servant in the world. Expressed concretely, the use of **תורה** and the development of the concept in FI become inextricably bound to the key motif of servant-discipleship and the correlative theme of righteous suffering.<sup>5</sup> Hence, in FI, ‘torah’ not only supplies an apt description of the speech and actions of YHWH’s prophet and servant(s) but specifies what YHWH requires for the conduct of his people as disciples. As overarching concepts, then, ‘torah’, ‘servant-discipleship’, and ‘righteous suffering’ provide coherence and interconnectivity between the Isaianic visions of judgment (chs.1-39), restoration (chs.40-55), and separation (chs.56-66). As discipleship is uniquely personified in the profile of Isaiah ben Amoz (and followers) and dynamically embodied in the figure of a suffering servant (and servants), Israel is reconstituted and refashioned as a

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within a prophetic book by focusing heuristically on the notion of a model author. In my view, this notion provides a way to assess the *gestalt* or excess that arises from the configuration and interplay of diverse parts within the calculated composition of the (layered) whole. The effort is not to limit the conjecture of a reader to one right view; rather, as a limit to interpretation and a balanced text-reader approach, I recognize with Eco that good or bad readings of a text are decided by the rule of internal coherence as “the parameter for its interpretations” (Eco, *Limits of Interpretation*, 60).

<sup>5</sup> This introduction examines the interpretation of the concept of **תורה** in the Old Testament (OT) and FI. Nevertheless, discipleship and suffering servanthood become consistently used concepts, establishing analogical relations (common patterns and allusions) between texts and figures in FI. For the history of interpretation regarding servanthood and the motif of righteous suffering, see, in addition to the commentaries, e.g., Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1956); S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh* (Transl. G. W. Anderson; Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 187-257; C. G. Cruse, “The Servant Song: Interpretive Trends since C. R. North,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 8 (1978): 1-27; H. Haag, *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterjesaja* (EdF 233; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985). On righteous suffering, see, e.g., Karl T. Kleinknecht, *Der leidende Gerechtfertigte: Die alttestamentliche-jüdische Tradition vom ,leidenden Gerechten’ und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus* (WUANT 13; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984); Lothar Ruppert, *‘Der leidende Gerechte’ in Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyriologie* (J. W. van Henten, ed.; StPB 38; Leiden, 1989). Compare, Lea Jakobzen, “The Individual’s Suffering in Psalms and in Mesopotamian Narratives,” *Beit Mikra* 47 (2001): 33-56; Daniel P. Bricker, “Innocent Suffering in Mesopotamia,” *TynBul* 51 (2000): 193-214, and “Innocent Suffering in Egypt,” *TynBul* 52 (2001): 83-100.

society of disciples who are fit to discharge their vocation as YHWH's vehicle for blessing humanity.

### *1.1. Background*

The reader of FI perceives YHWH's intention to establish a universal rule, characterized by justice, righteousness, and peace.<sup>6</sup> The epicenter for this global purpose is Mount Zion (2:2-5), and YHWH's instrument for exercising dominion is **תִּירָה** (2:3). **תִּירָה** from Zion is a means of approach for the world of YHWH's universal kingdom. For the promulgation of this **דָּבָר**, YHWH will exalt Zion as the symbol of his might and glorious presence. YHWH's reign from Zion entails **תִּירָה**, and its distribution involves a witnessing-voice both to interpret the symbol and to summon listeners who will respond reverently and obediently to the true God. People will acknowledge YHWH and make pilgrimage there to learn YHWH's way. Accordingly, Isa 2:5 exhorts the House of Jacob to join the pilgrimage of all nations (**בְּלִי-הַגּוֹיִם**)—to walk in the light of YHWH (**בְּאוֹר** **יְהוָה**). Thus, it appears that, provocatively perhaps, the prophet links the destiny of Israel to that of all peoples, tethering their joint futures to the fulfillment of FI's programmatic vision concerning **תִּירָה** and **דָּבָר-יְהוָה**.

In FI's perspective, instead of heeding this exhortation and enjoying the consequent peace and blessing, the House of Jacob chooses darkness; instead of walking in the light of YHWH (2:5), Israel disregards **תִּירָה** (5:24). In the ensuing story, YHWH advances his purpose by a word promoting Israel's hardening (6:9-10), and their recalcitrance provokes his wrath, bringing the arm of YHWH down hard against them (5:25). By the instrumentality of two alien powers, first Assyria and then Babylonia, Israel and Judah each experience devastating judgment through oppression, deportation, and loss of land. After the fall of the northern kingdom, the outlook for Judah and Jerusalem remained bleak; dark times put in question Israel's place and calling within YHWH's universal design. Did not Israel have a special place in YHWH's purpose for humanity? Will YHWH use Jacob-Israel to realize his world-embracing purpose? If so, after the horrors of judgment, how would he restore his people to their land and vocation? Moreover, given Jacob-Israel's unholy character and history, what would prevent the recurrence of national apostasy?

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<sup>6</sup> Isa 1:21, 27; 5:7, 16; 9:5, 6; 16:5; 26:3, 9, 12; 28:17; 32:16-18; 33:5; 40:14; 45:7; 48:18; 52:7; 53:5; 54:10, 13; 55:12; 56:1; 58:2; 59:8, 9; 59:14; 60:17; 66:12.



The vision of FI concerns YHWH's coming to rule the world by his powerful Spirit and infallible words. I argue that, towards this end, in and through a special offspring (זרע), YHWH aims to realize an enduring covenant-relationship,<sup>7</sup> a promise of future renewal and restoration (59:21). This promise includes the coming of YHWH as Redeemer (גואל) to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression (לשבי פשע) ביעקב, v.20; cf. 1:27-28). Zion's Savior and Redeemer (60:16) is the Mighty One of Jacob. He is coming soon, and when he does, he will have regard only for those who "tremble at my [God's] word" (חרד על דברי, 66:2, 5).<sup>8</sup> From them, God's spirit and words will not depart but abide forevermore.<sup>9</sup>

According to the preceding sketch, FI promises a stable future. This sketch also suggests that, within the scope of FI, both Zion's fundamental crisis and its vital resolution pertain to Jacob-Israel's penitential response to דברי יהוה and תורה.<sup>10</sup> Put differently, the calling, character, and future of God's people (and the nations) are inextricably bound to תורה going forth from Zion. Their collective weal or woe depends on their response to this word of YHWH.

This link discovered in FI between the identity and vocation of God's people and their orientation towards תורה is evident in E-N as well.<sup>11</sup> There too, both the community's present troubles and YHWH's aspirations for them are impossible to discern without the provision and aid of תורה (cf. Ezra 7:10; 9; Neh 8-10, 13).<sup>12</sup> As a people, they have experienced a second 'exodus' (from Babylon to Jerusalem), and they are beginning anew in the land. After the confession of their sins admits failure to keep covenant with YHWH, E-N indicates that the foremost requirement for those aspiring to restoration is consistent adherence to Ezra's תורה.

<sup>7</sup> The nature of this covenant is an open question, one that this study also considers (cf. Isa 51:7; Jer 31:33; Ezek 33:26; Deut 10:15-16; 30:6).

<sup>8</sup> Scripture translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>9</sup> See Isa 61:1-3 (cf. Num 11:28; Joel 2:28-29).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Isa 1:10-17; 2:3, 5; 5:24; 30:9; 59:20-21; 63:7-65:16; 66:2, 5.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Ezra 3:2; 7:6, 10; 9:4; 10:3; Neh 8:1, 14; 10: 29; 13:3.

<sup>12</sup> Concerning the role of Nehemiah 8-10 vis-à-vis תורה, Titus Reinmuth explains, "By the insertion of Nehemiah 8-10, the editors of Ezra-Nehemiah present the orientation to Torah as an integral part of the restoration history of Judah." See T. Reinmuth, "Nehemiah and the Authority of Torah in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, Reader* (HBM 17; ed. Mark J. Boda and P. Redditt; Sheffield: Phoenix, 2008), 262. Commenting specifically on their use of *torah* and *covenant*, Williamson suggests that these chapters provide a picture of what restoration *should* look like for the community. He writes, "It is the goal of restoration rather than a description of the path which leads to it." H. G. M. Williamson, "The Torah and History in Presentations of Restoration in Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Reading the Law: Studies in Honour of Gordon J. Wenham* (J. G. McConville and K. Möller, eds.; LHB/OTS 461; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 156-72.

In addition to their apparent orientation towards תורה, FI and E-N share designations for the community of survivors after judgment. Each corpus describes the remnant community as holy “seed/offspring” (זרע, Ezra 9:2; Isa 6:13c; 59:21) and “tremblers” (חרדים) at God’s word (Ezra 9:4; 10:3; Isa 66:2, 5).<sup>13</sup> These similarities suggest a common socio-historical background within which, for the post-exilic community, תורה is a word of YHWH pertinent to the community’s restoration, identity, and vocation. In both FI and E-N, YHWH’s people are a holy offspring who tremble at דבר־יהוה.

In a recent study, Jacob Stromberg comments on FI and E-N’s use of ‘trembling at the divine word’ and considers “reasonably secure” the link between this phrase in E-N and Mosaic Torah—however it was understood by the writer. As he observes, “[In] Ezra 9-10 trembling at the divine ‘word’ is synonymous with trembling at the divine ‘command’, and the ‘commands’ [מצוות] are clearly derived from Deuteronomy... here to ‘tremble’ at God’s ‘word’ entailed adhere to Mosaic legislation.”<sup>14</sup> He also properly observes that Isa 66:5 suggests the phrase דבר־יהוה is capable of broader application.<sup>15</sup> Still, since E-N and FI presume a common socio-historical background, it is reasonable to assume that E-N’s use of the term תורה overlaps with its use in FI. Therefore, in both E-N and FI the term might refer to Mosaic legislation. The aforementioned areas of affinity suggest a link between FI, E-N, and Deuteronomy.<sup>16</sup>

This intertextuality raises several important questions, and locating the discussion in the setting of Ezra’s reforms provides a platform from which to build.<sup>17</sup> First, how do

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp suggests that this group in Ezra 9-10 is identical to the “tremblers” identified in Isaiah 66. He labels them (anachronistically) “Quakers,” describing them as “a shunned and hated minority group... [that] either preceded the arrival of Ezra or... came about as a result of the (predictable) failure of his mission and his disappearance from the scene.” Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 76. He suggests that this group could have been loyal to Ezra but opposed to Nehemiah, and finds a situation of tension and conflict in the closing of Isaiah favorable to the development of sects in the time of Ezra. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (AB 19B; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 54.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile: The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 23.

<sup>15</sup> J. Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile*, 23, n.57.

<sup>16</sup> On the ‘Mosaic’ referent of תורה in Ezra-Nehemiah see Lester Grabbe, “The Law of Moses in Ezra Tradition: More Virtual than Real?” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (ed. J. W. Watts; SBLSymS 17; Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 91-113; Sarah Japhet, “Law and ‘the Law’ in Ezra-Nehemiah,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (ed. M. Goshen-Gottstein; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 99-115; Rolf Rendtorff, “Ezra und das ‘Gesetz’” *ZAW* 96 (1984): 165-84. For an opposing view, see Cornelis Houtman, “Ezra and the Law” *OTS* 21 (1981): 91-115.

<sup>17</sup> The thesis does not presuppose or require a particular theory of the book of Isaiah’s history of composition; rather, I am after an interpretation of the book against the Persian phase background of Israel’s history. My aim is to understand FI’s place in the life of Israel. Nevertheless, as a generalization, standard critical scholarship on the book of Isaiah seems agreed upon a final phase of composition in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century,

FI and E-N (taken separately) conceive of תורה (and דברי־יהוה)? Second, do FI or E-N seek to interpret the other? If so, what is the direction of influence?<sup>18</sup> Third, what is the relationship between FI and E-N as regards תורה? Is their conception of תורה similar or dissimilar? If similar, is the use of the concept in FI synonymous with its use in E-N or is it necessary to account for diversity in relations of contiguity, overlap, or inclusivity?<sup>19</sup> Finally, what strategic role might תורה play in the broader canonical function of FI and of E-N?<sup>20</sup>

### 1.1.1. Date and Setting

Studies of Isaiah holistically and of Trito-Isaiah (TI) alone support my introductory observations by suggesting a socio-historical background for FI in the early Persian phase of Israel's history, a backdrop akin to that of E-N.<sup>21</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, in particular,

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Persian period. Regarding a Persian phase of composition, Blenkinsopp is representative: "I would conclude that... a core component of Isaiah 56-66 was composed close to the time of the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah, that is to say, about the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E." See Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, 76. See also the survey of critical commentary in S. De Vries, *From Old Revelation to New: A Tradition-Historical and Redaction-Critical Study of Temporal Transitions in Prophetic Prediction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 112.

<sup>18</sup> Several scholars have suggested that E-N was influenced by FI, appealing chiefly to mention of Cyrus and the exodus motif (cf. Ezra 1:2-6). See, e.g., Klaus Koch, "Ezra and the Origins of Judaism," *JSS* 19 (1974): 173-97; J. Gordon McConville, "Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy," *VT* 36 (1986): 205-24; R. L. Braun, "Cyrus in Second and Third Isaiah, Chronicles, and Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of R. W. Klein* (ed. G. M. Patrick and S. L. McKenzie; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 146-64. Stromberg's thesis does not support the conclusion that E-N is dependent upon FI. Rather, the mention of 'holy seed' in Ezra 9 can be explained by appeal to the exegetical texture of this chapter, interlaced with citations from Deuteronomy; consequently, he concludes that Ezra 9 is not dependent on Isa 6:13c, but is dependent upon Deuteronomy's 'holy nation' (Deut 7:2-6). See his discussion of McConville (1986) in *Isaiah after Exile*, 171-73.

<sup>19</sup> Recall Stromberg's observation that in Isa 66:2, 5 the phrase "word of God [lit. "my word," דברי־יְהוָה]" may be capable of broader application, suggesting that the phrase may be inclusive, perhaps involving both Mosaic Torah and the prophetic word.

<sup>20</sup> Broader questions come to mind as well. For instance, does FI or E-N indicate a remedy for ending or preventing the recurrence of the national apostasy that leads to exile? What does each composition contribute to our understanding of early Jewish eschatology (in particular)? In short, how does each corpus offer a way forward for Israel?

<sup>21</sup> Ezra-Nehemiah scholarship has achieved something of a consensus regarding two phases of composition, one near 400 B.C.E. and a final phase near the beginning of the Hellenistic period, around 300 B.C.E. See, e.g., L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 1: Yehud, the Persian Province of Judah* (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 72.

Among specialized studies on Trito-Isaiah, see esp. P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56-66* (VTSup 62; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Unlike Blenkinsopp, Smith sees no reason to identify the precise background for the compilation of Isaiah 56-66 with the period of Ezra's reforms. According to him, the book reaches its final form between 538 and 515 B.C.E. He asserts, "The divisions and tensions within the community that became apparent in chs. 56-59 and 65-66 were the result of the resurgence of social injustice and syncretistic practices, which while indulged in and supported by many, were opposed by TI [Trito-Isaiah] and a loyal minority" (*Rhetoric and Redaction*, 206). See also Grace Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992) and Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* (JSOTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 11-21.

proposes a setting specifically in the time of Ezra.<sup>22</sup> The vision of the end of exile and restoration in FI and the record of restoration and reform in E-N each have import for the people of God in the complicated setting of Persian domination.<sup>23</sup> My aim in this study is twofold: to focus on FI in order to articulate the distinctiveness of its vision and then to assess its import for the Persian phase setting.

### 1.1.2. Ideological Comparisons

As indicated, several major issues of common concern arise in both corpuses, and scholars differ sharply about whether FI, juxtaposed in a canon with E-N, affirms or subverts the outlook and reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the recognition of analogous concerns and the possibility of their shared place in communal life within this socio-

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<sup>22</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 185, and "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 51-52. The reasons for giving special attention to the work of Marvin A. Sweeney will be clarified below.

<sup>23</sup> For introduction to post-exilic and Persian period Judah, see, e.g., R. Albertz and B. Becking, eds., *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era* (Studies in Theology and Religion 5; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003); B. Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel, eds., *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformations of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OtSt 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999); L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000) and D. L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Besides awareness of continuing foreign domination, the several issues include late biblical prophecy, universalism and particularism, debt-slavery, ethnicity and the place of aliens in the community, intermarriage, the relationship of theocracy and eschatology, and particular issues concerning the cult (e.g., holiness, acceptable worship at the Second Temple, and the concerns of priestly lineage and Sabbath observance). Regarding late biblical prophecy, see, e.g., D. L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (SBLMS 23; Missoula: Scholars, 1977); J. Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel After the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1986); J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1986); Benjamin Sommer, "Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation" *JBL* 115/1 (1996): 31-47.

Regarding universalism and particularism, D. L. Smith-Christopher poses the question in a manner most helpful:

The difference in perspectives...was *not* whether the present circumstances of political subordination need to change. The difference between these perspectives was a strategic discussion of how the change of circumstances should be brought about. To focus the difference even more specifically—the difference of perspective was *what must happen to the foreigner in order for our present circumstances to change for the better*.

D. L. Smith-Christopher, "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic and Biblical Theology," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (M. G. Brett, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 120 (his italics). For more on this problem, see J. Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah: Prophet of Universalism?" *JSOT* 41 (1990): 83-103; C. T. Begg, "Foreigners in Third Isaiah," *Bible Today* 23 (1985): 90-108; A. Gelston, "Universalism in Second Isaiah," *JTS* 43 (1992): 377-398; Christiana van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (JSOTS 107; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991); J. D. Levenson, "The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. G. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 143-169; M. Weinfeld, "Universalism and Particularism in the Period of the Return to Zion," *Tarbiz* 33 (1964): 231-32.

Regarding intermarriage, see, e.g., W. Horbury, "Extirpation and Excommunication," *VT* 35 (1985): 13-38 and D. L. Smith-Christopher, "The Mixed Marriage Crisis of Ezra 9-10 and Neh 13: A Study of the Sociology of Post-Exilic Judean Community," in *Second Temple Studies, Vol. 2: Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (T. Eskenazi and K. Richards, eds.; JSOTSup 175; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 243-265.

Regarding debt-slavery after the exile, see, e.g., K. Baltzer, "Liberation from Debt Slavery after the Exile in Second Isaiah and Nehemiah" in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (P. D. Miller and P. D. Hanson, eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 477-84.

historical background alone justify the comparison: the striking similarities create analogies between them, inviting assessment and possibly accentuating their differences respecting issues that confronted Judean society during this period. One major concern facing God's people in the Babylonian and Persian periods, specifically the *gôlâ*-community, was to measure continuity with past tradition. This measure would in turn inform present communal identity, institutional legitimacy, and covenantal vocation.<sup>25</sup> Put differently, in addition to basic questions about the nature of Israel and its institutions, a specific concern of YHWH's people was to ask, "What hope is there for a people who have been judged by their God?" or "Is the covenant with YHWH still intact?" A second major issue concerned the prophetic hope for the future (near and remote, penultimate and definitive), and closely related to this, the identity and final destiny of the righteous and the wicked (Isa 66:18-24). How are the people of God identified? What hope does the present generation have of realizing the goal of restoration? How shall it fulfill its vocation within YHWH's purpose for blessing the entire creation?<sup>26</sup>

The changes and developments that occurred during the Persian hegemony seized the attention of readers of FI because it contributed to the shape and direction that Judaism would take. Indeed, as often recognized, in this remarkable period the interpretation of Scripture became a vital activity for the people of God; naturally, the hermeneutical and exegetical decisions made during this phase were introductory and basic to the large period following.<sup>27</sup> Thus, to engage their audiences and address the complexities faced by the

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<sup>25</sup> Relevant to this is one's qualifications for participation in the community and the worship of the temple (cf. Isa 56:1-8; 66:18-23; Ezra 9:1-4; Neh 9:2; Deut 23:1-9). See, J. N. Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah: A Study of the Function of Chapters 56-66 in the Present Structure of the Book," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah, vol. 1* (C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, eds.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 177-92. As this matter relates to the Second Temple, see, e.g., W. A. M. Beuken, "Does Trito-Isaiah Reject the Temple? An Intertextual Inquiry into Isaiah 66:1-6," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honor of Bas van Iersel* (S. Draisma, ed.; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1989), 53-66.

<sup>26</sup> Relevant here are eschatological expectations and scholars' perceptions regarding incipient sectarian impulses. On this perception, see, e.g., J. Blenkinsopp, "Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 2: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (E. P. Sanders, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 1-26 and *Opening the Sealed Book*, 56-88; P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1968); A. Rofé, "The Piety of the Tora-Disciples at the Winding-up of the Hebrew Bible," in *Bibel in Jüdischer und christlicher Tradition: Festschrift für J. Maier* (ed. H. Merklein, et al; BBB 88; Frankfurt: Hain, 1993), 78-85 and "Isaiah 66:1-4: Judean Sects in the Persian Period as Viewed by Trito-Isaiah," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (A. Kort and S. Morschauser, eds.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 205-217; B. Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*; Morton Smith, *Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University, 1971); S. Talmon, "The Emergence of Jewish Sectarianism in the Early Second Temple Period," in *King, Cult, and Calendar in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 165-201 and "The Internal Diversification of Judaism in the Early Second Temple Period," in *Jewish Civilization in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991), 16-43. See also, Klaus Koch, "Ezra and the Origins of Judaism," *JSS* 19 (1974): 173-97 and J. Gordon McConville, "Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy," *VT* 36 (1986): 205-24.

<sup>27</sup> L. Grabbe argues that the Persian period—not the period following Alexander's conquests—is the seminal stage in the development of early Judaism. He claims that the most important elements of modern

Second Temple community, it seems that readers/redactors in this period welcomed the influence of earlier sacred texts, finding in them treasures old and new (cf. Matt 13:52). In short, to fashion a trajectory for God's people, they pictured their future in terms of their past. Unsurprisingly, then, as biblical literature (notably the Pentateuch) was recognized and accepted as Scripture,<sup>28</sup> or the inspired revelation of God for 'post-exilic' communities, biblical interpretation reached a high point.<sup>29</sup> In recognition of this high point, this thesis studies the conception of תורה that characterizes FI. With special reference to the writings of Marvin Sweeney, I examine how FI's vision of תורה going forth from Zion relates to Mosaic Torah and to Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms.

To articulate the distinctiveness of FI's vision, I address the following questions as regards FI's conception of תורה:

- (1) What is the particular view of Israel's identity and vocation in the scope of FI?
- (2) How does FI relate Israel's nature and calling to its conception and use of תורה?
- (3) Specifically, what is the connection of Israel's role to the ascent of the nations in FI's programmatic vision (Isa 2:2-4, 5)?
- (4) With special reference to the proposal of Marvin Sweeney (discussed below), does FI have its own distinct message with regard to תורה (|| דבר-יהוה) in the vocation of Israel or is FI (merely) a servant of Ezra's reforms?

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Judaism were already extant or in process by the end of the Persian period. See L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism, Vol.1*, 2. See also J. L. Kugel and R. A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

<sup>28</sup> According to Eugene Ulrich, "A book of *Scripture* is a sacred authoritative work believed to have God as its ultimate author, which the community, as a group and individually, recognizes and accepts as determinative for its belief and practice for all time and in all places." Eugene Ulrich, "Terminology for the Developing Scriptures in the Second Temple Period" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Washington, D. C. 2006), 1. Regarding the developing canon see, e.g., S. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets* (FAT 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); W. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004); Julio C. Trebolle-Barrera, *The Jewish and Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (W. G. E. Watson, transl.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> This activity is apparent within the canon itself through observation of inner-biblical exegesis and interpretation. Inner-biblical interpretation may be understood broadly to include both expository and compositional techniques (e.g., the exegesis of Scripture, the influence of earlier biblical traditions and texts, narrative analogies, allusions to and echoes of earlier texts). On biblical interpretation in this period, see, e.g., D. J. A. Clines, "Nehemiah 10 as an Example of Early Biblical Exegesis," *JSOT* 21 (1981): 111-17; L. M. Eslinger, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category" *VT* 42 (1992): 47-58; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); J. Krašovec, *Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views* (VTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1999); J. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1998); J. Kugel and R. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); D. C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1-70; B. D. Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to L. Eslinger" *VT* 46 (1992): 479-89 and *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998), 1-31; P. Tull, "Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," in *To Each Its Own Meaning* (ed. S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 156-180 and P. Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBLDS 161. Atlanta: Scholars, 1997).

Pertaining to Israel's identity and vocation, my ultimate intention is to show how FI's conception and strategic use of **תורה** relates to servant-discipleship as a central organizing motif.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.2. State of the Question

A survey of scholarship regarding the nature and use of **תורה** underlying FI's vision reveals an open debate, putting in pause both the simple classification of **תורה** in FI with Mosaic Torah (as referent) and the facile identification of FI's agenda with Ezra's reforms.<sup>31</sup> Consideration of the prominent literature in this debate enables one to appreciate the state of the question concerning the relation of FI and E-N on the meaning of **תורה**. Before examining Isaianic scholarship on this question, however, I briefly survey scholarship on **תורה** in contemporary OT studies.<sup>32</sup> This exercise provides a basis for interaction and reassessment of the nature of **תורה** within scholarship on Isaiah.

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<sup>30</sup> I will have more to say about this feature later in the thesis by interaction with relevant texts. For now, suffice it to say that I will observe Shamaryahu Talmon's definition of 'motif' as "a representative complex theme which recurs in the Hebrew Bible in varying forms and configurations... arising out of common experience, and being implanted in the collective (synchronous and diachronous) memory of the group or audience whom an author addresses." See S. Talmon, "Har and Midbār: An Antithetical Pair of Biblical Motifs," in *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East* (M. Mindlin, ed.; London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), 108. Talmon observes that motifs can be adapted in entirely new literary settings, often amalgamated with other images, themes, and literary patterns. Recurring in patterns, they are effective tools of the biblical writer that intend to evoke a clear echo of an audience's shared historical, theological, or societal knowledge. Citing biblical examples of the 'barren wife' and 'the youngest son', Talmon observes that, at times, literary tropes disclose an empathy with situations of the individual and with societal phenomena that appear to stand in opposition to well-established standards (Talmon, "Har and Midbār," 109). In my view, this observation may be relevant to the motif of 'servanthood' (i.e., 'suffering servant' or 'suffering righteous').

<sup>31</sup> The literature survey will focus on the contemporary debate in Isaiah scholarship. In Ezra-Nehemiah scholarship, scholars appear to talk of Mosaic Torah rather freely. Lester Grabbe's comments represent the consensus: "Whatever Ezra's role... the result was that by the end of the Persian period 'Moses' law' was in existence." See L. Grabbe, "The Law of Moses in the Ezra Tradition," 113. H. G. M. Williamson shows the importance of this conclusion for the history of interpretation in this period: "It is not a new law that Ezra presents, but one whose demands frequently cannot be simply applied to the contemporary setting." The task of the commentator, then, is to explain how the formulations of the law in Ezra-Nehemiah arose out of the laws as we know them. Hence, while traditions of reading may differ, the readers all interpret one law. By showing that Ezra-Nehemiah's use of the law is consistent with the methods of biblical interpretation current at the time, the reader can see that the law of Ezra was "similar to, if not yet fully identical with, our Pentateuch." See Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Waco: Texas, 1985), xxxviii-ix.

<sup>32</sup> Studies abound on the 220 occurrences of **תורה** in the Old Testament. For general discussion and bibliography, see W. J. Beecher, "Torah: A Word-Study in the Old Testament," *JBL* 24 (1905): 1-16; S. H. Blank, "The LXX Renderings of Old Testament Terms for Law," *HUCA* 7 (1930): 259-83; Peter Enns, "Law of God" in *NIDOTTE* 4:3723; G. P. Fowler, "The Meaning of **תורה** in the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1954); G. Liedke and C. Petersen, "**תורה** / *Tôrâ* instruction," in *TLOT* 2:1415-22; B. Lindars, "Torah in Deuteronomy," in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), 117-36; G.

### 1.2.1. תורה in Old Testament Studies

The study of the word תורה has traditionally been the domain of form critical research. This has led to a narrow association of the term with various social roles perceived to be sharply divided in ancient Israel.<sup>33</sup> The result is a multiplicity of conceptions of תורה, each strictly associated with a distinct circle of mediators: priestly, sapiential, Mosaic (i.e., deuteronomic legislation ascribed to Moses), and even an unmediated תורה, unique to YHWH alone.<sup>34</sup>

In the prophets the lexeme תורה can thus signal the presence of a narrowly-conceived “prophetic *tôrâ*” (*Prophetische Tora*), or the prophetic adaptation of a priestly genre of instruction (i.e., “priestly *tôrâ*,” *Priesterliche Tora*).<sup>35</sup> So understood, this prophetic *tôrâ* is a borrowed speech form, distinguished from a legal dispute by a concern for matters cultic<sup>36</sup> rather than civil (e.g., the social concerns of the domestic law-court). J. Begrich<sup>37</sup> believed that תורה originally belonged to the priests<sup>38</sup> and that the prophets must have adapted priestly *tôrâ*.<sup>39</sup> By removing the prophetic element (*Einschlag*), he hoped to discover the original priestly form. The prophetic forms were so substantially modified, however, that this effort proved to be impossible, and others decided to call the same passages simply “prophetic *tôrâ*.”<sup>40</sup> Theodor Lescow, for instance, identified three

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Östborn, *Tora in the Old Testament: A Semantic Study* (Lund: Håken Ohlssoms Boktryckeri, 1945); García López and H. J. Fabry, “תורה *Tôrâ*,” in *ThWAT* 8:609-646.

<sup>33</sup> The point of departure, according to Blenkinsopp, is “the assumption that *Tôrâ* is best defined in function of the office or institution which dispenses it.” See J. Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1977), 35.

<sup>34</sup> These distinctions naturally led to a fight over which came first. Sarah Japhet, for instance, suggests that legal concepts emanated from the prophets, instead of a process of broadening from Moses to prophecy in general. She suggests that the notion of prophets as lawgivers indicates a shift from pre-conquest times to the realities of life in the land of Israel; hence, she sees the development of the legal tradition as a process “from prophecy in general to ‘the master of all prophets’,” namely, Moses. Thus, the greatest prophet also becomes the greatest lawgiver (S. Japhet, “Law and ‘the Law’ in Ezra-Nehemiah,” 103).

<sup>35</sup> See the description of these two genres in M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 527-28. His definition of priestly *tôrâ* is as follows: “An authoritative instructional form, postulated by J. Begrich, from which prophetic instruction (prophetic torah) is believed to have developed.”

<sup>36</sup> Discerning sacred vs. profane or appropriate attitudes in the worship of YHWH by means of sacrifices were *priestly* prerogatives.

<sup>37</sup> Joachim Begrich, “Die Priesterliche Tora,” in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testament* (ed. P. Volz, F. Stummer, and J. Hemple; BZAW 66; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1936), 63-88.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Deut 17:18; Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26.

<sup>39</sup> He lists the following pericopes as examples: Isa 1:10-17; 66:2b-3; Hos 6:6; Amos 4:4f; 5:4f, 21-24; Mal 1:10. Claus Westermann adds Isa 8:11-15 and Jer 7:21. See C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (transl. H. C. White; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 203.

<sup>40</sup> H. Wildberger’s comments are representative of this view: “[Since] the individual terms are deeply rooted in the language of the cult, one must take this present message of the prophet essentially to be priestly torah. But this form has been substantially modified by the prophet, so that one would not be completely in error to designate this a prophetic torah.” See H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 38.



segments,<sup>41</sup> consisting of a generalizing introduction, often including the keywords **צדק** and **משפט**, a central core of material from cult and ethics, and a conclusion, formulated chiefly as a promise. Lescow suggested that prophets who offered post-exilic sermons on **תורה** (e.g., Isa 56:1-7; 58:1-8) adapted a priestly *tôrâ* to proclaim those attitudes and actions pleasing to YHWH.<sup>42</sup> Blenkinsopp, recognizing their condemnatory tone, suggests that they perhaps imitate priestly forms sarcastically.<sup>43</sup>

Joseph Jensen, whose treatment heavily influences conceptions of **תורה** in FI, thoroughly rejected this view. His aim was to show that prophetic texts have been labeled prophetic *tôrâ* without sufficient grounds.<sup>44</sup> As an alternative, he suggested that **תורה** arose in schools, derived either from wisdom circles, designed for training the rulers of Israel and Judah in civics, or from the family circle, as parents passed wisdom along to their offspring.<sup>45</sup>

The situation, then, is not as clear as one might expect. The artificial precision sought from several occurrences of the word **תורה** led to the perception that each occurrence must have a technical sense, and so a narrowly restrictive definition was often imposed. Thus far, then, Jensen's conclusion is correct: "many explanations for the derivation of **תורה** have been offered, but none of them rest on compelling arguments, and none of them have been accorded general acceptance."<sup>46</sup> I do not attempt to cover all the ground here,<sup>47</sup> since distinguishing the origin and sense of the word by means of form critical (or tradition-historical) study alone is not possible.

Suffice it to say, one must ask in each case whether **תורה** is a technical term (pointing to a precise documentary referent or genre) or a word (together with other terms) signaling a concept requiring exegesis of whole passages. Questions about lexicography must be distinguished carefully from questions about the theological views or commitments of the various biblical writers (beliefs, concepts, theology), as mixing the

<sup>41</sup> Theodor Lescow, "Die dreistufige Torah: Beobachtungen zu einer Form" ZAW 82 (1970): 362.

<sup>42</sup> Although Lescow connected this to priestly entrance liturgies, he insisted that this was not its *Sitz im Leben*, but only one possible area of use. See Lescow, "Die dreistufige Torah," 379.

<sup>43</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 184. Elsewhere Blenkinsopp writes, "At all events, competence in *tôrâ* could be expected of the priest, though it was not always forthcoming." See his, *Prophecy and Canon*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Jensen, *The Use of Tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition* (CBQMS 3; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1973), 13. I will discuss Jensen's view more thoroughly below.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Deut 4:5-8; 6:20-25.

<sup>46</sup> Jensen, *The Use of Tôrâ by Isaiah*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> See the dictionary studies mentioned above.

two (word and concept) invites distortion.<sup>48</sup> This study shares an interest in the particular theological view of FI concerning the concept of תורה, not merely the sense of the word in each of its twelve occurrences<sup>49</sup>—however the latter may signal or contribute to the Isaianic conception.

The significance of Deuteronomy's relation to prophetic literature as well as the danger in construing Deuteronomy (or the Pentateuch) too narrowly in judicial and legal terms are important when considering תורה as a concept in FI. Liedke and Petersen write, "Deuteronomy takes up the understanding...that the revelation of Yahweh's will to Israel should be understood as a unity."<sup>50</sup> Thus, they find lamentable the atomization of traditions in form-critical scholarship based simply on occurrences of the word תורה. In fact, they propose that the opposite trend emerges, namely, "the view, developed in Hosea, Isaiah, and especially Deuteronomy, of the unity of the 'law', which leads to the designation not only of the Pentateuch but of the entire OT canon as *Tôrâ*."<sup>51</sup> So understood, Jean-Pierre Sonnet suggests that Deuteronomy introduces a "Mosaic logic" (i.e., legal and prophetic) that is "grafted onto the patriarchal one."<sup>52</sup> Its design is to expound YHWH's unified purpose and will for Israel in the cosmos. Together then, both patriarchal and Mosaic, the stories and covenants (including laws) constitutive of the finished corpus of the Pentateuch reflect a hermeneutical process of instruction to guide Israel's life.

García López and Fabry further this conception, noting that even in Deuteronomy תורה is a multivalent word:

The book of Deuteronomy is a reservoir for the several semantic variations of the term *tôrâ* ... The *tôrâ* as it appears in Deuteronomy includes not only prophetic and legal features but also didactic, sapiential features.<sup>53</sup>

They conclude that even if Israelite tradition recognized Deuteronomy as the singular embodiment of the Mosaic Covenant, it is nevertheless important to note that תורה does

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. James Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1961) and Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983). Regarding the word תורה, several senses may be noted. But if there is a conception of תורה at work in FI, this concept is a topic of biblical theological study. If the *concept* is used strategically in a particular passage, the question is not, does the word occur, or to what does it refer, in particular, but, what other words, images, figures of speech, and so forth, may also signal the presence of the concept.

<sup>49</sup> Isa 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7.

<sup>50</sup> G. Liedke and C. Petersen, "תורה / *tôrâ* instruction," *TLOT* 2:1422 (ET).

<sup>51</sup> G. Liedke and C. Petersen, "תורה / *tôrâ* instruction," *TLOT* 2:1422.

<sup>52</sup> Jean-Pierre Sonnet, *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (BIS 14; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 229.

<sup>53</sup> García López and H. J. Fabry, "תורה / *tôrâ*," *ThWAT* 8:640-41. Deuteronomy 33:10 even refers to תורה as *YHWH's* תורה.

not merely connote one idea. Thus, the several occurrences of this word (with others, e.g., *בְּרִית, מִשְׁפָּט, דְּבָרִים*) in Deuteronomy signal a broader conception of ‘Mosaic Torah’. As their study and Sonnet’s imply, if this is a relevant observation for Deuteronomy, it is relevant for the Pentateuch as a whole.<sup>54</sup> Following these scholars, as God’s singular will for Israel, *תּוֹרָה* in Deuteronomy signals a hermeneutical concept, involving the exploration and re-appropriation of diverse earlier traditions according to the ‘Mosaic logic’.

In a recent article discussing the various uses of *תּוֹרָה* and *אִמְרָה / דְּבָר*,<sup>55</sup> Stephen Chapman confirms this trend that views *תּוֹרָה* as a hermeneutical concept. First, he concedes that already in the biblical period *תּוֹרָה* could function as a technical term for received Scripture or, even more precisely, a recognized area of the canon (e.g., Mosaic Torah); nevertheless, he also conceives of *תּוֹרָה* as a rubric for a broad hermeneutical process. Consequently, instead of a chronological distinction, he proposes a qualitative distinction between what is “Mosaic” and what is “non-Mosaic.”<sup>56</sup> Chapman concludes that *תּוֹרָה* and *דְּבָרִים* (eventually associated with the bipartite canon, *תּוֹרָה* and *נְבִיאִים*) have for their focus the unity of YHWH’s purpose and will.<sup>57</sup> This qualitative focus could be appropriated beyond Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch (*תּוֹרָה*); indeed, Chapman contends it was also adopted in this manner by the writers of the prophetic books (*נְבִיאִים*). Hence, in various times and in many ways, conceptions of *תּוֹרָה* could be altered by different writers who envisioned the re-realization of YHWH’s singular purpose and will within the variegated settings of their existence and in accordance with their own (inspired) rhetorical agendas. Therefore, as a broad hermeneutical concept, *תּוֹרָה* might signal the hermeneutical process whereby YHWH’s revealed purpose and will are reinterpreted according to the situational and rhetorical purposes of the various human writers of Scripture.

As a dynamic hermeneutical concept, then, *תּוֹרָה* may involve strategic reflection on the redemptive meaning of history that aims to interpret the singular purpose and will of

<sup>54</sup> García López and H. J. Fabry, “*תּוֹרָה / tôrâ*,” *ThWAT* 8:641.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Chapman, “The Law and the Words as a Canonical Formula within the Old Testament,” in *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition* (ed. C. A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 26-74.

<sup>56</sup> S. Chapman, “The Law and the Words,” 43 n.96.

<sup>57</sup> According to Chapman, in E-N too, “*תּוֹרָה* can refer to the totality of life before God, including the formulation of new ‘facilitating’ laws. In fact,” he concludes, “Torah now becomes a way of employing ancient scripture wisely (Ezra 7:25).” See S. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 239.

the one true God.<sup>58</sup> Patterned after Deuteronomy itself, תורה may signal a dynamic hermeneutical activity reflecting the advance of revelation history in new times and places; that is,<sup>59</sup> תורה may signal a canonical impulse that looks back to previous Scripture and involves *reinterpretation* (exposition and composition) concerning who God is and what he has done with implications for the faith and life of the community.<sup>60</sup> Plainly then, for writers in later periods, Mosaic Torah traditions or Mosaic Torah as a whole could present relatively comprehensive and coherent patterns for visions of restoration.<sup>61</sup> Conceivably, prophetic writings (like FI) could have taken up such traditions according to their own ‘logic’, strategically transforming them for their role in a prophetic book’s vision of restoration and renewal.

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<sup>58</sup> To this end, for example, FI paints analogies with creation (Gen 1-3) and chaos-flood (Noah, in Gen 6-9), the election of Abraham’s family, Jacob, Esau, Moses, exodus, wilderness, and conquest. See Rikk Watts, “Echoes from the Past: Israel’s Ancient Traditions and the Destiny of the Nations in Isa 40-55,” *JSOT* 28 (2004): 481-508.

<sup>59</sup> As regards Deuteronomy, Dennis Olson states,

The structure of the book focuses on passing the story, law, and covenant from one old generation to another new generation of God’s people... Since the creation story of Genesis 1, the narrative of the Pentateuch has told the story of the world and of the people of God. But in Deuteronomy, the narrative pauses to teach what this foundational story means for every new generation.

D. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 11. Deuteronomic teaching involves “an ever-changing process of exposition and exploration of *torah* for new times and places” (D. Olson, *Deuteronomy*, 12).

<sup>60</sup> Just as “law” and “love” are not mutually exclusive but inseparable notions in Deuteronomy, the Torah is not exclusively legal; that is, its conception is much broader, including a narrative of redemptive history that climaxes in the exodus. Moreover, the whole is conceived within a special (covenantal) relationship that is concerned with the basic rhetorical movement from indicative to imperative. As a book within the larger context of the Torah, Deuteronomy itself presents with a significant retrospective and prospective gaze: it is after Abraham and the exodus, but set on the plains of Moab, on the eve of the conquest. Although its perspective *cis*-Jordan (Deut 1:1) suggests that its aim was to enable blessed life in the land, the setting of Moses’ speeches outside the land suggests its import for all the times and places of Israel’s existence.

Other features, suggested to me by McConville, support this view: it contains an altar law, but no specification of place—not even Zion/Jerusalem! It specifies many teachers: father to son, elder, priest, prophet, and king; it envisions a new prophet (torah-giver) like Moses (Deut 18) and a new covenant (Deut 30). It even includes an account of the death of its author. See J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC 5; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2002), 17-51. Although Moses has died, he has left a book of “torah” for Israel, a reinterpretation of God’s purpose and will for the community’s life (Deut 30:19; cf. 4:1-40). With the completion of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy’s legal and prophetic logic allows for re-realizations in later times. Thus, it anticipates new words of God while leaving the details of fulfillment to the purpose and will of YHWH alone (Deut 32:29; cf. Isa 43:13).

<sup>61</sup> Commenting on the use of the word תורה in Isaiah 1:10-17, H. G. M. Williamson writes, “By this time [i.e., the time of the compiler of FI], Torah will have come to be used more widely and generally for all types of divine revelation relevant to the proper way to conduct one’s life, including all those which have been specified above [namely, Mosaic, prophetic, priestly, didactic, and wisdom].” He sees little reason to insist on sharp distinctions of social roles with correspondingly distinct Torahs in ancient Israel. His comments support my notion of תורה as a hermeneutical *concept* within the historical setting of FI. See H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1-27: Isaiah 1-5* (ICC; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 86.

### 1.2.2. תורה in *Isaiah Studies*

Turning now to scholarly treatments of the use of תורה in the book of Isaiah, we observe a heavy dependence on form-critical approaches regarding the meaning of תורה in the OT.<sup>62</sup> Two main sides debate the particular meaning of תורה in FI. First, there are scholars who suggest that FI knew Mosaic Torah and specifically identify תורה with Mosaic Torah (i.e., legislation from Deuteronomy). Second, there are scholars who think the conception of תורה in FI remains distinct; FI did not know Mosaic Torah, yet תורה in Isaiah is either analogous to Mosaic Torah or at best a supplement to Mosaic Torah.

#### 1.2.2.1. *Isaiah knew Mosaic Torah and תורה in FI refers to Mosaic Torah.*

For some in this first group, תורה in the Second Temple period may be a multivalent term, having prophetic, priestly, and sapiential connotations; nevertheless, in some periods—depending on the scholar under discussion, either the Josianic period of reform or the exilic and postexilic periods—תורה in FI is identified with Mosaic Torah. There are three scholars, taken as representative, whose approaches each result in this somewhat similar conclusion: Gerald T. Sheppard, then a recent contribution from Ronald E. Clements, and following him, but more nuanced (in a published lecture series), Irmtraud Fischer.

##### 1.2.2.1.1. *Gerald Sheppard*

Representative of his essays on Isaiah,<sup>63</sup> Gerald Sheppard's 1996 article, "The 'Scope' of Isaiah as a Book of Jewish and Christian Scriptures," articulates his concern to move Isaiah scholars to the same canonical playing field by unearthing what representative scholarly works indicate by "text"<sup>64</sup> and reintroducing the pre-critical concept of "scope."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Although he is commenting on Isa 1:10, Brevard Childs's observations appear to have extensive application: "Much scholarly debate has occurred in an effort to determine precisely whether the genre stems from priestly, prophetic, or wisdom circles. The argument has become quite sterile without much exegetical illumination." See B. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 19.

<sup>63</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, "The Book of Isaiah as a Human Witness to Revelation within the Religions of Judaism and Christianity," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering; SBLSP 32; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 274-80; "The Book of Isaiah: Competing Structures According to a Late Modern Description of its Shape and Scope," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering; SBLSP 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 549-82; "The 'Scope' of Isaiah as a Book of Jewish and Christian Scriptures," in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. Roy F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 257-81.

<sup>64</sup> In his 1992 and 1996 articles, he supplies helpful critical surveys of the works of M. A. Sweeney, E. W. Conrad, H. G. M. Williamson, and C. R. Seitz.

<sup>65</sup> For Sheppard, "scope" denotes both the shape of the text and its central purpose or argument, similar to Eco's *intentio operis*. By "text," he means the specific "territory of land" appropriate to the

If readers are to avoid imposing their own view upon a text, they must properly understand its form-and-function as Jewish and Christian Scriptures. To this end, he proposes a “criticism of criticisms” to know whether the same text (or texts) is envisioned at the focal point of scholarly debate.<sup>66</sup> This is a salutary discussion, because scholars who do not share the same view of Isaiah’s text will inevitably talk past each other. Sheppard’s goal is to unite recognition of the complexity of Isaiah’s prehistory with reverence for Isaiah as a text of Scripture in Jewish and Christian traditions.

The recent movement in Isaiah scholarship towards holistic readings<sup>67</sup>—variously conceived by Sheppard’s dialogue partners—does reveal several distinct conceptions of Isaiah as “text,” with each conception representing a halfway house on the road to his stated goal. For instance, Edgar Conrad’s literary or text-oriented description, coupled with his appreciation for form criticism, “underplays the complexity of its prehistory and shows little interest in a vision of the book as part of two scriptural intertexts, Jewish and Christian.”<sup>68</sup> And H. G. M. Williamson seeks a reading specifically from within the standpoint of Deutero-Isaiah (DI).<sup>69</sup> “At a minimum,” writes Sheppard, “‘the book of Isaiah’ is in this monograph only envisioned as two or more books that existed prior to a much later book of Isaiah in Jewish Scripture.”<sup>70</sup> While Conrad neglects composition history and fails to consider the literary text *as Scripture* oriented to Jews (and Christians), Williamson never arrives at the canonical final-form. But even in *Zion’s Final Destiny*, by Christopher Seitz, the search for a comprehensive symbol or unifying theme remains “pre-scriptural,” that is, “at the level of an intertextuality between different redactional levels of composition.”<sup>71</sup> Seitz’s discovery of a concern for Zion and its restoration only reveals how various redactors responded to a theological problem in the effort to vindicate their particular version of Zion theology. Hence, Seitz too fails to see the text of Isaiah as a

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discussion of scope. By introducing “scope,” he indicates that his chief concern is to discern the text’s principal subject matter and intention. See Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 275.

<sup>66</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 257.

<sup>67</sup> For a brief summary of developments up to the turn of the century, see e.g., Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Book of Isaiah in Recent Research” *CurBS* 1 (1993): 141-162. See also Patricia K. Tull, “One Book, Many Voices: Conceiving of Isaiah’s Polyphonic Message,” in *As Those who are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL* (C. M. McGinnis and P. K. Tull, eds.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 279-314, and Christopher B. Hays, “The Book of Isaiah in Contemporary Research” *Religion Compass* 5 (2011): 549-566.

<sup>68</sup> See Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 264, where he refers to Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>69</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> G. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 266.

<sup>71</sup> G. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 267. See Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion’s Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

book of Jewish Scripture. His “text” falls short of participation within even larger “intertexts of biblical books...as part of a scripture that begins with the Torah of Moses.”<sup>72</sup>

Sheppard is most appreciative of Marvin Sweeney’s 1988 dissertation,<sup>73</sup> yet even that effort falls short of his vision for the “text” and “scope” of Isaiah. Sweeney’s procedure involves delimiting sub-units of the text so that, by careful redaction-critical and rhetorical analysis, he may reach conclusions about a particular sub-unit’s structure and its syntactical interconnections with neighboring sub-units; then, after this careful analysis, signs of thematization may be considered. According to Sheppard, “Sweeney sees ‘the text’ as primarily a series of changing structures of new texts that build upon earlier textual compositions, each with its own ‘reinterpretation’ of prior stages, structures, and units of tradition.”<sup>74</sup> On this view of Isaiah’s composition-history, Sweeney is able to show how the final redaction determines the overarching concerns of the whole, with each component part playing its role within the larger framework. By this procedure, Sweeney discovers the impact of a new literary and historical context upon the semantic import of an earlier textual tradition within the macro-genre “prophetic book.”<sup>75</sup>

According to Sweeney, Isaiah reached final form in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century, the period of Ezra’s reforms according to Mosaic Torah, and with this date, Sheppard can agree. He is disturbed, however, by Sweeney’s conclusion that Isaiah lacks any indication that תורה refers to the Five Books of Moses (or any specific body of teaching).<sup>76</sup> Sheppard is frustrated with this result, because, in his words, “We know these books came to belong within Jewish Scripture in a relationship with the Mosaic Torah.”<sup>77</sup> Put differently, Sweeney’s hermeneutical commitment to read Isaiah along with other 5<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish Scriptures should have led him to the conclusion that תורה in Isaiah refers to the

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<sup>72</sup> G. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 267.

<sup>73</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*.

<sup>74</sup> See G. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 263. Compare Sweeney’s more popular article, “Resignifying the Prophetic Tradition: Redaction Criticism and the Book of Isaiah,” *Reconstructionist* 50 (1984): 19-22. Here he sees the value of redaction criticism in its ability to analyze the editorial activity by which the various segments of a biblical book were put together. The redactor of the book of Isaiah “resignified” the old Isaianic traditions by placing them together with later material.

<sup>75</sup> Sweeney defines “prophetic book” (*Prophetisches Buch*) as, “The literary presentation of the sayings of a particular prophet...Each book begins with either a superscription that identifies the following material as the ‘words,’ ‘vision,’ ‘pronouncement,’ of the prophet or with some variation that associates the following material with the prophet” (*Isaiah 1-39*, 532). He explains that the examples of Isaiah and Zechariah demonstrate that the book is not necessarily written by or about the prophet, even though the prophetic books present their contents as such. For a similar understanding of this genre, see Ehud Ben Zvi, “The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M. A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 276-97.

<sup>76</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 276.

<sup>77</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 279. For an endorsement of Sheppard’s Torah-centered orientation, see the article by Benjamin D. Sommer, “The Scroll of Isaiah as Jewish Scripture, or, Why Jews Don’t Read Books,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1996* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 225-42.

Pentateuch, a conclusion consistent with the post-exilic orientation towards Mosaic Torah.<sup>78</sup>

As Sheppard has it, “More important than a thematizing of the book will be the larger vision one has of the text and what questions we ask of it.”<sup>79</sup> Hence, if the book of Isaiah was completed in the period of Ezra’s (Mosaic) Torah, one must ask if this text might not have this Torah as its principal subject matter. “Later references to *torah* in Isaiah 1-39,” he suggests, “may plausibly have the Mosaic Torah originally in mind (2:3; 8:20; 24:5), as do the references in 40-66 (42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7).”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, Sheppard concludes,

The identification of ‘the word of Yahweh’ with ‘the torah of our God’ (1:10; cf. 2:3) points to the principal subject matter of the book of Isaiah as a whole. Here we find a post-exilic usage in the sense of ‘laws...the statutes...and the everlasting covenant’ (24:5). Against Sweeney, I do not think that anything in Third Isaiah precludes the possibility that the Torah here is complementary to the Mosaic Torah of Ezra.<sup>81</sup>

Sheppard thinks that תורה is used in the Second Temple period to capture the full range of biblical revelation. Hence, as a multivalent term, it would become the ideal concept to express the *location* of Jewish Scripture. The exilic and postexilic periods,<sup>82</sup> however, represent an intermediate stage in the Jewish conception of תורה during which תורה (and “word(s)” [אמרה, דבר]) was specifically identified with *Mosaic Torah*;<sup>83</sup> thus, Isaiah “consistently presumes a revealed Mosaic legislation as the norm against which to judge Israel’s failure and the guide to future obedience and divine reward.”<sup>84</sup> Sheppard appears

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<sup>78</sup> Sheppard’s own view is set forth succinctly in “The ‘Torah’ in Isaiah 1-39,” in *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (ed. J. L. Mays and J. Blenkinsopp; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 562-63.

<sup>79</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 274.

<sup>80</sup> Here Sheppard has to rely on a fair amount of assertion. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 275. Of the twelve occurrences of the word in FI, Sheppard classifies eight usages as identifying specifically with Mosaic Torah: 2:3, 8:20, and 24:5 (because, he says, they probably belong to the exilic and postexilic periods), and each use of תורה in Isaiah 40-66 (42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7).

<sup>81</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 277. “Complementary” is ambiguous and perhaps amounts to a concession, similar to Stromberg’s, that in FI תורה may be capable of broader application. Nevertheless, from the larger context of the article, it appears that Sheppard intends to be more precise; i.e., תורה in FI corresponds to Mosaic Torah. As a text of Jewish Scripture, according to him, FI (as ‘text’) has precisely *this Torah* “in mind.”

<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to know by what dates Sheppard distinguishes the Second Temple period from the exilic and post-exilic periods. From his treatment of Isaiah as a book of Jewish Scripture, it seems that “exilic” designates the time of “Deutero-Isaiah,” and “post-exilic” designates the early Persian phase (i.e., the time of the book’s final redaction), perhaps prior to the Hasmonean Dynasty.

<sup>83</sup> This is a most interesting move, without any further justification. Sheppard merely asserts that Isaiah also identified “word” (אמרה, דבר) with the one Torah revealed in Hebrew Scripture, namely, Mosaic Torah. See Sheppard, “The ‘Torah’ in Isaiah 1-39,” 563.

<sup>84</sup> Sheppard, “The ‘Torah’ in Isaiah 1-39,” 563. It appears, however, that his conclusion simply shifts the discussion of which “text” or “texts” scholars discuss from “text(s)” at hand in a pre-canonical (exilic and post-exilic) stage to “text(s)” at hand at some later time when the Jewish canon is closed. By



to conceive of תורה in social scientific terms: its sense depends on its reception by the community. He writes, "...the Scripture might be seen as a social contract between disparate groups of Jews who share some degree of consensus and must seek through the interpretation of their common Scripture to justify how they share, in fact, the same Torah in the future."<sup>85</sup> In the Persian phase setting of FI and E-N, the consensus regarding a shared תורה meant its identification with *Mosaic legislation* from the Pentateuch. Instead of "text" or "scope," it seems that assumptions about the canonical process and Persian phase Jewish society have become Sheppard's all-controlling hermeneutical criteria.

Sheppard does wisely anticipate objections, acknowledging particularly the "remarkable independence"<sup>86</sup> of Isaiah from specific interpretations of the Mosaic Torah.<sup>87</sup> In response, he reasserts the following claim, "Any structural analysis that ignores [the] identification of the subject matter ignores the late form and function of the book as a book of Jewish and Christian scripture."<sup>88</sup> Next, he observes a similar reticence regarding specific interpretations of Mosaic Torah in other canonical literature, notably the Deuteronomistic History and Psalms. The Deuteronomistic History and Psalms, like Isaiah, are not filled with obvious examples of later Jewish *halakah*.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, in the post-exilic period, if one is to read these documents *as Jewish Scripture*, they should each be read *as if* they have Mosaic Torah for their (canonical) center. In short, if one asks what they are about, the logical answer is "the Torah,"<sup>90</sup> and the same is true of FI's subject matter.<sup>91</sup>

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parity of reasoning, on Sheppard's own account, it appears that *in this later stage*, תורה in final-Isaiah would take on the new meaning "biblical revelation."

<sup>85</sup> Sheppard, "The 'Scope' of Isaiah," 280.

<sup>86</sup> Sheppard, "The 'Scope' of Isaiah," 279.

<sup>87</sup> Mosaic traditions flood Isaiah, but the book appears free of specific citation of Mosaic Torah texts. See, e.g., the specialized studies of B. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 132-175, P. Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 28-33, and B. J. van der Merwe, *Pentateuchtradities in die Prediking van Deuterjesaja* (Groningen: Wolters, 1956).

<sup>88</sup> Sheppard, "The 'Scope' of Isaiah," 279.

<sup>89</sup> That is, they are not filled with *midrashic* extension of biblical legislation or legal interpretation. Perhaps instead they invite comparison with Mosaic Torah as extensions of narrative traditions (or *haggadah*), a more theological interpretation of the Pentateuch. If this is so, perhaps Sheppard's view of Torah is unduly restricted to Mosaic legislation. Scholars universally recognize the presence of Pentateuchal narrative traditions in Isaiah. In addition to studies mentioned above, see, e.g., Rikk Watts, "Echoes from the Past" *JSOT* 28 (2004): 481-508, and John Harvey, *Retelling the Torah: The Deuteronomistic Historian's Use of Tetrachal Narratives*. *JSOTSup* 403; New York: T & T Clark, 2004). Harvey contends that the narratives in Genesis to Numbers provided the authoritative outline of ancient Israel's religious traditions; hence, the Tetrateuch was the theological lens through which the Deuteronomist saw Israel's life in its land and developed the motifs of a new exodus and new Moses.

<sup>90</sup> And even if scholars were to agree on the same *text* of Isaiah, for some scholars (e.g., Sweeney), "the Mosaic Torah may not yet be accepted...as the Torah at the time of some of these late redactions" (Sheppard, "The 'Scope' of Isaiah," 279).

<sup>91</sup> Scholars have long noticed that comparison of the Latter Prophets and the Pentateuch is complicated—not least because of idiomatic differences. Nevertheless, shared features and associations do invite such comparison *and* the canon-historical implication that, *contra* Wellhausen's *lex post prophetas*,

Finally, Sheppard defends his understanding of the “text” and “scope” of Isaiah by appeal to varied reading strategies in Jewish and Christian traditions. Whereas early Jewish interpretation viewed Isaiah as commentary on Mosaic Torah, Christians—who naturally, he says, have different views about “legal Torah”<sup>92</sup>—concentrate on promissory and sapiential interpretations, which find fulfillment in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>93</sup> Thus, based on the demand that all scholars revere the same text, he asserts that Jewish and Christian scholars are free to offer differing perspectives in their description of Isaiah.<sup>94</sup>

In sum, as a text of Jewish Scripture, in Babylonian and Persian phases, readers comprehend FI by means of a hermeneutical orientation towards Mosaic Torah; therefore, תורה in Isaiah refers to Mosaic legislation available to exilic and post-exilic communities. It appears, however, that Sheppard has only dogmatically asserted his conclusions regarding תורה in Isaiah; he has nowhere demonstrated—either by exegesis or by historical reconstruction—whether, in the exilic or post-exilic period, FI’s תורה referred to the ‘legal Torah’ revealed to Moses.<sup>95</sup> In fact, despite his salutary concern for “text” and “scope,” I find Sheppard’s reading flat and eisegetical. His conclusions are based exclusively on extra-textual considerations or assumptions about the ‘pre-Second Temple’ period. He ignores the potential of nuance and the unique sense that the word תורה may connote in various instances of its use in FI. For him, as a book of Jewish Scripture, תורה must refer to a specific body of teaching external to Isaiah. Based on this assumption, he imports the technical sense, ‘Mosaic Torah’, into each instance of Isaiah’s use of תורה. While it is possible that some recipients of Isaiah actually thought the word referred to Mosaic Torah, given its scope, it must be asked if this is a legitimate interpretation of the

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the relation between Torah and the historical reality of prophecy cannot simply be reversed. Sheppard’s own view on their canon-historical relation may be indebted to that of his friend, Brevard Childs: “Obviously the issue is complex and difficult to treat in a brief summary. In the previous section on law, I have argued for the traditional sequence, and found it *inconceivable* from the broad evidence to reverse the canonical order. I would strongly support the view that the prophets can only be understood by assuming the authority of Israel’s ancient covenantal law which they used as a warrant for their message of divine judgment.” Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 174. Interestingly, however, Childs does not agree that Sheppard’s conclusions regarding the referent of תורה in Isaiah follow from the mere recognition of the proper canonical-historical relationship (Childs, *Isaiah*, 19).

<sup>92</sup> This is Sheppard’s term (“The ‘Torah’ in Isaiah 1-39,” 563).

<sup>93</sup> Compare, e.g., Mt 5:17-18 and Romans 10:5-8.

<sup>94</sup> G. Sheppard, “The ‘Scope’ of Isaiah,” 279.

<sup>95</sup> It is not even clear that his conclusions follow from his proposed canonical hermeneutic. In his recent commentary, Brevard Childs comments on Sheppard’s approach. Instead of identifying Isaiah’s use of the word תורה with Mosaic Torah, Childs sees a broadening of both Mosaic and prophetic conceptions via the “coercion” of intertextuality in the canonical process. He writes, “The subject matter of the prophetic message as divine truth continues to exercise a coercion on Israel such that the Mosaic Torah itself increasingly received its full meaning from the divine reality witnessed to by the prophets” (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 30). According to Childs, the canonical juxtaposition of Torah and Prophets leads to expanding and deepening conceptions of the divine reality and the force of the divine will; hence, his conception of “prophetic torah” acts as a check on legalistic moves that, he thinks, inhere in law.

‘text’. Furthermore, it appears that Sheppard’s insistence that each instance has the precise meaning “Mosaic legislation” is not only artificial as to FI, but unduly restrictive as to the content and ‘scope’ of Deuteronomy/the Pentateuch.

#### 1.2.2.1.2. Ronald E. Clements

For Ronald Clements, canonical intention is not in view when one considers the final shaping of a particular book like Isaiah; therefore, the intention of those who ultimately adopted the book into the canon “cannot, and should not, be assumed to have been identical with the intentions of those who shaped the present book of Isaiah.”<sup>96</sup> Although Isaiah was recognized as Scripture, the notion of canon and the canonical process is a consideration that only occurred subsequent to its final shaping. For this reason, he sets aside Sheppard’s canonical interests; they belong to the realm of hermeneutics.<sup>97</sup>

Clements’s own interests belong to the literary and theological realm of redaction criticism. He develops the insights of H. Barth, who suggested that a carefully edited and compiled edition of Isaiah’s prophecies was prepared during the reign of Josiah (639-609 B.C.E.).<sup>98</sup> Clements develops Barth’s insights by recognizing the concern of a redactor to carry forward the message of Isaiah of Jerusalem into chs.40-55.<sup>99</sup>

Does this Josianic redaction impact the interpretation of תּוֹרָה in Isaiah?

Regarding this question, he wrote in 1996,

In 8:16 the child’s name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is described both as a “testimony” (תְּעוּדָה) and a “teaching” (תּוֹרָה). In 42:4 and 21 the term תּוֹרָה = “teaching” is used in a very unusual fashion, since it can hardly be intended as a reference to Yahweh’s “law” in the later sense. Rather it appears to refer to Yahweh’s “purpose,” which is shortly to be realized and which has been declared beforehand by the prophets.<sup>100</sup>

In his commentary on chs.1-39, concerning 24:5, Clements concludes cautiously: “It is not impossible that the Mosaic covenant with Israel is meant, as the glossator at least seems to

<sup>96</sup> Ronald E. Clements, “Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaiah’s Development of First Isaiah’s Themes,” in *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 80.

<sup>97</sup> By the realm of hermeneutics, I assume that Clements means the relationship of canonical part and whole.

<sup>98</sup> See Hermann Barth, *Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit: Israel und Assur als Thema einer Produktiven Neuinterpretation der Jesajaüberlieferung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977). On this view, the definitive redaction of Proto-Isaiah (PI) appeared at the time when the Assyrian empire was at the point of collapse.

<sup>99</sup> Clements’s argument appears to anticipate the thesis of Williamson in *A Book Called Isaiah*. “From the time of their origin,” writes Clements, “the prophetic sayings of Isaiah 40-55 were intended as a supplement and sequel to a collection of earlier sayings of the eighth-century Isaiah of Jerusalem.” Like Williamson, he doubts whether Isaiah 40-55 ever stood on its own as an independent collection of oracles. See Clements, “*Beyond Tradition-History*,” 83.

<sup>100</sup> Clements, “*Beyond Tradition-History*,” 89.

have understood by his reference to the laws.”<sup>101</sup> In a subsequent article on the unity of Isaiah, he argues that **תורה** has this sense in the book: “YHWH’s purpose declared through the prophets.”<sup>102</sup>

In a recent contribution, however, dealing specifically with the question of the meaning of **תורה** in chs.1-39, he appears less guarded, and he is highly concerned with canonical (hermeneutical) matters. First, Clements recognizes that the focused occurrences of the noun in 1:10, 2:3, and 42:4 would “take on a distinctly wider significance if they are considered as references to a recognized body of legal and instructional tradition existing in a written documentary form.”<sup>103</sup> Next, he states that the critical dividing line in the relevant use of the noun **תורה** for a written document is Josiah’s reform (621/2 BCE). That is, before Josiah, **תורה** could only refer to a prophetic message; after Josiah, however, it refers to a tradition of sacred written instruction.<sup>104</sup> According to Clements, this historical turning point in Judah’s history led to widespread reexamination of the meaning of **תורה** along Deuteronomic lines.

In this shift produced by Josiah’s reform, Clements identifies a transition in Israelite religion from a focus on cultic religious observance to the religion of a comprehensive written book of polity and conduct. “It was the beginning of the ‘religion of a book’,” he asserts, “the essential foundation of the canonical Hebrew Bible.”<sup>105</sup> Commenting on Isa 8:20, he writes, “[T]he interpretation of **תורה** as a comprehensive body of rulings revealed through Moses is already evident in the case of the re-interpretation in 8:20 of the reference to **תורה** in Isaiah 8:16.”<sup>106</sup> What this new book-religion affords, then, is a widespread reorientation of all Israelite literature towards Mosaic Torah.<sup>107</sup> Henceforth, according to Clements, all instances of **תורה** in chs.1-39

<sup>101</sup> Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 202.

<sup>102</sup> Ronald E. Clements, “The Unity of the book of Isaiah,” in *Old Testament Prophecy*, 100. Compare his comments in “Beyond Tradition-History,” 89, “[T]he whole of Isaiah’s prophecy is a ‘witness’ to God’s action and intentions towards his people.” He hereby connects 8:2, 16 to 43:10, 12 such that all Israel is to become a “reliable witness” (8:2) to YHWH’s uniqueness.

<sup>103</sup> Ronald E. Clements, “The Meaning of **תורה** in Isaiah 1-39,” in *Reading the Law: Studies in Honor of Gordon J. Wenham* (ed. J. G. McConville and K. Möller; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 59.

<sup>104</sup> He writes, “...the earliest date that can be claimed for this Deuteronomic redefinition of **תורה** is 623-622 BCE, but some time up to a century later is more probable” (Clements, “The Meaning of **תורה** in Isaiah 1-39,” 3).

<sup>105</sup> Clements, “The Meaning of **תורה** in Isaiah 1-39,” 61, 62.

<sup>106</sup> Clements, “The Meaning of **תורה** in Isaiah 1-39,” 65.

<sup>107</sup> John Oswalt’s treatment of Isaiah 8:16, 20 (cf. 30:9) may support Clements’s view. He asks, “Is it not possible...that Isaiah is here referring to the revealed word of God (certainly so in v.20), and that the binding and sealing is an act of affirmation and attestation? He is evidently including his own oracles in the statement (so v.18), but the context demands that he not be limiting the ground of hope merely to his own experience (v.17) . . . . [Isaiah] is reaffirming his dependence upon God as revealed in Scripture and

must be understood as references to the law-book of Moses; the noun is to be read consistently in relation to this deuteronomic nucleus of the Pentateuch.<sup>108</sup> What did this revision achieve for readers of chs.1-39?

According to Clements, Isa 5:1-35:36, which constitutes the main core of chs.1-39, focuses on both national and international political issues. It announced that all foreign powers would be condemned. This was productive during the period of Assyrian judgment, because it applied divine power as a threat to the pride and ambition of foreign rulers.<sup>109</sup> However, this appeal to divine force also introduced an unstable dimension that, if misunderstood, would lead to a dangerously distorted philosophy of history. Therefore, ch.1 and 2:1-4:6 sought to remedy this problem by placing the authority of תּוֹרָה at the center. “Throughout the present book,” notes Clements, “the existence of a written book of torah, ascribed to Moses, is presumed and provides the key to understanding its warnings and threats.”<sup>110</sup> Hereby, the new emphasis is placed upon individual and corporate obedience to the demands of Mosaic legislation. According to Clements, the redaction of chs.1-39 along these lines successfully countered the over-emphasis on divine sovereignty by introducing the responsibility of faithful adherence to Mosaic Torah.

In sum, according to Clements, the prophecy’s focus on (correlative) national and international issues is now linked directly to the central authority of Mosaic Torah. Henceforth, it is no longer the case that all foreign powers must be judged. Instead, by introducing the rule of law and highlighting the deuteronomic moral imperative to “choose life” (Deut 30:19b; cf. Isa 1:18-20), תּוֹרָה would provide “a means of grace to guide the way forward”<sup>111</sup> for the Jew first but also for all nations (cf. 2:3). Thus, with Josiah’s reform, by means of a Mosaic Torah redaction, instead of strict justice, chs.1-39 offered grace (and therefore hope) both to Israel and to the nations (cf. Isa 1; 2:1-4:6). Unfortunately, Clements’s study is limited to proto-Isaiah (PI). It appears to share the

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challenging those who follow him to do the same (cf. Josh 24:14, 15).” John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 235-36.

<sup>108</sup> See R. E. Clements, “The Meaning of תּוֹרָה in Isaiah 1-39,” 60. It appears that Clements’s broader aim lies in the effort to defend a Mosaic Torah redaction of Isaiah analogous to what he assumes for the book of Jeremiah. He writes, “...the wider structure of the Hebrew canon becomes a matter of far-reaching theological concern once it is recognized that a significant editorial revision has affirmed that the message of the book of Isaiah, like that of the prophet Jeremiah, should also be interpreted in light of the Mosaic תּוֹרָה. In the instances of its occurrence in Isa 1-39 the impact of this תּוֹרָה-revision is all too easily discounted by the translation of the Hebrew תּוֹרָה to mean simply ‘message’, ‘instruction’” (Clements, “The Meaning of תּוֹרָה in Isaiah 1-39,” 60).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Isa 10:15-19; 37:23-29.

<sup>110</sup> Clements, “The Meaning of תּוֹרָה in Isaiah 1-39,” 71.

<sup>111</sup> Clements, “The Meaning of תּוֹרָה in Isaiah 1-39,” 70.

liabilities of Sheppard's view, and oddly seeks to counter divine sovereignty by locating 'grace' in human responsibility.<sup>112</sup>

### 1.2.2.1.3. *Irmtraud Fischer*

In her stimulating study, *Tora für Israel—Tora für die Völker*, Irmtraud Fischer provides an indirect response to Clements and the much-needed exegetical potency Sheppard's program lacked. Like Sheppard, she regards it as certain that the Pentateuch (i.e., Mosaic Torah) was not only available but was already dignified as "kanonisch"<sup>113</sup> at the time Isaiah reached its final form.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, following his lead, she proposes a "kanonischen Zugang" to Isaiah as a book of Jewish Scripture. She explains, "...da Israel spätestens ab diesem Zeitpunkt begann, sowohl die Prophetie als auch die Weisheit mit dem Blickwinkel der Tora zu lesen und von der Tora her zulegen."<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, as she perceives it, one should not simply identify the Isaianic referent of תורה with the Pentateuch; rather, FI constitutes a prophetic torah, which she understands as applied Mosaic Torah. That is, prophetic torah is Mosaic Torah that has been updated vis-à-vis the prophetic word for its own temporal and social context.<sup>116</sup> In short, as she understands it, the book of Isaiah is *halakah* to Mosaic Torah; i.e., it is the contextualization of Mosaic Torah for the purpose of directing the people's behavior and the regulation of their conduct. Therefore, when Israel rejects prophetic Torah (cf. Isa 8:16, 20; 30:9) it shows its disregard for Mosaic Torah as well.<sup>117</sup>

Fischer's hermeneutical goals also diverge from Sheppard's interest in reading Isaiah as Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Based on the canonical Isaiah, she pursues a question of distinct interest to non-Jewish followers of Christ ("Heidenchristen"), asking,

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<sup>112</sup> What is more, aside from transmitting imperatives in the form of an "authorized guidebook," it is insufficiently clear how Clements understands the vocation of Israel within YHWH's universal plan, either concerning its internal affairs—the right-ordering of which might qualify it for service rather than judgment—or its peculiar function as YHWH's vehicle to bless the foreign nations. See Clements, "The Meaning of תורה in Isaiah 1-39," 70.

<sup>113</sup> Consequently, it cannot be further updated ("...folglich nicht mehr fortgeschrieben werden kann"). See Irmtraud Fischer, *Tora für Israel—Tora für die Völker* (SBS 164; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995), 14.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Klaus Baltzer, who writes, "As far as I can see, in DtIsa the phrase 'his Torah' already embraces the whole of the Pentateuch." See K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (P. Machinist, M. Kohl, transl.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 43.

<sup>115</sup> She cites Sheppard's 1992 SBL Seminar Paper (Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 14).

<sup>116</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 14.

<sup>117</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 12. Elsewhere she writes, "Realization of *the* Torah, the Torah of Moses, by the people on Zion is the precondition for the Torah going forth from Mount Zion for all the nations" (her italics). See Irmtraud Fischer, "'YHWH as Sole Divine Power': A Canonical-Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 2:1-5, Joel 4:9-21, and Micah 4:1-5" in *Isaiah's Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations* (R. Cohen and R. Westbrook, eds.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 154.

“Which Torah is binding for the nations?”<sup>118</sup> Is it the Sinai-Torah (i.e., the instruction conveyed to the people of Israel through Moses) or some other תורה? In other words, Fischer is interested in the relevance of תורה for Gentile readers of Christian Scripture (“Tora für die Völker”). Proceeding sequentially, she finds in Isaiah two primary strands of תורה-tradition subsequently tied together: a Sinai tradition complex and a Zion tradition complex. Shifting metaphors, she observes that in the first two chapters of the book, two tones are struck (“die Töne angeschlagen”):<sup>119</sup> Isaiah 1:10-17 calls *Israel* to obedience to YHWH’s תורה and word (דבר), and 2:2-5 (cf. 4:2-6) summons *the nations* to hear תורה in a Sinai-like description of Zion.<sup>120</sup>

The first tone is “Tora für Israel,” a prophetic actualization of Mosaic Torah, which she suggests is strongly stamped by the book of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic theology.<sup>121</sup> This is the תורה Israel had refused to hear, so that Isaiah’s תורה must be sealed in a book (cf. 8:16, 20; 30:9); “Die Frage der Legitimität Jesajas wird sich in späteren Tagen, wenn seine Worte eingetroffen sind, erweisen.”<sup>122</sup>

She hears the second tone, “Tora für die Völker,” in a text that addresses “nicht nur über Israel, sondern über alle Menschen,”<sup>123</sup> namely Isa 24:5. This second תורה brings the nations into direct contact with the תורה of Israel. According to Fischer, the Zion theology of Jerusalem strongly shapes this second תורה, which arises from the priestly tradition of the Noahic covenant.<sup>124</sup> The transgression of the nations has polluted the whole earth, constituting a breach of the eternal Noahic covenant (ברית עולם, Isa 24:5).<sup>125</sup> Since covenant violation is a breach of תורה, YHWH has pronounced his verdict on both Israel and the nations—*schuldig*.

In ch.42, a final “Harmonisierungsversuch” is undertaken. Here, perceiving Israel to be the servant figure, she perceives that the servant’s role is an international teaching role. In 42:18-25, however, this servant confesses failure to obey תורה, and agrees that both YHWH’s verdict and his dispensing of the covenant sanctions are just (42:25; cf. Deut 32:22).

<sup>118</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 12.

<sup>119</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 117.

<sup>120</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 22-23, 35-36.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. 5:24; 42:24-25; Deut 32:22.

<sup>122</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 50.

<sup>123</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 67.

<sup>124</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 117.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Gen 9:5-6, 16; Num 35:33.

Therefore, in ch.51, the tones finally sound together. She explains, “Jes 51,1-8 liest sich als Zusammenführung der beiden am Buchanfang eingewobenen Fäden der Tora.”<sup>126</sup> Only as God’s servant can Israel take the **תורה** to heart and fulfill the role of servant-mediator of YHWH’s **תורה**-revelation to all the peoples (51:4f.; cf. 2:3-5). In ch.66 the message *für Israel und die Völker* coincides as a message *für “alles Fleisch”* (vv. 23f.).

She concludes as follows:

Die Arbeit an den zwölf Belegen für ‘Tora’ im Jesajabuch unterstützt damit Norbert Lohfink’s These, das sich dieser Kanonteil ‘als eine Art prophetischen Kommentars der Tora, gewissermaßen als die Durchführung der Verheißung des deuteronomischen Prophetengesetzes (Dtn 18,15-18)’ präsentiert.<sup>127</sup>

FI exhorts Israel to take Mosaic Torah to heart so that Israel can fulfill its God-given prophetic vocation to the nations. Fischer has shown that **תורה**’s function in Isaiah cannot be divorced from Mosaic Torah traditions.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, because **תורה** relates directly to Israel’s calling, it is relevant to the blessing vis-à-vis Israel that God has promised non-Jewish Christians.

Though I find attractive her view that **תורה** for the nations (the Noahic covenant) serves to establish universal guilt, it is not clear that Zion theology arose from the priestly tradition of the Noahic covenant. Yet, in the final analysis, this seems irrelevant, because for Fischer only one **תורה** may serve as the basis of *halakah* for both Israel and the nations, namely, Mosaic Torah with its prophetic expansion, understood as further legislative instructions for Israel.<sup>129</sup>

#### 1.2.2.2. *Isaianic Torah is a supplement to Mosaic Torah.*

The second group represents something of a consensus position, stemming from the work of Joseph Jensen. After a closer look at Jensen’s contribution, attention is given to the writing program of Marvin Sweeney. Here, **תורה** in Isaiah remains distinct; it is sapiential, prophetic, or simply “Isaianic” Torah. This **תורה** is a supplement to Mosaic

<sup>126</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 117.

<sup>127</sup> Fischer, *Tora für Israel*, 118, citing Norbert Lohfink, *Der Gott Israels und die Völker* (SBS 154; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1994), 30.

<sup>128</sup> In his commentary on Dt, K. Baltzer endorses Fischer’s view. He writes, “The word *Tôrâ*—instruction, law—is used only five times in DtIsa. This fact easily masks the key function that the Torah has for DtIsa. It is through the Torah that the sovereignty of the one God over the whole world is efficacious and discernible. It is the Torah of Moses, the Servant of God. The identification of the nameless Servant of God with Moses shows clearly how important the remembrance of Moses, his words and acts, is for DtIsa and his time (Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 42).

<sup>129</sup> In “YHWH as Sole Divine Power,” 154, Fischer speaks of the Torah of Moses as “legislative instructions for Israel...updated by the prophets.”



Torah (or deuteronomic legislation). After surveying this group, I offer a proposal for reassessment.

#### 1.2.2.2.1. Joseph Jensen

In 1973, Joseph Jensen published a major study of the use of תֹּרָה in Isaiah 1-39.<sup>130</sup>

Observing influence from the wisdom tradition, Jensen was concerned to say something definite about the 8<sup>th</sup>-century figure, Isaiah ben Amoz. He found what he was after in Isaiah's debate with wisdom circles.<sup>131</sup>

Signals of wisdom influence in chs.1-39 include language about drinking, bribes, justice, and the exercise of special care for the weak and helpless. As his title indicates, Jensen thinks that the chief signal of wisdom influence upon Isaiah is the noun תֹּרָה. His thesis is that תֹּרָה in chs.1-39 embodies the value-system of the wisdom tradition. He asserts that the prophet was intimate with this value-system, and since (as he believes) Isaiah came from nobility, he would have received wisdom training.<sup>132</sup> Intellectually armed by this training, Isaiah was the perfect servant for challenging the nobility's hypocrisy and calling them back to the high ethical code of their society. "Isaiah," he explains, "recognizes their excellence and gives them a lasting authority under YHWH's aegis."<sup>133</sup> Thus, the prophet employs a wisdom term for the sake of his polemic against the rulers, especially the requirement that the nobility establish justice in society (1:10-17; 5:22-24).

Nevertheless, the concerns of the nobility would naturally extend beyond the internal affairs of Israelite society to those of international relations or foreign policy. The difficulty for the nobility was that 'real world' problems posed a threat to faith in YHWH: conflicts looming on the international horizon suggested solutions that were pragmatic rather than theological. Isaiah addressed these concerns directly by advising the nobility to consult YHWH's wise will; indeed, YHWH, he promised, would lead them into a truer understanding of wisdom. Jensen writes,

<sup>130</sup> Joseph Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*.

<sup>131</sup> On wisdom influence in Isaiah, see the classic study by Johannes Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," *TLZ* 74 (1949): 75-80. See also, J. W. Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); R. E. Murphy, "Wisdom—Theses and Hypotheses," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (J. G. Gammie, ed.; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 35-42; J. Crenshaw, "The Wisdom Literature," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* (D. Knight and G. Tucker, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 371-73; H. G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah and the Wise," in *Wisdom in ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (J. Day, R. P. Gordon, and H. G. M. Williamson, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), 133-41.

<sup>132</sup> Jensen writes, "Many of the elements of Isaiah's polemic seem to find their best explanation in the supposition that there was a Jerusalem 'school' in which the sons of the ruling classes received their training" (*The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 122).

<sup>133</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 124.

The term, as employed in his oracles, always looks back to Yahweh as its source, never—it is otherwise in his use of חָכְמָה—to man. This can only mean that he recognizes Yahweh alone as the source of wise instruction and that man can only be wise by receiving such instruction from Yahweh.<sup>134</sup>

As it were, Israel's rulers were to trust and obey YHWH's instruction, since according to the prophet there was no other way to establish lasting peace. In his debate with wisdom circles, then, according to Isaiah ben Amoz, *wisdom* dictates that rulers trade pragmatism for trust in YHWH's revelation. Wisdom (= חָכְמָה) means submission to YHWH as the ultimate guide for political policy.

In the 8<sup>th</sup>-century, when there were no *written* texts to serve as the locus of YHWH's revelation, the result is "situating the source of wisdom in something divine and mysterious rather than in experience and human investigation."<sup>135</sup> Since all true wisdom comes from God, it is a charismatic gift of faith. In Jensen's view, wisdom does not come in the form of a document, at least not until after Josiah's reform produced an early form of Deuteronomy as a substitute for or expansion of the Decalogue.<sup>136</sup> Hereafter, the term חָכְמָה would be used in its deuteronomic sense, and Israelite religion would indeed become a religion of the book. Nevertheless, Jensen maintains that the wisdom tradition is the fountainhead of this later deuteronomic development; post-Josiah, a disciple could study YHWH's will in Deuteronomy and teach the same to his children "as if the code is the instruction of a father to his sons (Deut 4:5-8)."<sup>137</sup>

In this relationship of instruction from father to son, then, Jensen finds an indication of Deuteronomy's debt to the wisdom tradition. Wisdom as rule of life lies behind the book of Deuteronomy; it was, after all, the חָכְמָה-rule of life for one hundred years previously, as seen in the prophecy of Isaiah ben Amoz. Thus, in agreement with Moshe Weinfeld,<sup>138</sup> wisdom becomes fused with law after the 7<sup>th</sup>-century discovery of Deuteronomy; only after this historic document-producing reform could חָכְמָה take up the sense/referent of Mosaic legislation. One consequence for חָכְמָה in Deuteronomy, he explains, "is that the term retains its didactic overtones, and to say 'the book of divine

<sup>134</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 124. See also, Joseph Jensen, "Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and in the Rest of the Old Testament," *CBQ* 48/3 (1986): 443-55. Here he treats Isaiah's use of חָכְמָה and understands it to designate "God's βουλή as both comprehensive and salvific (such as Eph 1:11)." Jensen indicates here that Yahweh will always accomplish his heavenly plan(s), even if that requires undoing the plans of all earthly powers.

<sup>135</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 124.

<sup>136</sup> Here Jensen follows B. Lindars, "Torah in Deuteronomy," 117-36.

<sup>137</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 15 n.50.

<sup>138</sup> See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

instruction' might represent the real meaning better than the usual translation 'the book of the law.'<sup>139</sup> Mosaic Torah becomes the written codification of wisdom as charismatic gift, but the prophetic genius precedes the written code.

In sum, as seen from the writings of the 8<sup>th</sup>-century prophet, תורה means divine instruction with wisdom connotations (not yet Mosaic). Isaiah used it in his polemic against the wisdom circles to refer to YHWH's charismatic gift. Because the word תורה has wisdom connotations, it was also an apt term for the deuteronomic designation of Israel's rule of life codified under Josiah in the 7<sup>th</sup>-century. Jensen argues that the absence of prior written testimony and the association of תורה with wisdom in Isaiah preclude the notion of a "prophetic torah."

To support this view, Jensen argues that no 8<sup>th</sup>-century prophetic texts use the term תורה to designate prophetic utterances, and that "prophetic torah" does not exist as a literary form. To this dual end, he surveys the use of the term in the Twelve Prophets, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, concluding that the term means either civil "law" (the deuteronomic sense) or cultic "law" (i.e., "priestly torah").

Turning to its usage in chs.40-55, he finds that DI does not use תורה in a legal sense.<sup>140</sup> For example, in 42:21, while compatible with a 'legal' sense, "it could well be a wisdom term here."<sup>141</sup> In 51:4, parallel with נשפט, he claims that the word is used in conjunction with DI's "realized eschatology." It is not a written code, but "something to be possessed interiorly...a well-spring for conduct, and stands in close conjunction with the gift of God's enduring salvation."<sup>142</sup> This sense is similar to Jeremiah's 'new covenant'. Thus, in Jensen's view, the writer expresses neither a legal (Mosaic Torah) nor a prophetic conception (prophetic torah), but understands תורה as God's charismatic (and salvific) gift. In 42:4, the noun is associated with the task of the servant; hence, here, as he correctly perceives, "our understanding...will depend to some extent on what sort of a figure we conceive the Servant to be."<sup>143</sup> Since Jensen thinks that 42:4 provides a picture of the coming of God's kingdom, he defines the term as "the universal establishment of the order willed by God."<sup>144</sup> תורה, he explains, "is the instruction or revelation which accompanies [the kingdom of God] as an inevitable corollary or even an indispensable

<sup>139</sup> He adds, "As Israel's sacred literature evolved, the term eventually came to be applied to the completed Pentateuch." Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 16.

<sup>140</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 23.

<sup>141</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 23.

<sup>142</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 23.

<sup>143</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 23.

<sup>144</sup> Jensen, *The Use of 'Tôrâ' by Isaiah*, 23.

condition.”<sup>145</sup> It is difficult to see how this use differs from chs.1-39, and Jensen is content to call it “instruction” or “revelation” in 42:4.<sup>146</sup> His only consistent conclusion is that the OT *never* uses תורה to designate the prophetic word.<sup>147</sup>

Overall, Jensen claims that תורה in PI is a wisdom term, and he defines it differently from its use in all other prophetic books (including DI). In chs.1-39, the 8<sup>th</sup>-century prophet borrows a wisdom term for his polemic against nobles trained in wisdom schools; thus, its sense is restricted to the charismatic gift of divine instruction with wisdom connotations. The prophet selects this term because it suits his apologetic purpose. In the rest of the prophetic corpus, however, תורה is priestly when concerned with cultic matters (with Begrich), Deuteronomistic when concerned with legal matters (with Weinfeld), and “instruction” or “revelation” from YHWH when portraying a future charismatic gift for Zion’s restoration.<sup>148</sup> For Jensen, in both PI and DI, ‘prophetic torah’ is a misnomer because the OT never uses the term תורה to designate the prophetic word. However, the trouble with this argument is that Isaiah does this very thing: as YHWH’s emissary, he offers prophetic words designated as תורה. As God’s prophet, Isaiah delivers God’s will for Israel in and through his oral witness and his writing. As YHWH’s disciple (with successors), he provides an alternative curriculum of divine instruction for those concerned about Zion.<sup>149</sup> In other words, Jensen is correct that in chs.1-39 the vital teaching for directing the affairs of state comes from God, yet submission to the will of God entails heeding the prophet’s תורה.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Jensen, *The Use of ‘Tôrâ’ by Isaiah*, 23.

<sup>146</sup> He finds a similar definition in Zechariah 7:12. See Jensen, *The Use of ‘Tôrâ’ by Isaiah*, 24. He notes that others still insist on speaking of prophetic torah even when the term תורה does not occur. After analyzing Isaiah 1:10-17 (which contains the term תורה); Zech 7:1-7 (which contains the question-answer pattern); Micah 6:6-8 (a covenant lawsuit); and Isaiah 56:1-8 (an announcement of salvation with imperatives to do justice and righteousness), Jensen says, “No” to the question of the presence of a prophetic torah. He provides the following conclusions: (1) with entrance liturgies (cf. Pss 15; 24; Isa 33:14-16) the term תורה does not occur in the Old Testament, (2) even though priests were required to teach torah, a simple question-answer pattern does not make for priestly torah, much less prophetic torah. What is more, in many so-called prophetic torah texts, no question-answer pattern is found, and (3) the four texts mentioned have little or nothing in common by which to categorize them generically (Jensen, *The Use of Tôrâ’ by Isaiah*, 25).

<sup>147</sup> Jensen, *The Use of ‘Tôrâ’ by Isaiah*, 25. Here again, if תורה is something the servant brings, much depends on what sort of a figure we conceive the servant to be.

<sup>148</sup> I.e., DI is unique like PI, but lack’s PI’s wisdom connotations.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. 1:10-17, 18-20; 8:1-4; 19-20a; 30:9-11, 20. On this point, see Williamson, “Isaiah and the Wise,” 138.

<sup>150</sup> Isa 8:16-23; cf. 30:20-21; 50:4. Moreover, תורה is a multivalent term in the prophetic book (with prophetic, legal, priestly, didactic, and sapiential connotations). David M. Carr points out correctly that Isaiah “produced a minicurriculum of materials of *various* genres. This included not just judgments or prophetic ‘teachings’ (e.g. Isa 1:10-20) but also royal hymns (e.g., Isa 9:16 [ET 9:2-7]; 11:1-9), parables (e.g. Isa 5:1-7), and other forms of literature.” See Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 145.

Nevertheless, of studies limited to chs. 1-39, Jensen's is the most thorough. After him, the view that Isaiah's use of *תורה* is unique among the prophets became something of a consensus.<sup>151</sup> As John Goldingay expresses it, "There is no indication that in Isaiah *tôrâ* refers specifically to the collected teaching about a way of life that is associated with Moses."<sup>152</sup> In my view, FI's uniqueness justifies the search for an 'Isaianic logic' that expounds YHWH's unified purpose and will for Israel in the cosmos.

#### 1.2.2.2.2. Marvin Sweeney

Although he upholds the consensus, Sweeney nevertheless undertakes a slightly different yet extremely constructive course. First, he counters Sheppard's view that FI specifically identifies *תורה* with Mosaic Torah by noting that FI never suggests reference to Mosaic legislation.<sup>153</sup> This is not because Sweeney thinks that FI bears no relation to Mosaic Torah. In fact, he suspects this view is an unfortunate sign of Christian theology's impact upon biblical studies, wherein the prophetic context is "diametrically opposed to the legal context of the Pentateuch."<sup>154</sup> Despite this concern, he initially follows Jensen, who stressed that *תורה* has the generalized sense of "wise instruction" in 1-39 and "instruction/revelation" in 40-55. Sweeney, however, contrasts each sense of *תורה* with its referent in the period following Ezra's reform of Jewish religion, whereupon he thinks the term does take on the technical sense of Mosaic legislation.<sup>155</sup> Rather like Jensen, Clements, and Sheppard, then, Sweeney recognizes a later, restrictive, or limiting, sense of

<sup>151</sup> See, e.g., fairly recent commentaries by J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 184, B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 30, J. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: 1-39*, 96, H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 38. H. G. M. Williamson's comments are perhaps representative:

It has long been noticed that Isaiah uses this word in a somewhat distinctive manner, and the whole matter has been the subject of a thorough investigation by Jensen . . . . Jensen seeks to refine this further by denying that it is ever legitimate to speak of "prophetic torah" and seeing here instead the idea of wise instruction as attested in particular in the book of Proverbs. He believes that this reflects ancient usage and that Isaiah made use of it because of his debate with wisdom circles in Jerusalem. Whether or not this is so, the significant point for our present purpose, and one which commands general agreement, is that Isaiah uses the term in a manner which is not found in other prophets of this period.

See, H. G. M. Williamson, *A Book Called Isaiah*, 89. In more recent discussion (of Isa 2:2-5), Williamson states that the clear judicial and legal language in this passage cautions against defining *תורה* in an exclusively sapiential sense. His argument arises from awareness that Israel's social life was not organized in such watertight compartments as was once thought (*Isaiah 1-5*, 86, 185).

<sup>152</sup> Nodding in Jensen's direction, he adds that one might rather set the absolute use of the term here in the context of other instances such as those in the intellectual (or wisdom) tradition. See J. Goldingay and D. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1* (ICC; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 264. Cf. J. L. Koole, *Isaiah III, Vol. 1: Isaiah 40-48* (HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997), 272, 278-79, and C. R. Seitz, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (NIB: Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 309-552.

<sup>153</sup> M. Sweeney, "The Book of Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 51.

<sup>154</sup> Sweeney, "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 51. One wonders if all "Christian" theology is a footnote to Wellhausen—or Marcion.

<sup>155</sup> Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 99 n.224.

תורה as “Mosaic legislation” with this essential difference: he associates FI’s use of תורה with Ezra’s reforms rather than with Josiah’s reforms. In the account of reforms in E-N, תורה is a technical term referring to deuteronomic legislation and its re-interpretation by Ezra.

Still, his conception of Mosaic Torah is restricted to Deuteronomy in its legal/legislative aspects (D). This is because D was the instruction manual for Ezra’s reforms in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century. More importantly for his position on FI, Sweeney concludes that Ezra would have interpreted the significance of תורה in PI and DI in support of his reform efforts.<sup>156</sup> Ezra’s instruction, then, is an example of early Jewish *halakah*; it extends deuteronomic legislation in application to the life of the community.

Note that, according to Sweeney, three editions of Isaiah had existed prior to its final Mosaic Torah-oriented redaction, and none of these editions employs תורה with reference to deuteronomic legislation. Before the 5<sup>th</sup>-century, the composition history of the book had unfolded in three movements, from Assyrian judgment to Josianic reform to restoration. The last redaction represents the fourth movement and final design of the book. This last edition transforms the book by including a future-oriented vision of the separation of the wicked from the righteous. The following table summarizes Sweeney’s four movements:<sup>157</sup>

Edition	Theme	Date	Setting	Texts
1 <sup>st</sup>	Judgment	8 <sup>th</sup> -century	Isaiah ben Amoz	Various texts in chs.1-32
2 <sup>nd</sup>	King Josiah	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> -century	King Josiah’s program of national and religious reform	5-23; 27-32; 36-37
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Restoration	Late 6 <sup>th</sup> -century	Return of exiles; Building of the Second Temple	2-32; 35-55; 60-62
4 <sup>th</sup>	Separation	Mid-late 5 <sup>th</sup> -century	Reforms of Jewish religion under Ezra	1:1, 19-20, 27-28; 2:1; 4:3-6; 33; 34; 56-59; 63-66

<sup>156</sup> Sweeney writes, “Although it is unlikely that the eighth-century prophet Isaiah, or even any of the other Isaianic writers prior to the time of Ezra, employed the term תורה in reference to Mosaic Torah, it is likely and even probable that Ezra understood the term in reference to his own reform program that was based explicitly upon Mosaic Torah” (“Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 52).

<sup>157</sup> In order to produce this table, I have adapted material from the introduction to Sweeney’s *FOTL* commentary. See Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 51-52. Although I appreciate much of Sweeney’s treatment of Isaianic Torah, it is interesting that H. G. M. Williamson can comment on the text’s final redaction and reach the opposite conclusion regarding this narrow conception of Torah. Commenting on Isaiah 1:10-17, he writes the following: “It [should be] appreciated that it is not the eighth-century Isaiah, but the late chapter’s compiler who has penned these words. By this time, Torah will have come to be used more widely and generally for all types of divine revelation relevant to the proper way to conduct one’s life, including all those which have been specified above.” See Williamson, *Isaiah I-V*, 86.

The final movement is contemporary with Ezra. Note, however, that for Sweeney this movement and separation vision does not merely address the community contemporary with Ezra's socio-historical setting; it actually took form in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup>-century program of Ezra.<sup>158</sup> That is, given the date of the final edition, Isaiah is a text that shares not only the setting but also the design of Ezra's reforms. Thus, he asserts that the scope of the document has been re-signified in cooperation with Ezra's reform program, and he concludes that FI's purpose is to promote adherence to Ezra's instruction in the way of Judaic religion.

FI amounts to prophetic exhortation to adopt Ezra's vision for reform, which was founded on Mosaic Torah; hence, Ezra's reforms (directly) and FI's 'separation eschatology' (indirectly) are based on Mosaic Torah; it is at *this* word that the holy seed tremble (Ezra 9:4; Isa 66:2, 4). Indeed, each reader/hearer of FI must alter his behavior according to this external holy standard or suffer the consequences. The one who pays heed to Mosaic legislation is righteous and will be blessed (66:23). The wicked ignore Mosaic legislation, so YHWH has established a day for separating the wicked from the righteous in Zion (66:24; Ezra 10:19).

To distinguish Sweeney's view from Sheppard's, it is important to appreciate that in employing the term **תור** the writers and redactors of the earlier editions *never* referred to Mosaic Torah. For example, the edition directly beneath the final layer is late 6<sup>th</sup>-century, one hundred years before Ezra. Commenting on Isa 2:2-4 (part of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century text), he explains, "Not only does Ezra appear a century after this time, but the prophetic context for the writing of this passage and the works of DI continue to play a role in the interpretation of the term **תור**."<sup>159</sup> In other words, DI may have had a role in the composition and redaction of Isaiah 1-55—altering the sense of the term **תור** in earlier editions—but text-internal features are lacking to indicate that the 5<sup>th</sup>-century edition redactionally altered the expressed meaning of **תור** in the 6<sup>th</sup>-century edition. So, on this reckoning—based on inter-textual indicators of a shared socio-historical background—the 5<sup>th</sup>-century edition of Isaiah is the *only* edition aware of Ezra's application and extension

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<sup>158</sup> To ground this view, Sweeney observes the following shared features: (1) Both FI and E-N employ the term **תור** ("tremblers") to describe those who adhere to YHWH's covenant (Isa 66:2, 5; Ezra 9:4; 10:3). (2) Both books polemicize against those who fail to observe the covenant. (3) Both emphasize observance of the Sabbath as the cornerstone of the covenant (Isa 56:1-8; 58:13-14; Neh 9:14; 10:31; 13:15-22). (4) Both emphasize YHWH's Torah. (5) Both support the centrality of the Temple. (6) Neither precludes the participation of foreigners or eunuchs who convert to Judaism (Sweeney, "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 58). Thus, Sweeney bases his view on inter-textual analogies, as he perceives the (external) coherence of FI with E-N. In other words, since FI and E-N agree in certain respects, they must also share a common intention.

<sup>159</sup> Sweeney, "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 52.

of Mosaic legislation. This edition post-dates the composition of all twelve texts where the term **תורה** actually appears: Isa 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7. Since there is no sign of a 5<sup>th</sup>-century hand upon the earlier edition of Isaiah, it is not possible even in FI for the term **תורה** to refer to Mosaic legislation.

In sum, **תורה** refers to Mosaic legislation, but editions of Isaiah do not manifest knowledge of Mosaic legislation before Ezra's reforms. The 5<sup>th</sup>-century redactor and (final) edition of Isaiah would have known Mosaic Torah, but with this edition, no new occurrences of the noun **תורה** appear; all twelve occurrences were present already, prior to the final redaction. More importantly, there is no evidence of a redactional hand upon these twelve occurrences of the term. Since they did not refer to Mosaic Torah in the earlier editions, and they remained unaltered in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century redaction, they must retain their unique sense in the document's final form. Therefore, as a term in FI, **תורה** remains a prophetic word of wisdom (chs.1-39) and revelation (chs.40-66) uninformed by later knowledge of Mosaic legislation.

Nevertheless, Sweeney does advance beyond the consensus position. Appealing favorably to Sheppard's notion of scope, he states that the final edition redefines the whole of Isaiah *hermeneutically*. Consequently, the meaning of **תורה** shifts due to the hermeneutical effect of whole on part.<sup>160</sup> Put differently, the expanded final shape of the *text* broadens the 'territory of land' appropriate to the discussion of *scope*; thus, the parts are re-signified within the whole according to the overall design of the finished book. This shift occurs because of new correlations between the use of **תורה** with other passages and notions within the expanded document as well as its reception within a new historical and literary milieu. More concretely, as a whole, FI now takes on the rhetorical aim of its final-redactor, who was a supporter of Ezra's reforms. In application, therefore, FI functions holistically in direct support of the final redactor's purpose, which was to re-signify the book as an exhortation to the community to uphold Ezra's Mosaic Torah-oriented reforms.

Sweeney explicates this final intention by means of the dynamic development of the Isaianic theme of the destruction of the wicked. This shift amounts to a movement from Deutero-Isaianic conceptions of corporate restoration to TI's view of individual

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<sup>160</sup> He writes, "Although it is debatable whether individual authors of Isaiah intended such a comprehensive view of **תורה** when they wrote the passages in which the term occurs, the meaning of **תורה** takes on a hermeneutical life of its own when it is considered in relation to its full literary and interpretive context in the final form of the book of Isaiah." See Sweeney, "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 63; he cites Sheppard's 1992 SBL Seminar Paper.



restoration effected through the removal of the wicked from the righteous community. With this movement, the final redactor redirects the Isaianic theme of the destruction of the wicked against those within the Judean community who reject YHWH by refusing to join in Ezra's reforms. Thus, in ultimate design, FI now offers prophetic support for Ezra's plan to fashion an ideal Jewish community under Mosaic Torah.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, the book of Isaiah's subordinate function vis-à-vis Ezra's interpretation of Torah may be summarized as follows: Ezra's Torah-oriented legislative reforms were designed to effect a separation of the wicked from the righteous in the community called Israel. FI's vision subserves Ezra's reforms by offering prophetic support for Ezra's new socio-political order and holy society. For the governance of this society, the lead actor is Ezra and his interpretation of Mosaic legislation (as recounted in E-N). But the book of Isaiah, recast by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century redactor, comes alongside him to play the supporting role. Their interrelationship, therefore, may be fairly construed by analogy with the roles of Haggai and Zechariah: just as these prophets serve Zerubbabel and Yeshua's temple, FI serves Ezra's torah. In this manner, the organized political and social community of Israel is legitimately restored in continuity with the past. With Israel and its institutions hereby ordered for life under Mosaic Torah, the community will be able to survive Persian hegemony (cf. Ezra 7:26; 9:9; 10:10).

To shore up his conception of the relation of FI to E-N, Sweeney insists that there is harmony among their various ideological interests.<sup>162</sup> To support his claim that FI and

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<sup>161</sup> Notice that Sweeney's conclusion is consistent with Joseph Blenkinsopp's observation of the proper relationship of the law and the prophets: Israel's 'myths and laws' "constitute a normative order against the changing social and political patterns encountered throughout the history, while prophecy enabled this order to survive." According to Blenkinsopp, prophecy subserves Torah ('myths and 'laws'). J. Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon*, 1.

<sup>162</sup> It is important to note that in his dissertation (1988) Sweeney cautioned against simple harmonization of FI and E-N. There he had written,

[T]here is no indication in Isaiah that חוקי משה refers to the Five Books of Moses or any specific body of teaching. This and the willingness to accept foreigners (Isa 56:1-8; 66:18-21) indicate that the party which produced the final form of the book did not fully agree with Ezra's program (*Isaiah 1-4*, 196 n.11).

While his view of the use of חוקי משה has remained consistent, his conclusion about FI's relation to E-N is considerably different. In 1988, he suggested that FI might have a separate agenda; indeed, it might have been written to express *disagreement* with aspects of Ezra's Torah-centered reform program (*Isaiah 1-4*, 99, n.224). Subsequent to his 1988 dissertation, however, Sweeney has taken a different course. In recent contributions, he has sought to harmonize the apparent tensions between FI and E-N by focusing chiefly on the matter of intermarriage. He notes that Isaiah never mentions it, but instead is concerned with adherence to the "covenant of Judaism" as a condition for proselytes ("Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 57). Nevertheless, to resolve the perceived tension between FI's apparent universalism and E-N's narrowing of the concept of Israel, Sweeney suggests that it is not ethnicity *per se* but gender that presents the significant difficulty. Whereas Isaiah is concerned with the propriety of including eunuchs and foreign men in Temple worship (Isa 56:1-8), E-N is concerned about marriage to foreign women. According to Sweeney, only the latter could lead to apostasy. Therefore, he concludes that there was no need to expel foreign husbands, as they would present little threat of apostasy. Apparently, Jewish women could marry pagan men without threatening the holy seed; if an Israelite woman were to marry a foreign man, the covenant would remain intact ("Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 58.). Pagan wives, however, would inevitably lead their children into apostasy and breach

E-N share a socio-historical background, Sweeney examines the list of nations featured in chs.13-23 and concludes that YHWH's worldwide rule comprises the Persian empire of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century BCE.<sup>163</sup> He finds additional support in FI's recognition of a rebuilt Temple (66:1, 5) and a start to the restoration of Judaic religion.<sup>164</sup> Thus, his conclusion that the two corpuses share a Persian phase setting rests on firm ground.<sup>165</sup> But is the view that FI subserves Ezra's reforms a necessary consequence of common setting and the analogy of Scripture,<sup>166</sup> or has analogy amounted to proof? And is this solution adequate to address the tensions that scholars still perceive between FI and E-N?<sup>167</sup> If Isaiah scholarship has reached a consensus on FI's relation to the latter, it appears to reside in the straightforward recognition of unresolved ideological tensions.

Appreciably, Sweeney notes the profound use of Mosaic traditions associated with Sinai in what he identifies as Isaiah's 6<sup>th</sup>-century edition. He thinks that these Mosaic traditions provided the model for Isaianic *תורה* from Zion (*aggadah*). To support this claim, he observes several correspondences between the return of the exiles to Zion in Isaiah and the motif of the exodus in Exodus and Numbers.<sup>168</sup> Thus, for Sweeney, "Just as

of covenant, as they had in the past (Ezra 10:44; cf. Neh 13:1.). Apparently, one's daughter could marry Uriah the Hittite without harm, but Ruth the Moabitess posed a great risk to one's son, his offspring, and indeed the entire community. A related objection may be found in the shared conception of *tôrâ* as "catechesis" (in which a *father* [and mother] teaches his son the way of YHWH) in both deuteronomic (Deut 4:5-8; 6:7f, 20f) and wisdom (Prov 1:8f; 3:1f; 6:20f; 7:1f) traditions.

<sup>163</sup> That is, within this section of oracles, there is no mention of Persia itself, and Greece is not yet a recognized world power, though mention of Babylonia and Cyrus presupposes the subjugation of Babylon. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Textual Citations in Isaiah 24-27: Toward an Understanding of the Redactional Function of Chapters 24-27 in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 107/1 (1988): 39-52, and also his article, "On Multiple Settings in the Book of Isaiah," in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (ed. M. A. Sweeney; Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 28-35.

<sup>164</sup> This too, he says, "[C]orresponds to the situation in the late 5<sup>th</sup>-century B.C.E. when Nehemiah and then Ezra returned to Jerusalem to begin their work" ("Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 56-57).

<sup>165</sup> Sweeney thinks FI envisions a restored Israel as part of the larger Persian Empire and writes, "Essentially, the book of Isaiah identifies YHWH's actions and plans with those of the Persian Empire" (*Isaiah 1-4*, 120).

<sup>166</sup> In addition to textual affinities, in his view, FI's historical function is consistent with its canonical function, given the order of the Jewish *TaNaK*. According to Sweeney, this canonical order indicates that the *נביאים* are subordinate to *תורה* and do not transcend the *כתובים*. Thus, in the *TaNaK*, FI points the reader to the *כתובים* and E-N. In this way, *תורה* is exalted at the head of the canon, and FI takes its subordinate place within the *נביאים*. See M. A. Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>167</sup> For example, compare the comments of Grace Emerson, who writes, "The hoped-for rebuilding of the city walls in which foreigners are to participate in 60:10 can hardly be connected with Nehemiah and his resistance to such outside assistance!" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 63). Furthermore, Sweeney seems to disregard the apparent exclusivity of Ezra's group, which consisted of returned exiles only (Ezra 9:4). See also the broader literature on Isa 56-66, e.g., O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*; P. D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: A Post-Exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood* (FAT 2:19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). The complexity and insufficiency of evidence must also be recognized. In my view, while the analogies Sweeney has observed are important, they are insufficient to establish the design of FI as support for Ezra's reforms.

<sup>168</sup> There will be a new sanctuary at Zion (Isa 4:2-6; cf. Exod 13:21-22; 40:34-38) and a hardening of the people and their enemies (cf. Isa 6; cf. Exod 7:1-5; 14:8). Isaiah's unclean lips echo the call of Moses (Isa 6:5; cf. Exod 6:12, 30). Assyria and Babylonia are subjected to YHWH's rod (an analogy to the rod of

Mount Sinai serves as the locus of revelation to Israel in the Mosaic traditions, so Zion serves as the locus of revelation to Israel and the nations in the book of Isaiah.”<sup>169</sup> Mosaic Torah is connected to Sinai and the first exodus, yet *תורה* in Isaiah is connected to Zion and a second exodus.<sup>170</sup>

Next, Sweeney observes a distinction in the manner of application of *תורה* from Zion versus *תורה* from Sinai. He suggests that before the fourth edition, wherever the term *תורה* appears, the vision was concerned with the regulation of the affairs of the nations and Israel’s relationships within this arena (cf. 2:2-4), but Mosaic Torah and Ezra’s reforms were concerned with the internal regulation of Israel’s life. Before the 5<sup>th</sup>-century, editions of Isaiah modeled the conception of *תורה* from Zion on narratives about Torah from Sinai. This *תורה* had an established sense distinct from Ezra’s use of *תורה* as Mosaic ‘law’ and a distinct application to foreign entanglements, but Ezra’s reforms nevertheless restored the application of *תורה* to domestic civil relations.

The fourth and final redaction, however, changed Isaiah too. This final redaction aimed at an internal separation of the wicked from the righteous—a move Sweeney identifies as “Deuteronomistic,”<sup>171</sup> reorienting its scope towards domestic civil reforms. According to Deuteronomistic ideology, righteousness involves personal adherence to the Mosaic covenant, for by this standard YHWH will separate the wicked from the righteous. Since he finds this concern only in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century edition of Isaiah, Sweeney concludes that an author-editor imposed a Deuteronomistic redaction at this stage. This definitive redaction had the twofold effect of re-signifying *תורה* and refocusing its application

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Moses that punished Egypt, cf. Isa 10:24-26; 11:11-16; cf. Exod 7-11; 14), and the return itself is a new exodus (cf. Isa 27:12-13; 35:1-10; 62:10-12). See Sweeney, “Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 64-65.

<sup>169</sup> Sweeney, “Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 64.

<sup>170</sup> Note similarities with Fischer. Remember, however, that for Sweeney, before Ezra, writers of Isaiah simply do not know Mosaic Torah (limited to legislation); the word only appears in editions of Isaiah that antedate Ezra’s 5<sup>th</sup> c. reform, and it never shares a referent according to its use in E-N.

<sup>171</sup> Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 195-96. Deuteronomistic ideology is concerned with domestic affairs and explains misfortune by the notion of *retributive justice*: adherence to the covenant brings blessing (28:1-14), but curse and calamity continue because of the wickedness of the people (Deut 28:15-68).

Note similarities with Clements, though, apparently, separation in FI (as regards divine sovereignty and human responsibility) is associated with a final Deuteronomistic redaction during the time of Ezra (and not Josiah). Here, Sweeney writes, “YHWH had promised restoration, but that restoration had not been realized. The [5<sup>th</sup> century] redaction reconciled this situation with an element of constitutive hermeneutic [the early text is now part of a larger system] together with the prophetic element in line with Deuteronomistic ideology.” Note that this comment only appears in his earlier (1988) work.

Smith sees a movement from the offer to the people as a whole to do justice and righteousness to a later split within the community. Hereafter, according to Smith, the distinction between Jew and non-Jew no longer applies. Indeed, the criterion of separation appears to apply to both Jew and non-Jew equally, suggesting that the barrier between the two has been broken down (56:3-8; 65:13-15; 66:5; cf. 60:10; 61:5; 56:7-8). Compare P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 188.

appropriately to domestic affairs. Thus, the simple conjunction with Ezra's legislative reforms explains the new direction of the 4<sup>th</sup>-movement of Isaiah.<sup>172</sup>

To recapitulate, for Sweeney, before the 5<sup>th</sup>-century, the book of Isaiah portrayed the revelation of YHWH's תורה to Israel and the nations from Zion. This revelation was analogous to and indeed modeled upon the revelation of תורה to Israel in the Mosaic covenant tradition from Sinai (as recounted in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). But use of this revelatory model in DI also involved a transformation in application to foreign interaction rather than domestic or civil affairs. In its final (5<sup>th</sup>-century) form, however, an author-redactor changed the conception of 'Israel' from a society conceived of corporately to one defined by individual righteousness. All told, FI envisages in concert with E-N a holy society founded upon a Deuteronomistic ideology that promises blessing for the righteous and destruction for the wicked. As the post-exilic executor of Mosaic Torah, Ezra is Moses' successor (i.e., a new Joshua, cf. Josh 1:6-8), and FI is his prophet.

As an initial critique, I doubt the legitimacy of Sweeney's conclusion that a תורה-orientation only arises with the 5<sup>th</sup>-century redaction since this view depends upon an artificial separation of legal traditions from narrative traditions.<sup>173</sup> To explain the historical contingencies that affect 5<sup>th</sup>-century readers of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century vision and how they handled them, he assigns to Ezra and the final redactor of Isaiah an unduly restrictive view of Torah as codified Deuteronomistic legislation. He then plays off this view against narrative traditions from the Pentateuch, which, he observes, the 6<sup>th</sup>-century edition had utilized to model תורה from Zion. Despite this observation, he effectively denies any interrelationship between this Zion תורה and Ezra's Deuteronomistic reforms. The analogy between Sinai and Zion that gives rise to the 6<sup>th</sup>-century Isaianic conception of תורה refers *exclusively* to narrative traditions within the Pentateuch. In the 5<sup>th</sup>-century, however, its prior conception is effectively abandoned (or eclipsed) when TI expands that edition and subjects it to Deuteronomistic redaction. The final redaction re-signifies the whole, subordinating the prophetic book to Ezra's program.

Now, as one might concede, deuteronomic legislation (D) in Torah may stem from a ('Moab') tradition distinct from the other pentateuchal traditions; but the deuteronomic code is nevertheless linked to narrative traditions (Horeb in D = Sinai). Hence, its

<sup>172</sup> Sweeney, "Isaiah as Prophetic Torah," 65.

<sup>173</sup> For the view that DI's use of תורה is closely related to Deuteronomistic conceptions, but provides a "*neue Nuance von Tora*", forming an "autonomous continuation" (*eigenständige Fortsetzung*) of the Deuteronomistic tradition, see the dissertation by Labahn. Antje Labahn, *Wort Gottes und Schuld Israels: Untersuchungen zu Motiven deuteronomistischer Theologie im Deuteronomium mit einem Ausblick auf das Verhältnis von Jes 40-55 zum Deuteronomismus* (BZAW 143; Kohlhammer, 1999), 117.

‘progress’ in legislative matters presumes reinterpretation of the Sinai narrative traditions.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, past-orientation (like Ezra’s) serves a new (prospective) purpose: it re-appropriates the past in order to set a course for the present (‘today’).<sup>175</sup> Yet, Sweeney’s view takes for granted a separation of *narrative* from *law* and a restrictive view of later *תורה* as purely legal. This separation of narrative and legal traditions overlooks the canonical-historical (i.e., narrative) continuity and progression of old and new within Mosaic Torah itself.<sup>176</sup> This is one reason why, despite the advance that Sweeney makes regarding the designation of FI’s macro-genre as prophetic torah, it is untenable to deny the organic relation between the conception and use of *תורה* in the 6<sup>th</sup>-century and 5<sup>th</sup>-century redactional layers.

Further still, his reconstruction of the composition of FI promotes a retrospective reading<sup>177</sup> that cuts off any text-internal appreciation of the coherence between chs.1-54 (55) and chs.56-66. Thus, there is no meaningful relationship between the restoration and separation visions; the focus simply shifts due to editorial addition (enlarging the scope) and redaction (re-signifying the whole). The redactional unity is perceived as the latter vision is imposed upon the former. The impact is largely unidirectional, from Sweeney’s perception of similarities with Ezra’s reforms to a construal of TI to the re-signification vis-à-vis E-N of the message and canonical function of Isaiah as a whole. In the final redaction, the whole book of Isaiah is re-signified and read based on prior assumptions regarding the external coherence of TI with E-N.

This move is puzzling, since, as we have seen, Sweeney does not discover editorial harmonizing with reference to *תורה* in DI, yet he does find an analogy with *non-legal* Mosaic traditions diffused throughout. In my judgment, the absence of the former and the clear presence of the latter require deeper reflection on the correlation of law and narrative, which should be allowed to influence understanding of the correlation of Sinai and Zion as well as FI’s restoration-and-separation vision. Their correlative features not only inform the distinct agenda of FI on a holistic reading, but also one’s appraisal of the organic relationship of chs.1-55 and chs.56-66.<sup>178</sup> If the reader does not follow Sweeney in

<sup>174</sup> Consider, for example, the exodus, wilderness-wandering, apostasy, and lawgiving at Sinai (e.g., the Book of the Covenant).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Deut 1:10; 4:4, 39; 5:3; 30:15. Of course, these motifs are also present in the Isaiah-edition that antedates Ezra’s reforms and in E-N itself.

<sup>176</sup> On this tension between old and new, see Gordon McConville, “Old Testament Laws and Canonical Intentionality,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. C. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 276.

<sup>177</sup> For this sort of critique applied at the level of approach, see Brevard S. Childs, “Retrospective Reading of the Old Testament Prophets,” *ZAW* 108 (1996): 362-77.

<sup>178</sup> It does appear that FI presumes Mosaic Torah traditions as a compositional model—both its narratives of redemptive history and its legal/moral imperatives, and Sweeney recognizes aspects of an

prioritizing E-N as a reading strategy, but approaches FI from a perspective particular to its own discourse structure—reading the document according to its own dynamic order of presentation—will not FI have a better chance of speaking for itself? And given its eventual juxtaposition in a canon with E-N, might not the two books be seen to stand in a somewhat different relationship?<sup>179</sup> If one does not prioritize a particular canonical order, then FI and E-N may appear to stand in a relationship that does not *subordinate* either law to prophecy or prophecy to law; the two may stand together in a bi-directional interplay. On the one hand, instead of playing the subservient role, it may appear that the conception and strategic use of תורה in PI and DI can enrich our assessment of both FI's separation vision and Ezra's reforming activity in the Persian period. On the other hand, the hermeneutical interplay may suggest (on a second reading) that FI also presents a *longer view* than E-N with a more profound redemptive-historical and salvific outlook. Such a reading may be the result (or implication) of juxtaposing FI and E-N within a canon.<sup>180</sup>

If, in FI, Sinai traditions provide a theological model for תורה from Zion, perhaps their analogical relationship suggests more about the vision than the mere republication of Mosaic Torah. Perhaps the term תורה itself signals a new 'logic', in the idiom of Isaianic prophecy, which requires a more profound sense for the transformation of old traditions in expectation of the 'new day'. While still permitting it to function as a vision for the life of Ezra's reform community 'today', such a reading of FI may highlight the distinct agenda and integrity of FI's witness as a prophetic vision. That is, FI may continue to inform the reading of E-N itself, enhancing understanding of the socio-political setting and legitimate aims of Ezra's program of reforms *not-yet-realized*. Instead, apart from explicit indicators that FI shares Ezra's aims, Sweeney's construal risks obscuring the message and agenda of FI.

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Exodus motif diffused throughout chapters 1-66. In my reading, this motif includes (at least) the following items: the mountain of God (Sinai, Zion), hardening (Egypt, Israel), judgment (Egypt, Assyria, Babylonian, cosmic), chosen leader (Moses, servant and servants), people of God (Israel, Israel and nations as servants), deliverance (exodus, second/new exodus), wilderness (place of testing, place of blessing), covenant (Mosaic [Abrahamic, Davidic], new?), and torah (Mosaic from Sinai, prophetic and Zion?).

<sup>179</sup> I am favorable to Sweeney's canonical aim and focus, and I acknowledge that my ultimate aim and focus is canonical, albeit Christian and Protestant. Nevertheless, neither the extent nor the order of what has been recognized and received as canonical Scripture (Jewish or variety of Christian) was established for the 5<sup>th</sup>-c. community. See, e.g., J. Barton, "Canons of the Old Testament," in *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (A. D. H. Mayes, ed.; Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 200-222.

<sup>180</sup> Childs points out that the concept of final form is closely connected with the issue of readership. "They have been ordered toward a present and future audience who receives its identity in some way from Israel's past story which is lost if a new story is reconstructed apart from the received narrative form. Thus to suggest that the major force involve [sic] in shaping Israel's prophetic history derives from readings retrojected as literary constructs runs in the face of the final form of Scripture which is eschatologically oriented toward the goal of instructing every future generation of Israel in the reality of God who continues to act on its behalf." B. Childs, "Retrospective Reading," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 377.

To recast this perception, even if the two books address the same audience, rather than the ‘prophetic’ serving the ‘legal’, might they instead comprise two distinct yet ultimately complementary voices? Instead of subordinating FI to E-N, given their canonical-hermeneutical interplay, they might be subject instead to mutually affecting readings that simultaneously respect their distinct canonical integrity. In other words, what may be made of FI’s own canonical integrity vis-à-vis E-N or indeed its quality as prophecy to speak anew?<sup>181</sup> Is the resultant reading of FI restricted to Ezra’s specific enactment? In calling the people back to their fundamental loyalty to YHWH, might subsequent leaders find it necessary to refashion communal experience according to FI’s message in ways *unlike* Ezra? My concern is that given Sweeney’s notion of its re-signification by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century redactor, such questions regarding the text’s meaning or import are excluded. There is no longer any need to take up FI and *read it again*. The potential for a more reflective ‘second reading’ of FI within expanding horizons (from age to age) is eclipsed by a facile subordination of the vision’s import to Ezra’s reform and the strained effort to harmonize the book with E-N.

### 1.2.3. Assessment of Recent Scholarship on תורה in Isaiah

It should be clear from the preceding survey that conceptions of תורה in FI and E-N are of central importance for any ideological comparison of the message of these two books for the post-exilic community. Careful investigation of the complex relationship between FI and E-N regarding תורה should yield fresh judgments regarding their particular contributions to understanding Jewish life and eschatology in the Persian period (and beyond). Before offering a reassessment, however, I outline and respond to two related problems shared by the views presented above.

The first problem (or tendency) in the literature surveyed is a narrowly restrictive view of תורה as either wisdom instruction or Mosaic legislation; that is, the literature tends towards the view that תורה has legal or wisdom connotations only. With regard to FI in particular, in one way or another, these two problems have led to a search for the meaning (or significance) of תורה in genres or bodies of literature (ultimately) external to the book of Isaiah. Moreover, as reflected in the literature cited, these problems presuppose the view that Mosaic Torah is *sui generis*, in a class by itself, having exclusive integrity or canonical supremacy. On this view, Mosaic Torah, then, bears greater

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<sup>181</sup> John Barton, for example, notes that in Israel during the late and post-biblical period prophecy was generally understood as applying to *distant* or even eschatological times rather than the immediate future (*Oracles of God*, 179).

authority than any subservient prophetic word. FI does not ultimately generate and standardize תורה-traditions<sup>182</sup> or even permit interpretation of FI as prophetic torah on its own terms; rather, Mosaic Torah is primary, and Ezra's reforms, because Torah-oriented, hold ultimate authority and function as the hermeneutical key to FI. The secondary prophetic book merely serves Ezra's program—it has no more profound agenda of its own.

In response, Moses does not begin his speech by laying down legislation but by retelling the story about who God is and what he has done (1:5, הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בָּאָר, (אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת)). That is, Moses' first speech (Deut 1:6-4:44) is not 'legal' in any conventional forensic or legislative sense, and yet it is, nevertheless, Moses' exposition (בָּאָר) of the 'law' (הַתּוֹרָה).<sup>183</sup> Thus, it appears that Moses' תּוֹרָה is a practical vision for conceiving of Israelite society *only* in light of Israel's relationship to and history with YHWH. While it specifically demands Israel's response for life (בַּחַיִּים, Deut 30:19), it is a vision capable of ultimate realization only because of its redemptive-historical and theological underpinnings (4:31; 5:6; cf. 30:6). Thus, an adequate definition of תּוֹרָה needs to be broad enough to contain the narratives of YHWH's mighty acts, lest one destabilize the relationship of divine indicatives to the imperatives that follow.<sup>184</sup> One's conception of תּוֹרָה cannot be restricted rigidly to Mosaic legislation, a specific earthly institutional arrangement, or a particular program of legislative reform, because תּוֹרָה comprises both 'law' and 'gospel'<sup>185</sup> and appears as an expression of the "revelation-of-the-divine-will,"<sup>186</sup> a vision of the reign of God.

A second problematic feature of the literature surveyed, corollary to the first, is the subordination of the prophetic writings to Mosaic Torah, which suggests prophecy is a

<sup>182</sup> The language of 'generating' and 'standardizing' traditions is from Peter Ackroyd, *Continuity: A Contribution to the Study of the Old Testament Religious Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 15.

<sup>183</sup> The first major section as a whole already has the character of תּוֹרָה. The narrator introduces the section with the formula אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים (1:1), and Moses' first speech, having begun with תּוֹרָה in 1:5 (הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בָּאָר אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת), ends with תּוֹרָה in 4:44—an *inclusio* (וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם) (מֹשֶׁה לִּפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). Deut 4:45 begins the next major section with the introductory formula (אֱלֹהֵי + statutes; cf. 12:1; 28:69 [ET 29:1]).

<sup>184</sup> In Deuteronomy, the observation of macro-level structuring reveals a similarity in the beginning of all the major sections of the document. That is, major speech sections all begin with a variation of the phrase, "These are the words" (אֱלֹהֵי + words, statutes, laws, judgments, or covenant in 1:1; 4:45; 12:1; 28:69 [ET 29:1] respectively). This is a reversal in the use of the formula in closing sections of speeches in Leviticus and Numbers (Lev 26:46; 27:34; Num 36:13). The relationship of this structure in Deuteronomy to its canonical role in Leviticus and Numbers may already point to the tension of old and new. Deuteronomy grounds the actual laws in the mighty works of God and the synonymous relationship of דְּבַר־יְהוָה and תּוֹרָה.

<sup>185</sup> F. Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 8.

<sup>186</sup> G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 235.



secondary authority under deuteronomic legislation. But did Mosaic Torah ever enjoy exclusive canonical integrity? The profile of Moses and his role in Mosaic Torah (or the relation of prophet and book in the finished book of Deuteronomy), along with the quality of Moses' words, match the profile of Moses' role as prophet.

Of course, YHWH's prophet Moses is the preeminent protagonist in the pentateuchal narrative;<sup>187</sup> indeed, his preeminence is correlative with the exodus as the climactic event-complex depicted in the pentateuchal narrative traditions. Moses' preeminence is apparent by virtue of his role as the mediator of YHWH's deliverance and as a suffering intercessor on behalf of his people, Israel.<sup>188</sup> Like YHWH, he was such a one, remarkably, in whom his people must *believe* (Exod 14:31). Subsequent to crossing the sea, YHWH continued to display his servant's preeminence in the exceptional mode of communication of God with Moses (Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:10), and as mediator of the covenant (Deut 28:69 [29:1]), the people must continue to heed YHWH's word through him. Yet, although Moses was preeminent, his role was not necessarily unique (cf. Deut 18:15-22). In fact, while Deut 34 claims a uniqueness for Moses, Moses did not apparently see himself as a distinct class of Israelite (Deut 18:15-19; cf. Num 12:3). This explains his yearning for a day when all God's people would become 'prophets like Moses' (Num 11:29; 12:1-3). Hence, knowledge of the exceptional character, yet essential commonness, of Moses is woven into the warp and woof of his chief documentary legacy. This is evident despite the aim of the Mosaic deposit itself to re-present, interpret, and preserve, once-for-all, in a word (תּוֹרָה/דְּבַר), the central history and theological ideas of Yahwism, and despite its placement beside the Holy Ark.

Now then, what is the relationship between Moses and the literary deposit ascribed to him? If Moses' role was exemplary but not necessarily *sui generis*, does it follow that Mosaic Torah is necessarily *sui generis*? What is the relationship of authority between Mosaic Torah and the prophetic writings? Do they bear the same formal character as 'word of YHWH' (דְּבַר יְהוָה)? The quality of Moses' word matches the profile of Moses' role in Deuteronomy (and the Pentateuch). When one considers תּוֹרָה in Deuteronomy, for example, as García López and Fabry have shown, one does not find a forensic use only; the term has at times priestly or sapiential connotations; and so, tethering it to a particular form (and setting in life) emerges as invalid. These various connotations are all employed within speeches ascribed to the one man, Moses, whom

<sup>187</sup> The following observations are adapted from Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 121-24.

<sup>188</sup> Exodus 32-34; Deut 1:37; 4:21; 9:6-29.

YHWH had raised up to be his servant.<sup>189</sup> As YHWH's servant—though he was (like Hammurapi) also a shepherd (Num 27:16, 17)—Moses did not exercise his role strictly as a king (priest, or sage), but as a prophet (Deut 34:5, 10). Prophecy or prophetic exhortation (*paraenesis*), then, may be the correct macro-genre designation for the Torah of Moses. Moses' written testimony to his people was his prophetic legacy, and it remains YHWH's abiding word. As Moses' prophetic speech, then, Mosaic Torah is preeminent. But does the conclusion follow that the Torah of Moses makes all other words ancillary?

After the death of God's servant, Torah passed with the ark before the people and over Jordan to guide their life in the Land (Deut 31:24-26).<sup>190</sup> It also carried with it the anticipation that God would raise up successors of Moses who would similarly guide the people with new words of God in accord with the old Mosaic traditions. Hence, consistent with its own self-witness (18:15-22; 34:10f), and correlative with Moses, Moses' Torah is *not* unique; it does not stand-alone, *sui generis*. Put differently, the *sui generis* character of the Scriptures is not limited to Mosaic Torah only, but extends from this authoritative installment to authorize the speech and writings of all legitimate successors of Moses. The implication of the nature of this written deposit as *Mosaic* is that the Torah ascribed to him is *primus inter pares*; nevertheless, after Moses, from generation to generation, this word makes ongoing instruction possible through its re-appropriation by subsequent readers in new times and for new audiences.<sup>191</sup> In this 'canonical' sense, Mosaic Torah is thus relativized: YHWH intended for this written deposit to be taken up, taught, and fulfilled in both new words and new actions by successors whom YHWH would call or raise up (Deut 16:18-18:22). Their words and actions would also be from YHWH, complementary to Moses' and having equal authority.

This ongoing instruction apparently took shape through the speech and actions (including writing) of Moses' successors, the prophets (cf. Deut 18:15-19; 2 Kgs 17:13). Their new words were on par with Moses' Torah. The Chronicler, for example, presupposes their equal standing in 2 Chronicles' striking echo of Exod 14:31, where

<sup>189</sup> Exod 14:31; Deut 3:24; 34:5; cf. Josh 1:1.

<sup>190</sup> J-P Sonnet writes, "Deuteronomy ultimately emphasizes in the **אִתּוֹ**-record phenomenon what I call its ark-aspect: its movability. The book is to be 'taken-away' (see 31:26: 'Take this book of the Torah, and put it by the side of the ark'); it is what, with the ark, goes over. Spatial transcendence is a sign of temporary pervasiveness. The book can be read over and over again; day after day in the case of the king (Deut 17:19), every seven years in the case of all the congregation (Deut 31:10-13). The **אִתּוֹ**-medium gives Moses' Torah entry into the land that the fathers entered and re-entered, up to their respective burying. The same medium, through the act of reading, enters the time of the 'sons', i.e., the time of the generation in the land. Banning Moses from the land, YHWH metes divine justice; yet, God's refusal is the reverse side of *laissez-passer*: written by Moses in the 'book', the words of the Torah will reach the land. The actual removal of Moses' burial place from public knowledge (34:6, 'and no one knows') is, analogically, the reverse of the actual publication of his Torah 'book' throughout time and space (31:8, 'and their sons who have not known will hear')." J-P Sonnet, *The Book within the Book*, 229-30.

<sup>191</sup> See, e.g., Ezra 8-10; cf. Deut 17:14-20; 31:10-13.

Jehoshaphat, reflecting upon the role of YHWH's servants, exhorts the people of Judah, saying, "Believe in YHWH your God, and you will be upheld; believe his prophets, and you will prosper" (2 Chron 20:20b). Thus, the prophets' words as God's servants were to be received as the very words of God. The collective purpose of this 'prophetic word' was consistent with the notion of Mosaic succession; therefore, it stood on equal footing with Moses' word and was conceivably set beside Moses' Torah in a mutual canonical interplay. Outside of Deuteronomy, although Moses remains the prototype, the term **דבר** may signal the prophetic message that a successor to Moses proclaims. It refers to the word of a prophet like Moses rather than a word identical to or ancillary to Moses' own Torah. Within this arrangement, as *primus inter pares*, Moses' word remains pre-eminent, but as the *prototype*, the words of Moses' prophetic successors carried equal authority. Moses and the prophets shared the same *role* (i.e., mediating YHWH's words<sup>192</sup> and interceding on the people's behalf).<sup>193</sup> Chapman rightly comments, "Israel's disobedience to 'the words' was just as egregious and provocative in God's eyes as its disobedience to 'the law'."<sup>194</sup> As the Chronicler understood, Israel's obedience to the prophetic word would bring forth blessing (2 Chr 20:20b).

According to the canonical-historical presentation, then, it appears that Moses/Mosaic Torah and the prophets/prophetic writings are joint witnesses to the true God; they provide distinct-yet-compatible testimonies to YHWH's singular character and purpose. Although distinct, the prophetic writings of Moses' successors stand in the same class with Moses' Torah; naturally, the faithful recognized and received the prophetic words just as they had Moses' words—as **דבר**, the very word of God.

In conclusion, to regard the prophets/prophetic writings as subordinate to Mosaic Torah is mistaken. Although Moses and the Torah ascribed to him remain pre-eminent, Moses is not unique; he stands in relation to his successors as the prototype (or model).<sup>195</sup> On this biblical view, the redeemed community recognized and received both Mosaic Torah (**דבר**) and the Prophetic Word (**דבר**) as Scripture. In mutual interplay, they are equal and authoritative, distinct-yet-complementary, voices. For this reason, as God's

<sup>192</sup> See 2 Kgs 17:13-14; Jer 7:25-26; 11:10; 25:4; 29:19; Dan 9:10-12; Hos 4:1-6; Zech 1:6; 7:12; Mal 3:7, 22 (4:4).

<sup>193</sup> See Jer 15:1; 20:7-18; Ezek 3:22-27; Dan 9:6; Amos 7:2-6; cf. Gen 20:7. For the view that Moses was God's 'prototypical prophet', see Patrick Miller, "Moses My Servant," *Interp* 41 (1987): 245-55.

<sup>194</sup> S. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 217.

<sup>195</sup> This presentation, somewhat dependent upon Chapman, also follows observations of Gary Knoppers regarding incomparability in Kings. Knoppers has argued cogently that, in Kings, the incomparability formula does not claim that an individual is *sui generis* but *primus inter pares*. Chapman argues, correctly, I think, that Moses and the prophets stand in the same *category*; given this relationship, Moses is *pre-eminent* but not *sui generis*. See, G. Knoppers, "There was None Like Him: Incomparability in the Books of Kings" *CBQ* 54 (2002): 411-31.

holy gift, God's people ultimately accepted their written deposits as two parts of the one canon of Holy Scripture.

### 1.3. Proposal for Reassessment

#### 1.3.1. Deuteronomic<sup>196</sup> analogies in final-Isaiah

In light of the above clarifications, I offer the following proposal for reassessment. In subsequent literature, *תורה* need not have the technical sense of Mosaic legislation; rather, *תורה* signals a message, namely, the divine word that prophets like Moses proclaim.

Conceivably then, in FI, the reader need not be surprised to find that *תורה* never refers to Mosaic legislation. Indeed, the reader may expect its use of early tradition to be distinctively shaped according to the logic/agenda of FI; and yet, Mosaic traditions may still provide relevant analogies for comprehending the concept and its use in the prophetic book. Along these lines, perhaps Sweeney's perception that in FI Sinai provides the model for *תורה* from Zion has actually *opened* the way to further investigation. Three matters emerge that suggest a model for conceiving of FI as *Torah*:

- (1) The prophet's role as 'תורה-giver' in the development of Isaiah
- (2) The design of Isaianic *תורה* as divine instruction for disciples
- (3) The nature of Isaianic *תורה* as a word of YHWH to be taken up, taught, and fulfilled in new words and actions by God's prophetic servant(s)

These three aspects of the 'prophetic book' bear relevant analogies to prophetic traditions from Mosaic Torah.

The first deuteronomic analogy comes from an intra-textual observation about the Pentateuch. Consider the prophet's role as 'תורה-giver' by analogy with further reflection on the profile of Moses in Torah. With due recognition of their complex relationship in the Pentateuch, the deuteronomic code (D) in Deut 12-26 may be compared profitably to the Book of the Covenant (BC) in Exod 20:22-23:19 (cf. Exod 34:10-26). Both the fact that no one code is complete and the ascription of BC and D to Moses in his role as Torah-giver invite comparison. Their ascription to Moses is a significant unifying feature; it is a canonically-expressed intention that unveils a strategy for reading these two distinct but inseparable codes.<sup>197</sup> Simply by their juxtaposition in a canon, then, a

<sup>196</sup> 'Deuteronomic' refers to the retrospective exilic/post-exilic interpretive perspective; it is ideological, reflecting a *tendenz*. By 'deuteronomic' I simply mean the influence upon other literature of theological tendencies and motifs associated with the book of Deuteronomy.

<sup>197</sup> James Kugel recognizes that the present form of the Pentateuch might be the result of a conscious design and argues that they were therefore given in a certain sequence: "some were first promulgated at Mount Sinai, others thereafter, and then, forty years later, Moses 'expounded' the Torah in the plains of

relationship of unity and diversity arises, and the parallel codes can be compared with respect to worship, ethics, and the nature of YHWH.<sup>198</sup>

Any attempt to handle these distinct literary and ideological/theological entities requires reflection upon how these codes relate to one another. Clearly, the two codes are far from identical, but equally clear is the fact that the role of Moses in Deuteronomy trades on his role in Exodus. Compared to his position in BC, Moses' role as תּוֹרָה-giver in D is 'new', and yet, this newness does not eclipse or replace the old written code. The new code stands instead in a canonical-historical relationship with the old, though it is hard to establish firm connections between them. By their juxtaposition in the canon, 'what is old' in Exodus (BC) is not superior to 'what is new' in Deuteronomy (D), and 'what is new' in the latter does not amount to either rejection or replacement of 'what is old' in the former. United by their ascription to Moses, the two codes (BC and D) comprise equal, authoritative, and complementary voices within the broader narrative framework of Exodus and Deuteronomy.<sup>199</sup>

While at first blush these observations may merely suggest that the Pentateuch is a complex puzzle, the relationship that arises between old and new provides a constructive model for successors of Moses, not only for those appointed to the court (e.g., judges or kings), but also for prophets raised up with new words from YHWH. Conceivably, any use of the codes would involve their interpretation and reapplication, re-conceiving and re-expressing the old things for new situational-rhetorical purposes.

In FI, by analogy, despite the imperative to 'forget' the things of an earlier epoch,<sup>200</sup> when YHWH does a new thing (Isa 43:18; 65:16, 17) he does not discard the former things. They retain their validity insofar as they provide a pattern and frame of reference for understanding the new things to come. In fact, for new audiences, the

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Moab just before his own death (Deut 1:1-5), introducing some new statutes and revising some of the old ones in the process." See Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 755. Significant for my thesis are his observations that (1) it was the Torah story which gave divine authority to the various customs and laws, and that (2) the same argument regarding the corpus's 'growth' can be made for the book of Isaiah. No stage in the work's long period of composition is obsolete; in a manner analogous to the Pentateuch, redactors of Isaiah would have sought to transmit a particular message that they felt the prophet (as source) had intended for the coming generations (Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 563).

<sup>198</sup> This section is dependent upon the observations of McConville, "Old Testament Laws and Canonical Intentionality," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. C. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 259-81. Similar observations could be made for the relationship of BC and D to the Holiness Code (H) in Lev 17-26. I am grateful to Gordon McConville for helping me to become alert to the complexities. See his *Deuteronomy*, 29-30, 39. See also, "Deuteronomy's Unification of Passover and Massot—A Response to B. M. Levinson," *JBL* 119 (2000): 47-58. For a response to McConville, see C. J. H. Wright, "Response to Gordon McConville" in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. C. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 282-90. For an alternative view, see, B. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University, 1997).

<sup>199</sup> On this tension between old and new, see Gordon McConville, "Canonical Intentionality," 276.

<sup>200</sup> Isa 41:21; 42:9; 43:9; 46:9; 48:3.

remembrance of the former things is hermeneutically necessary, since understanding ‘what is old’ is a prerequisite for recognizing and appropriately responding to the new things proclaimed. Therefore, to gain insight into God’s purpose expressed by the prophet, the reader/redactor must properly discern the relationship of former and new.

Second, consider the rhetorical purpose of Torah as instruction for the life and well-being of God’s people. In Deuteronomy, Torah is inherently *catechetical* by design. “Catechesis” in Dennis Olson’s broad sense of instruction for disciples, “is the process of education in faith from one generation to another based on a distillation of essential tradition.”<sup>201</sup> Olson explains that this process involved exposition and exploration of Torah for new times and places.<sup>202</sup> With a view to each new generation, the aim of instruction is to fashion the community of faith for life and blessing, characterized by **מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה** (Deut 16:18; cf. Gen 18:19). In short, as a concept, Torah consists of teaching and guidance for right living. To this end, of course, the word must be *internalized*—confessed and embodied in the dynamic-yet-ordered life of the covenant community. This active confession and embodiment in communal life is Israel’s wisdom, worship, and witness (Deut 4:6-8).

Following the Mosaic model, catechetical instruction would also involve a relationship between ‘what is old’ and ‘what is new’. Here the design of this old-new interplay is to prepare the eyes, ears, and hearts of the community to recognize the character of the true God, eagerly embrace his unfolding purpose, and take up its collective role as YHWH’s witness.<sup>203</sup> Thus, as catechesis, **תּוֹרָה** iteratively places demands on the faith and life of God’s people in the interrelated spheres of worship and social ethics, domestic affairs and international politics. Within these spheres, catechesis operates by means of admonition and exhortation (*paraenesis*) for the life of disciples in the community. I will argue that FI shares an analogous concern for **תּוֹרָה** (**דְּבַר־יְהוָה** ||) as instruction for disciples.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Olson notes that the Deuteronomic program of catechesis is theologically centered, humanly adaptable, form-critically inclusive, socially transformative, and communally oriented (*Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, 11). By extension of this notion, one can say that the outcome of the revelatory process (inherent in its very design and reflected in the canon itself) is a *tradition* of influence and interaction that is *catechetical*. Catechesis is a key aspect of both the canonical process and the vital task of producing successors (disciples). By means of this process, each new listening/reading community is taught to think and act within the frame of reference provided by the Scriptural tradition. Accordingly, each previous part of the growing tradition—internal and external to a book—provides the frame of reference for understanding until the dynamic tradition reaches closure in a completed whole.

<sup>202</sup> D. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, 12.

<sup>203</sup> Deut 6:20-25; Isa 43:10-12; 44:8.

<sup>204</sup> See, e.g., Isa 1:10-17; 8:16, 20; 30:18-22; 42:4; 50:4.

Finally, the concept of *תורה* in Deuteronomy involves *dual agency*.<sup>205</sup> In Deuteronomy, Moses' words and YHWH's words come together such that Moses' words are to be observed as the very words of YHWH.<sup>206</sup> Even YHWH's signs and wonders—understood as expressions (speech and actions) usually reserved for God—are applied to Moses. As A. D. H. Mayes observed, “The power and activities of Moses are exalted to the level of those of YHWH himself.”<sup>207</sup> This convergence of divine and human speech and actions is also true of Moses' successors, the prophets. In FI, for example, the prophet (and his offspring) stand before Israel as signs and portents from YHWH of hosts (Isa 8:18; 20:3).

In FI too, the prophet's *תורה* and *דבר־יהוה* come together, expressed linguistically by their appearance as a poetically matched pair (e.g., 1:10; 2:3). Given this parallelism, it is evident that the latter phrase, *דבר־יהוה*, does not designate a concept secondary or subordinate to *תורה*. This observation supports Chapman's view that the emphasis on priestly torah or Mosaic Torah (or even wisdom torah) is balanced in the Scriptures by an emphasis on the prophetic witness or ‘prophetic torah’.<sup>208</sup> All three involve the same prophetic urgency of decision with respect to the word proclaimed. Again, these features suggest analogies between Mosaic Torah and Isaianic prophecy: each corpus essentially involves a prophetic function or a witnessing voice<sup>209</sup> which summons the people back to their proper loyalty to YHWH.<sup>210</sup>

In sum, the intent of the prophetic office is to prompt loyalty to YHWH, for he alone is sovereign in Israel's affairs. Consequently, neither Moses nor his role is unique—only YHWH is *sui generis*. Although Moses is preeminent (Deut 34:10), his role would continue only as taken up *mutatis mutandis* by God-ordained successors (Deut 18:15-19).

<sup>205</sup> This observation is basic and has been recognized throughout the history of interpretation. In its application to canon formation, see now, S. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 125.

<sup>206</sup> See (e.g.) Deut 4:10-14; Exod 14:31; 2 Chr 20:20b.

<sup>207</sup> A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1979), 414. Dennis Olson concurs indicating that Moses and YHWH are virtually identified in functional terms (*Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses*, 170).

<sup>208</sup> See Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 154ff. Cf. Deut 30:15; Josh 24:15; 1 Sam 8:8; 12:2, 5; 1 Kgs 8:61; Isa 10:32; 28:23-29; Ezek 21:25, 29; 24:2; 39:8; Amos 3:3-8; Ps 1; Prov. 1.

<sup>209</sup> This witness-function of Scripture—constantly re-oriented to new situational/rhetorical contexts and climaxing in Christ—may help to explain why the NT writers understood and read the entire generic spectrum of inspired Scripture as *prophecy* foretelling and demanding a response concerning the Christ (“But who do you say that I am?” cf. Mt 16:15; John 5:39; Acts 2:30-31). That is to say, as a whole, the biblical writers were seen as *prophets*. And a prophet is essentially a *witness*, a herald of the word and work of the one true God. In the fullness of time, this one God spoke climactically in the Father's grand display of love: the eschatological exposition and fulfillment of torah in the suffering and glory of Messiah and the outpoured Spirit (Luke 24:44-48). This perspective, in turn, may inform our understanding of Jesus' word to his own disciples, summoned to fulfill their calling as “witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48; Mt 28:18-20; cf. Num 11:29; Isa 59:21; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21). On this point, see Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 756, n.49 (and cf. p.756, n.51).

<sup>210</sup> See J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 37.

It is important to recognize, therefore, that Moses and his successors are members of the same class. Like Moses, their words come together with YHWH's words, and they bear the same divine authority. Like Moses, their call is to communicate YHWH's words to the people and to intercede on their behalf. Like Moses' words, their words would provide instruction—**תורה**—to guide Israel's life. Like Moses' words, their words were taken up, taught, and fulfilled generation after generation as words of judgment and deliverance. According to this model, the prophetic word is not subordinate to Mosaic Torah; it is equal and complementary to it as the self-same word of YHWH (**דבר־יהוה**). I will argue that FI is fully in line with this deuteronomic view.

### 1.3.2. *Torah is a hermeneutical concept*

In this introduction, I have surveyed literature on **תורה** in FI and proposed reassessment by analogy with its function in Deuteronomy.<sup>211</sup> As a key word in FI, **תורה** signals a concept analogous to the concept of **תורה** in Deuteronomy, but I agree with Sweeney that the term never has the technical sense of Mosaic legislation; that is, **תורה** in FI does not refer to Mosaic Torah. I differ from Sweeney, however, in my proposal that Mosaic Torah traditions may nevertheless supply a constructive model for understanding FI's prophetic conception of **תורה**. Thus, in FI, **תורה** may signal a hermeneutical concept (on a deuteronomic model) with a distinctive Isaianic content (or 'logic'), such that *Isaianic Torah* is the message the vision proclaims to readers. To put it another way, rather than pointing to an external corpus or program of reforms, the text-internal use of **תורה** in FI may signal a message of intrinsic Isaianic import.<sup>212</sup>

According to this model, after the death of Moses, new prophets will arise (Deut 18:15, 18) with new words of instruction, explicating in retrospect and prospect YHWH's singular will for Israel. If they are true prophets, as Moses was, then their words are YHWH's words (vv.21-22), distinct (not separate or autonomous) and correlative (not subordinate or secondary) to the Mosaic deposit (v.16). The Mosaic prophetic legacy may

<sup>211</sup> See Appendix A, which illustrates these analogies by exegetical reflection on Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (vv.20-22; cf. Deut 5:23-27).

<sup>212</sup> A recent article by Carolyn Sharp comes close to this proposal. Recognizing the Servant's role as pedagogue, she writes, "God is doing a new thing in the Servant's story and in the Servant's teaching. The audience must learn this new way in which the redemptive authority of God is being enacted . . . In obedient listening and in praxis modeled by the Servant will be found an enduring redemption more powerful even than death." See C. Sharp, "(Re)Inscribing Power through Torah Teaching: Rhetorical Pedagogy in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah" in *Thus Says the Lord': Essays on the Former and Latter Prophets in Honor of Robert R. Wilson* (John Ahn and S. Cook, eds.; LHBOTS 502; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 177, 178. In my view, rather than mere catechizing or modeling through prophetic speech and activity, the Servant's teaching entails the praxis of internalization and embodiment on the part of disciples.



still stand relative to the words of his successors as ‘*primus inter pares*’ (Num 12:1-8; Deut 34:10), since, as YHWH’s word, Moses’ Torah also continues with the people, retaining its validity to govern Israel from Sinai to Zion. Even so, as successor-prophets address new situations in the idiom of the old (earlier Mosaic) traditions, they would bring forth their words in a distinct but complementary message to sustain and guide the covenant community. As communicators of YHWH’s words, their role would be analogous to Moses’ prophetic role; the equal authority of their words as **דבר יי הוה** is the significant unifying feature. Nevertheless, neither Moses nor his Torah is unique. Like Moses, a true prophet is one raised up by YHWH and taught by him in the mediation of divine words (**דבר יי**) of instruction (**תורה**) for the people. Therefore, while a true prophet is Moses’ successor, as YHWH’s servant, the prophet is ultimately YHWH’s disciple.

As YHWH’s disciple, a prophet brings words of instruction for people who have pledged fealty to the divine king.<sup>213</sup> In this way, the heavenly king governs Israel, and the entire community benefits in the process. They entrust themselves to their king, willingly performing the words that come to them by the instrumentality of his prophetic messenger(s). What this implies concerning YHWH’s intention is that all God’s people would become servants and disciples.<sup>214</sup> As servant-disciples, the people would receive the prophetic instruction and bear responsibility for catechizing the next generation, just as they did under Moses.<sup>215</sup> Accordingly, each new generation in Israel is held responsible for this prophetic torah, as weal or woe is contingent not merely upon discerning true from false but upon offering the requisite response in **משפט וצדקה**. A faithful response would bring blessings and generate the witness appropriate to bring about worldwide recognition of the true God. For when YHWH’s disciples display such discernment, they prove their wisdom as a witness before the nations (cf. Deut 4:6-8), who will come, in turn, to learn **תורה** for peace (Isa 2:2-4).

By analogy with YHWH’s word through Moses, therefore, my proposal is that FI’s distinctive message may be construed *as torah for disciples*. As I argue, already in the profile of the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz, this message involves a pedagogy of suffering as *Isaianic Torah* elicits a penitential response and offers sober instruction for disciples who

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<sup>213</sup> J. Tigay’s comment is most fitting, “[The prophets’] role reflects the unprecedented seriousness with which Israelite religion believed that God and not the king was the true sovereign, and that human kingship was a man-made institution, established by prophetic mediation and hence subordinate to prophetic authority.” See Jeffrey Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, **דבר יי** (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 177.

<sup>214</sup> Isa 54:13, 17b; 60:21; 65:1-16; 66:14.

<sup>215</sup> Deut 5:24; 6:20-25; cf. Isa 59:21.

will serve and wait for YHWH. For the waiting community, suffering is a means to bring about the proper response to YHWH from all Israel. Thus, a disciple's response to the Isaianic catechesis is crucial, just as crucial and decisive in God's sight as obedience (or disobedience) to the Torah, understood as 'the Law' of Moses. Just as they trusted God's servant Moses, the faithful must also trust the word and work of God's prophetic servant(s). Given its Isaianic use, then, the decisive difference between Deuteronomy, FI, and E-N concerning **תורה** is its particular hermeneutical application within a distinct book and for a distinctive design/agenda. **תורה** in FI describes the prophetic words and actions of YHWH's servant and disciples, and taken together, **תורה** and servant-discipleship may facilitate an articulation not only of the coherence of FI but of its canonical integrity vis-à-vis E-N.

### 1.3.3. Method

The task ahead has several dimensions that require careful methodological treatment. Much has already been stated or implied as regards method; yet, I will clarify certain aspects of my approach here. As to my interest in FI's conception of **תורה**, I focus some attention on passages where the term **תורה** appears (1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9; 42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7), assessing its range of meaning in these passages (along with associated terms, concepts, and images) and assessing their contribution to understanding the text of FI as a whole.<sup>216</sup> To avoid distorting its sense and their contribution, I delimit each passage as a linguistic unit<sup>217</sup> and appreciate each unit within the broader horizons of context in the framework of FI perceived as a calculated composition. That is, I handle terms, concepts, and images within properly defined linguistic boundaries and units as parts within the design of a larger whole, discerned by appeal to text-linguistic and literary/rhetorical features. I will argue that **תורה** in these passages does not point to an external corpus or agenda of reforms but contributes to the broader agenda of FI as 'prophetic torah', a separate vision that re-appropriates traditions according to its own intrinsic 'logic'.

Thus, my chief interest is to discover the broad agenda of the text of FI (Sheppard's 'scope' and 'territory of land'), specifically as this bears on the concept of 'torah' in the

<sup>216</sup> Other terms that comprise the lexical and conceptual framework of revelation in FI include דרך ארץ, ישע ישועה, אור, ברית, צדק/צדקה, שפט/משפט, מצות, למד/למדים, אומרה, דבר/דברים, עבד/עבדים, and עבד.

<sup>217</sup> I will observe arguments from signal syntax, changes in subject, “actor” (or character), and other appeals (as relevant) to syntactical, linguistic, structural, and thematic features, which suggest the boundaries of a unit.

document. This effort entails an orderly exegetical methodology that takes care to observe the richness and diversity of the finished form of the prophetic book without privileging as a reading strategy either its later canonical relationship with E-N or the historical reconstruction of Ezra's reforms. The aim is not to discount the contexts in which the text was written or features of the text that indicate its being both a part and product of history ('behind the text')—I am not advocating a synchronic versus diachronic debate.<sup>218</sup> Rather, my approach will be ordered, and so, appropriately limited, because my goal of ascertaining the agenda of FI as an organizational unity requires hearing the prophetic book on its own terms.<sup>219</sup> My aim and focus, therefore, is to surmise the *intentio operis* by taking FI as a received unit of Scripture. Hence, 'FI' doubles as a designation both for the finished form of the text and for the 'model author' as a strategy of its design to communicate to model readers—indeed to recruit and shape disciples for Zion and the service of God. I take up a holistic reading strategy in order to check my conjecture about reading FI as 'torah for disciples' against the text as a coherent whole. Specifically, I will argue that the 'logic' of chs.1-39 and chs.40-55 is carried forward into chs.56-66, where no new occurrences of the noun **תורה** appear. That is, Sweeney's acknowledgement regarding the lack of evidence for a 5<sup>th</sup>-century redactional hand upon the twelve occurrences of the term **תורה** in chs.1-55 not only indicates that the term retains its unique sense in the document's final form, its non-use in chs.56-66 suggests that servant-discipleship and righteous suffering—rather than Ezra's (Mosaic Torah-oriented) reforms—provide the overarching concepts that in FI determine the final shape of the text and its intention for readers in the restoration community.

Accordingly, my hermeneutical goal primarily requires approaches appropriate to the final form of the text (linguistic, literary, and rhetorical) rather than methods chiefly designed to reconstruct the history of its production and composition (source, form, and

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<sup>218</sup> As a contribution to the 'unity school' of scholarship on the book of Isaiah, the thesis addresses a particular stage or phase within the larger interpretive enterprise. It recognizes FI as a text recognized and accepted as such by an ancient community localized within a particular historical situation. The "unity school" refers to scholars pursuing holistic readings based on either a redactional, literary, or an authorial unity. The label comes from Benjamin Sommer, who apparently means this to be pejorative. B. Sommer, "Allusions and Illusions: The Unity of the Book of Isaiah in Light of Deutero-Isaiah's Use of Prophetic Tradition" in *New Visions of Isaiah* (R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney, eds.; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 157.

<sup>219</sup> I by no means regard the historical context as irrelevant to understanding the *intentio operis*. That is, I do not seek to deny the important supplementary role of comparative methods and historical reconstruction or the diachronic methods designed to reconstruct the history of composition—the book of Isaiah is not an 'autonomous text'. It is my aim, however, to give the exegetical priority to the finished form of the book. As Childs explains, "[this priority] is not derived from a higher evaluation of the last level of redaction *per se*, but rather in the entire critical assessment provided by the final form of the text as to what is normative for Israel's faith involving all the different levels" (*Isaiah*, 441). What I am after is this normative construal as it is discovered in the interplay of part and whole throwing light on each other.

redaction criticism).<sup>220</sup> That is, I will read the book exegetically and theologically in order to discern its message to readers in the ongoing circumstances of exile, rather than from the standpoint of either a particular theory of its composition or a sociological theory regarding the motives for its production.<sup>221</sup> Thus, as a holistic interpretation with particular regard for FI's conception of *תורה*, my limited aim is to discover the theological message 'within the text'<sup>222</sup> as this is oriented towards producing, shaping, and guiding a community of servants and disciples.<sup>223</sup> Such a reading should facilitate reassessment of the coherence of FI with E-N, completing the picture without subordinating the prophetic book to the reforming agenda of Ezra or isolating it (as propaganda for Ezra's reforms) from broader questions engaging the future of Israel's story.

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<sup>220</sup> For further reflection on orderly approaches to exegesis, see Eep Talstra, "From the 'Eclipse' to the 'Art' of Biblical Narrative: Reflections on Methods of Biblical Exegesis," in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism: A Symposium in Honor of Adam S. van der Woude* (F. Garcia-Martinez and E. Noort, eds. VTSup; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1-41. There are interesting analogies here to the canonical approach of Brevard S. Childs (cf. Edgar Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets*). See also, C. R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: toward a New Introduction to the Prophets* (STI; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), and the intriguing discussion of Childs's approach in Timothy Ward, *Word and Supplement: Speech Acts, Biblical Texts, and the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 208-97. On the multiplication of methods in OT scholarship, see, e.g., John H. Hayes, ed., *Methods of Biblical Interpretation: Excerpted from the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004) and S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993).

<sup>221</sup> Given the inherent complexity of FI's design, the explication of the *intentio operis* is not only a priority, but also an aid to the further assessment of FI's relationship to E-N. Thus, I will be reading FI as a work oriented towards ancient Israelites temporally located within an 'exilic' situation (i.e., in Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian phases). For a similar theological approach (to Trito-Isaiah), see John Goldingay, "About Third Isaiah..." in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies* (James K. Aitken et al, eds.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 375-89. See also, Childs, *Isaiah*, 444-45.

<sup>222</sup> On the three inseparable dimensions 'behind', 'of/within', and 'in front of' the text, see Anthony Thiselton, "'Behind' and 'In Front of' the Text: Language, Reference and Indeterminacy," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (C. Bartholomew, et al, eds.; SHS 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 97-120.

<sup>223</sup> Isa 8:16, 20; 54:13, 17.

## Chapter 2

### “Let Us Walk in YHWH’s Light”: The Role of Isaianic Torah in Judgment and Salvation

#### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I argue that universal order and peace are contingent upon the quality of Israel’s penitential response to YHWH’s תּוֹרָה (1:10, 27; 2:3, 5). Isaiah 1:10-17, 2:2-4 (2:1-4:6), and 5:18-24 are key passages in the ‘prologue’ to FI (chs.1-5) that express the nature and import of this תּוֹרָה and its relationship to Zion’s circumstances, which are a central concern of the vision (1:1; 2:1).<sup>1</sup> These passages also stress the correlation between Israel’s response to תּוֹרָה and the condition of its international relations. The calling, character, and future of God’s people and the nations are bound up with תּוֹרָה going forth from Zion, the place where YHWH will establish his worldwide reign (2:3, 5). Reading holistically, I support the claim that lasting peace and stability at Zion is postponed for a time after cosmic judgment (2:2-4; 13-23; 24-27).

The document begins with a superscription<sup>2</sup> that introduces the temporal frame for Isaiah’s activity (1:1). With its heart in Zion, 1:2-31 orients the reader to the entire book. Like an overture to a symphony, these verses lay out the basic themes of the piece. A *paraenesis*<sup>3</sup> (1:2-20) meant to prompt repentance precedes a vision of Zion’s restoration and redemption from the perspective of justice-righteousness (מִשְׁפָּט || צְדָקָה, 1:21-31).<sup>4</sup> In the first section, YHWH accuses Israel of iniquity (vv.2-3), admonishing (vv.4-9) and exhorting his corporate ‘son’ directly (vv.10-17). The prophetic instruction (תּוֹרָה, v.10)

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<sup>1</sup> The ideology of Zion involves YHWH’s chosen city and/or his chosen dynasty. According to Daniel Schibler, “God’s rule is not only linked to the idea of him ‘dwelling’ in Zion in some abstract way (Deut 12:11), but also to his ruling there through his representative on earth, the king. In Zion, divine and earthly powers intersect. In the book of Isaiah, they intersect to the point of practically holding the whole book together.” D. Schibler, “Messianism and Messianic Prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33,” in *The Lord’s Anointed* (P. E. Satterthwaite, *et al*; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 94. See also J. Alan Groves, “Zion Traditions” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, ed. B. T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 1019.

<sup>2</sup> A document’s superscription is a concise phrase that constitutes the name of the literary work. According to Marvin Sweeney, “[The] basic function is to identify the work in question so that it may be distinguished from surrounding material” (*Isaiah 1-4*, 27). Superscriptions typically include indicators of the type of literature (חֲזוֹן), author (יְשַׁעְיָהוּ), and date (...בִּימֵי). Other superscriptions in FI include 2:1; 6:1; 7:1; 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 20:1; 20:2; 21:1; 21:11; 21:13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; 36:1; 38:9. There are no further superscriptions after Isa 39.

<sup>3</sup> Sweeney defines paraenesis as an address that seeks to persuade with reference to a goal. It generally combines admonition and exhortation, and frequently includes commands, prohibitions, and instructions (cf. Deut 6-11; Prov 1:8-19; Isa 31). See M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 527.

<sup>4</sup> “Justice-righteousness” refers to the divine project to realize a people upon earth whose right behavior in society corresponds to YHWH’s plan for the cosmic ordering of the world. See J. Gordon McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology: Genesis-Kings* (LHB/OTS 454; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 32, 80.

is followed closely by a final entreaty (vv.18-20), embedded within an appeal for a legal proceeding that includes an offer of forgiveness, contingent upon Israel's repentance. Between this trial (vv.2-20) and the vision and verdict of judgment (vv.21-31), no material intervenes; Israel makes no collective response.

A second superscription (2:1) introduces the programmatic statement of the vision, literally, "the word that Isaiah saw" (הַדְּבָרִי אֲשֶׁר הִזָּה יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ). In 2:2-4 and then in 4:2-6, pictures of salvation appear, this time with intervening material pertaining to YHWH's judgment upon the prideful in Judah and Jerusalem (2:6-4:1). Isa 2:5 is the pivotal verse within this large section, for it summons members of the House of Jacob to "walk in YHWH's light" (נִלְכְּהוּ בְּאוֹרֵי יְהוָה).

Isa 5:1 follows, introducing the 'Song of the Vineyard' (שִׁירַת דּוֹדֵי לְכַרְמִי, vv.1-7), which precedes a series of 'woes' (הוֹי in vv.8, 11, 18, 20, 21, and 22). Chapter 5 concludes with a threat of punishment (vv.24-30), foretelling the imminent distress and darkness that will characterize the coming day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא). The chapter further expounds the iniquity previously mentioned in YHWH's accusation from ch.1. Once again the prophet contends that the people have rejected the word of Israel's Holy One (5:24; cf. 1:10-17; 2:5), and for that reason (עַל־כֵּן, 5:25), YHWH's arm is ready for action. He has raised an ensign (נֵס), signaling the nations to come; indeed, he whistles for their approach—but not to learn הוֹרָה (cf. 2:3). Instead, foreign powers are coming as instruments of YHWH's warfare against Jacob-Israel (vv.26-30). Thus, ch.5 employs a combination of oracle types to portray the unjust, the judgment they face, and the reason they are judged.

Structurally, ch.5 comprises a transition; it continues to expound the iniquity mentioned in ch.1, darkens the dim tone of 2:6-4:1, and casts its ominous shadow over Israel and Judah in chs.6-8 (cf. 5:30). Chapters 6-8, in turn, further the argument of chs.1-5 with specific detail by explicating the general statements regarding YHWH's judgment and by introducing important aspects of the document's profile of Isaiah ben Amoz. Chapter 5 explains that YHWH's decision to bring foreign nations in judgment against Jacob-Israel is just (vv.24-25, cf. v.7), but the reader does not learn until chs.6-8 about either the prophet's task in bringing judgment or the Assyrian empire's role as YHWH's instrument of judgment.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The juxtaposition of chs.1-5 and chs.6-8 (extending into chs.9-12)—the two large opening sections of the book of Isaiah—creates a notional discourse relationship of general statement followed by specific detail. Specific information absent from the first phase (chs.1-5) is gained in the second phase rhetorical elaboration (chs.6-12). Hence, while similar linguistic features, themes, and key words continue beyond

Together then, linguistic and rhetorical features indicate that chs.1 and 5 each introduce larger sections and bookend 2:1-4:6. In fact, the structure and subject matter of these two chapters suggest they provide the broad context for reading 2:1-4:6, embedded between them. Here too, linguistic signals, rhetorical design, and semantic content conspire, revealing to those concerned for Judah and Jerusalem that Israel's rejection of **תורה** entails divine judgment (2:6-4:1). Although they can hope in the vision of peace (2:2-4, 5), judgment has become the inevitable path to its further enjoyment in restoration (4:2-6). If ch.1 supplies the overture to the Isaianic symphony, chs.1-5 provide the prologue to the finished book. The primary focus of the whole pertains to Israel's responsibility to **דבר־יְהוָה** and **תורה** (1:10; 2:3; cf. **אמרה** in 5:24).

Of course, Israel will not be the only nation to experience judgment (cf. 2:9). As the document shows, the path for Israel becomes the path for the world. Judgment will extend to the ends of the earth, affecting all nations (chs.13-23). Indeed, YHWH's cleansing-judgment will be cosmic in scope (chs.24-27), and an analogous justification is offered: the inhabitants of the earth have transgressed **הַתּוֹרָה** (24:5). We must consider what **תורה** the nations have transgressed and Israel has rejected. Further exegesis of the passages mentioned enables a judicious assessment. Within the larger context of chs.1-5, exegesis of 2:2-5 in particular sets the stage for discerning both the present and future of YHWH's plan to magnify **תורה** (cf. 42:21).

## 2.2. *Isaiah 2:2-4, 5 in Context (2:1-4:6)*

The observation of tone and signals of cohesion reveal the macrostructure of 2:1-4:6, which contains visions of Zion's salvation and judgment. A second superscription distinguishes ch.2 from the preceding material. It is widely agreed that 1:1 functions as both the superscription to ch.1 and the title for the document.<sup>6</sup> At one time, 2:1 may have played a similar role, but this superscription does not introduce the entirety of FI, though it

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chs.1-5, connecting 1-5 with 6-12, the two large units are distinct. No call narrative appears until the 1<sup>st</sup>-person account in ch.6, and only chs.7-8 offer a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person narrative profile of the prophet. Isaiah ben Amoz is not introduced as a character until Isa 7:3. Chapters 1-5 mention him in two superscriptions only (1:1; 2:1). Moreover, the precise nature of the threat to Israel is unclear in chs.1-5. In ch.1 and ch.5, the threat arises simply from an unnamed earthly foreign power. The reader is not introduced to either the Syro-Ephraimite coalition or the King of Assyria until ch.7. This generic paraphrase (in chs.1-5) enables these chapters to form the prologue for the finished book, which provides for its thematic development and subsequent detail.

<sup>6</sup> Brevard Childs writes, "In the final literary form of the book of Isaiah, 1:1 now introduces the entire book (Childs, *Isaiah*, 11). So also, e.g., J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 1-39, 175, M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah* 1-39, 63, H. Wildberger, *Isaiah* 1-12, 3, H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah* 1-5, 15.

now appears to cover at least 2:2-4:6.<sup>7</sup> Isa 5:1 begins a new section with a song title and change of person (from 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. sg. to 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg.): “Let me sing...a love song.” Regarding the scope of 2:1, further support comes from internal observations about the form and content of 2:2-5 and 4:2-6. The latter connects to the former by tone and by variation of the phrase, “in that day” (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא), which is paragraph-initial in each unit.

Consequently, 2:2-5 and 4:2-6 function as bookends to the large section of intervening material in 2:6-4:1. Therefore, I consider 2:1 as the introduction to 2:2-4:6 and 5:1 as the opening of a new unit within the prologue.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s definition of tone is relevant to the relationship of units in 2:1-4:6, since tone and linguistic signals of cohesion work in concert to communicate the organization and message of the section. Bakhtin has said that tone is oriented in two directions “with respect to the listener as ally or witness and with respect to the object of the utterance as the third, living participant whom the intonation scolds or caresses, denigrates or magnifies.”<sup>8</sup> Consider, first, the object of the utterance. The tone of the passage is oriented towards Judah and Jerusalem (עַל־יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם, 2:1; 3:1, 8),<sup>9</sup> though its import extends to all humanity. In 2:6-4:1, the tone is uniformly negative and critical (cf. 5:1-30); judgment statements are made and utterances are to be fulfilled ‘in that day’ (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא). Judgment is required because all humanity (אָדָם || אַנְשִׁים, v.11a) has disregarded YHWH (2:11, 12, 17, 22, and 3:16). More concretely, the people are guilty of idolatry, arrogance, and pride in relation to domestic affairs (5:8). For failure to love their God and neighbor in society (1:4, 17), the prideful and self-reliant will be brought low with the result that ‘in that day’ YHWH alone will be exalted (וְנִשְׁגַּב יְהוָה לְבַדּוֹ, 2:11b). In contrast with the negative picture in 2:6-4:1, the tone is positive in 2:2-4 and 4:2-6; in these two units, Zion is portrayed in its glory. Two positive sections (2:2-4; 4:2-6)

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the superscription covers more than 2:2-4, and it may cover as much as chs.2-12. Support for this conclusion is based on observations such as the continued development of themes (e.g., darkness and light, pride and arrogance, exaltation, and the corporate responsibility of leaders), the repetition of the key terms or phrases (e.g., בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) beyond ch.4 (5:30; 7:18, 20, 21, 23; 10:20; 27; 11:10, 11; 12:1, 4), the affinity between 2:6 and 9:14 regarding unlawful means for divining the future, and the ‘spirit of burning’ in 4:4, explicated by 9:17ff. If this is so, 5:1 and 7:1 must be understood as introducing subunits within the final arrangement of chs.2-12. For the idea that (instead of ch.4) ch.12 may be the outer limit, and for a list of the various options, see Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 163.

<sup>8</sup> From “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art,” in *Bakhtin’s Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, transl. 1976), cited in M. H. Abrams and G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 227.

<sup>9</sup> The order may be significant, and arguments for the date of FI are made based on the same order for the phrase “Judah and Jerusalem” in Persian phase literature (e.g., 2 Chr 11:14; 20:17; 24:6, 8; Ezra 9:9; 10:7). The reverse order appears internally: compare 1:1; 2:1 with 3:1, 8; 5:3; 22:21. J. Blenkinsopp suggests that the order in the superscription suggests a Second Temple date, but the order internal to the Isaianic sayings may be taken to be of earlier date. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 175; cf. M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 71, who cites D. Jones, “The Tradition of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem,” ZAW 67 (1955): 226-46, as originally making this observation.



envisioning a day of glory and salvation for Zion envelop this negative section (2:6-4:1). The initial appraisal of tone indicates that Zion's inhabitants face a choice between blessing (2:2-4) and judgment (2:6-4:1).

Second, Bakhtin says that tone is oriented towards addressees or 'listeners', which 2:5 identifies as the House of Jacob (בֵּית יַעֲקֹב), although I contend that vv.6-9 are not addressed to them but to YHWH. Aside from this brief unit, the section is geared towards the former group (vv.5-6a), which is expressly exhorted to participate in the activity portrayed in the preceding section (vv.2-5). In other words, as 'witnesses' of the prophet's vision this audience is expected not only to heed YHWH's word but to become YHWH's allies. To this end, a voice summons the House of Jacob to walk in YHWH's light (v.5).

Corresponding to the tone of each unit, the phrase 'in that day' is significant for understanding the relation of form and content in 2:1-4:6. In 4:2-6, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא is paragraph-initial (cf. 12:1); in 2:2, its phrasal counterpart, בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, appears as paragraph-initial too. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא also appears in the larger 'negative' section (2:6-4:1; cf. 5:30), but there it is a formula to conclude smaller segments (2:11 and 17, an *inclusio*; 2:20; 3:7, 18; 4:1; cf. 5:30). Thus, linguistic features coincide with tonal content as attention shifts from positive to negative and back to positive. The section opens by focusing attention on the exaltation of Zion (2:2-4), shifts to the judgment of the people, the cities of Judah, and Jerusalem itself (2:6-4:1), and then returns to Zion again, portrayed magnificently in the vision of 4:2-6. In each occurrence where the tone is positive (2:2-4; 4:2-6), בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא (or its phrasal counterpart) is paragraph-initial; in the larger section that communicates a negative tone (2:6-4:1), בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא tends to appear at paragraph-end. Isa 5:1 marks a new section, shifting from the vision of salvation (4:2-6) to song (שִׁירָה), and the discourse changes from 3<sup>rd</sup>-person (4:2-6) to 1<sup>st</sup>-person (5:1). The macrostructure of 2:1-4:6, therefore, appears straightforward.

Delimiting the closing boundary of the first unit after the superscription (2:1) is more difficult than perceiving overall structure. The first unit begins neatly at 2:2 (וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים), but does the next unit begin at v.5 or v.6? That is, does v.5 close the first unit or open the second? The Masoretes marked an open paragraph division (פְּתוּחָה/פ) after v.4, and this supports the view that the vision-proper ends at that verse. This decision may be further supported by observation of the transition from a sequence of *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* forms within the future oriented vision (vv.2-4) to the imperative (לֵכוּ),

introducing a present exhortation in v.5.<sup>10</sup> This syntactical distinction corresponds to a difference in both participants and speaker; that is, there is a pronounced shift from an account of the speech and actions of the nations (vv.2-4, עמים רבים || כל־הגוים) to the prophetic speech in v.5, exhorting the House of Jacob to take action. Verse 3 embeds the direct speech of the nations within the future-oriented vision, but v.5 is set apart from the preceding vision. In v.5, a new address comes to the House of Jacob, from either the prophet or another voice (notice the 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.).<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, cohesive features suggest 2:5 may function as the conclusion to vv.2-4. Parallel vocabulary and syntax link the verse with the preceding unit. The verb הֵלַךְ in 2:3 is repeated in 2:5, and each occurrence initiates an imperatival sequence.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the construction of v.5 is virtually identical to v.3:

אל־הַר־יְהוָה	לכו ונעלה	2:3
אל־בית אלהי יעקב...		
בארחתיו ...	ונלכה	
יעקב	בית	2:5
באר יהוה:	לכו ונלכה	

The foreign nations and the House of Jacob are summoned similarly, and the formal resemblance prompts the reader to consider their relationship. In v.3 the nations speak, saying, “Come, let us go up to YHWH’s Mountain,” a destination they further identify as the “House of the God of Jacob.” In v.5, the 1<sup>st</sup>-person plural appears again (cf. 1:9), but it is some representative speaker—not the nations, but the prophet Isaiah (or another voice)—who exhorts the House of Jacob, saying, “Come, let us walk in the light of YHWH.” Repetition of vocabulary and syntax draws a positive parallel between the two exhortations, first for the nations to go up (עָלָה) to the House of the God of Jacob (YHWH’s Mountain), and then for the House of Jacob (YHWH’s people)<sup>13</sup> to “walk” accordingly (הֵלַךְ, v.5). Verse 5 makes its present-time appeal to the House of Jacob in

<sup>10</sup> See v.10, where an impv. [בוא] starts a new subsection.

<sup>11</sup> Baruch Schwartz thinks it comes from Isaiah ben Amoz himself. See B. Schwartz, “Torah from Zion: Isaiah’s Temple Vision (Isaiah 2:1-4)” in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (A. Houtman, M. J. H. M Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz, eds.; JCPS 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 11-26. For the view that it should be ascribed to DI, see (e.g.) H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 150. Sweeney argues for a date in the Persian period (*Isaiah 1-39*, 95-96). Gene Tucker observes that evidence for the date and authorship of this passage (2:2-5) is inconclusive. See G. M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39* (NIB; Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 66.

<sup>12</sup> Impv. + waw conjunctive + pl. cohortative.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Wildberger comments correctly that when God’s people are referred to as the ‘House of Jacob’, it is intended as a way to show the correlation between themselves and the ‘God of Jacob’. YHWH is the God who has chosen Jacob-Israel for his people. See Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12* (BKAT 10/1: Neukirchener-Verlag, 1972), 87.

light of the preceding vision regarding the nations (vv.2-4); therefore, it closes the unit by providing an indirect command for Israel to walk in YHWH's light (בְּאֹר יְהוָה v.5 || בְּאֹרְהֶיּוּ v.3). The result is that together vv.2-4, 5 make their primary address to Jacob-Israel, and the parallel with v.3 suggests that v.5 summons Israel to walk the path on which light from YHWH's revelation shines.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, v.5 is a transitional element; it is closely related to vv.6-9 and subsequent sections of 2:1-4:6. In v.6a, the phrase 'House of Jacob' from v.5 appears again, taking up its designation for the collective entity 'us' (also from v.5).<sup>15</sup> This time the group is further identified as 'your people' (עַמְךָ), the most likely antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person plural in the next verse (מִלְאוּ, v.7).

בית יעקב		2:5
בְּאֹר יְהוָה:	לכו ונלכה	
עמך בית יעקב	כי נמשתה	2:6ab $\alpha$
	כי מלאו	

Unlike v.5, in vv.6-9 the speaker does not primarily address the people but YHWH.

This exegetical conclusion turns on the view that the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person in both 2:6a and 2:9b points to YHWH and that these two clauses (2:6a, 9b) form an *inclusio* around vv.6b-9a.<sup>16</sup> Like v.5, vv.6b-9a continue to refer to the people, yet they do so indirectly (in the

<sup>14</sup> Geza Vermes thinks תּוֹרָה is the light that illumines the path Jacob must walk. See G. Vermes, "The Torah is Light" *VT* 8 (1958): 436-38. Perhaps this simply means that they must learn from the vision, but more will be said below.

<sup>15</sup> Compare 2:3, where House of Jacob designates a place.

<sup>16</sup> The problem here is that "House of Jacob" can be taken as either appositional or vocative after the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person singular verb. The latter (vocative) may be understood in two ways: (1) the second person figure is distinguished from the people—"You have forsaken your people, O House of Jacob"—or, perhaps, (2) the House of Jacob has forsaken its own ancestral customs—"You have forsaken the ways of your people, O House of Jacob" [NJPS]. The second of these two options is ruled out by the shift from second person to third person; if correct it would be more natural to read: "for [כִּי] you [2<sup>nd</sup> per. sg. or pl.] are full of eastern practices." If the first option were correct, then the House of Jacob might refer to the leaders only: it is due to failure in the corporate responsibility of its leaders that the people as a whole suffer. The fact that a distinction between the people and their leaders is in view may be sustained by observation of 3:1-4:1 (see 3:12, "your leaders are misleaders" [NJPS]; cf. 3:15; 1:23-26). The verses immediately following 2:6a, then, would not comprise a list of the people's infractions but those of their leaders (or rulers). If this is so, then 2:9 (וְאַל־תִּשָּׂא לָהֶם) may constitute a cautionary note against paying regard to such leaders (cf. v.22, rhetorically, כִּי־בִמְהֵרָה נִחְשָׁב הוּא). Nevertheless, the more immediate context does not *narrow* the referent but *broadens* it to "humanity" in general (see אֲדָם || אִשָּׁה in v.9). The effect of this broadening is that 'people' in v.6a refers to a collective entity (cf. 9:15-16). Even if the problem started 'at the top' with Israel's leaders, Israel is taken as a corporate whole; the context shows that the common 'people' cannot be separated from its leaders. In fact, the corporate community is behaving as a people that do not know YHWH (1:3); that is, they do not behave like collective Israel, but like collective humanity. As a collective entity, then, this 'people' are far from innocent. These observations point to the former (appositional) view that 'House of Jacob' is in apposition with 'people' and that YHWH is the subject of 2:6a: "You, YHWH, have forsaken your people, identified with the House of Jacob." This view finds support in v.9b, if YHWH is also the subject of that verse. And indeed, as the context shows, YHWH is the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure in both verses. No other referent will do.

3<sup>rd</sup>-per.), explaining why (״, v.6b) they have been forsaken (שׁוּׁ, v.6a) by God. The series of 3<sup>rd</sup>-person utterances sets up and justifies the petition in v.9b that God *not* “forgive/exalt” (שׁוּׁ) them.<sup>17</sup> God forsakes them because they have trusted in human schemes and expressions of power (cf. v.22). A particular reason (implied here) is their failure to heed the prophetic word; they resort to diviners and soothsayers (2:6b; 9:14).<sup>18</sup> Then 3<sup>rd</sup>-person pronouns in 2:7-8 (וְהֵם, 3x) point to their amassing of wealth, horses, and chariots—typical expressions of economic and military power (v.7; 39:2; cf. Deut 17:14-17). The House of Jacob is guilty, not only of disregarding YHWH’s word, but of making and worshiping idols (Isa 2:8). God has forsaken his people because they do these wicked things.

In 2:9b the speaker addresses the same figure again, this time with a negated jussive (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. sg. + לֹא): “Do not exalt them” (וְאַל-תִּשָּׂא לָהֶם). Here it is most natural to see the referent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person plural (לָהֶם) as collective ‘humanity’ (שׂוֹׁ || ׀ ׀), described on the same line as humbled and abased (v.9a, שָׁפַל || שָׁחָה). Indeed, the broadening takes place because the House of Jacob is walking in the way of impious humanity (v.6b). Therefore, this large section (2:6-4:1) once again draws a parallel between two groups, namely, the nations (|| many people-groups) and the House of Jacob (v.5 || v.6; cf. 2:2). Here, however, joining the walk of the international community is not positive but negative; yet, this is just what the ‘House of Jacob’ has done. Therefore, due to its proud pursuits, the people deserve the fate of self-exultant humanity (2:12). The speaker—recognizing that only YHWH is exalted (cf. 6:1), indeed, that YHWH sets himself against all self-exalting humanity—implores YHWH, “Neither exalt nor forgive them” (v.9b).<sup>19</sup>

In sum, YHWH’s people are to heed the prophetic word (דְּבַר) concerning Judah and Jerusalem (2:1). In 2:2-4 the object of the utterance is Zion and the nations, but it is

<sup>17</sup> In the context, שׁוּׁ can mean “lift up” (or “exalt”); it can also mean “forgive” (Isa 33:24; cf. Exod 34:6-7).

<sup>18</sup> See Deut 18:9-14; 1 Sam 15:22-23; 28; 2 Kgs 17:7-24; 21:10.

<sup>19</sup> This lexical choice (שׁוּׁ) expresses a double entendre. The writer demands from YHWH that no one like this—not even ‘your people’ (|| ‘the House of Jacob’)—should be forgiven or exalted. Hence, vv.6-9 address YHWH, and the plural pronominal suffix (לָהֶם) in v.9b reflects back to an antecedent in the context before v.9a, contracting its gaze from all humanity (in v.9a) to “your people” (|| “House of Jacob”) in v.6a. The point is that the behavior of God’s people cannot be distinguished from humanity around them; for this reason, they will share humanity’s judgment, like them their behavior does not warrant forgiveness/exaltation (שׁוּׁ). As J. A. Alexander writes, “...the verb in the last clause would suggest of course to a Jewish reader the twofold idea of pardoning and lifting up. They who bowed themselves to idols should be bowed down by the mighty hand of God, instead of being raised up from their willful self-abasement by the pardon of their sins.” See Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah* (1867; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 99.

difficult to identify the primary addressee. In 2:5, the object of the utterance and the primary addressee come together, targeting the House of Jacob or YHWH's people understood as a collective entity. In 2:6-9 (with 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. in v.6a and v.9b), the House of Jacob remains the object of utterance, but the primary addressee shifts to YHWH. It is as if the prophet becomes their accuser before the heavenly tribunal (cf. 1:2). A review of their actions exposes them as a people whose sins manifest their rejection of the prophetic word. Considering this failure, it becomes the prophet's view that YHWH must judge them rather than forgive/exalt them. In their ignorance of the true way, they have followed the idolatrous path of self-reliant humanity; since they have become guilty and polluted, God has justifiably forsaken them (v.6a). Indeed, in 2:6-4:1, the audience begins to learn that YHWH's judgment will be as extensive as YHWH's promise in 2:2-4. Although 2:10-22 (cf. v.9a) suggests that just retribution will affect all humanity—that YHWH alone shall be exalted 'in that day' (cf. 2:11, 17; 6:1)—the prophet's gaze contracts again to focus upon Judah, Jerusalem (3:1-15), and the women of Zion (3:16-4:1).

On this reading, 2:5 belongs with 2:2-4 as a present exhortation to the House of Jacob to respond to the future-oriented vision by walking in YHWH's light. The subsequent context (2:6-4:1), however, contrasts directly with that light. Hence, 2:6-4:1 draws a distinction with 2:2-4, 5, as ominous clouds swiftly form (cf. 5:30; 8:22-23). This distinction with the shift in audience (from Jacob in v.5 to YHWH in vv.6-9) helps to sustain the view that 2:5 closes the first unit (vv.2-4). Yet, 2:5 also provides a neat transition to vv.6-9, where the topic of the speaker's address is YHWH's people (|| the House of Jacob). In relation to the exhortation in 2:5, then, 2:6-4:1 declares that the House of Jacob has not heeded the prophetic word. Having rejected Zion's light, the people exchange the prophetic word for that of soothsayers and diviners. Such a response can only bring the darkness of judgment. In a new section, 2:10 addresses this people again, this time with a double imperative, as they are actually exhorted to enter (בָּרָא) dark places and hide themselves (נִפְּאָל *nip'al*) from YHWH's threatening presence (vv.19-22). Instead of clouds disbanding to reveal the bright shining of day, storm clouds form to cloak the world in darkness. Those clouds carry the curse of suffering and humiliation from Israel's land and society (3:1-4:1; 5:1-30) to the ends of the earth (2:9).

Having thus distinguished v.5 from vv.6-9 (2:6-4:1), I will ask about the import of 2:2-4, and just how, specifically, 2:5 relates to the vision of תִּוְרָה from Zion in 2:2-4. From the analysis above, it already appears that the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem will share either blessing (2:2-4) or curse (2:6-4:1). They would experience judgment chiefly for hubris (pride or self-exaltation)—a trait that characterizes humanity collectively

(cf. 2:9, 11; 5:15-16). This judgment would extend to all nations; yet, due to its failure to heed the prophetic word, particular judgment would begin at the House of Jacob. If this is a sufficient consequence of reading 2:5 in relation to 2:6-4:1, where does it leave the vision in 2:2-4?

### 2.2.1. The Concept of 'Days' in Final-Isaiah

Isaiah 2:2-4, 5 is the programmatic vision of FI, a picture of Zion's exaltation. It is designed to motivate Israel to trust and obey YHWH. Together with 2:6-4:1 and 4:2-6, chs.2-4 as a whole demonstrate that YHWH creates both light and darkness; Israel's Holy One brings both weal and woe (cf. 45:7). Although the true God may wound and heal (cf. Deut 32:39), his sovereignty is never uncertain. However, Jacob-Israel's response is uncertain. In this word concerning Zion (Isa 2:1-2), vision and exhortation converge, showing that YHWH's ultimate purpose will be fulfilled contingently. Thus, the relationship between vision and exhortation in 2:2-4 and 2:5 sets up and clarifies the link between Israel's response and Zion's station. The question posed by the document's programmatic vision and addressed in the broader context is whether Jacob-Israel will be loyal to the prophetic word.<sup>20</sup>

The superscription in 2:1 specifies what follows as Isaiah's word of revelation (הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר חִזָּה יְשַׁעְיָהוּ) concerning Judah and Jerusalem (cf. 1:1). After the superscription, the first unit begins with a temporal clause (וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים). Clause-initial וְהָיָה functions macro-syntactically to introduce the vision as a distinct unit (vv.2-5).<sup>21</sup> The temporal clause may be linked back to the superscription by the implicit subject of וְהָיָה, namely 'it' (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.), which has "the word" (הַדְּבָרִים masc. sg., 2:1) for its antecedent. Isaiah's דְּבָרִים is principally concerned with a future situation that will transpire בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים. This observation is significant for the claim that this future-oriented word is the document's programmatic vision. Indeed, the macrostructure of chs.1-39, according to the placement of its superscriptions (e.g., 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 6:1; 7:1; 14:28; 36:1; 39:1), points to the vision's import for understanding FI's concept of history, or 'the days' (הַיָּמִים) circumscribed by the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (1:1). Closely related to this concept is the movement of the document in transitions from the Syro-Ephraimite threat to phases of Assyrian and Babylonian judgment.

<sup>20</sup> Isa 1:10; 2:3, 6; 5:24; 7:9; 8:11-15, 16-20; cf. Deut 28:1.

<sup>21</sup> That is, the phrase וְהָיָה is not merely clause-initial but paragraph-initial, functioning above the level of the clause. Here it has a deictic temporal function, signifying events unfolding in future time (lit., "It will be...") (IBHS, 539, and see Joüon 119c; GKC 112y; cf. Isa 14:3-4; Gen 9:14; Hos 2:1).

In a fascinating study, Archibald van Wieringen observed that the sequence of time-units in the superscriptions is *not* so much connected with this *Umwelt*—or the broader milieu of each phase of judgment—but with the text-internal sequence of the days of Judah’s kings.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the macrostructure (signaled text-linguistically) is designed to express FI’s intention regarding ‘the days’. Van Wieringen shows that after 1:1 has introduced FI’s ‘king list’ within the title of the document, chs.1-39 present the kings mentioned in sequence. Uzziah’s death (6:1) introduces the time of Jotham, which is rapidly followed by Ahaz’s time (7:1); Ahaz’s death (14:28) is followed by Hezekiah’s time, which runs to Hezekiah’s fourteenth year (14:28-38:5; cf. 36:1), and continues with his fifteen-year ‘bonus’ (38:5), introducing the transition from Assyrian to Babylonian judgment.<sup>23</sup> Van Wieringen observes that if the entire vision concerns Judah and Jerusalem (1:1; 2:1) “in the days of [these] kings of Judah,”<sup>24</sup> the expression **בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים** raises a question regarding the relationship between what Isaiah saw (**חִזֹּן**) regarding this moment (**בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים**) and the days summed up in 1:1.<sup>25</sup>

Linguistic design suggests a correlation between the vision **בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים** (2:2-4) and the subsequent visions **בְּיוֹם הַהוּא** within 2:6-4:6.<sup>26</sup> Each unit after 2:2-5 is presented as an oracle concerning a future time, namely, YHWH’s ‘day’. Isa 2:6-4:1 affirms that Zion will be cleansed by means of various judgments ‘in that day’; 4:2-6 proclaims that ‘in that day’ purified Zion will be a magnificent refuge for the people of God. Though these two units are juxtaposed, it may be difficult to conceive of God’s ‘day’ of judgment and God’s ‘day’ of salvation as a single day.<sup>27</sup> If a sequence is intended, its message would be that judgment precedes restoration, though it may be more

<sup>22</sup> A. van Wieringen, “The Day Beyond the Days: Isaiah 2:2 within the Framework of the Book of Isaiah” in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy* (F. Potsma, K. Spronk, and E. Talstra, eds.; Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker, 2002), 253.

<sup>23</sup> Although Hezekiah’s death is not mentioned explicitly, van Wieringen points out that mention of his sons in 39:7 suggests that the days announced in ch.39 are beyond the remaining days of Hezekiah (cf. 38:5). See A. van Wieringen, “The Day Beyond the Days,” 255. Thus, the absence of both superscriptions and mention of Isaiah in chs.40-66 suggests that chs.40-66 as a whole concerns ‘days beyond the days’ of Judah’s kings. The Babylonian judgment is present between chs.39 and 40 in the form of an ellipse. The word of consolation, therefore, concerns a time after judgment (Isa 40:8). He writes, “The text of Isaiah 40-66, therefore, transcends the heading in Isaiah 1:1 and is accordingly not determined by 1:1” (van Wieringen, “The Day Beyond the Days,” 255).

<sup>24</sup> 1:1. **בְּיָמֵי עֲזִיָּהוּ יוֹתָם אַחֲזֵי יְחֻקֵּיהֶם מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה**.

<sup>25</sup> A. van Wieringen, “The Day Beyond the Days,” 253.

<sup>26</sup> Compare its use in ch.5 and chs.7-12.

<sup>27</sup> David Petersen explains that the day of YHWH “draw[s] upon an Israelite tradition about a dramatic moment when YHWH will establish himself as true king, often in a military manner.” See D. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 170. It is a frequent motif in Isaiah (cf. 13:6; 22:5) and is also present throughout the Twelve (Hos 9:5; Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18-20; Obad 15; Mic 2:4; Hab 3:16; Zeph 1:7-16; Hag 2:23; Zeph 14:1; Mal 4:1, 5). See R. Rendtorff, “Alas for the Day! The ‘Day of the Lord’ in the Book of the Twelve,” in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (T. Linfeldt and T. K. Beale, eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 186-97.

appropriate to see the day of judgment and salvation as parallel or correlative ‘days’,<sup>28</sup> since cohesive features imply that both oracles of judgment (2:6-4:1) and the closing oracle of salvation (4:2-6) bear a significant relationship to the vision in 2:2-5. From the fact that 2:6-4:1 depicts various judgments and 4:2-6 portrays the restored magnificence of Zion ‘in that day’, it appears that their relationship may also be temporal. By means of the paragraph-initial phrase, בַּחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, the vision of Zion’s situation offered in 2:2-4 is projected into an indefinite future time. That transcendent time is hereby designated ‘days beyond that day’. Although this need not refer to the eschatological time or ‘the last days’ (ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, LXX; NASB; NLT)—for the term חֲרִית itself may simply refer to “that which comes after”—it does at least refer to a new beginning.<sup>29</sup> That is, God’s new ‘day’ is “a time of peace rather than war.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, according to the use of the phrase in 2:2, a better translation of the temporal clause may be, “After the days to come.”

If this is correct, it appears that Judah and Jerusalem will only be prepared for the vision’s realization after the day-complex of 2:6-4:1; that is, it must wait for a day beyond ‘that day’, not only after the day of cleansing judgment (2:6-4:1), but after Zion’s radiance is restored (4:2-6). A new day may dawn for Zion (2:2-4), but only after ‘the day’ of God’s judgment-and-salvation (2:6-4:1; 4:2-6),<sup>31</sup> for only then is the fulfillment of 2:2-4 possible (cf. 8:23; 60:1-3).<sup>32</sup> Put differently, while 2:2-4 holds FI’s programmatic vision aloft before the implicit audience, the fulfillment of this vision may not be anticipated *until*

<sup>28</sup> Childs says that ‘in that day’ (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) is “God’s time of eschatological judgment and salvation” and the initial phrase in 2:2-4 establishes the text’s context as eschatological (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 28, 35).

<sup>29</sup> Thus, I agree with Williamson that חֲרִית does not necessarily have eschatological force (cf. LXX ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις). See Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 179. It may be understood either temporally (the following time) or logically (indicating a result or outcome).

<sup>30</sup> J. Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBC 13; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 44.

<sup>31</sup> C. R. Seitz includes 4:2-6 with 2:1-5 among the expectations for life after judgment. While I agree with his assessment of these units vis-à-vis 2:6-4:1, the formula ‘in that day’ in 4:2 draws 4:2-6 closer to the word of judgment (cf. 4:1), distinguishing 4:2-6 from 2:2-4. The promise of universal peace in 2:2-4 is set out for a time after the judgment in 2:6-4:1 has become a memory, though the vision of restoration in 4:2-6 suggests that soon after judgment the stage will be set for its fulfillment. See his summary of chapters 1-4 in Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 43.

<sup>32</sup> The noun חֲרִית does not appear again until 41:22, but the adjective (אַחֲרָיו, “after”, cf. NRSV, “the latter time” [עֵת]) appears at 8:23, where it is marked (+ art.) to connect it with the phrase בַּעֲתֵּי הָרִאשׁוֹן (“as the former time”). The context also mentions nations (גּוֹיִם), and observes a movement from darkness to light (אֹרֶךְ יְמֵי, 9:1), thereby suggesting an intra-textual relationship with 2:2-5. The implications that flow from that context as regards the contrast of former (הָרִאשׁוֹן) and latter (הָאַחֲרֵי) times will be explored in the next chapter.



some ‘day/time’ after the days of 2:6-4:1 and 4:2-6. After those days to come, Zion will become a place of peace and justice for all nations.<sup>33</sup>

The internally coherent messages of 2:2-4 and 4:2-6 thus become vital. I begin with 4:2-6, and then return to 2:2-4 to consider the role that 2:5 shoulders at the close of the programmatic vision. Isa 4:2-6 brings to rest the large section comprising chs.2-4; both their positive tone and their paragraph-initial ‘days’ indicate that 2:2-4 and 4:2-6 bookend the intervening judgment section (2:6-4:1).<sup>34</sup> But how, specifically, does 4:2-6 relate to the immediately preceding judgment section and to the exalted vision regarding *תורה* and *אור* in 2:2-5?

### 2.2.2. *Isaiah 4:2-6*

The reader cannot help but compare 4:2-6 with the former ‘day of God’s judgment’; the contrasting tone and connections with 2:6-4:1 are unmistakable. Its language is highly-charged theologically, for it portrays a glorious and satisfying future for Zion tantamount to the full reversal of her unholy and unsatisfactory present. In fact, for the first time since 2:2 “that day” is *not* bad news.<sup>35</sup> Isa 4:2-6 heralds good news for the ‘Israel’ YHWH has graciously spared (*פֶּלִיטָה*, v.2). “That day” not only promises that the inhabitants left in Zion will be called “holy” (*קִדְוָה*, subst., v.3), with their names inscribed for life, but that they will enjoy the sovereign care and protection of Israel’s “Holy One.” Isa 4:5-6 guarantees this protection in comforting words that evoke YHWH’s former work of redemptive-recreation in the exodus. Thus, 4:2-6 pictures Zion as a place of safety and security for the remnant of Israel; it offers a portrait of the holy God dwelling in a holy place with a holy people.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, safety and a new beginning are not the only things promised to these survivors after judgment. Echoing themes from 1:2-20, 21-31, and 2:6-4:1,<sup>37</sup> 4:2-6 casts a vision of *that day* when YHWH will have purified Zion by smelting away her dross and removing

<sup>33</sup> The title of van Wieringen’s article contains both his translation and his thesis: “The Day Beyond the Days,” 253.

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 4 also holds significant intra-textual and thematic connections with chapter one.

<sup>35</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 203.

<sup>36</sup> The order is significant, Holy One of Israel, holy Zion, and holy people. YHWH cannot dwell with an iniquitous assembly (1:13), but as B. Schwartz points out, the “*sine qua non* for a location to be considered sacred is the abiding presence of the God of Israel there” (“Torah from Zion,” 11). Likewise, Zion’s holiness and the people’s holiness are inseparable (Isa 61). Indeed, this has relevance not only for the Isaianic vision of new exodus but also for new creation. The triad is discussed by Gordon Thomas, “A Holy God Among a Holy People in a Holy Place: The Enduring Eschatological Hope of the Scriptures,” in *The Reader must understand’: Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliot, eds.; Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 33-46.

<sup>37</sup> Chapter 4 is a significant nodal unit in Isa 2-4, echoing themes from Isa 1:1-4:1. These themes include ‘remnant’, ‘exaltation’ of Zion, ‘cleansing’ related to ‘judgment’, creation, exodus, glory, and protection.

her alloy (4:4; 1:24-26). In that day, she will be filled with survivors, but not until (‘when’ **כִּשְׁ**, 4:4a) YHWH has cleansed Jerusalem’s bloodstains (**דָּמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם** v.4b; cf. 1:15, 18). In that day, Zion’s holy ones will eat the fruit of the land (4:2; 1:19), but not until (**כִּשְׁ**) YHWH has washed the filth from her daughters (3:16-4:1; cf. 1:16). The wounding of cleansing-judgment precedes the healing of restoration; indeed, the former path opens the way to the latter. Thus, Zion’s restoration is the goal of judgment, as God’s ‘day’ of judgment and God’s ‘time’ of salvation come together as means to an end.

Therefore, in 4:2 the phrase “in that day” sets the good news alongside the bad news of 2:6-4:1. It tells Zion that despite the inevitability of judgment, her lamentable present estate will not remain her experience forever. Whereas 1:8 had portrayed fair-Zion ravaged and isolated—“as a shelter [**בִּסְכֵּה**] in a vineyard”—4:2-6 paints a rainbow of hope upon the horizon, beyond ‘that day’ of cleansing judgment. As a result, Zion’s exalted counterpart will rise up, resplendent and glorious, a symbol of stability and peace, for over all her assembly YHWH will erect a canopy for protection, a shelter (**סִכָּה**) from heat and soaking rain.

Thus, 2:6-4:1 and 4:2-6, though distinct, represent an event-complex regarding ‘that day’. The outcome envisaged in 2:6-4:1 and 4:2-6 assumes the inevitability of YHWH’s judgment for Zion’s purification. These two units therefore relate back to 2:2-4 as preparation for the realization of FI’s programmatic vision; they establish “the necessary conditions that will attract the nations in the first place.”<sup>38</sup> The vision of 2:2-4 cannot be realized until the ‘time’ after the coming ‘day’ of purification and restoration; hence, its fulfillment is an outcome that is projected onto a horizon beyond ‘that day’. The vision’s consummation, therefore, presumes the Isaianic movement from judgment to consolation. ‘That day’, explicated in 2:6-4:6, is an historical complex of days inclusive of the reigns of each king mentioned in the superscriptions of chs.1-39. It points to the period circumscribed by the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (1:1), or the time of Isaiah’s prophetic service. For the realization of God’s purpose in refashioning Zion for her role as the center of his universal reign—faithful, righteous, inviolable, a symbol of worldwide security and peace, and a cosmopolitan city—this complex of ‘days’ is necessary.

### 2.2.3. *Isaiah 2:2-5*

Why must fulfillment of this magnificent vision await the coming of God’s ‘day’ of judgment-salvation? Parts of an answer are coming together, but to tackle these questions

<sup>38</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 309.

adequately, the role of 2:2-5 (and v.5 in particular) must be examined.<sup>39</sup> What is the aim of this prophecy, and what role or responsibility, if any, does Israel bear for its fulfillment?

Isa 2:2-5, rather than referring to a present time, broadens the horizon of the document's total vision to include a period after the reigns of the kings listed in the superscription. Put simply, 2:2 concerns a time after judgment, a 'day' when the Assyrian and Babylonian judgments (39:6-7) may be forgotten (cf. 40:1-2).

This is not to say that the vision suddenly lacks interest in Judah and Jerusalem (2:1); instead, it functions to highlight YHWH's paramount concern, observed throughout chs.1-5, which is to establish his worldwide reign from Zion (2:3).<sup>40</sup> The most significant feature of 2:2-5, however, is not its focus on Zion, but its focus upon **בְּרִייתֵי יְהוָה** and **תִּוְרָה** (2:3). Several features of the vision clear the stage, so to speak, and contribute to this view of what is most critical to FI's programmatic vision and the administration of God's reign.

The apparent absence of the nation or the king enhances the central focus of this 'Zion'-vision: neither Jacob-Israel nor David is mentioned. Jerusalem is both YHWH's city and David's city, the capital of Judah (and formerly of united Israel), but in the immediate context, YHWH is the only monarch on the scene. No earthly dynast appears in Zion; neither ruler nor common Israelite inhabits Jerusalem. Whatever memory there is either of David (and descendants) or of Jacob (and descendants) only surfaces in two phrases, "house of YHWH" (v.2; cf. 2 Sam 7:13), and its parallel, "house of the God of Jacob" (Isa 2:3).<sup>41</sup> The 'house' is YHWH's house and the 'kingdom' is YHWH's kingdom (cf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. in 1 Chron 17:14), but there is no mention here of David's descendants (Isa 1:1; cf. 2:1). If isolated, then, this vision would offer only a faint recollection of Jacob-Israel's presence or existence. In fact, the only nations that approach YHWH's house are *gentile* nations—**הַגִּוִּיִּם** (v.2).

<sup>39</sup> Concerning the parallel in Micah, Ehud Ben Zvi notes that the situation points to the effort made by the literati responsible for these books to provide each of them with a particular character even if they worked with sources. His observations concerning the Micah passage can be modified with profit for readers of Isaiah: First, "the intended readership of the book of [Isaiah] is not asked to read [Isa 2:2-4] as a non-[Isaianic], or [Mican], passage; second, [2:2-4] is certainly an ["Isaianic"] text in the sense that it is integral to the book, that it fits its immediate (broader) textual environment, and that it clearly communicates a sense of coherence within the larger set of readings in chs.[2-4]." See Ben Zvi, *Micah* (FOTL 21B; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 103. Childs suggests that the passage predated both prophets and was accommodated by each collection in a slightly different form (Childs, *Isaiah*, 28). According to Sweeney, the result is that the two passages present two sides of an inter-textual debate. See M. A. Sweeney, "Micah's Debate with Isaiah," *JSOT* 93 (2001): 111-24.

<sup>40</sup> Willem Beuken writes, "...Zion is construed as a city whose vicissitudes form a major thread throughout BI [the book of Isaiah] as a whole." See W. A. M. Beuken, "The Literary Emergence of Zion as a City in the First Opening of the Book of Isaiah (1, 1-2, 5)" in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog* (vol. 1; Markus Witte, ed; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 457.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 23:1; Pss 20:2; 46:8, 12; 76:7; 84:9; 94:7.

Moreover, the nations do not come as might be expected (cf. 1:2-9), and the circumstances associated with their approach are startling. The many people-groups (עַמִּים רַבִּים) do not come ‘thundering’ for war (cf. 17:12) but for תִּוְרָה. When they arrive at the mountain for תִּוְרָה, given the analogy with Sinai/Horeb, they appear to enjoy a special dispensation from YHWH that was forbidden to Israel when it received YHWH’s words from Sinai;<sup>42</sup> that is, there is no proscription barring the peoples’ collective ascent (עֲלֵה). Hence, the nations approach this ‘new Sinai’ as only Moses had done before them. Also absent from the portrait is the darkness, fire, and smoke that accompanied YHWH’s theophanic presence at the original תִּוְרָה-giving. On this occasion, YHWH’s holy mountain remains calm (cf. Exod 19:16), not because YHWH is absent, but because the coming ‘day of YHWH’ has passed.<sup>43</sup>

These intriguing observations raise several questions. If Zion’s conspicuous position matches Israel’s conspicuous absence in the vision, then what has become of Jacob-Israel? If the nations do not come for war, then why do they approach the House of the God of Jacob? If Israel has not ceased to exist, do the nations appreciate Zion before Israel? At this point, the precise contours of Israel’s (and the nations’) future remain hidden,<sup>44</sup> but B. Schwartz draws two inferences from this unit that help to bring its central message into sharper focus.

- (1) There must be some way for nations to resolve disputes without resorting to war.
- (2) The special application of this passage is indeed intended for Israel.<sup>45</sup>

In what follows, I address these inferences as two related matters. The first concerns the nations’ engagement and purpose in coming; the second concerns the anticipated result and the question of the vision’s application to Israel. Is the message intended for Israel? If so, how does it function? If v.5 closes the vision, what is its intention?

Isaiah 2:2-5 portrays Zion’s exaltation. The participle + imperfect (נִבְנוֹן יְהִיָּה) contributes a durative nuance to the vision, connoting the future stability and permanency

<sup>42</sup> Exod 19:21-25; cf. Deut 5:1-5, 23-27.

<sup>43</sup> Compare the theophoric names for the child YHWH provides in Isa 9:5-6. The transition from war to peace resembles the transition from David (the warrior) to Solomon (the prince of peace). Cf. 1 Chron 22:8-9; cf. Isa 9:1-6; 11:1-5; 16:4-5b. For God’s ‘day’ as a succession of wars against unfaithful Israel, see, e.g., Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 61.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Pratt explains that OT prophecies did not necessarily speak of what had to be, but of what might be. See Pratt, “Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions” in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke* (J. I. Packer and S. K. Soderlund, eds; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 180.

<sup>45</sup> The first inference is found in Schwartz, “Torah from Zion,” 23. The second inference is a summation derived from his interaction with modern scholars who see Isa 2:1-4 as “a supreme expression of prophetic eschatology” whose aim is to “predict the conversion of the gentiles...[at] a time when Israel’s privileged position among the nations of the world will be abolished” (“Torah from Zion,” 11).

of what YHWH will establish there. After the coming days, the mount of YHWH's house (הַר בֵּית־יְהוָה) will be reestablished and exalted to a position of supremacy over every rival mountain; it stands not merely in contrast to every other mountain and hill, but over them all as the head of the mountains (בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים).<sup>46</sup> As YHWH's mountain, its reestablishment suggests Zion's restoration as YHWH's central sanctuary.<sup>47</sup> According to the vision, then, as the emblem of God's enduring reign, Zion shall function as a lodestone, magnetically attracting all nations to the House of Jacob's God.<sup>48</sup>

This opening utterance, which foretells Zion's ascendancy, is followed by four *w<sup>e</sup>qatal*-initial clauses (וַיִּשְׂאוּ וַיִּנְהָרוּ... וַיִּהְיוּ... וַיִּזְכְּרוּ in vv. 2-3). In each case, the *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* forms take up the future tense of the preceding imperfect (יִהְיֶה).<sup>49</sup> The subject of the second of these four clauses shifts from the mount to all nations || many people-groups (עַמִּים רַבִּים || כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם), who will respond at the sight of YHWH's mountain-dwelling both with words and deeds. Their initial act is uniquely described with the verb נָהַר, which some translations (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NASB) render "stream" as a denominative verb related to נָהַר ("river"), another (NJPS) translates "gaze with joy" (נָהַר [+ אֵל prep.]). The verbal root נָהַר is a homonym,<sup>50</sup> and in this context, its presence creates ambiguity. J. J. M. Roberts suggests that a double entendre is expressed: "It is probable that the prophet was purposely playing on the ambiguity between the two homonymous roots, נָהַר (I) נָהַר (II), in order to express both joyous recognition of and movement towards God's exalted house."<sup>51</sup> In this miraculous mass movement of peoples, the nations resemble a river flowing *up* YHWH's mountain; their active engagement at this great sight reflects their joyous acknowledgment of what God has accomplished. Thus, to mix metaphors, the mountain is not merely a lodestone but a beacon, a dazzling sign or ensign that YHWH

<sup>46</sup> Young observes correctly that Zion will hold first rank among all mountains, "all that is high will sink in importance before Zion." E. J. Young, *Isaiah Volume 1: Chapters 1-18* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 101.

<sup>47</sup> Nobert Lohfink is probably right when he perceives these rival mountains as the mountain-temples of rival gods. See N. Lohfink, *God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (Transl. E. R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>48</sup> See B. Schwartz, "Torah from Zion," 11.

<sup>49</sup> See IBHS, 528.

<sup>50</sup> נָהַר, I. *qal*: "stream towards" and II. *qal*: "shine," "be radiant with joy" (HALOT, 676).

<sup>51</sup> J. J. M. Roberts, "Double Entendre in First Isaiah," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 47. Roberts bases his case on the observation of the use of this verb in a metaphorical sense to indicate "a radiance of face that comes from looking upon something that brings joy (so Isa 60:5; Ps 34:6 [34:5])," and supports this analysis by appeal to Jer 31:6, 12 and 51:44. He notes that the cry of the Ephraimite watchmen in Jer 31:6 is similar to the cry of the foreigners in Isa 2:3. B. Schwartz, who rejects as "patently impossible" the idea that nations should stream upwards, nevertheless recognizes the sense "shine" / "be radiant," and follows R. Jonah ibn Janah to conclude that the nations' lift their gaze to "see" ("Torah from Zion," 15).

makes for the many people.<sup>52</sup> Since it will rise high, towering above all rivals, every nation will easily be attracted to it (but not so much to a magnet) as to a light. Thus, they will come (והלכו, 2:3) “streaming brightly” (וניהרו), marching to Zion with faces reflecting the resplendent glory of God.

The next clause in v.3 indicates that they will not merely act but speak (ואמרו), addressing one another as they approach YHWH’s house (cf. 1:18). Moreover, their speech explains their actions; their words tell why they are making pilgrimage to Zion. Their discourse, embedded within the vision, begins with a sequence of commands (לכו + ונעלה) expressing verbal engagement about what is happening at Zion and shared expectations for what they hope to find there. The imperatival sequence is followed first by *waw* conj. + jussive (וירנו) and then by *waw* conj. + cohortative (ונלכה), each introducing a purpose clause. The nations are going to Zion “so that he [YHWH] may teach us (וירנו) his ways (מדרכיו), and so that we may walk (ונלכה) in his paths (בארחתיו).” Then a causal כִּי follows, signaling the motivation for the preceding expression. Its justification is chiastically arranged to fix both eye and ear upon the unit’s chief theme:<sup>53</sup>

	A	כִּי מַצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא
B		תּוֹרָה
B'		וּדְבַר־יְהוָה
A'		מִירוּשָׁלַם

The nations come to Zion (|| Jerusalem) because they recognize YHWH as their Teacher (וירנו) and his תּוֹרָה as the key to their future. Furthermore, they recognize that Zion-

<sup>52</sup> Cf. 5:26; 11:10, 12; 62:10.

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Magonet has observed a peak, forming a mountain (horizontally) that focuses on YHWH’s ways || paths, speech || words, the repetition of nations and peoples and ‘lifting up’:

		A	נִשָּׂא
	B	הַגּוֹיִם...עַמִּים רַבִּים	
	C	וְאָמְרוּ	
D		מִן + דֶּרֶךְ...ב + אֶרֶץ	
	C'	תּוֹרָה...דְּבַר־יְהוָה	
	B'	הַגּוֹיִם...עַמִּים רַבִּים	
	A'	נִשָּׂא	

His assessment is valuable, especially since the prepositional phrases in D connect to the prepositional phrase in 2:5. Francis Landy comments, “The peak complements divine instruction and human response” (“Torah and anti-Torah,” *Interpretation* 11 [2003]: 320). See J. Magonet, “Isaiah’s Mountain or the Shape of Things to Come,” *Proof* 11 (1991): 175-81. It should not be missed, however, that כִּי is macro-syntactic, it functions at the discourse level to indicate the motivation for the preceding quotation and the entire vision (2:2-5). See B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 149-50.

Jerusalem is the only place where they can hear דְּבַר־יְהוָה. In making pilgrimage to Zion, their principal objective is to sit before YHWH as disciples before their Master. According to this vision, then, after the coming days, every nation will desire YHWH's תּוֹרָה. What is more, the people of YHWH's creation will realize that heeding תּוֹרָה is the only way to end global strife. The nations come to learn תּוֹרָה because they discern that YHWH's way/path (דֶּרֶךְ || אֶרֶץ) is the only mutually assured path to peace. People will see that תּוֹרָה from Zion is the special need of the cosmos: it is YHWH's instrument and the only non-violent way for nations to resolve their disputes.

More precisely, they will come for a judicial verdict on a deuteronomic (Deut 17:18-11) or, perhaps, a Solomonic model<sup>54</sup>—but it is YHWH who will sit as King and Judge in the High Court of Appeal. “He will be judge between [וְשֹׁפֵט + בֵּין] the nations and arbitrate for [וְהוֹכִיחַ + לֵ] the many people-groups” (Isa 2:4a), rendering decisions by means of his דְּבַר and תּוֹרָה from Zion-Jerusalem.

Despite the deuteronomic (and Deuteronomistic) analogy, nothing in the context indicates that this word refers to Mosaic Torah; indeed, the cognate verb, וִירָנוּ (יָרָה/ו), “so that he may teach us”), identifies the instruction given with God's decisions or rulings on particular international disputes that may arise between party-nations.<sup>55</sup> His decisions, rendered according to דְּבַר־יְהוָה and תּוֹרָה, will end international conflict; and so, YHWH will personally maintain justice/order (מִשְׁפָּט) in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Every nation will come for תּוֹרָה, because they will acknowledge YHWH as the fair and equitable Judge.<sup>57</sup> They will turn to him in order to learn his ways at Zion and adhere to his תּוֹרָה for peace. Indeed, they will adhere to תּוֹרָה because it will function as both preventative medicine and cure for every global problem. Hence, YHWH's תּוֹרָה will be profitable not only for the maintenance of justice and peace, but also for restoration. As a result, “No nation will raise a sword against another nation—they will no longer train for war” (v.4bc), because after the coming days implements of warfare will

<sup>54</sup> 1 Kgs 3:16-28; 10:1-13

<sup>55</sup> Neither should תּוֹרָה be restricted to a sapiential sense, *pace* Jensen, despite the correlation with 1 Kings 3. The instruction is more likely about what is ‘legally right’ (“*im Sinn Rechtsbelehrung*”), so Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12*. See also the discussion in Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 183.

<sup>56</sup> Sweeney writes, “The term *tora*, again parallel to *debar yhw*, ‘the word of YHWH’, apparently refers to YHWH’s instruction on the proper way to conduct international relations. It appears in the context of the legal resolution of disputes between the nations, in which YHWH is portrayed as the typical ancient near eastern monarch who employs his ‘Torah’ as a means to settle disagreements among his subjects. In this sense, Torah signifies a means to effect world-wide order.” See M. A. Sweeney, “Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 60.

<sup>57</sup> See Deut 17:18-11; Gen 18:22-33, cf. v.19.

become implements of agriculture. Thus, the vision proper (vv.2-4) focuses upon the interplay of global relations under YHWH who will establish sovereignty at Zion, maintained by his דבר and תורה. It is a vision of nations calling upon nations to face King YHWH together and learn from him. Therefore, Isa 2:2-4 proclaims that after the coming days, YHWH will settle all disputes by his דבר and תורה.

Now, the contrast with the House of Jacob within chs.1-5 (or 2:1-4:6) should not be missed. Isa 2:2-4 sets up a remarkable disparity between Israel's present sinful conduct and the future dutiful conduct of foreign peoples who live the life YHWH desires. Whereas foreign peoples will acknowledge YHWH's reign, God's children do not presently know him (1:2); whereas all nations will come to heed YHWH's דבר and תורה, God's children presently resort to soothsayers, mediums, and necromancers.<sup>58</sup> However one defines this תורה—as written or oral, focused upon foreign affairs or domestic relations—within this vision (2:2-4), the performance of the nations respecting תורה is exemplary, especially when compared with Israel's conduct in the prologue to the book. The privilege YHWH extends to the peoples and the piety of every nation in loyal response clashes with the impious character of God's rebellious children.

In fact, this vision of YHWH with the nations is even more striking if no scion of David or descendant of Jacob is present on the scene. The absence of an earthly monarch twists the positive tone of this salvation vision into a nightmarish scenario in which YHWH's future reign is portrayed *without* Judah. Isolated from the context, the vision might present the frightening image of a possible-world after the coming days. Applied to Jacob-Israel 'in that day', it amounts to a rebuke of the prophet's audience. It is not surprising, then, that the first unit of this "דבר that Isaiah saw" (2:1) closes with the exhortation in 2:5: "O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in YHWH's light."

Nevertheless, within the reading process, v.5 demonstrates explicitly that the vision is oriented towards Jacob-Israel and intended for their good.<sup>59</sup> Hence, 2:2-4 is *not* the final word. As I have shown, v.5 takes 2:3 and repeats the verb "walk" (הלך), connecting the prepositional phrases "in YHWH's light" (באור יהוה, v.5) and "in his paths" (בארחותיו, v.3). This link transforms the entire vision into an overt exhortation to the House of Jacob. Thus, one way or another, either for blessing or curse, 2:2-4 envisages the outcome of Israel's response to the prophet's exhortation. Verse 5 summons Jacob-Israel to respond positively, paying heed to YHWH's word as the nations within the vision are doing. Since

<sup>58</sup> Isa 2:6; cf. 1:10; 5:19, 24; 8:19; 9:14; Deut 18:9-14.

<sup>59</sup> See H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12*, 77.



Israel does not do that presently, v.5 charges Jacob-Israel: Turn back to God! Their response determines whether Jacob-Israel will be included in the vision or shut out of it. Repentance, therefore, is the hinge that swings open the door, dispelling the darkness of iniquity and enabling Jacob-Israel to walk along the well-lit way (cf. 1:27).

This conclusion is supported by Williamson, who suggests that ‘light’ may be the writer’s way of understanding the ‘ways’, ‘paths’, ‘law’, and ‘word of the Lord’ of v.3,<sup>60</sup> and by Schwartz, who says that **תורה** in this passage “refers not to the body of laws given to Moses or any other corpus of laws.”<sup>61</sup> If Francis Landy is also right that this **תורה** is “the linguistic equivalent of Zion” and “[t]o some extent...identical to the prophetic message,”<sup>62</sup> then, for the implicit audience, walking in YHWH’s ‘light’ is shorthand for heeding the prophetic word. Indeed, that appears to be the function of the entire unit: 2:2-5 constitutes a prophetic torah containing admonition and exhortation that aims to prompt Israel’s repentance. Verses 2:2-4 paint a picture of humility and the submission of foreign peoples and nations seeking **תורה**. When they come, they will look to YHWH as their arbiter for peace—it is to this end that they will heed his word. Yet, given its function respecting Jacob-Israel and the closing exhortation in 2:5, the message is fundamentally *prophetic*: it summons Jacob-Israel to return, humbly and submissively, to YHWH, and respond to FI’s prophetic instruction with renewed loyalty to their God.

Moreover, by closing the unit with 2:5, the prophet identifies with his people as he defines the way forward for them. He says, “This way, not that way,” so that v.5 amounts to an invitation to fulfill their calling, indeed to “truly be the house of Jacob.”<sup>63</sup> As the ‘House of Jacob’, the addressees must not participate merely as listeners or observers of the prophet’s vision for the nations; instead, they too must respond with their own appropriate words and actions. In short, they must heed the prophet’s word to become YHWH’s allies and disciples.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> He adds that an understanding of God’s self-revelation as ‘light’ is prominent in Isa 42:6, 49:6, 50:10-11 and 51:4 (cf. 60:1-3). See H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 145. See also Isa 45:7 and 60:3.

<sup>61</sup> B. Schwartz, “Torah from Zion,” 16.

<sup>62</sup> F. Landy, “Torah and anti-Torah,” 321-22.

<sup>63</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> As YHWH’s disciples, the House of Jacob would learn from YHWH’s prophet without the need to train for war. The vision is portrayed in parallel with the Mosaic tradition of **תורה** from Sinai; hence, the deuteronomic model (Deut 18:15-19) may be seen in the background. Thus, while it would be incorrect to identify the Isaianic **תורה** with Mosaic Torah, the two ‘words’ correspond, equally binding the conscience of the listener. This recognition leads Childs to write the following in response to G. Sheppard: “Sheppard’s canonical argument...does not appear to be fully convincing. ...I would argue that the semantic extension [of the term **תורה**] is not simply in terms of prophetic Torah being identified with Mosaic” (*Isaiah*, 30). Instead, Childs calls for the recognition of a theological and hermeneutical interplay between the Mosaic ‘law’ and the prophetic ‘words’.

Hope is not lost, as the very presence of this prophetic proclamation demonstrates. Nevertheless, impending judgment shapes the path to a new epoch, determining the way forward for the people of Judah, Jerusalem's officials, and the women of Zion (cf. 2:10-4:1). Presently, Judah is prideful; therefore, Judahites are unfit for their role. If the listeners would identify with the prophet, if they would be recorded among the survivors of Israel, then they will heed the prophetic exhortation and repent (2:5; 4:2-6). The subsequent context may indicate that judgment is inevitable, but 2:2-5 holds out repentance in hope that, after the coming day, "Zion" will stand for the assembled people of Jerusalem, and "House of Jacob" will stand for the true Israel of God. Though presently unfit for its calling, the prophet hopes that Jacob-Israel might once again have an integral part in YHWH's plan. As Sweeney comments, "Such a scenario, according to Isa 2:2-4, 5, would entail an era of world peace in which both the nations and Israel were included among those who came to Mt. Zion to learn YHWH's Torah, to submit to YHWH's authority as judge and ruler, and to enjoy the resulting era of peace."<sup>65</sup> On this view, Isa 2:5 brings Jacob-Israel back into the picture as God's people with a vocation to fulfill. It urges the House of Jacob to heed the prophetic torah in recognition and acknowledgment of YHWH's sovereignty, for only Jacob-Israel's submission would make this portrait of Zion complete.

Since submission to YHWH's word is the criterion of identity for the people of God, the actual starting point for the pilgrimage of the nations is Jacob-Israel's own humble walk in recognition of the true God. For Zion's sake, then, they must manifest their acknowledgement of YHWH by turning from the darkness of idolatrous humanity (1:25; 2:6-4:1) to walk in YHWH's light. Walking in YHWH's light means walking according to his path and learning from his **תורה**. In short, it is Israel that must seek first the true God and respond to his **תורה** (**דבר יהוה** || **תורה**), for in Holmgren's pithy utterance, **תורה** gives "the light for walking aright."<sup>66</sup> In the final design of this programmatic vision, restoration and universal peace is contingent upon Israel's own faithful response to the word of YHWH or Isaianic Torah.

These observations suggest that 2:2-5 is not strictly about international relations. While it is correct that 2:2-4 moves away from civil strife and envisions YHWH reigning as Judge in foreign affairs, the concern of FI with the movement of nations remains Zion-centered in this sense: FI recognizes that nations will come to Zion for one of two reasons; they will come either for **תורה** or for war. Since the former is the solution to the latter,

<sup>65</sup> M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 116.

<sup>66</sup> F. C. Holmgren, "Isaiah 2:1-5" *Int* 51 (1997): 61-64.

and since the special application of this passage is for Jacob-Israel, then, for the sake of Zion, it would be a mistake to isolate 2:2-4 and separate civil affairs from foreign affairs. It is not that the nations will come to Zion prior to Israel;<sup>67</sup> the point rather, as 2:2-4:6 demonstrates, is that Israel's experience in foreign affairs is symptomatic of the quality of its domestic practice. This is the thesis of chs.2-4, and appreciating it depends on the exhortation in 2:5.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Schwartz is right: when the call to repentance is heeded, "Zion will become God's flagship city...Israel will become the parade example of peace and domestic tranquility."<sup>69</sup> When, in obedience to יהוה, Jacob-Israel lives the kind of life YHWH desires, the nations of the world will come to Zion to be taught how to walk in YHWH's ways. According to R. B. Y. Scott, "we have here the promise of the peoples' response to Hebrew prophecy (torah, 'teaching') as a missionary message to mankind."<sup>70</sup>

### 2.3. *Isaiah 2:2-4, 5 in context (Isaiah 1:1-5:30)*

Remaining matters of investigation raised in this analysis begin to find resolution once it is recognized that ch.1 and ch.5 provide the context for reading chs.2-4. The parallel visions of 2:2-4, 5 and 4:2-6 exhibit a positive tone, which envelops the negative material intervening in 2:6-4:1. This intervening material shows that Judah's idolatry makes it unclean and consequently incapable of ascending Mt. Zion; therefore, a process of purification through judgment must take place. But ch.1 and ch.5 also envelop 2:2-5 and 4:2-6 in the prologue to FI. Chapter 1 qualifies the specific nature of Israel's major problem from the perspective of justice-righteousness, depicts Zion's present circumstances, and points out the need for both repentance and purification. Chapter 5 shows that YHWH will work out his purpose in the arena of international politics. Throughout chs.1-5, YHWH's sovereignty is plainly manifested, though not yet realized 'on earth as it is in heaven.' Nevertheless, it is also plain that no power (foreign or domestic) can contend with YHWH. YHWH aims to produce an ordered society at Zion, a reign characterized by justice, righteousness, and peace. And he will realize his plan for

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<sup>67</sup> Pace Beuken, "Literary Emergence of Zion," 468. Compare H. G. M. Williamson, when he writes, "In the first Exodus, Israel was given the Torah on Mount Sinai for the regulation of its own life in the land, whereas in the new Exodus God's revelation on Mount Zion is for the regulation of the affairs of the nations, and in particular Israel's relationship with this" (Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 183).

<sup>68</sup> Sweeney is correct to note: "Consequently, it is a key text in the structure of Isaiah 2-4 in that it projects a resolution to the tension between the two major components of this text and binds them together as a textual unit." M. A. Sweeney, "Structure and Redaction in Isaiah 2-4" *HAR* 11 (1987): 409.

<sup>69</sup> B. Schwartz, "Torah from Zion," 24.

<sup>70</sup> R. B. Y. Scott, "The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39: Introduction and Exegesis," (G. Buttrick, *et al*, ed.; IB 5; Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), 181.

worldwide rule. Therefore, Childs's overall assessment seems right, "The issue is the divine order of justice that God has established for his chosen people."<sup>71</sup>

In support of my conclusions about chs.2-4, exegesis of 1:10-17 and 5:18-24 reveals that chs.1-5 as a whole share the thesis of 2:5 regarding Israel's responsibility in the matter of *תורה* from Zion (2:3). As a written deposit, read holistically, chs.1-5 proclaims that full restoration and universal peace are contingent upon Israel's faithful response to the prophetic *תורה*. Moreover, since YHWH's intentions appear to be global, brief attention to 24:3-13 demonstrates that for any people or nation to approach holy Zion, YHWH's cleansing must be global. I show that the extension of judgment is connected to the thesis of 2:5 as well; thus, there is no contradiction between FI's visions of peace (2:2-4) and of cosmic judgment (24-27). Since YHWH's *דבר* and *תורה* aims to bring about the submission of the nations, purification, repentance, and adherence to *תורה* is the only path to restoration for all humanity.

### 2.3.1. *Isaiah 1:10-17*

The above features are already present in the theological movement of FI's poetic overture, namely, purification (1:21-26), repentance (vv.19-20, 27-28), and the demand for adherence to *תורה* (vv.10-17). I intend to show that *תורה* is an apt description of the speech of YHWH's prophet, whose words come together with God's words.

Chapter 1 reflects the generic form of a trial and judgment in court.<sup>72</sup> Witnesses are summoned (vv.2-9), defendants are accused (vv.10-17), and the judge makes a final appeal (vv.18-20) before rendering his decision (vv.21-31). The way speeches are introduced suggests that 1:2-9, 10-17, and 18-20 are distinct but inseparable strophes within the first stanza of FI's large two-stanza introduction (vv.2-20, 21-31). Isa 1:10-17 is embedded within this first section (vv.2-20), delimited in v.2 (*כִּי יְהוָה דָּבַר*) and v.20 (*כִּי פִי יְהוָה דָּבַר*) by quotation formulas that distinguish it from the verdict and vision of 1:21-31.<sup>73</sup>

According to the trial form, 1:2-20 introduces YHWH as the 'plaintiff' and 'parent'<sup>74</sup> whose initial words comprise negative testimony against the 'defendants' or the

<sup>71</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 48.

<sup>72</sup> M. A. Sweeney writes, "In the case of Isaiah 1, the trial genre constitutes the basic structure of the text and the parenesis constitutes its primary function...in which YHWH is the plaintiff and Israel is the defendant" (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 66).

<sup>73</sup> Isa 1:11 and v.18 have *אָמַר יְהוָה* and v.2 and v.20 provide an *inclusio* with macrosyntactic *כִּי*.

<sup>74</sup> See, Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 67.

‘children’ he has reared and raised (בָּנִים גִּדְּלָתִי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי, v.2).<sup>75</sup> Of course, YHWH is not merely the ‘plaintiff’ but the ‘judge’; there can be no higher court of appeal. The court learns that divine discipline has already fallen upon these children (vv.5-9),<sup>76</sup> and nothing has prompted change. A negative tone continues to dominate the textual landscape, yet God’s ultimate objective in these proceedings is to reestablish his relationship with Judah.<sup>77</sup> The opening trial calls YHWH’s estranged children back to proper recognition of the benevolent God and proper observance of what he requires from his people. Its design is to effect in Israel both a change of heart and new obedience (cf. vv.18-20).

Even so, the absence of an appropriate response from the accused suggests that the Judge’s plea has gone unheeded (שָׁפֵטוּ, v.17, and לֹא יִשְׁפֹּטוּ, v.23). For this reason, apparently, YHWH renders a negative verdict (vv.21-23) and judgment looms. A final declaration (לִכְן, v.24) occurs, consequential to the preceding verses, after which YHWH’s peculiar judicial sentence is pronounced (vv.24-26) and its rationale explained (vv.27-31).

The design of the verdict too is not retaliatory but remedial: YHWH intends to purify Zion of her corrupt officials and reconstitute her government with just leadership (vv.24-26). In this way, God will restore her former reputation as the ‘faithful city’ (קִרְיָה נֹאמָנָה) and ‘the city of the righteous’ (עִיר הַצְדִּיק, v.27, cf. v.21). The ultimate aim of YHWH’s further act of judgment, therefore, is redemptive. By a cleansing-judgment, YHWH will refine the entire community and restore its glory. Through Zion’s painful purification, God will separate the intractable sinners from the penitent righteous. By purging Zion of those who persistently reject him (עֹזְבֵי יְהוָה, v.28), YHWH will

<sup>75</sup> The trial genre of court background appears to overlap with a wisdom background, in which a father-son relationship is expressed (v.2), and an animal parable might be included (v.3). H. G. M. Williamson and J. Blenkinsopp, e.g., noting language evoking Deuteronomy 32, raise the question of a covenantal background, but find the evidence “inconclusive” (So Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 18; cf. Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 26, citing U. Rüterswörden, “Bundestheologie ohne בְּרִית,” *ZABR* 4 [1998]: 85-99). Williamson’s approach to the question of the chapter’s conceptual background appears best as he observes the several features of ch.1 and rejects what he calls “the rigid distinction which it was once fashionable to draw between wisdom and prophecy as completely separate tradition circles,” and continues, “both the wisdom writers and this passage were drawing, each in their own way, upon a common epistemological basis, thus illuminating some of the fundamental beliefs which were taken for granted in ancient Israel” (*Isaiah 1-5*, 28). My treatment, which emphasizes the legal proceeding, is designed to show a relationship between the problem in vv.2-9 and the ethical demands in vv.10-17.

<sup>76</sup> In the imagery of vv.4-9, Childs (*Isaiah*, 18) finds a picture of a rebellious slave repeatedly beaten by his master, but the picture may be nearer that of a rebellious son. Hence, a background analogous to Deut 21:18-21 may be nearer the mark.

<sup>77</sup> Indeed, this ultimate aim requires the reestablishment of מִשְׁפָּט || צְדִיקָה both vertically (v.2) and horizontally (vv.10, 27). Pietro Bovati expresses YHWH’s intention well: “...the [Just One] desires not only to deal correctly with the unjust, but to *re-establish justice*, so as to promote a right relationship between all members of the society.” See P. Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible* (Transl. M. J. Smith; JSOTSup 105; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 19.

redeem her and preserve a remnant of her repentant (שׁוֹבֵי) children to dwell there (vv.27-31; cf. 2:5). The function and intention of the sentence thus demonstrates YHWH's commitment not only to the Holy City but also to reconciliation with her people once their warfare has ended.<sup>78</sup>

The opening section of the chapter articulates the reason for this process (i.e., in vv.2-3, 4-9). The speaker in 1:2-9 and 1:10-17 is not YHWH, but a prophet with YHWH's words in his mouth (אָמַר יְהוָה, vv.3, 11; cf. vv.1-2, 20). According to 1:2-3, 4, the prophet calls heaven and earth (שָׁמַיִם || אָרֶץ)<sup>79</sup> to witness that the children's major problem—the crisis of which Israel's deafness and blindness are symptomatic—is their asinine disregard for their guardian and provider (אֱתֵי יְהוָה, v.4). Indeed, the ignorance of God's children surpasses the ox and the donkey, beasts well known for their lack of discernment. Even these creatures know where food may be found, but “Israel does not know, my people do not have understanding” (v.3).<sup>80</sup> Commenting on vv.2-3, Williamson prudently asks about a relationship to Isa 30:8-9, suggesting that v.3 points to wider concerns, “including political alliances and rejection of the prophetic word.”<sup>81</sup>

According to 1:10-17, the prophet nevertheless continues to mediate YHWH's words. Despite an apparent tone of frustration with Israel in vv.2-3, he shifts the orientation of his address from the panel of cosmic<sup>82</sup> witnesses (v.2) to the defendants (v.10). So, in a second quotation of YHWH's speech (אָמַר יְהוָה, v.11), he directs YHWH's *paraenesis* to the children of Israel themselves. But the new unit does not merely take the reader along; it reminds the reader of vv.2-4 and vv.5-9. Verses 2 and 10 each contain identical verbs of hearing (הִשְׁמַעְנוּ || הִשְׁמַעְנוּ), and so, in vv.5-9, due

<sup>78</sup> The chapter's structure develops neatly according to the form of the trial as observed by P. Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 32. YHWH, the accuser, initiates the trial (1:2-3, 4). The accused either turns confessing guilt or hardens protesting innocence. In response to the former, the accuser is prepared to grant pardon, leading to reconciliation. In response to the latter, the accuser is prepared for war. In chapter 1, it appears that war has already come (vv.5-7, 8-9), and so this address now comes to a remnant that has experienced judgment; furthermore, it appears that despite YHWH's discipline, this remnant remains not only unclean but also recalcitrant (vv.10-17). Nevertheless, YHWH persists with the accusation and makes a final appeal in hope of reconciliation (vv.18-20). As a variation on this form, however, it appears that judgment has become the means both to purification (vv.21-26) and to distinguish the guilty from the innocent among the accused (vv.27-31). YHWH's righteous judgment will separate the impenitent wicked from the penitent righteous.

<sup>79</sup> See Deut 4:26, 31; 32:1. For inter-textual connections between Isa 1:2-31 and the Song of Moses, see, e.g., Childs, *Isaiah*, 18 and Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 180. Childs cites Delitzsch's perceptive observation that “the present of Isaiah corresponds to the future of the Song of Moses” in F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (transl. J. Martin; vol 1; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 56.

<sup>80</sup> יָדַע שׁוֹר ... וְחֹמֶר ... שְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עָמִי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנֵן, v.3.

<sup>81</sup> So Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 35.

<sup>82</sup> “Heaven” and “earth” is merism; the scope of the address is not confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

to a profound decimation of Judah and Jerusalem, the reader now recognizes these defendants as the community of Israel narrowed to a remnant of survivors after war (שריד, v.9).<sup>83</sup>

At first blush, mention of ‘survivors’ seems hopeful. Without this remnant, “we would have been as Sodom, as another Gomorrah” (v.9; cf. Gen 18-19). In distinction from Sodom and Gomorrah, the city itself still stands (נוֹתֶרָה בְּתִצִּיּוֹן כְּסֹכָה בְּכָרֶם), Isa 1:8), and within it a few survivors remain (הוֹתִיר לָנוּ שְׂרִיד כְּמַעַט, v.9; cf. Gen 18:29-32). The speaker even includes himself among their number (לָנוּ, Isa 1:9). Therefore, perhaps this ‘remnant’ of Zion signals relief, a token of hope and the potential to rebuild for a future after judgment. Yet the reader’s sanguine complexion quickly fades as hope turns to provocation. Comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah in v.9 becomes identification in v.10, as both survivors and city are veritable “rulers of Sodom” and “people of Gomorrah.” *If* Israel’s remnant were righteous, *then* Zion might at least hope for relief and restoration; but there are not ten righteous among them (Gen 18:32)! Thus, their new title calls into question both the character of the remnant and the fate of the city. Instead of finding hope in either of them, the prophet identifies them as a desperate people, incapable of changing, whose destiny is the sword (v.20).

At this point, in a last cohesive link with v.9, the survivors discover the one place where new hope may be found. That is, after judgment, the survivors’ future will depend on repentance and renewed loyalty to YHWH with respect to the following word of “our God” (אֱלֹהֵינוּ, v.10). The speaker not only includes himself as one dwelling among the survivors, but, as one among them, he steps forth as a witnessing voice to meet their need with YHWH’s words. Thus, he calls them back to their proper loyalty to God.

On the one hand, then, the survivors are an unclean people who do not know God (cf. 2:5; 6:5), and for this reason, 1:2-9, 10-17 suggests that further judgment looms. The doom of war is impending once again, and its imminent occurrence is justice, as suggested by the prophet’s direct address to the audience in v.9: “you rulers of Sodom” || “you people of Gomorrah.” On the other hand, among this people there is a remnant (v.9), a company for whose sake, apparently, Zion has been spared. Their presence indicates that perhaps not all is lost (cf. Gen 18:32). Yet hope for Zion cannot be found in the character of these survivors alone. Altogether, then, the forecast according to Isaiah 1 is terribly bleak. In

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<sup>83</sup> Williamson suggests a character contrast between the seeing and hearing creation and Israel, whose ignorance implies an inability to see or hear (*Isaiah 1-5*, 31). Thus, the reader wonders what hope there is for people lacking discernment to perceive God’s way in the prophet’s words. The whole almost reads as a commentary on Deut 29:4, “But *to this day* [עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה] YHWH has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.”

fact, vv.10-17 keep up the trial by listing further accusations against the people (vv.11-15). Since these “Sodom-like rulers” and “Gomorraah-like people” are still united in wrongdoing, the prophet laments his solidarity with them as one unclean, as one dwelling amidst an unholy assembly. Unlike them (vv.2-4), however, he acknowledges the name of the true God and he recognizes the need of the accused. The only hope for this unhappy few (מַעַט)—prophet, people, and city—is found in דְּבַר־יְהוָה || תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ (v.10). Therefore, he calls on the collective entity to give heed to the word he is about to utter and to obey YHWH.

In what follows, the prophet calls attention to both Israel’s malady and God’s prescribed treatment; thus, while the larger context of the chapter demonstrates YHWH’s commitment to Zion, 1:10-17 focuses on YHWH’s requirement from her inhabitants: proper response to YHWH’s new word, the prophet’s תּוֹרָה. Williamson is right, “[I]t is impossible to remain loyal to God without hearing/obeying his word.”<sup>84</sup> It is to this word that v.10 invites attention.<sup>85</sup>

As a whole, Isa 1:10-17 finds the people’s wickedness incompatible with the functioning of the cult, e.g., sacrifices and offerings, festive assembly, even prayer. The survivors are profane, defiled, their hands stained by the blood they have shed (דָּמִים).<sup>86</sup> It is for this reason that YHWH’s presence threatens to ruin them in judgment. Perhaps in their awareness of the continuing threat to Zion, the people have frantically sought to multiply sacrifices, yet the prophet reminds them that YHWH’s desire is not for sacrifices, but for מִשְׁפַּט וְצִדְקָה.<sup>87</sup> The present lack of מִשְׁפַּט וְצִדְקָה is evidentiary; it indicates

<sup>84</sup> So Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 42.

<sup>85</sup> As support for my view, note that Wildberger labels 1:10-17 a *Lehreröffnungsformel*. This genre-label is significant because it contributes to his recognition of the coherence of ch.1, which identifies YHWH (with his prophet) as a Teacher who is summoning his children/students (1:2-3) for instruction and discipline (*Jesaja 1-12*, 35). Noting the parallel terms used by the prophet (e.g., in 2:3, in 5:24, in 2:3; 28:9; 26, and in 8:16), he thinks the prophet would sharply distinguish himself from identification as a priestly or wisdom teacher. Thus, he does not think it wrong to designate 1:10-17 a *prophetischer Thora* (p.36).

<sup>86</sup> Preceding the verb for emphasis (GKC 117z), “bloodstains” is a complement accusative, the obj. associated with the stative verb, מָלֵא (*IBHS*, 168), a verb of abundance (Joüon, 125d). Here the perfect aspect indicates a present state that has come about through an earlier action, the pl. commonly denoting violent bloodshed or bloodstains (BDB, 196). That is, although the Holy One of Israel must look away from these hands extended in prayer, he nevertheless knows that they are covered with bloodstains (cf. v.16). This, however, is *not* the cleansing blood of the sacrificial cult; rather, his people are “red-handed” because of their deeds of injustice (cf. v.17) and the guilt of murder (v.21). Gesenius (GKC, 124n) states that whereas the singular is used for the blood of sacrifices, the plural denotes blood that is shed, suggesting the bloodguilt of murders crying out for vengeance (cf. Gen 4:10-11; Isa 1:21; 5:7). Cf. NJPS, “Your hands are stained with crime.” Thus, without purification (v.16), the Holy One of Israel cannot look upon them or hear their prayers. Perhaps, under these circumstances, the copious blood, shed in their worthless offerings, illustrates and exacerbates their bloodguilt.

<sup>87</sup> Someone (e.g., a king, an official or a priest) has called for this, even required it (vv.11-12). Thus Williamson’s comments here as regards a ‘priestly torah’ are particularly apt: “Isaiah probably did take up the kind of language which was so used, and it is difficult to avoid the impression here that he was aping such declarations, even if he coined, so to speak, his own formula to do so” (*Isaiah 1-5*, 93). Nevertheless,



that Israel has forgotten what its Holy One requires from his children. A sacrifice with injustice is as absurd as it is offensive,<sup>88</sup> for cultic worthiness presupposes adherence to YHWH's ethical demands.<sup>89</sup> If only they would heed this word, then the forecasted judgment might be prevented and they might make a fresh start. Therefore, the section closes with a sequence of nine clause-initial imperatives, which indicate Israel's first requirement: moral-ethical purification.<sup>90</sup> It is a veritable cascade of exhortations urging God's 'children' to stop their negative behavior (חַדְּלוּ הָרַע) and learn good behavior (לִמְדוּ הַטֹּב). Therefore, if Israel would grow up, it must be taught conduct pleasing to God.<sup>91</sup>

To this end, "a new torah goes forth from the prophet's mouth."<sup>92</sup> It overlaps with both Mosaic Torah and wisdom-torah,<sup>93</sup> but the term תּוֹרָה in v.10 plainly refers to the contents of vv.10-17. "In view here," observes Tucker, "is not a fixed or authoritative body of revealed legislation but the living process of instruction. That is what the subsequent verses contain."<sup>94</sup> Far from subordinate to an external Torah of Moses, this prophetic torah charts the course for a new generation, or, better, it writes a prescription for their ongoing service to YHWH (cf. Deut 18:15-19). Moreover, that prescription involves reform, specifically targeting Israel's courts and exhorting them to "seek justice" (מִשְׁפָּט דַּרְשׁוּ) in imitation of God (cf. Deut 17:8-13). Its message is that the heavenly Judge demands equity in the earthly courts of his people, especially for the weakest members of society (e.g., the orphan and widow, v.17). Accordingly, Isaiah's word of

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regardless of either formal observations regarding תּוֹרָה or developments broadening its conception in the post-exilic period, to state the obvious, the most significant feature of the utterances here is that תּוֹרָה is an apt description for the prophetic word in 1:10-17.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Pss 40:6-8; 50:7-9; Prov 15:8; 21:3, 27; Jer 7:22-23; Mic 6:6-8; Eccl. 5:1; Hos 6:6. Accordingly, Rolf Rendtorff observes that the prophet is far from any rejection of the sacrificial cult *per se*: "[A] sacrifice presented by hands 'bloody' from acts of violence is senseless. So the concluding call sounds out not to desist from presenting sacrifices in the future but to learn to do good and seek justice in the present." See Rendtorff, *Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (David E. Orton, transl.; TBS 7; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), 171.

<sup>89</sup> See Williamson, "Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel," in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* (A. Rapoport-Albert and G. Greenberg, eds.; JSOTSup 333; London: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 22-38.

<sup>90</sup> Blenkinsopp points out that washing bloodstained hands is symbolic of moral cleansing and inner purification (חִטְּאֵל *hitpa'el*, "purify yourself," cf., e.g., Ps 73:13; Job 15:14; Prov. 20:9). See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 184.

<sup>91</sup> Learning suggests a process of discipleship and growth. According to Wildberger, the prophet is "longing for a new basis for human interaction, which would be visible in one's day-to-day relationships with others who live in the same geographic region" (Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 49; *Jesaja 1-12*, 47).

<sup>92</sup> So writes N. Lohfink, *God of Israel and the Nations*, 43.

<sup>93</sup> Childs sees these imperatives as "commensurate with everything that Israel had learned from its long historical experience with God. These are not universal ethical teachings, but a highly existential application of the divine will that had long since been revealed to Israel, and now delivered with a fresh poignancy to a corrupt, complacent, and self-righteous population" (Childs, *Isaiah*, 20).

<sup>94</sup> G. Tucker, *Isaiah 1-39*, 55.

תורה is designed for restoration; it shares the purpose of Mosaic Torah for the (re)ordering of life in Israelite society. Since repentance is the prerequisite for Israel's new life, with Sweeney, "[t]he basis for repentance is offered in the positive instructions of vv.16-17."<sup>95</sup> Of course, any failure to heed this word would rend the heavens, bringing down God's righteous judgment through war. Thus, impending judgment is another reason why, on this day for repentance,<sup>96</sup> the prophet so severely communicates the gravity of Israel's situation before God by evoking Sodom and Gomorrah.

A new segment begins in v.18, introducing YHWH's closing appeal. The unit is closely related to the preceding and is (initially) similar in form, commencing once again with two commands, one direct (impv.) and the second indirect (coh.). Isa 1:18-20 invites the listener to engage YHWH in deliberation, and extends the grace of forgiveness and cleansing, contingent upon the people's repentance and renewed obedience. Thus, the prophet moves from exhortation (vv.10-17) to entreaty (vv.18-20). This highlights the striking similarity of this invitation to the content of 2:2-5. In both 1:2-20 and 2:2-5, YHWH sits as judge in the high court of appeal and invites people to engage in arbitration:

ונוכחה	לכוננא	1:18
ונעלה ... והוכיח	לכו	2:3, 4
ונלכה	לכו	2:5

And so here too, from 1:10-17, 18-20, the reader sees that civil affairs cannot be separated neatly from Israel's providence in foreign affairs:

"If [כס] you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if [כס] you are unwilling and disobedient, you shall be eaten by the sword," for the mouth of YHWH has spoken. (Isa 1:19-20)

The judgment that Israel experiences presently has come by the hand of YHWH, but as a curse for disobedience, it is symptomatic of the quality of Israel's domestic practice in response to the prophetic torah.

### 2.3.2. *Isaiah 5:18-24*

Chapter 5 presents the other end of the envelop structure (1:1-31; 2:1-4:6; 5:1-30), closing the prologue but confirming that YHWH's purpose will unfold in the arena of international

<sup>95</sup> So M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 81.

<sup>96</sup> The ET of Wildberger's commentary renders his phrase "day of repentance" (*Isaiah 1-12*, 39), but Wildberger actually wonders if the many offerings and prayers being offered indicate that this was *einen Busstag* ("Day of Atonement"; cf. *Isaiah 6*). See Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 37.

politics.<sup>97</sup> How do 5:12 and especially 5:19 inform the concept of **תורה** signaled by the Holy One's words in 5:24? What do 5:12, 19, and 24 contribute to the concept of **תורה** in FI?

The superscription introduces an allegorical-parable in 1<sup>st</sup>-person<sup>98</sup> concerning YHWH's "vineyard" and "the planting of his desire." In 5:1-7, YHWH tells the audience how, despite his abundant provision and his hope for *śōrēq*-grapes, the vineyard produced only feral berries (**באש**). Consequently, it is worthless and destined for ruin. Naturally, the listener agrees with the Owner's proposal to dismantle the vineyard; and so, luring the audience into self-condemnation,<sup>99</sup> he asks rhetorically, "What more could I have done for my vineyard?" (v.4). Then YHWH lifts the veil, exposing the pervasive corruption of the House of Israel (YHWH's vineyard) and the men of Judah (his desirable planting):<sup>100</sup> YHWH "expected justice [**למשפט**], but look, injustice [**והנה משפה**], righteousness [**לצדקה**], but look, an outcry [**והנה צעקה**]" (v.7). A series of 'woes' follow (vv.8, 11, 18, 20, 21, and 22), expressing and amplifying the political polemic<sup>101</sup> against God's people. Yet, while 5:8-30 expresses YHWH's acute disgust with this vineyard,<sup>102</sup> there is a nuance of commiseration in the series of woes mediated by the prophet.<sup>103</sup>

Within ch.5, vv.18-24 form part of the larger section of woes (**הי**) directed at the unjust in Israel and Judah.<sup>104</sup> There are two main sections introduced by **הי**: vv.8-17 (2x) and vv.18-24 (4x), and **לכן** ("therefore") in v.13 and v.14 follows the woe statements that commence in vv.8-17 (v.8 and v.11). After the first woe (vv.8-10), the prophet charges

<sup>97</sup> J. Goldingay writes, "In length and theme chapter 5 pairs with chapter 1 and closes a bracket around 2:2-4:6. In contrast to 1:1-2:1 and 2:2-4:6, no positive note is struck at the beginning or the end" (*Isaiah*, 52).

<sup>98</sup> For discussion of the relationship of ch.5 to chs.6-12, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1-5*, 324-25. Williamson concludes that it is best to see the section introduced by 5:1-7 as stretching only as far as the end of the chapter.

<sup>99</sup> So Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 123. The parable recalls Nathan's ruse in rebuke of David (2 Sam 12).

<sup>100</sup> House of Israel and men of Judah should be seen as one collective entity whose corporate identity is expressed in poetic parallelism: YHWH's vineyard || desirable planting are the people of God, despite mention of Israel and the prophet's special concern with Judah and Jerusalem (cf. 1:2-3; 2:6-4:1).

<sup>101</sup> J. Blenkinsopp plausibly argues that the woe-series is essentially a political polemic focusing on the manipulation of the legal system, especially by means of bribery (*Isaiah 1-39*, 215). Sweeney shows how both 5:1-7 and 5:8-30 utilize juridical trial patterns in the attempt "to establish the guilt of Israel and Judah as the basis for the announcements of judgment against them" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 123).

<sup>102</sup> Alexander provides a catalogue of injustices: grasping of land and households, drunkenness, untimely mirth, disregard of providential warnings, defiance of God's judgments, confounding of moral distinctions, reliance upon human wisdom, and perversion of justice. See J. A. Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 126. The result, comments Oswalt, "is a perversion where values are reversed: debauchery is more honorable than courage, drunkenness is preferable to sobriety, the wicked are pronounced innocent, while the righteous are condemned" (J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 164).

<sup>103</sup> See GKC §147d. Contributing to the impact of an inclusio with ch.1, these woes appear to pick up where 1:4 left off: "Woe, sinful nation!"

<sup>104</sup> Van der Merwe indicates that 22 of 50 instances of the experience of a threat signaled by **הי** occur in the book of Isaiah. See *BHRG*, 335.

Israel's leadership with abuse for taking over households and land.<sup>105</sup> After the second woe (vv.11-12), drunkenness and reveling follow up the viticultural theme of vv.1-7: "Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may run after strong drink." Verses 13-14 recall 1:2-3 and 2:6-9, emphasizing Israel's ignorance and pride: "Therefore my people go into exile for lack of discernment [מבלי ידעת], 5:13]...those who exult in her [על ז בה], v.14]."<sup>106</sup> The second section of woes begins with v.18 (וַיִּי, 4x in vv.18, 20, 21, 22), and these are also followed by לִכֵּן (v.24), but the concluding section of the chapter begins with עַל־כֵּן (v.25) instead. Whereas each לִכֵּן introduces a divine declaration before a threat of punishment (vv.13-14, 24),<sup>107</sup> the closely-related עַל־כֵּן begins, after the enumeration of grounds, a summary statement in vv.25-30 in reference to the preceding.<sup>108</sup> Thus a slight distinction from the previous pattern signals the conclusion of the matter, based on the preceding sections of 'woes': "That is why X" or "So it happens that X."<sup>109</sup> In other words, 5:1-24 has demonstrated sufficient grounds for the execution of YHWH's plan to involve the foreign nations as his instruments of judgment against Israel and Judah. "That is why" (עַל־כֵּן) YHWH's hand is raised. He lifts his ensign (נִסִּי) for all the reasons enumerated, justly summoning a foreign army to march against Israel and Judah (vv.26-30). "In that day," a mighty people will come for war, and light will become dark because of its clouds (וְאֹר חֹשֶׁךְ בְּעֵרֵיפִיהָ).

In each major section of woes, the prophet portrays a people who have explicitly disregarded the program YHWH has made accessible through prophetic communication (vv.12, 19). That is to say, having consistently failed to heed the prophets' words of instruction and threats of impending judgment, they have refused to repent.<sup>110</sup> Childs rightly comments that whatever God does they judge to be irrelevant in their world.<sup>111</sup> In fact, in 5:19 the rulers of the people flatly deny that YHWH will do anything about their behavior. The prophet therefore identifies them as scoffers whose cynicism and taunting amount to a dare, defying YHWH to fulfill his plan:

<sup>105</sup> See 1 Kgs 21.

<sup>106</sup> NJPS translates, "for not giving heed."

<sup>107</sup> HALOT, 530.

<sup>108</sup> BDB, 486-530.

<sup>109</sup> HALOT, 833.

<sup>110</sup> G. Tucker (*Isaiah* 1-39, 95) is correct to see Isaiah's words as one instance of a pattern of rejection. He writes, "They are those who have refused to heed the Lord's will expressed in 'instruction' (תּוֹרָה *tôrâ*) or 'word'—that is, through the prophets (cf. Isa 1:10)."

<sup>111</sup> See Childs, *Isaiah*, 47. Williamson adds, "...it is Isaiah's relaying of God's warnings and threats of judgment which attracts their scorn" (*Isaiah* 1-5), 382.

...those who say [הַאֲמִרִים], ‘Let him make haste, let his work [or agenda, <sup>112</sup>מַעֲשֵׂה] come about quickly<sup>113</sup> that we may see [נִרְאֶה]; let him draw near, let the plan [עֲצָתָהּ] of Israel’s Holy One be fulfilled that we may discern it [נִדְעָה]’. (Isa 5:19)<sup>114</sup>

Their words, paraphrased in v.19, not only summarize their response to Isaiah’s preaching, but also connect them to the drunkards of v.12, those who seek strong drink but “lack regard for the deeds of YHWH, because the work [מַעֲשֵׂה] of his hands they cannot see [לֹא רָאוּ].” Here the reader glimpses the general reception of God’s word, connecting Isaiah’s preaching to the prophetic tradition (Deut 18:15-22; 2 Kings 17:13).<sup>115</sup> What was designed to give them insight (דַּעַת),<sup>116</sup> has actually exposed their disregard for truth. So, through a prophet’s ministry once again, their lack of discernment has lured them into self-condemnation. According to 5:19, their sarcasm implies that they take Isaiah as a false prophet. Consequently, there is no hope for YHWH’s desirable planting:

Therefore, as a tongue of fire devours stubble and a flame shrivels dried grass, their root will become as rot, and their blossoms will go up like dust, for they have rejected the תּוֹרָה of YHWH of Hosts; they have spurned the words [אֲמָרָתָהּ] of Israel’s Holy One. (5:24)

In response, then, YHWH’s verdict of judgment in v.24a corresponds to his verdict of judgment in v.13. Given the relationship between vv.12, 19, and 24, it appears likely that תּוֹרָתָהּ in v.24b includes the prophet’s words regarding YHWH’s instruction, purpose and plan, or at least the profile of his coming work (chs.1-4). Isa 5:13 (exile) and v.24 (ruin) each contend that rejecting YHWH’s אֲמָרָתָהּ and תּוֹרָה is tantamount to rejecting YHWH’s prophet. Therefore, ‘in that day’ when YHWH fulfills his plan, God will vindicate himself and his prophet/prophetic torah. Of course, v.24a, couched in terms evocative of the viticultural theme from the opening parable (5:1-7),<sup>117</sup> has Israel and Judah plainly in view. Due to their rejection of Isaiah’s words, the destruction of YHWH’s vineyard is inevitable; it only remains for him to articulate the means.

<sup>112</sup> With Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1-39*, 211), this rendering is borne out by the parallel term.

<sup>113</sup> Syriac (Peshitta) has *nsrhb mrj*, which BHS reads, “Let YHWH come quickly.” This would provide an explicit subject, strengthening the parallelism with “the plan of Israel’s Holy One”, but there is no ambiguity regarding whose works are anticipated.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Isa 56:12; 66:5.

<sup>115</sup> Noting the connection between v.12 and v.19, Williamson (*Isaiah 1-5*, 381) is correct to observe that while v.12 appears to refer to their disregard for God’s earlier works of salvation (cf., e.g., Deut 4:9; Josh 2:10), v.19 refers to something still future, namely their disregard for the announcement of impending judgment that is in view throughout the chapter.

<sup>116</sup> So Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12*, 189 (ET: 204).

<sup>117</sup> Blenkinsopp explains that its imagery of destruction is drawn from the practice of blanching or scorching the stubble after the harvest and the unpleasant experience of finding plants gone rotten (*Isaiah 1-39*, 215).

In 5:25-30 the reader learns that judgment involving foreign powers has become unavoidable. The passage concludes with the motif of YHWH's hand, the offensive weapon of the Divine Warrior outstretched (יָדוֹ יִטּוֹ) for judgment against his own people (v.25). In his hand, he holds an ensign (נִסִּי), summoning a nation from far away; vv.26-30 provide the vivid description of a foreign army on the march. Their charge is to bring YHWH's righteous punishment against Israel and Judah. The judgment demonstrates that despite the prophetic *paraenesis*, God's people continue to lack discernment; indeed, they have exchanged justice for injustice (1:16-17; 5:1-7), light for darkness (2:5; 5:30), the good of the land for a sword (1:19, 20; 5:25-30). Due to their failure to heed the prophet's הִוֹרֶה, to wash themselves, repent, and seek justice (1:10-17; 2:5; 5:12, 19, 24), a foreign power will come to shed the blood of God's people. Henceforth, Israel and Judah will join the cry of the oppressed, as judgment has become inevitable for them, not merely because of injustice (1:16-17) or idolatry (2:6-4:1), but because of their failure to heed the prophetic word (1:10; 2:3, 5; 5:12, 19, 24, 25b). That is why YHWH's children will experience divine discipline through foreign domination and exile (5:13) and why YHWH will demolish his vineyard (5:24a).

#### 2.4. Isaiah 24:3-13: General Extension to the Nations

God is executing a plan (יְעִי || דְּמָה, 14:24, 26) designed to encompass and ensnare every prideful, self-exalting, earthly power (chs.13-23; cf. 2:9). Hence, FI's message of judgment 'on that day' (cf. 13:6, 9) reaches far beyond Israel and Judah; YHWH's "hand is stretched out over all the nations" (הַיָּד הַנְּטוּיָה עַל-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם, 14:26; cf. v.27). Isaiah 13-23 thus contains oracles (בִּשְׁא, 13:1) against nations, cities, countries, and lands from Babylon to Tyre. Linguistic markers connect its features to those characteristic of the time of judgment that must precede restoration.<sup>118</sup> Several units are introduced by superscriptions,<sup>119</sup> and there are announcements concerning the 'day of YHWH',<sup>120</sup> with woe statements (17:12; 18:1) distinguishing that time from ch.40, which announces the end of judgment and the beginning of restoration. In conclusion of these oracles, the so-called 'Apocalypse of Isaiah' (chs.24-27) not only shows that YHWH is God and sovereign over all these nations, but that God aims to bring about universal peace at Zion

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Isa 1:1; 2:1, 2; 4:2; 5:30.

<sup>119</sup> See Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1, 11; 22:1; 23:1.

<sup>120</sup> Isa 13:6, 9; בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, 17:4, 7, 9; 19:16, 23, 24; 22:20, 25; 23:15; בַּעַת הַהוּא, 18:7.

(24:23). Isaiah 24-27, therefore, comprises a separate section within 13:1-27:13,<sup>121</sup> mirroring the movement of the book from a judgment affecting the whole earth to the restoration/recreation of the same.

Isa 24:1 begins this concluding section with הִנֵּה (“Look”), registering attention and shifting the focus from particular nations to the entire earth (הִנֵּה יְהוָה בּוֹקֵק אֶרֶץ). The chapter introduces the judgment of the whole creation, clearly indicating its cosmic scope and impact (vv.1-3; בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, v.21). The objective is to purify the earth in preparation for YHWH’s reign at Zion (v.23); hence, Zion remains the central focus of the vision.<sup>122</sup> It is as if to say, “There must be no remaining source of contamination; not only Zion, but the whole creation must be cleansed.”

Isaiah 25-27 follows, exploring the implications of this cosmic judgment for the phase of restoration. Chapter 25 begins a new section with 1<sup>st</sup>-person in v.1, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup>-person address and praise for YHWH’s accomplishment (vv.2-4). Here YHWH is praised because he has executed his plan (עֲצָה)—wonderful things devised long ago. Thus, ch.25 shifts from the establishment of YHWH’s reign at Zion “in glory before his elders” (24:23) to honor YHWH’s achievement of plans “faithful and sure” (25:1). Next, ch.26 commences with a song of praise for YHWH. The section concludes with 27:1-13, a poem containing four statements introduced by ‘in that day’. In that day, YHWH will slay the dragon from the sea (v.1); then “Pleasant Vineyard” and “Vineyard Keeper” will be reconciled (cf. 5:1-7). In that day, the dispersed will return from Egypt and Assyria, and they will worship at YHWH’s Holy Mountain (27:12-13). Sweeney helpfully summarizes the development: “[The unit] shifts its concern from YHWH’s punishment of the earth and its implications to YHWH’s blessing of the earth and its implications for both the nations and Israel.”<sup>123</sup> What this shows is that the whole creation requires the same remedy. To stand before the ultimate Judge, every earthly power must tread a path through cleansing-judgment. It begins with Zion, but moves out from there for Zion’s sake to encompass all nations. In that day, Zion will be the refuge in their midst (cf. 4:2-6).

Why must all this take place? The answer emerges in 24:3-6. Verse 3 begins with כִּי, explaining that the judgment will happen according to YHWH’s word (דְּבַר).<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Isaiah 28:1 begins a new section with “woe” (וָיָהּ), shifting the focus to the “drunkards of Ephraim.”

<sup>122</sup> Rendtorff points out that in ch.24 no concrete nations are named, and even the ‘ruined city’ (24:10-12) remains anonymous. “But then suddenly we read: “for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem” (24:23b). Again, then, this central word: Zion” (*Canonical Hebrew Bible*, 181).

<sup>123</sup> M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 312.

<sup>124</sup> “YHWH has spoken this word” (v.3): BHS regards “this word” (תִּהְיוּ דְבַר הַזֶּה) as an addition, recommending deletion, but textual support is missing. The formula כִּי יְהוָה דְּבַר alone suggests that v.3

Verses 4-5a depict the earth's woeful estate and vv.5b-6 spell out both the reasons for its destruction and the consequences of judgment for its inhabitants. A common curse (אלה, v.6) consumes the world due to their transgression of תורה and "decrees" (חק).<sup>125</sup> Its inhabitants "incur guilt" (ואשמו), because they have broken the "everlasting covenant" (ברית עולם, v.5).

The cosmic scope of the curse and judgment evokes the chaos of the flood, which God brought about due to the worldwide extent and impact of evil. The flood is analogous to this later divine decision both in the extent of judgment and in the deliverance of a remnant (v.6, Gen 6:5; cf. 9:6).<sup>126</sup> Unlike the flood, however, this judgment seems waterless.<sup>127</sup> Otto Kaiser calls it "a terrible drought."<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, as it extends to the entire world, it is flood-like insofar as YHWH's judgment affects everyone, eliminating all distinctions of religious office, political influence, or economic class (cf. vv.1-2). No one and nothing is exempt; earth and its inhabitants together are judged as if existing in a relationship of reciprocity—"but a few men are left" (ונשאר אנוש מזער).

Verse 5 articulates the grounds for this judgment, and v.6 has clause-initial על-כן (2x),<sup>129</sup> recalling 5:24 as it summarizes the consequences of the behavior of humanity. The תורה and "decrees" (חק) violated are not specified, although mention of drunkenness and reveling in vv.7-9 also recalls the viticultural theme from ch.5.<sup>130</sup> Mention of covenant, however, raises the question of its identity: is this covenant analogous to the Noahic covenant or the Mosaic covenant (and תורה)?

According to C. R. Seitz, "The most compelling reason for regarding the 'everlasting covenant' as the covenant with Noah is the national and cosmic scope presupposed by the chapter."<sup>131</sup> Dan Johnson, however, disagrees, asserting that the

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closes the summary introduction in 24:1-3. Nevertheless, if אלה is maintained, it provides a nice transition to vv.4-13, making the demonstrative kataphoric, as if to say, "For YHWH has spoken, and this is what he said."

<sup>125</sup> BHS regards "transgressed the תורה, violated the decree" as an addition, but there is no manuscript support for this view. The terms תורה and חק suggest Mosaic Torah, whereas ברית עולם might suggest the Noahic covenant.

<sup>126</sup> Isa 24:18-20 evoke the flood and suggest the cosmic scope of the judgment: "For sluices are opened from on high, and the earth's foundations quake. The earth will be utterly smashed up; the earth indeed shakes to and fro, the earth will surely reel. The earth staggers like a drunken man, it sways back and forth like a hut. Since its rebellion weighs heavily on it, it will collapse and not rise again" (cf. Gen 1:9ff; 7:11).

<sup>127</sup> But cf. Isa 8:7; 27:12-13

<sup>128</sup> O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39* (Transl. R. Wilson, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 191.

<sup>129</sup> Introducing a statement of fact (BDB, 486-87), "For this reason" or "so it happens that" (HALOT, 833).

<sup>130</sup> Isa 5:1-7, 11-12; 27:2-5; 56:9-12; cf. Gen 9:20.

<sup>131</sup> C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 180.



association of this covenant with “laws” (תּוֹרָה, pl.) and “statute” (חֹק), coupled with the unlikelihood of any breach of an “everlasting” (עוֹלָם) covenant, requires the identification of בְּרִית with the Mosaic covenant established at Sinai. The Noahic covenant, according to Johnson, is impossible for humanity to break because it is founded on God’s unilateral and unconditional promise never again to destroy the world by a flood. These factors, he thinks, also exclude any reference to a covenant that is in any sense a “world” covenant. Therefore, he restricts the scope of the covenant to Israel and the judgment to Jerusalem.<sup>132</sup> But this conclusion overlooks the vital connection maintained in FI between Zion and the surrounding world, between domestic and foreign affairs.

In contrast to Johnson’s view, Marvin Sweeney constructively points to the precise relationship between Zion and cosmic-order as a solution. He supports his observations by appeal to the ‘basic meaning’ of עוֹלָם—not ‘everlasting’ but ‘universal’ or ‘world’—and explains how this covenant is associated with Zion as the navel of the earth.<sup>133</sup> Since the larger context expresses a concern consistent with both the cosmic scope of the judgment and the crucial concern of FI for Zion, Sweeney’s view seems better than those proposed by either Johnson or Seitz. Sweeney’s explanation shows that the so-called ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’ is cosmic in scope yet Zion-centered. As Zion-centered, it is an integral part of FI’s vision and might not have an apocalyptic character after all. Its ultimate concern, rather, is for YHWH’s sovereignty and his desire for worship from his people, the returned exiles (27:13). This worship of YHWH presumes the reestablishment of מִשְׁפָּט and a new era of peace for Zion (24:23; cf. 1:10-17, 27). As Rendtorff plainly expresses it, “[T]his emphasized mention of Zion provides an echo of the whole horizon of expectation that began back with the vision of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (2:1-5).”<sup>134</sup> In fact, it is the reestablishment of justice at Zion that brings about the re-ordering of the entire creation, including international adherence to חֹק, תּוֹרָה and בְּרִית עוֹלָם. Thus, the

<sup>132</sup> See Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24-27* (JSOTSup 61; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 27.

<sup>133</sup> Sweeney writes, “בְּרִית עוֹלָם refers to the covenant that establishes the basic order of the world or creation. This is evident in the use of the term בְּרִית עוֹלָם in reference to the covenant with Noah in Gen 9:16. Although the term is elsewhere employed in relation to specifically Israelite institutions or contexts, it relates these institutions or contexts to the fundamental order of creation in Israelite worldview... One must keep in mind that Zion, by virtue of its identity as the site of YHWH’s temple, was conceived as the center of the earth (in competition with Babylon in Babylonian mythology), and thus of the natural order of creation in Israelite tradition . . . . In the present context, the violation of the בְּרִית עוֹלָם represents the disruption of the world or cosmic order” (*Isaiah 1-39*, 323). Compare William J. Dumbrell: “The use of the Noachian covenant materials in the Bible appeared to justify the assertion that in the post-fall era the notion of covenant contained the aspect of redemption of creation as well as the maintenance of order.” See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1984), 43.

<sup>134</sup> R. Rendtorff, *Canonical Hebrew Bible*, 181.

central focus of FI upon a society ordered under YHWH's **תורה** at Zion remains intact despite this extension of judgment to the nations.

All told, there is no contradiction between the vision of cosmic judgment in chs.24-27 (chs.13-27) and the vision of the nations brightly streaming to Zion in 2:2-5. Instead, the so-called 'Apocalypse' should be seen as an alternative (albeit negative) picture of Zion as YHWH's dwelling-place for the benefit not merely of all Israel, but of all peoples (cf. 2:2-4; 19:24). International adherence to YHWH's **תורה** from Zion is the *sine qua non* for upholding the created order. Only here within chs.24-27, the vivid depiction of YHWH's action in overcoming chaos and death for the establishment of a new age heightens the picture of universal peace (25:6-8; 27:1). Surely, the ultimate aim of YHWH's cleansing judgment is the definitive renewal of his vineyard (chs.24-27).<sup>135</sup> The road to peace, however, requires the universal submission of both Israel (chs.1-5) and the nations (chs.13-23) to YHWH's **דבר** and **תורה**. And so 2:5 carries the thesis, summoning Jacob-Israel to trust and obey, not only for the sake of Zion but also for the sake of the world: "Come, let us walk in the light of YHWH."

## 2.5. Conclusion

Plainly, Zion (1:1; 2:1; cf. 5:1) is a major focus of FI's interest throughout the prologue (chs.1-5). It is the dwelling place of Jacob's God (2:3), and as a paramount concern, FI's programmatic vision (2:2-4) discloses the eventual establishment of God's worldwide reign from there. This vision also demonstrates the essential role of **תורה** in the administration of YHWH's rule at Mount Zion. YHWH will exalt his dwelling place as a beacon for all nations. The peoples will see it, and they will approach the holy mountain to receive teaching (**יר** *hip'il*) in accord with God's ways (**דרך**) or paths (**ארח**). In 2:3, **תורה** is paired with **דבר יהוה** as God's instruments, and YHWH is portrayed as a judge presiding over a world court, judging (**שפט**) and arbitrating (**יכח** *hip'il*) for the many peoples who will come there to train (**למד**) for peace (v.4). The focus on Zion, then, indicates that God desires something more basic than the welfare of David's City. God exalts Zion because he wants to magnify **תורה** with the ultimate aim of catechizing the nations. YHWH's agenda is for all people to walk in heaven's ways. Hence, with 2:2-4, FI builds a striking platform for cosmic order (**משפט**). When Zion is exalted, the peoples will come, streaming radiantly up the elevated mountain in submission to the God of

<sup>135</sup> Cf. 1:8; 4:2-6; 5:1-7.

Jacob. What is more, they will come in fulfillment of YHWH's higher purpose, which involves their reeducation for peace according to his **תורה**.

In 2:5, the prophet summons Jacob-Israel (in effect) to join these nations ahead of the vision's fulfillment. That is, he exhorts the House of Jacob to attend to YHWH's word *now* by walking in the light of YHWH. This word, in line with the vision, is already illuminating their path (**אור**, 2:3). Isa 2:5 therefore belongs with 2:2-4 as a present exhortation (v.5) founded upon YHWH's promise regarding the peaceful subjugation of all nations, including Israel (vv.2-4, 5; cf. 1:18). Hence, the design of the whole (2:2-5) is to motivate Israel's own obedient response to **דבר־יהוה** and **תורה**. Consequently, the question posed by FI's programmatic vision—the question addressed by the broader context of the prologue—is whether Jacob-Israel will return in loyalty to YHWH by seeking the training that God's prophet currently offers.

As it is a prophet's responsibility to teach the people YHWH's way (cf. Deut 18:15-19), Isa 1:10-17 presently provides substantive training. In v.10, the prophet refers to his own *paraenesis* as **דבר־יהוה** and **תורה**, for it is through his instruction that Jacob-Israel must learn (**למד**, v.17) what YHWH desires. The prophet summons Israel to join cultic purity to societal reformation by correcting oppression, specifically targeting the exercise of **משפט** in the courts of society. In imitation of the heavenly Judge, Israel is responsible for the care and protection of society's weakest members (v.17). Thus, 1:18 shows that YHWH summons Israel to engage in arbitration (**יבץ** *hip'il*, cf. 2:3) ahead of the nations for the reestablishment of **משפט** and the preservation of peace (v.19). The content of the prophet's speech demonstrates YHWH's aim to reform the society for life and blessing (vv.18-20). Prophetic torah is thus an apt description of the speech of YHWH's prophetic agent in 1:10-17 and 2:2-5.

In 2:6-9, it appears that Judah's leaders and people collectively fail to heed the prophetic *paraenesis*. According to the ways of the impious nations, the House of Jacob pursues idols, amasses wealth, and resorts to sorcery and divination. The prophet therefore indicts them for apostasy (2:6-8). They disregard YHWH's word and choose the path of ignorance and self-reliance with the rest of humanity. Therefore, 2:9 broadens the referent to include "humanity" in general. It appears that Jacob-Israel's choices result in effacing any meaningful distinction between God's people and the surrounding nations. Moreover, their conduct demonstrates neglect of the future-oriented vision (2:2-4). God will judge them for imitating the present wicked conduct of the foreign nations rather than the future righteous conduct of people radiantly streaming to Zion (2:3). If this generation of God's

children (1:2-9) is disobedient and recalcitrant, unwilling to repent and accept the prophet's instruction and discipline now, the prophet realizes that YHWH must not forgive/exalt them (2:9b; cf. 1:21-26).

The verdict of judgment is most clear in 5:18-24 and 24:3-6. As 5:12 and 5:19 indicate, the people fail to either see (רָאָה) or understand (יָדַע) YHWH's agenda (מַעֲשֵׂה) as disclosed through his prophet. Instead, they display their foolish disregard for YHWH by taunting YHWH's prophet and rejecting YHWH's plan (עֲצָה). For rejecting this תּוֹרָה and spurning the word (אִמְרָה) of YHWH of Hosts (v.24), a foreign power is marching to destroy them (vv.25-30; cf. 1:20). The rebellion of Israel together with all humanity leads to chaos, as universal injustice violates the בְּרִית עוֹלָם (24:5; Gen 9:16). Thus, due to the transgression of הַתּוֹרָה (Isa 24:3-6), a common curse consumes the earth. Earth's inhabitants incur guilt (אָשָׁם), and the entire world suffers. Thus, the earth and its inhabitants experience retribution, purposed and executed by YHWH in accord with his word (דְּבַר, v.3; 25:1). If 2:2-4 is FI's vision for peace, then 5:18-24 and 24:3-6 are its opposite. The negative response of all humanity to דְּבַר־יְהוָה and תּוֹרָה has opened the door to curse rather than blessing (cf. 1:18-20).

The realization of Isaiah's peaceful vision (2:2-4) must await a 'day' beyond the days of judgment, when Zion's radiance will be restored (4:2-6). If that day is connected to the text-internal sequence of 'days' (1:1), then 2:2-4 offers a future-oriented vision for survivors after judgment. It thus becomes a message for a new generation, for a time 'beyond' the days determined for Judah's kings according to the superscription (1:1; cf. 40:1). Consequently, 2:2-4 proclaims to the survivors too that YHWH desires to settle all disputes by his תּוֹרָה. Yet, as the exhortation in 2:5 indicates, the starting-point for the ascent of all nations remains Jacob-Israel's own response in recognition of the true God (cf. 1:2-3, 10-17, 18-20). In context, then, 2:2-4 holds out hope for a day when survivors in Zion (4:2-6) will play an integral role in YHWH's plan (2:5). The hope of the world now depends upon the creation of a new generation that will both diligently seek and humbly respond to the prophetic torah (1:10-17; 2:3, 5; 5:24).

## Chapter 3

### “Your Eyes Will See Your Teacher”: The Portrait of Isaiah as YHWH’s Witness and Disciple

#### *3.1. Introduction*

The last chapter showed that peace through subjugation of the nations would require Israel’s submission to דבר־יהוה and תורה. In this chapter, I examine the profile of Isaiah ben Amoz, with particular attention to FI’s depiction of Isaiah’s commission, witness, and writing. My interest is neither to construct a biography nor to understand his subjective experience, but to discover the contribution of Isaiah’s profile to the *intentio operis*. Narrative accounts detail the prophet’s experience and official task (chs.6; 7-8; 20; 36-39), enhancing and deepening understanding of both chs.1-5 and the import of his witness and writing (8:16-23; 28:9-13; 30:8-17). In the profile of Isaiah, through graphic depictions of Isaiah’s experience, speech, and actions, a theological model or redemptive pattern emerges for Israel of the new arising from the old.<sup>1</sup> Hence, these descriptions were written ‘for our instruction’ (cf. Rom 15:4), for the benefit of Isaiah’s disciples (including later readers). The prophet’s commissioning in Isaiah 6 provides a logical starting point, for here we begin to perceive why YHWH calls him a sign and portent in Israel (20:3; cf. 8:18).

#### *3.2. Isaiah’s Paradigmatic Service*

##### *3.2.1. Isaiah 6:1-13, “How long?”*

Like ch.5, ch.6 is transitional and underscores both the rectitude and the inevitability of judgment. Millard Lind observes its location, suggesting it functions as a “hinge between two emphases: Israel and Judah’s transgression of the rule of the Holy by integrating with Near Eastern power politics (7:1-8:15), and their violation of that same rule in their domestic relationships (2:1-5:30).”<sup>2</sup> Hence, chs.2-5 (injustice in domestic relations) and 7-8 (disloyalty in foreign policy) make the prophet’s charge in ch.6 comprehensible,<sup>3</sup> while ch.6 authorizes and confirms the message (and the messenger) of God’s rule. Chapter 6

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<sup>1</sup> Childs comments regarding ch.6, “His experience of ‘death and rebirth’ is constitutive of his role in this chapter” (Childs, *Isaiah*, 52).

<sup>2</sup> Millard C. Lind, “Political Implications of Isaiah 6,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 337.

<sup>3</sup> See Willem A. M. Beuken, “...the people’s unwillingness and incapacity to hear, see, and to convert cannot be understood without the preceding series of accusations in chapters 1-5.” See W. A. M. Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 against the Background of Isaiah 1” *CTJ* 39 (2004): 73.

grounds the prophet's words in a decree of the divine council.<sup>4</sup> Unlike ch.2 or ch.5, however, ch.6 does not begin with a vision of the future (2:1) or a poetic parable (5:1-7); rather, 6:1-13 is a coherent unit of 1<sup>st</sup>-person narrative.<sup>5</sup> Chapter 6 accords well with the content and purification theme of chs.1-5, though its narrative form is quite distinct from the preceding poetic material. Their correlation is seen particularly in the depiction of Israel as intractable and idolatrous, a people whose disloyalty to YHWH is evident in their rejection of the prophetic word (1:10; 2:3, 5; 5:12, 19, 24). In ch.6, Isaiah discovers that his own role in the unholy movement of Israel's history will be to advance his people's hardening (6:9-10) until YHWH's vineyard (5:1-7) becomes a desolate wilderness (6:11-13). Notably, then, the purpose of YHWH and the words of his prophet continue to come together as ch.6 casts its shadow over chs.7-8. Subsequent chapters outline the course YHWH will take and why the people should have taken God's word seriously.<sup>6</sup> Because they fail to comprehend and embrace God's purposes, Isaiah does not bring them glad tidings; instead, the prophet's word becomes the catalyst for judgment.<sup>7</sup>

Isaiah 6 begins with a superscription (cf. 2:1), a temporal clause tethering this narrative to the intra-textual sequence of 'days' concerning Judah's kings (cf. 1:1; 7:1; 14:28; 36:1; 38:5). The episode takes place "in the year King Uzziah died" (בשנת־מות, המלך עזיהו, 6:1a), and a superscription introducing Ahaz's time, rapidly follows (ידיהו, בימי אחז בן־יוותם, 7:1).<sup>8</sup> However, when in 6:1 the prophet testifies, "The old king is dead," he does not name an earthly successor to David's throne.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the prophet is

<sup>4</sup> So also B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 58 and M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 140.

<sup>5</sup> *Wayyiqtol* forms initiate each section in vv.1, 5, 8, and 11.

<sup>6</sup> See J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 60. Aside from the content of Isaiah's confession in v.5 ("unclean"), the reasons why Isaiah is to harden the people are never specified in ch.6. This, of course, also points to its role as a 'hinge'.

<sup>7</sup> Their lack of understanding, which as Rendtorff explains is "now laid upon Israel as doom... has its roots in Israel's own sin." See R. Rendtorff, "Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book," in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (M. Kohl, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 174-75.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 7 continues with 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. narrative accounts of Isaiah's role during the latter king's reign.

<sup>9</sup> FI says nothing about the circumstances of Uzziah's death or Jotham's succession to the throne. It merely reminds the reader that the Davidic king, Uzziah, has died (6:1). Elsewhere, the Chronicler reports that Isaiah also wrote an account called "The Acts of Uzziah" (2 Chr 26:22), but no such document is extant. According to the Chronicler, Uzziah was a good king until he became strong militarily (cf. vv.13-15). In his might, he exalted himself and violated the priestly torah (vv.17ff). As an immediate consequence, he was cursed with skin disease and condemned to die unclean: "When he became strong, he grew proud [גבה לבר; cf. Deut 17:20], to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to YHWH his God and entered the temple of YHWH to burn incense on the altar of incense . . . . Thus, king Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death" (2 Chr 26:16, 21; cf. the account of Uzziah [= Azariah] in 2 Kings 15:5).

Although this Chronicles text is an interesting inter-text with Isa 6, within the book of Isaiah, the death of Uzziah merely serves as a temporal marker. It indicates in a general way the time when Isaiah's vision took place; its significance is its connection to Isa 1:1 and its role as the point of transition from a period of basic stability to an initial phase of divine judgment ('death'). The details of Isaiah's vision (and his failure to mention Uzziah's successor) also focus the reader's attention on the living God, the presence of YHWH as the true king (המלך, 6:5). Still, the correlation of Isa 6:1-13 with 2 Chr 26:16-22 supports the

met head-on by a theophanic vision: “I saw the sovereign Lord sitting upon a high and lofty throne” (v.1b).

The entire episode occurs within the Jerusalem temple (בית || v.1, היכל, v.4), though earthly symbols transpose into their heavenly archetypes.<sup>10</sup> The most outstanding feature of the place is its high and lofty throne (בסא רם ונשא, v.1).<sup>11</sup> The astonishing picture thus evokes Zion’s exaltation in 2:2 (cf. v.12),<sup>12</sup> and the divine Lord is the only ruler present. God has already taken his exalted seat to direct the world’s affairs (6:1, 8), and the temple doubles as his cultic-center and court. Here, the Lord is revealed before the prophet’s eyes visibly and dramatically, with six-winged seraphs (שרפים) hovering in attendance about the heavenly throne. It is striking that, as they fly, these dazzling creatures must cover (בסא) or shield themselves<sup>13</sup> from the awesome splendor, glory, and holiness of God (v.2). Their task is to herald his majesty and declare his praises (v.3). As they do, the very thresholds of the temple quake, their voices thundering: קדוש קדוש קדוש.<sup>14</sup> These heavenly creatures not only proclaim the Lord’s unparalleled holiness and unrivaled glory (כבוד)—they also publish the name and identity of God: יהוה צבאות. The Holy One of Israel,<sup>15</sup> the majestic Lord of glory, is none other than YHWH, the Divine Warrior who commands all armies.<sup>16</sup>

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observation that the majestic vision of YHWH as the only properly exalted one (6:1; cf. 2:9) underscores the requirement of holiness and explains YHWH’s decision to purify and refine the people through judgment. Thus, 2 Chr 26 helps the reader to see that the cleansing-action in Isa 6:5-6 and the commission and message of Isa 6:8-13 are the natural repercussion of Isaiah’s solidarity with an unclean people.

<sup>10</sup> That the “skirts” (שול, or “bottoms”) of YHWH’s robe filled the temple (מלאים את-ההיכל) as his glory fills the entire earth (מלא כל-הארץ כבודו) suggests that no temple built by human hands is really able to house the sovereign Lord who made heaven and earth (1 Kgs 18:27; Isa 66:1-2). See J. J. M. Roberts, “The Visual Elements in Isaiah’s Vision in light of Judean and Near Eastern Sources,” in *From Babel to Babylon: Essays on Biblical History and Literature in Honour of Brian Peckham* (J. R. Wood and M. Leuchter, eds.; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 204.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, Wildberger identifies vv.1-4 formally as a *Thronratsvision* (*Jesaja*, 236).

<sup>12</sup> Consistent with the theme of chs.1-5, then, YHWH will be exalted above all rival powers, as ultimately YHWH realizes his plan on earth as in heaven. Indeed, YHWH brooks no rival, anyone and anything that sets itself or its policies above YHWH and his plan will be humiliated and abased, cut down and destroyed—including his chosen king and chosen people (Isa 2:2-4, 5, 8-22; 5:19, 24; 6:11-13; 13-23).

<sup>13</sup> J. J. M. Roberts finds a parallel in the Egyptian art and iconography of this period, in which winged-cobras extend their wings to shield the divine king or deity from evil. The contrast with Isaiah’s vision is clear, for here, “Nothing is said of any attempt of these creatures to protect the enthroned king Yahweh. Instead, they seem to be protecting themselves from Yahweh’s glory.” Compare the response of both earthly and heavenly creatures in Exod 3:6; 1 Kgs 19:13; Ps 89:7, and see Roberts, “The Visual Elements in Isaiah’s Vision,” 207.

<sup>14</sup> YHWH’s superlative holiness (the *Trishagion* of Christianity or the *Kedushah* of Judaism) is here expressed through a three-fold repetition, the number three expressing completeness (cf., e.g., Gen 6:16; 22:4; Exod 19:1, 11; Lev 19:6; 1 Kgs 17:21; 18:1; Isa 19:24; 3:30; Hos 6:2). For a discussion of the value of numbers in the Hebrew Bible, see the introduction to Cornelis Houtman’s *Exodus Volume 1* (HCOT; Kampen: Kok, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> The reader is meant to understand that it is this vision that prompts Isaiah to use the title, “The Holy One of Israel,” for God. Baruch Levine, “The Language of Holiness: Perceptions of the Sacred in the

The prophet is the only “earthly intruder into the heavenly scene,”<sup>17</sup> and yet, to his amazement (v.5c), he survives to interpret the vision.<sup>18</sup> Isa 6:1-4, 5 is the written testimony concerning what he perceived: verbs of seeing (רָאָה) in v.1 and v.5 enclose the report, providing the reader with a 1<sup>st</sup>-person account of the prophet’s encounter with the sovereign Lord. In fact, the prophet identifies the figure as the true King and acknowledges his name: “I saw the Lord of all... the true King,<sup>19</sup> YHWH of Hosts, my own eyes have seen.”<sup>20</sup> Sweeney observes correctly that the theophany (vv.1-4) provides the context for the activities and speeches that appear in the following verses (vv.5-7, 8-10, 11-13).<sup>21</sup> A textlinguistic observation supports his remark, for in each section the prophet identifies YHWH as the sovereign Lord (יְהוָה, vv.1, 8, 11). Therefore, in addition to the time, place, and circumstances of ch.6, his identification of YHWH brings each part together into a cohesive whole.

The thematic movement of the chapter also achieves integration. Although the first note concerns death (מוֹת, v.1), the closing note in the vision of a holy seed (זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ, 6:13c) indicates hope for the renewal of life.<sup>22</sup> In fact, *holiness* not only brackets the entire report (6:3, 13c), but comprises its principal theme: YHWH’s purity or holiness—which indicates his transcendence and total separation from all that is profane or unclean<sup>23</sup>—qualifies the entire picture of the Lord’s exalted presence and the manifestation of his

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Hebrew Bible,” in *Backgrounds for the Bible* (M. O’Connor and D. N. Freedman, eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 253.

<sup>16</sup> The context of ch.6, subsequent to 5:25-30 and preceding chs.7-8, expresses the glory and majesty of the true King that provokes dread and awe from his subjects both heavenly and earthly. This context also suggests that צְבָאוֹת (צָבָא) describes YHWH in his capacity to command armies. Norman K. Gottwald describes it as a double-entendre, referring to both heavenly and Israelite armies. In this context, however, the Divine Warrior also commands foreign armies as the instrument of just judgment. See N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979; repr., Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 682.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998). The speaker does not identify himself by name, “although it is generally assumed that Isaiah, the eighth-century prophet, is speaking.” So, Peter Miscall, *Isaiah, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 45.

<sup>18</sup> Notice that while the reader is instructed by the vision report, and the prophet’s survival is of course significant, the prophet’s charge does not include telling the people about this vision of YHWH (so, Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh,” 75). Nevertheless, this aspect of the prophet’s profile *is* integral to the message of the prophetic book.

<sup>19</sup> “the true King” (v.5): In addition to the definite direct object marker (אֵת), מֶלֶךְ is marked with the article. YHWH is the king who alone is truly King; the sovereign Lord cannot be compared to any other king.

<sup>20</sup> וָאֵרָא אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי

<sup>21</sup> Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 133.

<sup>22</sup> Most scholars regard v.13c as a redactional element, but as Gene Tucker recognizes that it is impossible to reach a firm conclusion on the matter: “The editors of the book, if not Isaiah or the earliest tradents, saw that the national disaster could be a cleansing punishment and that new life could grow out of it” (*Isaiah 1-39*, 104). It is best to see it as a concise commentary on YHWH’s words; hence, as an element of inner-biblical interpretation, it is an instance of inspired redaction.

<sup>23</sup> For this conception of holiness or impurity, see Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 26, and see Phillip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).



majestic glory in all the earth.<sup>24</sup> The identification of “The Holy One” as “YHWH of Hosts” heralds God’s government of society, involving just retribution, blessing and curse, harmony and disorder, life and death.<sup>25</sup> It also proclaims that God requires holiness from his people.<sup>26</sup> In the absence of holiness, cleansing-judgment is the expected repercussion, entailing disorder, disharmony, and death both for Israel and the prophet. Nevertheless, if 6:13c recognizes hope, then the movement of ch.6, like that of chs.2-5, reinforces the point that judgment is the inevitable path to renewal for Israel.

Confronted only with this vision of God, however, the prophet discerns that Israel’s circumstances are quite desperate and hopeless. Indeed, as his reaction demonstrates, he understands the situation perfectly, for he immediately pronounces another woe—only this time upon himself (וְאִנִּי לֹא־אֶחָדִי)!<sup>27</sup> His eyes have seen the sovereign Lord—this alone warrants destruction (“I am cut off,” חָתַךְ, *nip ‘al*; cf. Exod 33:20)—but most significant in the proximate context are the reasons he gives for this expectation. The first involves his self-assessment: “I am a man with unclean lips.”<sup>28</sup> According to Victor Hurowitz, “Upon seeing YHWH by surprise, Isaiah panics, because he knows he is unprepared [for an audience with the sovereign Lord].”<sup>29</sup> Hence, this realization prompts a confession, as the prophet immediately acknowledges his guilt.

The second reason reveals the prophet’s profound grasp of his collective responsibility, the concept that a prophet cannot safely be isolated from the people he serves (v.5; cf. 1:9; 2:5).<sup>30</sup> As R. P. Carroll explains, the relationship between speaker and

<sup>24</sup> McConville notes many examples of the use of ‘glory’ for the dramatic manifestation or self-disclosure of God in “God’s ‘Name’ and ‘Glory’” *TynBul* 30 (1979): 149-163. Psalm 108:6, for example, expresses the hope that God’s glory would cover the earth (cf., e.g., Exod 19:6; 24:15ff; Num 14:21; Deut 5:24; Pss 102:16; 104:31f; 96:3; 72:18; 145:11f; Isa 28:5; 35:2 || “majesty” מַהֲרֹאֲשֵׁי; 40:5; 42:8; 48:11), and Exod 14:18 indicates its purpose, namely, that “...you shall know that I am YHWH” (cf. Isa 11:9). See also, Tremper Longman III, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament,” in *The Glory of God* (C. W. Morgan and R. A. Peterson, eds.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 47-78.

<sup>25</sup> See Isa 5:16, 19, 24; 4:3; cf., e.g., Exod 19:5-6; Lev 10:3; 11:44-45; Num 15:40; 16:7; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 23:14.

<sup>26</sup> At Sinai the whole nation became holy, a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6), and Israel’s response in holiness and purity was to reflect God’s maintenance of order and harmony in the created world (Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). John Gammie writes, “A unity of the Old Testament can be discerned in this unified response to holiness on the part of Israel: holiness requires purity.” J. G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Isa 3:9; 11; cf. 24:16; [חָתַךְ] 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, and 22.

<sup>28</sup> Victor Hurowitz has shown from Akkadian parallels that the reference to lips is a synecdoche, expressing the totality of the person’s being (“Isaiah’s Impure Lips and their Purification in Light of Akkadian Sources” *HUCA* 60 [1989]: 41).

<sup>29</sup> See Victor Hurowitz, “Isaiah’s Impure Lips,” 83. “Panic” may be an infelicitous term, since Isaiah wisely discerns his woeful estate; that is, he recognizes his (unintentional) ritual impurity (טָמֵא).

<sup>30</sup> See the excellent study by Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 196; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

community is a relationship of solidarity,<sup>31</sup> which here is expressed by identifying his pollution with that of his people: “I live among a people with unclean lips” (cf. 29:13).<sup>32</sup> The placement of this encounter after chs. 1-5 supports the connection, explaining why the prophet offers no defense of his people: he already recognizes their pollution and guilt.<sup>33</sup> Now, as Brueggemann clarifies, “[H]e stands within that community, condemned along with all the others.”<sup>34</sup> Thus exposed, the prophet awaits the judgment due him in part because of the impurity of the people with whom he identifies.

YHWH does not dispute the prophet’s assessment or the implications of his communal relationship, but heaven’s response is both surprising and significant (6:6-7). First, a seraph acts, applying a glowing coal from the altar (probably the altar of incense<sup>35</sup>) to one of the most indispensable and sensitive parts of a prophet’s body, his lips (שפתים)! Next the seraph speaks, interpreting its actions through words. By a painful process of burning, the seraph has purified the prophet. The cauterizing has removed his guilt, purged his sin (כפר, *pu‘al*), and enabled his healing (v.7).<sup>36</sup> Thus, by wounding him, the seraph has transformed him from unclean to clean. Consequently, the prophet no longer shares the impurity of the nation. Since the seraph’s operation has symbolically cleansed him, Isaiah is now ritually prepared to participate within the heavenly society. With clean lips, he is *fit* not only for an audience with the Lord, but also for serving on God’s behalf.

Indeed, the next thing he hears (שמע, v.8) is the voice of the sovereign Lord addressing his court: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Isaiah now stands on the Lord’s side as a participant (ל, 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.) in the divine council,<sup>37</sup> “the policy room of

<sup>31</sup> R. P. Carroll, “Blindsight and the Vision Thing: Blindness and Insight in the Book of Isaiah” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 85.

<sup>32</sup> Again, the lips are clearly synecdochic, but highlighting the specific connection between Isaiah’s lips and the lips of his people may have in view the prophet’s role in intercession and the people’s prayer in the context of worship (cf. 1:15). This is significant since the passage marks the same transition in Israel’s story as the stopping of Ezekiel’s mouth in Ezek 3:26. By his inability to intercede for the people, YHWH indicated the inevitability of their judgment—only here Isaiah will speak, but his speaking will have a negative impact (see below). The study by V. Hurowitz supports this view, for in several of the texts he examines the purification initiated by cleansing the mouth is a prelude to standing before a divine council sitting in judgment (“Isaiah’s Impure Lips,” 41).

<sup>33</sup> Isa 1:10-17, 21, 23; 2:6; 3:8; 5:7, 19, 20, 24.

<sup>34</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 59. Of course, pollution and sin are never merely individual or merely corporate matters.

<sup>35</sup> The presence of smoke filling the temple (v.4), the solidarity of the prophet with the community, and the correlation with 2 Chr 26:16-22 suggest that the altar in Isa 6:6 may be the altar of incense (cf. Num 16:46-47). The appearance of YHWH in the Holy of Holies, in the cloud above the mercy seat (Lev 16:14, 30-34), suggests to Sweeney that the time of the vision must be identified with the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 140).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. 1:16, 24-27; 4:4.

<sup>37</sup> See the correlative experience of Micaiah ben Imlah, whose vision also coincides with his commissioning during the time of Ahab king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah (1 Kgs 22:19ff.).

world government.”<sup>38</sup> Otto Kaiser observes that the prophet “resolutely takes God’s side without enquiring into the consequences which will follow for his own person.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, he steps forth at once, offering his services in response to YHWH’s summons—“Here I am, send me!” (v.8d)—and YHWH recognizes him. Replying to him with the commissioning formula, “Go, you will say” (לך ואמרת), he identifies him as a messenger. Within the statement of his charge, God embeds an outline of what the prophet must tell the people (v.9). Though he now stands with the holy God, Isaiah must nevertheless stand against the unholy nation.

The prophet’s commission as an emissary for YHWH of Hosts was made possible only through his painful purification; without that singular cleansing action, Isaiah would be unqualified either to stand with God or to carry out his commission as YHWH’s spokesperson to the people.<sup>40</sup> Because of this painful process, however, he has become the symbol and embodiment, the legitimate representative and authorized emissary, of YHWH’s heavenly government. YHWH is Isaiah’s God and Isaiah is his prophet, the sanctified agent of the heavenly administration. The Lord of Hosts sends him equipped with a word, which implements the plan of the sovereign Lord of history (cf. 55:11). This word will serve not simply as the witness to his people, but as the mechanism to further YHWH’s purposes for the world.

The details of YHWH’s speech explain how this will be so. In 6:9-10, YHWH specifies what Isaiah must say, and he outlines its intended impact on Jacob-Israel. When set out thusly, the text’s rhetorical features become apparent:

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<sup>38</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 60. YHWH governs world affairs from his heavenly throne.

<sup>39</sup> O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 130.

<sup>40</sup> This may be the place to mention the debate about whether Isa 6 depicts Isaiah’s call. There is no explicit indication that this is the prophet’s first encounter with YHWH, so it is hard to determine whether this is a call account or a re-commissioning. The placement of Isa 6 as a hinge between chs.2-5 and chs.7-8 suggests that the account of his vision experience is meant not only to inform but also to authorize and legitimize the prophet’s entire career. Therefore, it is perhaps best to identify this chapter as Isaiah’s call, a vocation account that focuses primarily on his preparation and commissioning. As such, its purpose is to authenticate the prophet as a spokesperson for YHWH and to aid in expressing the prophet’s overall message (cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 542). In the context of the prophetic book, it has the same role as the word of God, and so it is included for the reader’s instruction. In a well-known article, N. Habel, identifies six elements of a call narrative (cf. Exod 3-4; Jer 1; Ezek 1-3), and many commentators note that Isaiah 6 has all six elements—divine confrontation (Isa 6:1-2), an introductory word (vv.3-7), commission (vv.8-10), objection (v.11a), and assurance (vv.11b-13)—except a sign. Surely, here as elsewhere, Isaiah himself is the sign (6:6-7; 8:18; 20:3). See N. Habel, “Form and Significance of the Call Narratives” *ZAW* 77 (1965): 297-323.

<sup>9</sup> “‘Hear,<sup>41</sup> indeed, but do not understand;  
 see, indeed, but do not acknowledge.’  
<sup>10</sup> Make the mind of this people insensitive,  
 make its ears dull,  
 and seal its eyes,  
 lest<sup>42</sup> it see with its eyes,  
 and it hear with its ears,  
 and with its mind understand,  
 and repent  
 and be healed.”

The embedded quotation and its intended impact exhibit an extensive repetition of key words,<sup>43</sup> which are set forth chiastically in v.10, and vv.9-10 exhibit characteristics of Hebrew parallelism.<sup>44</sup> These literary and rhetorical features stand out as important clues to the meaning of these two verses.

First, the chiasm in v.10 directs attention to the sensory organs, especially the eyes (עֵינַי).<sup>45</sup> YHWH explains that the prophetic message will have the effect of shutting down these organs, making the mind (לִב/לִבָּב) insensitive<sup>46</sup> to his words (v.10), and preventing understanding. Second, the inclusio in vv.9 and 10 focuses upon dulling the sense of hearing (שָׁמַע):

<sup>9</sup> שָׁמַעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ  
 וְאַל־תִּבְיִנוּ  
 פֶּן־... שָׁמַע...<sup>10cd</sup>  
 יִבִּין...

This feature also shows the vital relationship between heeding and understanding (בִּינָה) (cf. 1:2-3).

The combination of these two features (chiasm and *inclusio*) highlights those constituents of the two verses that do not fit either pattern, namely, “do not acknowledge” (וְאַל־תִּדְעוּ, v.9), “...lest...it repent and be healed” (וְשָׁב וּרְפָא לוֹ, v.10). Put

<sup>41</sup> “Hear, indeed, but...see, indeed, but” (v.9): According to *IBHS*, 586, the inf. abs. expresses affirmation, indicating a strong contrast with what follows.

<sup>42</sup> “lest it see...hear...understand” (v.10): פֶּן negates the subsequent clauses, indicating the purpose for the making insensitive, dulling, and sealing of the mind, ears, and eyes (see *IBHS*, 661).

<sup>43</sup> Words (verbs and nouns) pertaining to the senses are repeated frequently, supplying cohesion between vv.9-10 and the whole narrative (v.1-7, 8-13). Seeing with the eyes (רָאָה and עֵינַי in vv.1, 5, 9 and 10) and hearing with the ears (שָׁמַע and אָזַן in vv.8, 9 and 10) are linked to understanding with the mind or heart (בִּינָה and לִבָּב in vv.9 and 10).

<sup>44</sup> The two cola in v.9bc, joined by a conjunction, are not only semantically parallel, since hearing and seeing are required for understanding and acknowledging, but syntactically (impv. + inf. abs. + cj. + neg. + juss.) and phonologically parallel: // שָׁמַעוּ שְׁמוֹעַ וְאַל־תִּבְיִנוּ / וְרָאוּ רְאוּ וְאַל־תִּדְעוּ

<sup>45</sup> The focus on the eyes recalls the earlier use of inclusio in vv.1-5, which served to draw the reader’s attention to what Isaiah saw (רָאָה, v.1) with his own eyes (עֵינַי, v.5).

<sup>46</sup> I understand שָׁמַע metaphorically; lit. הִפְּחֵם *hip ‘il* impv. masc. sg. = “make fat.”

differently, the unrepeatable phrases clearly stand out. YHWH regards the people's acknowledgment (יָדַע)<sup>47</sup> or confession of sin as an essential element of repentance (שׁוּב) and a prerequisite for their healing (רָפָא). As YHWH specifies, this response is critical if healing will ever take place, for without it, there can be no restoration for Israel. Heeding the prophetic word as well as acknowledging and turning from sin are the basic requirements for restoration. However, since Israel has not changed, the prophet's words will impact them adversely. The negative particles (לֹא and פֶּן) indicate YHWH's decision that the time for repentance and healing has passed.<sup>48</sup>

Now, what must not be missed is the symmetry between the notions in Isaiah's commission and those reflected in the context both of the seraph's response to Isaiah's cry of woe (vv.5, 6-7) and across the entire 1<sup>st</sup>-person account (vv.1-4, 5-7, 8-10, 11-13, with holiness for its principal theme). The relationship between Isaiah's peculiar purification and curious commission as well as the dynamic of the entire account welcome the reader to share in the prophet's experience and understanding of the Holy One's aims. This conclusion finds support as each particular section connects cohesively to linguistic features in the structure of the entire narrative: "I saw [רָאִיתִי] the sovereign Lord" (v.1)...[with] my own eyes [עֵינַי] (v.5)," "I heard [שָׁמַעְתִּי] the voice [אֶת־קוֹל] of the sovereign Lord" (v.8). Then with his final note in v.13c—FI's closing commentary—the reader is invited to share a view of "the holy seed," which hints at YHWH's aim to make a new beginning with Jacob-Israel, but only after an exhaustive, purifying judgment.<sup>49</sup> In

<sup>47</sup> The solidarity of Isaiah and his community suggests that a similar acknowledgement of uncleanness and guilt is required from the people (יָדַע + פָּשַׁע אֲנִי in Ps 51:5; cf. v.13).

<sup>48</sup> In chs.1 and 2-5, the reader has seen that Israel's sinful estate—which has involved the persistent rejection of YHWH's purposes as outlined by the prophetic תּוֹרָה—is characterized by premeditated and intentional offenses, including gross idolatry, social injustice, even murder (cf., e.g., 1:10-17; 2:6-4:1; 5:1-7). With astute commentary that could have been written for Isaiah, Baruch Levine explains that the prophets persistently attacked the mistaken notion that ritual worship could atone for criminality or intentional religious desecration. The prophets, he writes, "considered it a major threat to the entire covenantal relationship between God and Israel" (*Leviticus: JPS Torah Commentary* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003], 3).

<sup>49</sup> Seitz thinks that YHWH's aim is pastoral; that is, Isaiah is not to interpret the people's rejection of his message as failure (*Isaiah 1-39*, 55). That may be the case; indeed, the response to his exhortations in chs.1, 2-5 and 7-8 supports the truth of YHWH's interpretation and satisfies his objective without ever repeating what 6:9-10 explicitly says. Nevertheless, within the prophetic book, this chapter has a function similar to YHWH's ban on intercession in the book of Jeremiah ("Do not pray for this people," 7:16; 11:14; 14:11), and his refusal to hear Jeremiah's laments any longer (20:7-17). See also the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet's mouth was stopped to prevent him from interceding for the people (Ezek 3:26). The design in each case is to bring about the divine judgment, making the movement to exile inevitable. In the book of Isaiah, it is the death of Uzziah and Isaiah's temple vision that marks the occasion; hence, the vision has the function of announcing that point of no return when Israel's "*Heilgeschichte* becomes Israel's *Unheilgeschichte*" (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 56). Isaiah's prophetic service may not be able to bring about repentance. But just as judgment and hope cannot be separated in the other prophetic books—for after judgment, Ezekiel's mouth will be reopened (33:22) and Jeremiah will build up and plant (cf. Jer 1:10; chs. 24-25)—so

fact, from the prophet's painful encounter the reader learns that this role for God's servant will also facilitate a new beginning for Israel. That is, hinted at (if only for the moment) with the cleansing of Isaiah himself, the reader perceives that "the restoration of Zion, announced in chapter 1, starts with YHWH's manifestation of himself to Isaiah in the temple."<sup>50</sup>

Even so, it remains Isaiah's present task to harden the people, ripening them for destruction.<sup>51</sup> Given his profound sense of corporate responsibility, Isaiah responds with a prayer of intercession on behalf of his unclean people: "How long?" (עַד־מַתַּי, v.11), literally, "Until when?" or "When can I stop?!" His lament amounts to an appeal for mercy.<sup>52</sup> YHWH's rejoinder foretells the complete emptying of the land, recalling the destruction and burning (לְבַעַר + הָיָה, v.13a; cf. 1:7, 29-31; 4:4; 5:5c) of YHWH's vineyard (5:6-7).<sup>53</sup> The devastation will be total, and Isaiah must speak YHWH's words until the decreed phases of judgment reach fulfillment. His task therefore indicates the divine verdict on Israel's unclean estate: hope for the future requires such a radical course of destruction and burning that YHWH will effect a reversal of creation, exodus, and conquest. Jacob-Israel is a tree tagged for cutting down and removal; its destruction will be so severe that only its "stump" (מַצְבֵּת) will remain.<sup>54</sup> YHWH will reduce Jacob-Israel to a faint testimony to the tree's former glory. Hence, v.13ab is a prophecy of doom. Indeed, it appears that God has rescinded his promise concerning 'seed'/'offspring' and land for Abraham (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-15; 17:1-8).

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also in Isaiah there will be restoration and the renewal of life. In that society, presently, Isaiah himself may be the solitary member.

<sup>50</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "The Manifestation of Yahweh," 84.

<sup>51</sup> Isaiah's word, according to Craig Evans, is "a harsh word...intended to promote obduracy and to make the people ripe for judgment." See Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* [JSOTSup 64; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989], 162. YHWH does not merely threaten judgment and exile (vv.11-13b), this *is* judgment and it is his sovereign and absolute will for the progress of redemption. The precedent for the hardening of an entire people is of course the hardening of Pharaoh and the Egyptians during the exodus (Exod 4:21). Thus, Israel is like Egypt, and Isaiah is a prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-22).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Amos 7:5, "Oh YHWH, please stop!" Psalm 90:13 also begs YHWH to turn back, "How long? Have compassion upon your servants." Gene Tucker (*Isaiah 1-39*, 103) sees behind Isaiah's words a long tradition of prayer in ancient Israel (Pss 13:2; 74:10; 75:5; 80:4; 89:46).

<sup>53</sup> The generic language of 6:11 evokes the full scope of YHWH's cleansing-judgment from chs.1-5 and ch.24 (שָׂמַח = שָׂמַח, עָרִים, אֲדָמָה, שָׂמַח).

<sup>54</sup> The term is typically rendered "stump" due to its collocation with the felled oak in v.13b (see, e.g., NRSV, RSV, NJPS, TNIV, NIV, ESV, and NLT). For this rendering, see J. A. Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13," in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal* (J. A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif, eds.; London: Cambridge University, 1982), 108.

Nevertheless, a remnant of the tree—its stump—will survive.<sup>55</sup> And according to v.13c, this is a stump with potential, for “its stump is a holy seed” (מִצְבַּתָּה זֶרַע קֹדֶשׁ)! The word מִצְבַּת occurs twice in 6:13,<sup>56</sup> and both “seed” (זֶרַע) and “stump” (מִצְבַּת) are exegetically significant. While v.13ab foresees destruction for the tree, leaving only a stump behind, the presence of its stump in v.13c apparently suggested (perhaps to a late redactor) the renewal of life. Thus, after judgment (cf. 4:2-6) a symbol of destruction becomes a symbol for a pure beginning. Now, the stump, though small, counts for something—even a single seed can make a fresh start possible. As Mark J. Boda explains,

The present tree...is destined for destruction. The only hope is starting over again. The intention of this prophetic word is to foresee not only destruction (which it obviously does), but eventually ‘a holy remnant’ in the land.<sup>57</sup>

From a holy seed, the Holy One can raise a holy nation (v.13c). The clause may be a redactional element,<sup>58</sup> yet, in my view it should be retained because it underscores the point that the Holy God’s purifying judgment leads to the production of ‘holy offspring’ as a new community fit to dwell in holy Zion.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> I take אֵלָּהּ (fem. sg.) as the antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg. pron. suf. (+ אֵלָּהּ, “oak” = ‘their stump’). For the idea of the remnant, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1974), 236.

<sup>56</sup> The other place in Scripture where the term מִצְבַּת occurs is 2 Sam 18:18 (also twice). In that context it refers to “Absalom’s monument” (אֲבִשָׁלֹם יָד), and so, there, מִצְבַּת is more properly rendered as a “memorial” or “a memorial pillar,” referring to what Absalom had erected for himself in the King’s Valley, namely, “a pillar,” for he said, “I have no son to carry on my name” (הִזְכִּיר שְׁמִי אֵינֶלִי בֶן בַּעֲבוּר) (v.18b). The text explains his action, “He named the pillar [מִצְבַּת] after himself, and it is has been called ‘Absalom’s Monument’ to this day” (v.18c). In the absence of an heir to carry on his name (or dynasty), Absalom’s memorial would still recall his prior existence. On this basis, moving from 2 Sam 18 to Isa 6, the expression may indicate that by a purifying-judgment the mighty tree that was Jacob-Israel will be removed and burned up, leaving behind only a ‘memorial’ or testimony to its former existence. See Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 197. Compare G. K. Beale, for whom the tree is a cultic symbol (an Asherah pole), and so Israel’s punishment corresponds to the cutting down and burning of these symbols in the presence of Israelite idolaters. See Beale, “Isaiah 6:9-13: A Retributive Taunt against Idolatry” *VT* 41 (1991): 257-78. Idolatry is a contradiction of Israel’s calling as God’s image-bearer to “be holy as I am holy” (Lev 19:2).

<sup>57</sup> See Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 197. According to J. A. Emerton, “[T]he figure of speech left open the possibility of a future for the stump, and the glossator could believe in such a future” (“Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13,” 110). Compare the name of Isaiah’s son, שְׁאָר שׁוּב, in Isa 7:3, which Blenkinsopp calls, “[A] name that understandably lent itself readily to reinterpretation at different historical junctures (Isa 10:20-22; 11:11-16)” (*Isaiah 1-39*, 231; cf. G. Tucker, *Isaiah 1-39*, 108). As a sign-name it could be (1) positive ‘only a remnant of those threatening Israel will return’, (2) negative, ‘only a remnant of Judahites will return’ (cf. 6:13ab), or (3) positive, ‘a remnant will return after all’ (cf. 6:13c). According to v.13c, the identification of the remnant (negative) as “a holy seed” is positive, holding out hope for the tree by opening a future for its surviving ‘stump.’

<sup>58</sup> J. Barton, *Isaiah 1-39* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 78.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Willem A. M. Beuken, who rightly sees v.13c as integral to the entire unit, observing that, unfortunately, some scholars “attribute the lower status of a gloss to the very last sentence of the chapter.” He explains that this view “does not fully perceive that a seed that is really holy endorses the proclamation of the seraphs: ‘Holy—holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts; filling all the earth is his glory’ (6:3).” See W. A. M. Beuken, “‘The Manifestation of Yahweh,’” 77.

As a redactional element, the provenance of Isa 6:13c is suggested by Ezra 9:2, the only other occurrence of the phrase “holy seed” (זרע קדש) in the OT (cf. Ezra 2:59; Neh 7:61; 9:2, 8).<sup>60</sup> The problem in that context is marriage to foreign wives—a situation far removed from the ‘unclean lips’ of the prophet and his people in Isaiah 6. Whereas the effort according to E-N is to safeguard Israelite identity by promoting the racial purity of society, for “the holy seed has become mixed [ערב hitpa ‘el] with the peoples of the lands” (Ezra 9:2),<sup>61</sup> the design of FI is to underline the point (developed in chs.1-5) that the wounding of cleansing-judgment is prerequisite to the restoration and renewal of life. Nevertheless, as previously noted, vocabulary from E-N shared with FI does suggest an origin of v.13c closer to the time of Ezra’s reforms, and this conclusion is bolstered by the observation that returned exiles are designated not only as “the holy seed” (זרע הקדש) in Ezra 9 but also as “tremblers” (חרד) at the word (דבר) of Israel’s God (Ezra 9:4). This description of the humble appears in Isa 66:2, 5 as well, and Isa 6:13ab suggests that the stump refers to a remnant community surviving in Babylonian and/or Persian phases of Israel’s history. In support of this conclusion, Jacob Stromberg argues for the probability that an editor added the comment about the ‘holy seed’ in Isa 6.13 in the light of the use of זרע in Isa 65.9, where concern reappears for a righteous remnant surviving to possess the land.<sup>62</sup> Thus, he identifies what amounts to “a book-wide literary strategy,” explaining that the reader was to see the vision in ch.65 as a fuller explication of what was already announced to the prophet in ch.6 and the divine plan in ch.6 as anticipating what is said in ch.65.<sup>63</sup> Also based on shared vocabulary, Williamson has observed a further internal connection between Isa 6:13 and Isa 1:27-31 (v.31), with the latter interpreting the former according to final-Isaiah’s ultimate concern for the separation of the wicked from the righteous community in Zion (65:8-16; 1:19-20, 27-31).<sup>64</sup> These observations therefore suggest a Babylonian or Persian phase provenance for Isa 6:13c and highlight the

<sup>60</sup> Aside from 6:13, זרע is used positively in FI in texts that presume a setting during or after exile: Isa 41:8 (זרע אברהם); 43:5; 44:3; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 59:21 (3x); 61:9 (זרע ברוך יהודה); 65:9; 65:23 (זרע ברוכי יהודה); and 66:22 with overtones of blessing for Abraham, as זרע who will inherit the land.

<sup>61</sup> Allusion is made in Ezra 9 to Deut 7:1-6 (עם קדוש), 23:4-9, and the laws of holiness in Lev 19:19 as “the commandment” (מצוה) supporting the decision for separation as a remedy in accord with the law (תורה). See M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 115-117; H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 131-32.

<sup>62</sup> See Jacob Stromberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Isaiah* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 111, and Stromberg, *Israel After Exile*, 160-174.

<sup>63</sup> J. Stromberg, *Introduction to the Study of Isaiah*, 111-112.

<sup>64</sup> For the view that 6:13 is interpreted by 1:29-31, see H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah 6,13 and 1,29-31” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, eds.; BETL 132; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 119-28 (esp. 119, 127-28).



contribution of Isa 6 to the book of Isaiah as a message for disciples eager to overcome the exilic circumstances of Jacob-Israel.

In sum, Isa 6:1-13 is a didactic 1<sup>st</sup>-person narrative in which the profile of God's prophet Isaiah furnishes a pattern and an instructive model for Israel's future. The end note in v.13c concludes the narrative with a concise statement regarding the instructive import of the whole. As a coherent narrative, Isa 6 relates that only purification—the eradication of sin and moral impurity through fiery judgment (cf. 4:4; 1:25-26, 27-31)—can rectify the people's unclean condition. Isaiah's experience thus symbolically demonstrates that YHWH wounds and heals (cf. Deut 32:39); moreover, it indicates that the purpose of Israel's purification is not ultimately negative but positive. Regarding Isaiah, the aim of cleansing-judgment was to train the prophet for a holy calling: by a painful process, he became YHWH's servant with YHWH's words in his mouth (Isa 6:1-4, 5-7). Henceforth, the sovereign Lord and his prophetic servant are functionally united in their redemptive-historical objective.

By analogy with Isaiah's call, YHWH also indicates to Israel his intention to start anew; through analogy with Isaiah's own experience with the Holy One of Israel, judgment becomes the path to restoration and renewal, holiness and new life in the land, for Jacob-Israel. Thus, Isa 6:1-13b proclaims the holiness, sovereignty, and purpose of Israel's God by foretelling the coming judgment and the removal of inhabitants until ultimately only a stump will remain as a remnant. Nevertheless, according to Isa 6:13c, this stump will survive the judgment and comprise a holy offspring to reconstitute Israel and repossess the land (cf. 65:9).

What is striking about ch.6 is its use of the prophetic profile as the paradigm for this vision of the new arising from the old. By a painful process, Isaiah was the first to learn about YHWH's plan; thus, taught by his own suffering, he has become much more than YHWH's servant—he has become YHWH's disciple; as a holy survivor, he has become a model for instructing Israel in its way forward. His lips now testify, symbolically and discursively, of the dynamic unfolding of Israel's life with its holy God (6:3). Indeed, Isaiah's witness manifests both YHWH's glory and YHWH's requirement, for only a holy people can dwell in holy Zion with the Holy One of Israel. Thus, like a diseased tree, unholy Israel will be cut down, radically reduced to a stump, a remnant of its former magnificence. But from this remnant, YHWH can start again: new growth can come from its stump. Thus, the profile of the prophet may provide further impetus for the expectation of new growth from the stump of the felled-tree in Isa 6:13c. In turn, Isa 6:13c stands as part-to-whole by analogy with the relationship of units in chs.1-5 (esp. 2:2-5;

4:2-6), and by analogy to Isaiah's own experience. In ch.6 as in chs.1-5, the wounding of cleansing-judgment precedes the healing of restoration and an audience of survivors is invited to respond (as Isaiah has done) in service to YHWH's holy word.<sup>65</sup> The unholy people will be judged, and after judgment, the Holy One still requires exclusive allegiance from his people (1:21-31; 2:5).

### 3.2.2. *Isaiah 20:1-6, "YHWH is the only helper and deliverer"*

The 3<sup>rd</sup>-person narrative of ch.20 also expresses the symbolic action of prophetic suffering with exclusive loyalty to YHWH; only, this chapter is concerned with the Assyrian advance towards Egypt, explaining why 20:1-6 is appended to the Egypt pronouncement (מִשָּׁא מִצְרַיִם, 19:1; cf. כּוֹשׁ in 18:1) in chs.13-23.<sup>66</sup> An initial temporal clause signals the occasion more precisely, linking its message to regional events during the Assyrian judgment, specifically the siege of Ashdod by Sargon's general (20:1).<sup>67</sup> Despite this background, Isaiah ben Amoz and the shocking message communicated by him "at that time" (בְּעֵת הַהִיא, v.2) remain at the forefront.

The narrator provides YHWH's interpretation of Isaiah's actions regarding the fall of Egypt and Cush (vv.3-4) as well as YHWH's explanation of the intended impact of their collapse upon those who have hoped in Cush and boasted in Egypt (vv.5-6), identified in v.6 as "the inhabitants of this coastland" (יֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת). On the surface, then, this unit rebukes an audience for relying on foreign powers for help and deliverance.

The account elaborates Ashdod's circumstances, ending with acknowledgement of its helplessness. Truly striking, however, is the prophet's silence; YHWH is the only speaker. Even the closing words, which contain reported speech from the "the inhabitants of this coastland," are embedded in YHWH's commentary upon Isaiah's actions (v.6), and the manner of YHWH's speaking is all the more significant because his speech actually takes in Isaiah's actions. As a symbolic action report, דְּבַר־יְהוָה in 20:1-2 effectively

<sup>65</sup> As Beuken explains, "The chapter leaves open the way in which this response takes shape. Will the new offspring finally do what their ancestors have failed to do? Will they finally hear and see, understand and repent? Or can it only happen by means of a special intervention of YHWH himself (one that we simply cannot imagine)? It is clear that chapter 6 asks for a continuation." W. A. M. Beuken, "The Manifestation of Yahweh," 77.

<sup>66</sup> The next pronouncement commences in 21:1 (מִשָּׁא מִדְּבַר־יָם). Sweeney is probably right, then, when he identifies the *massa*' proper as 19:1b-20:6. According to him, this unit "provides a basis for the preceding material concerning the future of Egypt by pointing to Isaiah's past announcement of YHWH's intention to have the Assyrians conquer Egypt" (*Isaiah* 1-39, 264, 266).

<sup>67</sup> The Egyptians had evidently encouraged the Philistines to revolt against their Assyrian suzerain, but failed to support Ashdod during the Assyrian siege. The coastal city was captured in 711. Since this was over a decade following the Assyrian judgment of the Northern Kingdom (722), these events would be of primary concern to Hezekiah of Judah. It is of interest to note that, according to the book of Joshua, Ashdod was an allotment belonging to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:1, 24, 47). For more information regarding the historical background, see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 1-39, 322 and *ANET* 285-87.

consists of the prophet's actions alone (though related by YHWH).<sup>68</sup> For the audience on the world-stage, the divine communication was initially limited to the person and silent actions of Isaiah.<sup>69</sup> As God's servant (עֶבֶד, v.3), the prophet only acts, though astonishingly.

Isaiah symbolically performs God's 'speech', communicating his word wordlessly. God subsequently interprets this speech, but not until his servant had completed his outrageous commission. Thus, the narrator's introduction, "YHWH spoke by the hand [בִּיד] of Isaiah ben Amoz, saying..." (v.2), indicates that God was content for a time (three years!) to address the wider world through the act of his servant alone. In 20:1-6, therefore, the profile of the prophet offers another insight into the connection between Isaiah and the message of FI: as YHWH's servant, Isaiah himself has become the veritable "word of YHWH." Identified as a sign and a portent (אֵימֹת וּמוֹפְתִים, v.3; cf. 8:18), Isaiah bears *in his own person* the very humiliation and suffering that lie on the near horizon for his audience; hence, the servant's suffering constitutes YHWH's "word" unto his people. In ch.20, then, this symbolic action is Isaiah's instructive witness, both international and incarnational.<sup>70</sup>

Within the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person narrative, YHWH speaks twice (vv.2, 3). His first speech is addressed to the prophet (דְּבַר יְהוָה... לְאִמֹר), who is dressed in garments of lamentation and mourning ("sackcloth," שֵׁק, v.2).<sup>71</sup> YHWH issues commands to "go," (לֵךְ, impv. cf. 6:9), and slip off sackcloth and sandal, which the prophet executes directly: "So he did" (וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן).<sup>72</sup> A circumstantial clause clearly indicates the scandalous nature of the action performed (וַיֵּלֶךְ, inf. abs., v.2c). "Walking naked and barefoot" (עָרֹם וְיָחָף) is shameful, an experience Isaiah carried personally and existentially as the representative of his people (cf. 6:5). To his audience, it would comprise a shocking and dreadful

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Jer 27:1-28:17; Ezek 4:1-17; 5:1-4; 12:1-7. On symbolic action reports in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, see Kelvin Friebe, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Apparently, those who saw him had to discern the import of his actions for themselves. Joseph Blenkinsopp calls this a kind of 'street theater': "They serve eventually to draw the consciousness of the actor more fully into identification with the prophetic role" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 322).

<sup>70</sup> Here again, sovereign Lord and prophetic servant are functionally united in their purpose. As a word for the implicit observer, however, the action intends to scandalize. To discover the target-audience, the reader must consider the relationship of Isaiah's symbolic action in vv.1-2 to YHWH's commentary in vv.3-6 and then to the broadening horizons of context within the prophetic book.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Isa 3:24, 26; 22:12; 37:1, 2; Micah 1:8; Zech 13:14. Although "sackcloth" may simply refer to the garments of his office (2 Kgs 1:8), many commentators correctly see a movement from mourning to humiliation and suffering. By Isaiah's actions, "God is putting a decision into effect before their eyes" (J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 123; see also, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 322).

<sup>72</sup> Otto Kaiser recognizes in this strange act "part of the carrying out of the task for which the prophet had declared himself ready (cf. 6:8)" (cf. *Isaiah 13-29*, 115).

expression of vulnerability and powerlessness (cf. 47:3).<sup>73</sup> Yet, as a sign and a portent, his ‘word’ functioned to alert his target-audience to the suffering, captivity, and exile of an entire people.<sup>74</sup> The fact that he continued for three long years (שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים, v.3) might indicate the comprehensive nature of the coming judgment (cf. v.6).

YHWH’s second speech (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, v.3) interprets the prophet’s actions; though, he does not reveal its interpretation to Isaiah—a servant need not fully understand, only obey. Instead, YHWH addresses an undisclosed audience. In v.5, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person party is mentioned (“they”, וְהֵם), but no 2<sup>nd</sup>-person “you” is ever named explicitly. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-person party is significant, however, for it provides the key to discovering the implicit audience. In vv.3-6, YHWH’s interpretation of the prophet’s action may indicate that the “they” group were counted among the intended audience of that action, but this group is not (or is not primarily or strictly) the audience intended by the Lord’s interpretation of Isaiah’s action.

According to YHWH’s interpretation, for three years Isaiah walked about naked and barefoot as a sign and symbol against Egypt and Cush (עַל...וְעַל, vv.3-4), but YHWH also makes clear that these nations were not the only target of Isaiah’s symbolic-act.<sup>75</sup> YHWH describes the reaction of the “they” group (v.5), explicitly identified as those who looked to Egypt and Cush as their pride and hope (vv.5-6), namely, “the inhabitants of this coastland” (שֹׁכְבֵי הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, v.6). The coastland-peoples will be dismayed and ashamed (וַחֲתוּ וְבָשׁוּ, v.5), but Isaiah’s action was not (primarily) designed to affect them either. Instead, by this servant’s action, YHWH meant to provoke a response within Jerusalem identical to that of the coastland-peoples. By walking about the city naked and bare, the prophet would be humiliated, but his audience would be scandalized. The whole point of Isaiah’s nudity was to produce this response, for a scandalized audience might be roused to accept YHWH’s interpretation. Thus, Isaiah’s symbolic action does not serve as a warning only for Egypt, Cush, or even for the coastland people. While Isaiah’s action may have included the latter within its broad range of impact, his actions and YHWH’s commentary strike a different target.

Although the audience is undisclosed, the coastland peoples’ reported speech provides a key to identifying Isaiah’s audience (v.6). In the context, the inhabitants of the

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Gen 42:12; 2 Sam 15:30; Jer 2:25; Lam 1:8.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Ezek 4:1-17; Micah 1:7-9.

<sup>75</sup> That the sign was not strictly for Egypt and Cush is plain, since the reader is never told that Isaiah left Judah (or even Jerusalem), and YHWH’s speech to confirm and interpret the prophet’s action does not describe the response of either nation.

coastland are the Philistines,<sup>76</sup> residents of Ashdod and the other coastal cities that have relied upon Egypt (v.1). Nevertheless, the message targets any and all who would rely on Egypt for help and deliverance.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the extended impact of the message enables the reader to appreciate the specific target of the servant's actions and YHWH's speech. In v.6, the Philistines boast in the might of Egypt and Cush as "our hope." Without these nations, however, they can only ask, rhetorically, "How [now] shall we escape?" Their hope is gone; they have nowhere else to turn, and are "left without response, to ponder [their] impossible situation."<sup>78</sup> The indirect discourse warns any nation who would rely on earthly powers for hope and deliverance.

Given the placement of this passage within FI's collection of oracles concerning the nations, and with help from the broader horizons of context within the document (esp. chs.28-33), it is possible to identify the intended audience more precisely as the prophet's own people. Since God's cleansing-judgment will be cosmic in scope (chs.13-23; 24-27), it is unsafe to rely on foreign powers. Nevertheless, subsequent oracles (chs.28-33) indicate that Egypt was a special temptation, for both the Philistines and the rulers of Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup> From the inhabitants of Jerusalem, especially, YHWH demands exclusive loyalty.<sup>80</sup> Yet, like pagan Philistia, they lack the requisite insight; the rulers of David's City persistently fail to acknowledge YHWH. In the absence of loyalty, there can be no escape from judgment "in that day" (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, v.6). Thus, Isaiah's symbolic action teaches rulers that if they continue to oppose YHWH's plan, Judah will find itself numbered with the condemned nations. If they trust in foreign powers, they will share

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<sup>76</sup> Childs and Seitz reject the view that the "inhabitants of the coastlands" are the Philistines. While I agree that the placement of this narrative in the framework of the oracles concerning the nations broadens the scope of the referent of this phrase, in the immediate context, probably the Philistine inhabitants of Ashdod comprise the proximate aim of Isaiah's actions. The ultimate impact, however, is intended for inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. Nevertheless, in the full canonical context of FI, Childs is right that "'Inhabitants of the coastland' points to those distant nations (41:5; 42:4) who are helpless before God's sovereignty, which executes judgment on the world by means of the Assyrians and Babylonians" (*Isaiah*, 145; cf. Seitz, *Isaiah* 1-39, 144-45).

<sup>77</sup> Walter Brueggemann identifies them as "the bewildered and distraught...citizens of the small states who have been betrayed by Egypt, who now stare massive Assyrian power in the face, and who sense their own great jeopardy," and he adds, "...it is plausible that the 'they' in their bewilderment includes Judah" (*Isaiah* 1-39, 168).

<sup>78</sup> See Brueggemann, *Isaiah* 1-39, 167.

<sup>79</sup> Isa 31:1 offers a neat paraphrase of 20:1-6: "Woe to those who descend to Egypt for help, upon horses they rely; they trust in many chariots and vast numbers of riders, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel or turn to YHWH" (cf. 30:15-17). Isa 30:1-5, 6-7; 31:1; and 36:9-10 plainly identify this audience as Isaiah's own people (cf. Exod 13:17; Deut 17:16). Isa 20 and the other Isaianic cross-references appear within the "Hezekiah" section (14:28-39:8).

<sup>80</sup> Therefore, as Gene Tucker correctly states, "[T]he real message is addressed to those who would have observed the symbolic action and heard its interpretation, the leaders and people of Judah and Jerusalem. The direct meaning is that the rebellion fomented by Egypt will lead to disaster. The indirect message to those [watching and] listening in Jerusalem is to avoid this entangling foreign alliance" (*Isaiah* 1-39, 182).

their destiny. “How shall we escape?” (וַאִיךְ נִמְלֹט אֲנַחְנוּ). Isaiah’s answer is simple yet critical: turn to YHWH, hope and boast in God—there is no other deliverer.

### 3.3. *Isaiah’s Vocation and the Kings of Judah*

As keys to the security of Judah and Jerusalem, Isa 6 and 20 connect justice and righteousness in domestic affairs (chs.1-5; esp. 5:7, 16) to loyalty to YHWH in foreign affairs. In both international and internal life, for the enjoyment of lasting peace, Israel’s Holy One requires faithfulness in Zion from both rulers and citizens (1:21, 26). In chs.2-5, this association of divine justice with a faithfully administered collective responsibility was expressed by alternating pictures of societal weal and woe,<sup>81</sup> and the destiny of Jacob-Israel and Zion was bound up with their collective response to דְּבִרֵי־יְהוָה and תּוֹרָה.<sup>82</sup>

Chapters 7-11 (esp. 7-8) and chs.28-39 further this message by situating the prophet’s task and particular concerns in an unmistakably *royal* direction.<sup>83</sup> In these chapters, alternating pictures of weal and woe reappear, only here the focus of Isaiah’s Zion theology is not YHWH’s chosen city (2:2-4; 4:2-6) but YHWH’s chosen dynasty (7:3-17; 9:1-6; 11:1-5; cf.16:4b-6; 32:1).<sup>84</sup> Responsibility for the security of Judah and Jerusalem rests upon the king from David’s House.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See Isa 2:2-4, 5; 2:6-4:1; 4:2-6; 5:1-7, 8-30.

<sup>82</sup> See Isa 2:3, 5; 5:24; cf. 1:10-17; 24:5.

<sup>83</sup> This royal orientation, or emphasis upon the task of the Davidic king, is not a departure from the main thrust of FI’s message. The superscriptions alone introduce and maintain a connection between Jerusalem and this royal orientation in chs.1-39 (1:1; 2:1; 6:1; 7:1; cf. 14:28; 36:1; cf. 38:5) by correlating Isaiah’s task to the text-internal sequence of ‘the days’ of the Davidic dynasty. After ch.39 there are no more superscriptions, there is no king in Judah—except YHWH (מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה, Isa 41:21) or (perhaps Cyrus and) collective Israel (55:3ff)—and Isaiah is never mentioned again. Nevertheless, YHWH still aims to establish his worldwide reign in and through Zion (cf. 40:1-2, 9-11; chs.49-54).

<sup>84</sup> With the reign of David, there is peace after conquest, and Zion and kingship become intimately associated. Like Zion, David was chosen by Yahweh (cf. 1 Sam 16; 2 Sam 2; 5); Yahweh rules in his chosen city Zion by his chosen king, David (and his descendants). The promises to dwell in Zion and to make David and his descendants his royal representatives on earth are eternal promises (2 Sam 7:14-16).

<sup>85</sup> The Davidic promises in FI are dynamic rather than static, transformed (9:1-6; 11:1-5; 16:4b-5; cf. 32:1; 55:3) and projected into the future (2:2-4; 6:13c; 4:2-6; 12:1-6; 37:31). It is of interest to note, however, that the future-oriented vision remains consistent with the old pattern set forth and established by the Zion tradition. Only after YHWH had granted him rest from foreign enemies and his reign was secure did David receive the dynastic promise and offspring, namely, a son (cf. 2 Sam 7:1, 11; 1 Kgs 5:4; cf. Deut 12:10). After the kingdom was established, the task of the son was to maintain peace by reigning wisely, with justice and righteousness (cf. Isa 9:1-6; 11:1-5; 32:1; cf. Ps 72). This prince of peace would ensure order and well-being for the kingdom; he even had the task of punishing oppressors and delivering the oppressed (cf. 11:3-4). This pattern is replicated in Isaiah. The Davidic ideal (Isa 9, 11) alternates with the portrayal of Isaiah’s contemporaries Ahaz (ch.7) and Hezekiah (chs.36-39). As oracles for Hezekiah, especially, the influence of this pattern may signify to him that his reign is the turning point for the entire Davidic House and family (cf. 39:5-8). For the reader, this alternation of judgment and salvation oracles provides a future-oriented expectation: God will establish a kingdom of peace after a time of war, replicating the movement from David the Warrior-figure to Solomon the Prince of Peace. By means of this pattern, then, hope remains focused in a fresh beginning for the House of David and peace in the latter day (cf. 55:3-5). For a helpful treatments, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah, and Servant in the Book of Isaiah, The Didsbury Lectures 1997* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 30-72, and Marvin Sweeney, “The Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah,” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*:

In Isa 8:16-23; 28:9-13; 30:8-17, and 30:18-22, the intra-textual relationship of oracles pertaining to writing becomes important, yielding insight into the profile of the prophet in his writing activity as a significant aspect of his witness.<sup>86</sup> Due to his confrontation with Ahaz (ch.7) and the people (8:1-4, 5-10), the prophet was perhaps marginalized.<sup>87</sup> He nevertheless carries on his role as YHWH's emissary and the earthly king's conscience. Oracles that pertain to his witness and writing raise the question of whether the prophet actually stands alone or has colleagues and disciples (8:16; 30:10; cf. 1 Kgs 19:18); moreover, these oracles are directly relevant to FI's conception of *תורה* and constitute a significant feature of Isaiah's canonical witness to future generations. I begin with Isaiah 8:16-23, which is an important passage because it contains two occurrences of the term *תורה*. In the following section I will ask how each occurrence should be understood in the context.

### 3.3.1. Isaiah 8:16-23 (MT), "Waiting and hoping"

Witness and writing frame ch.8 (vv.1-4, 16-18, 19-23), which urges a nondescript audience to preserve and follow Isaiah's testimony and teaching. Through reliance upon God and Isaiah's witness, this audience must choose light, rather than the darkness chosen by Ahaz and his people.<sup>88</sup> In fact, Isaiah invites them to fashion an alternative society<sup>89</sup> that will chart the course for a new regime characterized by the ideals of justice, righteousness, and

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*Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, eds. BETL 132; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 41-61.

<sup>86</sup> I had written a fuller version treating Isaiah's message to Ahaz (7:7-9, 10-17; 8:1-4, 5-10) and an assessment of the relationship of chs.28-33 to chs.36-39. It was not possible to include this in the final dissertation for reasons of length, but I hope it will appear in another form in due course. B. Childs's description of their role is somewhat similar to mine; that is, these chapters (28-33) function, together with 7-8 (now), in order to 'put the question' to Hezekiah. A decision is to be made between Yahweh and Egypt (31:1), between Isaiah's plan and the rulers' plan (30:1). Isaiah's invective-threat (*תורה*) is meant to drive home the serious way in which Israel's misplaced trust is judged by God and doomed to failure: "they will all perish together" (31:3). See Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT 3; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1967), 32-35.

<sup>87</sup> In commentary on 8:1-4, 16-22, J. Blenkinsopp agrees that the prophet is "being rejected, silenced, or disregarded" (*Isaiah* 1-39, 238). See the familiar sociological study of this phenomenon by Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1980).

<sup>88</sup> Chapter 8 shares the circumstances of the setting from chapter 7. As in ch.7, YHWH's speech organizes and drives the narrative forward (Isa 8:1, 5, and 11). Verses 1-4 and 5-10 are negative in tone; they address the people, whose response (like Ahaz's) amounts to rejection of Isaiah's word and signs (7:12; 8:1, 3, 5). Despite the fact that the prophet had placarded it before them (in writing, 8:1-2) and 'incarnated' it (symbolically) in a living and breathing (i.e., surviving) son called, "Spoil-Hastens-Prey-Comes-Quickly" (8:3-4), the people refused the still waters of Shiloah. Although "Spoil-Hastens-Prey-Comes-Quickly" means that the people need not panic because the threat from Rezin and ben Remaliah will disappear once Assyria invades Damascus, they collapse with fear before the Syro-Ephraimite coalition (cf. 7:2). Consequently, Isa 8:5-10 responds to their refusal by portending judgment. The unit's contents double as a précis of Isaiah's encounter with Ahaz in 7:1-25. This correlation between ch.7 and ch.8 indicates that the people have chosen to follow their apostate king rather than YHWH's prophet.

<sup>89</sup> See W. Brueggemann (*Isaiah* 1-39, 74) and J. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah* 1-39, 244).

peace (9:1-6; cf. 32:1).<sup>90</sup> By this response to king and country, ch.8 demonstrates that YHWH alone beats the prophet's 'walking drum', and though Isaiah may be optimistic regarding Hezekiah's reign, YHWH may be his only society too. The prophet thus becomes the temporary repository of covenantal faithfulness, and therefore in a sense representative (cf. 6:5-7). Nevertheless, an alternative community, centered on the prophet, begins to emerge, whose witness may prompt the new king to turn from earthly powers to the sovereign Lord.

Isa 8:11-15 supports this view. In v.11, the sovereign Lord warns his prophet not to walk in the way of "this people" (הַעַם־הַזֶּה, v.11; cf. vv.5-10, 12), then instructs him in the path he should follow (v.13). It appears that Isaiah must continue to stand with YHWH in opposition not only to Aram, Assyria (chs.7-8, 10), or king Ahaz (7:13), but to the House of Jacob, his own people (v.14; cf. 6:5, 9; 8:6). If every one of them were to "plot together, it would be foiled," or if they were to "propose a plan, it would not stand" (7:7; 8:10). Unlike Ahaz and his people, Isaiah must trust in YHWH and his agenda alone (5:19); adhering to YHWH of hosts as the holy God, he must not fear what 'they' fear (8:12; cf. 7:2; 8:6). In contrast with these others, then, Isaiah must stand on God's side as an alternative society. But humanly speaking, this does not necessarily mean that Isaiah stands (with God) alone, since YHWH gives him a message involving a condition that extends beyond him to encompass both houses of Israel (v.14; cf. 7:9b). YHWH of Hosts is also the Holy One of Israel (8:13; cf. 6:3), and each house of Israel must either stand with Isaiah as YHWH's emissary or stumble, fall, and be broken (8:14-15).

After Isaiah's earlier message (כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה, v.11), the focus of the address shifts in v.16 to an audience of followers or "taught ones" (לְמוֹדִים). Verses 11-15 have raised the following questions: Who else would heed YHWH's word and embrace his path? Are there any who would follow Isaiah and see God's prophet vindicated? The

<sup>90</sup> Isa 32:1 is commonly understood to be proverbial, characterizing an ideal king and his rule (See Kenneth E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1995), 20. The poetic line is set out syntactically following the interjection, הֵן, with a and b in inverse parallel:

לְצַדִּיק יִמְלֹךְ  
מֶלֶךְ  
וְלִשְׂרָיִם  
לְמִשְׁפַּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל

There is no mention in the context of a Davidic ruler, and the repetition of the preposition before each constituent of the word-pair (לְצַדִּיק || לְמִשְׁפַּחַת) specifies the purpose or aim of a king's reign (יִמְלֹךְ) or a prince's rule (יִשְׂרָאֵל). See also, H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 63 and J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 429.



closing speech in 8:16-23 addresses these questions,<sup>91</sup> indicating that there are followers who are looking to Isaiah as their teacher and who will rely on his instruction to guide their way.<sup>92</sup> These followers thus receive the prophet's message as students taught by God through him. Indeed, vv.16-18 and vv.19-23, taken as a unit, hope to persuade Isaiah's disciples to follow YHWH as Isaiah does, by adhering to the path of light and eschewing the path of darkness. Hence, these 'taught ones' become a figure for all who would heed the word of Isaiah, including subsequent readers.<sup>93</sup>

Verse 16 begins with a double imperative: "secure" (צֹרֵר) || "seal" (חֲתוּם).<sup>94</sup> In this verse, the disciples preserve (i.e., "bind" or "tie up" and then "seal") a certain writing as evidence or testimony (תְּעוּדָה), in hendiadys with תּוֹרָה ("teaching," cf. 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 30:9).<sup>95</sup> It may not be possible to delimit the scope of this instructive testimony, but

<sup>91</sup> Isa 9:1-6 (MT) ends the larger section with YHWH's declaration of resolve to accomplish deliverance for the sake of Judah and David (note סְתוּמָה). The deliverance will be according to his word, for he is zealous to bring it about (v.6). In 9:7 (MT) a new unit begins, pertaining to the punishment of the House of Jacob: "YHWH has sent a word against Jacob-Israel" (רַב־בֵּר cf. LXX θάνατον).

<sup>92</sup> So, Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 102. "Taught ones" implies a teacher-student relationship. The referent of the 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. pron. in v.16 is ambiguous. Are these YHWH's disciples or Isaiah's disciples? NJPS takes v.16 as the close of YHWH's speech, and understands the disciples as YHWH's disciples. NRSV and NIV understand the disciples as Isaiah's own children or students. It is possible that (as before) the reader is not meant to distinguish the words of YHWH from the words of Isaiah (cf. 7:10ff). Alec Motyer writes, "My [the 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. pron. suf.] can refer to either Isaiah or the Lord, but better the latter as the Lord claims the believing, trusting remnant as his own." See A. Motyer, *Isaiah* (TOTC 18; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 85. And so, he follows E. J. Young's view that the disciples belong to YHWH not Isaiah. Young writes, "First of all, we should note that they are God's disciples and not Isaiah's. They are the elect" (*Book of Isaiah, Vol.1*, 314). Nevertheless, this dilemma (Isaiah's disciples or YHWH's) is a false one, since the dual agency of the prophetic word is part of the design: Isaiah's teaching is the Lord's teaching. If they would be the Lord's disciples, they must become the prophet's disciples (i.e., taught by him). Here this convergence of YHWH's word with the prophet's word is unmistakable, as Young himself recognizes when he writes (p.314), "They were taught of Him...here particularly by means of the teaching of Isaiah. In this derivative or secondary sense, then, they may also be denominated the disciples of Isaiah." More to the point, however, Isaiah is *the* disciple whom YHWH has been teaching (chs.6-8) as well as *the* prophet through whom YHWH has been delivering the divine-human word. Thus, he invites those who would adhere to his תּוֹרָה (|| תְּעוּדָה) to become disciples. They demonstrate their place in his company by adhering to YHWH as he does. Therefore, they are *both* Isaiah's disciples and YHWH's disciples.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Miscall agrees that children and disciples "are figures for all who listen to or read Isaiah whether those depicted later in the book who are no longer deaf and blind or postexilic readers of the book of Isaiah" (*Isaiah*, 52).

<sup>94</sup> Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, 176) notes that the imperative verbs may interrupt the narrative perspective of 8:1-15, indicating the beginning of a new subunit within the larger context. If this is so, then Isaiah is the speaker of v.16 as well as 17-23.

<sup>95</sup> E. J. Young (*Isaiah*, 313-14) thinks this testimony is written upon the heart/mind rather than an actual written deposit sealed until the time of fulfillment (cf. Jer 31:33). That a testimony was preserved in writing may be confirmed by analogy with 8:1-4, where Isaiah was commanded to write in the company of witnesses. Compare elsewhere the charge to resort to the teaching and testimony, directing others to earlier revelation as a standard of faith and life (in v.20a; cf. 29:11-12; 30:8-11). There is also the inner-biblical correlation with Jer 32:9-15, where Jeremiah's purchase of a field at Anatoth is corroborated by positive written testimony: "Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land." On Jeremiah 32:9-15 and Isa 8:1-4, 6-22, see, esp., Douglas Jones, "The Traditio of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem" ZAW 67 (1955): 226-46. Jones notes that Jeremiah's prediction, made to contemporaries, was "written down and witnessed that later its fulfillment may be recognized as Yahweh's work ... Moreover ... that they might live for future generations" (Jones, "The Traditio of the Oracles of Isaiah," 227). Although actual writing is not

the focus appears to remain fixed upon the Isaianic **תעודה** and **תורה** in 8:1-4, or more broadly, 7:1-8:15 (cf. 6:1-9:6). That is, **תעודה** and **תורה** refer to prophetic words and actions, including Isaianic explication of the God-given ‘signs and portents’. The presentation of Isaiah and children as symbols, then, is accompanied by a movement from prophetic speech and action to prophetic writing, including exhortation and admonishment, which holds out hope for those who wait for YHWH (8:18).<sup>96</sup> Hence, there is no reason to think that Isaiah’s words in vv.16-18 can be reduced to Isaiah’s experience (*pace* Oswalt);<sup>97</sup> rather, the **תעודה** and **תורה** are *canonical* words in the sense of a norm, rule, or guide that Isaiah’s disciples must accept and preserve. As words from God, the **תעודה** and **תורה** constitute inspired instructive-testimony to be kept with the prophet’s disciples both for a reliable witness against the people in the present and for the vindication of YHWH and his prophet in the coming day.<sup>98</sup> Douglas Jones explains,

Here now was a written prophetic **תורה**, likewise the word of God. But it was also a **תעודה**, not only because it was a witness to God’s instructions in the present, but also because it witnessed to his plans in the future. Therefore, it was bound and sealed and committed to his disciples... Isaiah has delivered God’s message and waits, looking eagerly for the fulfillment.<sup>99</sup>

Disciples who attend to this **תורה** are therefore Isaiah’s disciples as well as YHWH’s disciples (v.16), and since Isaiah has deposited his **תעודה** with them, they also share in the God-given vocation of Isaiah and his children (v.18). That is, as they follow the prophet’s instruction, they become YHWH’s witnesses too. As such, they must testify to the truth of YHWH’s word through his prophet (8:2; cf. Deut 18:21-22). Consequently, the existence of this word and these disciples (v.16) supplies further indication of the prophet’s hope for a new society gathered around the prophetic witness and instruction.

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indicated there, the function of ‘testimony’ (**תעודה**) is also plain in the book of Ruth (4:7, 9, 11), which reports a custom involving a transaction concerning redeeming and exchanging attested by witnesses (cf. Isa 8:2). It may be most natural, with Blenkinsopp, to regard the testimony in Isa 8:16-22 as writing secured in a receptacle of some kind and publically validated by witnesses (*Isaiah 1-39*, 243). Cf. H. G. M. Williamson: “Isaiah is speaking of a literal tying-up and sealing” (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 99).

<sup>96</sup> As Williamson points out, waiting suggests that Isaiah clearly expects to be alive when his words are fulfilled. See H. G. M. Williamson, “Hope under Judgment: The Prophets of the Eighth Century BCE” *EvQ* 72 (2000): 293. He correctly notes how Isaiah’s oracles consistently demonstrate the prophetic hope that judgment was not YHWH’s final word.

<sup>97</sup> For disciples, the parallel with **דבר־יְהוָה** indicates that Isaiah’s **תעודה** and **תורה** has more authority, and therefore holds out more hope, than “his own experience” (see J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 235-36).

<sup>98</sup> It is difficult to avoid the parallel to Moses’ activity with his **ספר התורה** || **תעודה**, deposited alongside the ark, “that it may be there for a witness against you” (**וְהָיָה שָׁם בְּךָ לְעֵד**, Deut 31:26; cf. Josh 24:26-27). Like this witness, for the people’s failure to heed this word, Williamson writes, “It would thus testify against them in future days” (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 97). He also observes that Isaiah’s writing in this context (8:1-4, 16-22) has a “quasi-legal function” (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 100).

<sup>99</sup> D. Jones, “The Traditio of the Oracles of Isaiah,” 236.

In v.17, the teacher tells his disciples that he is about to withdraw,<sup>100</sup> not because of doubt, fear, or shame at the rejection of God's message,<sup>101</sup> but because he hopes in God (וְקוֹיֵתִי לַיהוָה). Hence, he withdraws in order to wait for YHWH (חִכִּיתִי לַיהוָה), and this withdrawal of the prophet mirrors the withdrawal of Israel's Holy One.<sup>102</sup> Like YHWH, Isaiah 'hides his face' from the House of Jacob as a sign of God's judgment upon Ahaz and his people for rejecting the teaching of God's faithful prophet.<sup>103</sup> In response to Ahaz's regime, Isaiah's speech and actions identify the prophet as YHWH's disciple (functionally united with YHWH), and they invite listeners (and readers) to join the prophet in the waiting-service of the sovereign Lord. Unlike Ahaz and his people, then, the prophet and his followers stand firm and trust YHWH (cf. 7:9, 12; 8:6); as Isaiah's disciples, they await God's judgment and the vindication of their teacher. Isa 8:16-18 thus refers to both prophetic testimony (vv.16-17) and physical signs (or embodied symbols, v.18) as תּוֹרָה, signifying that Isaiah's actions and instruction also stand, along with his children, to explicate the meaning of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and to inspire the confidence his followers require as they wait for YHWH in the dark times that lie ahead (7:18-25; 8:5-10).

Verses 19-23 then supply a later expansion of vv.16-18,<sup>104</sup> formally indicated by the phrase, "Now, should they say to you..." (וְכִי־יֹמְרוּ אֵלַיְכֶם), which reinterprets the evidence from the earlier time as a deposit of God-given prophetic instruction, designed to guide the disciples' understanding after the present crisis, when, perhaps, king and people may again be tempted to seek alien and aberrant assistance as a substitute for the prophetic word (cf. Egypt in Isa 19:3). Repetition of תּוֹרָה and תַּעֲוִדָה in vv.19-20a<sup>105</sup> indicates

<sup>100</sup> B. Childs notes that he only resurfaces after Ahaz's death (*Isaiah*, 75; cf. 14:28). This supports the view that Isaiah hides as a marginalized prophet until his prophecy is confirmed. It also supports the view that the prophet actually wants these words to influence Hezekiah's foreign policy.

<sup>101</sup> See Gen 4:14; Exod 3:6; Isa 50:6; Amos 9:3.

<sup>102</sup> It is a hope that waits for the appearing of YHWH himself (YHWH is the antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. pron. suf.), and it involves the believer's expectation that YHWH will be true to his word through the prophet (cf. v.19f).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Deut 31:17-20. 'Hiding the face' is a familiar judgment motif (Pss 22:25; 27:9; 30:8; 44:25; 69:18; 88:14; 89:47; 102:3; 104:29; 143:7; Isa 45:15; 54:8; 57:17; 59:2; 64:7; Ezek 39:23-24; 39:29; Micah 3:4).

<sup>104</sup> H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 371, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 224.

<sup>105</sup> It is difficult to decide how to translate vv.19-20, because it is hard to know where the embedded quotation ends, and this difficulty is exacerbated by the nature of the conditional sentence. There are two choices: (1) ESV, NIV, RSV end the quotation after "moan" (וְהִמָּהֲגוּ); (2) NJPS, NRSV continue the quotation to v.20, "testimony" (וְלִתְעוּדָה). At first glance, the latter solution appears preferable, because the repetition of the verb אָמַר in vv.19 and 20 suggests an *inclusio*, the quotation is bracketed between these two verbs:

Introduction:	v.19,	Now, if they say to you:
Quotation	v.19,	"Inquire of the spirits..."
Evaluation:	v.20,	Surely, they who speak like this...

that, in view of the Assyrian (or subsequent) judgment, inquiring of the living God (אלהים, v.19)—or relying upon YHWH by recourse to this bound prophetic revelation—stands as a legitimate method in contrast to necromancy—or inquiring of ghosts and familiar spirits (ידעני || אוב, v.19)—as a deviant solution that the king and people might resort to for divining the future. Verses 20b-22 then state the consequences of this false choice by presenting it as a way of darkness (vv.20b-22; cf. 5:30) rather than light (8:23; cf. 2:5). In continuity with 8:16-18, then, this new subunit (vv.19-23) expands on the former by means of a generalizing/principalizing commentary, contrasting necromancy and the prophetic deposit as antithetical solutions for the plight faced by members of the community and outlining the respective outcome of each choice.

Indeed, it appears that hard times are coming for all, but while the false path (v.19) only leads to further darkness (vv.20b-22),<sup>106</sup> the true path (v.20a) leads ultimately to light and life (v.23). Walking the way of life in the light of YHWH requires returning to תורה and תעודה, understood now as an extant document, comprising prophetic instruction bound for future reference as the abiding witness of the living God (cf. Deut 18:15-19). In my view, there is no reason to conclude from the context or the reversed order of the terms that תורה now refers to a body of written law (*pace* Kaiser).<sup>107</sup> If Hezekiah's court is in view, the hendiadys points instead to the character of Isaiah's words, sealed as a prophetic torah, perhaps indicative of an inspired literary expansion in continuity with the prophet's earlier testimony (vv.16-18; cf. 30:8-17). In short, readers, including the king, must respond by choosing one of two paths, the first is a counterfeit and the second is reliable and true: the choice between the prophetic torah and necromancy is a choice between life and death (Isa 8:20b-23; cf. 2:5, 6, 22; 5:20, 30). For disciples ("you," pl., 8:19, 20),

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The first אמר introduces the quotation; the second אמר prescribes the destiny of those who speak in this way. Between these two verbs lies their entire speech.

As appealing as this solution appears, the presence of אלם in v.20 (the negative protasis of a real conditional) tells against it. The verse reads, "If they will not speak according to this word, then they will have no dawn!" According to this solution, the first conditional, introduced in v.19, "Now, should they say to you, 'Inquire of the spirits of the dead and the familiar spirits who chirp and moan,'" must have its apodosis after "moan" in that verse. That is, the next clause an interrogative beginning with ואל anticipates the response that the prophet makes to this speaking, "Should not a people inquire of their God? [Should they inquire] of the dead on behalf of the living?" In other words, Isaiah instructs his disciples to direct the people's inquiry to YHWH, specifically, "To the תורה and the תעודה" (v.20). It is as if he writes, "Should they resort to X, you will direct them to Y." That is, you will respond by directing them to the proper place to conduct their inquiry.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Isa 19:3; 28:18; Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:9-14; 1 Sam 15:22-23; 28:7.

<sup>107</sup> Otto Kaiser observes that the order of the two terms from v.16 is reversed in v.20 and concludes that this shows 'teaching' here is understood to be Torah, the written divine law (*Isaiah 1-12*, 200).

therefore, the choice for life, according to v.20a, entails adhering to Isaiah's תורה and תעודה.<sup>108</sup>

As a further word for the community, the expansion not only directs them back to the prophetic torah, but the contrast between the two ways becomes an antithesis between two types of people, identified as “they” and “you” (pl., v.19). “They” and “you” are distinguished by the former’s rejection and the latter’s embrace of the prophet’s speech and actions as the word of God. Like Ahaz, the former (“they”) reject YHWH’s word from the prophet, and in their anxious attempt to divine the future, “they” resort to the chirping and moaning of ghosts conjured by necromancers.<sup>109</sup> But their way will prove ineffective, because by inquiring of the dead they become like them (v.20).<sup>110</sup> The latter, “you disciples,” v.19 says, in effect, have hope if you are not misled by those who resort to necromancy, because “you” will attend to the revelation of the living God, based on the pattern of instruction delivered through Isaiah, preserved as a witness by his followers in vv.16-18. Put differently, as the criterion of their identity, subsequent readers are disciples because they will make recourse to the Isaianic תורה and תעודה too.

Nevertheless, because Ahaz and his people have refused Isaiah’s signs (7:12; 8:1-4, 6), the coming days will involve hardship. As van Wieringen explains, “The verses 20b-23b reveal a double future perspective: there will be darkness and non-darkness.”<sup>111</sup> Indeed, there will be great darkness for the former group (“they”). When God and his prophet go into hiding, “they” who reject YHWH’s revelation will lack truthful direction and be tested. In their desire to know the future, their recourse to false forms of revelation (cf. Deut 18:9-14) seals their fate: “If [אם] they will not speak according to this [YHWH’s] word [כדבר הוה], they will have no dawn [אין־לו שחר]” (Isa 8:20).<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Even if taken as a broader principle (patterned on the deuteronomic model), I am more inclined to agree with H. Wildberger (*Isaiah 1-12*, 371), who sees תורה as a referent to the prophetic movement rather than to a body of written law (i.e., Mosaic Torah or the Pentateuch), as O. Kaiser thinks (*Isaiah 1-12*, 200) or all authoritative tradition, as J. D. W. Watts thinks (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* [WBC 24; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985], 127). As Wildberger understands the expansion, vv.19-23 affirm that since the prophetic torah is a legitimate means for discerning YHWH’s will, Isaiah’s message would thus receive a hearing someday. In that day, with Isaiah, disciples will honor YHWH as holy and fear him as the living God (8:13); in turn, YHWH of Hosts would once again allow his countenance to shine upon the house of Jacob (cf. 2:5; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 375; cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 77).

<sup>109</sup> See 2 Kgs 16:3-4; cf. Deut. 18:10-11.

<sup>110</sup> Verse 20b, “If they will not speak according to this word, then they will have no dawn.” “If...not” introduces the negative protasis of a real conditional. By inquiring of the dead, only disadvantage can come to the living.

<sup>111</sup> Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (BIS 34; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 124.

<sup>112</sup> Again, as regards the translation of vv.19-20, my solution is thus closer to ESV, NIV, and RSV than to NJPS, NRSV. The all-important thing, then, is *where* divine guidance is to be found. The wicked resort to divination and inquire of the dead on behalf of the living, but disciples will resort to the prophet’s תורה and תעודה, attending thereby to the word of the living God (Deut 18:9-22).

There will be darkness for the latter group (“you”) as well (cf. 50:10), but for them this darkness will neither be absolute nor everlasting (9:1; cf. 50:11). This is because, in the time of darkness, the disciple does not lack an effective medium of revelation—disciples adhere to YHWH’s word as to a light.<sup>113</sup> Instead, the darkness they will face may be understood as difficulties arising from the way of life in imitation of God’s prophet: “you” will experience suffering because of your adherence to the prophetic revelation. Hoping in YHWH (8:17) and waiting for the latter time (עַתָּה...הַאַחֲרִיץ, v.23) means the student will share in the teacher’s suffering during the intervening days. Comforted by this word of life, until judgment is past and “God-is-with-Us” reigns, the disciple’s motto is “לַתְּעוּדָה וּלְתוֹרָה” So, like Isaiah with his children and disciples, subsequent disciples of YHWH’s revelation must also wait for YHWH, trusting the living God’s word and covenant rather than dead spirits, who ‘chirp and moan’ (8:19; cf. 28:15, 18).

In sum, for the latter, “they” (8:19), there is only distress and darkness—both now and in the coming day. But (כִּי) for the former, “you” (the disciples), there will be no gloom in the coming time, because “a light will come to her who was in distress.”<sup>114</sup> This light pertains to Judah’s deliverance from Assyria; it promises peace for those who rely on YHWH, and foretells the inauguration of a reign of justice and righteousness (9:1-6).<sup>115</sup> Yet *who* does Isaiah think will realize this Davidic royal aspiration?

The king of Isaiah’s aspiration may be Hezekiah. If so, his prophecy is meant to achieve a positive outcome by persuading the new king to become a disciple (or servant) who will steer free of foreign entanglements (esp. with Egypt) and manifest covenant-faithfulness by adhering to the prophetic torah. The alternation between the negative portrayal of judgment and the positive portrayal of peace in chs.7-11<sup>116</sup> thus warns of

<sup>113</sup> As Seitz explains, “When questions finally arise about the will of God, Isaiah and his children and his disciples can take their stand on the divine word vouchsafed to the prophet during the crisis.” (C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 83).

<sup>114</sup> As regards Zebulon and Naphtali, Isaiah’s counsel to Hezekiah was to keep calm and not listen to those who would convince him to turn to Egypt for help against Assyria. Rebellion would bring further darkness to this land, but resting in YHWH would lead to the reassertion of Davidic control over this northern territory of Israel. Thus, Sweeney is probably right when he writes, “Not only would such a view fend off potential revolt in a time of national crisis, but it would also preclude joining an alliance with Egypt that would only result in Assyrian retaliation and greater tragedy for the land” (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 186). Hezekiah’s future can be bright, if he fully relies on God.

<sup>115</sup> “God-is-with-Us” is not a deliverer: the zeal of YHWH of Hosts will do this (9:6). “In view of this emphasis,” observes Roberts, “it is important to note the relatively secondary role the Davidic ruler plays in the *inauguration* of this era of salvation. In neither 9 nor 11 does the messianic king overthrow the foreign enemy. Rather, in both cases, he inherits and enhances the results of Yahweh’s prior intervention. This is especially clear in 11:1 where the growth of the messianic shoot is immediately preceded by YHWH’s lopping off of the arrogant, overbearing forest of Jerusalem’s enemies.” See J. J. M. Roberts, “The Divine King and the Human Community in Isaiah’s Vision of the Future,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 350 (his italics).

<sup>116</sup> Isa 7-8; 9:1-6; 9:7-10:19; 10:20-34; 11:1-9, 10-16; 12:1-6.

further judgment and promises blessings to motivate Hezekiah to trust firmly in YHWH and his word. A positive fulfillment depends on his response of trust in Isaiah's *יְהוָה*, for without believing in YHWH and his prophet, he will not succeed.<sup>117</sup> But if Hezekiah turns away from Egypt and humbly adheres to YHWH, he need not fear the Assyrians as Ahaz did (10:24-27), for he will inaugurate a reign characterized by justice-righteousness, and the nations will come in peace (11:10-16; cf. 2:2-4).

Isaiah has outlined an alternative vision for society. But it is not new; it simply calls king and people back to their exclusive allegiance to God. Hence, the society Isaiah envisions is the *יְהוָה*-oriented society that YHWH desires (cf. 2:5).<sup>118</sup> Now that Isaiah has arrived at the 'days' of Hezekiah ben Ahaz, by analogy with Ahaz, he sees the new king's reign as a turning point for the entire Davidic House (cf. 7:9-17; 39:5-8). The question for him is identical to the question Isaiah (in effect) had asked his father, Ahaz: Will you be a king like David, a servant ruling under God and a disciple who adheres to the prophetic word?<sup>119</sup> As the head of Jerusalem and Judah (7:8-9), will Hezekiah promote peace by reigning with righteousness and justice (32:1; cf. 28:6)? These fundamental questions continue to arise in chs.28-33, and the design of chs.28-33 is to influence just such an outcome.

### 3.3.2. *Isaiah 28-33, "In returning and rest you will be saved"*

Isaiah 28-33 appears after the lengthy section of oracles against the nations (chs.13-23) that climaxes in YHWH's cleansing of the entire cosmos (chs.24-27).<sup>120</sup> Chapters 34-35 review the entire movement of chs.2-33 according to the pattern, oracle of judgment (ch.34) followed by oracle of salvation (ch.35). Like chs.36-39, chs.34-45 are transitional in nature; ch.34 recalls chs.2-33 and ch.35 anticipates chs.40-66. At the same time, throughout chs.1-39, part and whole broadly surrender to the sequence of Judah's kings (1:1; 6:1; 7:1; 14:28; 36:1).<sup>121</sup> Within this macro-context (chs.1-39), it is not surprising to discover that chs.28-33 reinforce the overall message by reflecting the themes and linguistic features of chs.2-5 and chs.7-11. For example, chs.28, 29, 30 and 31 are all

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Exod 14:31; 2 Chr 20:20.

<sup>118</sup> Of course, YHWH intended to form such a society from the start. He had begun to fashion it when he called Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 18:19) and David (2 Sam 7; 23:2-7) in righteousness.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 12:13; 24:11, 18; 1 Kgs 1:34.

<sup>120</sup> For the structure of chs.28-33, see esp. M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 353 and W. A. M Beuken, *Isaiah II, Volume II: Isaiah 28-39* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3.

<sup>121</sup> The overall message plainly demonstrates that YHWH is the Holy One of Israel, that the sovereign Lord is King, and that his glory is the fullness of the earth (6:3). Under his protection, no earthly power can threaten—there is simply no other staff of support or rock of refuge (17:10; 20:6; 26:4; 30:29, 31). YHWH reigns, and he will realize his agenda. Nevertheless, his agenda for Zion and Jacob-Israel also remains unfulfilled.

introduced by “woe” (וָיָהּ) oracles announcing judgment against God’s people.<sup>122</sup> A “woe” saying also introduces 33:1, announcing judgment against (his and) their enemies.<sup>123</sup> What is more, the intervening oracles in ch.32 depict the role of the king who would reign with justice and righteousness (וָיָהּ, 32:1).<sup>124</sup> Therefore, after Ahaz’s death (14:28), though perhaps from the perimeter of the court, in chs.28-33 Isaianic oracles expound the divine plan for Hezekiah and Zion (cf. 28:29; 29:15; 30:1).<sup>125</sup> Finally, chs.28-33 reflect a significant indication of overall coherence, moving the prophet’s oral speech to writing (just as YHWH did in chs.7-8). Here again, God intends to preserve Isaiah’s witness for a future generation (cf. 29:11-12; 30:8-17).

Now, if Hezekiah stands within the original audience as a person of interest, the design of the whole must be at least twofold. First, chs.28-33 urge the king to acknowledge YHWH’s agenda for refining Zion (28:17), and, second, they urge him to stand firm as the head of Jerusalem and Judah. Unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah must reject the faithless and foolish counsel of those around him.<sup>126</sup> He must not give heed to the drunken

<sup>122</sup> Cf. 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, and 22.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. 10:1, 5; 31:8-9.

<sup>124</sup> The portrait recalls the ‘messianic’ visions of Isa 9:1-6 and 11:1-9.

<sup>125</sup> These and other cohesive features invite a holistic reading of chs.1-39. The document’s structural patterns manifest an oracular interplay designed to motivate God’s people with both a carrot and a stick. As before (in chs.2-11), the carrot in chs.28-33 never comes without warning for the inhabitants of Judah—even extending to the women of Jerusalem (32:9-15; cf. 3:16-4:1)—and a portrayal of peace (32:10-20; cf. 4:2-6; 12:1-6) always follows the stick. As a noteworthy feature in this regard, the positive (paragraph-initial) וָיָהּ הַיְיָ הַיְיָ returns to announce the advent of YHWH’s ‘kingdom of grace’, for “in that day everyone will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold” (31:7; cf. 28:5; 29:18; 30:23).

<sup>126</sup> I recognize that unlike chs.36-39, no king of Assyria or Judah is mentioned and no specific military campaigns (or their outcomes) are mentioned in chs.28-33. (Assyria is mentioned, but not until 30:31.) This does not mean these chapters know nothing of Hezekiah (or Sennacherib), but it may signify, as Beuken notes, that “these chapters serve a more ideological purpose than a historical one.” In the same place, Beuken comments how the controlling policy in Jerusalem was identical to the foreign policy of other states in the region. It was “dominated by the question as to whether the Assyrian hegemony could be shaken off with the help of the smaller neighboring states and, in particular, in alliance with Egypt.” Regarding the prophet’s opinion on the matter, he writes, “Judah would draw no benefit at all from such worthless entanglements (30:1-7; 31:1-3). Only the recognition of YHWH as Israel’s only God (29:15-16; 30:1-2, 9-11, 15) and the maintenance of justice and righteousness (28:15, 17; 29:13, 21; 30:9, 12; 31:2) were of any value. Given the fact that these ideals were not being realized, God...was to punish Judah and Jerusalem, but he would also save his people through judgment (28:23-29)” (*Isaiah* 28-39, 6).

This conclusion raises a fascinating question that to my knowledge Beuken does not explicitly address. The question pertains to the relationship of this material to chs.36-39. For the view that chs.28-33 are inconsistent with chs.36-39, see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 381-82; R. E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem* (JSOTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), and A. Laato, “Hezekiah and the Assyrian Crisis in 701 B.C.” *SJOT* 2 (1987): 49-68. For the view that they are consistent, see the discussion in Seitz, *Zion’s Final Destiny*, 75-81 (cf. B. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*).

In my view, prose narratives in 36-39 vindicate Isaiah’s וָיָהּ הַיְיָ הַיְיָ in chs.28-33. They present the fulfillment of Isaiah’s vocation, demonstrating the truth of Isaiah’s prophecy and manifesting its nature as וָיָהּ הַיְיָ הַיְיָ. They also portray both positive and negative aspects of Hezekiah’s reign over the House of David. Positively, 36-39 show that YHWH would not allow Sennacherib to destroy Jerusalem (37:35; 38:6; cf. 7:14; 8:10; Ps 2). They also show how a penitent Hezekiah not only enjoyed YHWH’s healing and deliverance but also maintained peace in his day (37:22-29, 32; 38:5; 39:8; cf. 6:11). In a word, they show how YHWH was with him so that the Assyrian judgment would not be definitive (2 Kgs 18:7; 7:14; 8:10). Therefore, Hezekiah is a positive example of Isa 32:1 (cf. 38:2). Negatively, ch.39 exposes Hezekiah as the



priests and prophets of Ephraim (28:1-8) or the scoffers who rule in Jerusalem (28:14-22; cf. 8:19-23), or even meditate upon the wisdom of its sages (29:14). That is, the effective realization of the king's charge to reign in righteousness (32:1) requires a firm commitment to YHWH and his (prophetic) word (28:14, 23, 29; 30:15; cf. 7:9b). As YHWH's servant, Judah's king must not resort to either false counselors or false alliances (30:1-7; 31:1-3); he must serve YHWH humbly and exclusively. The following analysis considers this royal charge as a summons to Hezekiah to return to YHWH and heed the prophetic torah. It begins with 28:9-13 and closes with the movement to writing in 30:8-17 and 30:18-22.

### 3.3.2.1. *Isaiah 28:9-13, "They would not hear"*

In ch.28, the prophet defends his role as a teacher in Jerusalem. He uses Ephraim as a negative example for Judah, a test case to prompt Jerusalem's rulers to listen penitently rather than disparage his תורה. Two lines directly addressing rulers of Ephraim follow the introductory "woe" (הוֹי) in 28:1, announcing judgment by YHWH's agency in language evoking earlier chapters. In 28:1-2, the prophet characterizes the instrument of the Lord's judgment with a flood motif, which evokes 8:7-8 and portends the Assyrian invasion of the land. In 28:3-4, viticultural imagery recalls 5:1-7, as Assyria tramples Ephraim and the sword swallows its land as one would a first-ripe fig in springtime (cf. 1:20). Like the wicked in 5:11, Ephraim's rulers are drunk. Overcome with wine, the inept rulers were taken unawares; they had no one to warn them (28:1-2). Their priests and prophets were too stupefied to provide relevant counsel or competent assistance. They staggered at the vision and stumbled to render a decision regarding their failed foreign policy (vv.7-8).<sup>127</sup>

Further evidence of their incompetence (and indication of Isaiah's marginalization) appears immediately in the first part of 28:9-13. In vv.9-10, the subject must be Isaiah (cf. vv.11-13). He is recognized as a teacher (v.9), though these 'disciples'—presumably the same Ephraimite drunkards from vv.1-8—regard his lessons as inappropriate under the

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king who succumbs to pride; it provides an interpretation of his reign that demonstrates the Isaianic principle, "the lofty pride of men will be humbled" (2:11-12), and King Hezekiah was humbled (39:5-7; cf. 37:1-2). Whereas Ahaz's portrait is flat, and wholly negative, this complex portrait of Hezekiah shows concretely that Hezekiah is both a positive and negative model of the principle articulated in Isa 32:1.

<sup>127</sup> Sweeney thinks their drunkenness presupposes a banquet designed to celebrate the concluding of a contract with another party (*Isaiah 1-39*, 370). If this is so, the drinking party highlights the false counsel of the rulers, priests, and prophets who were responsible to direct Ephraim's foreign policy.

circumstances and beneath them.<sup>128</sup> The speakers, then, are probably Ephraim's useless priests and prophets who have maligned Isaiah's vision and mocked his analysis of their situation.

<sup>9</sup> To whom<sup>129</sup> will he teach<sup>130</sup> knowledge? To whom will he interpret the report—to those weaned from milk, to those just removed from the breast? <sup>10</sup> For it is 'Command after command, command after command, rule after rule, rule after rule; <sup>131</sup> a little here, a little there.'

"Knowledge" (דעה), as the content and aim of Isaiah's prophetic service, recalls 1:3 and 11:9. This precious commodity is precisely what Israel lacks, and precisely what the writer of 11:9 identifies as the solution for universal peace; hence, the object of this knowledge can only be YHWH and his purposes. The report (שמועה) refers more specifically to what they have been hearing from the prophet or the contents of Isaiah's message. Apparently, they regard his message as juvenile, and have grown tired of hearing it. They even ridicule his manner of speech, representing his message as poorly-expressed, incomprehensible, consisting only of stupid catch phrases,<sup>132</sup> uttered vainly, *ad nauseum*.<sup>133</sup> In their stupor, they jeer at him ironically like a gang of insolent schoolchildren. Their parody of the prophet's words shows that his instruction holds no interest and reveals their failure to recognize not only what precious knowledge his words contain but and whom he represents.

The teacher responds in vv.11-13, identifying his 'unintelligible' תורה with "the word of YHWH to them" (והיה להם דבר-יהוה, v.13; cf. 6:9-10). Because "they would not listen" (לא אבוא שמוע), YHWH's word, which had promised rest for the weary (v.11), will become a word of judgment, a rock to make them stumble and fall. It will

<sup>128</sup> I thus recognize, with J. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah's use of the rhetorical device of quoting the opposition (cf. 5:19; 10:8-11; 14:13-14; 29:15). See Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1-39*, 389-90) for a discussion of the various options represented in the commentary tradition.

<sup>129</sup> "To whom" (v.9, 2x): The interrogative is preceded by the sign of the definite direct obj. אֵלֶּיִם.

<sup>130</sup> "teach" (v.9): יורה *hip'il* impf. 3 masc. sg. ירה (cf. Isa 30:20, "teacher," מורה).

<sup>131</sup> "rule after rule" (v.10; cf. 18:2, 7). In Isa 18:2, 7, the writer introduces similar language about a threatening nation קִי־קִי (Cush; LXX, Ethiopia), which is variously translated in English versions. HALOT (1009) presents two senses: (1) "strong, powerful, mighty" and (2) "babble, foreign, unintelligible." ESV chooses the former, "a nation mighty and conquering"; NJPS chooses the later, "a nation of gibber and chatter"; and NIV compromises, "an aggressive nation of strange speech." For Isa 28, specifically, HALOT suggests that לִצֹּל and לִקֵּן are "old names for letters of the alphabet, which a teacher would use in lessons (here in Isaiah with mocking significance)." Following צִו ("command"), however, קִי (a measuring-line or string), may have the sense of a teacher's standards or rules.

<sup>132</sup> So W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah 28-39*, 36.

<sup>133</sup> According to Brueggemann, "The effect of the lines is...concerned with the sound rather than the substance, a sound that reiterates a simple, sharp syllable, delivered in mocking overstatement. The sarcasm implies that the prophet is a boring repeater of elemental, obvious claims, sounding the a-b-c's of Yahwism over and over" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 223).

become truly unintelligible to them, because it will turn into an incoherent sound-stream of phonetic gibberish and syntactic chaos. YHWH will continue to address them, but by means of a foreign-tongued oppressor (cf. 8:5-10; 36:11-12). What began with an offer of peace and rest will end with war, chaos, and exile (28:13).

Yet, there is hope insofar as the sovereign Lord is protecting both his interests and his faithful society. Isaiah is his emissary, and YHWH of Hosts will not allow either his message or his messenger to continue as the object of their scorn and derision. YHWH will have the last laugh (cf. Ps 2)! In another allusion to Isa 8 (vv.14-15; 28:16), YHWH of Hosts will see that Ephraim trips and falls; indeed, they will be broken, ensnared and captured (v.13).

In the next unit, paragraph-initial לכן (“therefore” + שמע impv.) connects vv.9-13 to vv.14-29. This passage reveals that the prophet meant for Jerusalem’s leaders to overhear his words to Ephraim. Ephraim would not listen, but perhaps there is hope for Jerusalem. His words still contain YHWH’s promise of rest for the chosen city.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, in this larger section, Isaiah exhorts them to listen (שמעו, impv., 2x, vv.14, 23), because YHWH plans to refine the city (vv.16-17). The stanza divides into three strophes (vv.14-22, 23-26, 27-29) that warn of judgment even as they offer hope. The prophet’s closing words are significant (vv.22, 26, 29). He ends the first strophe, saying, “Now then,<sup>135</sup> do not scoff, lest your bonds be tightened; for I have heard a decree of destruction from YHWH of Hosts regarding the whole land” (v.22). Then, he introduces the second unit, which contains a fuller set of imperatives: “Listen diligently to my voice, pay diligent attention to my word” (v.23).<sup>136</sup> The patent design of this arrangement is to prompt Jerusalem to attend to God’s word and repent (cf. 5:12, 19, 24). To this end, he teaches its leaders knowledge to weather the Assyrian storm (28:2, 9, 17). Having delivered the report, he offers reassurance concerning the heavenly source of his solution to their apparently mundane woes (vv.24-29).

This additional word of comfort comes in the form of a parable (משל), which reveals the source of his wisdom. Agrarian customs are used to explain the prophet’s message (vv.24-26, 27-29); as an illustration, it taps into shared wisdom (or common sense), confirming the prophet’s word by appeal to an integral part of the Israelite/Judean

<sup>134</sup> Cf. 7:9; 8:6; 28:12; 30:15.

<sup>135</sup> ועתה functions above the level of the clause to mark the conclusion of the speech in vv.14-22.

<sup>136</sup> הקשיבו ושמעו קולי האזינו ושמעו Brueggemann is quick to point out that *listening* is Israel’s fundamental requirement (Deut 6:4) (*Isaiah* 1-39, 223).

worldview, YHWH's **מִשְׁפָּט** (v.26).<sup>137</sup> Thus, within the created order, the farmer's knowledge is derivative and dependent upon God himself. The 'parable of the farmer' thus equates Isaiah with the farmer as one taught by YHWH. That is, if the rulers of Jerusalem could recognize and appreciate the identity of the prophet as taught by YHWH, they might recognize the heavenly source of his knowledge (**דַּעַת**) and the divine origin of his report (**שְׁמוּעָה**, vv.9, 19). Just as the farmer learns from the Lord of creation, so Isaiah learns from the Lord of history. In case they miss the point, he adds two closing lines that call explicit attention to the divine origin of his **תּוֹרָה**: "For he instructs [**יָסַר**] him in the right practice, his God teaches [**יָרָה**] him" (v.26), and "This too is from YHWH of Hosts; his counsel [**עֲצָה**] is extraordinary and exceedingly competent [**תְּשׁוּבָה**]" (v.29). The juxtaposition of these two lines demonstrates the dual-agency behind this knowledge, this report, and these exhortations, and it therefore highlights the proper evaluation of Isaiah's teaching as **דְּבַר־יְהוָה**. Jerusalem's rulers must share not only Isaiah's knowledge but also his recognition of its divine source. If they hope to escape the coming judgment, they must attend to Isaiah's **תּוֹרָה** as to the revealed word of YHWH. Unlike the foolish decisions of the drunken priests and prophets of Ephraim, Isaiah's vision for Jerusalem comes from God. Therefore, his report can and must be trusted. Isaiah's counsel, as YHWH's counsel, is both extraordinary and exceedingly competent (v.29).<sup>138</sup>

In all, the subunits of vv.14-29 constitute a distinct poetic unit in the chapter along with vv.1-8, 9-13. Their connection with 28:9-13 shows that ch.28 functions chiefly as a warning to the "scoffers" (**אֲנָשִׁי לִצְוֹן**) who rule in Jerusalem (v.14). Presently, they are behaving like those worthless rulers of Ephraim (vv.9-10),<sup>139</sup> who mocked the prophet's knowledge (**דַּעַת**) and refused to hear his report (**שְׁמוּעָה**, v.9, cf. v.19). By their failure to

<sup>137</sup> **מִשְׁפָּט** refers to the prophet's affirmation that YHWH preserves and governs the created order.

<sup>138</sup> Wisdom motifs abound, yet Isaiah utilizes wisdom motifs to support the view that his own prophetic words comprise **תּוֹרָה** from God. Although his words align closely with and even appeal to the Israelite (and broader ancient Near Eastern) worldview, their origin and source as YHWH's words means his **תּוֹרָה** finds its source in God and therefore has the nature of divine (special) revelation. In other words, wise 'children' should recognize Isaiah's prophetic words as divine **תּוֹרָה**, the revelation of the all-wise creator and exalted Lord of history. As Williamson explains, "It would be a mistake ... either to suggest that Isaiah condemned the wise because they adopted a wholly secular approach to policy or to argue that he was in some way trying to call the wise to what their own tradition should have taught them ... Rather, as with his pronouncement of judgment against social sin and injustice, there was what may loosely be called a prophetic element which was combined with other data in wider currency among his contemporaries" ("Isaiah and the Wise," 140). While YHWH's words presuppose for clarity what may be plainly known, as divine instruction they constitute an alternative *prophetic* curriculum (or prophetic vision) for society.

<sup>139</sup> Their behavior also recalls ch.8, for they have made a covenant with the realm of the dead (v.15; cf. 8:19). See Christopher B. Hays, "The Covenant with *Mut*: A New Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1-22," *VT* 60 (2010): 212-40.

attend to Isaiah's teaching, they have rejected the divine source of knowledge, and this brings judgment upon Samaria. The rulers of Jerusalem are just like them. They trust lies rather than the words that come from YHWH. For this reason, Isaiah has heard a decree of destruction against Judah. If their behavior continues, "the policies that led to the ruin of Samaria would lead to the same disastrous conclusion for Jerusalem."<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, it is not too late for Jerusalem to turn and heed the prophetic **תִּנְוֶה**. As the agricultural parable signifies, Isaiah is YHWH's disciple who exhorts his audience in Zion to follow his example and "let itself be instructed by God in 'the right order' of judgment and salvation," for, as Beuken continues, "Only thus will they escape the fate which has befallen [Ephraim]."<sup>141</sup> It is only a matter of listening, trusting, and following YHWH's prophet, for whoever believes does not act hastily but finds rest (vv.11, 16).

### 3.3.2.2. *Isaiah 30:8-17, "They were unwilling to heed the **תִּנְוֶה** of YHWH"*

Isaiah 29:1-8 portrays Jerusalem under attack. The details are vague; there is no mention of the king of Assyria (or of Jerusalem), and there is no specific description of a military campaign. Instead, by a negative image, vv.1-8 portray the nightmarish reversal of Isaiah's programmatic vision regarding all the nations (**כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם**, 2:2-4, 5). Subsequent verses show how, even under siege, the people of Jerusalem continue their appeal to YHWH yet mindlessly and irreverently withhold their hearts from him (29:9-14). The picture of idolatrous behavior is analogous to 1:10-17. For this reason, their hardening and distress will increase until wisdom and discernment perish (v.14) and David's city is utterly destroyed (vv.1-8).<sup>142</sup> Judah's prophets and priests have become blind, but not as Ephraim's. They do not stagger from wine (or other secondary cause); rather, YHWH himself has poured a deep sleep over them. It is God's judgment that shuts their eyes (vv.9-10; 28:7; cf. 6:9-10). The prophet expresses the outcome of this judgment in a short prose passage in vv.11-12,<sup>143</sup> which indicates that Isaiah's words have become as a sealed document, impenetrable to literate and illiterate alike. Why and how has it come to this?<sup>144</sup>

<sup>140</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 380. In my view, ch.28 comprises an implicit call for Hezekiah's court to join Isaiah in discipleship to YHWH.

<sup>141</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah 28-39*, 65.

<sup>142</sup> Here again, there is a patent allusion to 8:19. Ignorant of Isaiah's **תִּנְוֶה** and **תַּעֲוִדָה**, those who inquire of the dead will become like the dead, ghost-like, with voices "chirping" from under the sod (29:4).

<sup>143</sup> Isaiah 29:11-12: "Now, the entire vision has become for you like the words of a sealed document. Suppose they hand it to one who can read, saying 'Read this, please.' He would reply, 'I cannot, because it is sealed.' Or suppose they hand the document to one who cannot read, saying, 'Read this.' He would say, 'I can't read.'"

<sup>144</sup> Is Hezekiah also without hope?

Isa 29:11-12 illustrates three important aspects of FI's message. First, it exemplifies the inevitable fulfillment of Isaiah's mission as YHWH's emissary. The sovereign Lord is achieving his objective to harden the people by the word of the prophet (6:8-10), a simple case of cause-and-effect. Second, it demonstrates that YHWH's judgment is just. The persistent non-acceptance of YHWH's offer of rest (28:12; cf. 7:9b; 30:15) exposes the disloyalty of Jerusalem's rulers (7-8; 28-31). They have never rendered Isaiah's message its proper due; instead of loyalty and trust,<sup>145</sup> they have pursued idolatrous sources of knowledge (8:19; 28:15) and a would-be autonomous foreign policy.<sup>146</sup> Clearly, they have not learned the lessons of Ahaz (7:1-17) or Ephraim (28:1-13; cf. 8:1-4): YHWH of Hosts is the only suzerain, and he demands exclusive allegiance from his vassal—lack of trust in YHWH's word is rebellion (מַרְיָא, 30:1, 9). Without trusting YHWH, Judah and Jerusalem cannot expect to escape the oppressor (20:6; 30:7; 31:3). Apostasy in the House of David turns every coveted ally into a terror-inspiring foe. Isaiah has heard the decree of destruction (28:22b); he has delivered the report—there is no foreign power to help, there is only the Holy One of Israel! If Jerusalem continues to stand against him, every nation (כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) will come for war against Mt. Zion (עַל־הָהָר־צִיּוֹן, 29:8; cf. 2:2-4). YHWH hardens in order to judge, and the Lord's judgment is just (chs.5-6, 7-8). Under the circumstances, YHWH's commitment to Jerusalem-Zion actually requires the cleansing-judgment of Jacob-Israel. Thus, the sovereign Lord will be the driving force behind the attack, for the foreign armies are but instruments of "YHWH of Hosts, who will descend to wage war against Mt. Zion" (יֵרֵד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְצָבָא) על־הָהָר־צִיּוֹן, 31:4).

Finally, 29:11-12 showcases the inscrutable relationship in FI between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, making no effort to reconcile the apparent contradiction. It is enough to recognize how the Isaianic theme of teaching YHWH's word holds them in tension.<sup>147</sup> Through the prophetic word, YHWH not only drives the history forward, he justifies his purposes and vindicates his prophet. In this manner, he is instructing both the prophet and the prophet's followers; he is refining and reconstituting a society around the prophet so disciples will survive to start anew. They will fashion a new society in holy Zion founded upon trust in the words of Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel (cf. 54:13). In that time after judgment, the nations will come for peace not war.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Isa 7:9b, 12; 8:6; 28:12, 16, 22, 23, 26, 29; 30:15.

<sup>146</sup> Isa 8:6, 12; 28:22a; 30:1-7, 10-11, 16-17; 31:1-3.

<sup>147</sup> See Isa 28:9, 13, 23, 26, 29; 29:18, 24.

<sup>148</sup> See Isa 2:2-4, 5; 51:4, 7; 60:1-3.

Isaiah does not survive to see the fulfillment of YHWH's program or the realization of the programmatic vision in 2:2-4, but his message will not expire with those who are perishing, because—in reaction to their rebellion (30:1-7, 9) and at YHWH's command—he preserves his **תּוֹרָה** in writing once more (cf. 8:1-2; 8:16-23). “Now go, write it upon a tablet [for them<sup>149</sup>], and inscribe it in a document,<sup>150</sup> so that it may be an enduring witness<sup>151</sup> for the latter day” (30:8).

Isa 30:8-17 explicates 29:11-12 by bringing features of 8:1-4, 16-23, and 28:9-13 together into a concise summary of several key aspects of Isaiah's message. The unit begins with a temporal adverb (**עַתָּה**) and double imperative: “Now go, write it down...” (**עַתָּה בּוֹא כְתֹבָהּ**). This opening expresses a sequential change from the previous message about Egypt (vv.1-7) to a new event (v.8), nonetheless closely related to the directly preceding oracle (vv.6-7). In fact, the object suffix (**־ָ**, 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg.) can have for its antecedent both the nation (**מִצְרַיִם**, no formal gender) and the oracle regarding it. That is, the writing commanded in v.8 concerns at least “this” (**זֶה**) previous oracle about Egypt, in which YHWH has referred to that nation as “Rahab the Harmless Dragon” (NLT, v.7b).<sup>152</sup> Verse 7 clearly states that running to Rahab is senseless, and so, a written record (v.8) will preserve Isaiah's pronouncement for future validation. Brueggemann says, “Soon or late, the cruciality of Yahweh for public life will be made evident.”<sup>153</sup> The unit in v.17 closes with a harrowing statement regarding the reduction of Jerusalem's

<sup>149</sup> “for them” (v.8): BHS suggests deleting **לָהֶם** for reasons of meter (cf. Vulgate; GKC 135p). It may be an instance of textual corruption, but I retain it because it provides a tantalizing link between 30:8 and the disciples of 8:16.

<sup>150</sup> “document” (v.8): **סֵפֶר** refers to a scroll, inscribed on one side and then sealed, as in Isa 8:16 (see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 415).

<sup>151</sup> “an enduring witness” (v.8): reading with Mss Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate, I take **עֵד** (“witness”) to be the object of the verb **יִיחַד**, designated by the *lāmed* preposition.

<sup>152</sup> M. Sweeney thinks it refers back to v.7 only, and this may be the case (*Isaiah 1-39*, 390). Nevertheless, several features of vv.9-17 suggest that the unit can refer to Isaiah's vision more broadly (see, esp., **תּוֹרָה** || **דֶּבַר** in vv.9, 12, the descriptive words that point up key aspects of Isaiah's message in v.11 [e.g., way, path, Holy One of Israel], and of course Isa 30:15). Brevard Childs thinks the prophet is counseling his disciples to collect his words for a later time (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 226). Indeed, I agree that the content of the passage suggests that more is in view than v.7, but it is impossible to say exactly how much more. Christopher Seitz is surely getting close to the answer when he states, “...the core of Isaiah's preaching can be summed up with reference to one key verse in chapter 30” (See C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 219). He is referring to Isa 30:15 alone. Again, I agree, but why not make a similar comment about v.11? Verse v.11 provides (in shorthand) important Isaianic catchwords or phrases (‘way’, ‘path’, ‘Holy One of Israel’), and v.15 provides the core of his message (and Israel's response): “...‘By repentance and rest you will be saved, calmness and confidence will be your strength.’ But you would not consent.”

<sup>153</sup> See W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 243. Regarding the similar action of Jeremiah in Jer 36:5, Blenkinsopp writes, “Jeremiah's response to the interdiction would suggest that writing prophecies was a response to the non-reception of their oral delivery, a supposition that also fits the two occasions on which Isaiah is said to have committed his words to writing (8:16; 30:8)” (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 416). Sweeney also observes the similar role of writing in Jer 17:1; 30:2 and Hab 2:2-3 (M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 390).

population to an insignificant remnant, “as a flagpole on a hill.” The next unit transitions from YHWH’s judgment to grace (v.18). Despite this thematic shift, 30:8-17 and vv.18-22 seem like a pair, as they reflect the movement from the former to the latter time and the pattern of the new arising from the old.

In 30:8-17, YHWH continues as the speaker (cf. v.1). He commands an emissary to record “an enduring witness for a latter day” (לְיוֹם אַחֲרֹן לְעֵד עַד-עוֹלָם). This command recalls the account of Isaiah’s writing from 8:1-2, 16-23. Mention of a latter day also alludes to ch.8, where the light of a new day was promised disciples who attend to Isaiah’s תּוֹרָה while persevering through the gloom of judgment (8:16-23; cf. 2:2, 5). But this is not that day, because here, judgment stands on the horizon.

The reason for this comes in v.9 (כִּי). The people are rebellious (מָרִי),<sup>154</sup> untruthful (כַּחַשׁ) children (בָּנִים, 2x),<sup>155</sup> unwilling to heed YHWH’s תּוֹרָה. Clearly, the life of God’s people depends on YHWH’s תּוֹרָה, the fate of Zion hinges upon the prophet’s instruction (|| דְּבַר, v.12; cf. Deut 8:3).<sup>156</sup> Indeed, FI belabors the point that *everything*, the destiny of the entire creation, depends on accepting Isaiah’s תּוֹרָה.<sup>157</sup> YHWH’s children, however, do not see it. Instead of God’s word, they have made lies their shelter and falsehood their refuge (28:15).

In 30:10-11, the prophet expands on v.9 (cf. v.12), using the mendacity of his audience against them (recalling 28:9). By this device, he links his Judean audience to the incompetent rulers of Ephraim, who scornfully aped Isaiah’s familiar catchwords and phrases before.<sup>158</sup> Here, however, he does not disclose how the Judean audience belittled him but exposes their rebellious nature. YHWH presents them as children (בָּנִים) who have no regard for truth, let alone an ear for true prophecy (30:10). In fact, their actual

<sup>154</sup> Beuken notes that this word is almost a technical term for Israel’s recalcitrant behavior in the desert, but that among the prophets it characterizes Israel’s unwillingness to live according to God’s commandments (Isa 1:20; 3:8; Jer 4:17; 5:23; Ezek 20:8, 13, 21; Hos 14:1). Compare the term ‘rebellious house’ for Israel (16 times) in Ezekiel (see Beuken, *Isaiah* 28-39, 159).

<sup>155</sup> “Children” (בָּנִים) plainly recalls the “ignorant children” from 1:2-3.

<sup>156</sup> So also J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 167, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 1-39, 415 and W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah* 28-39, 162. Beuken writes, “[T]he instruction (torah) of YHWH’ in PI does not mean the law in its entirety but God’s concrete instruction given through the prophets (parallel with ‘word’: 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; parallel with ‘testimony’, תְּעוּדָה, 8:16, 20).” The fact that seers and prophets are both plural in this context identifies Isaiah as perhaps only one among others during his day or else it functions to identify his vocation with the succession of prophets raised up by YHWH since Moses (Deut 18:15-19).

<sup>157</sup> Despite correlation with Mosaic Torah, both 8:16 and 30:9 show how far FI’s conception of תּוֹרָה is from Mosaic legislation or priestly instruction. Everything hinges on the acceptance or non-acceptance of God’s purpose as communicated by the hand of the prophet. See the discussion in H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 88-89.

<sup>158</sup> J. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah* 1-39, 416) helpfully comments that the injunction to turn aside from the way and deviate from the path may well be a sarcastic mimicking of often-repeated prophetic-homiletic platitudes (cf. 28:9-10).



desire is to control and suppress the truth by stifling YHWH's prophets (רָאִים and חֲזִים). The children order the prophets about, telling them what to say regarding the 'way' (דֶּרֶךְ), or 'path' (פֶּתַח) to walk, even regarding 'the Holy One of Israel' (קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל). They have the audacity, in fact, to command God's emissaries to 'abandon' (סוּר) the way and 'turn off' (נָטַח) the path, to altogether 'stop' (שָׁבַת) confronting them with the Holy One of Israel. These children desire rebellion. Gene Tucker explains, "[T]hey want the mediators of revelation out of the way so that they will not have to listen to anything about the Holy One of Israel."<sup>159</sup> They all wish to go their own way.

An announcement of just retribution follows in vv.12-14, indicated by the familiar pair, "Now then...because" (עַתָּה...לְכֵן)<sup>160</sup> and the messenger formula (v.12). In a manner similar to v.9, as if to provide a second witness, vv.12-13a restate the reasons why YHWH will punish these children: "Because you have refused this word, trusted in disparagement,<sup>161</sup> and relied upon disloyalty, retribution will come upon you..." They have failed to learn that YHWH's way involves adherence to the prophetic word (דְּבַר), not its refusal; they have failed to discern that his path requires trust (בְּטָח), not contempt for his plan. Due to their persistent rebellion, they have become an object lesson for the principle that YHWH does not tolerate disloyalty. Accordingly, vv.13-14 mix metaphors of collapsing ramparts and smashing amphora in the effort to communicate the comprehensive, irreversible, nature of their imminent destruction. Isaiah had warned them—the devastation was decreed (cf. 28:22)—and their punishment is the Holy One's righteous verdict against his recalcitrant children (cf. 1:2-3, 4-9; cf. Deut 21:18-21).

Next, Isa 30:15-17 underlines the depth of their recalcitrance in contrast with YHWH's profound benevolence. In v.15, a second messenger formula introduces a direct quotation that distills YHWH's gracious remedy in a single line, indicating that YHWH has been an extremely patient and exceptionally devoted father. He had warned them to stay away from Egypt, and he had invited them to trust firmly in his sovereign care and protection (for this is rest), and he had exhorted them to imitate him by giving rest to the

<sup>159</sup> G. Tucker, *Isaiah 1-39*, 254.

<sup>160</sup> "Now then...because" (v.12): This pair (עַתָּה and לְכֵן) is familiar from Isa 7:5, 14 and 8:6-7, where it expressed YHWH's just retribution for wrongs previously articulated.

<sup>161</sup> "disparagement and disloyalty" (v.12): the gloss, "oppression" (ESV, NIV, NLT) does not work well in this context. Vulgate has *calumniam*, which suggests misrepresentation and denigration. עֲשָׂק, here, denotes "disparagement" or "slander" (cf. D. J. A. Clines, "עֲשָׂק" II," *CDCH*, 350, "calumny, slander," Eccl. 7:7; v.6 refers to the laughter or mocking of fools.). This choice works well in a context where the prophet's audience has shown contempt for his message. For the second word, rendered "disloyalty," Holliday has "deceit," citing this verse (*Concise HALOT*, 174). The larger context suggests treachery or betrayal, turning to Egypt rather than relying upon YHWH.

weary (for this is repose, 28:12). But they refused. In fact, the reader learns that YHWH's children were so obstinate they doggedly declined both his extraordinarily competent counsel (28:26, 29) and his generous offers of help and salvation. Still, he tirelessly and vigorously reminded them: "By repentance and rest you will be saved, calmness and confidence will be your strength" (30:15; cf. 7:9b, 28:12). Still they would not consent; they were unwilling to heed YHWH's **תורה** (30:9). Instead, they rushed continuously towards alternative means of knowledge and deliverance, until YHWH's patience reached a point of no return and all hope for deliverance/escape was lost (cf. v.7). If they would flee to a foreign power, the enemy would pursue them; if they would flee on horseback, the pursuer would be faster, and they would be overtaken. For their failure to heed the prophetic **תורה** and flee to God, they would flee the battle cry until (**עד אים**) only a flagpole (**תור**) remained on the mountain, as a banner (**נס**) on a hill.<sup>162</sup> Though it points to the fulfillment of Isaiah's commission (6:9-11), this truly is a most disturbing threat of punishment.

As a portrait of devastation, 30:15-17 evokes 6:11 and Isaiah's query, "How long [עד-מתי]?" YHWH's answer in 6:11-13 ("until," **עד אשר אים**) is analogous to 30:17. This suggests that 30:17 alludes to YHWH's response in 6:11-13, extending significantly to 6:13c: "the holy seed is its memorial." As in 6:11-13, so also in 30:15-17, YHWH will drastically reduce the population. For their rejection of God's presence, the remnant will become like a lonely monument, a solitary flagpole on a mountaintop, "a silent witness to presence transformed into abandonment,"<sup>163</sup> and a faint testimony to Zion's former glory. Altogether then, 30:8-17 outlines YHWH's reasons for commanding Isaiah to write in v.8. In short, Jerusalem's officials were not learning the lessons of Ahaz and Ephraim.<sup>164</sup> It appears that all is lost: life might germinate from a seed, but a flagpole is inorganic, inanimate, dead.

Yet these verses also provide further information regarding the nature of Isaiah's prophetic vocation. They indicate that Isaiah is a prophet with **תורה** like Moses (Deut 18:15-29),<sup>165</sup> for as Moses before his death (Deut 31:19, 21), he is instructed to write a word to act as a witness against a wayward and rebellious generation (Deut 31:16-24). As with Moses' word, this generation is unwilling to heed YHWH's **תורה** (Isa 30:9; cf. Deut 31:29). Therefore (as he did Moses), YHWH commands Isaiah to leave a deposit for a

<sup>162</sup> Is this the banner raised to summon armies at 5:26?

<sup>163</sup> So W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah* 28-39, 164.

<sup>164</sup> Would Hezekiah endure a harsher doom than Ahaz had earned?

<sup>165</sup> See Martin O'Kane, "Isaiah: A Prophet in the Footsteps of Moses" JSOT 69 (1996): 29-31, D. Jones, "The Tradition of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem," 232, and W. A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah* 28-39, 159.

future generation,<sup>166</sup> which will stand alongside Mosaic Torah for a twofold purpose: to vindicate YHWH and his prophet and to guide disciples in the society of a latter day.

### 3.3.2.3. *Isaiah 30:18-22, “YHWH waits to be gracious...”*

Isaiah 30:18-22 is a distinct unit from vv.8-17, if only because the shift from judgment (vv.8-17) to salvation (vv.18-22) is so remarkable. The relationship between these two units is nevertheless highly significant because it expresses succinctly the alternation between judgment and salvation that has characterized chs.1-39.<sup>167</sup> Just as 30:8-17 summarizes FI’s threat of judgment, so 30:18-22 summarizes FI’s reassurance of salvation,<sup>168</sup> and once again by the theme of teaching YHWH’s word. After 30:8-17, to show that there will be grace in the end, 30:18-22 proclaims the true way or path of salvation, which involves adhering to YHWH and attending to his word; its positive outcome represents the complete reversal of the preceding oracle (30:8-17). Consequently, the primary reason to consider these two oracles collectively is that their juxtaposition emphasizes God’s requirement to heed the prophetic **תורה** (vv.9, 12, 20-21). Their mutual relation demonstrates that both curse (vv.8-17) and blessing (vv.18-22) are contingent upon the people’s orientation to FI’s vision. Put differently, if Isaianic **תורה** is YHWH’s instrument for maintaining the order of the cosmos, then the pronouncement of judgment and salvation both manifest YHWH’s **משפט**.

Verse 18 immediately expresses the logical correlation between 30:8-17 and 30:18-22 by means of a conjunction and an adverbial construction (**וְכֵן**). “Now, that being so, YHWH is waiting to be gracious to you; and so, he will arise to show you mercy, for YHWH is a God of justice; everyone who waits for him is blessed” (30:18). Clearly, YHWH is no longer the speaker; rather, he is the one about whom the prophet now speaks and the explicit subject of the verb **יחכה** in v.18a. Verses 18-22, therefore, relate to the preceding as the positive side of YHWH’s response, anticipated after judgment, according

<sup>166</sup> Williamson perceives the difference from ch.8, for “unlike that earlier occasion it looks as though Isaiah no longer expected himself to be personally involved in that future day” (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 105).

<sup>167</sup> Isa 2-20, 21-23, 24-26, 27-31. The reader has encountered this alternation in ch.1 and throughout chs.2-12 (2:2-5; 2:6-4:1; 4:2-6; 5:1-30; 6:1-5, 6-7, 8-13b, 13c; 7-8; 9:1-6, 9:7-10:19; 10:20-34; 11:1-12:6), in chs.13-23, 24-27 (14:1-2; 16:4b-5; 19:16-25; 25:6-27:13), and throughout chs.28-33 (29:22-24; 30:18-33; 31:6-9; 32:1-8; 33:2-6). The reader will encounter it again in chs.34-35 and 36-39.

<sup>168</sup> The two oracles (30:8-17; 30:18-22), like chs.34-35, have a retrospective and prospective function. Isa 30:8-17 (cf. ch.34) looks back upon FI’s consistent warnings, and the dominant theme is judgment (chs.1-39). Isa 30:8-22 (cf. ch.35) looks forward to the FI’s offer of consolation after judgment, when restoration becomes the dominant theme (chs.40-55).

to the vision of the speaker.<sup>169</sup> If this is so, then by the prophet's word YHWH once again expresses his resolve to bring forth something new (6:13c; 30:17c).

It is significant to note that if YHWH is waiting, so are the prophet and his disciples. The connection of v.18 with vv.8-17 indicates that they long for the latter day (אחריו, v.8; cf. 6:11).<sup>170</sup> The emphasis on waiting itself suggests that that new day is akin to the one promised to Isaiah's disciples in 8:23 (cf. 2:2). Thus, 30:18 lifts their gaze to a time after judgment, a new era of grace and mercy. This fact, and the connection with ch.8, helps to identify the speaker more specifically as YHWH's own prophet-disciple to whom he has taught the תורה (8:16) and through whom he commands the wider audience ("you" pl.) to persevere (30:18). Since both God and his prophet eagerly wait for YHWH's coming day of salvation, so must the disciples who may be among the generation for whom Isaiah has written. Thus, as a message for those presently walking in darkness, v.18 forges a link not only with 8:16 and 8:23 but also with 8:17 by directing them to the prophet's תורה and תעודה (8:20) as the source of reassurance, truth, and guidance in the present time. Like 8:16-23, then, 30:18-22 provides current followers of Isaiah's message with additional reasons to persevere, for salvation is on the horizon. As a message for the generation of survivors, the fulfillment of Isaiah's message of judgment (30:8-17) would provide grounds for hope in the realization of his message of salvation (30:18-22). In either case, the prophet rests the implicit command to wait upon the fulfillment of his word, and so 30:18-22 calls for the imitation of both YHWH and his waiting-prophet.<sup>171</sup>

This last basis for the emphasis on waiting is expressed by an *inclusio*. The key verb חכה is repeated at the beginning and at the end of v.18, forming an envelope of expectation: "YHWH is waiting...wait for him" (יחכה יהוה...חוכי לו). This 'envelope

<sup>169</sup> See *IBHS*, 666, which explains that the complex preposition functions adverbially to introduce a proposed or anticipated response after a statement of certain conditions ("the foregoing being the case, therefore"). Brevard Childs thinks a connection to what precedes is "hardly logical nor expected," indicating a "characteristic brittle linkage with the primary redactional layer" (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 227). There is certainly a tension between this passage and the preceding, but a significant aspect of the message depends on how that tension is expressed. Verses 18-22 may be unexpected, but there is a profound logic behind its juxtaposition with 30:8-17.

<sup>170</sup> J. Blenkinsopp points out that waiting raises the question, "How long?" (עַד־מַתַּי), but he draws a connection to liturgical prayer and apocalyptic expectation rather than to Isaiah's question in Isa 6:11. According to him, it implies the anxious waiting of those who think that God owes it to them to intervene. I would agree insofar as this passage provides assurance that justice will prevail in spite of appearances to the contrary (See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 420). Willem Beuken comments appropriately, "After the judgment had been executed, the Isaianic tradition could consider nothing other than the expectation of God's benevolence" (*Isaiah 28-39*, 140).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Isa 7:9b; 8:16-23; 30:15. W. Brueggemann rightly observes that this waiting is also an alternative to Judah's "feverish, self-asserting military activity" (*Isaiah 1-39*, 245). Yet it primarily indicates that disciples have taken God's side and expresses their hope in God's ultimate revelation of grace.

of expectation' encloses within it the motivation for the disciple's behavior and the ultimate ground of their assurance. This is because the contents of the envelope indicate that YHWH is waiting to bestow the benefits of redemption; that is, he waits to "be gracious" (חַנּוּן) and to "show mercy" (רַחֲמִים)—acts that positively reveal YHWH's character and identity as the God of מִשְׁפָּט.<sup>172</sup> What is more, these benefits promise "blessing" (אַשְׁרֵי) to those who eagerly wait for YHWH and long for the fuller revelation of his מִשְׁפָּט. In that day, the truth will be manifest to all around that YHWH is their God and they are his people, a holy society fashioned in God's image.

Verses 19-22 explain the general statement in v.18, demonstrating by a reversal motif that YHWH judges in order to refine the people and start anew (cf. 6:13c; 30:17c). Verse 19 addresses the audience from v.18 directly and collectively, identifying them more precisely as "people in Zion, inhabitants<sup>173</sup> of Jerusalem" (עַם בְּצִיּוֹן יֹשֵׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם). Their outcry (v.19) and the limited provisions the Lord gives them ("meager bread and scant water,"<sup>174</sup> v.20a) imply a prolonged period of suffering and lamentation. Nevertheless, when YHWH's 'wait' is over, he will favorably hear their call for help and answer them. Their weeping (v.19), appropriate in the former time of judgment, will be inappropriate in the new day.

Next, vv.20b-21 mention a new "teacher" (מֹרֶה, *hip 'il* ptc. masc. sg.<sup>175</sup>):

...your teacher will no longer be hidden, but your eyes will see your teacher, and your ears will hear a word from behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you stray to the right side or drift to the left.

The term appears only four times with this sense in the OT, and two of its four occurrences are in this verse (cf. Job 36:22; Prov 5:13). It is unclear, however, whether מֹרֶה refers to a human teacher<sup>176</sup> or to God himself.<sup>177</sup> Though they will see him and hear his word

<sup>172</sup> The concentrated alternation between judgment and salvation in ch.30 that manifests YHWH's justice may be seen as an expression of the positive (Isa 30:18-22) and negative (Isa 30:8-17) aspects of the character creed in Exod 34:6-7. "The LORD passed before him [Moses], and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation'" (NRSV).

<sup>173</sup> "inhabitants" (v.19): reading מְשֻׁבִּים (masc. sg. ptc.) instead of the impf. מְשֻׁבִּים. It is pl. in my English translation because it has the collective מְשֻׁבִּים for its implicit subject.

<sup>174</sup> "meager...scant" (v.20): accusative of measure (Joüon 127b), indicating their present experience of going without. BHS proposes inserting a לְ preposition (specification) before each noun.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. מֹרֶה *hip 'il*, "teach" and מֹרֶה, 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:20; 28:9, 26; 30:9; 42:21, 24; 51:4, 7.

<sup>176</sup> E.g., NIV; cf. 1:10; 5:24; 8:20; 28:9; 30:9.

<sup>177</sup> E.g., NJPS; NRSV; Vg.; cf. 2:3; 28:26; 42:24; 51:4, 7.

(רַבֵּר), the teacher's identity is undisclosed.<sup>178</sup> Verse 21 describes him as one who imparts instruction or guidance in the way his people should walk, so he is probably a תּוֹרֵה-teacher on the Mosaic model (Deut 18:15-19). Beuken points out that the location of his רַבֵּר, coming "from behind you" (מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ), "transforms the Teacher into a shepherd."<sup>179</sup> Elsewhere in FI, YHWH is the shepherd of his people (Isa 40:11); hence, it may suffice to point out that YHWH (ultimately) is the Teacher who guides his people along the true way, though a new mediator/disciple may be implied. At any rate, it is impossible to be more precise.<sup>180</sup> The relationship between 30:8-17 and 30:18-22 suggests that the truly important feature is the integrity of the people's response and not the identity of the Teacher. The point is that in the latter day, by God's grace, they will listen and obey,<sup>181</sup> rejecting idolatry as proof of reconciliation.

The sweeping transformation of the people in 30:20b-21 contrasts with their behavior in 30:10-11. In vv.10-11, the people talked, while the dejected prophets listened and looked on: "Do not see...Do not perceive true things for us, speak to us flattering things—prophesy deceptions! Leave this 'way', turn off this 'path', and stop confronting us with 'the Holy One of Israel'!" However, in vv.20b-21, the Teacher talks, while the blessed people listen attentively and look on: "Your eyes will see your teacher and your ears will hear... 'This is the way, walk in it!'" This is a portrait of YHWH and disciples, with the whole picture resting on God's grace. In the previous context (vv.8-17), v.15

<sup>178</sup> In Job 36:22, it refers to God, "Who is a teacher like him?" (cf. Ps 9:20 LXX, νομοθέτης, "lawgiver"). In Prov 5:13 it refers to human teachers, "I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors" (מִלִּמְדָּה || לְמִוֶּדֶר). Most commentators identify the figure with God (e.g., Childs, *Isaiah*, 227); although Blenkinsopp recognizes that this is the dominant view, reaching back to the Tg. ("your eyes will see the Shekinah [שְׁכִינָה] in the sanctuary"), he regards this view as doubtful. "The explicit mention of Yahveh immediately preceding strongly supports identification with a teacher other than God, and why would God's word be heard behind the listeners? ... The alternative, then, is that the devout, those who wait for the divine favor to be revealed, are promised guidance from a human teacher, one now hidden, perhaps imprisoned, perhaps deceased. Hence the message comes to them from behind; that is, from the past, reminding them of the teaching to which they are to adhere" (J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 420). On this view, the teacher may be Isaiah himself, offering instruction through his deposit for a future generation, or a disciple adding instruction in the spirit of Isaiah.

<sup>179</sup> Beuken writes, "In the Near East, it is quite common for a shepherd to guide and lead his flock from behind" (*Isaiah* 28-39, 143). Yet this is hardly determinative of the figure's identity.

<sup>180</sup> The relationship between 30:18 and 30:19-22 suggests that 'YHWH as Teacher' is the best exegetical option. In v.18, YHWH is waiting and all who wait for him are blessed. Then vv.19-22 expand on this relationship between God and his people. In vv.19-20a, YHWH acts: he is no longer hidden, he listens (שָׁמַע) and answers (עָנָה), so that everyone who perseveres is blessed. In vv.20b-22, the inhabitants of Zion act: they see (רָאָה), hear (שָׁמַע), and answer (אָמַר), discriminating between clean and unclean objects and casting their idols away. In short, YHWH acts and his people reciprocate appropriately (cf. Jer 31:31-34). The radical reorientation depicted here and the voice speaking to the open ear also remind W. Brueggemann (*Isaiah 1-39*, 246) and Christopher R. Seitz (*Isaiah 1-39*, ) of Jeremiah's vision of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

<sup>181</sup> The contrast with the present generation and Isaiah's present experience anticipates the words of a 'second Isaiah', a teacher who will point the generation of survivors back to Isaiah's תּוֹרָה and תַּעֲוִדָה, while delivering new words of God that will guide loyal disciples in and through new circumstances after judgment.

manifests YHWH as a benevolent, nurturing father; yet, his children were (collectively) rebellious. They did not know (1:2-3), because in their obstinacy they could not see, hear, or understand (6:10-11). What 30:18-22 indicates, in contrast, is that God grants repentance, which is grounded ultimately in YHWH's merciful character. If the inhabitants of Zion will turn, they will be healed and enjoy a new experience of blessing, but first the sovereign Lord must give them ears to hear and eyes to see.<sup>182</sup>

### 3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the profile of Isaiah ben Amoz, paying particular attention to FI's portrayal of the prophet's commission, witness, and writing. My aim was to show that graphic depictions of Isaiah's experience, speech, and actions function paradigmatically to fashion and direct an Isaianic community of disciples who will hold fast to the prophetic torah.

First, I considered chs.6 and 20, which identify the prophet as a sign (אֵימָה), and portent (מוֹפֵת) in Israel (20:3; cf. 8:16). In and through Isaiah, דְּבַר־יְהוָה was not simply expressed verbally but embodied personally. Through a painful experience and a shameful task, Isaiah was the first to learn YHWH's way, and the reports of his symbolic experiences/actions are an instructive witness. In ch.6, Isaiah's mouth (פֶּה)/lips (שִׁפְתַּיִם) testify to the dynamic unfolding of Israel's life with its holy God. As YHWH's emissary, he was sent (שָׁלַח) to speak words to harden and refine rather than to deliver the people (6:9-10). Moreover, when the people rejected the prophet's message, they also rejected and despised the prophet himself; they regarded him as a foolish teacher and perhaps a false prophet. Yet, ironically, as their representative, Isaiah suffered the very humiliation they would experience as a nation turning to earthly powers for help. Thus, within the context of oracles against the nations (chs.13-23), ch.20 teaches Judah's rulers that running to foreign powers would mean sharing their fate. While Isaiah suffered obediently, going naked and barefoot, as YHWH's servant (עֶבֶד, v.3) he also positively witnessed that YHWH alone is Judah's help and deliverer. As accounts of a servant's vocation, then, Isa 6 and 20 manifest a measure of obedient suffering and bearing guilt to benefit others. Perhaps also, then, as an aspect of FI's design, his witness invites readers to continue as disciples, and thereby YHWH's servants too.

Isaiah 7-11 and 28-39 further this message by situating the prophet's task in a royal direction. In chs.7-39, responsibility for the security of Judah and Jerusalem rests with

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Deut 29:3 [4]; Isa 42:18-25.

Ahaz and Hezekiah, but rather than focusing on prose sections (chs.7; 36-39), my particular analysis focused on the intra-textual relationship of poetic oracles pertaining to writing in 8:16-23, 28:9-13, 30:8-17, and 30:18-22, as these oracles comprise a significant feature of FI's witness to future generations.

Witnessing and writing frame the chapter in 8:1-23. In v.16, the prophet deposited a certain sealed writing, called תְּעוּדָה ("testimony") and תּוֹרָה ("teaching") among his disciples. Disciples who attend to this word comprise an alternative society, sharing in the vocation of Isaiah and his children (v.18). Thus, they become YHWH's waiting witnesses, testifying to the truth of YHWH's word through his prophet (cf. 8:2). Consequently, they are a further indication of the prophet's hope for a new society in Zion comprised of disciples defined by this prophetic torah.

Isaiah 28-33 shares concerns with chs.7-8. The large section takes place after the lengthy section of oracles against the nations. Chapters 28-33 originally called upon Hezekiah to heed the prophetic torah by turning from Egypt to rely on YHWH alone. In 28:9-13, the prophet defended his role as a teacher whose vision for Jerusalem comes from God. Using Ephraim as a test case, he sought to prompt Jerusalem's rulers to heed his words and repent. If they would escape the judgment that had befallen Ephraim, they must stop disparaging the prophet's words. But Judah was unwilling to heed YHWH's תּוֹרָה (30:9; cf. 8:16). Therefore, in response to their rebellion (מַר', v.9; cf. 30:1-7) and at YHWH's command, the prophet preserved his תּוֹרָה in writing once more (30:8; 8:1-2; 8:16-23). Although it would be "an enduring witness" (לְעֵד עַד-עוֹלָם, vv.8, 9-17), his action signified that judgment stood on the near horizon. For their failure to heed the prophetic torah and flee to YHWH for help and deliverance, Judah would flee from the cry of battle until only a banner was left on the mountain. Isaiah's efforts to intervene thus appear unsuccessful; yet, he was a true prophet. Like Moses (Deut 31:16-24; cf. 18:15-22), he left a witness against a rebellious generation (Isa 30:8; Deut 31:29); and like Moses' deposit, Isaiah's witness would abide to guide God's people in a new day.

Finally, I considered 30:18-22, which promises to surviving-disciples new instruction under a (mysterious) new teacher (מֹרֶה) in a time of salvation (vv.20-21). As this unit indicates, YHWH waits (חָכָה *pi'el*) to be gracious and merciful to them; thus, the passage encourages disciples to wait (חָכָה *qal*) diligently for YHWH's deliverance. In that time, the truth will become plain to all around that YHWH is God and they are his people; indeed, YHWH promises blessing for those who long for the full revelation of מִשְׁפָּט (v.18). All told, it is a vision of YHWH acting and his people reciprocating



appropriately, of a holy God and a holy people forming one holy society at Zion (v.19; cf. 2:2-4; 4:2-6). When those who love Zion return to YHWH, they will enjoy a new order of blessing and healing; yet, the sovereign Lord must give them hearts to understand, ears to hear, and eyes to see (vv.20-21).<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. Isa 6:9-10; 42:18-25; cf. Deut 29:4.



## Chapter 4

### “The Coastlands Wait for His Torah”: Fashioning a Servant for YHWH’s Agenda

#### 4.1. Introduction

Isaiah 40:1-31 marks a major transition to a new and distinct historical-contextual situation. In narrative form, Isa 39 hinted that the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, which would lead to the exile of the southern kingdom, would be deferred until the coming of Babylon (39:6-8). Now that that judgment is past, the ‘preserved of Israel’ (49:6) are to have a future. With former prophetic warnings fulfilled, YHWH begins to speak new words with non-narrative characteristics<sup>1</sup> to people in an exilic situation (40:1-2). Unlike chs.1-39, however, there are no superscriptions indicating the type of literature this is or that Isaiah 40-55(66) is a separate work.<sup>2</sup> YHWH simply issues a decree for the consolation of a people who have experienced the Babylonian judgment.<sup>3</sup> Logically, this means over a century has passed and both King Hezekiah and Isaiah ben Amoz have died (39:8). The proclamation of comforting words presumes that despite difficult circumstances the former occasion of judgment is over. God now moves to reverse his people’s fortunes.<sup>4</sup>

The first section (chs.40-48) is striking because YHWH is the primary speaker. God’s words appear to come directly to Jacob-Israel, though there are indications at times that someone is mediating them.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, when this happens, the chapters do not identify the voice.<sup>6</sup> Besides YHWH (or YHWH’s agent), the only voice the reader hears,

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<sup>1</sup> By “non-narrative characteristics,” I mean to highlight the distinct poetic character of chs.40-66 vis-à-vis chs.36-39. Non-narrative characteristics include (e.g.) terse, parallel cola, repetition, direct speech as a mode of communication (with vocatives and imperatives), and figurative and affective language (imagery, metaphor, rhetorical questions, word-pairs, interjections, etc.). See J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1981) and A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1985). I agree with E. Talstra that poetic devices make use of the same grammar as prose texts, although they exhibit a different selection. See Eep Talstra, “Reading Biblical Hebrew Poetry—Linguistic Structure or Rhetorical Device?” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 101-26.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Isa 1:1; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 13:1; 14:28; 20:1-2; 36:1; 38:9. See Christopher R. Seitz, “How is the Prophet Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 219-40.

<sup>3</sup> See Isa 2:2; 6:11; 8:16-9:6; 12:1; 30:18-21; 35:4. Childs observes that whereas ch.12 should be understood as a song of thanksgiving for the deliverance from Assyria, ch.40, following 39:7, suggests that the assurance of comfort is for those being freed from Babylon’s oppression (Childs, *Isaiah*, 298).

<sup>4</sup> See W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 19.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., 42:5; 43:1; 44:6, 24; 45:1, 11, 14, 18; 48:17.

<sup>6</sup> In a recent contribution, David J. A. Clines also identifies various ‘voices’ in Isa 40, then assigns these to a small number of ‘speakers’. His particular identifications are all up for debate. Most interesting are his non-speaking voices, which include ‘the narrator’, who roughly equals ‘the prophet’ throughout DI, and ‘the implied author’, who gives voice to the entire poem. His ‘implied author’ corresponds to my ‘FI’, and his ‘prophet’ is a character who responds to YHWH’s voice in the unfolding vision (vv.6-7). See Clines, “The Many Voices of Isaiah 40” in *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (I. Provan and Mark J. Boda, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 120-21.

the one who responds to YHWH, is the anonymous voice of a ‘listener-speaker’ (40:6-7; 42:24-25; 48:16b).<sup>7</sup> In order to understand this response (required and given) to YHWH’s word, my analysis in this section is restricted to 40:1-11; 41:8-16; 42:1-12, 18-25, and 48:16b-19. The passages selected examine the nature of דְּבַר־יְהוָה, YHWH’s purpose for his servant and תּוֹרָה, and the emergence of the ‘listener-speaker’. Chapters 40-48 develop the servant theme gradually, and identify תּוֹרָה as a crucial piece of the servant calling to bring forth מַשְׁפָּט to the nations. This section thus plays a critical, albeit preparatory, role, setting the stage for considerable further reflection on the interrelationship of תּוֹרָה, servant, and disciples in FI.

#### 4.2. Isaiah 40:1-11: YHWH’s Commitment to Zion

Isaiah 40 raises questions about Israel’s nature and role within God’s plan to rule the world from Zion. God aims to comfort his people<sup>8</sup> and to take serious account of Jacob-Israel’s previous experience and present state. The stanza contains four strophes (vv.1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-11) delimited and linked by calling voices.

In 40:1-2, God inaugurates a new movement designed to encourage a people associated with Jerusalem (“comfort” is pl.). The communiqué concerns YHWH’s coming (vv.3-5, 9-11), but is mediated by someone (יֹאמֵר אֶל־הֵיכָל, v.1b). The audience should embrace the message because Jerusalem’s hard service is finished and her debt is satisfied. She has received double from God’s hand because of her sins (v.2). Then, in v.3, a voice (קוֹל) is overheard,<sup>9</sup> which dutifully carries YHWH’s charge (from v.2, קְרָא || דְּבַרוּ)

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Isa 40:3; 41:21-23, 26.

<sup>8</sup> As a large section of FI, chs.40-55 begin and end on this note (40:1; 55:12), and the assurance of YHWH’s comfort is extended to God’s people throughout (51:12-13; cf. 49:13; 51:3; 52:9). Christopher Seitz also perceives that ‘comfort’ is not instantaneously experienced, “it belongs to the mediation of the discourse of Isaiah 40-66 to drive that fact home” (Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 334). ‘Comfort’ is supported by the repetition of the phrase “fear not” (40:9; 41:10; 41:13-14; 42:1-2, 5; 44:2, 8; 54:4), the promise of joy (41:16; 48:20; 49:13; 51:3, 11), and the expected response in praise and exultation at YHWH’s appearing (42:10-12; 43:21; 44:23; 45:25; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9; 54:1). YHWH will ultimately demonstrate the truth of his words by his actions (cf. Exod 3:12).

<sup>9</sup> While the voice appears “sprung from heaven” (Calvin, *Inst.* 1.7.1), it is impossible to be dogmatic about either its identity or the setting. Naturally, many commentators think those commanded (pl., v.1) and the voice (sg., v.3) are celestial beings, a council of the heavenly host or angelic heralds speaking from the divine council. Many see analogies with 1 Kgs 22:19ff; Isa 6:1ff; Job 1:6ff; 2. For scholarly tradition regarding this view, see, e.g., B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892), 265 and later H. W. Robinson, “The Council of Yahweh” *JTS* 45 (1944): 151-57; F. M. Cross, “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *JNES* 12 (1953): 274-77. See also, e.g., M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 66 and R. Melugin, “The Servant, God’s Call, and the Structure of Isaiah 40-48” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers* (E. Lovering Jr, ed; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 21. Seitz thinks the trial genre that marks 40:12ff begins here and continues to ch.48 (so, Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 328 and “The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 109 [1990]: 229-47). For a slightly different take, stressing continuity with Isaiah ben Amoz, see B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 295. Against this position, see Koole (*Isaiah 40-48*, 47). K. Baltzer identifies the ‘voice’ and ‘mouth of Yahweh’ as a vizier,

and orders preparations for a theophany that the whole world will witness (v.5).<sup>10</sup> The voice conveys the message with divine authority, despite remaining unidentified.

Besides God, a voice, and the people, vv.6-8 point explicitly to a fourth participant, who has been listening and repeating the voice's words (vv.3, 6). Just as God's previous instrument, the identity of this listener-speaker is not disclosed; and yet, the charge (or better, the commission) is passed to this figure all the same (קול אִמֵּר קִרָּא, v.6).

Although anonymous, this listener-speaker becomes increasingly important as the prophecy acknowledges, challenges, and transforms this character's perspective.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, this figure not only listens but responds to (or resists) the voice's charge with the rhetorical question: "How can I proclaim?" (מִה אֶקְרָא, v.6aβ). Childs captures the tenor of the resulting disputation:<sup>12</sup> "The issue turns on how there can be a proclamation of

analogous to the 'mouth of the pharaoh' in Egyptian literature (see, Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 53), perhaps a 'celestial vizier' (so, R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* [NCB; Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976], 48). Walter Brueggemann thinks the word from heaven is a characteristic of the Isaianic tradition. He writes, "The rhetorical strategy of the tradition of Isaiah is to ground the future possibility of Judaism in the government of heaven... 'the nerve center of the universe'. The message comes with the certainty that derives from its origin in that context where key decisions are taken and implemented regarding earthly destiny, and even more significantly from its origin in the actual words of God" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 18). While he agrees with Brueggemann as regards the divine origin of the new comforting words, Blenkinsopp thinks a setting in the divine council is "not well-founded" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 180). According to him, the best explanation for the shift between plural and singular in 40:1-8 is a prophetic plurality in association with a prophetic individual; he cites Isa 52:7-8 as a parallel where a human herald is associated with such a plurality. Despite their general agreement with the 'divine council' view, Goldingay and Payne also point out that "our God" (אֱלֹהֵינוּ, vv. 3, 8) signifies a human speaker (*Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 1, 65). This is an important observation in light of v.1 ("my people... your God"). All that may be said with confidence is that a voice is heard, speaking in obedience to YHWH. The voice identifies with the audience ("our God"), utters YHWH's words (vv.1-2, 5, 8), and enters into a dispute with a 1<sup>st</sup>-person listener-speaker (vv.6-8). As Blenkinsopp suggests, the voice may point to a prophetic individual in association with a prophetic plurality, antecedent (in some sense) to the commissioning of the 1<sup>st</sup>-person listener-speaker in v.6. The point may be that after a long period of silence the prophetic word is reestablished.

<sup>10</sup> That is, the way is prepared for the glorious appearing of YHWH. The strophe (vv.3-5) recalls the seraph's words from Isa 6:3 and 35:1-2, "...They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God" (NRSV). The preparations require the removal of *physical* hindrances (40:3-5), but the strophe may not be read flat. Its role is to prepare the reader for the next two strophes (vv.6-8, 9-11). First, a listener-speaker embodies and articulates an obstacle to "our God's" message of comfort (vv.3, 8)—"All humanity is grass and all its faithfulness as the flower of the field" (v.6). Nevertheless, the second shows that whatever YHWH speaks (vv.1, 5) is as good as done, as YHWH's return is announced to all of Judah (vv.9-11).

<sup>11</sup> Noting that the aim of the text is to grant the reader a perspective, Christopher Seitz correctly resists the conclusion that the social and historical context may be determined with precision. The alternative he proposes, however—that the perspective established is God's own—seems to overlook the importance of the 1<sup>st</sup>-person listener-speaker. In the dynamism of the stanza, the words of this speaker surely do come together with God's own words (there is a dual agency), and God's words are the main emphasis. Indeed, God's perspective must be adopted. Nevertheless, it is the former figure's perspective, I think, that the implicit reader is invited to consider, that the implicit reader already naturally identifies with and (it is expected) will continue to share. That is, the reader also needs to be persuaded/convinced. By means of the 1<sup>st</sup>-person listener-speaker, the prophecy empathizes with the audience it aims to console. Hence, the use of the 1<sup>st</sup>-person is designed to get the reader on board, so to speak: to follow the experience of the 1<sup>st</sup>-person figure and eventually to embrace God's perspective (and FI's message). In this way, the reader will (also) become God's witness (i.e., another listener-speaker) and God's disciple. Cf. C. R. Seitz, *Book of Isaiah 40-66* (NIB 6; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 328.

<sup>12</sup> In a disputation, a prophet (the voice) attempts to persuade an audience (the listener-speaker) to abandon its position or belief and adopt that of the prophet. Here the voice, rather than refuting the

a coming salvation when God's devastating judgment preached by Isaiah has surely been fulfilled."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the listener-speaker supplies a thesis for dispute (vv.6-7), and the responding 'voice', while sympathetic, offers a most significant counter-thesis (v.8):

<sup>6</sup> I hear the voice speaking:  
 "Proclaim!"  
 So I said,<sup>14</sup>  
 "How can I<sup>15</sup> proclaim?  
 All humanity<sup>16</sup> is grass,  
 and all its constancy<sup>17</sup> as the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup> Grass withers,<sup>18</sup>  
 flowers fade,  
 when YHWH's wind blows on them.  
 Surely,<sup>19</sup> these people are grass!"  
<sup>8</sup> "Grass withers,  
 flowers fade,  
 but the word of our God will endure forever."

viewpoint of the listener-speaker (as is typical), affirms the figure's point of view while arguing for another perspective. For a definition of "disputation," see M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 519. Sweeney lists Isa 8:16-9:6; 40:12-27, 18-20; 44:24-28 among examples of this form.

<sup>13</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 300. Childs further notes that the rhetorical question establishes a continuity between PI and DI, both in terms of the old and of the new things.

<sup>14</sup> "So I said" (v.6): וְאָמַרְתִּי is probably corrupt (Joüon, 112qq); cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (וְאָמַרְתִּי). I have followed BHS, reading וְאָמַרְתִּי with LXX (καὶ εἶπα) and Vulgate.

<sup>15</sup> "How can I proclaim?" (v.6): For this rendering of the interrogative מַה, see GKC, 148aβ; Joüon, 144e; *IBHS*, 18.3.f).

<sup>16</sup> "All humanity" (v.6): כָּל + the determinate genitive (הַבָּשָׂר) does not have the distributive sense here; rather, it has the idea of totality: "all living creatures"/"all humanity" (GKC, 127c). Moreover, humanity means mortality, as in Gen 6:3, "My breath will not abide with humanity forever, since he is mortal [בָּשָׂר]." The notion is similar to Isa 31:3, "...the Egyptians are mortal, not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit," where בָּשָׂר and אָדָם form a word-pair (וְאֶת־אֲדָמָתָם וְאֶת־בָּשָׂרָם). (ומצרים אדם ולא-אל וסוסיהם בשר ולא-רוח).

<sup>17</sup> "constancy" (v.6): LXX (Peshitta, Vulgate) and 1 Peter 1:24 read δόξα; BHS proposes הִדְרָתוֹ ("its splendor"), others חֲמִדָּתוֹ ("its delight"). There is no reason to amend the text, for חֲסִד is significant, not least because of its double consonance with חֲצִיר. חֲסִד denotes steadfast commitment and loyalty regarding one's obligations (or covenant faithfulness). The future of Jacob-Israel does not depend on its חֲסִד but YHWH's חֲסִד (cf. v.1), which corresponds to YHWH's דְּבַר (v.8).

<sup>18</sup> "Grass withers, flowers fade" (2x, vv.7-8): Here present-tense forms used for the perfect express a permanent truth regarding a representative case: grass and flowers, they wither and fade. This gnomic (or proverbial) perfective (*IBHS*, 488; cf. Joüon, 112d; *IBHS*, 30.5.1c, gnomic *qatal*) enhances the contrast between transient (humanity) and the enduring word of God.

<sup>19</sup> "Surely, these people are grass" (v.7): וְאִנִּי has an emphatic sense (*IBHS*, 670n97) as an adverb with strong asseverative force. BDB (p.38) provides the glosses "surely" and "truly" (Gen 28:16; Exod 2:14; 1 Sam 15:32; Isa 45:15; Jer 3:23). If the voice utters a response, the question is where this response begins. According to Goldingay, the voice likely begins its response with this adverb (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1*, 83), but it seems more natural to me to place this clause in the mouth of the listener-speaker, since the predication "all humanity/these people are grass" would then form an inclusio. What is more, the pair, "humanity" and "these people," may serve to reintroduce God's people from v.1 (עַמִּי). If so, the listener-speaker acknowledges/laments the solidarity God's people share with all transient humanity. The immediate clause (v.7) connects the experience of God's people with the earthly powers that perish—there can be no point in preaching to them. Positively, however—given the announced preparations for a glory-theophany (v.5)—the solidarity of all humanity with God's people underscores the fact that YHWH's coming is a world-embracing event. All humanity (including these people) will behold the glory of YHWH (v.5)! Thus, the proclamation's potential impact is far-reaching, anticipating the extension of God's message of hope from Israel to the nations. If this is so, Isa 40:1-11 already raises questions about the nature and role of Israel after judgment. The NJPS translation, "Indeed, man is but grass" sees "humanity" and "these people" as synonymous rather than overlapping, and so it effaces the possible import of the connection.

The two strophes (vv.3-5, 6-8) are connected, and several of their features are noteworthy. First, the voice (קֹל) speaking in v.6 (proclaiming in v.3) is the mouth of YHWH, the instrument that proclaimed God's word in vv.3-5 (פִּי יְהוָה דָּבַר, v.5c).<sup>20</sup> Consequently, this is a word, according to Seitz, "that already exists in the record."<sup>21</sup> It stands as a decree: all humanity (כָּל־בָּשָׂר) will behold YHWH's glory (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, v.5ab).

Second, this same instrument of YHWH issues the command, "proclaim" (קִרְא), in v.6; only here the words are met by the listener-speaker's question (v.6b), paraphrased, "How can I?" The query itself expresses hesitation, resignation, doubt, perhaps outrage. Still, the thesis proper follows, initiating the dispute, and vividly illustrating the speaker's true outlook on the situation of humanity. Simply put, all humanity is grass (כָּל־בָּשָׂר חֲצִיר, v.6b). As recent events have shown, this is the desperate condition of earth's inhabitants, God's people included (cf. chs.5; 13-23; 24). Like the swiftly fading flower, humanity lacks "constancy" (חֲסָד v.7ab): flowers bloom only to wilt and grass grows only to wither when YHWH's wind (רוּחַ) blows on it. If humanity is "grass," to proclaim the coming of YHWH is futile—it will only end in destruction (cf. 37:27; 51:12).<sup>22</sup> YHWH's coming would be as before, a devastating wind, a destructive breath.<sup>23</sup> Now, if the speaker is a representative of God's people (indeed, of all humanity), then he conveys the disillusionment and despair that characterizes God's people in exile. They have lost temple, city, land—everything.<sup>24</sup> The thought of God's presence is not comforting; it means judgment, metaphorically represented by the scorching "wind" (רוּחַ). To this people, YHWH's coming is hardly good news—how can proclaiming it console them?

As a third feature, then, if the listener-speaker is a representative of this people, it is necessary to distinguish the more inclusive phrase, "all humanity" (כָּל־בָּשָׂר), from the

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Isa 1:2, 20.

<sup>21</sup> C. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 336.

<sup>22</sup> Humanity (בָּשָׂר) is imprecise, but all encompassing, a totality, evoking the concept of human 'mortality' as a leitmotif from Gen 6-9. It is tempting to make it more specific. Does it refer to earthly powers? Does it refer particularly to Babylon? Alternatively, does it evoke the ill-chosen alliances that resulted in the nation's previous experiences of judgment (ch.7; 28-33; 39)? Does it refer, rather, more broadly to everything that is not of God or God's word and spirit (Isa 31:3)?

<sup>23</sup> The wind of YHWH is a destructive blast (Hos 13:15). Elsewhere the phrase רוּחַ יְהוָה is associated with YHWH's activity as a warrior, enabling warrior-savior figures to conquer (Jdgs 3:10; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 16:13), or prophets to utter words of judgment (1 Sam 10:6; 1 Kgs 22:24; Ezek 11:5; Micah 3:8). In 1 Sam 19:9, it is the "evil spirit" from YHWH that torments Saul. In Isa 59:19-20, it separates the wicked from the righteous, but in the past, YHWH's spirit had given rest to Israel's ancestors (63:14). Therefore, this spirit's ways are also an aspect of YHWH's inscrutability (40:13); they reveal YHWH's immanence in the created order not only to destroy, but also to give life.

<sup>24</sup> "Israel had lost not only her land and her statehood," as Westermann explains, "but also her temple and its worship, the fountain-head of life for land and nation. But she was still left with the word of God committed to her keeping" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 42).

particular phrase, “these people” (הָעָם), in 40:6-7. This distinction is significant because the selection of הָעָם recalls “my people” (עַמִּי) from v.1.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the listener-speaker is conceding and lamenting a crucial point of solidarity shared between God’s people and all humanity, namely, that they are as good as dead. Given this solidarity (that all humanity is grass), when God’s wind blows God’s people will perish with all the rest. What point can there be in proclaiming YHWH’s word to them now? When God comes (v.5), רוּחַ יְהוָה will simply expose their inconstancy or infidelity. Even if they bloom and grow in season, when God comes, what will prevent God’s people from withering and dying? After PI, the figure’s claim seems irrefutable—a point well taken and a lesson learned (5:24; 40:24). So, when this figure says, “Surely, [God’s] people are grass” (אֲכַן חֲצִיר הָעָם, v.7c), the speaker is expressing a thesis he has undeniably learned from Israel’s former experience when both rulers and masses were subjected to the prophetic word (cf. 5:13-15; 40:23).<sup>26</sup> Surely, to proclaim this word (דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים)<sup>27</sup> to them again would spell further destruction. Therefore, when the speaker asks, “How can I proclaim?” he is in effect asking (with Childs), “Has not God’s devastating judgment preached by Isaiah surely been fulfilled?” This listener-speaker has not yet grasped the message of 40:1-2.

Instead of refuting the thesis, the voice concedes its inherent truth—there is no constancy in the fading flower or the withering grass, v.8a—but then issues a counter-thesis to transform the listener-speaker’s viewpoint (v.8b). The only hope for the fading flower is God’s self-same word, which abides forever (יְקוֹם לְעוֹלָם, v.8b): דְּבַר-אֱלֹהִים is a divinely-superintended constant. Hence, when to human appearances all is lost, YHWH’s word wakens hope. For דְּבַר-אֱלֹהִים is the creative agent of God’s constructive purpose after judgment. Formerly, the people were unwilling to listen to YHWH’s teaching and did not turn to him when afflicted, but his word now promises them

<sup>25</sup> Thus, the repetition would be a cohesive feature linking vv.1-2 and vv.3-8. This potential distinction, if intentional, is obscured by some versions (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NLT), which translate כָּל-בָּשָׂר as “all people” and הָעָם as “people” (NJPS translates the former as “flesh” and the latter as “man”). Cf. NASB, ESV, “flesh,” and Zurcher Bibel, “Fleisch.” LXX has σαρξ, with the sense “humanity” (mortality is in view). Although the Christian reader may see a shadow of it here, there is nothing to indicate the NT or Pauline contrast between the old age characterized by σαρξ and the new age of the πνεῦμα.

<sup>26</sup> The thesis does not amount to a confession of sin or the solidarity of Israel with all humanity as regards its fallen estate, although divine retribution of cosmic proportions may presume this. Instead, it expresses hopelessness after a prolonged period of judgment; sinful, yes, but it is more the response of a people familiar with judgment, the response of one weak and weary, frail and perishing—one who knows neither the comfort nor the salvation of God.

<sup>27</sup> Note the parallel from earlier passages of FI (e.g., 1:10; 2:3; 5:24). Edgar Conrad (*Reading Isaiah*, 130-43) refers to the call to proclaim concretely as the very torah/teaching of Isaiah ben Amoz; namely, the written message (parallel to YHWH’s counsel [עֲצָה]) that the people failed to heed from Isa 8:10, 16; 30:8, 14 (cf. 44:26; 45:23).



a new future.<sup>28</sup> The counter-thesis thus draws the listener's eye upwards, from its limited, earthly perspective to the boundless, heavenly sphere, transforming and renewing the figure's appreciation for the relationship between the transitory and the permanent. Moreover, the counter-thesis contrasts God's former wind/breath (רוח יי' הוה), which carried words of desolation and destruction, with God's new words, breathed out for consolation and re-creation. God's 'wind' brought retributive judgment, but that 'fiery-wind' (cf. 4:4; 5:24) has accomplished its purpose.<sup>29</sup> Jerusalem's time of judgment is over, and since Zion's debt is paid (v.2), a fresh start is possible. God's word can now bring comfort to people. YHWH's breath (רוח יי') will also carry this new re-creative, life-giving word. Therefore, to proclaim God's *parousia* is not vain, for he has a positive purpose for Zion.

The fact that preparations are underway for the worldwide revelation of God's glory means that a new beginning will extend from Zion with blessing for the entire creation. Indeed, the order to proclaim God's word to "these people" (God's people) actually anticipates this extension. Put differently, given the decree issued by God's mouth (v.5), rather than signaling the end of Israel's story, the solidarity of God's people with all transient humanity underscores the continuing, world-embracing character of Israel's role as Abraham's offspring (cf. Gen 12:1-3). Altogether then, whether in judgment or in salvation, FI continues to express a purpose that is cosmic in scope. By means of this new message, YHWH is not exposing the inconstancy of all humanity but demonstrating his own constancy (or faithfulness, אמת) to all humanity. Isa 40:1-11, then, raises interest in the particular role and nature of Israel.

To sum up, aside from YHWH and his people, the stanza introduces various participants but never identifies them. Nevertheless, the succession of nameless speakers provides coherence to the unit, lending a dynamic movement to the whole, like orders sent down a chain of command.<sup>30</sup> The orders are passed along promptly and dutifully (vv.1-2, 3-5) until, briefly, an unidentified listener-speaker hinders their passage, disputing the

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<sup>28</sup> Koole comments, "One might expect that v.8b would speak about the permanence of Israel in lasting safety and glory in contrast to the destruction of the world powers. In reality, however, the prophet talks about the abiding word of God with its promise and demand: only by that word is the future of Israel guaranteed" (*Isaiah 40-48*, 69).

<sup>29</sup> It quite possibly refers to the word of Isaiah ben Amoz, which history has verified. In other words, God has answered Isaiah's question, "How long?" (6:10; cf. Jer 12:4). Indeed, this is the testimony of Isa 40:1-2. The fulfillment of Isaiah's word of judgment presently grounds trust in God's new and revitalizing message of deliverance.

<sup>30</sup> C. Westermann envisions a movement of troops; the new exodus is getting underway as the imperatives in 40:1-11 set the new thing in motion (*Isaiah 40-66*, 33). Similarly, Christopher Seitz identifies a "sort of deployment phase as God speaks and then that will is communicated subsequently, through voices, spirits, or seraphic attendants" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 334).

purpose of it all (vv.6-8). In what follows, the reader can only speculate if, perhaps, this speaker has become YHWH's instrument, for vv.9-11 lack introduction. This absence might suggest that resisting God's will is senseless, since God's purposes are neither thwarted by nor dependent upon the stuff of humanity.<sup>31</sup> In any event, the communiqué continues in transit, reaches its final destination (40:1-2, 9-11; 55:10-11), and God's word prevails (40:8). The destination is also the focus of the communiqué, for it concerns the reversal of Zion's fortunes (vv.2, 9), a theme further integrating part and whole.<sup>32</sup> Related to the sequence of participants, however, the most striking cohesive feature of the stanza (vv.1-11) is its repetition of verbs of speaking (דבר, אמר, and קרא in vv.1-2, 3, 6, and 9). This feature not only adds cohesion, but urgency, underscoring the message of the whole.<sup>33</sup> By this means, our focus is fixed upon the delivery of YHWH's vital message of comfort for a people associated with Zion. Once given, the outcome is sure: "the word of our God will stand forever."<sup>34</sup>

Much else in the poem is nevertheless vague, even cryptic. The unmistakable facts are that this new prophecy derives from God (40:1, 3, 5), that he has begun to speak a comforting word oriented towards an exilic horizon (after judgment), and that the word will achieve its purpose (v.8; 55:11). God's self-authenticating word will bring out of distress a people linked to God and Zion (cf. 51:19). Towards this end, the unit begins and ends with expressions of comfort for a people who love Jerusalem (vv.1-2, 9-11).<sup>35</sup> The opening word (v.1) is what the people most need to hear—that they still belong to their God (עמי, "my people") and that YHWH is their God still (אלהיכם, "your God").<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Blenkinsopp sees in this fact sufficient evidence to regard this seer as the heir of Isaiah of Jerusalem (*Isaiah* 40-55, 183). He is a new prophetic visionary who "claims the mantle of Isaiah" in the ongoing covenantal dialogue between YHWH and Zion. See also, Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 23. Like Isaiah ben Amoz, as said by von Rad, "The pivot on which his whole preaching turns is an awareness of the reality of YHWH's creative word." See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol.2: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 242.

<sup>32</sup> Integration is achieved with chs.1-39 as well, since YHWH's concern for Zion is one indication of the profound continuity between this new message and the message of God's emissary Isaiah ben Amoz (1:1; 2:1; 6:3, 10; 40:2, 9). Gerhard von Rad has well said that Isaiah [FI] dwells continually on Zion (*Old Testament Theology, Vol. 2*, 239). Westermann adds that DI is a continuation of the deuteronomistic line of the former prophets: "[DI] concurs in his message which they proclaimed, and could never have constructed his own one of salvation had he not been able to build on theirs of doom" (Westermann, *Isaiah* 40-66, 35).

<sup>33</sup> Goldingay notices how the entire section comprises 'words'; indeed, "the passage is substantially about words" (*Message of Isaiah* 40-55, 9, his italics).

<sup>34</sup> Throughout the section, the emphasis rests squarely upon this message, the intrinsic quality of which corresponds to the character of YHWH himself (vv.12-31) and resists all argument (v.8). Its expression is equivalent to the refrain, "The zeal of YHWH of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa 9:6; 37:32; cf. 55:10-11).

<sup>35</sup> Charles C. Torrey may be right that the audience may be as extensive as "all who love Zion" (C. C. Torrey, *Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (New York: Scribners, 1928), 304.

<sup>36</sup> According to Klaus Baltzer it says to them that the relationship between God and his people—"my people, your God"—has been constituted afresh from God's side. "This," he says, "gives a hope that

Consequently, the fact that this God begins to speak new and comforting words to them is as significant for the downtrodden people as it is for Jerusalem, formerly overrun by Babylon (39:6-8), and for the towns of Judah (40:1-2, 9), formerly overwhelmed by Assyria (36:1). On one hand, the language signals God's intention to re-realize the relationship of obligation he had established with his chosen people and chosen place. On the other hand, it invites God's people to recapture their identity as Abraham's offspring (cf. 41:8; Ps 105:6-10) and represent for the world their reconstituted covenantal character as the people YHWH has chosen.<sup>37</sup>

Verses 9-11 conclude the unit with a vivid portrait of the manner of YHWH's homecoming. The preparations for this momentous event are underway (vv.3-5), and YHWH is now visibly (הנה, 3x) en route to Jerusalem (and surrounding towns). In 40:9 Jerusalem, personified as a herald (מבשרת, fem. sg.), is charged<sup>38</sup> with announcing the imminent arrival of "your God" (אלהיכם). Zion need not fear (v.9), for the Lord of all comes as both a warrior (זרעו משלה לו, v.10) and a shepherd (ברעה, v.11). The time of comfort is now on the horizon (vv.1-2) and all will play out as YHWH intends (vv.4-5, 8, 9-11).<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.2.1. *Ecce Deus vester*

Though 40:12-31 relates closely to the preceding stanza,<sup>40</sup> a series of rhetorical questions sets it apart.<sup>41</sup> Beginning at v.12, this barrage of questions shifts the theme from YHWH's magnificent activity (vv.1-11) to YHWH's matchless nature (vv.12-26, 28-29). After Jerusalem's fall, the people might doubt whether YHWH can do what he says; hence, the design is to renew their minds (cf. על-ל ב, 40:2) concerning the unassailable character of their God. Instead of a "vanquished God of a vanquished nation,"<sup>42</sup> they meet the

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makes life possible." See K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 50. Compare the earlier distancing formulae, "this people" (Isa 6:9-10; 8:6, 11-12; 28:11, 14; 29:13-14; cf. Hos 1:9).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Exod 6:6-7; 19:5-6; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 31:33; Ezek 36:28; Hos. 1:9-2:1 [1:10].

<sup>38</sup> The herald is charged by someone; perhaps by the voice (vv.3, 6) or by the listener-speaker figure (vv.6-8), but, again, there is nothing to clarify this. The ultimate agent, of course, is God.

<sup>39</sup> Blenkinsopp is surely right when he comments that the basic image is of a royal *parousia*: "Yahveh is a royal figure (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7)...The metaphor of the arm...bared for combat (52:10), connotes struggle against political forces opposed to God's purposes, and also echoes traditional language hymning Yahveh as king...(Pss 47; 93; 95-99). The arm imagery also recalls the liberation from Egyptian bondage (e.g., Deut 4:24)" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 185). Here royal imagery combines with shepherd imagery (analogous to Jacob leading his 'flock' in Gen 33:14). Spirit, counsel, understanding, and משפט (Isa 40:14) also contribute to YHWH's royal identity (cf. 11:2ff), as does his care for the poor and needy (41:21).

<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to tell if there has been a change of speaker (cf. vv.1, 9).

<sup>41</sup> Interrogative words/phrases include, מ' v.13, את-מ' v.14, ומה... v.18, ואל-מי [4x] v.21, ואל-מי v.25, מ' v.26, למה v.27, אס-לא... v.28.

<sup>42</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 39.

inscrutable Creator, the Lord of the world and the Lord of history (vv.11-14, 23-24).<sup>43</sup> All others suffer by comparison because only YHWH can exercise power and authority in the just maintenance of world order (משפט),<sup>44</sup> and YHWH brooks no rival (40:26; cf. 42:8; 48:11). The rhetorical questions thus settle all disputes by brushing aside all opposition. They challenge misconceptions by persuading God's people to revise their view of the balance of power in the cosmos and their own role within it. They support the truth of chs.1-39 (and 40:1-2) that God set the exile into his plan for good reason, and though Israel fails to recognize YHWH or see its guilt for what it is, it must learn to understand and testify that the sovereign Lord is on the side of משפט. To this end, the poem dramatically and vigorously communicates its central message concerning משפט and its true exercise in the world. Because משפט is "paramount to the course of history,"<sup>45</sup> all humanity will see that, like God's own character, the explanation for Israel's story is grander, fuller, and far more significant than anyone under heaven presently comprehends (vv.28-31).

The second part of ch.40 (vv.12-31) therefore shares the design of the first (vv.1-11) by correcting misconceptions and persuading its audience. It encourages Jacob-Israel by reasserting familiar themes from chs.1-39 that remind them that the Creator (v.12) has a just plan (יְעֹזֵר/עֲצָה, v.13).<sup>46</sup> God requires neither counsel nor instruction in the paths of justice, knowledge, and understanding (40:14; cf. 1:10-17).<sup>47</sup> Far from vanquished, Israel's God is faithful, and he never grows faint or weary (v.28). The section therefore rehearses what Jacob-Israel should know because it has (formerly) been told (40:21, 28).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> When contrasted with otherwise impressive contenders for global dominion and renown, YHWH is without peer. Before the sovereign Lord, the nations (גוֹיִם vv.15-17) are as a drop from a bucket (בְּמֵר מִדֹּלֵי), images of foreign gods (הַפְסֵל vv.19-20) and foreign rulers (שַׁפְטֵי אֲרָץ || רִיזֻנִּים vv.22-24) are nothing and emptiness (כֵּאֲדָן...וְלֹתְהוּ vv.17, 23), and the celestial hosts (צְבָא v.26; cf. Gen 15:5)—YHWH created them too (cf. v.22). For a fine treatment of YHWH's inscrutability in Isa 40-48, see Stephen L. Cook, *Conversations with Scripture* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2008), 19-38.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas LeClerc's study of justice in Isaiah concludes that משפט is proper to YHWH; it refers to YHWH's sovereignty or just rule in the ordering of the world and its history. In reference to Israel's complaint in 40:27, it refers to the people's cause or right. See Thomas L. LeClerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 102, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Beuken observes that Israel's משפט, violated by the nations, which seem to enjoy the protection of their gods, and apparently disregarded by YHWH, is the issue at stake throughout Isa 40:12-41:29. See Willem Beuken, "Mišpat," 11, 23.

<sup>46</sup> Isa 5:19; 28:29; cf. 14:26; 19:17; 25:1.

<sup>47</sup> Isa 1:17, 21, 27; 4:4; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 16:5; 26:8, 9; 28:17, 26; 30:18; 32:1, 16; 33:5; 34:5; דַּעַת, 5:13; 11:2; 33:6; תְּבוֹנָה/בִּיָּן, 1:3; 6:9-10; 28:9; 29:16.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Seitz comments appropriately, "The fit that exists between past testimony (from Isaiah's vision and from other sources of Israel's knowledge of God) and the present historical reality is what the 'author' knows to be the word of God addressing him and others" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 329). Israel's past, present, and future can only be fully grasped in the light of YHWH's תּוֹרָה and דְּבָרִים, which reveal that Israel's past, present, and future play out according to the sovereign purpose of the inscrutable God. In this

Nevertheless, this rehearsal notes an important aspect of YHWH's charge to comfort them (40:1): it will involve patient instruction for their edification. It is Jacob-Israel (and not YHWH, v.14) that requires a teacher (30:20-21), and YHWH is eager to fulfill the role. He begins to do so by interrogating his people.<sup>49</sup> Despite what they should know, they appear unaware of YHWH's ways; yet, God's examination reveals that he remains committed to those who wait for him (קַיִי יְהוָה, v.31). Once more then, YHWH patiently instructs his children in the way of understanding (cf. 1:2-3). If at last God's people would heed his word and look to his coming, they would learn the true way of מִשְׁפָּט and find strength for their weary souls (40:31).<sup>50</sup> To this end, therefore, the Isaianic exhortation comes, "Comfort, comfort my people" (40:1-2).<sup>51</sup> Verses 12-31 ground the exhortation in the character of the One who can renew and help them and also in the future orientation of the poem's first stanza, with its promise of YHWH's glorious *parousia* (vv.5, 9-11).

In sum, Isa 40 communicates "good news" for Zion (cf. vv.1-2, 9-11) by explaining YHWH's word, character, and actions to his people. The poem is meant to instruct them about their circumstances, settle their anxieties, and reintroduce them to their God. The two major sections of ch.40 therefore cohere: if 40:1-11 is about the word of the Lord, 40:12-31 is about the Lord of the word. In each section, the Lord's purpose is to convince his people that he is right (vv.6-7, 27), yet the eventual fulfillment of this prophetic word will be the deciding factor.

Nevertheless, the people complain. Apparently, Jacob-Israel sees YHWH as a means to its own ends. Under the circumstances, they surmise, if YHWH is not powerless, then he neglects his obligations to them. Isa 40:27 thus comprises a second barrier to the fulfillment of YHWH's purpose (analogous to 40:6-8). After vv.12-26, 'לִמְדָה' is empathetic, but direct: "How can you say, O Jacob, and claim, O Israel, 'My way (דֶּרֶךְ) is unknown to YHWH, my case (מִשְׁפָּט) is forgotten by my God'?" (v.27).<sup>52</sup> To address this grievance, God's words come steadily and powerfully in chs.40-48. These chapters show

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light, there are no grounds for complaint (Isa 40:12-26, 27, 28-31), for he who was able to realize the vision regarding former things will realize a new thing. Israel need only respond in trust (v.8, 31; cf. 8:17; 30:18; 54:8; 66:2).

<sup>49</sup> The series of questions itself supports the view that YHWH is their teacher (30:20-21; cf. 40:11) and that Jacob-Israel is his student or disciple (cf. 54:13).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. 1:17; 8:16; 26:9-10; 29:24.

<sup>51</sup> See Isa 8:17; 26:8; 30:18; 33:2.

<sup>52</sup> Despite its history with YHWH, Jacob-Israel's recent history and present circumstances indicate to his people that YHWH lacks power, does not listen, or has lost sight of them and their cause/right. In my view, YHWH understands this as a grievance expressed by a fearful, weak, and weary people, who have wanted someone to comfort them.

that YHWH not only understands their situation, but that he has not forgotten them (vv.1-2, 14). In fact, he will show them a new and better way. In the meantime, as God's people they must not trust obstinately in idols or wait neutrally for their God, for YHWH's word comes to Israel as his servant, and YHWH demands their faithful response.

#### 4.2.2. Conclusion and Implications

Isaiah 40 targets a specific audience with words and deeds that plainly intend to bring comfort (v.1). The poem's chief end is to persuade the community that judgment is past, that YHWH is coming, and that his purpose involves them still. God has not forgotten Jacob-Israel (chs.41-48) or Jerusalem-Zion (chs.49-55)! In subsequent chapters, YHWH will clarify their identity and outline their vocation within his inscrutable will. Of course, YHWH's own chief end through them is the revelation of his own glory (v.5; cf. 49:3) and the vindication of his claim to the title, "true God" (אלהים, 42:5). Nevertheless, the recognition of YHWH's inscrutable character and singular purpose is the main point of chs.40-48 and the reality to which Israel must testify (44:8). From God's perspective, it stands as good as done (40:8). The only real question is how to prepare *Israel* for its task.

Despite what is clear, much remains indefinite and open-ended.<sup>53</sup> For instance, it is difficult to specify the setting (time, place, and circumstances are all vague)<sup>54</sup> and perceive how YHWH will proceed. Apparently, it is sufficient, indeed imperative, for the reader to trust YHWH, to take God at his word (vv.1, 5, 8)—it is a word from YHWH after all (vv.12-31). As such, the listener/reader can rest assured that nothing will stand between God and the realization of his purpose. So the details unfold, internally expanding as earlier sections anticipate later ones, and the reader becomes involved in what Blenkinsopp calls "an ongoing process of incremental and cumulative interpretation of the existing material."<sup>55</sup> Yet, even as details come and after the second reading occurs, its interpretation remains open-ended. This welcomes the reader's participation: ch.40 summons the reader to join those who eagerly await the coming of God (vv.28-31).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. chs.2-5; 28-33.

<sup>54</sup> On the question of Jerusalem as the provenance, see Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55* (VTSup 139; Leiden: Brill Academic, 2010). See also, though with far less certainty, the discussion in Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40-55, vol.1*, 66. For a Judean provenance, see Seitz, "Divine Council," *JBL* 109 (1990): 230. Verses 9-11 present a point of view from within Judah, but the implicit reader may (also) reside in Diaspora (Babylon and elsewhere, cf. Isa 43:5-7). In a manner similar to Ezekiel, the important thing to see is that Jerusalem (and not Babylon) remains at the heart of FI.

<sup>55</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 210. Bonnard recognizes an inner-biblical *relecture*. See P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe, son disciple et leur éditeurs (Isaïe 40-66)* (Etudes bibliques; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972), 123-128.

A point of the delay in 40:6-8, therefore, may lie in the fact that the listener must carry the message. Positively, the very presence of this listener-speaker suggests that someone has already begun to pay attention and heed the voice from God. Thus, with Claus Westermann, I recognize that the two strophes preceding vv.6-8 (vv.1-2, 3-5) and the strophe that follows vv.6-8 (vv.9-11) together form a framework that highlights the central exchange between the voice from God and the listener-speaker.<sup>56</sup> This exchange is meant to persuade this figure to adopt the voice's perspective regarding the word of our God (דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים, v.8), to trust YHWH, and to dutifully take up the commission to proclaim. It is this perspective (and this response) that Jacob-Israel too must eagerly adopt in turning to YHWH and waiting for him.<sup>57</sup> The overall structure thus suggests that the listener-speaker is a representative of God's people. Perhaps this figure stands before them now as God's new prophet (Deut 18:15).<sup>58</sup>

According to the poem, then, for the effective realization of YHWH's purpose and *parousia*, the listener is the first obstacle to overcome. Thus, the pause in the movement of the poem at vv.6-8 adds to the suspense; while vv.1-5 set the stage and vv.9-11 deliver the content of YHWH's message, vv.6-8 may point to the instrument of its positive realization. Will (or has) the unidentified listener-speaker grasp(ed) the message (vv.8, 9)? If so, (how then) will Jacob-Israel recognize YHWH and follow suit (v.27)? For now, the questions raised by this 'prologue'<sup>59</sup> remain open.

<sup>56</sup> See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> John Goldingay observes, fittingly, that the vocation with which vv.6-8 are concerned may ultimately be not the prophet's...but the people's (Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol.1*, 80). The prophet's vocation is secondary to Israel's role in the world.

<sup>58</sup> Robert R. Wilson understands the listener-speaker as one of Isaiah's own disciples (Isa 8:16; 50:4). See R. Wilson, "The Community of Second Isaiah" in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (ed. C. R. Seitz, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 54. John Goldingay and David Payne concur, explaining that the words of vv.9-11 are "words that a prophet relates, having heard God speak them" (*Isaiah 40-55, vol.1*, 66). Much debate, of course, has centered around whether Isa 40:6-8 is the equivalent of a prophet's call. Verses 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-10 do present a series of commissions, but this is no call narrative, since (auto-)biographical details are absent and ch.40 does *not* introduce an independent book (Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 331). Nevertheless, it may be worth recalling N. Habel's identification of six elements characteristic of a call narrative (Exod 3-4; Jer 1; Ezek 1-3; cf. Isa 6): divine confrontation, an introductory word, a commission, an objection, assurance, and a sign. See N. Habel, "Form and Significance of the Call Narratives" *ZAW* 77 (1965): 297-323. Isa 40:6-8 might reflect aspects of the first five, although, like ch.6, no sign is given. Whereas, elsewhere, Isaiah himself was the sign (6:6-7; 8:18; 20:3), here, a new commission is issued based on the fulfillment of the commission of Isaiah ben Amoz (cf. 6:10). It is interesting that in ch.6 Isaiah appears as an anonymous 1<sup>st</sup>-per. listener-speaker (i.e., aside from the superscription, he is not identified by name until 7:3). There is thus sufficient information to see 40:1-11 as a continuation of the ministry of Isaiah ben Amoz, reversing its content, as Goldingay explains, "...in the conviction that this reversal would have Isaiah's own support" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 12). This brings up the question as to whether the listener-speaker will also, like Isaiah ben Amoz, constitute a sign and incarnate YHWH's message.

<sup>59</sup> According to Blenkinsopp, this new introduction is a fitting prologue that "amounts to an *apologia* for the message that is to follow in chs.40-48." See, with his further comments, *Isaiah 40-55*, 179. Like ch.1, ch.40 functions somewhat like an overture onto a new phase (set up by the transitional chs.36-39). Ch.40 takes up key features of chs.1-39 and prepares the reader for Isa 41-66 (40-55), introducing broad themes: Zion's time of judgment has past, the end of the exilic situation is on the horizon, Jerusalem may

### 4.3. *Isaiah 41:8-16: Out of Mesopotamia I called My Servant*

The next major section (41:1-42:12) pertains to Jacob-Israel's identity as YHWH's servant. YHWH first calls communal-Israel "servant" in 41:8 (עַבְדִּי, cf. v.13).<sup>60</sup> This clause begins a new subsection (vv.8-16), set within the broader context of the disputation (40:12-42:12) that commenced with the series of rhetorical questions in 40:12-31.<sup>61</sup> In 41:1-42:12, God wants his people to regain their sense of calling within the divine order and plan. Only now, instead of Jacob-Israel, the coastlands (צִיִּן) are summoned to trial (v.1).<sup>62</sup> Israel's God directs them to stand before him as witnesses to a judicial contest geared towards settling the question of the identity of the true God (cf. 46:1-2).<sup>63</sup> Thus, as YHWH's speech continues in 41:1,<sup>64</sup> a similar word regarding the divine commitment to

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expect restoration, but Israel is still ignorant about the ways of the Lord. Their complaint is evidentiary; they consider themselves forsaken, as if God is inept and exercises no power on their behalf. The need of God's people is fundamentally the same as it was in Isaiah 1-39: they must listen and heed YHWH's new word, which promises them a future.

<sup>60</sup> The noun also appears in 42:1, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 6; 50:10; 52:13; and 53:11 (cf. 54:17; 65:8, 13-14). Jan Koole has observed its occurrence in every literary form used by DI; e.g., oracles of salvation, polemical genres, admonitions, and self-testimony (*Isaiah 40-48*, 153). As a description of Jacob-Israel, it corresponds to YHWH as their Master. Brevard Childs adds that "servant" in itself does not indicate what special office or role is being described (*Isaiah*, 324). All offices and roles are instances of the class "servant of YHWH" (cf. Lev 25:42; 25:55; Jer 30:10; 46:27, 28). Elsewhere, it is used of common servants (Gen 24:14; 26:24; 1 Sam 16:15; 18:5; 1 Sam 25:40) like Job (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:8) and special servants like Jacob (Ezek 37:25), Moses (Num 12:7; Josh 1:2, 7; 2 Kgs 21:8; Mal 4:44), David (2 Sam 3:18; 7:5; 1 Kgs 11:3, 32, 34, 36, 38; 2 Kgs 19:34; 20:6; 1 Chron 17:4; Ps 89:4, 21; Isa 37:35; Jer 33:21, 22, 26; Ezek 34:23; 37:25), the Levites (Ps 113:1; 134:1; 135:1), even Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). It is a special term for YHWH's prophets (2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13; Jer 7:25; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4; Ezek 38:17; Zech 1:6), including Isaiah ben Amoz (20:3). It is also used of Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23) and 'the Branch' (Zech 3:8).

<sup>61</sup> Isa 40:6-8 and 40:12-31 are disputations, and 41:1-5, 21-29 are trial speeches in which YHWH sits as prosecutor and judge. See K. Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit* (JSOTSup 9; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 541, and Pietro Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice*. The setting is analogous to Isa 2:2-4, where all the nations willingly appear before YHWH's court of arbitration. It is as if once the matter of "true God" is settled there will be no more cause for war. Here the court scene may be a heavenly one that anticipates the fulfillment of FI's programmatic vision concerning Zion's exaltation.

<sup>62</sup> See P. Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice*, 338-40. There is some debate about whether the case continues beyond 41:4. Brevard Childs, for instance, thinks it breaks off at v.5 (*Isaiah*, 318). Baltzer thinks that vv.5b-7 contain a comic episode side by side with the serious court scene, adding, "Its content should be taken no less seriously" (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 91). Nevertheless, many features of vv.8-16 belong to the court framework; e.g., the mention of shame/humiliation and quarrelers (v.11), and the "I am" statements (vv.10, 13) that undergird the authority of the One executing this case. Beyond this see, e.g., H. J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; WMANT 14; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970) and J. Muilenburg, *Isaiah 40-66* (IB 5; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 447-67.

<sup>63</sup> The entire context of these opening chapters of Second-Isaiah indicates an underlying uncertainty about just who the true God is, a failure to recognize YHWH alone as *the* God (cf. 1 Kgs 18). To borrow a titular phrase from C. S. Lewis, in this court case the repeated use of rhetorical questions with YHWH as speaker (e.g., 40:18, 21, 25, 28; 41:4, 26) indicates that it is never "God in the dock." Rather, God is both prosecutor and judge of a suit against the nations and their idols, and Israel is present at court to hear YHWH's case (cf. 46:1-2). See Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, (Walter Hooper, ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994; reprint 1970).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Isa 40:25; 41:4, 9, and 13.



מִשְׁפָּט goes out to the foreign shores.<sup>65</sup> To them too God says, “Let the peoples renew strength” (וְלְאֲמִים יַחֲלִיפוּ כֹחַ), although there is yet no indication that they would rest upon YHWH for strength.

Moving to prosecute (41:1; cf. v.21; 1:17f.), YHWH presents his case with two rhetorical questions (cf. 40:12-26). The coastlands witness for the defense, with Israel apparently looking on.<sup>66</sup> The two rhetorical questions (וְיִי, 41:2, 4) are intended to generate universal recognition of YHWH’s sovereignty, to prompt all humanity to acknowledge the truth that YHWH is the true God.<sup>67</sup> Only a real God can say, “I am YHWH, [with] the first and with the last, I am he” (41:4).<sup>68</sup> YHWH reigns supreme not merely at creation or consummation but over the entire scope of history in between. Recognition of this truth concerning YHWH should follow naturally from the clarity of evidence in his case, which pertains to God’s performance in connection with the instrument he has fashioned to execute his purpose (41:2-4, 25-29).<sup>69</sup> YHWH declares that he has called an under-shepherd, an earthly ruler (cf. 44:28) who will fulfill his purpose by subjugating (וְרָדָה, cf. 45:1; Ps 144:2) earthly kings and reducing them to dust with his weapons of war (Isa 41:2). Hence, this earthly ruler will be a military victor (וְצָדִיק) roused from the east “for [YHWH’s] service” (לְרִגְלוֹ, 41:2; cf. v.25). He will re-establish justice as an aspect of YHWH’s plan.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Inasmuch as this prophetic text manifests the divine will, it is incumbent on its audience to exercise their own judgment in acknowledgement of the truth of God’s judgment. Thus, YHWH’s plan involving Israel, which includes the idol polemic and Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon (chs.41-48), is offered here as his committed response to his covenant people; it is a sure word that addresses their complaint in 40:27.

<sup>66</sup> With Goldingay (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1*, 157), I see the Judean community, personified here as a unit, sitting in that dock amidst the nations. As regards both groups, the focus is the same, namely, YHWH’s confrontation with idols and their worshipers.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Isa 40:5; 42:10-12; 49:26.

<sup>68</sup> אֲנִי יְהוָה רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרִימֵי אֲנִי-הוּא The trope, “first and last,” is merism; I have sought to bring out its sense in my translation (above). According to Joseph Blenkinsopp, this self-designation of deity “expresses much in small compass: permanence, permanent presence and availability, dependability, and unchangeability” (cf. 43:10, 13, 25; 46:4; 48:12); later, he states it denies theogony (*Isaiah 40-55*, 197, 292). It seems related to the statement in 40:8 about YHWH’s word and clearly functions as a promise of Israel’s deliverance.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Isa 10:5, 15; 44:28; 45:1-4; 47:6.

<sup>70</sup> Modern scholarship immediately understands this figure to be Cyrus. Early Jewish interpreters, however, took it as a reference to Abraham’s military exploits in Gen 14:1-16. His pursuit of the kings of Shinar results in their subjugation and territorial peace (Gen 14:18; 15:5; Isa 41:3). This observation has led Seitz to the view that the text is capable of both interpretations due to typological associations. Retrospectively, the lesson from Israel’s indigenous history becomes a prospective lesson concerning God’s calling of another agent “from the east” (cf. vv. 25-28). Seitz’s observation is most interesting, and it supports the “Abrahamic thrust” of Israel’s identity and calling in ch.41. This initial ambiguity allows the text to remain open to interpretation and urges careful attention to the dynamic aspect of DI’s unfolding character. C. R. Seitz, *Book of Isaiah 40-66*, 354. Cyrus’ calling as YHWH’s instrument is, of course, to defend the offspring of Abraham (45:4).

### 4.3.1. *Jacob-Israel among the idolatrous peoples*

Isaiah 41:5-16 depicts alternative responses to YHWH's performance. There is an underlying unity in the world's early reaction, as God's performance is met with widespread fear (אָרר in vv.5, 10, 13-14). Despite this, God's people should testify to the truth of the evidence and acknowledge that YHWH alone is Israel's helper and deliverer. As he says elsewhere, "Turn to me and be saved, for I am God, and there is no other" (45:22).

With a view to YHWH's coming, then, the prophecy presents a choice for its audience: either rely upon YHWH or reject him. Reliance brings salvation; rejection brings destruction. Isa 41:5-16 portrays each alternative as two contrasting ways:<sup>71</sup> one is negative, the other positive; yet, both provide a model or path for people to follow. In the context, the two ways function conjointly, exhorting Jacob-Israel to rely on YHWH. First comes the negative example (vv.5-7), rendering an account of the coastland-peoples' idolatrous response to YHWH's performance.<sup>72</sup> It evokes ancient Babel to illumine the path that FI's audience should *not* take.<sup>73</sup> Second, YHWH positively encourages Jacob-Israel to trust his performance (41:8-16, cf. 40:27), reassuring them of their ongoing status as his chosen people, invoking an ancestral model to guide Israel's way (41:8),<sup>74</sup> and reiterating his commitment as their shepherd who gives water to their poor and needy (cf. 44:1-5; 49:8-13). Having gained a sense of the context and structure of 41:1-20, I assess each alternative (41:5-7, 8-16) to discern their relationship.

### 4.3.2. *Trust or Lack of Trust*

#### 4.3.2.1. *Isaiah 41:5-7: Reliance upon idols*

In vv.5-7, the coastlands respond. They see (אָרר), become afraid (אָרררר), and begin to draw near—but not to YHWH. Instead, each one seeks the help (עֲזָרָה) of his neighbor

<sup>71</sup> Richard J. Clifford also notes that the action described in vv.5-7 is "simultaneous with the summons and the questions of vv.1-4 and the address to Israel in vv.8-16." See R. J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 2002), 91.

<sup>72</sup> While acknowledging that these verses are sometimes interpreted as the nations' reply to YHWH's speech, R. N. Whybray states that there is no probable connection to what precedes. He does perceive the obvious analogy with 40:9-20, but, for him, this passage is a lone atom in ch.41, an isolated procedural discourse on how to make a god. See R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 62. Likewise, Blenkinsopp, who correctly perceives the alternation between the address to foreign nations and their gods (41:5, 6-7) and the address to the Israelite community (vv.8-16), follows Duhm and relocates vv.6-7 to a place between 40:20 and 21, apparently due to similarity with 40:9-20. Happily, he retains v.5 in its present location. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 188, 197, 199. Still, linguistic cohesion between vv.5-7 and its co-text in vv.8-13 points to its retention in the present context.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. J. Koole (*Isaiah 40-48*, 209), who recognizes this "Babel-image," but thinks vv.5-7 are positive, indicating humanity's freedom to move away from Babylon.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Isa 40:26; 46:3; 48:19; 51:2; 63:7, 16.

(רעהו). Seeking safety within society is not wrong in-and-of-itself,<sup>75</sup> but the coastlands fail to recognize that true help comes from YHWH. They tremble (יִחַדְדוּ) at YHWH's performance (as they should), but in their ignorance, fear drives them to one another for strength (קִוּוּ), and bad company corrupts them, for they encourage one another (lit. their "brother[s]," אִישׁ v.6) to take courage (קִוּוּ) in the images of false-gods. Therefore, like ancient Babel,<sup>76</sup> for fear of having to live "without safety and existential security,"<sup>77</sup> the ends of the earth seek security in pagan-society and select wood for constructing idols.<sup>78</sup> Israel, however, should recognize that idols are nothing but a deception in the worshiper's right-hand (44:20).<sup>79</sup> In Clifford's fitting description, they form "a wonderfully ironic commentary upon a radically different relationship."<sup>80</sup> Verses 5-7 thus portray the response of idolatrous society to YHWH's performance; moreover, they expose Jacob-Israel's shared life in their midst. How then should God's people respond?

#### 4.3.2.2. *Isaiah 41:8-16: Reliance upon YHWH*

##### 4.3.2.2.1. "You, Israel, are my servant"

Isaiah 41:8-16 delivers the counter-example<sup>81</sup> and outlines an aspect of God's purpose, currently unrecognized by Israel (40:27).<sup>82</sup> It is a case of forgotten identity that begins and

<sup>75</sup> See the discussion in Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah*, 95-97.

<sup>76</sup> The conceptual parallel between the activity of the coastland peoples in this passage and the account of 'Babel' in Gen 11:1-9 is plain enough, though there is also a distinct echo of Gen 11:3 here. Isa 41:6, "each one his neighbor (אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ), they help" corresponds to Gen 11:3, "They said, each one to his neighbor (אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ)." The two phrases only differ by one consonant. Nevertheless, the point of comparison is the idolatrous exchange of a proper transcendence and immanence in covenantal unity under God's lordship for a false transcendence and a communal spirit centered in idolatry. Only the Holy One, he who abides forever and who dwells in a high and holy place, can revive the spirit of the lowly (Isa 57:15; cf. Gen 15:5; Isa 40:26).

<sup>77</sup> Jan Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>78</sup> Isa 40:19-20; 41:24; cf. Ahaz and Hezekiah's temptation to foreign alliances in Isa 7-8; 28-33.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Miscall is right to recognize this making of idols as a parody of divine creation (cf. 64:7). P. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 124. Expertly crafted by human hands, idols manifest a worldly wisdom. The smith surveys his product and thinks, "This is good, but I had better bolster it [lit., 'strengthen', קִוּוּ] with nails lest it totter" (v.7; cf. 40:19-20; 24:10; 54:10). But this is actually the height of folly, since idols lack substance (41:28-29); they offer no strength, no breath—no help/comfort at all. They are hardly reliable sources of sustainable energy (40:31; 41:1; 44:9-20).

<sup>80</sup> R. J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 91.

<sup>81</sup> Opinions differ as to whether vv.8-16 should be taken as a whole or divided into two parts, vv.8-13 and vv.14-16. I will treat vv.8-16 as a single unit. Though there are clearly two aspects to the response outlined in vv.8-16; nevertheless, as I aim to show, the two aspects constitute a singular response in contradiction of vv.5-7. The unity is perceived formally by repetition of אִישׁ in vv.8 and 16, bracketing the entire account by means of *inclusio*. Baltzer, who divides the passage into two sections, recognizes the close connection between them, concluding, "It is the same scene." See, K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 103 and J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 119.

<sup>82</sup> Following J. Begrich, Claus Westermann called this an oracle of salvation, a free apostrophe addressed to a congregation in response to a complaint. Likewise, I understand this passage to be a response to the complaint disclosing Jacob/Israel's failure to recognize YHWH in 40:27. See C. Westermann, "Das

ends with statements introduced by clause initial **וְאַתָּה** (“But you...” 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg.). In 41:8, **וְאַתָּה** precedes “Israel,” changing character to express the proper response in contradiction of vv.5-7.<sup>83</sup> The phrase is repeated in v.16, concluding the segment with a promise: whereas the wind (**רוּחַ**) will scatter *them* (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. pl.; cf. 40:7), *you* (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg.) will rejoice in YHWH (cf. 40:8, 9-11).<sup>84</sup> In each instance, the clause-initial disjunctive *waw* (adversative) indicates direct opposition to the preceding characterization of idolatry (41:5-7).<sup>85</sup>

The personal pronoun “you” is singular, yet collective;<sup>86</sup> here, “Israel” is a corporate/communal entity. **וְאַתָּה** implies that the union/solidarity desired by the coastland peoples should characterize “Israel,” ideally conceived in relation to the true God, YHWH (40:1). On the one hand, there is “you” (sg.), a people near to the true God or (even better) a people with whom he dwells (lit., “with you I am,” **עִמָּךְ־אֲנִי**, vv.10, 13). On the other hand, there is “them” (pl., vv.5-6), distant peoples who, in their ignorance and fear, busy themselves with the construction of idols. Here, then, the one God expresses the basic difference between the two basic people-groups under heaven as each group’s response to YHWH’s words and actions. Thus, the perceivable contrast with vv.5-7 is sharp, but kind. It is as if, shaking his finger and pointing at his people, YHWH says, “Not like them, for Israel-Jacob, you are *my* servant.”<sup>87</sup>

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Heilswort bei Deuterjesaja,” *EvT* 24 (1964): 355-73. As the passage plainly indicates, this genre designation overlaps with the prophetic vocation oracle, due to its utilization of the language of Israel’s election to a special office (cf. K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 100).

<sup>83</sup> Note the significant opposition of 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. pl. as regards “them”, and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. sg. as regards “Israel” (cf. “men”, **אֲנָשִׁים** in vv.11-12).

<sup>84</sup> The coherence of vv.8-16 may be seen in conceptual parallel with Ps 105:42-44. This passage, as if paraphrasing Isa 41:8-16, reads as follows: “For [YHWH] remembered his holy word to Abraham his servant, and he brought out his people with joy, with rejoicing his chosen ones, he gave them the lands of the nations.” His people will rejoice and boast when they fully recognize that YHWH alone is the Lord who keeps his covenant.

<sup>85</sup> Once again, Whybray, citing Westermann with approval, sees no connection with the preceding. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 63. According to Westermann, the present oracle is a reply to an unrecorded lamentation. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 68.

<sup>86</sup> Baltzer observes that the problem of a collective or individual interpretation is already posed in the very first passage where Israel is called “servant” (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 99). In this context, I think the collective is used to contrast true and false unity corresponding to true and false worship. Moreover, given the notion of corporate responsibility, the concept of Israel as a communal/corporate entity should not be played off against the presentation of “Jacob-Israel” as an individual person. Even in this passage, “Israel” is understood, if you will, in ‘seed-form’. That is, “Israel” began to exist already within the life history of its individual ancestor, Abraham.

<sup>87</sup> By means of my translation (Appendix B), I show how Israel’s vocation and Israel’s future depend on its God-given identity, and I am anticipating the further development of the servant theme in Isa 49:3 (see my next chapter). My translation is supported by Goldingay’s observation that Hebrew poetry is inclined to locate a main verb early in a sentence, not to precede it by too many preliminaries. He writes, “...an audience would be so familiar with noun clauses...that it would hear the words as meaning ‘You are Israel, my servant...’” (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol.1*, 159). I differ only insofar as I think the identifying clause indicates that Israel, and no other nation, is YHWH’s servant.

To identify “Israel-Jacob” as his servant in 41:8, YHWH combines two names for the grandson of Abraham.<sup>88</sup> This word-pair indicates that the present community has a common ancestor called Jacob, who was chosen by YHWH and re-named (re-defined as) “Israel.” This designation positively identifies Jacob as the one God chose and did not abandon, the one God renamed “Israel” before the birth of the nation. What precisely does this mean? Although the language of choosing may refer to individuals, like Jacob, Saul, or David, here it applies to the people,<sup>89</sup> and their present identity focuses back on Jacob-Israel’s own election. Remarkably, the calling of Jacob *as Israel* is a powerful indication that God remains committed to corporate Israel as his people. God is refashioning the present audience’s corporate identity in accordance with the history of the (original) elect Jacob designated “Israel.” Put another way, because their ancestor is still significant, in solidarity with Jacob, Israel remains YHWH’s chosen nation and, therefore, his servant.<sup>90</sup> This remnant-community, afflicted and dispersed, shares a common origin in Jacob’s life history; thus, their present identity is organically linked to this figure from the early history of redemption. Israel’s story commenced in antiquity, in a narrative about a patriarch called Jacob; since they are Jacob’s descendants, God’s words about the former “Israel” apply to this new “Jacob.” God is calling the nation to remember its corporate identity, and thus to rediscover its path for life—in short, to be “Israel.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the ancestor’s personal election pertains to Israel’s corporate election as God’s people with an open future.

Parallel to Israel-Jacob, YHWH refines the people’s identity in accord with its origin in Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham (Gen 17:5; Isa 51:2). Israel still exists because God chose Abraham;<sup>92</sup> in other words, its descent from Abraham establishes continuity with the past and confirms its legitimacy as God’s people.<sup>93</sup> Although chosen like Jacob, it

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<sup>88</sup> Note that the writer reverses the usual order of the pair: only 41:8 has Israel-Jacob. Everywhere else the order is Jacob-Israel: Isa 40:27; 41:14; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1, 2, 5, 21, 23; 45:4; 46:3; 48:1, 12; 49:5, 6.

<sup>89</sup> See (e.g.) 1 Sam 8:18; 2 Sam 6:21. In Deuteronomy, “choosing” often refers to God’s election of Israel due to his commitment to their ancestors (e.g., Deut 4:37; 7:6-7; 10:15).

<sup>90</sup> See W. A. M. Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 16-17.

<sup>91</sup> The indicative-imperative relationship here is analogous to the apostle Paul’s charge that Christians be(come) what they are (in union with Christ). Here, Israel is called to ‘be(come) what it is’, or to assume the role and take up the task for which God has called it. See John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 29.

<sup>92</sup> After Abraham, YHWH called Jacob, not Esau. Isaac is conspicuous by his absence, though, in Genesis, God appeared to Isaac at Beersheba, speaking in the same way that he now speaks to Israel: “I am the God of Abraham your Father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham’s sake” (Gen 26:24). Isaiah 41:8-16 incorporates this entire verse to reassure its audience of God’s presence with Israel. Israel must respond as Isaac did and worship the one true God (v.25).

<sup>93</sup> Blenkinsopp correctly observes the importance of this designation for Diaspora Jewish communities. “Addressing the dispersed communities of Jews as Israel/Jacob and offspring of Abraham

was *in Abraham* that YHWH first called Israel into being (cf. Gen 15; 17; 22). Jacob become “Israel” is “the seed of Abraham” (זרע אברהם, v.8), and for that reason, especially, the people belong to YHWH still (cf. 40:1). Reference to the “seed of Abraham,” then, calls Israel to embrace the covenant promises and renew their trust in YHWH (43:10).<sup>94</sup> If YHWH is Israel’s covenant Lord, Israel can rest in his special care and protection.<sup>95</sup>

As with the previous mention of Jacob, that of Abraham indicates that Israel’s future remains open by virtue of the promises God made to their ancestors.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, it implies that Israel is called in continuity with Abraham’s special purpose; that is, Israel-Jacob has an Abrahamic vocation to fulfill. Just as God’s first servant Abraham<sup>97</sup> was recruited for a mission in his day, Jacob-Israel’s identity still entails a proper response within the sphere of YHWH’s jurisdiction and a particular mission under the exercise of God’s sovereign will (vv.8-9).<sup>98</sup>

For this reason, Israel-Jacob is called “my servant” (עבדִי), of whom YHWH also says, “I have chosen you” (בחרתיך). The parallel between these two terms indicates the close connection between election and servanthood. It was as the seed of Abraham that Jacob-Israel was formed and shaped for YHWH’s service, and it is being summoned once again for reformation and reshaping with new purpose. Thus associated with YHWH, God reclaims the survivors of judgment as “Israel,” God’s servant with a special role in the world. YHWH’s declaration of their continuing identity, therefore, is a powerful guide and motivator for their proper response in reliance upon God. In contrast to the coastlands, who bond together for fear and rely on the idols they fortify (חזק) (vv.5-7, cf. v.9),

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emphasizes the importance for the...writer of reestablishing lines of continuity with the past” (*Isaiah* 40-55, 200).

<sup>94</sup> Of course, the expression “seed of Abraham” need not refer in the first place to Abraham’s physical descendants, but specifically to that progeny through which God’s special purpose would unfold. Abraham’s physical descendants include Ishmael, Edom, Moab, and Ammon (together with their respective progeny). Even Ishmael would fall under God’s covenant jurisdiction connected with Abraham, for he too was circumcised (Gen 17:23-27). Nevertheless, God’s covenant with Abraham was continued specifically through the promised child, Isaac (17:21; 26:2-5), the son whom Abraham loved (22:2, 12), and in his descendent, Jacob-Israel (32:28; 48:15).

<sup>95</sup> So also Whybray, *Isaiah* 40-66, 63. Because elsewhere the prophet looks as far back as Abraham, Whybray argues that the line in which Abraham is mentioned by name should be retained despite the apparent metrical disorder. Whybray suggests that the metrical disorder in this case indicates more probably that something has been accidentally omitted. Perhaps it would be better to argue that the colometry indicates the expressed intention of the writer to focus on Abraham in this way, thereby indicating YHWH’s covenantal commitment to Israel and the pattern for Israel’s proper response to YHWH’s plan.

<sup>96</sup> Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:4-8; 26:4, 5; Deut 4:30; 5:31; 6:20-25; 9:5, 27.

<sup>97</sup> As John Goldingay points out, Abraham is the first person in the Old Testament to be described as ‘my servant’, and that in a ‘fear not’ oracle (Gen 26:24). See Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah*, 100. Interestingly, Abraham is also the first person to be described as a prophet (Gen 20:7), specifically in his role as an intercessor on behalf of a king.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Gen 26:24; Exod 2:24; Deut 9:27; Ps 105:7-11, 42.

Jacob's Israelite-identity and Abrahamic-vocation are uniquely upheld by the grace and calling of the true God. In other words, Israel is presented with a choice between idolatry (and continued life in exile) or imitation of the active faith of the ancestor, Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), who was called out of a similar landscape amidst idolatry in Mesopotamia-Babel (Gen 11:1-9). Consequently, Israel must look to Abraham once again and follow his example if it will respond appropriately to YHWH's performance.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.3.2.2.2. "Abrahamic" Servanthood

It is significant, then, that the reference to Abraham in v.8 is qualified by a participle in the active voice: אֱהָבָה (lit., "Abraham who loved me").<sup>100</sup> This is no free motif. Israel, YHWH says, is the seed of "Abraham אֱהָבָה" (v.8). The construction is admittedly ambiguous;<sup>101</sup> nevertheless, I argue that the pointing of MT should be retained. The construction is best translated "who loved me," with "Abraham" as subject and "YHWH" as object (recipient).<sup>102</sup> The relationship between vv.5-7 and vv.8-16 and a close reading of vv.8-13 in particular support this conclusion.

The unit begins with three phrases in apposition: (1) "...my servant," (2) "Jacob, whom I have chosen," and (3) "the seed of Abraham, אֱהָבָה." Syntactically, each assertion pertains directly to Israel,<sup>103</sup> and so, the patriarchal and exilic horizons are hereby fused:

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Gen 12:1-3; chs.15, 17.

<sup>100</sup> *gal* ptc. masc. sg. + 1<sup>st</sup> per. sg. pron. suf. Many commentators note that Abraham's special relationship with YHWH, expressed as friendship, is found in Judaism (2 Chr 20:7)/Christianity (James 2:23) and Islam (Qur'an Sura 4:124).

<sup>101</sup> Baltzer argues for the translation "whom I (YHWH) love," based on the apparent apposition with "my servant"; yet, he also notes, "Actually, the word means *he who loves me*, the suffix being objective." Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 100, 101 n.87. "My friend" is equally ambiguous. Does it refer to one's display of friendship to another or the display of friendship offered to that one (i.e., my friend = the one who loves me)? See J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 86, where the author states that the term was broad enough to include the idea of both Abraham's love for YHWH and YHWH's love for Abraham.

<sup>102</sup> Translators commonly understand the 1<sup>st</sup>-person suffix as the subject rather than the object of the verb. In fact, BHS proposes changing the pointing to אֱהָבָה, removing the ambiguity by changing the form to signal the passive voice with YHWH as agent ("who is loved by me" = "whom I love"). Oswalt writes, "...one would expect to yield 'who loves me,'" but thinks that the proposal of BHS, (אֱהָבָה) is "more normal." J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 86.

<sup>103</sup> The first phrase ends with a 1<sup>st</sup>-person pronoun (אֲנִי), indicating possession. The second forms a relative clause with a 1<sup>st</sup>-person verb in the perfect aspect (+ verbal suf., 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. sg., בְּחַרְתִּיךָ). In the second phrase, there is syllepsis of the person; hence, the repetition of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person masculine singular after the verb corresponds to the antecedent, "you" (אַתָּה).<sup>103</sup> With only one break, this syntax continues to v.10, subsequent to the relative clause in v.9 ("whom I secured [you]..." אֲשֶׁר הִחַזְקְתִּיךָ). Therefore, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person pronoun defines the subject matter of each relative phrase in apposition and the context further identifies and defines "you." Nevertheless, that one break is critically important, since the only break from this syntactical pattern is the phrase that refers to Abraham.

If the writer wanted to continue based on parallel syntax, the reader would expect a 1<sup>st</sup> per. perf. + 3<sup>rd</sup> per. masc. sg. pron. suf., and Abraham would be the antecedent of this pronoun, "whom I loved (him)" (אֲהַבְתִּיהוּ). 2 Chr 20:7 is an important parallel in which Jehoshaphat prays to the Lord, referring to Israel as "the seed of Abraham אֱהָבָה." In that context, where appeal is made to the Lord on the basis of the

YHWH secured (יִחְזַקְתִּיךָ, v.9; cf. vv. 6-7, 10) Israel from the ends of the earth and called (קָרָאתִיךָ) Israel from its remotest parts to be his servant. Moreover, this servant—“Israel” in direct address—YHWH calls “Abraham’s seed.” Plainly, this servant’s identity is discovered by analogy to Abraham’s story. That is, like Jacob, it exists in solidarity with Abraham, even in him whom God chose, secured, and called from the ends/remotest parts of the earth; that is, the survivors discover their corporate identity in continuity with Abraham’s story.<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, this syntax supports the following notion: Israel must model its vocation upon the active faith and servanthood of its ancestor, Abra(ha)m. It was Abram—subsequent to his departure from Ur of the Chaldeans with his (idolatrous) father Terah<sup>105</sup>—whom YHWH chose and called out of the distant land of Haran.<sup>106</sup> God promises to secure (יִחְזַק) Abraham’s offspring from the same region to serve him once more.

The immediate context, then, invites Israel to imitate Abraham’s commitment to YHWH. The true God is their covenant Lord; as Israel is God’s people, they must serve him exclusively. Their proper response is grounded in Israel’s previous election and modeled after the response of Abraham whose heart YHWH had found “faithful” (cf. Neh 9:7). Abraham’s true seed disclose their identity by their response to YHWH’s own self-disclosure in word and deed. If Israel’s survivors would be characterized by obedience to YHWH’s call, they must turn from idols to serve the true God. In a word, *love* comprises Israel’s proper response to the sovereign Lord.<sup>107</sup> As I have proposed, this model encourages Israel towards the right response in contradistinction to the response of the coastlands (vv.5-7). Here then, in vv.8-16, Israel is summoned to renew their commitment

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Abrahamic covenant, the translation, “your friend” is more natural. Moreover, in that context, the 2<sup>nd</sup> per. pron. suf. agrees with its antecedent in person, gender, and number, just as expected. In Isa 41:8ff., however, YHWH is the speaker, and it is he who appeals to Israel for a loyal response according to the pattern of Abraham’s active faith and servanthood. My argument does not, of course, seek to deny the *mutuality* inherent in the covenant relationship (cf. 43:4; 48:14, where YHWH is clearly the subject of אֲנִי), only that the form and context are suggestive of Abraham’s love *for* God.

<sup>104</sup> In the name, “Israel,” and his description as “Abraham’s seed” Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 96, 101) perceives the portrayal of what Israel ought to be, anticipating the subsequent characterizations of the servant. He explains that “Israel” now receives its call in the alien land, no less than before, to serve God.

<sup>105</sup> Gen 11:31; 12:5; cf. Josh 24:2.

<sup>106</sup> YHWH is not characterized here as Israel’s deliverer from Egypt. In recapitulation of Israel’s story, the ‘exodus’ from Mesopotamia precedes that from Egypt. Israel’s roots thus go back behind the first exodus to the call of Abraham. Like the first exodus, the future exodus is an activity that begins here and comes to completion in the future. To paraphrase Hosea 11:1, with relevant substitutions, YHWH is saying, “Out of Mesopotamia, I called my servant.”

<sup>107</sup> As Baltzer so astutely observes, “...anyone who can call someone else to his service even in a far-off place is also exerting sovereignty there.” See Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 101. This observation applies not only spatially but temporally, that is, it applies equally to the recognition of YHWH as “First and Last” (41:4-5) for his sovereignty reaches back to Abraham and forward into the future of his chosen people.



to YHWH, and it is reasonable (given the context) to understand Abraham's own love and loyalty as the proper model for servant-Israel to follow. In other words, as Israel is Abraham's seed, YHWH is Israel's Lord; and so, Israel's present relationship to "the King of Jacob" (41:21) must correspond to Abraham's prior relationship of love and loyalty to YHWH. Based on the contextual relationship of vv.5-7 and vv.8-13, the 1<sup>st</sup>-person pronominal suffix as an object pronoun (referring to YHWH) is a stronger reading; there is no need to change the pointing and read the construction as a passive.<sup>108</sup> As true as the passive statement is, in this context, YHWH is not referring primarily to his love *for* Abraham;<sup>109</sup> instead, he is making an assertion regarding Abraham's response of love within the context of the covenant he graciously established with Israel's ancestor. In short, YHWH promises to do for Israel what he had done for Abraham, contingent upon Israel's analogous response.<sup>110</sup>

To be more precise about what YHWH desires from his people, we must first remember that YHWH tested Abraham's constancy. Would Abraham continue in trust or lack of trust? Israel knows the answer. Abraham demonstrated his allegiance<sup>111</sup> in obedience 'unto death' with respect to the very seed of promise; namely, Isaac, the son of his love. Hence, further (and admittedly tentative) support for this translation may come

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<sup>108</sup> I confess that I am attracted to this reading because it supports my view of the developing servant theme. Nevertheless, the common translation "my friend" at least presumes a mutual (bilateral) relationship (or reciprocity). Moreover, what I am arguing has two advantages over the alternative. First, it does not require a change in the pointing of the MT. Second, it appears to fit the context rather well. My overall conclusion regarding the developing theme does not rest solely upon this translation, since it can still be argued that Abraham is the model for Israel in its present estate: like Abraham, whom YHWH loves, Jacob/Israel is called out of a distant land and a milieu characterized by idolatry to (re)turn to YHWH.

<sup>109</sup> The only person in Scripture (other than Abraham) who is called YHWH's "friend" (רֵעַ) is Moses (Exod 33:11). There it is said that the Lord used to speak to Moses as "a man speaks to his friend" (אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ [!]), underscoring the quality of Moses' prophetic office. With Abraham, however, the focus is on his relationship to YHWH as father of Isaac, the son of his love, and the quality of Abraham's service.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Lev 26:40-45; Deut 30:1-10. Contrast the view of Goldingay, who sees a contradiction here between the future according to FI and the picture given in deuteronomic theology. As regards the account of Abraham, Goldingay thinks that Isaiah 41 takes a step in a different (non-deuteronomic) direction, and so he rejects the idea that Isaiah 41 requires acceptance of YHWH's commands. According to him, the sole basis for describing Abraham's offspring as YHWH's friend lies in the special relationship that he has initiated with Abraham. That there can be no relationship with YHWH except by covenantal condescension cannot be denied, and I would agree that the "more immediate drawn implication of the audience's being an Abrahamic people is that it shares Abraham's position as a people taken from far away." Nevertheless, Israel is not entirely passive, and just as Abraham was obligated to *serve* YHWH in that covenant (Gen 17:26), Israel's response of obedient service is required here as well. Put simply, Abraham is exemplary. Like him, Israel must prepare the way for a return to the Lord. The imperative is grounded in the grace of Israel's divinely established identity and calling in descent from Abraham. Israel must exhibit this identity, like Abraham, in trust and servanthood. My interpretation makes better sense of the syntax and the immediate context, where the point is that, in light of YHWH's grace and commitment, *Israel* must render the proper response of trust and service. Moreover, I do not think that Goldingay can consistently continue with his view of Isaiah's direction given the broader context of chs.41-48. It simply cannot stand as a general statement regarding its theological witness, which consistently requires Israel's response in repentant faith and loving obedience (cf. 43:22-28; 48:1-8; 48:1-11, 17-18, 21-22; 50:1-3; 51:7-8; 52:11-12; 56:1-8; 56:9-59:15a).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 10:12.

from Gen 22:2, the account of YHWH's test of Abraham's fealty vis-à-vis the ancestor's profound aspirations for Isaac, "your son...whom you love," אִשְׁרְ-אַהֲבָתָהּ (šer-ahavāh).

Would Abraham love YHWH supremely, or was his commitment to his only son, Isaac, superior? It is a test of faithfulness and of whether Abraham trusts YHWH's promise.<sup>112</sup>

In this new context, then, like Abraham, YHWH calls Israel to respond to the performance-test with a quality of servanthood consistent with its Abrahamic identity, a quality of servanthood analogous to Abraham's own self-sacrificing display of loyalty. In other words, Israel must respond to YHWH with the depth and quality of commitment displayed by Abraham in Gen 22 (cf. Deut 6:5).<sup>113</sup> A whole-souled dedication to YHWH is the only proper response to the faithfulness that YHWH, for his part, has displayed to Abraham's offspring (Deut 10:15). It is this love, corresponding to YHWH's own covenantal love, which YHWH requires of his servant. Jacob-Israel's calling to serve in faithful-commitment to him can be the only appropriate response to YHWH's word, though there are hints that YHWH's sovereign performance also functions as a test for all peoples.

In conclusion, YHWH has responded to Israel-Jacob's circumstances by declaring that—as he treated their ancestor, Jacob—he has chosen and not rejected them (v.9, מֵאַהֲבָתִי).<sup>114</sup> Although the exile suggests to Jacob-Israel that YHWH did reject them, the story for the chosen people has not ended;<sup>115</sup> on the contrary, God upholds his bond with them as Abraham's seed. Thus, he stands ready to bestow the promised blessings of that covenant upon his servant's progeny. God's relationship with Abraham's offspring is not over, for in their favor he remembers the covenant established with their ancestors.<sup>116</sup> Like their ancestors, Israel must turn from idols and rely upon God while waiting for YHWH to

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. Gen 15:5-6; cf. Isa 40:6-8. Given this correspondence, I am inclined to see support here for what Jon Levenson has called, "the tradition of Abraham as the archetypical lover of God." Levenson explains:

The genesis of this tradition...would seem to lie in the *aqedah* itself, in which Abraham chooses obedience to God over the life of his favored son, the one (the text goes out of its way to note) whom he loved (Gen 22:2). Adding to the image was the characterization of Abraham in the Book of Isaiah as the 'lover [of God]' (*ōhābī*, Isa 41:8).

Levenson further suggests that this tradition lies in the background to Paul's affirmation that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). See Jon D. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 221-22. Koole, who translates as I do, makes a connection to Gen 18:17-19 rather than Genesis 22 (See Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 155). I arrived at this interpretation independently of both Levenson and Koole.

<sup>113</sup> Here, John Goldingay points out that deuteronomic usage (cf. 4:37; 7:13; 11:1; 23:6 [5]; 30:20), and the word's application to Cyrus (Isa 48:14), draw attention to the fact that 'love' is not a matter of emotions so much as commitment (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1*, 162). YHWH's friends keep his commandments (cf. John 14:15).

<sup>114</sup> See Lam 5:22; Ps 89:39-40; 2 Kgs 17:20.

<sup>115</sup> Lev 26:40-45; Deut 30:1-10.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Lev 26:45; Exod 2:24.

fulfill the promises. Though they are weak and weary, Israel must not look to idols to renew their strength; instead, they must respond to YHWH's word in active faith and trust. Israel must await the blessings YHWH has promised, blessings he will bestow with the establishment of his reign from Zion. Moreover, like Abraham—but unlike the coastlands in their present activity (Isa 41:5)—Israel-Jacob has nothing to fear (אל־תִּירָא: 41:10, 13-14).<sup>117</sup> For God declares, “I will strengthen you (הַחֲזִיקְתִּיךָ) and help you (עֲזַרְתִּיךָ).” In contrast to the idolaters (cf. חֲזַק, 41:6), YHWH says, “I will uphold you with my saving right hand” (אֶף־תִּמְכַּתִּיךָ בְּיָמִין צַדִּיקִי, v.10).<sup>118</sup> In short, YHWH summons Israel from Mesopotamian-darkness so that, as Abraham's offspring, they might boast in the true God too (v.16).<sup>119</sup> Thus, reborn from the womb of Abraham's covenant, YHWH calls Israel to embrace its God-given identity and renew its ancestral vocation.

#### 4.3.3. Conclusion

Isaiah 41:8-16 ends as it began, with the phrase, “But you” (וְאַתָּה), repeating the contrast between the two responses by shifting the focus to two distinct outcomes.<sup>120</sup> Although vv.5-7 focus on the idolater, and vv.8-16 shift attention to Israel, vv.5-16 form a coherent unit. Each segment provides a model for Israel's corporate response. In the very region of Israel's origin in Abraham, the exiles find themselves in a similar position amidst idols. Both models develop against this backdrop, presenting two alternative responses to YHWH's purpose (vv.1-2). Both models further develop in vv.8-16 by means of the polarity between YHWH's promise to Abraham's seed (vv.10, 13-16) and YHWH's threat to their adversaries (vv.11-12, 15-16). The whole context recognizes that the history of Israel is a record of conflict, danger, oppression, and exile, predisposing the present community to existential insecurity. The coastland peoples share in this fearful present state of anxiety. When YHWH acts, however, though Israel's enemies will not stand, Israel will, for God promises that all threats to the community will disappear.<sup>121</sup> In that

<sup>117</sup> See Gen 15:1; Gen 26:24; Gen 46:3.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Isa 41:13; 42:6 [the servant]; 45:1 [Cyrus]; and 51:18 [Zion].

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Gen 12:1-5; Josh 24:2.

<sup>120</sup> That the immediate unit ends in v.16 can be seen by the established contrast between the people of God and idolaters, which does not continue into vv.17-20. Rather, vv.17-20 reassert YHWH's commitment to his people, focusing specifically on his provision for their poor and needy.

<sup>121</sup> Baltzer comments, “The servant is obliged to serve, the master to give the requisite care and protection” (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 126).

day, Israel's enemies will become "as nothing" (יְהִי כְאֵיִן, vv.11-12 [2x]) "and as naught" (וְכַאֲפִס).<sup>122</sup>

In conclusion, Isa 41:15-16 reveals three significant features of YHWH's purpose. First, with respect to these wicked idolaters, and even in opposition to them, God's people have a vocation to fulfill as God's servant (vv.15-16). As it was in the past, Israel's future includes a 'mission' among the nations. Second, the alternative responses to YHWH's just actions have distinct consequences either for joy and blessing or for curse and destruction. An appropriate response means that somehow, ultimately, the Divine Warrior will crush Israel's enemies (vv.15-16),<sup>123</sup> even as their Shepherd leads the faithful home (40:11). There they will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel (41:16). Finally, this passage reveals the important truth that whereas idolatry exchanges the creature for the Creator, YHWH's performance is recognized and praised in the proper response his chosen servant makes to his just and righteous design. In and through the servant, God reveals his name and glory; in and through God, the servant is exalted.<sup>124</sup> In that day, as Oswalt explains, "whatever the involvement of the people as instruments, it was he, the One who is unlike any other—the Holy One who has committed himself to a people—who had done it."<sup>125</sup> They will boast in him alone (v.16).

Therefore, although this passage contributes to YHWH's larger contest with idols, in view of YHWH's coming, the questions it raises are basic: will Jacob-Israel turn from idols, embrace their identity and calling, and acknowledge YHWH as the only true God? As chs.40-48 develop, YHWH's dynamic condescension demands Jacob-Israel's response as witnesses who testify to the correspondence between YHWH's word and YHWH's

<sup>122</sup> Koole is partly right when he concludes, "The prophet addresses the historical entity Jacob-Israel, with his entire history of wars waged and defeats suffered, which finally led to the exile. Such hostilities, however, need no longer be feared by the people." Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 163. Surely, Israel's history—not to mention the total witness of final-Isaiah (cf. Isa 5; 58)—plainly shows that the threat to 'Israel' is not merely external but internal as well.

<sup>123</sup> The vocation is parallel to that of the king mentioned previously in v.2.

<sup>124</sup> This particular theme is highlighted here by repetition of three interrelated Hebrew roots: יָרָא, עֹזֵר, and חֹזֵק. The root יָרָא, which may be glossed, "fear," or "be afraid", indicates the initial similarity between the response of idolaters and the response of Israel (vv.5, 10, 13-14). Nevertheless, the material difference between the responses of the two groups is absolute, for its grounding is in the presence or absence of YHWH himself amidst a people he loves and who love him in return. Whereas the ends of the earth tremble in fear (קָצוֹת הָאָרֶץ יִחַרְדּוּ ... וַיִּירָאוּ, v.5)—each one turning to his neighbor for help (יִעֹזְרוּ, v.6) and to idols for strength (וַיִּחַזְקוּ, v.7)—Israel has nothing to fear (אֵל-תִּירָא, vv. 10, 13-14). Though presently in the context of these idolaters, YHWH will rescue his chosen servant from their midst (עֲבָדֵי ... בַּחֲרֹתֶיךָ ... הַחֹזְקִתֶיךָ מִקָּצוֹת הָאָרֶץ, vv.8-9). Thus, their God is not only powerfully present among them (כִּי עִמָּךְ-אֲנִי, v.10), but entirely committed to helping them (עֹזֶרְתִּיךָ, 2x, vv. 13-14). In this connection, Whybray makes his fine observation that the phrase "fear not," characteristic of this oracle, surfaces in stories in which God appears in theophany to help his people (cf. Gen 15:1; 21:17; Josh 8:1). See R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 64; cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 71. Therefore, these *leitworte* play a vital role in developing the contrast between the two responses.

<sup>125</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 94.

deed. The fulfillment of this vocation is a vital component of Israel's response to YHWH's polemic against idolatry. Put differently, as the criterion of Israel's identity, *servanthood* constitutes Israel's witness to the true God. It entails their response to YHWH in trust as they wait for the effective realization of his purpose. What this calling more specifically involves, and its relation to **תורה**, becomes clearer in subsequent poems.

#### 4.4. Isaiah 42:1-4, 5-9, 10-12

##### 4.4.1. Introduction: "Ecce servus meus"

In a second phase of the trial (Isa 41:21-29; cf. vv.1-4), YHWH clears the way for Israel by unveiling the impotence of the rival gods.<sup>126</sup> The opening verse connects back to 41:1 with a double imperative, although instead of addressing the coastlands, the King of Jacob now challenges the gods directly: "Submit your case" (**הגישו עצמותיכם**), "Present your arguments" (**קרבו ריבכם**). The challenge exposes them as 'say nothings' and 'do nothings' (v.24), for unlike YHWH, they cannot foretell (**הגידו האתיות לאחור**, v.23), and they cannot bring about anything good or bad. Consequently, they are like false prophets, able to frighten no one,<sup>127</sup> because only a real god can make pronouncements and carry them out. Connecting back to v.2, in v.25, YHWH restates the evidence: he rouses a military leader "from the north [**צפון**], from the sunrise [**מזרח-שמש**]," who will trample rulers (**סגנים**) as a potter tramples clay.<sup>128</sup> None of the so-called gods proclaimed even a word about it (v.26), yet the report is an aspect of the good news YHWH will send (**אתן**) by herald to Jerusalem (v.27; cf. 40:1-11).

Now, this phase of the trial sets up another contrast in order to emphasize something positive about YHWH's servant. What God says about servant-Israel promises to transform the outlook and behavior of the coastland peoples. The arrangement of 41:1-42:12 discloses this prospect as follows:

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| A  | Trial (41:1-4), summoning the coastlands                          |
| B  | The coastlands rely on images of false gods (41:5-7)              |
| C  | The servant's reliance on YHWH (41:8-13, 14-16)                   |
| D  | YHWH's commitment to his servant (41:17-20)                       |
| A' | Trial (41:21-29), challenging the images of false gods            |
| C' | The servant's task involving <b>משפט</b> and <b>תורה</b> (42:1-4) |
| D' | YHWH's commitment to his servant (42:5-9)                         |
| B' | The coastlands sing praise to YHWH (42:10-12).                    |

<sup>126</sup> Their punishment will come in Isaiah 46.

<sup>127</sup> See 41:5-7, 10, 13-14; 45:7; Deut 18:22.

<sup>128</sup> Is Israel, Abraham-like, the military leader who comes out of the east (cf. 41:15-16) or is this Cyrus (44:28; 45:1)? The ambiguity at least suggests that there are two planks in YHWH's strategy.

Whereas, previously, evoking Babel and Abram (Gen 11-12), YHWH distinguished the coastland's idolatry from the way of reliance upon God (41:5-7, 8-13), here, in 42:1-4, in contrast to the empty images of false gods, YHWH presents his servant as the image of God. Macro-syntactic הן signals a comparison by closing 41:21-29 and opening 42:1-4.<sup>129</sup> The particle, הן, in 42:1, ties the new section back to the preceding verse (41:29, cf. v.24), while repositioning the spotlight to fix the reader's attention upon YHWH's servant.<sup>130</sup> By juxtaposing the verses, הן also highlights a catchword connection involving רוח in 41:29c and 42:1c.

רוח ותהו נסביהם	אפס מעשיהם	כלם און	הן 41:29
נתתי רוחי עליו...	בחירי רצתה נפשי	עבדי אתמך-בו	הן 42:1

Given YHWH's verdict on the futility of idols, הן makes a significant contribution to the message about YHWH's servant. God says, in effect, "Now that you have considered the false/offensive (און) gods, whose works are worthless (אפס), whose images lack divine breath (רוח),<sup>131</sup> consider my servant, I have put my breath/spirit (רוח) on him." In other words, in the contest with the idols, הן points the coastlands to YHWH's servant, signals the contrast, drawing 41:29 and 42:1 together, and points to the catchword connection. This connection in turn supplies the reason for the servant's success. In contrast with the empty idols, רוח fills the servant, enabling him to triumph as the image of the true God. Thus endued, rather than face destruction (40:6-7, 24; ch.46), YHWH's image will become the effective instrument of his reign in the cosmos.

#### 4.4.2. Structure of Isaiah 42:1-12

Isa 42:1-12 is a subunit of the larger poem (41:1-42:12) that contains three strophes distinguished by shifts in addressee (vv.1-4, 5-9, 10-12). In the first strophe, YHWH is the speaker. He presents his chosen servant (עבדי || בחירי) before the court (42:1),<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> As Peter Miscall writes, "In vv.1-4 the contrast between the idols and the divinely supported servant is introduced by *hen*, Look!, a form of *hinneh*" (Miscall, *Isaiah*, 126).

<sup>130</sup> Roy Melugin states that the particles, הנה/הן, often introduce speeches that proclaim certain persons have been established in particular offices or functions. See Roy F. Melugin, *Formation of Isaiah 40-55* (BZAW 141; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 65.

<sup>131</sup> Lit., "their images are wind and empty," רוח ותהו נסביהם, 40:7, 14.

<sup>132</sup> Claus Westermann points out that the servant's designation (הן) requires the presence of others who witness it, "and it also bears the stamp of accrediting...features link[ing] it with a royal designation" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 93). B. Childs observes close stylistic parallels with 1 Sam 9:15-17; Zech 3:8; 6:12 (*Isaiah*, 324).

announces the task for which he is designated (v.1bβ), outlines his approach (42:2-3a), and predicts his success (42:3b-4). Yet, the strophe's most significant features are the repetition of **מִשְׁפָּט** (3x, vv.1, 3, 4) and the word-pair **תִּוְרָה || מִשְׁפָּט**, which signals its theme and connects it back to the disputation in 40:12-31 (vv.14, 27).

Repetition of the divine name, YHWH, is the most significant cohesive feature of the second strophe, which mediates YHWH's speech. Isa 42:5 extends the initial segment with a unique version of the messenger formula, "Thus says the true/incomparable God, YHWH" (**יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, v.5; MT **פ** after 42:4). The formula, "I am YHWH" (**אֲנִי־יְהוָה**), introduces two further parts (vv.6-7, 8-9). Verses 6-7 are significant, because they address the servant regarding his commission; vv.8-9 are transitional, underscoring the fact that this is the pronouncement of **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**.

The final strophe (vv.10-12) commands the world to hymn YHWH. It is linked to the latter part of the previous strophe (vv.8-9) by repetition of YHWH's name, glory, and praise across the lines of the poem (vv.8, 12), with vv.9-11 forming the central section of vv.8-12. The plural object (**אֲתֹכֶם**) at the close of v.9 draws the reader's attention again to the coastlands (**אֲרָצֵי הַיָּם**, 41:1, 5; 42:10, 12), who, YHWH has announced, are awaiting the servant's **תִּוְרָה** (42:4). In vv.10-12, they (among others) are exhorted in a sequence of six imperatives to testify to YHWH's glory by singing songs in praise of the new things God will do (vv.9-10). Mention of "new things" connects this unit to 41:21-29 (see vv.22-23, 26, and, esp., v.27), where YHWH explains how having foretold the former things to Zion, now realized, he will presently provide a herald of good tidings to Jerusalem, implying the imminent arrival of things to come. The declaration of these new things gives rise to the song of all the earth in 42:10-12 (cf. v.9). These things probably include the servant's establishment of **מִשְׁפָּט** and his **תִּוְרָה**. There is no change of speaker. Thus, vv.10-12 end the large section (41:1-42:12) with the glorification of YHWH, indicative of the vision's certain result (cf. 40:5). As Westermann explains, "In this saving work, God is to prove himself to be truly God...His glory and praise...consist in his being recognized in his saving work."<sup>133</sup> It is as though YHWH were a prophet,<sup>134</sup> for the criterion of his

<sup>133</sup> Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 101.

<sup>134</sup> The trial sections in 41:1-4 and 41:21-29 emphasize speech (cf. 40:1-11), for "only the Lord can foretell and announce good news (40:9)" (Miscall, *Isaiah*, 126). Of course, a prophet is YHWH's emissary (by definition) and not YHWH himself, so, when I say, YHWH is a prophet, I mean that YHWH is portrayed as a prophet metaphorically. That is, YHWH is recognized as **אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** in terms of his performance according to the deuteronomic model of the true (vs. false) prophet (Deut 18:15-22).

identity as **האל** is the success of his word (40:8; 55:11; cf. Deut 18:22).<sup>135</sup> At the realization of this word, what else can the coastlands do but break into song?

Isa 42:13 begins a new section about YHWH in the form of a Divine Warrior theophany, and vv.14-17 report the Divine Warrior's speech. Notably, 42:16 recalls 40:10, as the Warrior becomes a shepherd, guiding the blind, turning darkness to light and leading them on level ground. Verse 17 closes with a further warning to those who would trust in idols, who would say to a molten image, "You are our God" (cf. 41:5-7, 21-29). Having delimited the boundaries of 42:1-12, I will treat each strophe in turn.

#### 4.4.3. *Isaiah 42:1-4: משפט for the Nations*

YHWH introduces his servant with language similar to 41:8. This is YHWH's chosen servant (**בחר**, v.1; 41:8), upheld (**תמך**, v.1; 41:10, cf. v.13; 42:4) and accepted (**רצה**, v.1; cf. 40:2) by God. Nevertheless, when compared with 41:8, the use of repetition in this poem shows that **משפט**, fronted in v.1 and repeated in vv.3-4, is the key to understanding God's aspiration for this servant.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, the cohesive features connecting 42:1 with 41:29 (**הי** and **רוח**) and the contrast established between this poem and 41:21-29 indicate that YHWH's contest with the gods actually comes down to the ability of a true god to exercise **משפט** through his chosen image.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, 41:1-42:12 expands YHWH's response to Jacob-Israel's complaint in 40:27 and concentrates YHWH's ultimate answer within these four programmatic verses (42:1-4).<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Miscall, observing the affinity between 42:1-4 and 2:2-4 comments intriguingly, "What does go forth is the Lord's word (2:3) and...the book of Isaiah is one manifestation of the divine word. The servant is a figure for the book and, in the book, we read of other servants..." (*Isaiah*, 128).

<sup>136</sup> **משפט** in v.1 is closely related in vv.3-4 to **אמת** and **תורה**. Regarding **משפט**, **אמת**, and **תורה** in 42:1-4, Walther Zimmerli writes, "Our whole interpretation of the servant's task will turn on our understanding of these words." See J. Jeremias and W. Zimmerli, *Servant of God* (Chatham: W. & J. Mackay, 1957), 28; cf. C. R. North, *The Second Isaiah*, 107 and the thesis of Willem Beuken, "Mišpat," 1-30. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the significance of this passage within FI. If Isa 2:2-4 is FI's programmatic vision, 42:1-4 appears to function similarly within chs.40-55 as that vision's further explication. As YHWH's programmatic vision, it holds out similar benefits for the nations (**תורה**, **משפט**), and as a prophetic word, it is indicative of a dual agency (cf. 2:3; 42:1, 4bc).

<sup>137</sup> J. Goldingay supports this point of view when he says, "Jacob-Israel's complaint about its **משפט** (40:27) remains part of the prophet's agenda; 40:12-31 constituted one response, 41:1-29 made it more specific, and 42:1-4 takes it in an implicit new direction such as breaks the bounds of the parameters of Jacob-Israel's complaint" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 149).

<sup>138</sup> First, YHWH reminded Jacob-Israel about his word, character, and ongoing commitment to them (40:1-11, 12-31). Next, he reestablished their situation as his servant according to their ancestral identity (41:8-16), while exposing the other gods as false, their images as "empty" symbols (**תהו**), and their worship as an "abomination" (**תועבה**, v.24, cf. 41:2-4, 21-25). Thus, with words and acts to demonstrate his might in contrast to the false-gods' impotence, he has reclaimed the title **האל** and commands Jacob-Israel's trust.



In 42:1-4, YHWH presents his key piece of evidence, an image equipped with divine רוח. It is important to see this רוח as the dynamic essential to an image's success. Without the animating 'breath/spirit' of a god, the image is powerless; as an instrument to affect the created order, it is nothing. Idols of wood and stone are inanimate and ineffective, and choosing one is abominable, in part, because they lack רוח. Yet, the truly significant point, and one that provides hope for all humanity, is that the true God does not select wood or stone for his image at all. To represent him in the world, he selects a servant of flesh (בשר). Freely chosen and mightily upheld, this human servant is the image YHWH accepts/favors (רצה). Put differently, what is devoid of רוח cannot bring משפט. Since only YHWH's servant-image is endowed with רוח, only YHWH's servant can effect משפט. Servant-Israel stands before heaven and earth as God's image to realize God's משפט-purpose. As Brueggemann writes, "This is indeed the work of Yahweh now to be done by the servant."<sup>139</sup>

The arrangement of 41:1-42:12 also points to a correlation between the two poems where God's servant has become the focus of attention (41:8-13 and 42:1-4).<sup>140</sup> This suggests that YHWH's servant in 41:8-13 is also YHWH's champion in 42:1-4. Whereas 41:8-13 stressed the servant's ancestral identity, 42:1-12 further specifies the servant's covenantal vocation. Their correlation suggests that 42:1-4 also calls Jacob-Israel back to God. Whereas 41:8-13 called corporate Israel back by accenting its special relationship with God, 42:1-4 calls upon Israel by accenting its special vocation as God's chosen image and the bearer of משפט and תורה for the world. The fact that Israel's task involves משפט is most significant, since it reveals where Israel's משפט-problem has been all along (cf. 40:14, 27). In other words, Jacob-Israel has no one to blame but itself, for משפט is the responsibility of Abraham's offspring (Gen 18:19).<sup>141</sup> In response to Jacob-

<sup>139</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 43. Cf. W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 30, "...it is only by the gift of...ruach that the Servant is enabled to realize his wonderful mišpat."

<sup>140</sup> Trygve Mettinger rightly points out that 42:1-4, 5-9 have a striking parallel in 41:8-13, and he wonders why B. Duhm failed to list 41:8-13 among the so-called "Servant Songs." See Mettinger, *Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983), 10.

<sup>141</sup> משפט was never merely the king's responsibility, for from the start, it was a vital part of God's design in calling Abraham (Gen 18:19). From its inception, collective Israel was called in Abraham for the purpose of doing משפט before the Judge of all the earth. As Seitz helpfully comments, "This task is one with very old roots, traceable to the promises made to Abraham and Sarah, conjoined here with the concrete manifestations of the promise: *mišpāt* and *tôrâ*. *Mišpāt* here refers to the established will of the One God, now made known in and through all creation in fulfillment of the promise[s] to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). . . . The servant is dispatched to bring those promises to completion, armed now with a *mišpāt* and *tôrâ* that Israel has come to associate with God's servant Moses, as well as the prophet Isaiah (Isa 1:10; 2:3; 8:16)" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 363-64). Thus, while Israel complains to YHWH regarding its 'cause' (40:27), Israel has its own vocation to fulfill regarding the exercise of משפט (or just rule) as YHWH's image-bearer.

Israel's complaint (40:27), this poem shows just how far YHWH has been from neglecting Israel's **משפט**. To play on the words of Israel's complaint, YHWH has not disregarded **משפט**, Israel has, because **משפט** is what Jacob-Israel's servant vocation has always involved (42:1, 3-4).<sup>142</sup> Thus, if 40:12-31 reintroduces YHWH, and 41:8-16 reminds Israel of its role in YHWH's plan, 42:1-4 reviews its definite (though still inexact) task.

If Jacob-Israel is the agent of YHWH's purpose concerning **משפט**, what does Jacob-Israel's **משפט**-task involve? The term **משפט** plainly receives its connotation in association with the court context (or contest with idols) in 41:1-42:12. Noting that **משפט** may be understood out of the legal process of the previous chapter, John Scullion argues that bringing **משפט** to the nations involves publishing this message: "[T]he gods of the Babylonians have been declared to be nothing; there is one God only, Yahweh."<sup>143</sup> If so, then **משפט** involves Israel's witness regarding YHWH's claim to the title **האל**. This is an attractive solution, because it fits the context (chs.40-48) and is undoubtedly part of its meaning.<sup>144</sup> Yet, given the details of the servant's actual commissioning (vv.6-7), **משפט** gains further nuance. Its parallel with **תורה** in v.4bc supports this suggestion,<sup>145</sup> especially if Scullion is correct that **תורה** refers to a newly established rule or a reordering of global society,<sup>146</sup> which it may also be the servant's task to enforce/bring about (cf. 2:2-4; 51:4). Consequently, with Williamson, who notes "an astonishing variety" of understandings, **משפט** may signal the total reordering of society for its well-being under God,<sup>147</sup> though in this context, it is important to understand "society," or at least the impact

<sup>142</sup> As B. Childs (*Isaiah*, 324) writes, "For anyone who takes the larger literary context seriously, there can be no avoiding the obvious implication that *in some way* Israel is the servant who is named in 42:1. No one else is named" (his italics). Even if the servant role is later particularized, this should not override conclusions offered at this stage of interpretation. A holistic reading observes stable parameters, while appreciating development and taking care to avoid a premature (or unwarranted) synthesis.

<sup>143</sup> J. Scullion, S. J. *Isaiah 40-66* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1990), 41.

<sup>144</sup> This is also the conclusion of Thomas LeClerc, "In 42:1-4, the term *mišpāt* refers to both the formal outcome of the legal proceeding and the consequent reality of YHWH's universal rule" (*Yahweh is Exalted in Justice*, 109). For LeClerc, the servant is merely a herald of God's just rule (p.129). The servant's **תורה**, then, involves his role in bringing forth and establishing universally the court's verdict regarding YHWH's sovereignty over the world and its history.

<sup>145</sup> See Isa 1:10, 21; Ps 17:2; Jer 5:4; Hab 1:4.

<sup>146</sup> J. Scullion, S. J. *Isaiah 40-66*, 41.

<sup>147</sup> For the alternative definitions he lists (with bibliography), see H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 135. A thorough list of alternatives (e.g., 'true religion,' 'YHWH's sovereign purpose,' 'concrete legal decision,' 'authoritative decision on matters of behavior,' 'decisions about events in the world,' and 'the implementation of right and justice') can be found in Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol.1*, 214-216. See also, Bernard Renaud, "La mission du Serviteur en Is 42, 1-4" *RevScRel* 64 (1990):101-13 (with a list of alternatives on p.106). Blenkinsopp's view is similar to Williamson's position. For him (*Isaiah 40-55*, 210), **משפט** "refers to a social order based on justice that originates in the will and character of the deity (cf. 40:14; 51:4)." W. Brueggemann says that in prophetic utterance, it is "the reordering of social life and

of Israelite society, broadly. Mention of the “nations” (לְגוֹיִם, v.1) and “coastlands” (צִיָּוִן, vv.4, 10, 12; cf. 41:1) suggests that its influence extends to the entire created order (v.4, אֶרֶץ = “earth” not “land”). Hence, the relevant scope of מִשְׁפָּט reaches beyond the borders of Israelite society to the earth’s far shores (vv.3b-4). Despite its great distress, Jacob-Israel can become the King’s (41:21) instrument for aiding the afflicted peoples of the world. For the benefit of humanity, as YHWH’s agent for restoring order (even שְׁלוֹם) among all nations, the servant is more than a herald.<sup>148</sup>

This conclusion, however, raises questions about the figure’s office, for it seems that YHWH’s image-bearer has received a king’s commission.<sup>149</sup> Empowering with רוּחַ,<sup>150</sup> being presented (יָהָר) and chosen (בָּחַר, as a king),<sup>151</sup> rather than sent/appointed (as a prophet),<sup>152</sup> and bringing forth מִשְׁפָּט, points beyond the Abrahamic model to a royal/Davidic model for Jacob-Israel’s vocation. While it might be best to simply leave the question open,<sup>153</sup> a royal office would support the view that מִשְׁפָּט involves aiding the

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social powers so that the weak (widows and orphans) may live a life of dignity, security, and well-being” (*Isaiah* 40-66, 42).

<sup>148</sup> Christopher Seitz says similarly, “Once the ‘gods’ of the nations are shown to be nothing and a delusion, the nations, the coastlands, and the wider earth are placed in a position where they might see and receive the *mišpāt* that the One God means to be theirs, as offspring of servant Abraham” (*Isaiah* 40-66, 361).

<sup>149</sup> See Dennis J. McCarthy, “Installation Genre” *JBL* (1971): 31-41. For the king’s exercise of מִשְׁפָּט in general, see 1 Kgs 3:28; 7:7; 2 Sam 15:1-6; Isa 16:5; 32:1; Jer 21:11-12; 22:1-3, 13-17. Despite resonances with monarchy (cf. 11:2-5), from the proximate context (41:8-13; cf. 42:19), and in the exilic setting of chs.40ff, it does not follow that the servant of 42:1-4 is an individual. In fact, the poem does not identify either an individual or a particular office for the servant. I only point out that elsewhere מִשְׁפָּט is associated with rule over nations and is a prominent signal of a royal role (Pss. 2:7-9; 72:1-4, 8-11). It is not surprising, therefore, that Otto Kaiser thought YHWH was presenting a king before the heavenly council. See O. Kaiser, *Der königliche Knecht* (FRLANT 70; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 16-18. As Joachim Begrich recognized, however, YHWH is the only king in the context (41:21; cf. 43:13-15). As an alternative, his proposal was that the servant is the Great King’s herald, and so the poem presents a prophet’s commission (cf. 41:27; 42:19; 61:1). See J. Begrich, *Studien zu Deuteriojesaja* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), 13. (For a spirit-filled prophet mightily proclaiming מִשְׁפָּט, see Micah 3:8.) Westermann discovers a compromise inasmuch as he sees “two lines of mediation which had parted company during the course of Israel’s history”; namely, the prophet’s word and the king’s act. These two lines “are reunited in the servant.” In this reunion, he thinks he has discovered the rationale for the choice of “servant,” since this is the OT’s term for Moses, “in whose person the two lines were still one” (Westermann, *Isaiah* 40-66, 97).

<sup>150</sup> It is important to note that the divine רוּחַ is given not only to kings (1 Sam 16:13, where David is the anointed champion; 2 Sam 23:1f; Isa 11:1-2), but also to prophets (Num 11:25, 29, the elders as prophets; 1 Sam 10:6, 10), warrior-savior figures (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), and all Israel (Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:26f.; Joel 2:28).

<sup>151</sup> See, e.g., 1 Sam 10:24; 16:8ff; 2 Sam 5:1-3; 6:21; 16:18; Ps 2:7; Isa 11:2-5. Of course, בָּחַר may refer broadly to the election of the people (Deut 7:7; Isa 41:8; 43:10, 20; 44:1, 2; 48:20; Ezek 20:5).

<sup>152</sup> Isa 6:8; Jer 1:5; Ezek 3:17; but cf. Isa 42:19; 48:16b; 61:1.

<sup>153</sup> This is W. Brueggemann’s solution. He states that the depiction draws upon “the entire memory of ancient Israel that affirms that Israel is related to Yahweh as servant to master (king) and that the life of Israel consists in obedience to the will and command and purpose of the king” (*Isaiah* 40-66, 42). Rather than seeking the servant’s precise identity in some individual or office, then, one ought to recognize that “servant” is an umbrella term synonymous with several offices in Israel. Hence, “servant” can define the character, identity, and task of Jacob-Israel corporately or of a single (or several) Israelite(s) personally. As

weak/distressed in society.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, even in the absence of an individual human monarch, a royal orientation would connect chs.41-42 with that of chs.1-39 and FI's pervasive concern for Zion, transforming Davidic monarchy into an aspect of *communal* Israel's Abrahamic vocation (cf. 41:8; 51:2; 55:3ff).<sup>155</sup> As a task extended to (i.e., meant to be fulfilled by) the nation as a corporate kingdom (cf. Exod 19:5-6), **מלכות**-empowering would enable Jacob-Israel to bring **משפט** effectively to/from Zion to the weary of all the earth (40:28-31). According to Goldingay, "[T]his gives YHWH's servant a (quasi-messianic?) position of authority."<sup>156</sup> The difficulty is that no particular feature of vv.1-4 defines the figure's office or identity beyond question, and as Melugin observes, the royal form may be more background than foreground to this unit.<sup>157</sup>

Turning specifically to 42:2-4, then, with reference to **משפט**, I assess both the servant's mode/approach to his task and YHWH's perspective on its effectiveness. Understanding *how* the servant brings **משפט** helps determine the sense of this term in 42:1-4. YHWH depicts the servant's approach (or manner) in vv.2-3ab. Verse 3c is

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such, "servant" could apply to a prophet, priest, king, or judge in Israel and to all Israel (cf. Exod 19:5-6). As Miscall says, "Any group or individual who do the work of the Lord can be a servant...the focus should be on what a servant (or prophet) does, on what their role and function are, not on who that servant is" (Miscall, *Isaiah*, 127). As I have shown thus far, "servant" is synonymous with YHWH's image-bearer or YHWH's disciple. A servant is a student of the Master-Teacher, and, in this context (41:1-42:12; cf. 42:19), "the servant" is most likely the personification of corporate Israel. If YHWH is *teaching*, then Israel may still be in the process of *learning* its vocation as YHWH's apprentice.

<sup>154</sup> A royal orientation would also support my view that this servant is the Great King's image-bearer and earthly representative. But compare the prophet's role in (e.g.) 1 Kgs 17 (in the absence of an effective king).

<sup>155</sup> Monarchy was already related to Israel's Abrahamic vocation under Davidic rule insofar as YHWH's choice of David and his offspring served God's will for his people regarding his promises to Abraham (Gen 17:6, 13, 16). Indeed, Davidic dynasty follows God's way of continuing his special covenant purpose through "a son from your own body" (**בן מבשר**, Gen 15:4 || 2 Sam 7:12; cf. Gen 25:23). It places the demand to do justice-righteousness from Gen 18:19 upon a line of kings with a corporate responsibility (cf. Ps 72:1-4). Regarding the transformation of the royal motif in FI, see, M. A. Sweeney, "Davidic Covenant in Isaiah," 41-61.

<sup>156</sup> J. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol.1*, 214. P. Miscall (*Isaiah*, 126), who alludes to Isa 2:2-4, points out that despite the absence of an earthly monarch, the world-wide scope of the servant's 'rule' suggests "messianic" as an appropriate label.

<sup>157</sup> In fact, most commentators follow Melugin, who also recognized that it is not possible by formal analysis to determine what kind of figure is in view. Roy F. Melugin, *Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 65. He also says, "[T]he poem is an imitation, torn from any recognizable rootage in a particular function or office. The prophet borrowed from the various genres using this style to create a poem of his own which announces the choosing of Yahweh's servant." Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40-55*, 209) agrees, calling it, "a literary unit that does not correspond directly to any particular institutional form." Yet, based on its proximity to 41:2, 25, he identifies the figure with Cyrus. This identification, however, is unlikely, given the content of vv.2-3. Though he is "anointed" and "taken by the hand" (45:1), Cyrus is never called "servant." Cyrus is merely YHWH's instrument *for the sake of* (**למען**) "my servant, Jacob-Israel" (45:4). If the immediate context is to provide the answer, then perhaps Begrich (*Studien*, 13) was right. The figure is YHWH's representative as regards **משפט**, and **משפט** pertains to the worldwide acknowledgement (41:20; 42:5, 10-12; 45:3, 6) of YHWH as **האל**. Since the truth about God is established on the prophetic model (Deut 18:22), it seems reasonable to understand YHWH's image-bearer as a herald (Isa 41:27; 42:19; cf. 61:1-3). The only objection to this, it seems, is that, unlike kings, prophets are never "presented" before a council; they are raised up and called.

transitional; it closes the previous segment (v.3ab) and shifts attention to v.4 in which YHWH predicts the successful completion of the servant's task. The chiasm in vv.3-4 suggests a relationship of solidarity between the servant (v.4) and the 'needy' (v.3). Altogether, the expression of the servant's approach in vv.2-3ab and success in v.4 places v.3c in the center. Its parallel to v.4b helpfully uncovers the relationship between **משפט** and the servant's successful approach.

לא ישוב	קנה רצון	42:3	a
לא יכבנה	ופשתה כהה		b
משפט	לאמת יוציא		c
	לא יכהה	42:4	b'
	ולא ירוץ		a'
עד-ישים בארץ	משפט		c'

The effect of this arrangement is to bring comfort both to the 'needy' and (indirectly) to the servant. The needy perceive that **משפט** is certain to come (vv.3-4), and the servant receives assurance that his labor on their behalf (extending to the coastlands) is not in vain (v.4).

The most striking rhetorical feature of vv.2-4—found in both the servant's approach (vv.2-3b) and his success (v.4a)—is that YHWH expresses each "affirmation" about the servant negatively by a feature Beuken calls *litotes* (7x with **לא**).<sup>158</sup> The consistent use of this device contributes to the character of vv.2-4 as challenging conventional expectations regarding the figure's performance. It opposes incorrect expectations and assessments about the servant.<sup>159</sup> The servant's approach will thus confront, astonish, and defy conventional perspectives regarding **משפט**. While the use of *litotes* characterizes these verses, the intervening statements are closely related, because they contain the terms **משפט**, **אמת**, and **תורה**. Each term is introduced by a preposition (v.3c, 4bc), and each clause is nuanced by the use of *litotes*. As Beuken points out, each *litotes* contributes to the content of **משפט** and the three prepositional phrases (vv.3c, 4bc) specify that the Servant will really bring it (**אמת**) and proclaim it (**תורה**).<sup>160</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Verses 2-3ab, 4a include the use of *litotes*; i.e., understated assertions implied by negation of their contrary (here, with neg. particles). They nuance the content or quality of **משפט** that the servant will bring. W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 23.

<sup>159</sup> As Seitz observes, "One might naturally expect spirit endowment to lead to speech and royal commissioning to lead to action of a decisive, if not also triumphant, sort. The images used here to describe the servant's activity apparently wish to emphasize just the opposite (vv.2-3), and in that consists their special character" (*Isaiah 40-48*, 363).

<sup>160</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 23.

Regarding the servant's approach, vv.2-3ab focus on the servant first and then the 'needy'. Verse 2 centers exclusively on the servant's manner of speech: "he will neither cry out, nor lift up, nor make his voice heard in the street." At first blush, it appears the servant will *not* speak, and if he is YHWH's herald or representative, bringing **תורה**, this apparent silence is difficult to comprehend. The device of *litotes*, however, signals a challenge to convention, implying the establishment of **משפט** by a mode of speech that is pleasing to God. What this means is not entirely clear, but unlike those in distress (19:20; 33:7) perhaps, or more probable (in this context), unlike the idolater (46:7), because the servant relies upon YHWH, he need not "cry out" (cf. 40:27). If the servant were a royal figure, perhaps the public revelation of his reign will contrast with the way of a triumphant Near Eastern monarch. Hence, Scullion may be right when he observes, "He will not behave like a victorious king with proclamation in the market-place and the crushing of opposition, but quietly."<sup>161</sup> Alternatively, if as Whybray (and Begrich) thinks, the figure were a herald, his work as YHWH's representative would involve the "quiet proclamation of God's universal rule."<sup>162</sup> Here Scullion says, "Israel will not conquer by the sword, but as a living example of obedience to God's law in the manner of his care for the weak."<sup>163</sup> Baltzer adds that he has sufficient authority without public shouting because his **תורה** is most welcome: "The person who holds this office is judged by his treatment of people who are living on the fringes of society."<sup>164</sup> Therefore, he does not raise his voice because he will exercise his authority differently, quietly and compassionately, by example.

Verse 3ab portrays his treatment of the bent reed and faint wick. I have already mentioned the 'needy' as the object of the servant's action in doing **משפט**. Naturally, with Brueggemann, many see in this verse the actions of a king who is merciful in domestic affairs, "reordering social relations for the sake of the vulnerable."<sup>165</sup> Yet, this solution may overlook both the *litotes*—since this behavior would not necessarily be contrary to the people's hopes and expectations—and the servant's target for **משפט**, namely, the nations (v.1). Mention of nations and coastlands suggests that the servant's activity will somehow affect the entire earth. If the needy parties are not restricted to a particular territory (e.g., Judah or Babylon), then how might his treatment of the 'bent

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<sup>161</sup> J. Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66*, 41. So, also, ruling out Cyrus, C. Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 96), "...in oriental law, when a new king succeeds to the throne, he re-enacts the laws and has them publically proclaimed. The way in which the servant was to bring forth justice and establish it is to be the opposite of this."

<sup>162</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 72.

<sup>163</sup> J. Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66*, 41.

<sup>164</sup> See, K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 128.

<sup>165</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 42.

reed' and 'faint wick' comfort the nations? Isaiah 1-39 had affirmed the pervasive link between social justice and foreign relations, and there is every reason to think that this connection still obtains within chs.40-55. On one hand, then, this verse might express non-reliance upon foreign powers, such as Egypt, the bent reed (36:6; cf. 28-33).<sup>166</sup> The  $\text{לַיהוָה}$ -empowered servant will rely upon God, not mortal-flesh, whose chariots and horses are snuffed out easily, like a wick.<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, as before, the reversal motif is prominent in chs.40-55, where the oppressed hope for the judgment of Babylon and its gods (chs.45-47). Naturally, Jacob-Israel and other oppressed people-groups would hope for a powerful reprisal in the form of their oppressor's subjugation, but YHWH has raised Cyrus for this sort of task.<sup>168</sup> Thus, v.3ab may challenge such expectations and attendant policies, indicating that the servant will bring  $\text{מִשְׁפָּט}$  in a radically different manner. This difference, therefore, points to a radically new order of social reality in the Near East, a welcomed subjugation of all the nations that will manifest the way of YHWH. The servant's  $\text{לְיָהוָה}$ , then, will draw the nations as Solomon's wisdom had captivated the Queen of Sheba.<sup>169</sup> Rather than turning to false images (41:5-7), v.3ab invites the nations to turn to YHWH's servant for  $\text{מִשְׁפָּט}$  (42:1, 4). The result might involve a separation, as YHWH's mercy extends to the oppressed peoples but not to their oppressors.<sup>170</sup> In their humbled estate, only the former would take notice as the servant's manner directs them to walk a new way. Nevertheless, the verse does not specify his manner or its beneficiaries precisely.<sup>171</sup> At this point, all one can say is that the way of YHWH's servant will be contrary to expectation: whether in foreign affairs or in domestic, YHWH's servant stands for the 'needy' of the world and against its familiar, oppressive, ways.

Verse 3 closes with the association of  $\text{מִשְׁפָּט}$  and  $\text{אֱמֶת}$  (+  $\text{ל}$  prep.). It reaffirms what vv.2-3 have asserted about the servant's approach<sup>172</sup> and provides a neat transition to

<sup>166</sup> For this interpretation, see, e.g., Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "An Intertextual Reading of 'A Crushed Reed' and 'A Dim Wick' in Isa 42:3," *JSOT* 83 (1999):113-24.

<sup>167</sup> Isa 30:16; 31:1-3; 43:17.

<sup>168</sup> Isa 41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1.

<sup>169</sup> 1 Kgs 10:1-13; cf. Isa 2:2-4; 60:1-3.

<sup>170</sup> See 36:6; 40:8, 24; 43:17; chs.45-47. Goldingay thinks such a development (42:1-4) would indicate disappointment with Cyrus. Rather than disappointment, I think a deliberate contrast continues to develop between YHWH's regime and the hegemony of all prideful regimes (e.g., Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian), including the old hypocritical ways of the House of Jacob (cf. Isa 2:6-4:1; chs.7-8). J. Koole also thinks the servant is "to a certain extent...antithetical to the Persian conqueror" (*Isaiah* 40-48, 212), but makes no further comment. My view is that as the instrument of the Divine Warrior, Cyrus' task is limited to the problem of Babylon, but his methods are inadequate to address the root problems that confront Israel and the world. It is the vocation of YHWH's servant to bring  $\text{מִשְׁפָּט}$  and  $\text{לְיָהוָה}$ .

<sup>171</sup> So Beuken explains, "There is no need of trying to identify the bruised reed and the fading wick exclusively with either the feeble Israel or the nations whose impotence will be manifest as soon as God's *mišpat* becomes manifest in history" (*Mišpat*, 24).

<sup>172</sup> Cf.  $\text{בְּאֱמֶת}$  in Isa 10:20; 16:5; 38:3; 61:8.

v.4, where YHWH predicts the servant's success. Since 42:1-12 is embedded in the larger context of the trial (41:1-42:12) and disputation (40:12-31), לִאֱמֹתָ (lit., "to/for truth") may be glossed, "in reality" or "beyond dispute." In parallel with עַד ("until"), אֱמֹתָ indicates that the servant's מִשְׁפָּט will prevail. He will stay the course until he implements מִשְׁפָּט definitively (לִאֱמֹתָ), thereby ensuring a stable and permanent order for his society (cf. 39:8).<sup>173</sup>

The final verse of the strophe underscores this point by focusing exclusively on the servant's success. Isa 42:4a takes up verbs from v.3ab to depict the completion of his mission: "he will neither be faint nor broken." YHWH upholds his servant, but the negative statements imply a struggle. Though it is no bigger than a hand (*pace* North),<sup>174</sup> a cloud does begin to form. Here, Beuken helpfully points to what he calls the "surprise aspect" of the figure's מִשְׁפָּט: onlookers will be astounded that the servant "will not perish under the oppression which he will experience while completing his task."<sup>175</sup> I would only add to this the point made earlier that both chiasm and verbal repetition suggest the servant's solidarity with the needy. Beuken may have this solidarity in mind when he says, "...the last word will not rest with oppression," because there is "a new factor in the process as which the course of events is seen: the Servant."<sup>176</sup> This main point, however, is underlined in v.4b by the preposition עַד (for degree). Parallel to לִאֱמֹתָ, it indicates that the servant's actions will indeed culminate in the definitive realization of his task—YHWH's servant will make YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט prevail on the earth. With Beuken, then, "The servant will establish justice despite all opposing forces,"<sup>177</sup> for YHWH's רִוּחַ will sustain him toward the realization of his purpose (v.4; 40:31).

With a view to the servant's opposition, Westermann believes that here we glimpse the aspect of the servant's work "reminiscent of the call of a prophet (Jer 1:19)."<sup>178</sup> Thus, it may not be surprising when, at the close of the strophe, Isa 42:4c associates מִשְׁפָּט (in v.4b) with תִּוְרָה. The line is chiastic in form, with two cola joined by a conjunctive *waw*. Each colon begins with a preposition; yet, syntactically, they mirror each other. The first

<sup>173</sup> Goldingay suggests, "so that it becomes a permanency." He comments from v.4aα to support this rendering: "When the metaphor in v.3a reappears in v.4aα...it is reworked in order to describe the servant's persistence and effectiveness rather than the way he went about his task" (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol. I*, 220). His view is similar to that of Westermann, Whybray, and Kooile: the servant makes מִשְׁפָּט prevail "in reality."

<sup>174</sup> In 42:1-4, according to North (*Suffering Servant*, 142), "No cloud is yet on the horizon."

<sup>175</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 26.

<sup>176</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 26.

<sup>177</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat," 23.

<sup>178</sup> Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 96.



colon places the verb at the beginning of the line, the second at verse end. This inverse parallel arrangement places the word-pair **משפט** and **תורה** at the center (cf. 51:4). **תורה**, however, also has a suffixed pronoun (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.), as if to underscore two significant truths. First, the servant will bring **משפט**, as YHWH has promised. Second, when he does, he will bring **תורה** as well.<sup>179</sup> Here too, at the close of the strophe, the nations (**גוים**, v.1) are not forgotten, for the impact on them is kept in view by the *inclusio* with “earth” (**ארץ**) and “coastlands” (**איים**) in v.4bc.<sup>180</sup> Hence, Whybray may be correct when he says that **תורה** (like **משפט**) is something “applied to all nations,” and concludes, “The most probable meaning is Yahweh’s sovereign universal rule or order (cf. 40:14).”<sup>181</sup> Marvin Sweeney comments similarly: “Insofar as Second Isaiah contends that YHWH is both creator and ruler of the world, **תורה** and **משפט** apparently refer to the principles by which order will be established among the nations of the earth.”<sup>182</sup> Thus, “the coastlands” expresses the universal expectation that YHWH’s servant will bring about the new world-order characterized by **משפט**, while **תורה** may indicate its specific content in the form of the servant’s testimony, teaching, or instruction regarding principles for conduct. As the agent of YHWH, the corporate servant must undertake the **משפט**-task formerly exercised by Abraham and Samuel as well as David and Solomon (cf. Deut 10:17-18). In the absence of a king or prophet, Israel must be able to teach others as YHWH has taught them. Thus, the coastlands wait for his **תורה**, trusting that by this means, in the new order of social reality, the servant will bear out or validate YHWH’s will for their lives too.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>179</sup> In chs.1-39, as I have shown, **תורה** did not point beyond FI, but referred to the prophetic word itself (1:10; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 30:9-10). Given the import of Isa 2:2-5 in those chapters (cf.; **מציון תצא תורה**, v.3) and of this statement in chs.40-55 (**והתורה אים יצא...משפט לגוים יוציא**, 42:1, 4), is it reasonable to assume that somehow collective Israel (as YHWH’s servant) is YHWH’s means to extend **תורה**? As Clifford reminds, Isaiah 2:1-5 is, “a text mined more than once by Second Isaiah” (*Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 46). In fact, the same word-pair appears again at 51:4 (along with **ארץ**, cf. 2:5) where **תורה** also has a suffixed pronoun, only now it is 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., with YHWH as antecedent! Commenting on 51:4, Marvin Sweeney correctly explains that, there too, **תורה** refers to “the principles of order and justice among the nations of the earth” (“Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 62). Together 42:4 and 51:4 point to the dual agency of YHWH and of his image-bearing servant as regards **משפט** and **תורה**.

<sup>180</sup> Note that **איים** is parallel to **גוים** in 40:15 and to **ארץ** in 41:5. Again, perhaps this signals a distinction among nations: whereas some persist in idolatrous ways, others identify themselves with the plight of Jacob-Israel. The latter are victims of oppression, wrongly treated by the succession of proud empires (Assyria, Babylon, and Persia). They trust that the one God will bring about their deliverance too.

<sup>181</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 72. Baltzer thinks **תורה** here refers to the global establishment of Mosaic legislation (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 130). Nothing in the context suggests this view is correct.

<sup>182</sup> See M. A. Sweeney, “Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 61.

<sup>183</sup> Here I am tempted to translate **לתורתו** as “his revelation.” Goldingay, for example, thinks that the servant is the means of extending the teaching to which Isa 2 refers (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 160). The

Although these verses connect **רוח**, **משפט**, **תורה**, and **אמת** with the task of Israel as YHWH's servant (identified at 41:8), the details remain indefinite. While asserting that 'Jacob-Israel' remains YHWH's people with a global mission, 42:1-4 only increases the mystery regarding how YHWH's servant will accomplish the task God has begun to describe. The effect is to persuade the listener to continue in anticipation and (with the coastlands) to wait for his **תורה**. In fact, everything in the poem waits for YHWH and for the servant's **תורה**. As Seitz points out, "A promise has been made, and God will have to make good on it."<sup>184</sup> As each new line brings new information and new mysteries, the demand to trust YHWH and his word continues to come, as it were, 'ahead of time'. This means that, once again, FI issues an invitation both to follow and to serve. This particular poem, as it were, takes up God's people as a shepherd does sheep, reorienting them along the right course. Its forward progress summons Jacob-Israel (and the world) to become YHWH's disciples.<sup>185</sup> Those who respond join the waiting-witnesses who learn from what the prophet has spoken and look to YHWH in hope for the definitive fulfillment (40:8; 42:4). Indeed, those with proper confidence in his coming acknowledge that YHWH is **האל** (42:5).

#### 4.4.4. Isa 42:5-9: New things

In this section, I focus upon the servant's commission in vv.6-7, which positively explicates his presentation in vv.1-4<sup>186</sup> and substantiates my earlier observations regarding the servant's world-embracing **משפט**-task.<sup>187</sup> The strophe begins with the messenger formula at v.5 and closes at v.9, announcing that, since the former things have come to pass (or are about to arrive, **הראשונות הנה באו**),<sup>188</sup> YHWH is foretelling (**נגד**, etc.) new

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coastlands would then stream to Zion rejecting false images for the true image of the true God, who is also God's servant, Jacob-Israel (cf. 2:5).

<sup>184</sup> C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 363. Again, the interpreter must carefully observe intra-textual connections in the dynamic development of Isa 40-55 without attempting a premature synthesis. Seitz is helpful, for he appreciates how the descriptions of the servant's effective approach in these verses are, as he says, "keyed to later manifestations of his activity within the cycle of 'servant poems'."

<sup>185</sup> I am not suggesting a missionary vocation for Jacob-Israel beyond the general character that servanthood witnesses to YHWH as Torah from Sinai was designed to witness to him (cf. Deut 4).

<sup>186</sup> B. Childs (*Isaiah*, 325) observes that this positive installment in vv.5-9 contrasts with the negative statements of vv.1-4.

<sup>187</sup> I concur with Christopher Seitz. The first two strophes (vv.1-4, 5-9) are two episodes of approximately equal length, "the first involving the presentation of the servant, the second the commissioning of him" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 362).

<sup>188</sup> The former things could have a wide range, including details of Israel's former redemptive story, fulfillment of the words of Isaiah (and other prophets) or (if **נהג** conveys imminence) the coming of Cyrus foretold in 41:25. New things, however, pertain to the task of the servant, further specified in vv.6-7.

things (חַדְשׁוֹת) to the court (אֵתְכֶם, v.9).<sup>189</sup> Within this context, a communiqué comes from YHWH's emissary containing a commission for the servant (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. sg., v.6) whom God has just presented (vv.1-4) as his surrogate or representative<sup>190</sup> in the exercise of מִשְׁפָּט. The Creator promises to refashion (יַצֵּר) his servant for a fresh, world-embracing objective. Consequently, the mission God intends to accomplish through his servant will impact all humanity; every people (עַם) and nation (גּוֹיִם) that breathes (רוּחַ || נְשָׁמָה, vv.5, 6) and walks about the earth could potentially benefit.<sup>191</sup> The servant's own hope of success rests upon YHWH's identity as אֲנִי יְהוָה (הָאֵל, vv.5, 6, 8; cf. 41:4), established as the result of his creative activity and the verification of his will as Lord of history, formerly disclosed (v.9).<sup>192</sup> YHWH's chief objective through this servant—given the new things God will bring about through him—is to vindicate his Name (שֵׁם) and manifest his glory (כְּבוֹד, v.8; cf. 40:5). Thus, v.5 and vv.8-9 provide the frame, and vv.6-7 the content of the servant's call and commission. Verses 8-9 signal the strophe's conclusion and its contribution to YHWH's larger polemic against the idols (פְּסִילִים, v.8, 41:1-42:12).

In 42:6a, YHWH refers back to the servant's task from vv.1-4, encapsulating the reason for his presentation there (הֵן, v.1), and for his commissioning here (קִרְאָה, v.6), as “the cause of righteousness (or vindication)” (בְּצִדְקָה, cf. 41:9; 43:9).<sup>193</sup> Next, YHWH amplifies the course of his commission with two parallel phrases governed by לֹ- + נָתַן

<sup>189</sup> It seems most natural, given the court context of the poem as a whole, to see a final address to the court as the explanation for the change from 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. (in v.6) to 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. pl. in v.9.

<sup>190</sup> M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 71.

<sup>191</sup> The parallelism of terms for “people” clarifies the universal scope of the servant's task (cf. גּוֹיִם, אָרֶץ, and אֲנִי in vv.1, 4). The parallelism of רוּחַ and נְשָׁמָה in v.5 (cf. רוּחִי, v.1) indicates that the servant is endowed with YHWH's “breath” for his post-judgment role in YHWH's movement towards redemptive recreation. See Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 205-207. J. Koole (*Isaiah 40-48*, 227) notes that DI no longer uses the word רוּחַ in a negative sense (40:6-8; cf. 44:3; 48:16; cf. also 54:6), for in giving רוּחַ to his servant, the Creator intends to refashion a peaceful, livable, world characterized by מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה. Thus, in this context, it may summarize, in a word, an important aspect of the servant's objective. As Seitz says, “The whole force of the unit is to define Israel's role within the context of all peoples to whom God has given breath and life” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 364).

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Isa 40:6-8, 12-26, 28; 41:4, 22-23, 26; 46:9; Deut 18:22.

<sup>193</sup> It is hard to know whether the term overlaps with מִשְׁפָּט, pertains to the conclusion in v.8 (and hence, “vindication”), or is closer to יִשׁוּעַ (“salvation”) here. The two terms, מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה, are parallel in Isa 1:21; 32:1; 51:1, (|| תּוֹרָה in v.7). “Righteousness” is a quality of a king's judgment in 11:4, 5; 16:5. In 26:9, when YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט is in the earth, its inhabitants learn (לִמַּד) צִדְקָה. However, in chs.40-55, צִדְקָה often has the sense “vindication” or “victory” (41:2; 43:26; 45:8, 13, 25; 51:5). The servant is part of YHWH's plan to demonstrate that he is the true God, though, as an aspect of YHWH's total plan, the servant takes on a role distinct from that of Cyrus. Later, the servant not only expects “vindication” (50:8), but also brings “righteousness” (53:11).

prep.).<sup>194</sup> As Westermann explains, the servant “is destined to become a tool or means whereby God effects something on others.”<sup>195</sup> The two phrases, “covenant for people” (ברית עם) and “light for nations” (אור גוים) probably refer to the same work.<sup>196</sup> For the benefit of the nations, YHWH will turn his servant into an extraordinary embodiment of covenant and light. If the address is made to Jacob-Israel as a corporate entity, these set phrases may signal the restoration of God’s people as a community. By an administration of covenant, YHWH will reorganize Jacob-Israel so that they will walk in YHWH’s light (cf. 2:2-5). Hence, God may plan to re-realize his covenant with them as the charter of a new and blessed society. Such a society would enjoy and extend YHWH’s משפט and תורה to the world (42:1, 4; cf. 51:4-5) and manifest his צדק as King of Jacob (cf. 32:1). Such a blessed renovation of this society would signify YHWH’s glorious presence among his people and his enduring commitment (cf. ברית || חסד in 54:10; 55:3) not only to them, but to all those who rely upon him as God (41:8ff) and wait for his appearing (40:31). Consequently, Israel’s service to God and their waiting-witness would both be a blessing and offer guidance (תורה/אור) to benefit of all humanity.<sup>197</sup>

In v.7, two gerunds and three clauses follow these prepositional phrases. They describe the result of YHWH’s strategy through the servant, clarifying the implications of his transformation into a tangible expression of YHWH’s ברית and אור. The three clauses are interrelated, yet it is difficult to tell exactly what they mean; hence, the details of their outworking are open to question. Westermann sees in them the end of suffering in general: socio-political, religious, personal, international.<sup>198</sup> The first gerundival clause, “opening the eyes of the blind” (לפקח עינים עורות), and the third clause, concerning release from prison “darkness” (חשך), are closely related to the second prepositional phrase (אתנך... לאור גוים). Since Jacob-Israel is YHWH’s servant, blindness and imprisonment must portray the condition of the nations/oppressed peoples. Hence, it appears that, somehow, YHWH will enable Jacob-Israel to convey the reality of YHWH’s צדק and משפט as light for the world. The second clause, “bringing forth prisoners” (להוציא ממסגר אסיר), may relate more specifically to the previous prepositional phrase (אתנך... לברית עם). Thus, the transformation of Jacob-Israel into an

<sup>194</sup> ל + נתן = “to make, appoint, or turn you into.” “You” is 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg.

<sup>195</sup> C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 100.

<sup>196</sup> See R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 74.

<sup>197</sup> See אור || ארח in 2:3, 5, as training through תורה; cf. אור || ארובה, “healing” in 58:8, and see Isa 45:7; 49:6; 60:1, 3, 19, 20 (Gen 12:2).

<sup>198</sup> C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 99.

embodiment of covenant means that God's people will give expression to an experience of liberation that will benefit all the earth. This would undoubtedly impose upon earth's offspring the obligation to respond, yet this holds out submission to the Creator as a life of perfect freedom both for Israel and for the world (v.5).<sup>199</sup> Verses 6-7 thus outline the new things YHWH will do (v.9), things that will transcend Israel's own experience and promote the song of all the earth (vv.10-12).<sup>200</sup> An explication of vv.1-4, vv.6-7 reveal that, like צדק, "covenant" (ברית) and "light" (אור) sum up the servant's משימה-task.

Thus, it appears that 42:1-12 announces a new world-order (משימה, vv.1-4) and foretells a new world-age (v.9). It suggests that YHWH will restore Israel and that through his servant's embodiment of ברית, YHWH will achieve his righteous purpose, and the servant's תורה will become a light (אור) for liberation and guidance in the world (vv.4, 6-7). Of course, the vision's realization presupposes Israel's own enlightenment and deliverance from oppression, and this, in turn, accents the programmatic character of Isa 42:1-12. If servant-Israel is to express YHWH's commitment (חסד) to all transient humanity (cf. 40:6-8; 42:5-9), it must first become the embodiment of YHWH's covenant and light. Once realized, in-and-through Israel's expression of covenant and light, YHWH will become the Teacher for the world (2:2-4); thus, each person, potentially, could become YHWH's disciple. Perhaps, for the accomplishment of its mission as God's servant, Israel must also become an embodiment of תורה. For this תורה the coastlands wait, as they hope that one day all humanity will join in the praise of YHWH's accomplishment (42:10-12). The implication is that all the nations must choose: either embrace the vision and give glory to YHWH or face destruction with the idols.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>199</sup> R. N. Whybray observes that a covenant imposes obligations on people (*Isaiah 40-66*, 74). For a similar view, which rejects the view that the covenant imposes obligations on people, but maintains the distinction between Israel and the nations, see D. W. van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isa XL-LV" *VT* 35 (1985): 446-58. Van Winkle thinks ברית refers to self-obligation imposed by God for the salvation of people (p.456).

<sup>200</sup> Isa 42:10-12, "Sing to YHWH a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who descend to the sea and its fullness, to the coastlands and their inhabitants. Let the wilderness and its towns lift their voices, the villages where Kedar dwells. Let the inhabitants of Sela cry aloud, from the mountaintops, let them shout aloud. Let them give glory to YHWH, and let them declare his praises in the coastlands."

<sup>201</sup> See Isa 41:11-12, 15-16, 24; 42:13-15, 17; 46-47. As regards the nations, Goldingay is surely on track when he says that 42:6-7 holds alternative paths before them. He explains, "Insofar as they cast themselves as oppressors, they will experience calamity as the downside to Israel's deliverance. Insofar as they are to be seen as fellow-victims of oppression with Israel, they may be able to share in Israel's deliverance" (*The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 163).

#### 4.4.5. Conclusion

Within Isa 40-48, the function of 42:1-12 is analogous to 2:2-5, and within FI, it stands beside it to offer its contribution to the whole. Just as 2:2-4 acts as FI's programmatic vision for Zion, so 42:1-12 points to YHWH's vision for Jacob-Israel. Both are concerned with the exercise of **משפט** (**שפט**) and **תורה** (**יר**) (2:3; 42:1, 3-4), and both set forth their ideal in poetry. Together these Isaianic passages comprise a symbolic portrayal of YHWH's vision and aspiration for Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>202</sup> Together, they offer tremendous encouragement to everyone concerned with Zion's welfare and the universal order of **משפט**. After judgment, according to the Abrahamic and Davidic pattern, YHWH aims to fulfill his promises not merely for Jacob-Israel and Zion but through his servant for the world.<sup>203</sup>

As the court setting shows, the Lord does more than promise fulfillment—he stakes his reputation on it before all humanity. In disputation with his people, God confirms his word (40:8) and indicates that through ways inscrutable, as Creator and Lord of history, he is upholding **משפט** (40:12-31; 55:8-11). Then, before the court, in 42:1-12, YHWH presents Israel as his servant for bringing **משפט** and **תורה**. In contrast with the empty-images of the false gods, Israel is YHWH's image with **רוח** (42:1; cf. 41:29). Israel is thus equipped for a theological task with terrific socio-political benefits for humanity. Indeed, the affect of its fulfillment will be cosmic in scope, for it carries the potential to create a new order of life and blessing for the world.<sup>204</sup> To this end, the poem expresses YHWH's plan to refashion Jacob-Israel as the core of a new humanity. He promises to make his people into a covenant and a light to display YHWH's salvation and glory. In somewhat veiled terms, then, 40:1-31 and 41:1-42:12 announce what is to transpire between YHWH, the servant, the nations, and Zion—indeed, between YHWH and all for whom his commitment pertains. But for Jacob-Israel to take up this vocation and assist the blind and imprisoned to recognize and acknowledge YHWH as God, it must first be transformed for the task.

<sup>202</sup> In Williamson's expression, "[T]he figure of Isa 42:1-4 is quite simply the Israel whom God wants his chosen people to be...an ideal held out before them as vision and aspiration" (*Variations on a Theme*, 142).

<sup>203</sup> See Isa 4:1-6; 12:1-6; 40:1-11; 41:8; 42:1, 4, 5-9.

<sup>204</sup> Isa 40:6-8; 41:1, 20; 42:1, 4; 45:22-25.

#### 4.5. *Isaiah 42:18-25, Non-recognition by Jacob-Israel*

Isaiah 42:18-25 re-expresses YHWH's aim (v.21), points up a problem with his servant (vv.18-19), and declares that the problem persists (v.20).<sup>205</sup> The aim and the obstacle both pertain to YHWH's **תִּוְרָה** (vv.21, 24). The obstacle is that Jacob-Israel will (or can) neither hear nor comprehend YHWH's **תִּוְרָה**, and so they cannot benefit from it in order to fulfill their **תִּוְרָה**-calling (42:4). Although YHWH explicitly identifies them as his messenger, they are not qualified to witness because they fail to see their guilt for what it is (42:25). Although they share the condition of exile—a condition that binds the oppressed peoples and nations (v.22, cf. v.7)—they have not learned to confess the truth that YHWH is on the side of **נַשְׁפָּט** (40:27). The stanza thus discloses the solidarity of the present and pre-exilic generations<sup>206</sup> in order to expose Jacob-Israel's incessant failure to heed the prophetic **תִּוְרָה** or learn from the many things (**רַב־וֹת**, 42:20) YHWH has done or is doing in their collective experience (v.25).<sup>207</sup> Accordingly, it follows the theophany of 42:13-17, and raises the question *why* Israel consistently fails to recognize the Divine Warrior's activity.

The unit begins at 42:18, with YHWH speaking directly to an audience (masc. pl.) he recognizes as “deaf” (**חֲרָשִׁים**) and “blind” (**עִוְרִים**). The audience is Jacob-Israel, and the main theme is their obstinate disregard for YHWH's **תִּוְרָה** (vv.21, 24). The unit closes at vv.24-25 with a surprising concession regarding the truth of YHWH's assessment of Jacob-Israel. Isa 43:1 then moves on (**וְעַתָּה**, “But now”), and a new messenger formula (cf. 42:5) introduces YHWH's speech in pursuit of redemption for a people blind, yet having eyes, and deaf, yet having ears (v.8).

After calling his own servant “deaf” and “blind” in v.18, YHWH exhorts him with two imperatives: the first is a verb of hearing (**שָׁמַע**), and the second, a verb of seeing (**נִבְטָה** + complement, **רָאָה**). Exhorting the deaf to hear and the blind to see seems futile—and that is the point. These imperatives do not (yet) signal a miracle, but underline YHWH's frustration with the audience's lack of spiritual discernment.<sup>208</sup> Not all is lost, however, for mention of ‘the blind’ makes a catchword connection between this unit and 42:13,<sup>209</sup> where YHWH promised to shepherd them (v.13; cf. 40:9-11; 43:8). In 42:18-19, however,

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Isa 43:22-24; 48:1-8.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Isa 40:1-2; 63:7-64:11.

<sup>207</sup> Isa 1:10; 5:24; 28:14; 30:9; 46:12 (cf. Deut 18:15ff; 29:1, 3). On the deuteronomistic character of these verses, see Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40-55*, 219), Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 182, 185, and the study by Antje Labahn, *Wort Gottes und Schuld Israels*.

<sup>208</sup> See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 218.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Isa 42:7 and **חֲרָשִׁים** || **עִוְרִים** in Isa 29:18; 35:5.

the identification of YHWH's *servant* as blind and deaf is pejorative, and the two rhetorical questions (וַיִּשְׁאַל) in v.19 signal another disputation (v.24 also has וַיִּשְׁאַל). The unit thus recalls the dispute of 40:12-31 and Jacob-Israel's complaint regarding מַשְׁפָּט (v.27; cf. 42:24). Only now, the Lord calls the servant to task by turning Jacob-Israel's complaint on its head. YHWH has not forgotten their way (וַיִּשְׁכַּח); rather, the path God's people take continually demonstrates their waywardness (v.24). In fact, the syntax and rhetorical questions in v.19 confirm the superlative nature of this servant's condition: no one is as blind as YHWH's servant.

To underscore the point, v.20 restates their condition proverbially, evoking Isaiah's prophetic call: "You witness many things, but disregard them; his ears are open, but he never listens." The language recalls Isa 6:9 in particular,<sup>210</sup> and this allusion is significant because it accents the fulfillment of YHWH's word through the former prophet, though it appears now as if Isaiah was too successful (6:10).<sup>211</sup> Jacob-Israel still does not get the message about YHWH's תּוֹרָה, and in this context too, idolatry remains their chief temptation/sin.<sup>212</sup> In fact, 42:21-22 shows how the collective entity continues to frustrate God's aspirations. Verse 21 states YHWH's singular desire in language that recalls 42:4, 6: "For his righteousness's sake [לְמַעַן צְדָקָתוֹ], YHWH desires to magnify תּוֹרָה and make it glorious." For this cause (בְּצִדִּיק), YHWH's servant was called, and for his תּוֹרָה the coastlands wait (42:4, 6).<sup>213</sup> When v.22 mentions "this people" (וְהָאֵלֶּה), however, it speaks as though YHWH wants to distance himself from his servant's present deplorable condition. They should act as disciples (8:16-17), serving, waiting, and witnessing to God's righteousness, embodying and expressing YHWH's desire through תּוֹרָה. Like a nation in darkness (cf. 42:7), however, they are hidden away, imprisoned, despoiled, and plundered (v.22). Hence, though it appears in the context of the servant poem's new, more upbeat melody, vv.18-25's own song continues the negative tones from before (cf. 2:6-4:1). Yet, the remedy for Jacob-Israel's shame remains the same; Brueggemann puts it

<sup>210</sup> "See, indeed, but do not understand; hear, indeed, but do not acknowledge." (Isa 6:9)

<sup>211</sup> As W. Brueggemann observes, "the ominous sentence of chapter 6 seems still to be in force" (*Isaiah* 40-66, 47).

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Isa 2:8; 31:7; 42:17; 44:18.

<sup>213</sup> Despite the deuteronomistic character of retribution in 42:18-25 (cf. 44:25-26), the allusions to Isa 6 and the link with the servant poem suggest that תּוֹרָה is more of an Isaianic term than a Mosaic term in this context. Nevertheless, the Isaianic תּוֹרָה appears to reflect a deuteronomistic model; thus, there is a harmony in spite of the diversity.



well: “The only relief from misery is hearing and seeing, of attending to Yahweh’s wondrous Torah.”<sup>214</sup>

Verses 23-25 return to 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, as another question is put to servant-Israel (יְהוָה). Remarkably, YHWH does not grow weary beyond helping them, but pleads with his people in order to prompt their return. He asks them distributively, “Who among you will heed (יִשְׁמַע *hip ‘il*) this? Who will pay attention (יִשְׁמַע *hip ‘il*) and listen (שָׁמַע) regarding the time to come?” (לְאַחֲרָיִם; cf. 41:23). The question amounts to a calling, and the referent is surely to things YHWH is doing and will do, things God has called his people to wait for<sup>215</sup> as they listen, pay attention, and witness.<sup>216</sup>

Now, the closing verses definitely stand out within this strophe, because they suggest an answer to YHWH’s question and make a response to YHWH’s call. They are outstanding because in them another voice is heard, though the topic does not change. In 42:24-25, a voice takes over, reminding the people of their suffering and recognizing YHWH’s agency in just retribution. However, the most striking thing about these verses appears in v.24. In that verse, a voice articulates the confession (1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.), “We sinned against YHWH.” This confession is remarkable in itself, but in a context where God’s messenger is “deaf” and “blind,” never seeing and never listening (v.20), it is also paradoxical. It is astonishing too because it means that someone *is* listening—and not merely listening, but grasping the message and responding appropriately. In v.24, a listener-speaker responds in solidarity with his people, yet in harmony with YHWH’s assessment of them. What is more, the listener-speaker proceeds to take up YHWH’s own message as a prophet or herald. Thus, the listener acknowledges the truth of YHWH’s word and then conveys that truth to the people, asking, “Was it not YHWH against whom *we* sinned (אִנּוּנוּ)?” This is an incredible development because it clearly indicates that this listener-speaker shares God’s verdict. He concedes YHWH’s point regarding Jacob-Israel’s recalcitrance and confesses their persistent wrongdoing: “YHWH’s judgment was just,” he says, “because Jacob-Israel would not walk in his way or obey his תּוֹרָה.”<sup>217</sup>

<sup>214</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 47.

<sup>215</sup> Isa 40:31; 42:9; 43:19; 48:6.

<sup>216</sup> Isa 43:8, 10-13; 44:1, 8; 46:3, 12; 48:1.

<sup>217</sup> According to Marvin Sweeney, “The immediate context gives no clues as to the specific meaning of תּוֹרָה other than to identify it as the ‘teaching’ of YHWH that was initially rejected by the Servant Israel (cf. Isa 42:19), thereby bringing YHWH’s punishment upon itself” (“Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 62). Cf. Isa 1:10-17; 2:3, 5; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 30:9.

#### 4.6. *Isaiah 48:16b-19: Recognition by the Listener-Speaker*

Isa 40:1-42:12 is a word of comfort for Zion that will stand (40:1-2, 5, 10-11). Through a remedial course of instruction, God has rehearsed Jacob-Israel's ancestral identity (41:8-13) and vocation (42:1-4), and charted a new course for his people that promises to astonish the entire world (41:14-16; 42:5-12). Nevertheless, in 42:13-45:25, YHWH elaborates his court case, primarily because Jacob-Israel continues to frustrate the Great King's purpose. God's people fail to recognize the Divine Warrior (42:13-17; cf. 40:12-26); servant-Israel is blind and deaf, refusing to walk in YHWH's way and obey his **תֹּרָה** (42:18-25); and yet, YHWH's word keeps coming, pleading with them to acknowledge both his saving purposes and their recalcitrance.

In 43:1-8 (**וְעַתָּה כִּהְיֵאמַר יְהוָה**, v.1), God reasserts his commitment to their redemption (cf. 40:28-31). As court reconvenes in 43:9-21, YHWH calls upon his witnesses to testify that 'I am God' (**אֲנִי־אֵל**, 43:12; cf. 41:5-16). When they do not, 43:22-28 resumes the dispute, stressing Israel's obstinacy in the face of divine forgiveness (cf. 42:18-25). When again, in 44:1-5, YHWH reasserts his commitment (**וְעַתָּה...כִּהְיֵאמַר יְהוָה**, vv.1-2), the territory is all too familiar. In 44:6-8, YHWH insists upon his incomparability, the idol polemic continues (44:9-20), and Israel is again asked to remember YHWH's words and certify that YHWH is God (44:21-24). Finally, in 44:25-45:25, YHWH himself announces that his purpose in calling Cyrus will succeed (cf. 41:2, 25). Subsequent chapters pronounce sentence on the images of false gods (ch.46) and herald the overthrow of Babylon (ch.47).

After all this, Isaiah 48 commences with yet another disputation, this time over Jacob-Israel's hypocritical holiness (vv.1-11). The people swear by YHWH's name, but neither truthfully nor righteously (**לֹא בִאֵמַת וְלֹא בַצִּדְקָה**, v.1); their worship is disingenuous.<sup>218</sup> Isa 48:12-16a follow it up, re-avowing YHWH's claims regarding the calling of Cyrus (vv.12-16a).<sup>219</sup> The entire chapter is addressed to the House of Jacob (v.1, || Israel in v.12), which after the elimination of all others shockingly remains the primary

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Isa 1:10-17; 43:22-24.

<sup>219</sup> I agree with Brevard Childs, who writes, "[T]he point of the oracle [vv.12-16a] is to remind Israel, and not the nations, of the truth of God's claim that the deliverance from Cyrus was evidence for his sovereign authority, which Israel continues to reject through unbelief. It should be noted that nowhere in the chapter so far has Israel's resistance been linked to Cyrus' being a foreigner and yet God's chosen vehicle, an argument which many modern commentators assume to be the actual issue lying behind the controversy" (Childs, *Isaiah*, 376). Although Cyrus will do things David/Solomon had done (i.e. building city and temple, 44:28), chs.40-48 never state that Israel's unbelief is due to Cyrus' foreign status. Israel's rebellion is everywhere due to its resistance to God and to the prophetic **תֹּרָה**, and the evidence for this is found in Israel's incessant turning to idols. YHWH declares things ahead of time, "lest [Israel] say, 'My idol performed them'" (48:5).

obstacle to the discharge of YHWH's glorious purpose (vv.20-21, 22). According to Seitz, "In chap.48, the provision of new things has been set within the context of failure to attend to former things. That is, the former things...[serve] to rebuke Israel on the verge of learning a new thing."<sup>220</sup>

After the disputation, YHWH responds to Israel again with similar, familiar, language in 48:16b-19, though this time it also contains an outstanding dissimilarity. The passage begins in vv.16b-17a with the discourse marker (וַעֲתָהּ) and the messenger formula familiar from 43:1 and 44:1-2a, "But now...thus says YHWH." The distribution and function of this linguistic marker and its association with the messenger formula in both ch.43 and ch.44 supports the view that 48:16b begins a new subsection. The whole of ch.48 (indeed, all of chs.40-47) establishes the importance of these verses:

וַעֲתָהּ כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה 43:1a

וַעֲתָהּ שָׁמַע יַעֲקֹב עַבְדִּי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲרָתִי בּוֹ 44:1-2a  
כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה

וַעֲתָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחֲנִי וְרוּחוֹ 48:16b-17a  
כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה

YHWH is the speaker in 48:1-16a, recapitulating his message from chs.40-47—identity and vocation, disputation and trial, YHWH's performance through Cyrus and commitment to his name and glory—bringing the whole development to a climax. It is all here:<sup>221</sup>

YHWH's unique deity (אֲנִי־הוּא אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן אֵף אֲנִי אַחֲרֹן, v.12), the repeated summons to listen (שָׁמַע אֵלַי, v.1, שָׁמַע וִיזָאתָ, v.12), and Israel's rebellion (פָּשַׁע, v.8) despite YHWH's ability to unfold both the former things (vv.3-5) and the things to come (vv.6-8; cf. v.15, אֲנִי אֲנִי דְבַרְתִּי).

The central unit of the chapter is 48:16b-19. This passage is prominent because someone else speaks. In 48:17, this 'someone' is clearly a prophet. Here then, YHWH's messenger steps forth, and it is the same 'listener-speaker' (40:6-8; 42:24-25). This messenger does not identify himself by name,<sup>222</sup> though the figure has expressed solidarity

<sup>220</sup> See Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 418.

<sup>221</sup> According to J. Blenkinsopp, "[Isa 48:12-19] restates the major themes of chs.40-48" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 292). Compare John Goldingay (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 339-40), "Chapter 48...says little that is new but brings to a climax a stress on two contrasting certainties, God's purpose for Jacob-Israel and Jacob-Israel's obstinacy."

<sup>222</sup> Several alternatives have been proposed for the place of this verse within ch.48. Duhm, Muilenburg, Whybray, and North all consider it a gloss, foreign to the context. Westermann relegates it to a fragment, similar to 61:1, which somehow found a place here on the margins of 49:1-6 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 203). Commentary that is more recent correctly recognizes its place in its present setting (see, e.g., Childs, Blenkinsopp, Goldingay, Koole, S. Paul, and Seitz). The state of the question is whether this verse

with God's people in his prior testimony (40:6-7, 42:24-25). Hence, YHWH's messenger is a representative figure, distinct but not separate from Jacob-Israel, whom he singles out for rebuke. The listener-speaker is distinct because he comprehends what the Teacher wanted Jacob-Israel to grasp, namely, the truth about YHWH's דבר (40:6-8) and תורה (42:21; cf. 44:26). More specifically, the listener-speaker understands Jacob-Israel's Abrahamic identity and servant vocation (41:8-16; 42:1-9), the divine calling of Israel as a waiting-witnesses to YHWH's sovereignty (43:10, 12; 44:8), and YHWH's way of redemption in the world (40:27; 43:1-8; 44:1-5). Moreover, this figure is distinguished because, once again (cf. 42:24-25), he righteously (בצדקה, 48:1) takes YHWH's point of view and faithfully (באמת, 48:1) expresses YHWH's complaint to the community as a whole (vv.17-19). Therefore, as a representative, he is a true agent of Israel and YHWH's delegate to both Jacob and the world. The most important feature about this figure, however, is the dynamic that not only explains his character and role but also anticipates his success. That dynamic is, of course, his endowment with YHWH's רוח (ורוח).

In this context, nothing else needs to be said about him. His empowering with YHWH's רוח<sup>223</sup> and his activity as YHWH's messenger sum up and carry along with him every positive remark about Jacob-Israel's character and role in chs.40-48. In contrast with Jacob-Israel, his self-identification (אדני יהוה שליחני) and his action as YHWH's messenger demonstrate that he is not obstinate (קשה, v.4) but compliant—a servant who

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introduces the authorial voice or the voice of another, “a unique voice” (according to Childs, *Isaiah*, 377). For instance, Christopher Seitz (*Isaiah 40-66*, 419) identifies this figure as the authorial voice of Isa 40-55:

In v.16...the veil falls from the one who has been speaking, and he steps forward and announces his spirit endowment and his having been dispatched by God...The reason why it is difficult to know whether God is the one who did not speak in secret ‘from the beginning,’ or the voice at [v.16b], is that they up to now have been one and the same. Only here, we see a distinction between the divine voice and the prophetic voice, and it is one that will obtain throughout chapters 49-53.

Brevard Childs follows the earlier position of Franz Delitzsch, who saw an analogy between this verse and Zech 2:12ff and 4:9, where the commentator also thinks the speaker is an exalted divine messenger. Delitzsch wrote,

[T]hese words are followed in ch.xlix.1 sqq. by an address concerning himself as the restorer of Israel and light of the Gentiles, and cannot therefore be either Israel as a nation or the author of these prophecies, nothing is more natural than to suppose that the words, ‘And now hath the Lord,’ etc., form a prelude to the words of the One unequalled servant of Jehovah concerning Himself which occur in ch.xlix . . . after Jehovah has prepared the way for the redemption of Israel by the raising up of Cyrus, in accordance with prophecy, and by his success in arms, He has sent him, the speaker in this case, to carry out, in a mediatorial capacity, the redemption thus prepared, and that not by force of arms, but in the power of the Spirit of God (ch. xlii.1; cf. Zech iv.6).

Neither Childs nor Delitzsch comments about the use of the messenger formula in 48:17 and its connection with prior uses, e.g., 43:1; 44:1.

<sup>223</sup> רוח is the special endowment of the one commissioned by YHWH (cf. NJPS and see Isa 11:2; 41:27; 42:1; 61:1; cf. 44:3; 59:21; 63:10-11, 14). The implication is clear, as Goldingay expresses it: “The prophet’s self-perception is as Yhwh’s servant” (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 354).

neither deals faithlessly (בגד) nor rebels (פשע, v.8) against his Lord. Thus, 48:16b is a pivotal verse, addressed to Jacob by a student or disciple of YHWH who is neither blind nor deaf but understands the lessons of chs.40-47, and so he personally steps forward as God's prophet<sup>224</sup> to bring Jacob back to God.<sup>225</sup>

In short compass, this passage re-expresses both the Holy One's aspirations for (42:1-4, 5-9) and regrets about (cf. 42:18-25) Jacob-Israel. It clearly shows that YHWH desires the fulfillment of their servant-vocation according to the divinely established ancestral pattern of relationship. Thus, the basis for fulfillment is the recognition of Jacob's God-given identity and privileged calling as "Israel," Abraham's offspring, chosen not rejected. Isaiah 40-47 has stated beyond question that Jacob's birthright still obtains.<sup>226</sup> Even now, YHWH's messenger reaffirms God's continuing role as Jacob's Redeemer (גאל),<sup>227</sup> Teacher (מלמד *pi'el* ptc., v.17; cf. 40:14), and Shepherd (מריר *hip'il* ptc., cf. 40:11). The question, then, is whether Jacob will now abandon his birthright or fulfill his calling as servant-Israel, God's faithful image-bearer in the world. YHWH's hope unfolds in 48:18b-19. Here, the messenger declares that the re-establishment of such blessings as flow from an enduring covenantal relationship—peace, righteousness, offspring, and renown<sup>228</sup>—is contingent upon Jacob's renewed response of love and loyalty to YHWH.<sup>229</sup> In v.18a, therefore, YHWH exclaims profound regret (ל) at Jacob's obstinate response. It appears that Jacob's present estate holds back the desired fulfillment of his servant-calling (42:18-25).

Nevertheless, in vv.17-18, the speaker expresses another critical relationship, which may also disclose a key to the vision's fulfillment. While the God of Abraham and Jacob is also the shepherd of his sheep (v.17), in this context the reader can detect a more vital association in the depiction of YHWH as Teacher (מלמד) and in the exhortation for Jacob-Israel to heed his commands (מצוות, v.18). YHWH, having no need of a teacher himself (cf. 40:14), is not only able to teach, but has been teaching and is teaching Israel

<sup>224</sup> For שׁל + *qal* pf. 3<sup>rd</sup> masc. sg. + 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. suf., see Isa 6:8; 61:1; cf. 36:12; 42:19; 55:11.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Isa 42:22; 48:20-21; 49:1-6. Childs is right that this "unique voice" has "an immediate task to perform in chapter 48...he is the one who delivers the divine oracle in vv.17-19, and this role assumes a prophetic function" (*Isaiah*, 377). This is a significant point, because the oracle places in the listener-speaker's mouth YHWH's goals for the House of Jacob.

<sup>226</sup> Isa 40:1-2; 41:8-13; 43:1-8; 44:1-5, 26; 46:3-4.

<sup>227</sup> See Isa 43:1; 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24; 47:4.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Gen 12:2-3; 15:5-6; 22:17; 32:13.

<sup>229</sup> Shalom Paul notes that this is the first time the message of contingency or mention of "commands" is found in DI. Surely, it has been implicit in the articulation of Israel's identity, its calling, and throughout the previous disputations. See Shalom Paul, *Isaiah 40-66* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 317.

still.<sup>230</sup> The Holy One of Israel is the people's teacher, not the idols or idol-makers (44:9, 10), not the diviners or sorcerers of Babylon (47:12). Not only is YHWH's role in chs.40-48 analogous to a true prophet, but the fundamental bond between YHWH and Israel is analogous to the bond between master and servant or prophet and disciple (cf. 8:16-23). If that is so, then this passage supports my exposition of YHWH's role as 'prophet' and 'teacher' throughout chs.40-48, and it begins to address the questions raised by 40:1-11, about whether the listener-speaker and the people would grasp the message. The former, it seems, has grasped, or is grasping, the message, and (as ch.50 will state explicitly) the relation between YHWH and the listener-speaker is a Teacher-student relation. Thus, YHWH's role parallels the role of Isaiah ben Amoz (with his disciples) from chs.1-39.

Moreover, 48:17 recalls the "Teacher" (מורה, 30:20-21) Isaiah promised, who (after judgment) would instruct (למד) Israel, directing the people in the way (דרך) they must go (48:17). Hence, the Great King's role as Teacher suggests that the King's "command" (מצות) in v.18 may overlap with Isaiah's תורה (or דבר-יהוה) from chs.1-39<sup>231</sup> and YHWH's תורה from 42:21, 24-25. Thus, YHWH's instruction here correlates with the תורה (תעודה) that Isaiah had sealed (either literally in a document or upon the mind) with his children or disciples (8:16-23; 30:9-22). Like Isaiah, the disciples' superlative feature was their allegiance to YHWH's purpose and their desire to wait beside their master, resting all hope in YHWH.<sup>232</sup> As YHWH's word, it also connects to the תורה that, for the sake of his righteousness, YHWH still desires to make great and glorious (42:21). Therefore, in this context, the association of מצות and דרך does not appear to refer to commandments of deuteronomic legislation, but to YHWH's ongoing purposes, which he has disclosed through his prophetic messengers to guide the life of his people (Deut 18:15-19). Put differently, the word of God in chs.40-48 itself contains the מצות that servant-Israel must heed if it would enjoy the promised restoration.<sup>233</sup> Such commands the listener-speaker now recites to Jacob within this exilic situation (48:20-21). Clearly, he has overcome his initial hesitations (40:6-7). In fact, these new words

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Isa 1:3, 17; 29:24; Jer 32:33.

<sup>231</sup> Isa 1:10; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 30:9.

<sup>232</sup> Isa 8:17; 30:15, 18; 40:31; 42:4. Seitz supports this view. He writes, "The verb *lmd* (למד: 'to teach') also has clear associations with Isaiah and his 'disciples' (8:16)—that is, those 'taught' (*limmuday*) who bear witness to the testimony and teaching for a later generation (8:16-22)... This recognition is further evidence that the voice that in 48:17-19 speaks for God understands himself as bearing proper testimony to God's word of old" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 419).

<sup>233</sup> J. Koole agrees that the passage brings the word מצוה close to the meaning of תורה. Alluding to 42:4, 21, 24, he writes, "it does not have the technical sense of 'law'" but "his commandment in the concrete situation of the exiles" (*Isaiah 40-48*, 593-94).

underscore the point that YHWH has been pressing home from the beginning (cf. 40:8, 14), namely, that God remains committed to those who wait for him (40:31); his sovereign purposes will prevail (40:8; 42:4, 21). Indeed, this instruction is the **מַצְוָה** that demands their response ‘ahead of time’, for “the word of our God stands forever” (40:8; cf. 55:11). By attending to it, they testify that the Holy One of Israel is God. Jacob-Israel’s response to it thus constitutes their witness.

In conclusion, this word of command (**מַצְוָה**) pertains to Jacob’s return (vv.20-21); the continued disclosure of God’s purposes for their departure actually aims to prompt repentance. For Israel, this means they must stop turning to idols, for the words of empty images will not avail them. Instead, Jacob-Israel must heed the word of YHWH’s prophet and rely upon their God, who alone gives the words that profit (**יֵעֵל**, v.17).<sup>234</sup> Because the 1<sup>st</sup>-person listener-speaker has understood this message, he has become God’s agent to show Israel the way. For this reason, he is equipped with **נִרְרָה** and sent to demand Israel’s penitent response (48:16b; cf. 6:8-10). Jacob’s positive response would confirm its ancestral identity as Abraham’s offspring and lead Israel to the fulfillment of its servant-vocation. What is more, their positive response would substantiate the claim that YHWH has frustrated the omens of the oracle-priests, made mockery of the diviners, and turned the wise men back. Therefore, this messenger appeals to his people, “Has not YHWH made their ‘knowledge’ foolishness?” And he brings them words of comfort and rebuke, exhortation and admonition. This is the testimony of the one God has sent. Calling the people back to God, he bases all hope upon YHWH’s promise to establish the word of his servant and to fulfill the counsel of his messengers (44:25-26; cf. Deut 18:9-22). In short, the listener-speaker has become YHWH’s disciple, and as YHWH’s agent, he has become Israel’s new teacher too. He relies upon God’s word—at all costs to recite it, to embody it, and to express it—and he waits for God as a servant, manifesting God’s way in the world and teaching his people to testify that YHWH is God. Presently, it appears that only this unidentified figure has grasped the message (40:8; 42:23-24; 44:26); consequently, it appears that the Abrahamic promises will remain unfulfilled until Jacob corporately accepts its identity and vocation as YHWH’s servant and disciple. Yet YHWH has sent this figure, equipped with **נִרְרָה**. So, the question that remains is how to get Jacob-Israel to turn and walk in God’s way, to follow his commandments in their exilic situation, and consequently, to fulfill their peculiar calling as the people God has chosen to bless the world.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Isa 30:5; 44:9; 47:12; 57:12.

#### 4.7. Conclusion

By **דבר אל היינו** (40:8), in-and-through Israel, YHWH will work out his plan to rule the world from Zion. Israel-Jacob is YHWH's servant (**עבד**, 41:8), the seed (**זרע**) of Abraham (of Sarah's womb, cf. 51:1-2) chosen to bear a world-embracing covenantal vocation. To this end, chs.41-48 summon Israel to rely on YHWH as a new Abrahamic society by abandoning idolatry and witnessing that YHWH is God. In fulfillment of YHWH's ultimate objective, servant-Israel would bring **משפט**, **תורה**, and **אור** to the nations as the manifestation of a **ברית עם** (42:1-4, 5-9). However, it appears that *Jacob-Israel* hinders the realization of YHWH's objective; YHWH's servant remains blind and deaf (42:18-25). Although YHWH remains faithful, Israel's present condition and conduct resemble that of the idolatrous peoples (41:5-7; 43:22-24; 48:1; cf. 2:9). Thus, God's people continually frustrate his righteous (**צדק**) purpose (**חפץ**) to magnify **תורה** (42:21-22; cf. 2:2-5). Israel neither recognizes YHWH's performance (41:2, 25; 45:9-13) nor acknowledges YHWH as God, and the offspring of Abraham fail to rely upon YHWH (41:8-13) by heeding his prophet's commands (**מצות**, 48:18). Consequently, Jacob is unfit to bear the name, "Israel,"<sup>235</sup> let alone fulfill its Abrahamic (and royal) vocation as YHWH's servant to bring **משפט** and **תורה** for the reordering of global society.

As chs.40-48 plainly assert that YHWH has not forgotten Zion or Jacob-Israel, Isa 40:6-8 and 48:16b-19 evidently signify that YHWH's words and actions will continue to converge with those of a prophetic-messenger.<sup>236</sup> Thus, to address the problem of Israel more directly, at YHWH's initiative, a listener-speaker has stepped forth. The listener-speaker is YHWH's prophet, commissioned, sent (**שלח**, 40:6-8; 48:16b),<sup>237</sup> and endued with **רוח**. Unlike the House of Jacob, which bears the name Israel (48:1-2), this listener-speaker hears and sees (42:18-19) that, although "we" have sinned against YHWH (42:24), God not only remains faithful but also teaches Jacob to benefit (**למד**, 48:17; cf. 40:14). Indeed, in 42:24 and 48:17, the listener-speaker's understanding converges with YHWH's

<sup>235</sup> Consider the opening words of ch.48, "Heed this, House of Jacob, who are called by the name 'Israel', and come forth from Judah's line, who swear by YHWH's name, and invoke the God of Israel—neither in truth nor righteousness" (48:1). As Goldingay cleverly expresses it, "Over chs.40-48 the community has proved to make a good Jacob but a poor Israel, and ch.48 has brought this fact into sharpest focus" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 369).

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Isa 42:24-25; 43:1; 44:1, 26.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Isa 6:8; 42:1, 19; 61:1.



own.<sup>238</sup> He therefore steps forward to speak as the agent of God's purpose, taking up language from chs.40-48 to guide survivors in the way of being Israel. As he tells them what YHWH commands (מִצְוָה), he summons Jacob back to God.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> In 42:24, the speaker recognizes that Israel has refused to walk in YHWH's ways (דֶּרֶךְ + הַלֵּךְ) by its refusal to obey his תּוֹרָה. In 48:17, the speaker introduces YHWH as the one who teaches (לְמַד) Israel to profit by leading Israel in the way it should go (דֶּרֶךְ + הַלֵּךְ).

<sup>239</sup> Isa 44:22; 48:17-22; cf. 6:10; 49:5.



## Chapter 5

### “Listen to Me, Coastlands”: The Servant’s Testimony and Life as Torah

#### 5.1. Introduction

YHWH’s messenger continues to speak in Isaiah 49-55. Although his word is prescriptive, like Isaiah ben Amoz, this prophet “is having serious trouble persuading his public.”<sup>1</sup> His opening speech in 49:1-6 elaborates on both YHWH’s words from 42:1-4, 5-9 and his own from 48:16b-19 in what Childs has called “an intentional literary continuation.”<sup>2</sup> In view of the latter, this continuation is also surprising, since the speaker’s audience is not Jacob-Israel but the coastland-peoples (49:1).<sup>3</sup> As the listener-speaker brings his words to the coastlands (cf. 41:1), it appears that YHWH’s messenger to Israel has also become his emissary to the wider world. While it is unclear whether the listener-speaker acts alone, ch.49 does begin to clarify lingering uncertainties about his character and function. As anticipated (cf. 48:16b), 49:1-12 openly applies language to YHWH’s messenger that chs.40-48 had reserved for servant-Israel.<sup>4</sup> While he still testifies that God has not abandoned his objective or his people, parallels of content and structure suggest that the listener-speaker now carries YHWH’s image and Israel’s role personally. As Williamson observes, God’s ultimate purpose remains of primary importance;<sup>5</sup> still, the opening line of chs.49-55 raises significant questions. What can this address to the coastlands mean for Jacob-Israel (or for Zion)? Does the listener-speaker fulfill Israel’s vocation alone?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 301.

<sup>2</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 381. On the differences between chs.41-48 and 49-55, see M. Haran, “The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies of Isa XL-XLVIII” in *Congress Volume, Bonn 1962* (VTSup 9; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 127-55 and S. M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 321. Blenkinsopp lists several features in common with chs.40-48 (*Isaiah 40-55*, 299). His list includes the call to foreign nations; summoning coastlands to attention (40:15; 41:1, 5; 42:4, 10, 12, 15); YHWH’s summoning and designating figures to discharge particular tasks (41:9; 42:6; 43:1; 45:3-4; 48:15); YHWH’s forming Israel in the womb (44:2, 24); YHWH’s glory manifested through Israel (44:23); YHWH’s salvation from one end of the earth to another (42:10; 43:6; 45:22; 48:20); and the accumulation of appositional clauses introducing YHWH’s direct speech (42:5; 43:1; 44:1-2, 6; 45:1, 18).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 41:1; 42:4, 10-12; cf. 20:1-6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 41:1, 8-13 and 42:1-4, 5-9.

<sup>5</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 149.

<sup>6</sup> Goldingay makes a similar observation, but does not make the connection that I think FI intends by presenting Zion’s response in 49:14. He writes, “After 48:22, the opening of ch.49 made threatening reading for Israel...Has Israel ceased to be Israel? Can it be abandoned?” See, J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 371. In my view, it is important to see that *Jacob* does not ask these questions. Apparently, Israel remains blind and deaf and still thinks YHWH disregards its צַדִּיקִים. Thus, the call to the nations follows and adds the complaint that Israel has failed to pay attention. Jerusalem-Zion, however, does respond, personified as a woman. The city, portrayed as a mother, is concerned for her estranged offspring (vv.14-26).

Related to these questions, 49:14-26 personifies Zion as a woman (cf. 40:9) with her own anxieties about YHWH's commitment. In fact, Zion's lament in ch.49 parallels Jacob-Israel's complaint from 40:27: "YHWH has forsaken me," she cries (49:14). Since preparations were ordered for YHWH's *parousia* (40:5, 9), she has received only brief attention (41:27; 46:13); naturally, she longs for reassurance regarding YHWH's commitment. Therefore, she complains, "YHWH has forgotten me," and frets, "Will my Lord restore my children to me?" Also in question is whether the Lord still plans to establish Zion as the seat of his sovereign rule (2:2-4; 40:9-11; 49:23), and, if so, how it will work out.

The above questions begin to find answers in chs.49-55. In this chapter, I focus particular attention on the three servant poems in this section: 49:1-13; 50:4-9 (10-11); 52:13-53:12. In these poems, the listener-speaker expresses, embodies, and enacts תורה in servant-form, revealing how his words and actions merge with YHWH's own objectives for Zion, Israel, and all humanity.

## 5.2. *Isaiah 49:1-13: A Prophet's Self-Testimony*

Isaiah 49 begins with an unidentified figure summoning the coastlands to hear 1<sup>st</sup>-person testimony (שמעו אלים אל). The invitation to "peoples from afar," לְאֲמִיּוֹת מֵרְחוֹק—elsewhere summoned only by God<sup>7</sup>—and the command to pay attention (קשב),<sup>8</sup> set up the expectation that YHWH is speaking.<sup>9</sup> The previous unit reported the speech of YHWH (אמר יהוה), ending with the refrain, "There is no peace for the wicked" (48:22);<sup>10</sup> this unit is structurally parallel to God's presentation of the servant in 42:1-12. In ch.42, the Creator was the principal speaker, but here the coastlands receive a creature's personal testimony, the self-presentation of God's agent called from the womb (קראני יהוה מִבֶּטֶן). Baltzer is right to think that similarities with 42:1-4 connect the fate of this speaker to that of Israel in the earlier chapter.<sup>11</sup>

This poem also centers on a figure accepted as YHWH's servant (vv.1-4; cf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. in 42:1-4). The first stanza (49:1-6) reports a dialogue between the speaker and YHWH. Verses 5-6 outline YHWH's purpose and commitment to the speaker's success (cf. 42:4, 5ff). Two more stanzas (49:7-12, 13; cf. 42:5-9, 10-11), distinguished by shifts in addressee (cf. 42:1, 5, 10), extend the poem. Messenger formulae separate vv.7-12 into

<sup>7</sup> Isa 41:1, 5; cf. 42:4; 51:5; 60:9

<sup>8</sup> Isa 42:23; 44:1; 46:3, 12; 47:8; 48:1, 12.

<sup>9</sup> So also, J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 365.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Isa 39:8; 57:21; 66:24.

<sup>11</sup> See, K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 306.

strophes at v.7 and v.8, highlighting YHWH's name via repetition (cf. 42:5-9) and introducing expressions that verify YHWH's dedication to the eventual reversal of the figure's situation (v.7) and the success of his mission (vv.8-12). The poem closes with rejoicing (v.13), recalling the joyous resolution envisaged at 42:10-12; only now, the scope has expanded as the heavens and earth (שָׁמַיִם || אֲרֶצַּיִם) lead the song (cf. 1:2; 48:13; 49:13). This merism signifies universal recognition of the true God, who prompts music that resounds throughout the cosmos (49:13), when he comforts (נָחַם) his afflicted.<sup>12</sup>

The introduction of צִיּוֹן as a participant in v.14 marks the transition to the next poem (49:14-26) and shifts attention from the servant to the city. The two poems are distinct yet closely related. Together they establish the theme of chs.49-55.<sup>13</sup> Whereas chs.40-48 contended with Jacob-Israel's grumbling about מִשְׁפָּחַת (cf. 40:27; 42:1-4), chs.49-54 (55) contend with Zion's lament about desolation and the end of tyranny.<sup>14</sup> Isa 49:1-13, in particular, forestalls Zion's complaint, assuring her that the Lord has compassion (רַחֵם) on his afflicted ones (עַנִּיִּים).<sup>15</sup> At the reversal of her fortunes "all humanity will know that I am YHWH; your Savior and Redeemer is the Mighty one of Jacob" (v.26; cf. v.13).

Despite its opening address to the coastlands, 49:1-13 suggests that YHWH's achievement through his agent will benefit both Jacob-Israel and Zion. The chapter's design thus embeds the servant motif within the broader theme of YHWH's coming reign, providing coherence and keeping central YHWH's relationship to Zion and to all those concerned for her welfare.<sup>16</sup> Sweeney expresses the relationship between YHWH, the servant, and Zion well: "The servant is the agent for demonstrating YHWH's power to the whole earth, and Zion is the seat of YHWH's rule. Together the servant (Israel) and Zion serve as the starting point for YHWH's rule over the entire earth."<sup>17</sup> The listener-speaker's opening address therefore signifies that FI's programmatic vision (2:2-4) will remain central in chs.49-55.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Isa 12:1-2; 40:1-2; 51:3, 12; 52:9; 61:2; 66:13.

<sup>13</sup> Both 49:1-13 and 49:14-26 contain natal imagery (vv.1, 15), express reversal signaled by the transformed behavior of oppressive rulers (vv.7, 23), and conclude with the return of the Diaspora and the restoration of society (vv.9-12, 22-23).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Isa 44:24; 51:17-23; 52:1-6; 54:1-10, 11-17. Seitz agrees that Zion functions "in a way not unlike Jacob/Israel in the first section, never speaking directly in any sustained way, her views and attitudes revealed through the servant's direct response to them" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 423). See the chart listing appearances in DI of "Jacob/Israel" and "Jerusalem/Zion" in P. Wilcox and D. Patton-Williams, "The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah," *JSOT* 42 (1988): 82.

<sup>15</sup> עַנִּיִּים + 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. suf., 49:13 (cf. 48:10).

<sup>16</sup> Isa 1:27; 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 40:1-11.

<sup>17</sup> M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 85.

So, in vv.1-6, instead of Jacob-Israel, the listener-speaker summons the coastlands to heed his self-presentation. If he is YHWH's servant, his testimony before the coastlands suggests his words might be a feature of the **תורה** promised in 42:4 ("...the coastlands wait for **תורה**"). Put differently, as an address to the coastlands ("Listen, coastlands"), YHWH's servant begins to unfold his own testimony as the partial content of their **תורה**-expectation. The **תורה** they await undoubtedly presumes the positive response of YHWH's image-bearer in the world (41:8-13; 42:1-4, 5-9), and yet here the listener-speaker begins to act as YHWH's earthly representative. In fact, like his Lord before him (41:4), the disciple unfolds his testimony directly to the nations: "Listen to me, coastlands; pay attention, peoples from afar" (v.1).

The use of the preterit (after the perfect form) indicates that the speaker is telling the story<sup>18</sup> of his calling as God's prophet, raised and commissioned to proclaim YHWH's word.<sup>19</sup> As the speaker reflects on his previous dialogue with YHWH, given the audience and manner of his self-presentation, the listener expects that he will also assume the task assigned to corporate Israel (42:9).<sup>20</sup> The promise of light and salvation in v.6 only confirms this expectation, implying that this figure has personally set out to bring the new things YHWH has foretold, including the **תורה** eagerly awaited by the coastlands.<sup>21</sup> That the **תורה** (at least initially) comes in the form of prophetic speech implies a prophetic vocation, starting *here* with his *Lehreröffnungsformel*.<sup>22</sup> In this address, the listener-speaker begins not only to instruct but also to personify the witness that YHWH wants from Jacob-Israel.

After the summons (v.1a), he tells the coastlands about his qualifications and preparation for this commission (vv.1b-3). YHWH called him prenatally, from his

<sup>18</sup> "he called me [**קראני**]...then he [YHWH] made [**שם**] my mouth...and he made me [**ישימני**]...and he said [**יאמר**]." Notably, like God's servant Moses, he does not begin his testimony by laying down legislation or foretelling what God will do, but by narrating a story (cf. **תורה**, Deut 1:5; 4:44; 18:15). He is expounding the former things of his experience insofar as they pertain to his calling by God.

<sup>19</sup> His commissioning is probably found at 40:6-8.

<sup>20</sup> As another important structural similarity, the use of *inclusio* in both 42:1-4 and 49:1-6 underscore the fact that what YHWH said before about corporate Israel now (also) applies to this personal figure. The two inclusions also underscore the fact that in both contexts the figure's task promises to benefit the nations. In 49:1, **לאומים** is paired with **אני** (cf. 41:1), and in v.6, **ארץ** is paired with **גוי**. Compare **גוי** in 42:1 and the *inclusio* it forms with the pair **אני** and **ארץ** in 42:4. In 42:6, **גוי** is paired with **עם**, an expression which reappears in 49:8 in the identical expression, "I will make you into a covenant for people" (**אתנך לברית עם**), though it is followed by a distinct set of infinitives.

<sup>21</sup> Carolyn Sharp writes similarly, "The instruction for which the coastlands wait is the light of torah obedience modeled in the life of the Servant...Called by God before birth and reassured by God that he will yet be a light to the nations: this is the Servant's story, and this is what the coastlands are to heed." See, C. Sharp, "(Re)inscribing Power through Torah Teaching," 176.

<sup>22</sup> So, J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 4.

mother's belly (מֵעָה || בֶּטֶן, v.1b; cf. 40:6), and pronounced his name (49:1). As Blenkinsopp points out, "The pronouncing of the name [הַזִּכִּיר שְׁמִי] is a solemn act of invocation or conferring a special identity."<sup>23</sup> Yet, no name appears in v.1. His prenatal selection potentially alludes to Gen 25:23, as this verse is similar to a biographical description from Israel's history with God: "Two nations are in your womb (בִּבְטֶנְךָ); two peoples shall issue from your belly (מִמֵּעֶיךָ)."<sup>24</sup> Of these two, Jacob was chosen, and Esau was rejected (Isa 41:8); yet, YHWH did not personally name Jacob until Peniel, after he had labored as a grown man (Gen 32:29 [28]). While there is a link to the story of Jacob, this descendant is unique and so is his vocation. Brueggemann recognizes both the imprecision and immense potential of his role as "Yahweh's device for Yahweh's purposes."<sup>25</sup> In the immediate context, then, it is more natural to see v.1b as his calling to public office and his formation for a special prophetic role established by God. The figure is never called a prophet, yet affinities with imagery surrounding Jeremiah's prophetic call suggest that this listener-speaker was chosen from the womb (בֶּטֶן) and likewise appointed as a prophet to the nations (נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם, Jer 1:5).<sup>26</sup>

These suggestions find further support in v.2, where the figure tells the coastlands about his formation by God, noting first that YHWH "made my mouth as a sharp sword" (וַיֵּשֶׁם פִּי כַחֲרֵב חֶדֶה). It appears that YHWH has been preparing him for a challenging public ministry that requires appropriate weapons of war. As a sword in the hand of the Divine Warrior, his mouth would become a suitable device for YHWH's purposes. As a sharp sword, his words could penetrate; having "the power of incisive speech,"<sup>27</sup> they could draw close and cut to the heart. The choice arrow (חֵץ בָּרוּר), by contrast, is designed for a long-range target,<sup>28</sup> perhaps suitable for reaching the peoples from afar (v.1a). Still, it is important to see that, maybe contrary to the coastlands' expectations, his only 'offensive weapon' is speech.<sup>29</sup> In Koole's memorable expression, "he is all

<sup>23</sup> See, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 300.

<sup>24</sup> This would anticipate the name 'Israel' in v.3 (cf. Gen 32:29; cf. 35:10), as Bonnard, for example, thinks. He says that when the prophet speaks about the name pronounced, the name 'Israel' is meant. See P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe*, 218.

<sup>25</sup> W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 110.

<sup>26</sup> Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40-55*, 300) also says that the natal location and international audience are "elements of the type-scene of prophetic commissioning." C. Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 208) and R. N. Whybray (*Isaiah 40-66*, 136) think these features require an individual figure rather than a collective one. As Whybray says, "The servant here must clearly be distinct from the nation." Such evidence is inconclusive once one compares similar expressions in 40-48 used for *forming* corporate Israel (as YHWH formed Jeremiah in Jer 1:5). See repetition of בֶּטֶן + מֵן + צֹר in 44:2, 24; 46:3; and 48:8.

<sup>27</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 300.

<sup>28</sup> So, Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 208.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jer 23:29; Hos 6:5; Isa 11:4.

mouth.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, he is *YHWH*’s mouth, and by this mouthpiece, *YHWH* brings words of restoration and life.<sup>31</sup> Since *YHWH* only puts his **דבריו** into true witnesses,<sup>32</sup> the mention of his mouth suggests preparation for a public office in which **תורה** and **דבריהם** come together.<sup>33</sup> This weapon suggests the exercise of a political-theological agenda, hidden until now (cf. v.5). If so, why conceal his identity for this moment? Was it important for *YHWH* to bring Cyrus first (chs.45-47)? Is this mouth *YHWH*’s weapon forged for the time of favor, for the day of salvation (49:8)? The poetry is characteristically imprecise, even cryptic, but answers begin to emerge in vv.3-6.

### 5.2.1. *Be Israel for Israel’s Sake*

Childs observes correctly that 49:3 expresses the central point of the call,<sup>34</sup> which pertains to the naming of the listener-speaker and determines his role and task. My examination proceeds from the figure’s task to his name and then back to his task.

Although chs.40-48 commonly used an identical expression for Jacob-Israel (41:9; 44:21), the listener-speaker’s report of *YHWH*’s speech resembles the formal installation of a king: “You are my servant” (**ויאמר לי עבדי אתה**). This similarity leads Claus Westermann to compare v.3 with Ps 2:7, “*YHWH* said to me, you are my son” (**יהוה יאמר אלי בני אתה**), and to suggest a composite role for the listener-speaker.<sup>35</sup> Given this similarity and the correlation of 42:1-12 and 49:1-13, he perceives a combination of the call of a prophet (**עבדי**)<sup>36</sup> with the royal designation of *YHWH*’s servant in 42:1-4 (**הן עבדי**).<sup>37</sup> As Melugin recalls, however, “Isaiah 49:1-6 is much like the commissioning of Jeremiah as well,”<sup>38</sup> and there is nothing explicit here about the royal

<sup>30</sup> J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 9. This reminder from him is also helpful, “For the time being, this word is his only power. But the word is a power, a ‘sharp sword’” (*Isaiah 49-55*, 2).

<sup>31</sup> The use of litotes from 42:1-4—which would confirm my view that the figure’s weapons (and so, his approach) are contrary to expectations—does not characterize 49:1-6. Nevertheless, there appears to be some relation to this aspect of the earlier poem by the use of metaphor in this one. Although it mentions weaponry, it is not the weaponry of Cyrus, certainly not the weaponry of Babylonian judgment. That *YHWH* has prepared his mouth suggests that he is *YHWH*’s emissary, and the “weapons” indicate that this prophetic messenger speaks words in total reliance upon *YHWH*’s might to realize their intent.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Deut 18:18; Jer 15:19; Isa 1:20; 40:5; 45:23; 48:3; 51:16; 59:21.

<sup>33</sup> See Isa 6:5-7; 30:2; Jer 1:9; Ezek 3:1-3.

<sup>34</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 383.

<sup>35</sup> See, C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 208.

<sup>36</sup> See Num 12:7; 2 Kgs 17:13; 21:8.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ps 89:4, 21; Isa 37:35.

<sup>38</sup> R. Melugin, *Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 69. For affinities with Jeremiah, see, e.g., Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 32-72; Sheldon Blank, *Prophetic Faith in Isaiah* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1967), 100-104.



administration of מִשְׁפָּט.<sup>39</sup> The portrayal of his role as YHWH's mouthpiece (49:1-2) places the emphasis on the call of a prophet. Hence, the similarity between Ps 2:7 and Isa 49:3 is interesting, yet insufficient support for a combined royal-and-prophetic role.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in 49:3, the predication pertains to the figure's formation (vv.1-2) and thus to his designation as YHWH's prophet. In other words, "you are my servant," in v.3, is just another way of saying, "you are the mouth of God," i.e., a prophet.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Goldingay may be correct when he perceives a contrast between royal (ch.42) and prophetic (ch.49) roles.<sup>42</sup> Still, rather than a change in office, the development from 42:1-4 to 49:1-6 might only point to a shift of emphasis regarding the function of YHWH's servant. If the concept of "servant" overlaps with "image-bearer"—as the Creator's תְּבִלָּה-endowed representative (cf. 41:29; 42:1; 48:16b)—then "servant" is the broader class and particular roles/offices comprise instances of "servanthood" (cf. 41:8) as a calling from God. In 42:1-4, 5-9, given YHWH's response to Jacob-Israel's complaint (40:27) and the role that royal figures bear in bringing מִשְׁפָּט, the royal aspect of the servant's task is stressed. Given YHWH's response to Zion's complaint (49:14) and the role that prophetic-messengers bear in calling Jacob-Israel back to God,<sup>43</sup> 49:1-6 accentuates the prophetic aspect of the servant's task. Here again, however, it may be best to follow Melugin, who notes that ch.49 (like ch.42) utilizes familiar forms, but precisely follows none of them.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> LeClerc points out that in ch.49 the faithful servant entrusts his *cause* to YHWH: "his confidence that YHWH is the ultimate judge of his efforts" (*Yahweh is Exalted in Justice*, 114; cf. Isa 40:27).

<sup>40</sup> The comparison of עֶבֶד in 49:3 with its distribution in the (more) immediate context of 41:9 and 44:21, neither of which involves a royal designation, supports this conclusion. Isa 41:9 and 44:21 contribute to contexts in which servant-Israel is called to remember (זָכַר) YHWH, to rely upon YHWH as God and to witness that YHWH is King.

<sup>41</sup> Form follows function. I maintain this view despite fascinating observations from royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia and Egypt, which state that the king was selected for rule prenatally. See, S. Paul, *Divrei Shalom: Collected Studies of Shalom Paul on the Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1967-2005* (CHANE 23; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 18-22, citing Hellmut Brunner, "Egyptian Texts" in *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (W. Beyerlin, ed.; OTL; Philadelphia, 1978), 27-30. In his commentary, Paul distinguishes the servant from Mesopotamian examples as regards the "spiritual destiny" of Israel, called to be a "light unto the nations" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 323). This is true, but I maintain that while he has observed interesting formal similarities, the prophetic aspect of the servant's calling is most prominent in this context. In other words, as a representative to/of servant-Israel, the figure, a prophetic servant (vv.1-4, 5), without changing his office, has also become the servant according to the description in Isa 42:1-12. That is, the prophet takes up Israel's servant appointment as a prophet even after his designation as "Israel" (vv.3, 6).

<sup>42</sup> Goldingay writes, "[I]f a vision for kingship and Davidic tradition in particular shaped 42:1-4, a vision for prophecy and Jeremianic tradition shaped 49:1-6 . . . Israel has been called and equipped for a king's characteristic ministry as a servant of Yhwh, a ministry exercised before the nations before whom the king was to bring Yhwh glory. The latter role had been transferred from the king to Israel but it has now been transferred to the prophet" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 367, 369).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. 48:16b-19, 20-22.

<sup>44</sup> See Roy F. Melugin, *Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 65, 69.

The central concern of v.3, however, is the figure's name. In this verse, YHWH's reported speech reads as follows: עבד־יְהוָה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאֵר (v.3). The only name is (of course) "Israel." Various options, including excision, have been suggested regarding the syntactical relation of יִשְׂרָאֵל to the other constituents of this line. In my view, there is insufficient evidence to justify its removal.<sup>45</sup> The syntax supports retaining "Israel," allowing it to function as a vocative reaffirming corporate Israel's status and identity as YHWH's servant. Comparison may then be made to 41:8, "But you, Israel, are my servant" (וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדִּי). Similarly, since עַבְדִּי and יִשְׂרָאֵל evidently refer to the same figure, their juxtaposition may simply express apposition: "you are my servant, identified as Israel." There is no meaningful distinction between these two options, and the use of these nouns throughout chs.40-48 suggests that either one is natural. As Westermann says, "The Servant is 'Israel'...plump and plain."<sup>46</sup> Yet, there is a problem with these solutions: the nation itself.

In ch.49, the trouble appears in association with the question raised by v.1, the name "Israel" in v.3, and the task outlined by v.5. Verse 1 asks for a name: "What name did YHWH pronounce from the womb?" Verse 3 supplies the name "Israel." Yet the task outlined in v.5 identifies a figure who serves God as his agent to tackle the Jacob-Israel problem: "[YHWH] formed me from the womb to be his servant in order to return Jacob to him." But how can "Israel" serve Israel (v.5)? The relationship of vv.1-5 in the unit expresses a further difficulty, experienced existentially by the speaker. Verse 5 begins with the familiar phrase, וְעַתָּה (v.5),<sup>47</sup> introducing the time of YHWH's new speech-act, "But now, YHWH says..." (וְעַתָּה אָמַר יְהוָה).<sup>48</sup> What YHWH actually says *now* is immediately interrupted by a long parenthesis, so that the verb אָמַר, which introduces YHWH's speech, must be repeated in v.6, "He said..." (וַיֹּאמֶר). The parenthesis in v.5 relates to vv.1-4 as specific elaboration upon the servant's own general commentary, in which A-D corresponds to A'-D'; i.e., it repeats the call from v.1b and clarifies the nature of the prophet's previous mission. The parenthesis also tells why the prophet has grown weary, though he evidently continues to rest in YHWH for strength (cf. 40:31).

<sup>45</sup> Advocates for its removal include H. M. Orlinsky, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah" in *Studies in the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah* (H. M. Orlinsky and N. H. Snaith, eds.; VTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 79-89 and N. Lohfink, "'Israel' in Jes 49,3" in *Word, Lied, und Gottespruch: Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten, FS J. Ziegler* (J. Schreiner, ed.; Würzburg: Echter, 1972), 217-29.

<sup>46</sup> C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 208.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Isa 43:1; 44:1; 48:16b.

<sup>48</sup> וְעַתָּה is concerned about the present (so, K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 306).

A	v.1bα	YHWH called me	from the womb...
	v.3a	He said,	
B		“You are my servant...by whom I will display my glory.	
	v.4	As for me, I said,	
C		“It was	for nothing that I labored;
		for an empty breath,	I wasted my strength.
D		Nevertheless, my מַשְׁפֹּט rests with YHWH,	
		my result rests with my God.”	
	v.5	But now, YHWH says—	
A'		he who formed me	from the womb
B'		to be his servant	
C'		in order to return Jacob to him,	
		but Israel would not assemble.	
D'		Still,	I am honored in YHWH’s sight,
			and my God, he is my strength.

This prophetic figure was formed from the womb to be a servant for YHWH’s glory. His initial objective was to return Jacob to God, but his labor seemed for naught, a waste of time and strength (cf. 40:6-7; 48:16b-19). Consequently, he regarded himself as a failed, ineffective representative of YHWH, rather like the false Babylonian gods (v.4aβ; cf. 41:29).<sup>49</sup> YHWH’s assessment, however, was different (cf. 41:14ff).<sup>50</sup>

Verse 4 communicates the figure’s own sense of discouragement and failure, though the prophet’s further expression of trust in God soon follows.<sup>51</sup> This reliance upon YHWH distinguishes the prophet from the people, just as YHWH had hoped servant-Israel’s reliance would set Jacob-Israel apart from the idol-worshiping nations. Above all, he is different because, unlike Jacob-Israel (40:27), he knows that his מַשְׁפֹּט rests with YHWH.<sup>52</sup> In fact, this conviction may explain his appeal to the coastlands, for he also

<sup>49</sup> He actually calls himself an “empty breath.” In this hendiadys, the two nouns (לְתֵהוּ וְהֵבֵל) present a single, coordinate, idea; its use in 49:4 can be compared to its use in 41:29 (רוּחַ וְתֵהוּ). In that context, YHWH himself characterizes the worthless images of false gods. In 41:29, instead of theophany, the idols were merely an empty breath. In 49:4, the prophet says he had thought of himself as one of these, only an empty image—weary and without strength. Nevertheless, YHWH says that, as servant-Israel with רוּחַ (42:1; 48:16b), his prophetic-servant is actually the image of God. Compare Isa 30:7, where Egypt is “utterly useless” (הֵבֵל וְרִיק) (TNIV).

<sup>50</sup> Isa 49:4, “As for me, I had said,” includes a dislocated constituent (וְאֵנִי), which brings out the contrasting assessment of the two partners in the dialogue, namely, YHWH and his servant.

<sup>51</sup> Hesitation followed by resolve characterizes Moses, Elijah (1 Kgs 19), and even to some degree, Jeremiah.

<sup>52</sup> The reader may identify in this verse the servant’s complaint (cf. 40:27; 49:14, 24). Yet there is an important difference between this verse and both 40:27 and 49:14. Unlike Israel and Zion, because of YHWH’s ongoing speech to him (vv.5, 6), the servant recognizes that, despite appearances, his מַשְׁפֹּט and פֶּעַל continue (as they always have) to rest with YHWH. So, rather than a complaint to YHWH, it is best to see v.4 in reference to Jacob-Israel, with Koole, as “the lament of the undesired mediator” (*Isaiah 49-55*, 14).

knows that they await the servant's **תַּוְרָה**; therefore, his testimony offers them reassurance that, despite the apparent delay, YHWH will see to the further implementation of Israel's **מִשְׁפָּט**-purpose from 42:1-4, for YHWH is **הָאֵל** (42:5). The problem, he indicates once more, is not YHWH but Jacob, for he says, "Israel would not assemble" (v.5bβ;<sup>53</sup> cf. 48:14, 20-21). That this is the correct reading of v.5bβ is supported by 48:16b-19, 20-21, which also indicates why the listener-speaker became frustrated and discouraged. He had called for Jacob to repent, but the people would not (vv.17-19), a point proven by their refusal to depart from Babylon (48:20-21).

Nevertheless, the coastland-peoples learn that YHWH has spoken to this figure more than once (**וַעֲתָה אֲמַר יְהוָה**, v.5), indicating that he is honored; moreover, YHWH remains his strength, and, indeed, through him YHWH still intends to display his glory. YHWH's new speech indicates that the relationship continues and that God still accepts him (cf. 42:1); hence, he can trust God to vindicate him. Though the prophet's mission to Jacob-Israel was initially frustrated, as v.6 shows, his prophecy is about to assume a new and broader task. In effect, by addressing the coastlands, the prophet assures them that God not only affirms *this* servant for his commission, but guarantees the success of *Israel's* own mission to bring **מִשְׁפָּט** to the earth (49:6, 7-12, 13; cf. 42:1-4). As Childs has written, "God confirms that in spite of his momentary failure, [the] role of establishing right in the earth (42:4) will be sustained."<sup>54</sup> The listener-speaker recognizes that his **מִשְׁפָּט** rests with God and that, as God's **רוּחַ**-empowered servant, he will neither fail nor grow weary in the establishment of **מִשְׁפָּט** (42:1, 4). The self-presentation of this figure thus conveys to the coastlands that while God's servant may be bent, he is not broken.

Herein resides the answer to the interpretive crux posed by the relation of 49:3 to 49:5. Although Israel remains a problem, YHWH is set on using Israel to implement his worldwide **מִשְׁפָּט**-purpose. The resolution excludes the vocative and appositional readings of v.3, since God must do for Jacob-Israel what it cannot do for itself. The key to

<sup>53</sup> "Israel would not assemble" (v.5bβ): The form is *nip'al* impf. Syriac and Arabic texts propose 1<sup>st</sup>-per., **אִשְׂרָאֵל**. I take a risk here, perhaps, by following the Kethib rather than the Qere. The Q, **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, here, makes the statement positive (so 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, a few Mss LXX, Aquila, and Arabic; cf. Tg). The context shows that YHWH has a servant, designated 'Israel', with a commission to fulfill as regards Israel, but Israel has frustrated his objective. The K retains the negative particle, suggesting an antithetical parallelism; and I think the syntactical differences between v.5bα (inf const. + **ל** + n. + prep. + suf.) and 5bβ (*waw* dj. + neg. part. + impf.) actually support this view. The *waw* disjunctive indicates the contrast, and its presence is significant since the terse parallelism of biblical Hebrew poetry frequently omits conjunctions. On the positive reading (with **ל**), one might expect a second infinitive (with **ל**) in v.5bβ, as is common in these poems. Moreover, the MT's Q may be theologically motivated, as removing the neg. particle keeps the focus positively upon assembling Israel *to him*, that is, to God. The strength of my translation is that it makes explicit the nature of the speaker's frustration.

<sup>54</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 385.

the syntactical question therefore appears with the figure YHWH has chosen to solve the problem of Israel. That is, this chosen servant, whom YHWH now upholds, whom he formed from the womb for Israel's benefit (vv.1-5) is God's agent to help Israel. Indeed, this listener-speaker will enable Israel to be Israel (41:8-13) so that it can fulfill its **מִשְׁפָּט**-vocation for the world (42:1-12).

It is important to recognize that YHWH's strategy is both ancient and new, for here again, God sends a prophetic servant to guide Israel in the way. Although hardly a new remedy for Israel's plight,<sup>55</sup> it is striking that v.3 identifies the prophet as the *personification* of "Israel." This identification suggests that the relationship of the proper noun, **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, to the personal pronoun, **אַתָּה**, should be read predicatively, as the common noun, **עַבְדְּךָ**, was read: "you are my servant, *you are Israel*." That is, "you are Israel" in 49:3 has the selective-exclusive force of an identifying clause; it specifies the entity to which the proposition applies. Having contrasted him with the people, YHWH singles out the listener-speaker in order to express his uniqueness as "Israel." As Williamson points out, this identification amounts to a designation.<sup>56</sup> Thus, in order to show the relationship between what is known from the context and what is new, the line may be re-translated as follows: "You, my servant [known], are hereby designated Israel [new], by whom I will display my glory." It appears that since the House of Jacob did not wear the name well (48:1-2), when in v.3 YHWH finally discloses his name—which according to the divine design he had pronounced "from the womb" (49:1)—the servant receives Jacob's old honorific title, "Israel."<sup>57</sup> According to Mowinckel, by this name YHWH gives "*Israel*"

<sup>55</sup> The remedy suggests continuity with the line of prophets reaching back beyond, yet significantly including, YHWH's servant, Isaiah ben Amoz (20:3). Goldingay (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 367) puts it similarly, "The words constitute a claim to be a prophet in the true OT sense. In particular, this fact points us to a sense of identification with the ministry of Isaiah ben Amoz." Compare the comments of C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 212.

<sup>56</sup> On this and other matters, see the important article by H. G. M. Williamson, "The Concept of Israel in Transition," in *The World of Ancient Israel* (R. E. Clements, ed.; New York: Cambridge University, 1989), 141-61. This view also appears in *Variations on a Theme*, 150, and in the article by Peter Wilcox and David Patton-Williams, which credits his influence, "The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah," 79-102.

<sup>57</sup> In this context, the comments of C. R. North are worth repeating, "The writer would seem to say that here in the Servant is the true Israel found ... 'Israel' is not a term of address (vocative), and not merely an apposition to 'my servant', but a name which is predicated. It needs not therefore be an indication of the Servant's proper name. It can be understood as a name of honour applied to him...it is here honorific" (*The Suffering Servant*, 144). Shalom Paul takes "servant" and "Israel" in v.3 as appositional. Next, he regards, "who formed me in the womb to be his servant," as parenthetical and identifies YHWH as the 'subject' of **לְשׁוּבָה** in v.5, reading, "[YHWH] has resolved to bring back Jacob to himself." This avoids the issue. When it resurfaces in v.6, commenting on "to restore the tribes of Jacob," he is at least consistent: "It is too easy for Me [YHWH] just to restore the tribes of Jacob." He does not appear to acknowledge the difficulty, as his comments appear without further explanation. For him, Israel is a collective entity in chs.40-55; yet, this seems inconsistent with his view that DI speaks in 1<sup>st</sup>-person in Isa 61. See S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 326-27, 538.

“the standing and importance of one who represents the entire nation.”<sup>58</sup> Here is the listener-speaker—prepared, protected, and kept secret (49:1-2) since his commissioning in 40:6-8—now called to be Israel itself! Thus, he will not only fulfill a prophet’s vocation, but Israel’s vocation as well. YHWH says to him in effect, “Since you are now *called* ‘Israel’, you must also *be* Israel.” In fact, since he retains a ministry exercised to Israel, he must be Israel for Israel’s sake.<sup>59</sup> In this way, while Israel remains YHWH’s servant (v.3), YHWH’s servant can restore Israel to God and thus to its servant role (41:8; 49:4-6).

In sum, this solution means that neither YHWH’s ultimate objective nor Israel’s role in its realization are threatened, for YHWH’s glory (הִפָּא, *hitpa‘el*) will be manifested through his image after all. Because as his מַלְאָכִים-empowered messenger (48:16b) God will display his glory through this “Israel” (49:3), hope is renewed that, through him, glory might also be displayed through the House of Jacob once again (42:1).<sup>60</sup> Hence, corporate and personal servant remain “profoundly oriented toward each other” (cf. 42:24),<sup>61</sup> and the designation of the one as Israel now amounts to an invitation for the many to follow. Furthermore, the connection of this figure to the manifestation of YHWH’s glory suggests that, through *this* devotee, YHWH will bring about the new things he is declaring for Zion’s restoration (cf. 40:5; 42:9).

### 5.2.2. *Be Israel for the Sake of the World*

Verses 4-6b $\alpha$  all have the same basic object, namely, the return and retribalization of the survivors of Israel. Yet, in 42:1-12 the task of bringing Jacob back was not envisaged for God’s corporate servant as Israel. In the former poem, Israel’s calling as a light to nations would result in “opening blind eyes, and bringing forth prisoners from prison.” Isaiah 42 had outlined Israel’s servant role as a mission extended from Israel to the world (42:1, 4, 5-9, 10-12). Isaiah 42:18-48:22 nevertheless disclosed Jacob-Israel’s solidarity with humanity’s woeful estate; hence, reassembling *this* Israel must take precedence, as a prerequisite for the fulfillment of servant-Israel’s Abrahamic (41:8) and Davidic (42:1, 4) calling to embody a covenant for the world (42:6). Consequently, the listener-speaker, whose servant role has involved a mission to Jacob-Israel all along, must stay the course. Given the listener-speaker’s new and incomparable designation as “Israel,” however, the

<sup>58</sup> See S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 215. “In place of the corporate nation Israel,” writes Childs, “which up to this point has always borne the title, ‘my servant’ (41:9; 42:1, 19; 44:1; 45:4), a single figure now carries the title and even office” (*Isaiah*, 382).

<sup>59</sup> Notice that the development of 49:1-6 recapitulates the relationship in ch.41 and 42 between Israel’s identity (emphasized by 41:8-13) and vocation (emphasized by 42:1-4).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. 44:23; 55:5; 60:9; 61:3.

<sup>61</sup> R. J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 152. In the same place, he writes, “The concept can include those Israelites who are associated with the servant in obedience to the present task.”

scope of his role must also broaden to correspond with his new name. This broadening mission is the message of v.6.

In v.6, YHWH says the listener-speaker must continue the task he presently bears as a prophet to Jacob-Israel; and yet, YHWH will expand the reach of his mission so that it will encompass the new servant-task he bears as “Israel” (49:3). This expanded mission is therefore consistent with the figure’s calling to be Israel for Israel’s sake. “Israel,” God’s  $\text{לִרְאוֹת}$ -endowed image-bearer, hereby remains Israel (42:1; 48:16b; 49:3), only with a twofold mission. First, designated as Israel, he becomes a *bona fide* model for all Israel to follow. Second, as the authentic expression of Israel, he becomes the *avatar* of Israel’s identity and vocation before the entire world.<sup>62</sup> The features of v.6 support this conclusion. First, the address to the coastlands and the inclusio supplied by the pairs,  $\text{לְאֻמִּים מְרַחֵק} \parallel \text{אֵיִם}$  (v.1) and  $\text{אֹר גִּוִּים} \parallel \text{קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ}$  (v.6), demonstrate that the servant’s role has been expanded to absorb that of corporate Israel (cf. 42:1, 4, 6). Second, the syntax of YHWH’s reported speech indicates a causal relationship. Since YHWH has designated the prophet as “Israel,” it is no longer enough (lit., “too insignificant”  $\text{נֶקֶל}$ ) for this prophetic figure to fulfill a commission to the surviving remnant alone. Accordingly, YHWH expands the figure’s role and task to correspond with Israel’s calling to benefit the nations (42:1-4, 10-12). Again, this means that the task of bringing about the will of God in the world will still be undertaken by “Israel,” only now (at least initially) it will be borne by YHWH’s representative prophetic servant.

Finally, v.6 expresses God’s will more specifically with two clauses governed by the verb  $\text{נָתַן}$  (+  $\text{ל}$ -prep.), a syntactical relation familiar from 42:6, only here the second clause is different. The parallel to “light for nations” ( $\text{לְאֹר גִּוִּים}$ ) here is “so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” ( $\text{לְהֵיוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ}$ ).<sup>63</sup> Perhaps this suggests that the House of Jacob will see and seek the salvation that comes to life in YHWH’s prophet (cf. 2:5). As light radiates through him, Jacob-Israel and the entire world may recognize and desire it (2:2-4). If we are also to understand the aim of this expansion as the fulfillment of Israel’s royal ( $\text{מֶלֶךְ}$  and  $\text{תּוֹרָה}$ ) vocation from 42:1-4, 5-9, then Melugin’s observation is appropriate: “As the king is to have the nations as his inheritance (Ps 2:8), so the servant is to be a light to the nations (Isa 49:6).”<sup>64</sup> Indeed, this

<sup>62</sup> Childs explains the development well, “Israel is now understood within the dynamic movement of the prophetic history as embodied in the suffering, individual figure who has been divinely commissioned to the selfsame task of the deliverance of the chosen people and the nations at large” (*Isaiah*, 387).

<sup>63</sup> For “light” || “salvation” see Isa 51:4; 60:3.

<sup>64</sup> R. Melugin, *Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 69.

light begins to come, as it were, ‘ahead of time’ with ch.49’s summons to the coastlands. It seems they are hearing and so becoming recipients of his **תורה** after all (42:4).

In the next stanza (vv.7-12), messenger formulae (**כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**) distinguish v.7 and vv.8-12 from the preceding, uniting these two strophes as twin messages from YHWH. The formula shifts away from the reported dialogue (vv.1-6) to deliver God’s speech more directly; however, in v.7, it is difficult to identify the audience (individual or collective). What is clear is that YHWH addresses one “deeply despised, abhorred by nations, a slave (**עַבֵּד**) of rulers,” yet “chosen” (**בְּחֵר**) by God. The verse also clearly expresses the motif of reversal, from the humiliation to the exaltation of “Israel” as either the prophet<sup>65</sup> or the people,<sup>66</sup> or (perhaps ultimately) both. In any event, v.7 describes the figure as a “slave,” which clashes with “Israel” as the servant’s honorific title (v.3). As a slave, the tyrannical rulers do not presently recognize Israel’s association with YHWH. As despised, the kings and princes of the earth presently regard Israel as menial and insignificant (cf. 41:14).<sup>67</sup> As abhorred (**הִעֲבָה**), Israel is the object of intense loathing.<sup>68</sup> Yet, somehow, their perception will change; hence, despite the verse’s inherent difficulties, the main point is that God is faithful.<sup>69</sup> The evidence for this is the transformed outlook of the kings who once despised this slave. They will see and rise up (in astonishment?) from their dignified position, and proud princes will fall prostrate in homage to God. Again, it is hard to tell who (individual or collective) or what they will see. Nevertheless, the logical relationship of the last clause to the preceding in v.7, “since [YHWH] chose you” (**וַיִּבְחַרְךָ**), and the selection of the verb **הִעֲבָה** (cf. 41:21; 44:19) suggest that a contrast is again being drawn between the alternate choices of the ‘participants’ in chs.40-55 (cf. 41:5-7, 8-13). YHWH elects his servant,<sup>70</sup> one who bears

<sup>65</sup> “The Servant is despised and abhorred by everyone. That he of all people should be chosen by Yahweh is a reason for the mighty to be astonished. It signifies a fundamental reversal,” writes K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 313. See also, B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 386.

<sup>66</sup> Westermann (*Isaiah* 40-66, 213) thinks it refers to the nation, because the chosen-Jacob needs restoring. Later he writes, “It is the faithfulness of its God who, when disaster overtook it, stood by it from first to last” (*Isaiah* 40-66, 216). See, e.g., also, J. Goldingay (*Message of Isaiah* 40-55, 374), who makes the excellent point that it is impossible to accept a situation in which Israel is a “servant of rulers” instead of a servant of YHWH. J. Blenkinsopp writes, “The referent is clearly the Israelite people as a whole, not an individual” (*Isaiah* 40-55, 304).

<sup>67</sup> In Jer 49:15, **בֵּית** refers to Edom’s small size; its other appearance in Isaiah comes at 53:3 (2x).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Job 30:10; Ps 106:40; Isa 14:19; Ezek 16:25. The prophet previously used the noun form, “abomination” (**הִיעֲבָה**; 41:24; 44:19), to refer to the abhorred idolaters and their loathsome practices. Is this how outsiders viewed the servant, the servant’s message, or Jacob-Israel’s worship of YHWH?

<sup>69</sup> The expression, “YHWH who is faithful” (**יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר נֶאֱמָן**) appears only here and in Deut 7:9. The phrase underscores YHWH’s faithfulness to his promises spoken through his prophetic servant. YHWH is faithful to preserve rather than forsake the people he has chosen (cf. 40:27; 41:8-9; 43:10, 20; 44:1-2; 45:4), and thus YHWH is faithful to his word that stands forever (40:8).

<sup>70</sup> Isa 40:1; 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2.



his image (collectively and personally). Throughout chs.40-55, YHWH's selection, and the command that this "choice" respond by choosing YHWH and his ways, contrasts with the peoples' selecting idols.<sup>71</sup> The verse thus points to YHWH's own ultimate vindication in the vindication of his choice. Probably, the idea is that God will receive glory through his chosen one when he becomes a light for nations. Therefore, what the kings will see is this light.<sup>72</sup> In other words, "Israel" is YHWH's choice and YHWH's instrument for salvation. YHWH, in turn, is the only choice for both the prophet and the (international) community that waits in reliance upon him.<sup>73</sup> Still, it is a difficult verse, but one other thing becomes clear: through "Israel," his chosen servant, Jacob-Israel retains its role in YHWH's plan to bring about the universal submission of all the nations and peoples of the earth (45:23).<sup>74</sup>

After v.7 has reaffirmed the Lord's ultimate aim, v.8 commences with another messenger formula. The rest of the stanza (vv.8-12) works out the details of the servant's task introduced by the first stanza (vv.1-6). What is striking, here—given the enormous scope of v.6 and the patent affinity that 49:8-12 bears with 42:5-9—is how this section makes exclusive reference to the servant's commission *as "Israel" to Israel* (49:3, 5), the "preserved" (נִצָּר) from the tribes of Jacob (v.6abα). For instance, in v.8d, the anticipated result merely exhibits fulfillment of the prophet's initial call; although it now includes restoring the land and allotting the uninhabited property, he appears to bring about only the return of Jacob. Hence, this apparent restriction raises a question about YHWH's "not enough" (נִכְלָה) from v.6aα. It is crucial, therefore, to understand the relationship of his 'local' mission (v.8) to his 'international' calling to be Israel for the sake of the world (v.6). Both catchword connections between verses of this poem and verbal connections between the servant poems in chs.41, 42, and 49 facilitate understanding. These connections do not merely provide cohesion; they are a key to the relationship between domestic and foreign affairs as regards "Israel's" commission.

The first connection involves the "day of salvation" (בְּיוֹם יְשׁוּעָה), which v.6 promised would reach "the ends of the earth" in view of the servant's personification of

<sup>71</sup> Isa 40:20; 41:24; cf. 1:29; 65:12; 66:3.

<sup>72</sup> N. Lohfink writes, "God's servant functions as 'light to the nations' when the kings and princes see how God deals with Israel." See, N. Lohfink, *God of Israel and the Nations*, 49.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. 40:28-31; 42:4; 48:22. The literary anticipation of Isa 52:10, 15; 53:3 is difficult to miss. Childs finds a "redactional retrojection" from ch.53 here in 49:7, explaining, "The introduction of the servant in v.7 as a redactional retrojection assures that the servant is understood as the addressee of vv.8-12" (*Isaiah*, 386). This identification of the audience is the more likely one, but even Childs's comments point up the difficulty of establishing it at this point in the development of chs.49-55.

<sup>74</sup> Thus, the ultimate goal of FI remains the fulfillment of its programmatic vision for the establishment of YHWH's worldwide sovereignty (2:2-4).

light (42:6; 52:10; 62:1). Here, however, the parallel expression, “time of favor” (בֵּעֵרָה רְצוֹן), suggests that “salvation” refers to YHWH’s merciful response to the outcry of his people and their deliverance from distress.<sup>75</sup> God promises to answer (עֲנֶה) his people’s cry for help (עֲצֹר) on the appointed day (at the appointed time).<sup>76</sup> Indeed, from the beginning, YHWH has repeatedly offered help for Israel (41:10, 13, 14; 44:2), promising strength even as they were called to wait for him (cf. 40:1, 28-31); since each messenger formula (49:7, 8) follows YHWH’s “but now” (וְעַתָּה) in v.6,<sup>77</sup> these expressions of help indicate that Israel’s wait will soon be over. Thus, it appears that the long-awaited time is near; indeed, that it has come, so to speak, with the re-commissioning (49:5-6) of YHWH’s prophetic servant as “Israel.” More than this, in his role as “Israel,” the prophetic servant seems to be both the subject matter of YHWH’s address and its addressee. YHWH promises to answer the servant’s cry for help on the appointed day. This feature of the poem is clear simply from the correspondence of v.6 with vv.8-12 as they pertain to the help that YHWH’s servant, in turn, promises the preserved of Israel.

At this point, the correlation between 42:6 and 49:6, 8 becomes more important than the catchword connections, since the correlation is directly relevant to the question of what fulfillment will mean for the association of domestic and foreign affairs in Israelite society. Concerning that relationship, however, this poem splits into two verses what YHWH had previously expressed in one. Whereas בְּרִית and אֹר were paired in 42:6, 49:6 mentions אֹר and 49:8 mentions בְּרִית. The parallelism established occurs across the lines of the poem and in reverse. Despite this difference, “covenant” in 49:8, just as “light” in 49:6, makes a vital link with 42:6. The affinity between the two poems suggests a close connection between the “covenant for peoples” (49:8) and the “light for nations” (49:6) within this poem as well.

Between these poems and within 49:1-12, then, the message develops incrementally and organically. The dynamic progression indicates that, as YHWH’s image-bearer and servant, Israel remains the solution to the problems of all humanity.

<sup>75</sup> See Isa 12:2; 25:9; 51:6; Exod 14:13 (cf. רָצוֹחַ in Isa 40:1-2).

<sup>76</sup> The use of these temporal expressions may be compared to the use of similar expression in Isa 1-39. I think their use in this context supports the thesis of van Wieringen mentioned in chapter 2 of this dissertation. In Isa 40-55, the absence of superscriptions and the anonymity of the listener-speaker suggests that chs.40-66 as a whole concern the time beyond, or in van Wieringen’s expression, the ‘days beyond the days’ of Judah’s kings (1:1). Thus, the Babylonian exile is present between chs.39 and 40 in the form of an ellipse. The word of consolation is concerned with Jacob-Israel’s response to YHWH in this exilic setting during the time after judgment (Isa 40:8). As van Wieringen expresses this, “The text of Isaiah 40-66...transcends the heading in Isaiah 1:1 and is accordingly not determined by 1:1” (“The Day Beyond the Days,” 255).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. 43:1; 44:1-2; 48:16b-17.

This is the point of making the servant into **בְּרִית עַם**. As a model for the world to see, “Israel” will serve God by serving Israel.<sup>78</sup> Between “light for nations” and “salvation to the ends of the earth,” therefore, “covenant for the people” stands as the missing link. Verse 8 provides that link as YHWH calls the servant-figure to embody and express a commission for Israel that blossoms into a commission for the world. In other words, to be a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, and to release the prisoners from darkness (42:7) first requires the gathering of the Diaspora (49:9-12; 48:20-22) from all points of the compass (cf. 43:5-6). The allotment of the uninhabited property and the restoration of the tribes of Israel (v.8)<sup>79</sup> will express what it means to become a covenant for people. In other words, Isa 49:6, 8-12 comprises a vision of Israel delivered and restored, reconstituted and re-organized by God through his servant. The **בְּרִית עַם**, therefore, refers to the restoration of Israel as this is first concretely embodied and manifested by him.<sup>80</sup> It is “for people” (**עַם**), here (as in 42:6), because ultimately the entire world is obliged to respond to what YHWH will do for all Israel through the one designated Israel.

In sum, vv.8-12 offer hope for humanity inasmuch as they offer reassurance to YHWH’s prophetic servant, “Israel.” His labor has not been in vain, for as “Israel,” he will reassemble Israel, thus returning Jacob to God (vv.4-5).<sup>81</sup> So, while 49:1-13 (cf. v.4) does not mention **מִשְׁפָּט** in the same sense as 42:1-4, the nations can rest assured that because this “Israel” knows that both his **מִשְׁפָּט** (“vindication”) and his **פְּעוּלָה** (“result/reward”) rests with YHWH (cf. 40:27), **מִשְׁפָּט** (“just order”) will be brought to the

<sup>78</sup> In fact, this is servanthood—it is the fulfillment of **תּוֹרָה**—and this **תּוֹרָה** is the solution to the problems of the world (cf. 1:10-17; 2:2-4, 5).

<sup>79</sup> All of these features of the servant’s task signal the second exodus motif, since the fulfillment of **תּוֹרָה** in the exodus complex of events included both wilderness and settlement, the roles of both Moses (Deut 3:28; 19:3; 31:7) and Joshua (Josh 13-19). Moreover, release, restoration, and re-allotment of ancestral land-holdings point to the exile as a period of debt-slavery and YHWH’s role as **גֹּאֲל** on Israel’s behalf (Lev 25:25-55; cf. 40:1-2; 50:1). See J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran* (VTSup 115; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 192.

<sup>80</sup> Lohfink writes, “...Israel’s covenant is associated here with the turning of the nations to the God of Israel. And yet in the process it continues to be the covenant *with Israel*” (*God of Israel and the Nations*, 50, his italics).

<sup>81</sup> The fulfillment of the commands remains correlative to the response of the persons addressed. Thus, more than mere political reintegration is in view. The passage does not tell how this will take place, but YHWH’s promise is that the achievement of the servant’s task will lead to Israel’s repentance. Far from being cast off (48:19), YHWH’s representative will draw a penitent people back to YHWH (cf. 48:22). Blenkinsopp agrees, explaining that this “includes the idea of reintegration and return to the land (cf. Jer 50:19; Ezek 39:27), physical restoration (cf. Isa 58:12; Ps 23:3; 60:3), and moral regeneration...turning” (*Isaiah 40-55*, 301). There is no final separation, however, of the political and spiritual. As C. R. North has correctly recognized, with Calvin, there are two levels of fulfillment here. Thus, he observes, “...it is difficult to see how any prophet, especially in the conditions of the exile, could conceive of a spiritual restoration apart from the political rehabilitation of his nation” (*The Suffering Servant*, 146).

nations. Put differently, YHWH has a chosen servant who is up to the task outlined there as well.

Furthermore, while 49:1-13 does not mention **עַבְדֵּי יְהוָה** explicitly (cf. 42:4), this servant's address to the coastlands already begins to satisfy their longing for it (v.1). If that were not enough, because this servant will help Jacob-Israel fulfill its vocation—regardless of whether they presently see or hear<sup>82</sup>—**מִשְׁפָּט** will come to the nations through the House of Jacob after all (42:1). Therefore, while YHWH's choice of servant assures the coastlands that "Israel" will accomplish its task, YHWH's designation of this servant as "Israel" assures Jacob-Israel that the covenant Lord will comfort them too, and all Israel will be true Israel again. As Koole recognized, once "true Israel will make his people into the true Israel again,"<sup>83</sup> the world will come aright. At the favorable time of fulfillment (v.8), heaven and earth will rejoice with the coastlands (42:10-12; 48:13; 49:1, 13), because, as a covenant for people, Israel will definitively (**לְאָמָה**) establish **מִשְׁפָּט** in the earth (42:4).

### 5.2.3. Conclusion

Verses 7-12 make a crucial link with the former servant poems (41:8-16; 42:1-12). They also bring the three stanzas of this servant poem together (49:1-6, 7-12, 13). By a ministry to Jacob-Israel, the servant becomes a light for nations and a covenant for the people. This covenant anticipates the renewed focus on Zion in chs.49-55. It says to Zion that land restored to people (v.9) will mean people restored to land, for YHWH will shepherd them home to overflow their capital and inhabit the cities of Judah (cf. 40:9-11). Indeed, the return of Israel anticipates the reversal of Isaiah's commission in 6:10-11 (cf. 40:1-2), the fulfillment of the prophetic exhortation to repent (1:17), and an end to Jacob-Israel's exilic circumstances (4:2-6). That achievement will enable Jacob to walk in the light of the Lord (2:5), thus bringing about the realization of FI's vision for global society (2:2-4; 60:1-3).

Chapter 49 indicates that if Israelite society would embody covenant, light, and salvation for the world, it has need of a prophet's service once more. YHWH will return to rule the world from Zion (40:1-11),<sup>84</sup> and the servant's address to the coastlands pertains directly to Zion's future. It anticipates a positive answer to Zion's complaint in 49:14 and the nations' streaming to hear **עַבְדֵּי יְהוָה** from there. In the meantime, this means that the

<sup>82</sup> Isa 48:10, 13, 14; 42:18-25; 43:1; 44:1

<sup>83</sup> See J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 1.

<sup>84</sup> "The prophetic announcement of the comfort of God with which these chapters began (40:1) is therefore now being fulfilled in events taking place and about to take place (cf. 51:3, 12; 52:9)," J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 305.

servant's **תִּוְרָה** is not for the coastlands only—it is for Israel as well. To paraphrase 42:4, the coastlands await the expression and embodiment of **תִּוְרָה** in YHWH's servant for the restoration of Israelite society. In ch.42, deliverance involved the nations; in ch.49, for salvation to reach the nations, it must first reach Israel. It has begun in the form of a servant, designated “Israel,” who will incarnate the prophetic **תִּוְרָה**.<sup>85</sup>

### 5.3. *Isaiah 50:4-9, 10-11: The Servant's Self-Testimony as דְּבַר־יְהוָה*

#### 5.3.1. *Structure of Isa 50:1-11*

Chapter 50 contributes to the broader context of 49:1-54:17 as it unfolds dramatically,<sup>86</sup> contending with doubts (49:4, 14; 50:1-3), building towards salvation (50:4-52:12), and climaxing in 52:13-53:12 before it resolves in 54:1-17. The chapter opens with another messenger formula (v.1)<sup>87</sup> and a series of rhetorical questions characteristic of the disputation form (**אִי... אִי... מִי... מִדָּוִעַ**, vv.1-2). The first stanza carries the dispute about Zion (49:14-26) directly to her obstinate children (50:1-3). The topic is their mother's suffering and the cause of their separation from her. Unable to see that she suffers for *their* wrongdoing, they actually blame her Redeemer! They think *God* has divorced their mother and sold them to creditors,<sup>88</sup> and so YHWH explains to them that they were sold for their iniquities, and she was sent away (**שְׁלַחָה**) for their transgressions. Still, they do not believe that YHWH has the power (**יָד**) to reach them, let alone redeem (**פְּדוּתָה**) and rescue (**נִצֵּל**) them. Heretofore, he has patiently addressed their complaints (40:27), but now YHWH protests. “When I came [**בֹּאֵה**] calling,” he says, “none of you stepped forth to answer [**וְאִין אִישׁ... וְאִין עֹנֶה**].”<sup>89</sup> In 50:4-9, however, a listener-speaker emerges to show the way. Blenkinsopp is thus correct that 50:4-9 “marks a further stage in the disclosure of a prophetic voice and therefore a prophetic presence.”<sup>90</sup> With the

<sup>85</sup> See B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 394. FI presents a movement from incarnation in the prophetic profile of Isaiah ben Amoz (and his disciples), to ex-carnation (in the written word) to (re-)incarnation in the servant (and disciples/servants) who takes up this word and vision at all costs, longing for YHWH to deliver both his people and his beloved Zion from their present exilic situation.

<sup>86</sup> J. Goldingay observes that repetitions across chs.50-52 facilitate a process whereby themes of chs.40-49 are resumed and their demand on God and people are underlined (*Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 2, 206).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Isa 49:7, 8, 22, 25.

<sup>88</sup> See Isa 40:1-2; 49:7-9; cf. 61:1-3 and J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 193.

<sup>89</sup> The presence of the God who calls with his ‘voice’ underscores the fact that Jacob-Israel is blind (failing to recognize YHWH's presence) and deaf (failing to hear his word). See Isa 42:18-24; 44:21-23; 48:20-21.

<sup>90</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 319.

reappearance of self-referential discourse (1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., v.4; cf. 49:1-6) the audience once again hears the testimony of someone who is grasping the message.<sup>91</sup>

In 50:4-9, the listener-speaker answers the question YHWH had posed to Zion's children at v.2. In contrast to Zion's other children, this prophetic-messenger was present when YHWH came; he does not merely answer YHWH's call (קָרָא), he lives by YHWH's word (דְּבַר, 50:4; cf. 40:6-8). Thus, 50:4 reveals that God has taken the initiative to teach this prophet how to edify the weary (50:4). While YHWH clothes the heavens with darkness (v.3), making its covering sackcloth, light radiates from the listener-speaker who soliloquizes about "my Lord YHWH." Nobody else answered, but in vv.4-9, the servant obediently responds with a word (דְּבַר, v.4) that illumines the way for the others.<sup>92</sup> Having once expressed a sense of failure in his mission to the impenitent-children, he now knows his labor is not in vain (49:4-6).

Nevertheless, as the prophet's confidence in YHWH's purpose increases,<sup>93</sup> so does doubt and disillusionment in the society.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, the prophet's self-testimony here goes beyond his previous תִּנְיָן by restating and then redefining the servant's task as a light for nations (50:10-11).<sup>95</sup> His words now pertain to conduct under oppression (vv.5-9), and they comprise a script for Zion's children to follow (v.10). In vv.5-9, God's new Israel (49:3) meets with "increasingly vehement opposition,"<sup>96</sup> and so for the first time his word describes conduct in humiliation and affliction. As "Israel," he accepts insult and abuse (vv.5-6) and testifies that he will prevail over his adversaries (vv.7-8)<sup>97</sup> because YHWH helps him (vv.7, 9).<sup>98</sup> Despite his suffering, he takes up YHWH's name in each part of the monologue,<sup>99</sup> as all four strophes (vv.4, 5-6, 7-8, 9) commence with the phrase, "My Lord YHWH" (אֲדֹנָיִי יְהוָה). In the final stanza (vv.10, 11), the speaker nevertheless changes, as other voices press the audience to make a choice that will distinguish them

<sup>91</sup> Isa 40:6-8; 42:24-25; 48:16b-19, 20-21.

<sup>92</sup> As J. Koole expresses the relationship between the first two stanzas, "[I]n vv.2-3, Israel refuses to recognize the rightfulness of God's judgment; the Servant accepts the sentence but continues to repose his trust in God" (*Isaiah* 49-55, 103). As Westermann understands it, the servant accepts the principle of just retribution, saying, "he regards the attacks, blows and insults as justified... Any other way of taking the Servant's behavior as expressed in v.6 was quite impossible for the times" (Westermann, *Isaiah* 40-66, 229). His voluntary acceptance of Israel's suffering is an important aspect of this testimony, conveyed through 1<sup>st</sup>-per. discourse: "I did not rebel, I did not turn away, I gave my back..." (v.5).

<sup>93</sup> See Isa 40:8; 42:24-25; 48:16b; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; cf. Ezek 3:8-9.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Isa 40:27; 42:22; 46:12; 48:5, 8; 49:14; 50:1.

<sup>95</sup> Isa 42:6; 49:6, 8; 51:4-6

<sup>96</sup> See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 40-55, 320.

<sup>97</sup> Isa 40:8; 42:4; 49:4-6.

<sup>98</sup> Isa 41:10, 13-14.

<sup>99</sup> See J. Koole, *Isaiah* 49-55, 101.

from the wicked (cf. v.11).<sup>100</sup> The first voice explicitly identifies the speaker as YHWH's servant (קִוִּי עַבְדְּךָ). Hence, the repetition of אֲדֹנָיִי יְהוָה and the identification of the speaker of vv.4-9 as עַבְדְּךָ manifests the bond between the servant's Lord (אֲדֹנָיִי) and the Lord's servant (עַבְדְּךָ); it reflects the covenantal reciprocity that YHWH as "our God" desires from all Israel as "my people" (40:1). Isa 50:4-9 therefore constitutes true Israel's witness to "my Lord YHWH" as the true God, and v.10 is issued in hope of discovering other God-fearers who will follow the path of YHWH's servant. It remains for God himself to disclose the alternative path in v.11, for it leads to "torment" (מַעֲצָבָה)—a single word that signals the fate of those who reject his servant.<sup>101</sup>

Isaiah 51:1 starts the next unit, which offers further comfort to devotees of Zion's cause. As an initial observation, 50:4-9 instructs and encourages this group; hence, ch.51 indicates that a larger audience has indeed begun to grasp the message, as God expects *from* Israel what the servant has said and done *as* Israel (40:27-31; 41:8-16; 43:12).

As a preliminary impression, therefore, 50:4-9 appears to defend the truth of the servant's claims from 49:1-6 by beginning to show Jacob how to be Israel again. Since the servant knows where vindication (מִשְׁפָּט), strength (עֹז), and help (עֲזָרָה) are found, he takes up Israel's own vocation, testifies to the truth about אֲדֹנָיִי יְהוָה, and does what any true disciple of YHWH would do in the face of adversity.<sup>102</sup> The chapter thus supports the view that YHWH has been training his apprentice for a pedagogical, prophetic role (49:2; 50:4). Together with 49:1-6, 50:4-9 suggests that there were hidden years, intimately related to the preparation of the servant's mouth, during which he continued to grow in the understanding of God's word ("morning by morning"). Now, in the midst of his painful pedagogy, his own discourse testifies to the import of his training for the edification of others. Those who heed his testimony also rely on God's word as they follow the servant's pattern out of reverence for God. In result, the servant's testimony as YHWH's disciple aims to multiply disciples who would imitate the servant's pattern of self-sacrificing servanthood (53:14, 17). Children of Zion who would become servant-disciples too must turn and walk in the servant's light (cf. 49:13), trusting YHWH to help and vindicate them (50:7-8).

<sup>100</sup> See Isa 30:20-21; 48:17, 22; cf. 1 Kgs 8:32.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Isa 1:31; 48:22; 57:21; 66:24.

<sup>102</sup> As Goldingay puts it, he claims "implicitly to be modeling what it means to be a child of Ms Zion and to be realizing by anticipation the intent that 54:13 will announce" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 404).

### 5.3.2. *The Disciple's Self-Testimony (Isa 50:4-9)*

#### 5.3.2.1. *A Disciple of YHWH and Isaiah ben Amoz (Isa 50:4)*

The phrase, ‘My Lord, YHWH,’ opens the stanza and structures the entire servant poem (vv.4, 5, 7, 9), conveying a quality of intimacy in the disciple-figure’s relation to YHWH. The phrase coherently communicates both the requisite acknowledgement of YHWH’s sovereignty and the believer’s personal commitment to YHWH as his Lord. In the first strophe (v.4), the figure identifies himself as the Lord’s very disciple (לְמוֹד), and as Clifford points out, “This title holds the key to the passage.”<sup>103</sup> That God’s servant is God’s disciple, Westermann concurs, is “the most important feature in the picture of the Servant.”<sup>104</sup> On the one hand, as the particular relationship between the Teacher and his disciple continues to unfold, discipleship adds the nuance of faithful reliance/trust to the requirement of absolute allegiance/loyalty (v.4).<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, when YHWH is the Teacher, the learner does not merely follow his דָּבָר as a devoted student, he relies on the Lord’s instruction (תּוֹרָה) to guide him as a loyal servant.

Presently, the Teacher’s training leads the disciple into conflict (vv.5-6), just as it did previously for the misunderstood prophet (28:9-12). Like Isaiah, this prophet does not train with material weapons of war, for YHWH’s ‘gift’ (נָתַן) of a tongue connects 50:4 to 49:2, where YHWH prepared his mouth (as a sword) for his calling to the nations (49:6).<sup>106</sup> As YHWH’s mouthpiece, his work is not violent but ministerial and declarative; and so, perhaps in light of FI’s programmatic vision, as “Israel,” YHWH’s disciple is already receiving the דְּבַר־יְהוָה (|| תּוֹרָה) that the nations will seek when they stop training for war (cf. 2:2-4). As a disciple, training the tongue suggests that his task involves memorizing (or recording) and reciting YHWH’s דְּבַר.<sup>107</sup> The result is that this servant will manifest light for the nations as well as for the House of Jacob (2:5; 42:6; 49:6). As YHWH’s apprentice, this servant is equipped with דְּבַר־יְהוָה (or תּוֹרָה) to enlighten the weary of the world.<sup>108</sup>

To equip this figure as a teacher, God first prepared his ears to hear before his tongue was readied to speak (50:4b-5a; cf. 6:10). Having his ears opened to receive God’s word, he could become as “the ones taught” (לְמוֹדִים) and speak for YHWH with his

<sup>103</sup> R. J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 161.

<sup>104</sup> See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 228.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. 48:17; 30:20-21.

<sup>106</sup> See Exod 4:10-12; Jer 1:5, 9-10.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Baruch in Jer 36:4, 6, 17, 18, 32; 45:1.

<sup>108</sup> See Isa 40:31; 41:1; 42:4; 49:7.



tongue (cf. 42:1-4; 53:7). As the Lord's student,<sup>109</sup> he is trained to say exactly what he hears יהוה say.<sup>110</sup> Thus, there is a dual agency, a relationship between God in heaven and the prophet on earth, whom YHWH has raised up to guide the weary of Israel and Zion.<sup>111</sup>

Now, on a holistic reading of FI, "as the ones who are taught" also alludes to 8:16.<sup>112</sup> This correlation suggests both affinity and continuity with the teacher-student relationship that obtained between Isaiah and his disciples (including his children) in chs.7-9. Hence, the repetition of לְמוֹד supports the relationship between chs.1-39 and chs.40-55, and suggests that this "disciple" is a student not merely of YHWH's new words but also of Isaiah's old ones.<sup>113</sup> Given his special relation to YHWH, then, the speaker has become, as it were, a disciple of Isaiah ben Amoz too. Since YHWH has opened his ears, this disciple can receive and recite דְּבַר־יְהוָה and תּוֹרָה, both old and new, adopting Isaiah's former words and integrating them into his own new words. Thus, his preparation ensures that, in this exilic situation too, Isaiah's words still speak. In other words, as a disciple, since he can receive and recite Isaiah's תּוֹרָה and תַּעֲזָרָה, he is qualified to 'unseal' what was sealed by the former prophet.<sup>114</sup> In the Lord's preparation of this disciple, then, by opening his ears, he becomes YHWH's new mouthpiece to teach Jacob-Israel.<sup>115</sup> He bears the same prophetic, pedagogical, role on behalf of Israel that Isaiah ben Amoz bore, so that, through him, Isaiah's own תּוֹרָה is no dead letter. Unlike Isaiah, however, his specific task is not to harden but to return Jacob-Israel to God (49:5). Thus, after judgment, YHWH's actions through this servant-disciple positively incorporate Isaiah's former words into God's new design for the reversal of Zion's experience.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. 40:6-8; 42:24-45; 48:16b-19; 49:2.

<sup>110</sup> K. Baltzer writes, "What is said makes clear that the one who is introducing himself here is a 'teacher'...a 'disciple', 'a scholar' (לְמוֹד), and he passes on that which he has heard from his Lord and master" (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 339).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. 41:29; 42:1; 49:7; 50:10.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. 50:4; 54:13. The phrase, "one taught," לְמוֹד, occurs 6 times in the Hebrew Bible, twice in Jeremiah, with the sense, "be accustomed" (Jer 2:24; 13:23) and 4 times in Isaiah, with all four referring to "disciples" (Isa 8:16; 50:4 [2x]; 54:13). As Williamson observes correctly, "The occurrences in Isaiah, by contrast [with Jer 2:24; 13:23], seem to be closely associated with each other. They all use the word in the plural, and they all have the positive meaning of those who are instructed by God, either directly or through his prophet" (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 108).

<sup>113</sup> So also, Baltzer, who writes, "Isa 8:16 suggests that there was a teacher-pupil relationship in the framework of the prophetic institution...and on the basis of what has already been said the Servant's position and function permit a comparison with the prophetic office" (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 339). B. Childs rejects 8:16 as a context, pointing to the more immediate context found in 48:17, "the oracle delivered to recalcitrant Israel by the servant" (*Isaiah*, 394). But while affirming the latter, I can see no reason to deny the former connection.

<sup>114</sup> Here again, Williamson's comments are helpful, "[DI's] emphasis on the word [disciple] implies that he is one of those who is 'qualified' to unseal the document" (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 108).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Isa 30:20-21; 48:16b-17; 50:10.

This basic holistic observation points to further similarities with the prophetic profile of Isaiah ben Amoz.<sup>116</sup> Like Isaiah, this disciple realizes his solidarity with the sinful people (6:5; 42:24), his mouth and tongue are specially prepared to speak (6:7; 49:2; 50:4), and as Isaiah before him, he must do what God expects from him as a servant (20:3; 49:6). Most significantly, perhaps, like Isaiah (but unlike the people), he understands the depths of Jacob's iniquity and debt. Thus, acknowledging the Lord's presence, he responds when YHWH calls, recognizes that YHWH upholds **משפט**,<sup>117</sup> and acknowledges the Holy One's righteous desire to magnify **תורה**.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, he understands that the Mighty One of Jacob offers strength and **דבר** to help his people stand.<sup>119</sup>

If these similarities are relevant, so are the dissimilarities, for unlike deaf Israel and the role of Isaiah, who sealed their ears and stopped their mouths (6:10), this figure has ears to hear and a tongue to speak—not for himself only, but for the weary. Therefore, as Israel, he can facilitate the realization of YHWH's aspirations for Israel according to both its ancestral identity (41:8-16) and its servant vocation (42:1-4; cf. vv.18-19). He can fulfill the task expressly designated to him in 49:1-6, to be Israel for Israel's sake and to assemble Israel for God. His mission is thus expressed in both continuity and contrast with the mission of Isaiah ben Amoz, because his own open ears signify that YHWH no longer intends to close off the organs of repentance (6:8-10). Rather than destroy the land and remove its inhabitants (6:11-12), this prophet's word will comfort (40:1), edify (50:4), and reconstitute Israel (49:8). Through this disciple, therefore, both YHWH's new word and Isaiah's old word function to rescue Israel and redeem Zion. Like Isaiah before him, this servant appears to implement words (both traditional and new) in speech and action, so that now, for the preserved of Israel, Isaiah's words of rebuke and the servant's words of consolation come together in YHWH's singular design to refine and restore his people. Put differently, although the listener-speaker bears a similar prophetic, pedagogical, role, he exercises it for salvation rather than judgment. As a word unsealed, therefore, Isaiah's

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<sup>116</sup> Though many rightly note affinities with the call of Jeremiah, one must not overlook the intratextual correlation between the disciple, designated "Israel," and the master, Isaiah ben Amoz. On this section's affinities with Jeremiah, see esp. the commentary by K. Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 340). Baltzer notes similarities (esp. with Jeremiah's so-called confessions) as regards personal vilification and threats (vv.5-6; cf. Jer 11:19; 15:10; 17:15; 18:18; 20:10), the invocation of YHWH and expressions of trust (vv.7-8; cf. Jer 11:20; 17:14; 20:11, 13), the judicial clarification of the accusations (vv.8-9; cf. Jer 11:19; 15:10-11; 17:15-16; 18:18-20; 20:10), and the deflecting of the threatened fate on to the enemy (v.9; cf. Jer 11:21-23; 15:15; 17:18; 18:21-23; 20:12). In support of the connection with Isaiah ben Amoz, see Charles David Isbell, "The *Limmûdîm* in the Book of Isaiah" *JSOT* 34 (2009): 99-109, who sees "disciple" as a description of the prophetic role held by sixth-century 'students' of the earlier Isaianic tradition, responsible for transforming Isaiah's messages of doom into messages of hope at the prospect of redemption.

<sup>117</sup> Isa 1:10-17; 49:4; 50:8.

<sup>118</sup> Isa 5:24; 42:24-25.

<sup>119</sup> See Isa 40:8, 28-31; 41:10, 13-14; 49:5; 50:4, 7, 9.

words, which formerly brought judgment by cutting off the way of repentance, now bring consolation by opening the way to restoration. This is the purpose of the servant's self-testimony for the repentant: his prophetic profile contributes to Isaiah's prophetic book as a movement from judgment to restoration. Indeed, his own performance in word and deed becomes the model, as Jacob-Israel, the coastlands, and the kings and princes of the earth watch and listen.

For the moment, his peculiar calling involves sustaining the weary (v.4; 40:1; 40:29-31), who are Jacob-Israel, Zion (40:27-31; 43:22; 49:14), and "all Israel." Therefore, *pace* Seitz, who thinks that this signals "a narrowing or specifying of the prophet's audience,"<sup>120</sup> there is insufficient reason to consider 'the weary' as a definable group within Jacob-Israel. The figure of 50:4-9 (10) does not make his appeal only to some and not others in the community. Even if the response to his word will distinguish between the weary, who rely on God, and the rebels, who do not, this דבר presently comes to everyone. Thus, it seems that, without delusion, he hopes to sustain "all Israel."<sup>121</sup> His objective is to comfort his people as God has desired; as he too has been comforted by God throughout chs.40-49 (cf. 40:1; 49:5-6). At this point, then, his address to the "weary" indicates his solidarity with all Israel, for, as "Israel," YHWH has taught him the lessons of 40:28-31; hence, he is able to teach others with ears to hear and a mind to understand (cf. 51:7) about YHWH's power to strengthen them. The great difference is that God's דבר now comes through this disciple and his actions as YHWH's prophetic agent, specifically by his declaration of דבר or תורה. In short, he is carrying out his mission to all (49:5-6, 7-12), though his word will search the heart to effect the distinction Seitz anticipates.

Now, since the text is talking about a "word" that the figure speaks to the people, דבר must go with the first line, which mentions a disciple's 'tongue' (cf. 49:2), rather than the second line, which mentions the disciple's "ear." The word he speaks is the message YHWH gives the prophet to edify the weary. More than this, true "Israel" becomes in word and deed a model of what it means to be YHWH's disciple and, like the prophet Isaiah, a true child of Zion (cf. 54:13).

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<sup>120</sup> "The word he has to speak involves the weary. The term was used at 40:30 to stipulate who God was prepared to strengthen; not the strong or the verile, but the faint, the powerless, the weary, and the exhausted (40:29-31). Here the weary are those addressed effectively by the servant." See Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 437.

<sup>121</sup> Seitz is only right if 'the weary' already designates those addressed *effectively* by the servant. There is no reason in v.4, however, to think it does, as if the servant himself has identified this group in advance of his utterance. See S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 194.

To sum up, at his own initiative, God has prepared his disciple ('one taught'). With the ear, he has listened, so that with his tongue, he knows how to edify the weary with דבר. This language signals the Teacher-student relationship, which suggests that the word whereby YHWH trains him is YHWH's (and Isaiah's) תורה. As Goldingay expresses it, "The תורה that Isaiah once brought is the דבר that Second Isaiah now uses to encourage."<sup>122</sup> Hence, it is important to see his training as the education of one who will also be a teacher.<sup>123</sup> As a תורה-teacher, and as Isaiah's disciple, this disciple's תורה comes together with both Isaiah's old תורה and YHWH's new דבר. His דבר has the sense of instruction or principles for guidance (as תורה in 42:4).<sup>124</sup> Thus, the portrait recalls the role and will of Moses, who, as a teacher (Deut 4:1, 5), also longed that future generations in Israel would be filled with prophets and teachers (Num 11:29; Deut 4:10).<sup>125</sup> Like Moses and Isaiah, he is trained for battle (49:2), but he does not wield the sword (cf. Exod 17:9ff; Isa 37:4-6); rather, he is equipped with YHWH's word and spirit (48:16b; 50:4) in order to guide the weary lambs on their way (30:20-21; 40:10-11). With his tongue and words he says exactly what God intends (cf. Isa 42:4; Ps 57:5), so that, as Seitz observes appropriately, "God and the servant are one."<sup>126</sup>

### 5.3.1.2. *The Disciple's Manner (Isa 50:5-6)*

The subsequent strophes (50:5-6, 7-8, 9) show that the training of this servant has involved a pedagogy of humiliation and intense suffering (vv.4, 5-6) that nonetheless included the assurance of YHWH's help, vindication, and eventual punishment of adversaries (vv.7-8, 9). Together they make a profound statement of conviction that does not merely acknowledge general "help" but the specific recognition of where משפט comes from (v.8).<sup>127</sup> The listener-speaker recognizes that YHWH alone brings deliverance from false

<sup>122</sup> See, J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 404. I agree with his view that there is no reason to restrict this דבר to the coming liberation of God's people from Babylon or to YHWH's message concerning Cyrus, since דבר is all encompassing. "The word is the one that comes from YHWH, concerns YHWH's purpose that stands forever, and is guaranteed to generate its fruit (40:6; 55:11). It is the word of YHWH's servant concerning Jerusalem's restoration (44:26), though also the word that concerns the whole world (45:23), and the word that is destined to leave Jerusalem rather than becoming stuck there (2:3)" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 405). In this context, דבר is shorthand for the concept of תורה, overlapping with מצות as the disclosure of the Teacher's purpose in 48:17. It thus incorporates within it Isaiah's total vision as a coherent unit or prophetic תורה.

<sup>123</sup> One who offers catechesis, as Moses did (Deut 1:5; 4:1; 6:20-25; 18:15-22).

<sup>124</sup> So also, J. Koole: "In 42:1ff, he offers this insight through his 'instruction' (תורה), and דבר in this verse must mean the same thing" (*Isaiah 49-55*, 108).

<sup>125</sup> See Patrick Miller, "Moses My Servant: The Deuteronomic Portrait of Moses" *Int* 41 (1987): 245-55.

<sup>126</sup> Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 437.

<sup>127</sup> Isa 40:27; cf. e.g., 41:10, 13, 14.

accusation and oppressive justice. Once again, the contrast with 40:27 demonstrates that the servant has taken up Israel's mission (49:3) for Israel's sake (49:7-12).

In the first of these strophes, the listener-speaker indicates his manner/approach. Two positive affirmations in v.6a are enclosed between two denials in v.5 and a third in v.6b. The denials in particular recall Beuken's observation of '*litotes*' from 42:2-4, where YHWH had expressed the servant's manner. The six positive and negative statements add up to one obedient response to YHWH and Isaiah's instruction, establishing a clear character contrast with Zion's iniquitous children. Unlike that unresponsive brood (v.2), which frustrates YHWH's intentions as it hides from him (42:22), this "Israel" does not shield his face (**פני לא הסתרת**), v.6b). Instead, the listener-speaker most willingly, even bodily, replies to YHWH's training, and his answer becomes the witness of his very life: not only tongue (**לשון**) and ears (**אזן**), but also back (**גר**), cheeks (**לחי**), and face (**פנה**) each (fronted) stand as part-for-whole.

His profound humiliation involves both physical and verbal abuse;<sup>128</sup> yet, "as for me," he says, overturning expectations, "I did not rebel [**לא מרית**], I did not turn away [**לא אחור לא נסוגתי**]" (v.5).<sup>129</sup> He will rely on his Lord as a disciple, and adversity does not distract him from his focus upon YHWH. Moreover, his focus upon YHWH amounts to a fixation upon 'God's word that stands forever' (40:8). As the context implies, the object of the negated verb (**לא** + **מרד**) is **דבר-יהוה**. When he says, "My Lord YHWH has opened my ear" (v.5a; cf. v.4),<sup>130</sup> and "as for me," his point is that he does not rebel against **דבר-יהוה** (cf. **תורה** in 30:9).<sup>131</sup> Therefore, unlike Jacob-Israel, in the face of

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Pss 22; 31:35.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Isa 1:20; 3:8; 8:17; 30:9; 63:10.

<sup>130</sup> Even here, the term **מרד** evokes Israel's past rebellion and continuing apostasy against YHWH's **תורה**. While the term **תורה** is never the object of this verb, the concept is plainly signaled by the regular occurrences of objects including YHWH's mouth, word, and speech by Moses and the prophets. Sometimes the object is the Lord's **רוח**-presence, glory-presence, or **משפט**. In the remaining cases, the object is YHWH himself. Thus, the figure stands apart from the wilderness generation, which lacked trust and disobeyed, rebelling against YHWH's mouth (**פה** + **מרד**) in Num 20:10, 24; 27:14; Deut 1:26, 43; Josh 1:18 (cf. Deut 9:7, 23-24; 31:27; Pss 78:8, 17, 40, 56; 105:28 [+ **דבר** and **חשך**]; 106:7, 33 [+ **רוח**], 43; 107:11 [+ **אמרה**]; Isa 63:10 [+ **קדשו**]; Ezek 20:13, 21). He also stands apart from the obstinate son of Deut 21:18, 20 (cf. Isa 1:20 + **פה**) and the pre-exilic generation, which defied YHWH's word, bringing down YHWH's judgment (+ **פה** in 1 Sam 12:14-15; 1Kgs 13:21, 26; Lam 1:18; cf. Neh 9:26; Isa 3:8 [+ **כבוד**]; Jer 5:23; 3:42; Ezek 5:6 [+ **משפט**]; 20:8; Hos 14:1).

<sup>131</sup> Williamson observes that 50:5 and 30:9 are the only two places where the root **מרד** occurs in Isa 1-55. He writes, "Whereas the earlier generation was characterized as 'a rebellious people [**עם מרי**]...who will not hear [**לא-אבו שמוע**] the instruction [**תורה**] of the Lord' (30:9), so that Isaiah was obliged to commit his teaching to writing, this figure associates his listening [**לשמע**] (v.4) to God's word with the statement that 'I was not rebellious' [**לא מריתי**]" (*The Book Called Isaiah*, 109).

adversity he turns towards his Lord rather than away from him.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, he does not prove faithless before intense suffering and brutal assault, because he adheres to YHWH's דבר, apparently, *without a word* (cf. 42:2). He simply and voluntarily, yet positively and faithfully, obeys his Lord's commission, giving (נתן) his back to their scourging and his face to shameful maltreatment (50:6).<sup>133</sup> Rather than wearing down his opponents as a boxer absorbing blows, he rests both his fate and theirs in God's hands (v.9), trusting in God's power to deliver him (ד', v.2). Again, the point is that, in spite of abuse, he does not grow faint or break down (42:4) as long as he relies on the instruction of his Teacher. Indeed, the Lord has repeatedly wakened him for this very day; morning by morning, he has strengthened him with דבר, so that, day by day, as it were, he can fulfill his calling to the weary with the utmost faithfulness.<sup>134</sup> Because he knows that YHWH's דבר is sure (40:8), he trusts YHWH as God and takes up Israel's role as his witness. As YHWH's disciple, equipped and designated as "Israel" (49:3),<sup>135</sup> this servant adheres to תורה and דבר-יהוה (42:21; 50:4), even if this requires accepting discipline from the Teacher's hand (cf. ד' in vv.2, 10-11). This servant, Koole writes, "Does not deny his task and his Sender."<sup>136</sup> As Israel, he relies upon the inscrutable-yet-incomparable Creator and Lord of history to uphold משפט (40:12-26), embraces his ancestral identity (41:8), and begins to fulfill the vocation of God's image-bearer in the world (42:1; 48:16b; 49:3).

This last point brings up another striking feature of this stanza, namely, that the speaker never identifies his adversaries. This ambiguity raises questions about the

<sup>132</sup> Ps 44:19; cf. 53:4; 78:57; 80:19; Isa 59:13; Zeph 1:6.

<sup>133</sup> As Baltzer points out, the account is analogous to Jeremiah's experience of personal vilification and threats (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 340). Yet, at this point, while informative, analogies with other 'righteous suffer' figures, like Jeremiah (or Moses, or Job, or those in Psalms of lament), due to relevant dissimilarities actually break down. As Blenkinsopp observes, there is no protestation of innocence here, "no calling down vengeance on the perpetrators and, unlike the psalms of individual lament, no plea for vindication" (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 320). Next to Isaiah ben Amoz (Isa 20:3), the only valid OT parallel to his testimony may be that of Abraham. Although his suffering was radically different, Abraham's trial was profoundly similar. Abraham's reverence for YHWH was put to the test; like this disciple (and disciples, v.10), he relied on YHWH's promise implicitly, expressing loyalty without a word in the face of a most dire threat to his beloved son, Isaac, the promised seed (Gen 22:1-18). Abraham surely trusted God to provide for him during his test (Gen 22:8, 14). Similarly, in Isa 50:4-9, the listener-speaker trusts that God will help him. His vindication, like Abraham's vindication, is as sure as God's word. Nevertheless, the *self*-testimony of one voluntarily undergoing such a trial is otherwise unheard of and quite striking; though the reader will hear about greater things than this (Isa 53).

<sup>134</sup> In the service of his Teacher and for the benefit of the weary, nothing is too much for him to bear (cf. 42:4). And despite the severe shame and suffering he endures, as Seitz observes, he nowhere implies that he has taken a risk in respect of knowing what God is doing. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 439.

<sup>135</sup> Isa 41:8-16; 42:1-12; 48:16b; 49:1-13.

<sup>136</sup> J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 111. Westermann supports this view and comments, "[T]he lament of the mediator who is attacked and defamed because of his task, here develops, for the first time, into assent to and acceptance of this suffering... [I]n spite of attacks and abuse, the Servant has not rebelled against receiving the word from God, nor has he shrunk from coming forward with it to those for whom it was designed. He has not been deterred into ceasing to hear and to speak" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 229).

adversaries' perception of YHWH's disciple and what circle(s) they come from (Judean or Babylonian). That resistance to the listener-speaker's message has already arisen within the Judean society cannot be denied (48:16b-19; 49:4); and so, recalling Jeremiah's experience (Jer 20:2; 37:15), he may possibly experience flogging from a representative of his own people (Isa 50:6). Has Jacob-Israel's resistance indeed devolved into violent opposition? Does the recalcitrant community of chs.40-48—disobedient, rebellious, and wayward—oppress God's faithful servant? Blenkinsopp adopts this position, suggesting that his punishment is unofficial; the community gives him a "roughing up."<sup>137</sup> Koole also wonders if blows on the back indicate that Judean oppressors take him for a fool.<sup>138</sup> Given the emphasis on עֶבֶר and affinities with Jeremiah, perhaps the Judean community takes him for a false prophet (Isa 44:25-26; cf. Deut 18:20-22).

The alternative view is that he faces danger from the Babylonian authorities. Since he regards all his fellow Judeans as 'weary' (v.4), they cannot be his attackers. Hence, in contrast to Blenkinsopp's informal roughing up, Goldingay regards his treatment as "a formal symbolic shaming."<sup>139</sup> With Whybray, he cites the legal terminology in v.8 and concludes that the assailants are more likely Babylonian. Given the foretold rousing of Cyrus, and the pronouncements against Babylon and her gods (chs.45-47), opposition might conceivably arise from within Babylonian circles (cf. 49:7).

Yet, the text lacks the requisite clarity to decide the issue. Court terminology is a characteristic feature of chs.40-55, and chs.40-49 have provided sufficient grounds to think that the listener-speaker would face opposition both from without (the nations) and from within (Jacob-Israel). On one hand, the consistent application of the Teacher's עֶבֶר might already have begun to effect a distinction within Israel (cf. 50:10); so, opposition could point to violence from that community. On the other hand, along with his weary community, he might experience continued opposition from the nations, particularly from the Babylonian authorities. Thus, the servant may have friends and enemies in both the Judean community and the international community.<sup>140</sup> However, the text does not say; so, the question whether formal or informal judicial action is implied cannot be answered with

<sup>137</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 319. In support of his position, he observes that Nehemiah similarly pulled out people's hair in a fit of anger (Neh 13:25; cf. Ezra 9:3), and, as for spitting, this is "simply one of the grossest expressions of contempt (e.g. Job 30:10)." See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 320.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Prov 10:13; 19:29; 26:3. See J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 112.

<sup>139</sup> See J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 407 and *Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 2, 210. See also, R. N. Whybray (*Isaiah 40-66* 151), who thinks that v.8 points to his arrest by Babylonian authorities and trial.

<sup>140</sup> Thus, I am inclined to agree with Seitz, who comments judiciously, "When one adds to that the rebuke of chap. 48 and the commissioning of one servant who is Israel, light to the nations, the safest conclusion to reach is that, from chap. 48 onward, adversaries can no longer be neatly divided along Israel/the nations' lines" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 438).

certainty. The ambiguity encourages reflection, and the reader is invited to make his/her own assessment of the figure, and thus to respond to his testimony either as a disciple (v.10) or as an opponent/rebel (v.11).

### 5.3.1.3. *The Disciple's Success (Isa 50:7-8, 9)*

The next two strophes each begin with the clause, “My Lord YHWH helps me” (vv.7, 9), shifting the emphasis from the listener-speaker’s manner to his confidence in YHWH’s commitment to him. After the repetition of “My Lord YHWH...,” v.7 contains two denials that envelop a single affirmation (cf. vv.5-6). The first negative and the positive statement are each introduced by the phrase, *על־כן* (“therefore”), indicating that “My Lord YHWH helps me” is the basis of the servant’s resolve. Then, a statement expressing certainty follows these two clauses, highlighting ‘assurance’ as the further result of YHWH’s helping *דבר*. Due to his Helper, the figure does not know disgrace, and so, as YHWH’s instrument, he sets his face as flint. The insults thrown by his oppressors (v.6) deflect off his face.<sup>141</sup> With YHWH as his source of resolve, he will never be ashamed.

God’s presence emboldens him further: “My Vindicator is near!” (cf. v.2). Consequently, in v.8 the victim takes the argument to the aggressor. With two rhetorical questions (*מִי*, 2x), he dares any challenger to bring a case against him (*רִיב*), and with two volitional forms, he provokes his accuser, “Let us stand up [*עמד*, cohortative] together!” “Let him approach me [*נגשׁ*, juss.]” He can taunt his adversary, because he knows that God will prove his innocence and openly acquit him. Before any court, faced with any dispute (vv.8-9), whether formal or informal, he can confidently submit his testimony because his Vindicator<sup>142</sup> stands near.

Two observations require further comment. First, unlike Jacob-Israel, this listener-speaker recognizes that *אדני יהוה* is also *בעל משפטי* (lit., “my owner of *משפט*”). That is, YHWH who summons to court also stands on his side to hand down the verdict.<sup>143</sup> Second, the listener-speaker now demonstrably assumes “Israel’s” role (49:3) as God’s witness at court. In the case concerning *האֵל*, this “Israel” not only stands on God’s side,

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Deut 8:15; 32:13; Ps 114:8; Job 28:9. Mention of ‘flint’ suggests an analogy to the prophetic profiles of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. If he is a prophet in the Judean community, like Jeremiah, he has become an iron pillar, a bronze wall to withstand the opposition (Jer 1:18; 15:20). Even if he faces threats in Babylonia, like Ezekiel, his message will nonetheless succeed, for his resolve alone is sufficient to break hearts in the rebellious house of Israel (*בֵּית־מֶרֶץ*, Ezek 3:8-9).

<sup>142</sup> *צִדִּיק*, “legal defender,” *hip‘il* ptc. cf. 43:9, 26.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Isa 41:1-4, 21-29; cf. 40:14, 27; 49:4.



he has become YHWH's lead witness.<sup>144</sup> These observations point to the nature of the disciple's testimony, for he will tell the court what the Teacher has taught him to say. In other words, his audacious claims constitute YHWH's דבר (v.4), and as such, comprise a précis of Isaiah's תורה and YHWH's דבר together. The דבר that the Teacher instructs his disciple to utter constitutes the witness's testimony. Since he knows his Teacher and recognizes that his דבר will stand forever (40:8), he is confident that בעל משפט will pronounce the verdict in his favor (40:27). Moreover, if אדני יהוה is also his 'משפט-Master', then the disciple can trust him as his 'Taskmaster' too (42:1-4).<sup>145</sup> He knows that the one who has called him, who also upholds and helps him, will also vindicate him,<sup>146</sup> since YHWH's commitment assures success.

This assurance of a successful outcome contrasts with the fate of his accuser(s), who seek to harm him or prove him guilty (רשע *hip 'il* impf; cf. 54:17). To signal the fate of the accuser, the disciple introduces a reversal motif (v.9),<sup>147</sup> which contains a prophecy: the accuser will wear out, devoured like a moth-eaten garment, but the weary will be invigorated (40:28-31), strengthened by דבר יהוה.

In this context, the phrase, הן כלם ("Look, all of them") in v.9, recalls the contrast that YHWH set up between his chosen image-bearer at 42:1-4 (cf. 49:7) and the images of the false gods at 41:21-29. The reader may see the idolatrous accuser as worthless—destined to share the fate of the false gods<sup>148</sup>—while this disciple is worthy because he is chosen and graciously accepted as YHWH's image-bearer (42:1). YHWH is God, and he will display his glory through the life of this servant-disciple, designated "Israel" (49:3). With Stephen Cook, the message and appeal to his audience is "[t]o take up the life-mode of servanthood [i.e.,] to work at living into humanity's creation in God's image, humanity's *imago Dei* (Gen 1:27)."<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, in this connection (v.9), the important point is that all humanity will be assessed for their view of the servant, just as

<sup>144</sup> Cf. 43:10, 12; 44:8.

<sup>145</sup> So J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 118.

<sup>146</sup> Isa 41:8-16; 44:26; 48:16b; 49:1-6; 50:4

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Job 13:19; 31:35.

<sup>148</sup> See ch.46; cf. 44:9, for the shaming of idol-makers.

<sup>149</sup> S. Cook, "An Interpretation of the Death of Isaiah's Servant" in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions* (R. Heskett and B. Irwin, eds.; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 114. In fn.12, he adds, "Isaiah's figure of the Servant of the Lord is God's true image on earth," citing Isa 52:13 (cf. 6:1).

they will be judged for their view of the true God. Friend or foe, accuser or disciple, v.9 anticipates the question and the choice posed by vv.10-11.<sup>150</sup>

### 5.3.2. *Recruiting Disciples: A Choice between Light and Darkness*

Grand claims can be made about vv.10-11, which comprise a separate stanza to close ch.50. Blenkinsopp affirms that the concluding verses are crucial for interpreting the passage as a whole and perhaps also for the interpretation of Isa 40-55 as a whole,<sup>151</sup> and Mowinckel expresses their aim concisely: “The entire passage is a vehicle of prophetic preaching, with the intention of addressing an appeal to men: make the right response to the Servant and his message.”<sup>152</sup> Hence, these verses *recruit*, exhorting and admonishing the audience, presenting a choice between light and darkness.

Though vv.10-11 are closely related to the preceding stanzas (vv.1-3, 4-9), they also comprise a distinct unit due to shifts in speaker. In v.11, the mention of a hand (יָד, cf. v.2) with a 1<sup>st</sup>-person suffix and the fate that that hand can bring identifies YHWH as the speaker of the verse. Verse 10 is more difficult because both YHWH and “the voice of his servant” are spoken about (3<sup>rd</sup>-per.). If neither the servant nor YHWH speaks in v.10 (though YHWH speaks in v.11), does the reader hear yet another voice? The ‘voice’ (קוֹל, v.10) most likely refers to the self-testimony from vv.4-9; it belongs to “[YHWH’s] servant.” Hence, v.10 explicitly identifies YHWH and Isaiah’s disciple (vv.4-9) with the servant figure (v.10) who also testified previously (48:16b; 49:1-6). While it makes a further statement about this servant, v.10 does not identify the speaker. Perhaps the answer will be forthcoming after an assessment of its contribution to ch.50.

Isa 50:10-11 functions as commentary on the servant’s self-testimony. Verse 10a begins with a rhetorical question (הֲיִי). Aside from the invitation it makes, an aspect of its function is to classify Isa 50:4-9 as a model of reverence, the positive connotation of יִרָא (“fear,” cf. 41:5-7). Hence, the servant’s pattern of life, both as a disciple and as the image of YHWH (42:1), not only invites a response, it requires imitation. To this end, v.10a exhorts its audience, most likely the ‘weary’ from v.4 (cf. 40:28-31), to follow the servant’s manner in “the fear of YHWH” (יִרָא יְהוָה). The first clause also recalls the “Who among you (מִי בְכֶם)” (42:23), which had addressed Jacob-Israel distributively (and without discrimination), while revealing that the voice of YHWH’s messenger is also

<sup>150</sup> J. Koole captures well the implication of v.9’s transitional nature: “...the downfall of the Servant’s enemies is the consequence of their guilty disposition towards the Servant and their actual rejection of him” (*Isaiah 49-55*, 120). They have only themselves to blame.

<sup>151</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 322.

<sup>152</sup> S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 195.

Jacob-Israel's representative.<sup>153</sup> Here, then, reverence for God identifies those whose ears—like those of that representative disciple (vv.4-5)—are open and attentive to God's call (v.2). The parallel clause makes the same point differently; it exhorts the audience to express reverence for YHWH by obeying (ב + שמע) YHWH's servant, or the דבר he has spoken for the sake of the weary (v.4).<sup>154</sup> Since the servant does not merely utter but embodies תורה, his דבר (v.4) also transforms neatly into a report about a disciple's symbolic action in reverence to God (vv.5-6, 7-8; cf. 20:1-6), with consequences for his adversaries (v.9). In other words, it edifies the weary by calling those with eyes and ears to observe this disciple's response as the pattern for their own life in reverence for God.<sup>155</sup> Like Isaiah and his "children" (offspring + students), this servant-disciple does not merely speak, he has become a sign to guide the weary in their walk and a symbol of what God promises his people (54:13, 17; cf. 8:18; 20:3).

Next, verse 10b moves from general exhortation to specific requirement with a succinct paraphrase of the servant's self-testimony from vv.4-9. Here again (cf. 40:1-2), the imperative is seasoned with empathy for its audience, exhorting them and consoling them. Accordingly, אשר (concessive use) signals the sympathetic portrayal of their present exilic situation: "even though he walks about in darkness and has no light..." The speaker first recognizes that, like YHWH's servant, this audience undergoes suffering. Then the exhortation comes, affording life-giving guidance. The specific ethical imperative in v.10b is to imitate the manner of the servant (vv.5-6) by trusting in YHWH's name. The key verbs, expressing reliance (שען *ni'pal*) and trust (בטח),<sup>156</sup> define what it means to wait for God by obeying the voice of his servant. Being a disciple means imitating the servant's embrace of דבר-יהוה (תורה or מצות, 48:18), joining the "ones who are taught" (למוד), expressing Israel's vocation for the world (42:6; 49:8), and

<sup>153</sup> This one confessed sin in solidarity with his people (v.24). This is the same one who had disputed about דבר with YHWH's voice (40:8), who had stepped forth to call for Jacob-Israel's return (48:16b), who was subsequently designated "Israel" (49:3), and whose self-testimony regarding דבר has become the model of what reverence for YHWH entails (50:4-9).

<sup>154</sup> It should not be missed that this command ascribes authority to a disciple identical to that of his master, Isaiah ben Amoz (and YHWH; cf. Isa 1:10ff; 6:9-10; 7:13; 8:16. 20; 30:8-9; 42:4; 49:1). One might recall Isaiah's role as sign and symbol. J. Koole adds that "to listen to the voice of his Servant" means that people pay full attention to the person of the Servant and are surprised by the strange way in which he performs his task and realizes God's justice (*Isaiah* 49-55, 126).

<sup>155</sup> Carolyn Sharp explains that through the rhetorical question, hearers are encouraged to answer: "We do—we fear the Lord and obey the voice of the Servant!" Through this rhetorical question, the text invites its readers into performance of the obedience, which it has been speaking. . . . The Servant models how to learn...how to discern and understand what God is doing through his practices of torah faithfulness. This is his instruction and his witness." See, C. Sharp, "(Re)inscribing Power through Torah Teaching," 176-77.

<sup>156</sup> Trust, of course, recalls the response that Isaiah had demanded during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah (e.g., 7:9; 30:12, 15; 31:1), which required relying and resting on God for safety and security.

reciting the servant's self-testimony as one's own (50:4-9). As a new humanity (the *imago Dei*, 41:29-42:1), discipleship involves loyalty and trust in the recognition that YHWH alone is God (41:8-16).

If 'discipleship' is the key to vv.4-9, then servant-discipleship is what reverence for YHWH entails. This response is not only appropriate, it stands in stark contrast to the existential terror and idolatrous practices of the coastland peoples (41:5-7). The message of v.10, therefore, is that though presently one may walk in darkness, YHWH's promise (ברך) to restore those who wait for him still stands (40:8, 30-31) to strengthen them with everything he has given to his servant. For those who stand on God's side, this is comfort indeed, for the present darkness will not last forever. What is more, as light is the opposite of darkness, by obeying the voice of his servant, they too become the opposite of rebellion and apostasy.<sup>157</sup> Then those who presently walk in darkness will join the servant and embody the light of YHWH (2:5; 42:6; 49:6). Nevertheless, not everyone will take hold of the message. As Sweeney expresses it, "[O]nly those who are righteous, i.e., who trust in YHWH, will be eligible for inclusion in the restoration of YHWH's relationship with his people."<sup>158</sup>

To sum up and tackle the question of speaker, v.10 extends an invitation to the weary, exhorting the "righteous" among them to identify with the servant-disciple of YHWH. In view of the analogy to 42:23 ("Who among you?"), where the listen-speaker had responded to the voice from YHWH (42:24), perhaps here also one of YHWH's disciples has begun to understand. In v.10, he steps forth in response to God's call as a disciple of YHWH's servant, and invites the rest of his community to walk in "true Israel's" light.<sup>159</sup> His address to the community constitutes an appeal for them to rely on God as the servant does.

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<sup>157</sup> 'Darkness', 'light', 'obedience', and 'relying on God' reworks themes from Isa 1-39 (esp. chs.5-9). On the theme of light, see, e.g., R. E. Clements, "A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme in the Book of Isaiah" in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays in Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (ed. J. W. Watts and P. R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 57-69. J. Goldingay makes a similar observation, and extrapolates to express its import for the present context: "[Verse]10 constitutes a challenge to people for whom the promise in 8:1-9:2[1] has not yet come true. Their experience is the one presupposed by 42:9; 49:9. They continue to walk in the darkness of Babylon... Trusting in, leaning on YHWH is an expression of revering YHWH. The chiasmic structure mirror's the verse's tautological content. It asks whether there is anyone who reveres and follows, but then simply declares that this is what they must do" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 413-14).

<sup>158</sup> M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 83.

<sup>159</sup> This is also the view of Blenkinsopp, grounded upon the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person reference to YHWH and his servant. As he sees it, "[Verse 10 is] a comment on the servant's statement by one who is qualified not only to speak for him but to pronounce a judgment on those who oppose him. This betokens commentary by a disciple who shares in the charisma of the master and has internalized his message... the prophetic servant is the disciple (*limmud*) of Yahveh, as the commentator is of the servant" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 323). R. N. Whybray says that in v.10 the speaker is the prophet, in v.11, it is YHWH (*Isaiah 40-66*, 153). Christopher Seitz identifies the speaker, perhaps prematurely, as "the servants" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 438). Goldingay and Koole follow Melugin, who thinks that YHWH is the speaker in both verses (*Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 72).

The closing verse (50:11) provides a contrasting picture, which reflects a division within the audience as regards their assessment of YHWH's servant. The interjection **וְהִנֵּה**, connects v.11 back to its similar (twofold) use in v.9, where the disciple foretold the judgment of his accuser (**הַשֹּׂאֵף** *hip 'il*, lit., "he that condemns/declares me guilty") as a reversal motif addressed to those about whom he spoke (**בָּלֵם**). Verse 11 is also similar to v.10 in that it confronts an audience in 2<sup>nd</sup>-person (**כָּלֵם**, pl.). Thus, as if to provide a second witness, YHWH's word as Judge foretells the fulfillment of the servant's prophecy from v.9. The difference between v.10 and v.11 is that, unlike the previous speaker, YHWH clearly singles out those who refuse to revere him. Ironically, he portrays this audience as those who walk by their own light (**אֹרֶךְ**). Apparently, they do not recognize that YHWH who clothes the heavens with darkness also provides requisite light; and so, as a symbol of their autonomy, they set light to flaming torches. In doing so, these kindlers of fire show their disregard for YHWH. Indeed, their action amounts to a refusal to heed the call of YHWH as disciple(s) (vv.2, 4-9, 10). These torch-lighters reject the servant's claim about **בַּעַל מִשְׁפָּט** and his vindicating presence.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, they rebel and turn away, relying on other light sources and, conceivably, trusting in idols. Their doing so indicates that they take YHWH for a false God and his servant for a false prophet. Of course, their response to YHWH's disciple involves turning to their own way, and this alone constitutes idolatry. Ironically, it leads to further darkness and torment (**מַעֲצָבָה**).<sup>161</sup> It seems that those who would torment the servant of God will receive torment from God in return. Therefore, one's assessment of YHWH's servant is a matter of life and death.<sup>162</sup> There is no other alternative than to heed his **תּוֹרָה** (cf. Deut 30:15). In view of FI's programmatic vision, if v.10 calls Jacob to walk in YHWH's light (2:5), v.11 announces the destruction of those who refuse, just as 2:6-4:1 and 5:30 had portended darkness previously.

### 5.3.3. Assessment: Discipleship as Lived-**תּוֹרָה**

In conclusion, YHWH sustains the weary by sending them a servant-disciple who personifies God's own **דָּבָר** and **תּוֹרָה**. Though numbered among the weary, he began to see that his labors were not in vain (49:4). With ch.50, his labors have taken center stage

<sup>160</sup> See R. J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 161.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. 1:31; 2:5, 6ff; ch.5; 8:12-22; 66:24.

<sup>162</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp explains, "Lying down (**שָׁכַב**) is a euphemism for death (e.g. 1 Kgs 2:10), as the bed (**מִשְׁכָּב**) is for the tomb (e.g. Isa 57:2), and there is also a hint that the fire that they themselves light is also the fire that will consume them" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 322).

in FI's vision. In vv.9-11, the servant-disciple declares his "innocence" as one who recognizes אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה as the true 'owner' of his מִשְׁפָּט (v.8, cf. 40:27). In vv.10-11, YHWH's words (v.11) converge with the words of a prophetic voice (v.10) to exhort the community that heard and witnessed the servant's activity to agree with God's assessment of his disciple and to trust YHWH as the speaker of v.10 does. The righteous are those who respond to this call by turning from rebellion and relying upon YHWH themselves. In this way, they obey the 'voice' and imitate the servant's pattern of life (vv.5-6, 10). In contrast, the wicked disregard the servant's דְּבַר (or they continue to assert his guilt), perhaps because they take him for a false prophet (vv.9, 11). Together, v.10 and v.11 show that the servant's labors as "Israel" have begun to effect a distinction within the community. While some persist in lighting their own fires, others turn to walk in YHWH's light.

Ch.50 declares that, as a disciple, YHWH's servant recognizes YHWH's presence and answers YHWH's call (v.2). YHWH has given him a disciples' tongue to edify the weary with דְּבַר. What is more, his self-testimony suggests that he has become an embodiment of דְּבַר יְהוָה/תּוֹרָה itself. Since he recognizes YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט and YHWH's way (דֶּרֶךְ) in the word (40:14, 27), he has become a disciple, radiating YHWH's light (49:6) to illumine Jacob's path (2:5). In chapter 51, light from this servant-disciple's תּוֹרָה continues to shine in the darkness, for the design of the disciples' life is replication—recruiting disciples to serve the Teacher and children to repopulate Zion (54:13, 17).<sup>163</sup>

#### 5.4. Isaiah 51:1-8, 15-16: "People in whose heart is my תּוֹרָה"

Isaiah 51-52 manifests a montage of chs.40-50 and comprises a crescendo within chs.40-55,<sup>164</sup> selecting and arranging earlier material into concerted strophes that feature imperatival sequences pressing towards a climax concerning the arm of YHWH and Zion. These chapters recall ch.48, which, having also recapitulated earlier material (from chs.40-

<sup>163</sup> This is light, for with Caroyln Sharp, "In obedient listening and praxis—modeled by the Servant—will be found an enduring redemption more powerful even than death." See C. Sharp, "(Re)inscribing Power through Torah Teaching," 178.

<sup>164</sup> B. Childs rightly stresses the importance of the "contiguity of context" with the preceding passage. Yet, he writes, "To those who respond, the challenge is given to return to the roots of the faith, to Abraham and Sarah, the source of the nation's true identity" (*Isaiah*, 401). This observation, among others mentioned below, suggests much more than a close association with the immediately preceding chapter. The mention of Abraham and Sarah not only recalls Israel's identity (41:8), but also other analogies between Israel and these ancestors, such as a similar period of expectation/waiting and a similar movement from one (few) to many. In fact, as a message for survivors of judgment, their mention evokes the entirety of chs.40-55, which unfolds YHWH's promise to comfort and edify those who wait for him (40:1, 28-31; regarding 'comfort'; cf. 12:1; 51:3, 19; 61:2; 66:13).

47), ended similarly by exhorting its audience to ‘go forth’ to Zion.<sup>165</sup> Chapters 51-52 also differ from ch.48, because their overall tone is comparatively optimistic.<sup>166</sup> Here the spotlight rests on the promises of YHWH that ground the several imperatives.

In the first stanza (51:1-8), these features appear in all three strophes (vv.1-3, 4-6, 7-8).<sup>167</sup> First, each strophe takes identical form. Vocatives follow imperatives to identify the audience as God’s people (v.4; cf. vv.1, 7, 15),<sup>168</sup> exhortations come chiefly as verbs of hearing (שמע hip ‘il, קשב hip ‘il, vv.1, 4, 7) and seeing (ראה hip ‘il, עיני + נשא, vv.1-2, 6), and the way of speaking is also typical of chs.40-50.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, the tone is positive; there is no mention of the people’s obstinate or deaf-and-blind condition (cf. 42:18),<sup>170</sup> and each imperative is founded upon a promise from God (כי, vv.3, 6, 8). Second, the content of each strophe explicitly evokes the servant poems,<sup>171</sup> and yet, differently, YHWH is the principal speaker and actor,<sup>172</sup> and there is no mention of his servant. Still, תורה (51:4) will go forth to edify the weary people,<sup>173</sup> who are once again identified as Abraham’s offspring (51:2; cf. 41:8). Though they become weary as God

<sup>165</sup> צא, impv. masc. pl. צא, 48:20-21; 52:11-12 (cf. 40:1-11).

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Isa 48:1, 4, 8, 18; 42:18-25.

<sup>167</sup> Williamson writes, “[T]he verses we are concerned with here stand at the start of the sustained build-up to what is in many respects the high point of Deutero-Isaiah’s proclamation to the people in exile” (*Variations on a Theme*, 156).

<sup>168</sup> As an intriguing feature of chs.49, 50, and 51-52 (54-55, and 56-66)—although YHWH is called ‘the Mighty One of Jacob’ (49:26; 60:16), ‘the God of Israel’ (52:12), and ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; )—God’s people are never called ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ together after 49:1-6, where the servant is designated as ‘Israel’. ‘Jacob’ appears again in 58:1 (descendants/house of Jacob), 59:20 (|| Zion), 63:16 (as ‘Israel’), and 65:9 (|| Judah). ‘Israel’ appears again in 56:8, 63:7 (house of Israel), and 66:20 (children of Israel). But after the specification and extension of servant-Israel’s vocation in 49:3, 5-6, Jacob and Israel never appear in parallel (as a word-pair).

<sup>169</sup> See, J. Goldingay (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 418), who mentions parenesis, confrontation, disputation, promises, and ‘fear not’ oracle as formal descriptions of this context, before he writes, “The repeated exhortation to attentiveness sets the tone of vv.1-8 and in the context points to part of its significance as one long exhortation to attentiveness, which in due course introduces 51:9-52:12.”

<sup>170</sup> J. Blenkinsopp thinks that the stanza also expresses an incipient sectarian viewpoint (*Isaiah 40-55*, 325). For him, 51:1-8 is directed to the “well disposed” among the prophet’s audience in 50:10. YHWH’s people and nation (v.4) comprise those who are receptive to the prophetic message (v.4), as opposed to those who choose to follow their own lights (50:10-11). If this is so, the narrowing of the concept of Israel might involve a simultaneous broadening to encompass any and all who respond with trust in and reverence for YHWH. Hence, Isa 51:1-8 may be a literary anticipation of Isa 56:1-8. See the similar remarks of Childs (*Isaiah*, 401). Nevertheless, the repeated exhortations suggest that Isa 51-52 makes its appeal to the entire community without discrimination (as in 50:10; cf. 51:4)—though it is true that only those who heed the message are accounted “righteous.” Put differently, the prophetic word will ultimately separate the wicked from the righteous (v.6), yet the plea presently goes as a summons to God’s people who must hear and respond in trust.

<sup>171</sup> Isa 41:8-16; 42:1-12; 49:1-13; 50:4-11. Isa 49:1 and 51:1 both begin with “Listen to me” (שמעו אלי).

<sup>172</sup> Paul Hanson, Christopher Seitz, and John Goldingay identify chs.51-52 as the further words of the servant. Seitz thinks the servant is the speaker (*Isaiah 40-66*, 442), and Hanson, who rightly thinks Isa 50:4-11 introduces the servant as a teacher, identifies Isa 51:1-52:12 as “The Taught Teacher’s Lesson.” See Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 142. Goldingay supports Hanson’s view (cf. *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 326). While I agree that ch.51 continues the lesson, the new context now identifies YHWH as the teacher (dual agency).

<sup>173</sup> Cf. דבר in 50:4; 51:16; 52:6.

tarries (cf. 40:28-31; 50:4), YHWH urges them to persevere as they await his saving arm (זרוע, 51:5).<sup>174</sup> Given their description, then, there is no reason to think the audience has changed in 51:1; and so, as before, a proper response to the imperatives of chs.51-52 would reveal ‘the righteous/innocent’ (צדיק) among them as those who seek YHWH by obeying the voice of his servant (50:10). In the first strophe (51:1-3), therefore, those who follow the path of discipleship are encouraged to continue by imitating Abraham and Sarah’s example of trust,<sup>175</sup> for (כי) YHWH has promised to comfort Jerusalem.<sup>176</sup> As God blessed Abraham and Sarah before, so he will bless Zion now, transforming her from her barren state into a new Eden with a new human family.<sup>177</sup> Presently few in number (cf. 41:14), they will become a multitude again, rejoicing over her with thanksgiving and the sound of music (51:3, 11).<sup>178</sup>

The second strophe is especially relevant, because in 51:4-6 YHWH reaffirms his intent to realize the vision from 42:1-4, 6 regarding תורה, משפט, and אור (cf. 2:2-5; 49:1-6, 8). He exhorts the people to lift their eyes to the heavens and gaze at the earth below, for (כי) all creation may wear out, but (as Abraham also believed) YHWH’s purpose will prevail (51:6).<sup>179</sup> Thus, as a teacher present with his disciples (cf. 30:20-21), YHWH points to where would-be ‘new Abrahams’ should look for deliverance if they too would be a blessing (Gen 12:1-3; Isa 42:6), as (כי) the coastland-peoples, who eagerly wait for תורה (42:4; 49:1), wait also for YHWH’s arm (זרוע, 51:5). Isa 51:4-6 is most

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Isa 40:10-11; 50:2. In the OT, the arm of YHWH brings comfort and displays God’s might. In Mosaic Torah, it recalls the deliverance of the exodus (e.g., Exod 6:6; 15:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19). As a recurring image in FI, YHWH’s arm signals the exodus as a motif; along with other metaphors and language, it transforms the original exodus by application to promises for deliverance and the establishment of YHWH’s reign at Zion through a new exodus (cf. Isa 30:30; 33:2; 48:14; 51:5 [2X]; 51:9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8; 63:5; 63:12). In Isa 40:10, YHWH’s arm rules for him; in 48:14, YHWH’s arm is against the Chaldeans; in 50:2, it appears in the rhetorical question, “Is my arm to short to save?” In 51:1-8, like the servant figure of 42:1-4, YHWH’s arm brings משפט to all people as the destiny of God’s people continues to be linked with that of the nations (cf. Gen 12:1-3). Along with the imperatives in chs.51-52, the repeated use of YHWH’s arm contributes to the crescendo: “Awake, awake, put on strength, arm of YHWH” (51:9); “Your God reigns...he will bear his holy arm” (52:10). And then, in 53:1, a voice asks, “YHWH’s arm, on what sort of figure has it been revealed?”

<sup>175</sup> See Gen 17:4-8, 15-17; 18:10-14, 18-19; 21:6; 22:16-18; cf. Isa 41:8

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Isa 40:1; 49:14-26; 51:12, 23.

<sup>177</sup> See also, K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 163-71. The vision includes both a vision for a new creation and a vision for a new humanity (cf. 42:1, 5, 10-12; 51:3, 13). As John Goldingay notes, “Behind Gen.12, blessing, fruitfulness, and multiplication go back to Gen 1:22, 28” (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 421).

<sup>178</sup> Cf. 42:10-12; 49:13, 19-21. The mention of rejoicing at the end of particular strophes in chs.51-52 (51:3, 11, cf. v.16; 52:7-10) recalls the servant as YHWH’s instrument, because it echoes the rejoicing mentioned previously in extension of the servant poems (42:10-12; 49:13; cf. 54:1-7).

<sup>179</sup> Although the imagery may recall Isa 24, I do not think anything more is implied than the prevailing of YHWH’s purposes (cf. 40:8; 42:3-4; 55:11; Gen 15:5-6.). Thus, Childs’s comment that “divine power is exercised in apocalyptic judgment” may express more than can be derived from the context. As Childs himself restates the import of v.6, “The ungodly will perish, but God’s deliverance will endure forever” (*Isaiah*, 403).



relevant, however, due to the source and referent of the תורה that they await and that disciples must heed.

<sup>4</sup>Pay attention to me, my people; my nation,<sup>180</sup> heed me, for תורה will go forth from me, and my משפט I bring quickly as a light for peoples. <sup>5</sup>My צדק draws near, my ישע will go forth, and my arms will arbitrate for the peoples, for me the coastlands eagerly wait, for my arm [זרע] they await.

Bringing together major themes from the servant poems, v.4 sets משפט in parallel with תורה (42:1-4)<sup>181</sup> and identifies this word-pair as YHWH's 'light for peoples' (cf. 42:6). As in 49:6, this אור is further explicated as YHWH's act of 'salvation/deliverance' (ישע), 51:5; cf. ישועה || אור in 49:6). Since 51:1-6 recapitulates and reaffirms, rather than contradicts, the earlier message concerning YHWH's servant, and 51:4-6 draws together משפט, תורה, ישועה, and אור from the particular servant poems, the third strophe (vv.7-8) renders part-and-whole as תורה for disciples:<sup>182</sup> "Listen to me, you who know righteousness, people in whose heart is my תורה" (v.7).<sup>183</sup> Like v.4, this verse identifies God as the ultimate source of this תורה;<sup>184</sup> what is more, it redefines the society as a nation of disciples with YHWH's תורה on their mind (voc. עם תורתי בלבם).<sup>185</sup> This result actually presumes the successful fulfillment of the servant's vocation, and implies further grounds for successors to heed the present imperatives.<sup>186</sup> Anticipation of the servant's success, therefore, should instill courage (51:7) in the heart of disciples/students who have heard/witnessed and internalized the servant's self-testimony. Hence, when the

<sup>180</sup> "my people...my nation" (v.4): BHS proposes with a few Medieval Mss עמים...ולאומים, "peoples...nations." This word-pair would evoke FI's paradigmatic vision (2:2-4) of nations streaming to Zion to hear YHWH's תורה.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. 40:27; 49:4; 50:8

<sup>182</sup> As J. Koole writes, "...everything depends on whether this divine word is accepted in its full consequences" (*Isaiah 49-55*, 147).

<sup>183</sup> "in whose heart is my תורה" (v.7): This is an asyndetic nominal clause after an indeterminate noun (Joüon, 158b).

<sup>184</sup> This is an important point, not because it excludes the servant, but because it points up the dual agency of תורה in FI as a prophetic word underwritten by YHWH. Koole explains this well: "[תורה's] substance and authority are legitimized by God and it is his will that this instruction reaches the world and is accepted there" (*Isaiah 49-55*, 148).

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Isa 8:16, 20; 50:4. For the OT and esp. for these disciples, 'mind' (לב) refers to their thoughts and will rather than the common (modern Western) view of the 'heart' as connoting feeling or emotions.

<sup>186</sup> Isa 42:4, 6; 49:1-6, 8; 50:4-9. In this context, Goldingay rightly observes a shift in "rhetorical time" and "rhetorical place," a contrast between chs.40-50, which mention the way things have been (in Babylon), and chs.51-52 and chs.54-55 as regards the way they will be (in Zion) (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 417). This suggests that these chapters not only look back to chs.40-50, but that Isa 53 (52:13-53:12) may be the pivot or hinge on which FI's prophetic message turns. Between former and latter, Babylonia and Zion, stands YHWH's servant.

stanza identifies the audience as “knowers of righteousness” (vv.7-8), “people with תורה inscribed on their minds,” it is referring to the ‘ones taught’ as a community with ears and eyes prepared to obey the servant’s voice with reverence for God (50:4, 10-11; cf. Jer 31:33). These ‘righteous ones’ have no reason to fear reproach/reviling (Isa 51:7-8; cf. 54:17), for having grasped the message, they will imitate their master, sharing in both his vocation and his vindication. As disciples, they too will express and embody תורה (|| דבר) in servant-form for the aid of all humanity (50:4). As they walk in YHWH’s light, these righteous ones will beckon all nations to “go forth to Zion” (2:2-4; 55:3b-5).<sup>187</sup>

Thus, while recapitulating the message of chs.40-50, there are also new things in chs.51-52, like the ‘internalization’ process;<sup>188</sup> i.e., grasping, embodying, and re-expressing תורה in servant-form. This process is important for understanding FI’s intention to repopulate holy Zion with disciples (54:13). This new thing therefore involves the redefinition of YHWH’s nation (לְאוֹמִי, v.4), entailing the transformation of “pursuers of righteousness” (רַדְּפֵי צֶדֶק, v.1) into “knowers of righteousness” (יֹדְעֵי צֶדֶק, v.7; cf. 1:2-9). Like the servant, these ‘taught ones’ also have YHWH’s words in their mouth (51:16; cf. 49:2; 50:4).

Also new in chs.40-55 is the word-pair צֶדֶק/צִדְקָה || יְשׁוּעָה/יִשְׁע (“salvation-righteousness”) pertaining to the realization of YHWH’s salvific purpose (deliverance) and redemptive reign (righteousness).<sup>189</sup> Hence, the pair is not only syntactically but also semantically parallel to תורה || מִשְׁפָּט as God’s established rule for the righteous

<sup>187</sup> Marvin Sweeney writes, “Again, the context identifies תורה as a term that refers to the principles of order and justice among the nations of the earth” (“Isaiah as Prophetic Torah,” 62). See also, Shalom Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 362. Thomas LeClerc understands the word-pair מִשְׁפָּט and תורה together to mean something different for Israel and for the peoples. “[F]or the peoples... *instruction* and *justice* mean *deliverance* from their foolish bondage to idolatry and the imparting of knowledge to worship the one who exercises sovereignty over all kingdoms; for Israel, *instruction* and *justice* mean coming to know that YHWH has power to redeem them from exile and to restore them to their homeland.” See, T. LeClerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice*, 122 (his italics).

<sup>188</sup> This ‘process of internalization’ is Williamson’s helpful expression. As he explains, “the addressees in 51:1 are defined as those who ‘pursue righteousness’, but by the start of the third part they have become ‘you who know righteousness, the people who have my teaching in their hearts’.” He also thinks, to me correctly, that the aim is to extend this process until it embraces the whole of the people, “by making the experience, faith and confidence of the prophet himself (verses 7-8) their own.” His conclusion, based on echoes of 2:2-4 and 42:4, is that the nations are to be ‘ruled’ by the same salvific regime that should have characterized the rule of Israel by her kings in the preexilic period (cf. Isa 32:1). See H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 157, 160, 163.

<sup>189</sup> See C. F. Whitley, who understands DI’s use of צֶדֶק as the expression of YHWH’s will, power, and influence. He translates Isa 51:5, “my divine rule is near, my salvation has gone forth.” C. F. Whitley, “Deutero-Isaiah’s Interpretation of SEDEQ,” *VT* 22 (1972): 469-75. See also, BDB, 841, which connects it to YHWH’s covenantal purpose (cf. HALOT, 302). For Rolf Rendtorff, whereas chs.1-39 relates צֶדֶק with מִשְׁפָּט, emphasizing righteousness which has to be done, in DI, this “righteousness” “speaks of God’s own צֶדֶק, whose coming is announced and whose character will be יִשְׁע, salvation” (*Canon and Theology*, 183).

reordering of global society (cf. 42:4).<sup>190</sup> Knowers of righteousness among Israel's survivors understand that there is no cause for fear (אֵל־תִּירָאוּ) or dismay (אֵל־תַּחֲתוּ), because, somehow, perhaps involving the servant as instrument (cf. 49:6), YHWH will bring his gracious salvation near (קִרְיָב). When God's powerful deliverance goes forth (יֵצֵא), YHWH's reign will endure forever (לְעוֹלָם), and undismayed (לֹא־תַחֲתוּ), 'knowers of righteousness' will be a blessing to all generations (לְדוֹר וָדוֹר, 51:8).

In sum, the structure of present imperatives founded on promises of God in 51:1-8 and 51:9-52:12 issues a summons for survivors to turn back to YHWH and lay hold of this תּוֹרָה, which in chs.40-50 has unfolded God's purposes in servant-form. What is more, it expands on ch.50 in particular by calling them to respond actively and reverently to the servant's voice (50:10-11). One might object that chs.51-52 do not portray the servant or his speech. Indeed, divine agency and the divine source of every good thing<sup>191</sup> are striking and unmistakable features of the stanza.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, since 51:1-8 follows closely after 50:10, *divine agency* does not eclipse but actually enhances the *dual agency* inherent in the functional union of YHWH with his human image-bearer (42:1; 48:16b; 49:3). In 51:1-52:12, YHWH personally underwrites the servant's vocation and self-testimony from chs.49-50. Thus, after 49:1-6 and 50:4-9, 51:1-8 (and 51:9-52:12) has become necessary: it underscores the fact that the heavenly Lord himself guarantees the earthly servant's testimony and derivative success (52:13; 53:10). In this way, the chapter anticipates that, through his servant, YHWH will manifest his arm (cf. 50:4; 51:9; 53:1),<sup>193</sup> glory (cf. 42:8, 12; 49:3), and compassion for his afflicted ones (49:13; 54:7-10; 55:7).

As a closing observation about this selective montage, the term בְּרִית (42:6; 49:8) is absent from the stanza, though there are clear signals of the concept of "covenant" in ch.51. These signals occur in three ways: first, by mention of light for peoples (אֹר)

<sup>190</sup> See, J. Scullion, S. J. *Isaiah 40-66*, 41.

<sup>191</sup> אֵל, אֹר, מִשְׁפָּט, תּוֹרָה, צֶדֶק, and יֵשׁ.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. אֵלֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ in 51:12. As T. LeClerc observes, "Indeed, YHWH in the spotlight is precisely the focus of this passage. He is the speaker and the language points unrelentingly to him, his attributes, and his accomplishments," although LeClerc also thinks that the spotlight on YHWH indicates the servant has died. See LeClerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice*, 119. Williamson, however, correctly recognizes that it is a mistake to assume that God has now cast aside all thought of acting through his chosen mediator: "[T]here are many passages in Scripture where God is represented as speaking of direct action in contexts where it is made clear that in practical terms he will use human beings to effect his will. A strong hint that the same is true here comes from the emphasis on the 'arm' of the Lord in v.5 (2x), which in 53:1 seems to be used as a title for the servant" (*Variations on a Theme*, 164).

<sup>193</sup> Goldingay is of course correct that the identification of the servant and Lord will be taken further in 52:13-53:12 (*Message of Isaiah*, 425).

עַמִּים, v.4);<sup>194</sup> second, by repetition of עוֹלָם, collocated with salvation and righteousness (vv.6, 8; cf. 49:6, 8; 54:9; 55:3b);<sup>195</sup> and third, by the chiasmic form of 51:15-16:

A	51:15 Truly <sup>196</sup> I am YHWH your God <sup>197</sup>
B	who stirs up <sup>198</sup> the sea, and its waves roar. YHWH of Hosts is his name.
C	16 I have put my words in your mouth, and in the shadow of my hand I have covered you,
B'	in planting the heavens establishing the earth, and saying to Zion,
A'	‘You are my people.’” <sup>199</sup>

The chiasm places YHWH’s (prophetic) words (דְּבָרַיִם) at the center (C; cf. 59:21; Deut 18:18), promising his protection to disciples (cf. 49:2; 50:4) during the movement from their present exilic-situation to restoration (B-B’). This too presumes the accomplishment of the servant’s mission to Israel from 49:6, which was designed to enable Israel to be Israel again, to bring Jacob back to God so that they could conduct their own worldwide servant-vocation.<sup>200</sup> It also places “your God” and “my people” on the outside (A-A’), plainly recalling the covenant formula mentioned at 40:1.<sup>201</sup> This supports the conjecture that, according to FI, God’s aim via the prophetic תּוֹרָה is for servant and disciples to reconstitute a united holy society dwelling in Zion as light for nations and a covenant for people.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Cf. אֲנִי יְהוָה || אֲנִי יְהוָה in 42:6; 49:6, 8.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Isa 24:5; 40:1, 8; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; cf. Gen 17:7.

<sup>196</sup> “Truly” (v.15): This disjunctive *waw* expresses emphatically a nuance of affirmation (Joüon M 177n).

<sup>197</sup> “I am YHWH your God” (v.15): The phrase occurs 267x in the OT, 249 times in Deuteronomy, and 12 times in Deut 30:1-10 alone. It occurs only 9 times in Isaiah. Hosea 12:10 (cf. 13:4) brings out its full sense: “I am YHWH your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt (מִצְרַיִם).” As self-disclosure, it recalls God’s saving action in the exodus (cf. Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6).

<sup>198</sup> “stirs up” (v.15): BHS proposes גָּעַר, “rebukes,” but the MT provides a closer parallel with the subsequent clause. On this verse, see Jer 31:35.

<sup>199</sup> “I am YHWH your God... You are my people” (v.15, 16): This last clause forms an inclusio with the first clause of v.15, the covenant formula. If the first clause of v.16 is the center of a chiasm, this would indicate that God’s people are those who have God’s words in their mouth (cf. 51:7, people who have God’s torah [written] on the heart).

<sup>200</sup> Childs’s comments support my view. He states that those who have followed in the servant’s footsteps are here assigned their own prophetic task: “bringing good news to Zion, which is an extension of the servant’s task (49:6ff)” (*Isaiah*, 404).

<sup>201</sup> Cf. “my Lord YHWH” and “my servant” (50:4, 5, 7, 9, 10). Although “new covenant” does not appear, Koole, Seitz, and Goldingay rightly see in Isa 51:7 and 51:16 a link with Jer 31:31-34 and Ezek 36:27. See J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 158, C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 447, and J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 428.

<sup>202</sup> Isa 42:6; 49:8; 2:2-4; 52:1, 11-12; 55:3-5; 59:21; 60:1-3; cf. Exod 19:5-6.

Of course, the pattern (impvs. + כִּי) illustrated by 51:1-8 continues into 51:9-52:12,<sup>203</sup> signaling that at the definitive fulfillment of YHWH's word, God's people shall know his name (שֵׁם): "for I am he who promised, 'Here I am'" (52:6).<sup>204</sup> With his people in train, while protecting them as a Shepherd, YHWH will return to Zion as the triumphant Divine Warrior (52:7-10, 11-12; cf. 40:9-11). Thus, chs.51-52 bring together themes, imagery, and motifs from chs.40-50 into a literary montage that also contains a linguistic pattern signaling a crescendo, which rises towards a climax concerning the arm of YHWH and Zion. In 52:7-10, the herald announces YHWH's imminent return to Zion, and in vv.11-12, a messenger commands his people, "Depart, depart...for [כִּי] you will not go forth in haste...because YHWH is the one who goes before you and...forms your rear guard" (52:12). Significantly, this linguistic pattern (impv. + voc. + כִּי) also appears in chs.54-55. In those chapters too, what YHWH has done or will do continues to ground each imperative. Notably, the sustained build-up in chs.51-52 and the outcome and further commentary in chs.54-55 enclose the final servant poem in 52:13-53:12, suggesting that, with this significant unit, the reader has arrived at the climax of FI's vision for a community of disciples adhering to תִּוְרָה in servant-form;<sup>205</sup> indeed, YHWH predicates the vision's realization upon the servant's success (52:13).

##### 5.5. Isaiah 52:13-53:12: "My Purpose Will Succeed by His Hand"

After the command to depart in 52:11-12, 52:13 reintroduces the servant, and 54:1 immediately turns to joy at Zion's comforting. Isaiah 51:1-52:12 and 54:1-55:13 contain sequences with units of similar structure, rehearsing in an insistent and concentrated manner the general message of chs.40-55 and grounding the particular exhortation and forewarning of 50:10-11. These large sections envelop the climactic servant poem of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (henceforth, Isa 53), which guides pursuers of righteousness on the way to restoration by its further incarnation of servanthood.<sup>206</sup> The poem contains three stanzas

<sup>203</sup> Isa 51:9-16, 17-23, 52:1-6, 52:7-10, 11-12.

<sup>204</sup> כִּי־אֲנִי־הוּא הַמְדַּבֵּר הַנֵּנִי, cf. Isa 6:8; 51:12, 15; 58:9; for the acknowledgement of YHWH/YHWH's name, see, e.g., 45:3, 6; 49:25; 52:6.

<sup>205</sup> תִּוְרָה in servant-form' is my expression. Sigmund Mowinckel has called the ideas revealed in the description of the Servant a "climax in Old Testament prophecy." He explains, "The whole line of revelation history in prophecy and in Israel's spiritual history leads up to the thought of the innocent, suffering Servant of God, who, by his message, his suffering, and his death, reconciles men to God, 'intervenes', 'pays the forfeit of his life' . . . . The Servant is the legitimate child of the prophetic movement, and its supreme realization" (*He That Cometh*, 233, 257).

<sup>206</sup> See Stephen Cook, "Death of Isaiah's Servant," 111. Having begun already in the self-testimony of ch.50, the prophet's whole life is a prophetic word and a powerful sign (cf. Isa 20:3; 8:18; Ezek 4:3-6; 24:24, 27). See also, S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 231.

(52:13-15; 53:1-11a; 53:11b-12)<sup>207</sup> with four strophes in the central stanza (53:1-3, 4-7, 8-9, 10-11a). My analysis focuses on this pivotal poem's further contribution to the conceptual framework of revelation in FI,<sup>208</sup> as here we see FI's עַבְדִּי in servant-form.

The poem opens and closes with YHWH's speech, which promises success and vindication.

### 5.5.1. *Speakers, Audience, and Scope of the Poem*

The poem's three stanzas each contain 1<sup>st</sup>-person testimony concerning YHWH's servant. While there are no direct speech formulae, the first and third stanzas plainly come from above (1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., עַבְדִּי) and address an audience whose identity is initially unclear. In the central unit, the speaker shifts from YHWH to an earthly community (1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.) whose identity (as well as its audience) is also initially unclear.<sup>209</sup> "My people" in v.8bβ

<sup>207</sup> The minority view represented by R. N. Whybray strikes me as inconceivable even though the chapter division understands a break at 52:15 and 53:1 (cf. MT, which has □ after both 52:12 and 53:12). For Whybray, this division relates to different understandings of the referent of "my servant" in 52:13-15 and 53:1-12. He cites Coppens, Snaith, and Orlinsky in support of his view that 52:13-15 is a separate pericope, a "short promise of salvation assuring the exiles of a reversal of their fortunes and a new pre-eminence in the world, which will astonish the other nations." See R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 169 and *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet* (JSOTSup 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1978), 132-134. I remain unconvinced that the servant of 52:13-15 is (corporate) Israel, while the figure's identity shifts to an individual prophet in 53:1-11a and vv.11b-12. Whybray's claim depends on his determination of the unique form of 53:1-12, following Begrich (*Studien*), as a song of thanksgiving. Whereas thanksgiving hymns are typically sung by the one delivered (1<sup>st</sup>-per.), this one, Whybray says, is unique because in 53:1-11a others sing about the deliverance of God's servant (3<sup>rd</sup>-per.). I agree that elements of lament and thanksgiving are incorporated (Isa 53 is not an elegy). (See Whybray's list of terms in *Thanksgiving*, 95.) Melugin (*Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, 73) also observes the influence of speech-patterns of the psalm of thanksgiving and calls Isa 53 "the prophet's own creation." There is, of course, more to say about the peculiarities of this poem. Lament does turn into thanksgiving, but not at the servant's actual deliverance. Lament as well as thanksgiving focuses on the figure's significant demise. It is not quite a eulogy either (*pace* Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 353), since as Gressmann points out, it takes on the form of confession (or penitential psalm) and aims to prompt the same response from the audience. See Hugo Gressmann, *Der Messias* (FRLANT 43; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929), 305-06; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 256; B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 413. Bringing about the audience's confession is an important aspect of the servant's success: he brings about a change of perception, the movement from blindness to sight essential for repentance and change of behavior.

<sup>208</sup> It is impossible here to provide a full-orbed treatment of this poem. For a detailed analysis, see now, Kristin Joachimsen, *Identities in Transition: The Pursuit of Isa 52:13-53:12* (VTSup 57; Leiden: Brill, 2011). I will attempt to handle it as an aspect of my holistic reading of FI's intention. *Pace* C. R. North, who regarded its place within DI as "not altogether homogenous" (*Suffering Servant*, 154), I maintain the close correlation and interdependence of Isa 53 within the broader context of FI. I also agree with Baltzer, that the servant poems in particular help to interpret one another (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 393).

<sup>209</sup> The situation is analogous to 40:1-9, and as the 1<sup>st</sup>-per. voices in 40:6-8; 42:24 (pl.); 48:16b; 49:1; 50:4 (cf. 1:9; 2:5), the voice speaking in 53:1-11a is not identifiable. The appearance of a 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. speaker raises questions about the identity of the community and the authorship of Isa 53. T. Mettinger identifies the 'we' as the gentile nations (*Farewell to the Servant Songs*, 38), and as C. R. North observes, this is almost a necessary consequence of the collective identification of the servant, which Mettinger accepts and North rejects (*Suffering Servant*, 151; cf. S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-55*, 397). In my view, Skinner rightly pointed out the distinction between gentiles who have not previously heard (52:15) and the 'we' who have (53:1), concluding that 'we' is "one Israelite in the name of all," although the next question to ask about is the nature of Israel. (J. Blenkinsopp [*Isaiah 40-55*, 355] thinks the chapter supports a view of incipient sectarianism.) See John Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah: XL-LXVI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1902), 137. His conclusion, and the view of the servant as prophet, naturally leads to a

(עמי) suggests that the actual speaker is a single personality, another listener-speaker, most likely from among (and so associated with) Israel.<sup>210</sup> Thus, this speaker acts as spokesperson for some larger community of God's people. As a persona,<sup>211</sup> the community is imitating the self-testimony of 49:1-6 and the soliloquizing of 50:4-9,<sup>212</sup> although, unlike those two poems, concerning its place within YHWH's purpose, the figure's testimony is not entirely self-referential. Instead, the spokesperson's testimony pertains to particular words and actions of God heard and seen by the community. What the 'we' have seen is the revelation (נִפְלְאוֹת nip'al)<sup>213</sup> of YHWH's arm (זְרוֹעַ יְהוָה, v.1)<sup>214</sup>

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consideration of authorship, and even North thinks that Isa 53 may be from a later author (*Suffering Servant*, 154).

The discussion is important, but given the analogy to ch.40, on a holistic reading, it may be the wrong discussion to have, since the 'we' constitutes another voice. See W. F. Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations" *JBL* 93 (1974): 41-49 (p.41): "It is a creative procedure in the displacement of the poet's imagination beyond the limitations of his single viewpoint so that he may gain a manifold insight into the human experience... The use of [a] persona by the poet enriches its intuition." This observation does not permit one to avoid discussions of composition or to conclude that the pl. voice is merely a fiction. Thus, Goldingay, who recognizes the poem as the prophet's own, thinks Isa 53 comprises the prophet's further testimony regarding his own death: "...the poem expresses the prophet's conviction about Yhwh's promise, that whatever form of death he might experience will not be the end" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 475). Koole, who strongly rejects the view that the prophet is also the servant, thinks DI is the author and Israel is now speaking about a savior-figure (*Isaiah 49-55*, 275). Seitz's treatment may be best, because he leaves the question of authorship to one side, distinguishing between DI's composition and the voices that function in the poem. "[T]he voices that speak up in the poem—giving it a character quite singular within the discourse thus far—are not necessarily the same voices responsible for the tribute's form and existence in the first place" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 460). This is an important observation, because, even if the final form of DI is a product of redaction, the 'we' primarily functions on the level of the completed prophecy. In my view, the 'we'-group's identity is not given, but open-ended. Pace Blenkinsopp, it is not limited to a precisely defined sect (or scribal group) in the early Persian period, though a narrowing does seem to take place, and, apart from further commentary on the nature of Israel, the observations of Skinner and Koole may be too broad (cf. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 404). Hermisson identifies the 'we' as 'pupils' (i.e., disciples), a vague, yet agreeable option. See H.-J. Hermisson, "The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (B. Janowski and P. Stuhlmacher, eds; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 22.

<sup>210</sup> Only YHWH and prophet say, "my people," in FI and the referent is always God's people or the chosen people (broadly or narrowly conceived). See, e.g., 1:3; 5:13; 10:2, 24; 22:4; 26:20; 32:13, 18; 40:1; 51:4, 16; 52:4-6; 57:14; 63:8; 65:22. The exception that proves the rule is 19:25, where YHWH calls Egypt "my people" and Assyria "the work of my hands," indicating that they also belong to God. Corresponding to this observation, the use of 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. in FI always refers to the solidarity of the prophet and Israel (regardless of how broadly or narrowly the collective entity is defined). (See Isa 1:9; 2:5; 40:8; 42:24.) I do not think YHWH speaks again until v.11b. Childs similarly observes that the confessing 'we' is in some sense (broadly or narrowly defined) Israel. He writes, "[T]he confessing 'we' of the Old Testament is always Israel and not the nations" (*Isaiah*, 413). Blenkinsopp adds, it is "a disciple...one who speaks on behalf of those who 'revere Yahveh and obey the voice of his servant' (50:10)" (*Isaiah 40-55*, 350-51). He thinks it unlikely that the speaker represents the nations and rulers mentioned in the YHWH discourse (52:15).

<sup>211</sup> By 'persona', I recognize that the voices have emerged from the text as a way of staging its utterances. It is another listener-speaker, probably a disciple of YHWH and his servant (50:10). Significantly, the voices express a profound reciprocity between God, the servant, and disciples. What unites them all is YHWH's purpose and YHWH's word (cf. 51:16; 59:21). Thus, even the voice of the 'we' is designed (as a textual strategy of the author) to produce model readers (i.e., to multiply disciples).

<sup>212</sup> The nature of the poem as testimony of YHWH and 'we' concerning the servant reflects the nature of the previous two poems as self-testimony, highlighting the solidarity between YHWH, servant, and disciples.

<sup>213</sup> Divine disclosure is a matter of actions (52:10; 53:1) and prophetic speech (52:13-15; 53:1, 11b-12; cf. 1 Sam 2:27; 3:1, 21; 9:15; 2 Sam 7:27; Isa 22:14; Amos 3:7).

on an unidentified personal-figure, ‘he’. What the ‘we’ have heard (שמיעה + 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. suf.) relates to its further interpretation.<sup>215</sup> ‘He’ is the topic of the subsequent verses (53:2-11a) just as ‘my servant’ is the topic of YHWH’s testimony in 52:13-15. Proximately, then, within the poem, the central unit constitutes a recitation by the ‘we’ as their response, at least indirectly, to YHWH’s own testimony regarding his servant. In this response, the representative spokesperson stands before the listener like a Shakespearian chorus, drawing the hearer in and connecting the audience to the experience of ‘we’ regarding what it has learned about ‘he’, who is also the manifestation of YHWH’s powerful arm. The audience of vv.1-11a is undisclosed, but the rhetorical questions in 53:1, and the movement from YHWH (1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., 52:13-15) to ‘we’ (1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl., 53:1-11a; cf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., v.8) and back to YHWH again (1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg., 53:11b-12) suggests a dialogical relationship between the outer frame and the central unit. YHWH’s word is overheard by the ‘we’ (52:13-15; cf. 40:1, 3), a witness/listener-speaker, representing the ‘we’, responds (53:1-11a)—not only to the voice heard, but also to YHWH’s arm revealed (53:1)—and then YHWH speaks again, uttering the final interpretive word (53:11b-12).

The collocation of things heard/seen with the speaker’s rhetorical questions in 53:1 (מִי...עַל-מִי) is striking, because it recalls 40:6 (מִי אֶקְרָא), perhaps to express a kind of commissioning of the ‘we’ analogous to that of the listener-speaker.<sup>216</sup> Like the listener-speaker, who is also YHWH’s servant, the ‘we’-group must proclaim things seen and heard, though in the poem, as Clines has observed, “nothing is in fact reported to anyone”<sup>217</sup>—though God overhears and responds in 53:11b-12. In contrast to 40:6-7, however, the spokesperson’s apparent hesitation to speak does not arise from either awareness of humanity’s transient nature or doubts about whether YHWH’s word will prevail (cf. 40:8); instead, the spokesperson questions whether anyone will believe what the ‘we’-group has seen and heard.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, in vv.2-11a, the spokesperson begins

<sup>214</sup> See Isa 40:10; 51:4, 9; 52:10.

<sup>215</sup> I say ‘further’ interpretation, because the ‘we’ have already interpreted what they have seen as the revelation of YHWH’s arm (53:1b); in other words, *this* (53:1a, 2-11a) explains *that* (53:1b). Therefore, the ‘interpretation’ of “what we have heard” might include interaction with (1) chs.51-52, (2) the servant’s self-testimony (cf. Isa 49:1-6; 50:4-9), (3) YHWH’s word and testimony (chs.51-52; esp. 52:13-15), and (4) oral reports or conversations within the community about YHWH’s arm. “What we have heard” also points to these things as influences upon the community’s own interpretation/testimony as a “report” (שמיעה).

Believing takes up the peculiar manifestation of YHWH’s arm and may also indicate trust in a prophetic word (Isa 43:10; Exod 4:1-9, 31; 14:31; 2 Kgs 17:14; 2 Chron 20:20; Jon 3:5; cf. Gen 45:26; Ps 106:12, 24).

<sup>216</sup> Delivering a report was a prophet’s task in Isa 28:9, 19; Jer 49:14; Ezek 21:12 [7]; Obad 1:1 (cf. 1 Sam 2:24; 1 Kgs 10:7).

<sup>217</sup> He adds, “[T]he only ‘hearing’ has gone on outside the dimension of the poem.” See, David J. A. Clines, *I, He, We, and They*, 43.

<sup>218</sup> Interestingly, Clines also perceives a link between Isa 53 and 40:6-8, but not at this point or for this reason. Instead, for him, the two passages are analogous because they both involve a ‘conversion’, and (if my additional observation may be included) I agree with him. He writes, “[T]he ‘conversion’ of the ‘we’



to testify about this radically new thing, offering the community's own interpretation. It is fair to say that they were appalled, yet, somehow they have begun to speak. Now it is as though this 'we'-group cannot help but express and assess what they have witnessed. Thus, the commission would presumably involve extending their own testimony, (possibly) with YHWH's own declaration of the servant's success (52:13-15) and definitive construal of its rationale (53:11b-12).<sup>219</sup> Taken as a complete message, then, Isa 53 points to a wider audience.<sup>220</sup> Put differently, the juxtaposition suggests that one voice responds to the other, and so there is only one line (or two ends) to this conversation; yet, both voices ring out as if the exchange takes place in public—as if God wants all humanity to overhear.

So whom does Isa 53 aim to reach? The two 'YHWH'-stanzas (52:13-15; 53:11b-12) contain similarities, which signal their function as prologue and epilogue to the 'we'-stanza, or body of the poem (53:1-11a).<sup>221</sup> Their proximate audience, at least, is the community whose representative testifies in vv.1-11a (cf. v.8). Having learned from the servant's own testimony,<sup>222</sup> the community sees and is hearing more about him from God.<sup>223</sup> But the 'players' mentioned by YHWH also include the 'many nations' (גוים רבים) and 'kings' (מלכים) who will "shut their mouths" (יקפצו...פיהם), 52:15; 49:7, 23) in "speechless respect"<sup>224</sup> because of things neither heard (לֹא + שָׁמַע) nor seen (רָאָה) before. These new things concern 'him' (עַלָּיו), this 'he' whom only YHWH identifies as 'my servant' (עַבְדִּי, 52:13; 53:11b).<sup>225</sup> Truly, this is the one whose appearance (מַרְאֶה, 2x, 52:14; 53:2) was inhumanly marred, and yet, this is the one whose service (in and through humiliation) will benefit the 'many' (3x, 53:11b-12).<sup>226</sup> Indeed, this is the figure "upon whom" (עַל־מִי) YHWH's arm has been revealed, and about whom the community

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to recognize God's purpose in the suffering of the servant corresponds well with the 'conversion' of the prophet himself in the call-narrative of 40:6-8" (*I, He, We, and They*, 29).

<sup>219</sup> Seitz's view lends support to this reading, for he claims, "God is promising that what the servants ...are about to share as 'our report' in the following verses will also come to astound kings and nations." Thus, he says, "[T]he servants' confession can be interpreted as a template for that of the nations...though it is not worked out beyond the promise of 52:15" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 464).

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Isa 42:4; 49:1, 6; 51:4.

<sup>221</sup> I will return to this connection to point out some of the links in a subsequent section.

<sup>222</sup> See Isa 48:16b; 49:1-6; 50:4-9.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. 42:1-4; 51-52. This leads Baltzer to conclude that the scene is a court of law (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 398), but the setting is not clearly indicated. Given the analogy with 40:1-9, however, it is important to recall that the poem begins and ends with speech from YHWH's throne in heaven. Assessments from above (52:13-15; 53:11b-12) envelop and correspond to the confession of the 'we' from below (53:1-11a).

<sup>224</sup> Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 252.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Isa 20:3; 37:35; 41:8, 9; 42:1; 49:31; 51:4-5; 52:10.

<sup>226</sup> The further (inverted) reference to the servant's 'appearance' and 'form' (52:14 מַרְאֶה || תִּצְהַר ; 53:2 מַרְאֶה || תִּצְהַר) specifically links 52:13-15 to 53:1-12 (cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-66*, Vol. 2, 275; J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 259).

must testify, bringing forth evidence (vv.2-3, 7-8aα) with analysis (vv.4-6, 8aβ-11a). This understanding of YHWH's new thing is supported by the emphasis in 52:15-53:1 upon recounting (ספר *pu'al*, v.15) the instructional features (רצה || בי) of this wholly new revelation. These instructional features signify that the poem now constitutes a report (שמועה)<sup>227</sup> that explains both how and why YHWH's arm has fallen on his servant. News of the event is vitally important, since it will not merely benefit the 'many', but also transcend the boundaries of Mt. Zion, arresting the attention of and bringing light and salvation to the world.<sup>228</sup>

An inverted parallel structure—signaled by repetition and semantic pairs between cola in 52:15b-53:1—supports my preliminary observations regarding both its content and its cosmic reach:<sup>229</sup>

52:15b	A	“For what was not recounted (ספר)...they will have seen (רצה);
	B	what they had not heard (שמע),
	C	they will consider (התבוננו).”
53:1	C'	“Who would believe (האמי)
	B'	what we have heard (שמעתנו)?
	A'	And YHWH's arm—on what figure has it been revealed (נגלה)?”

The chiasm draws attention to the dialogical nature of the unit as a ‘conversation’ between ‘YHWH’ and the ‘we’-group.<sup>230</sup> It also highlights the universal scope of the poem's address<sup>231</sup> and the pivotal role of YHWH's arm.<sup>232</sup> In other words, as 1<sup>st</sup>-person testimony, Isa 53 may function as an invitation or summons for others (including the reader) to take up this testimony about the arm of YHWH and bear witness to God in trust (אמי, *hip'il*, v.1). Therefore, given its *Sitz im Buch*, it appears that the ultimate aim of this two-fold witness—its import as a vision of new things—is to generate disciples who will realize the truth about YHWH's servant, turn from idols to the true God, and follow the servant's

<sup>227</sup> Westermann comments that the term שמועה refers to a thing which they have heard (1 Sam 2:24; 4:19)...which they themselves have to pass on to others” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 260). See, similarly, S. Mowinckel (*He That Cometh*, 199), ‘a report’ is, “[A] tradition which they have heard within their own circle, and which, through the prophetic author of this Song, they are now spreading abroad.”

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Isa 2:2-5; 42:1-4, 6, 10-12; 49:1, 6, 8, 13.

<sup>229</sup> J. Koole also observes a chiasm, but perceives its expression somewhat differently and makes no comment about its significance other than as a cohesive feature of the two stanzas (*Isaiah 49-55*, 259).

<sup>230</sup> The juxtaposition of C and C' make it tempting to insert an adversative conj.: “What they have not heard, they will consider,” said YHWH. “But,” replied the ‘we’, “who would ever believe what we heard?”

<sup>231</sup> The antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. pl. in v.15b = מלכים || גוים רבים.

<sup>232</sup> גוים רבים || ירוש, is fronted as a constituent of v.1b.

תורה regarding the way of Israel in the world (cf. 42:4).<sup>233</sup> If so, the message somehow pertains to the fulfillment of the servant's מִשְׁפָּט-and-תורה task with a view to populating Zion with these disciples (49:5; 54:13). Then, Israel will embrace its identity (41:8-13), fulfill its vocation (42:1-4), and Zion will rejoice (51:3; 52:1, 6-10; 54:1).<sup>234</sup> The thirsty will be invited to take heed (55:1, 6-7),<sup>235</sup> and God's people will enjoy new life as a united 'Abrahamic' society (51:1-8; cf. 41:8-13; 48:17-19). Such a society, reconstituted by YHWH's servant, will flourish (cf. 1:27; 52:7) and endure (54:17; cf. 2:2), becoming a light for nations and a covenant for people (42:6; 49:6, 8). Indeed, through such a society, YHWH promises not only אור and בריית, but מִשְׁפָּט and תורה (51:4-5, 15-16) for the world by the renewal of Zion's worldwide-witness (2:2-5; cf. 60:1-3) on a restored 'Davidic' model (42:1-4; 55:3b-5).<sup>236</sup>

Of course, this is not a prose account. It is poetry and contains things inscrutable, with much of its imagery (and the quality of life it anticipates) out of focus. Despite its poetic character, it becomes clear that Isa 53 is the key to both the restoration of Zion's children and the understanding of that תורה, or the manifestation of that זרוע יהוה, which the coastlands eagerly await (42:4; 51:4). Isa 53, thus far, is primarily about the revelation of something new in the world, something never seen or heard before, whose impact will be cosmic in scope (48:6-7). Having universal import, it concerns an interpretation of the profound connection between YHWH's servant and arm that will ultimately result in the servant's exaltation (52:13) and humanity's liberation (42:7; 49:9-10). Therefore, the association of these correlatively appalling (52:14)<sup>237</sup> and astounding (52:15) things must not be merely considered but believed throughout the world (53:1).<sup>238</sup> That is to say, the association of YHWH's servant and YHWH's arm is important for the audience to grasp because through this connection the 'we' and (ultimately) the 'many

<sup>233</sup> Eep Talstra expresses it well, "The 'new' means a change of Israel that gives up resistance and hesitation and gains insight from seeing the fate of the Servant...it correlates with knowing, insight, and understanding." See in "Second Isaiah and Qohelet: Could one get them on speaking terms?" in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy* (F. Potsma, K. Spronk, and E. Talstra, eds.; Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker, 2002), 235 (225-36).

<sup>234</sup> רנה, impv. fem. sg., Isa 54:1; cf. 42:10-12; 49:13.

<sup>235</sup> דל, impv. masc. pl., 55:1; cf. 2:5; 49:5-6, 8; Prov 9:5.

<sup>236</sup> Using terminology from Ps 89 but referring to Israel as a whole, the divine promises extended in the former Davidic covenant are now extended to the nation (Ps 89:4-5, 21, 25, 29-30, 34-38, 40; cf. 2 Sam 7:15-16). Shalom Paul calls this "a unique ideological innovation," and notes that this "democratization of the political ideal is connected to similar cultic innovations" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 434-35). See also, O. Eissfeldt, "The Promises of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1-5," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson, eds.; New York: Harper, 1962), 196-207 and Marvin Sweeney, "The Reconceptualization of the Davidic Covenant in Isaiah," 41-61.

<sup>237</sup> While שם can be translated "astonished," it plainly has a negative connotation in v.14 (cf. Jer 2:12; 18:16; Ezek 26:16), referring to the figure's humiliation.

<sup>238</sup> See Isa 42:4, 9-12; 45:22; 49:6, 8, 13, 23, 26; 51:4-6; 52:10.

nations' will come to see, hear, understand, and be healed (52:15; 53:1, 5; cf. 6:10).

Moreover, this association, as well as the intended response to it, brings back into focus YHWH's aim to achieve a universally shared perspective on YHWH's plan and servant (42:1-4; 49:1) through whom he will manifest his glory (49:3).<sup>239</sup> In other words, the entire world must embrace God's assessment, for it represents God's definitive construal concerning the requisite way to life and peace for humanity.<sup>240</sup>

In sum, by the revelation of YHWH's arm in and through this suffering figure, the 'we' (in particular) appear to have grasped a message personally incarnated in their midst.<sup>241</sup> "As such a word spoken 'in person'," explains Fretheim, "it has the potential of being a more convincing word, of having an increased impact upon people."<sup>242</sup> The only appropriate response is to take up God's revelation as their own verbal and active witness. Put differently, as a word spoken in person, what the 'we' have seen and heard regarding the potentially salvific suffering of 'he' compels them to respond. By demanding their response, the word prompts their repentance and summons their participation as witnesses. It exhorts the audience to identify with the servant, to join the 'we'-group, and to bear faithful witness to YHWH as God. Isa 53 is therefore a disciple-making word, a word of instruction and guidance for life. It aims to generate disciples who, like the servant, will not merely recite this word as a credo/manifesto, but embody it as their witness (53:1). Consequently, it is a critical aspect of FI's **תורה** for Israel and all nations.<sup>243</sup> Indeed, its particular summons was expressed—perhaps by the same spokesperson—at 50:10.<sup>244</sup> Like 50:4-9, Isa 53 is a program for conversion (as disciples' eyes and ears now see), imitation (of YHWH's servant), and vindication (of YHWH, the servant, and disciples). It is a plan for Jacob-Israel's renewed involvement in the Abrahamic (and Davidic) calling to bring blessing, as well as unity and peace, to the world (41:8; 51:1-8). Moreover, with the appearing of this figure and this way, Israel can no longer complain as in 40:27, because the servant-disciple's submission testifies to YHWH's **משפט**, as this one submits to YHWH's pedagogy in righteous-suffering. Thus, in confession and proclamation of Isa

<sup>239</sup> See, e.g., Isa 40:5; 42:8; 42:12; 43:7; 44:23; 45:25; 48:11.

<sup>240</sup> Hence, the words of the 'we'-group reflect the same dual agency manifested in both the word of Isaiah ben Amoz and the prophetic servant-figure. This confirms their identity as disciples.

<sup>241</sup> See Isa 20:1-6; 50:4-9; 53:1; cf. 42:4; 49:1.

<sup>242</sup> T. E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 165.

<sup>243</sup> As Seitz explains, "[T]he horizon of the servant's work not only encloses most immediately the acknowledgement that follows (53:1-9), but also anticipates, as the nations see what the report of Israel entails, the inauguration of all nations' coming to knowledge of the one light of YHWH" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 460). See Isa 2:2-4; 51:4-5; 60:1-3.

<sup>244</sup> "Who among you reveres YHWH by obeying the voice of his servant? Even though he walks about in darkness and has no light, he should trust in YHWH and rely upon his God."

53, not only ‘we’ but also many nations (and kings) will see, hear, and understand YHWH’s way.

This purpose with other features (discussed below) suggests that Isa 53 acts as both further commentary on preceding chapters and the ground of FI’s total vision. In order to interpret YHWH’s purpose, it takes up a palette of old words, familiar poetic forms, and evocative images to paint a mental picture so radically new that the reader can begin to visualize what the ‘we’-group have seen, heard, and expressed regarding the servant’s task and the servant’s way.<sup>245</sup> Despite the vivid imagery and the emphasis on sight, taking up this picture is initially like describing a shadow or peering through a glass darkly; nevertheless, as the intrigued and astonished listener responds in trust (53:1), ‘we’ (all) will find that walking in YHWH’s light restores sight, ensures success, and promises blessing.

#### 5.5.2. *The Temporal Location of ‘We’*

The poem is more intriguing and astounding once one considers the temporal location, stance or vantage point, of the ‘we’ vis-à-vis the suffering and exaltation of YHWH’s servant.<sup>246</sup> With regard to the servant’s suffering, the community too stands between past humiliation (נָשָׂא, 53:12) and promised exaltation (יָרוּם וְנִשְׂאָה, 52:13).

Hence, their stance is analogous to the servant’s stance in 50:4-9, where, in the midst of suffering, the servant expressed full reliance on YHWH as his helper and vindicator (vv.7-9). The significance of this stance is (at least) threefold. First, in the poem’s frame, YHWH’s testimony foretells the destiny of his servant and explains its basis, but never reports its fulfillment; nevertheless, the ‘we’ see, hear, and understand. Second, as commentary on 50:4-9, the central portrait shows that the ‘we’ of Isa 53 have ‘taught-tongues’ of their own to transmit what they have seen, heard, and understood.<sup>247</sup> Third, the testimony of YHWH and the ‘we’ acts as a twofold witness, confirming the servant’s self-testimony (49:1-6; 50:4-9) and doubling as a further summons, equivalent to the exhortation of 50:10. As a result, despite the pervasive use of imagery in Isa 53, it is all

<sup>245</sup> Hermisson is right, “The tradition only provides the means to facilitate an expression that far transcends all that is traditional” (“The Fourth Servant Song,” 45).

<sup>246</sup> Edgar Conrad (*Reading Isaiah*, 49) makes a similar inquiry regarding the implicit reader of Isa 6; cf. Richard Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 185. This perspective and use of 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. suggests that the implicit audience is summoned to adopt the stance of the ‘we’ in the reading of Isa 53.

<sup>247</sup> Observing the content of the two poems, Reventlow comments similarly, calling Isaiah 53 “a commentary, especially on the third song [Isa 50:4-9]. But,” he says, “it presupposes an already developed situation: The Servant has been killed (so it seems) and the speakers are left all alone, looking back and only now discerning the relevance of all that had been going on before their eyes.” See Henning Graf Reventlow, “Basic Issues in the Interpretation of Isaiah 53,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (W. H. Bellinger and W. R. Farmer, eds.; Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1998), 26.

about testimony.<sup>248</sup> As disciples, the ‘we’ now have their own store of words to edify the weary and invite their response. Similarly situated between promise and fulfillment, then, the temporal location of the ‘we’ indicates that disciples too must not only believe (53:1), but faithfully witness as they obediently wait (40:31; cf. 8:16). With reverence for YHWH, they must not only respond to his voice, they must follow the servant’s way and תורה.

Now, rather than literary and rhetorical features alone,<sup>249</sup> this vantage point is best appreciated through observation of the poem’s linguistic signals. Thus, in what follows I expose the backbone of the poem, treating in turn each stanza of the outer frame and each strophe of its central portrait.

#### 5.5.2.1. YHWH’s Opening Testimony (Isa 52:13-15)

After the interjection (הנה), YHWH builds up the servant with one *yiqtol* form, followed by another and two *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* forms (v.13). The verse introduces the stanza as a general statement about the servant’s unparalleled future: YHWH’s image-bearer will have success.<sup>250</sup> The stanza closes in v.15 with two lines of syntactically parallel cola. The first line contains a pair of *yiqtol* forms, and the second, introduced by causal כִּי, has two cola each with initial אֲשֶׁר + (לֵא)-*qatal* plus a *qatal* form; this last, I have rendered (in each case) by the English future perfect: “they will have seen...they will have considered.”<sup>251</sup> Thus, after כִּי, v.15b explicates v.15a, which had depicted the astonishment of many nations (גוֹיִם) and the silencing of kings (מַלְכִּים).

<sup>248</sup> In Isa 41:8-16 (identity and role) and 42:1-12 (vocation), YHWH is the speaker, presenting his servant to court. In Isa 49:1-13 (designation as Israel) and 50:4-9 (Israel’s pedagogy of suffering) the servant offers testimony regarding his role/task and his Vindicator. The individual who testifies is YHWH’s disciple who also recruits disciples who will obey his voice and testify about their teachers, both YHWH (and Isaiah) and the servant figure. In Isa 53:2-11a, the disciples actually do testify about the servant and YHWH as his and their Vindicator.

<sup>249</sup> By the latter, I mean, (e.g.) features like repetition, ambiguity, imagery, simile, metaphor, antithesis, contrast, etc., some of which will also be noted. On the cohesive function of repetition in this poem, see Paul R. Raabe, “The Effect of Repetition in the Suffering Servant Song” *JBL* 103 (1984): 77-84.

<sup>250</sup> The servant’s success appears to increase and expand, for, like YHWH in 6:1, he will be extremely elevated and internationally recognized. Given the analogy with 2:12, and despite other possible Davidic motifs (cf. 53:2), the repetition of אֲשֶׁר and לֵא at 52:13 does not require the view that the servant-figure is divine or a king—only that God’s human image-bearer shares in YHWH’s own dignity as *the* King (cf. Ps. 8:5). I am not suggesting that the figure cannot be a king, only that that identification is not explicit in FI. In fact, the relationship of Isa 53 to YHWH’s ‘Davidic’ aspirations for his entire people (cf. 42:1-4; 55:3-5) is the more significant concern of FI. Thus, citing the affinity between 52:13 and 6:1, Stephen Cook may express the meaning of 52:13 best: “Isaiah’s figure of the Servant of the Lord is God’s true image on earth” (See Cook, “Death of Isaiah’s Servant,” 114, n.12). As such, his disciples, as Zion’s children, will comprise the new humanity.

<sup>251</sup> See my translation and its defense in Appendix B.12.

Now, v.14 is the only verse in this stanza that does not contain a *yiqtol* form, but only contains a single *qatal* (v.14a) followed by two parallel verbless clauses (v.14bαβ), which are introduced by asseverative כֵּן (“truly”). Hence, v.14b is functionally parallel to v.15b. It also explicates the first line of the verse, earnestly expressing the reason for the appallment of the ‘many’ (רַבִּים). What is more, v.14a (*qatal*) and v.15a (*yiqtol*, 2x) are linked by the compound כֵּן...כַּאֲשֶׁר, which signals a comparison that suggests a movement from before (humiliation/apparent defeat) to after (exaltation/definitive success). The comparison is also a matter of degree: “just as appalled” (depth of humiliation), “so also astonished” (height of exaltation). This movement evokes the dynamic expressed by 49:7, where YHWH addresses one deeply despised (בִּזְיוֹן) with a similar promise.<sup>252</sup> Consequently, the contextual comparison<sup>253</sup> (and the link with 49:7) indicates that the *qatal* form in v.14a requires the English past tense—“Just as many were appalled concerning him”—and the *yiqtol* and *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* forms in v.13 and the *yiqtol* forms in v.15a require the English future—“He will be highly exalted...he will astonish many nations, kings will shut their mouths.”

In sum, verse 13 apparently relates to v.15ab as general statement to specific detail. The relation of v.14ab to v.15ab indicates that the degree of astonishment will match (or surpass, אֲשֶׁר, v.13) the degree of appallment. Yet, whereas v.14 mentions the suffering of ‘my servant’ as something past (given), v.13 and v.15 proclaim his exaltation as something future (new), and so, unrealized. Hence, the first verse foretells the servant’s success and the closing verse proclaims the evidence of its achievement. Affliction (v.14) sits in the middle. Suffering, therefore, is the path to exaltation and honor, a means through which YHWH displays his glory (49:3). Nevertheless, the stanza clearly considers the servant from a temporal position between past humiliation and future vindication.

#### 5.5.2.2. *The Testimony of ‘We’*

The central stanza contains the confession of the ‘we’ (53:1-11a). It moves from incredulity, misapprehension, contempt, and despair (הִפְּיָל, *hip ‘il*, v.1, 2-3, 8aβ-9) to comprehension, admiration, trust, and confident expectation (vv.4-6, 7-8aα, 10-11a).<sup>254</sup> In

<sup>252</sup> “Kings will see and arise, princes, they will bow down with reference to YHWH, the Faithful One, the Holy One of Israel, since he chose you” (49:7; cf. 49:26; 60:16).

<sup>253</sup> The ‘tense’ is of course established from the context, as Clines observes, “...it is not the tenses that indicate temporality...it is the comparison...Only in the relationship between Yahweh and the servant does the perfect tense happen to correspond with ‘before’ and the imperfect with the ‘after’ (52:13; 53:10-12)” (*I, He, We, and They*, 48).

<sup>254</sup> This is partially seen by repetition, which is a feature of cohesion, yet there is also a coherent progression as the ‘we’ express their changed perspective on the servant from one strophe to the next. See

this stanza, the figure is called ‘he’, never ‘servant’, though the divine name does appear.<sup>255</sup> When it does, ‘YHWH’ is always associated with ‘him’ (יהוה, vv.6, 10 [2x]; cf. על-מִי, v.1, לפניו, v.2,<sup>256</sup> אלהים, v.4). Thus, YHWH is ‘with him’ (50:8)<sup>257</sup> and he is YHWH’s servant on their behalf. Also in this stanza, *qatal* forms predominate over *yiqtol* forms in each strophe but the last (vv.2-3, 4-6, 7-8aα, 8aβ-11a), and passive stems (15x), often indicative of divine agency,<sup>258</sup> are pervasive.

After the rhetorical questions in v.1, the account of the ‘we’ commences in v.2 with a *wayyiqtol* form, followed by three verbless clauses.<sup>259</sup> Then there is a half-line in which conjunctive *waw* + *yiqtol* appears on either side of a verbless clause. Here, utilizing a horticultural simile, the ‘we’ speak retrospectively about a past condition that was unfulfilled due to the servant’s unimpressive form or appearance. Verse 3 contains an *inclusio* with the *nip’al* participle, “despised” (בזוה, 2x; cf. 49:7), and the first strophe (vv.2-3) ends with a summary clause (לֹא-qatal), underlining its main point: we saw, but disregarded him. Thus, the first strophe looks back in order to explain why the ‘we’ expect no one to believe that ‘he’ was “the locus of YHWH’s revelation.”<sup>260</sup>

The next strophe (vv.4-6) contains a sequence of *qatal* forms and passive participles. It is introduced by אֲנִי (adv., “nevertheless”), and expresses the transition from former misconception to accurate reassessment.<sup>261</sup> This strophe is significant

Paul R. Raabe, “The Effect of Repetition in the Suffering Servant Song,” 77-84 and Clines, “...the attitude of the ‘we’ to ‘him’ changes from hostility to scorn to appreciation” (*I, We, He, and They*, 37).

<sup>255</sup> Isa 53 never mentions Jacob-Israel by name either. The only name that appears in Isa 53 is YHWH (cf. 42:8; 44:5; 50:10; 51:15; 52:5, 6). This may be an important feature, not only because the testimony of both the servant and the ‘we’ honor YHWH, but also because others must first take up the testimony of the ‘we’ if they will imitate the way of ‘he’.

<sup>256</sup> His growth ‘before him’ (לפניו, v.2, i.e., YHWH) is an aspect of God’s design (vv.6, 10) though, given God’s care and blessing, it is plainly un-extraordinary and contrary to human expectation. His subhuman appearance (52:14) and the use of the plant simile (53:2-3) shows a figure sustained by God yet to all appearances withering away and weary (40:31). He is, in fact—even as a picture of transient, frail, humanity (40:6-8)—God’s image-bearer (42:1) through whom YHWH will get glory (49:3).

<sup>257</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 18:5, 14; 2 Kgs 18:7.

<sup>258</sup> So also, Goldingay, “it is explicit that God is the agent behind the passive participles” (*The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 502).

<sup>259</sup> There are biographical elements here, but the account is best seen as an artistic perspective on the servant’s total life of suffering; in short, it is not a simple chronological description. As an account of manifold sufferings, Childs (*Isaiah*, 414) observes how it resonates with the typical idiom of the innocent suffering one of Psalms. See Pss 22:6-7; 39:1-4; 88:8, and the discussion in Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, 92-96. Muilenburg observes that the wide diversity of terms used to describe the suffering “forbid[s] any attempt to identify its precise nature” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 622; cf. C. R. North, *Suffering Servant*, 150).

<sup>260</sup> J. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 2, 300. What they beheld incredulously is exceeded in chs.40-55 perhaps only by divine inscrutability as regards מִשְׁפָּט (40:27) and the incomparability of YHWH as Creator and Lord of history (Isa 40:12-31). This suggests that the servant’s maltreatment itself is a manifestation of blindness and apostasy as regards God’s reign.

<sup>261</sup> Westermann observes that here, “The real question is this: what led the speakers in 53:1-11 to make the discovery they did? To point to the subsequent exaltation,” he continues, “is not the answer” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 263). Observing the temporal stance of the ‘we’ will enable the reader to identify the answer.



because it testifies regarding ‘his’ innocence and confesses ‘our’ guilt, while astonishingly, yet appropriately, ascribing the agency behind this figure’s suffering to God: “he was stricken by אֱלֹהִים” (נָכַח, *hop ‘al* ptc., 53:4). Thus, “it was Yahveh,” comments Blenkinsopp, “who, exceptionally, caused the sickness, suffering, and ills to fall on him (6b).”<sup>262</sup> Though he was innocent, he suffered—as one for the many—because of their guilt.<sup>263</sup> The experience of this suffering-yet-innocent one, as Blenkinsopp notes, is contrary to the *interpretatio communis*,<sup>264</sup> for one expects suffering as divine retribution for sin.<sup>265</sup> As before (v.3), the closing verse contains an inclusio: “We all [כָּלֵנוּ] like sheep have gone astray<sup>266</sup> ... YHWH laid upon him the iniquity of us all [כָּלֵנוּ]” (v.6). The verse amounts to an admission of apostasy and guilt. It seems that the case against the accused (50:8-9) has turned against the ‘we’ in self-accusation and confession. Nevertheless, while the ‘we’ recognize that the chastisement (מוֹסֵר) and bruising (חֲבוּרָה)<sup>267</sup> of ‘he’ brought reconciliation (שְׁלוֹם) and healing (רִפּוּא) for the community

<sup>262</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 350.

<sup>263</sup> I agree with J. Koole that the inclusio supports the view of the servant as an individual, for “here a contrast is drawn between one and all others,” who were rebellious, insubordinate, blind and deaf (*Isaiah 49-55*, 296).

<sup>264</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 351. Apparently, the community encounters something paradoxical and apparently incomprehensible to their theology of retribution, for the relationship between deeds and consequences, or the seemingly reliable relationship between prosperity for righteousness (or innocence) and suffering for wickedness (or guilt) has apparently been overturned. Although an overly simplistic expression of this relationship would presume a mechanical worldview, which is foreign to the biblical tradition, there is something illuminating here. The classic study is K. Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?” *ZTK* 52 (1955): 1-42, but Bernd Janowski is particularly good on the subject. He calls the view, which surfaces in Isa 53, “a decidedly strange view of righteousness: the righteous live by their faithfulness and suffer because they are righteous.” His explanation is that Isa 53 contradicts the more traditional view of reality in which every consequence relates back to a corresponding action and all deeds come back upon their doers either for good or for evil. See, B. Janowski, “He Bore our Sins,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (B. Janowski and P. Stuhlmacher, eds; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 49 and “Die Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück. Offene Frage im Umkreis des ‘Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhangs,’” *ZTK* 91 (1994): 247-271. Following Janowski, every consequence for *him* relates back to the actions of ‘we’, and all their deeds fall upon him for their good and his evil.

<sup>265</sup> In his explanation of motifs, S. Talmon cites biblical examples such as the ‘barren wife’ and the motif of the ‘youngest son’. He observes that, at times, literary tropes disclose an empathy with situations of the individual and with societal phenomena that appear to stand in opposition to standards laid down in codified biblical law (“Har and Midbār,” 109). The ‘righteous sufferer’ is a clear example of this. As Janowski (“He Bore our Sins,” 49) also recognizes, “Th[e] circular [*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*], or rather reciprocal, structuring of activity is deprived of its force in the suffering righteous tradition.” This motif overlaps with the conventional ‘pedagogy of submission’ (cf. 50:4-9), on which, see D. M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 129. Onlookers might expect to observe the chastisement of a disciple, as a student expects discipline for slighting the master, but they also expect blessing (and life), not suffering (and death), as the reward for the righteous.

<sup>266</sup> By the animal simile (sheep going astray), the ‘we’ perhaps also point to the servant’s role in reuniting the flock and returning it to God (49:5-6).

<sup>267</sup> See 50:5-6. In 53:5b, מוֹסֵר recalls the rebellious child image of 1:2-6; though, unlike Israel, the servant is innocent, and he did not rebel. See, Kathryn Pfisterer Darr *Isaiah’s Vision and the Family of God*, 67. Carr writes, “...his ‘ears’ are open to God’s instruction, while he endures the beatings of his human peers.” See, D. M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 150; cf. the monograph by J. A. Sanders, “Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism” issued as the *Colgate Rochester Divinity School Bulletin* 38 (1955). Isa 50:4 and 53:2-11a demonstrate that the lessons, which

(v.5b), nothing is said about the figure's future situation. Indeed, it appears that they actually have come to believe what they have heard ahead of the servant's exaltation (cf. v.1).

Verses 7-8a $\alpha$  further the account again with *qatal* forms. First, parallel passive verbs appear within the animal simile in v.7. One is a *yiqtol* form (יָבֹל, *hop'al*) paired with a *qatal* (נִפְּלָה, *nip'al*), but nothing in the context suggests a change of tense. It is notable that the 'we' now recognize how his behavior in and through suffering contrasts with their own. Unlike those who rebel (cf. 50:5), he was submissive (53:7), because he was certain that YHWH would help and vindicate him (49:4; 50:7b-9). He accepted suffering as a part of the office delegated to him (49:3, 6; 50:5), and he was "unflinching in his total silence."<sup>268</sup> Although he was oppressed, "as a lamb led to slaughter"<sup>269</sup> or as a ewe before her shearers is silent, he did not open his mouth" (לֹא יָפֶתַח פִּי; 2x, v.7; cf. 42:2).

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enabled him to speak דְּבַר to the weary, are being learned by some among the 'many', who comprise the audience of 50:10-11. In 48:17, the listener-speaker recognizes God as the teacher (לִמּוֹד), and as God's servant, he responds as a disciple (49:1; 50:4). Isa 54:13 promises Zion that like 'him' all her children will be disciples (לְלִמּוֹדִים) of YHWH. Only in distinction from the former disciple, these disciples required the suffering of the former in their stead to 'get it', and it was healing for 'us'.

<sup>268</sup> S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 407.

<sup>269</sup> See Jer 11:19a, "I was like a docile lamb led to the slaughter" (NJPS). Debates over this inter-text pertain to the question of whether the servant died. Most agree that this is not referring to ritual sacrifice (see, e.g., Janowski, "He Bore our Sins," 65), but did he die? Jeremiah did not die at the hand of his adversaries; nevertheless, the conclusion that the servant of Isa 53 did not die does not follow simply from the analogy with Jeremiah (pace, e.g., R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 176; T. Mettinger, *Farewell to the Servant Songs*, 41). Joseph Blenkinsopp, for instance, comes to the opposite conclusion based on the same analogy; for him, Jer 11:19 supports the view that the servant died, since murder was the clear goal of Jeremiah's adversaries. That Jeremiah lived is irrelevant. Plainly, his enemies were not simply seeking to cast the prophet from his homeland (*Isaiah 40-55*, 353). Seitz (*Isaiah 40-66*, 466; cf. Westermann, 266) states his view clearly, "The servant dies." Childs (*Isaiah*, 416) calls any other interpretation "tortuous," a reading that "run[s] against the plain sense of the text." Consistent with his aim, D. J. A. Clines notes the ambiguity inherent in the phrase (*I, He, We, They*, 29), and Goldingay follows suit (*The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 507), wondering if "cut off" refers to the prophet's isolation from human society (cf. v.3b).

Related to this discussion is the mention of his grave in v.9. Here, appeal is often made to a literary stereotype in the Akkadian wisdom piece, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, Tablet II.114-15 (ANET, 596): "My grave was waiting...before I was even dead." So as J. Goldingay observes, "Having a grave ready does not mean that the person destined for it has died" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 507). And Shalom Paul sees "grave" in v.9 as a rhetorical device: "...the death and demise of the servant are not literal, but serve as a metaphor for his highly precarious state" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 408; cf. R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving*, 103-104). On the collective view, every description, including death and the grave are representations of exile (cf. Ezek 37:11; cf. Lam 3:54). Compare the view of Sweeney: "In the context of the book of Isaiah, the portrayal of the suffering servant functions as one means to address the problem of evil or exile by asserting that it was divinely ordained." M. A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 78. Yet even on the personal view, where the one stands for the many, the interpreter must emphasize the poetic rather than prose nature of the chapter. Nevertheless, North's response, which lines up with that of Childs and Seitz, seems decisive: "...a man may describe *himself* as, or as if, already dead, there is...no analogy for a sufferer not yet dead being described by *someone else* as though he were" (*Suffering Servant*, 148, his italics). What is more, the perspective of the 'we' appears to look back over the servant's life as a completed whole in vv.2-9 (all of life, including death and the grave) and only begins to speak of a reversal of fortune (or life from death) in v.10. I think he was killed, but Goldingay's point is well taken; the proposition, "'He was killed' (or 'he was excluded') would have been clearer, but not necessary as effective" (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 507).

Despite the fact that he was denied the protection of just order (מַעֲצָר מִשְׁפָּט, 53:8aα), unlike Jacob-Israel, he did not complain (40:27). Consequently, Clines recognizes that his commitment to the purposes of Yahweh (53:10) lies entirely in his silent and unresisting suffering.<sup>270</sup> Nevertheless, the account is entirely about behavior already seen rather than coming success.

The spokesperson's final analysis (vv.8aβ-11a) begins (as v.1ab) with a rhetorical question (מַה). Here, מַה (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. mas. sg. suf.) is the fronted object (מַה): "Among his generation, who would have considered [it]?" This question, the fronting of the object, and the *yiqtol* form (פִּי שֶׁיִּקְטֹל *pol'el*) recall not only v.1b but also the content of vv.2-3. The question is followed by causal כִּי (v.8b) plus a *qatal* form, "For he was cut off from the land of the living," then a causal מֵכֵן in a verbless clause expresses the reason. It had seemed to his own generation that the servant could not have any kind of future—despite, they now confess, his suffering for the transgression of 'my people' (v.8bβ).<sup>271</sup> Nevertheless, v.9 continues (as v.2 began) with *wayyiqtol*, expressing the figure's ignominious end. From despicable (vv.2-3) to apparently beyond saving (vv.8b-9), all his life was insignificance and rejection, isolation and affliction, sickness, injustice, violence, plague, and now, apparently, death and burial (cf. v.12b). All this despite the fact that he did (עָשָׂה, *qal* pf.) no violence (לֹא-חָמַס, v.9bα; cf. 42:3). As if to stress the coupling of non-violent action with innocent speech, "There was no deceit in his mouth" is a verbless clause (v.9bβ; cf. v.7; 49:2; 50:4). Verse 10 follows with a final *inclusio* (cf. vv.3, 6), here by repetition (in inverse parallelism) of the divine name (יְהוָה) and חָפֵץ (vb. and n.), indicating, once again, YHWH's agency in the servant's ruin. Its opening colon glances heavenwards before falling back to the earth: "As for YHWH, he purposed [יְהוָה חָפֵץ] to crush him" (v.10aα).<sup>272</sup> Now they recognize this cannot be the end.

<sup>270</sup> D. J. A. Clines, *I, He, We, They*, 65. Goldingay is correct that "this portrait goes beyond" the former one, since, in Isa 50:4-9, the servant *did* open his mouth (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 506). But the key difference between this figure and Jacob-Israel is what his silence indicates; namely, his lack of complaint or rebellion and his evident submission to YHWH. In 50:4-9, he confidently opened his mouth to testify in praise of his Teacher (50:4) and Vindicator (50:8). There, his God-given design was to edify the weary. In Isa 53, the 'we' testify in recognition of this loyalty and the honor he showed to God. As with 42:2-3, the issue is not whether he speaks but how he approaches both God and humanity. In this, his manner contrasts sharply with that of the many oppressor nations and kings, including Israel in its rebellious estate.

<sup>271</sup> J. Goldingay captures this well, "It seemed like Jeremiah and like Zion, the servant would never have children, that he was destined to have his life cut off, and that he had failed in his ministry" (*The Message of Isaiah 40-55*).

<sup>272</sup> "[R]ight up to the last moment," comments Westermann, "up to the grave itself, the Servant's life gave absolutely no indication at all of the supremely positive significance which was later attached to it." (*Isaiah 40-66*, 266).

Indeed, in v.10a $\beta$ , and continuing in the final line of the central stanza (v.11a), a linguistically marked transition takes place. It holds out a new kind of life in reward for the servant's successful fulfillment of an open condition. After v.10a $\alpha$ , a sequence of five *yiqtol* forms lifts the listeners' gaze from crushing death to bountiful life by focusing on the anticipated blessings YHWH set before his servant in compensation for his labor: "After the labor of his life, he will see these things and be satisfied with the result." By its 'fruit', then, the servant will realize concretely that his work was not in vain (49:4).<sup>273</sup> The 'we' anticipate the exaltation of 'he' and the shared enjoyment of his blessings (v.11a; cf. 53:12a), as expressed by the verbal sequence.

The sequence begins with the conjunction  $\text{אם}$ , which signals a conditional. Verse 10a $\beta$  is the protasis: "If/when his life [ $\text{נפשו}$ ] makes reparation [ $\text{אשם} + \text{שׂוּ$ ]..."<sup>274</sup> This clause points to the servant's role as a mediator/intercessor (cf. v.12c), of whom it can be said that, before God, by "taking over the consequences of *other's actions*,"<sup>275</sup> he restores  $\text{חסד}$  as well as  $\text{שלום}$  for the 'we' (cf. v.5; 40:6). By submitting himself to God as an innocent one, he demonstrates the loyalty YHWH requires despite the adversity 'we' are facing in life and death. By bearing guilt as the righteous one in their place, he shows the 'we' what they deserve for their failure to meet their obligation to God; in this way, before God and the 'we' (indeed, before all humanity) who have offended YHWH's honor through disregard of  $\text{תורה/דבר יהוה}$ <sup>276</sup>—in injustice, oppression, and reliance upon false images—he honors YHWH, fulfills the obligation of "Israel," and manifests the true image of the incomparable God.

<sup>273</sup> In contrast with the graphic depiction of sufferings, including the mention of his being 'cut off' and his grave, there is very little description of the restoration of the servant's fortunes. This difference too might mark the spot where 'we' stand. Surely, life of submission to YHWH demands both this explanation of his suffering and ultimately his exaltation. Thus, the 'we' anticipate that he will enjoy the characteristic features of that obedient life blessed by God (progeny, life, success, prosperity). Compare the comments of Hermisson, "How this is to be imagined is not said...here is guilt that must lead to death; here is righteousness that must lead to life" ("The Fourth Servant Song, 39), and Childs, "...there is no explicit mention of resurrection...Nevertheless, the text clearly speaks of a reversal of fortune" (*Isaiah*, 419). As Seitz observes, "How this happens, in practical terms, is not spelled out, and we must respect the text's poetic and reticent character at this juncture and not seek to fill out too much detail" (*Isaiah* 40-66, 467).

<sup>274</sup> Compare the use of  $\text{פגוע}$  (*hip* 'il pf.) in v.6. The mention of  $\text{אשם}$  cannot eclipse what YHWH has already accepted ( $\text{רצח}$ ) in 40:1-2; hence, the two contexts are somehow related. Of course, subsequent chapters have shown that the judgment of exile had not changed the people or eradicated their sin or temptation to idolatry (42:18-25). For this, something else was necessary. This something else has been plain since chs.1-5 set before Israel a choice between repentance and cleansing judgment. Like the new generation after the wilderness wandering, judgment leaves survivors to start anew by turning to YHWH. Yet, like that 'new' generation, the problem of reigning sin remains. Punishment has not changed them. So, how can a people 'blind, deaf, lacking understanding', even 'guilty', be healed in order to dwell with YHWH in Zion once more? The arm of YHWH brings the answer in this act of salvation for the 'we' through the judgment of God's servant.

<sup>275</sup> B. Janowski, "He Bore our Sins," 69 (his italics).

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Isa 1:1-16-17, 23; 5:24; 24:5; 30:15; 40:6-7; 42:24-25; 48:18.

In fact, this is what he was designated “Israel” for: to fulfill Jacob-Israel’s calling as the waiting witness to God. This he did by embracing his people’s vocation and by testifying regarding **מִשְׁפָּט**. Thus, as a witness to God, he is an old-yet-new thing, because, as “Israel,” he must carry Jacob-Israel’s identity (41:8-16) in order to fulfill its calling (42:1-4; 49:1-6). In so doing, he recognizes and acknowledges YHWH as both his Teacher,<sup>277</sup> knowing his place as one taught (50:4), and as the incomparable God. What is more, he knows that the Creator and Lord of history (40:12-26) is Jacob-Israel’s only help (41:13, 14; 50:7-9) and Zion-Jerusalem’s only comfort (40:1; 49:14; cf. 20:6). As one taught he knows that YHWH upholds **מִשְׁפָּט** (40:27; 49:4-5; 50:8) and strengthens the weary with **דְּבַר** (40:31; 50:4; cf. 8:16). He is also an old-yet-new thing because with ears to hear and eyes to see, he is able to fulfill his charge and Israel’s obligations;<sup>278</sup> he has confessed the name of Israel’s God in truth and righteousness (48:1), and, in and through this “Israel,” YHWH’s arm and glory are revealed (49:3; 53:1).

Indeed, he demonstrated **חֶסֶד** before humanity by suffering with God’s **דְּבַר** to them,<sup>279</sup> and before God by submitting to affliction without rebellion or complaint.<sup>280</sup> As YHWH’s righteous image (42:1), he was rejected and disregarded (with him) by the ‘we’; indeed, the ‘we’ hid their faces from him as each one turned from God to his own way (cf. 41:5-7). YHWH’s righteous image was despised, though he did no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless, by his life as Israel, he fulfills Israel’s obligation to YHWH; for this reason, he can make his life an **עֹשֶׂה**. Moreover, he does this successfully by rendering to God the loyal service that ‘we’ owed and by taking the consequences of their failure.<sup>282</sup> He made his life an **עֹשֶׂה** when, at YHWH’s initiative, in recognition of his people’s guilt (42:24), he took responsibility for them (49:3; 50:4-9). Thus, he was submissive, and God counted him among the transgressors, laying upon him the guilt of ‘us all’. In this way, he gave his life for the honor of God and for the liberation and healing of ‘we’ (53:5),<sup>283</sup> thereby discharging their guilt.

<sup>277</sup> See Isa 30:20-21; 40:14; 48:17.

<sup>278</sup> See Isa 42:1-4, 18-25; 48:18; 49:3.

<sup>279</sup> See Isa 40:6-8; 42:23-24; 48:16b, 18; 49:4-6; 50:8-9; 53:2-3, 7.

<sup>280</sup> See Isa 42:2; 49:4; 50:5-9; 53:7-9.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Isa 48:1, 3, 5, 6-8; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 51:16; 59:21.

<sup>282</sup> As an offering to make restitution, an **עֹשֶׂה** is given for offenses against God (see esp. 1 Sam 6:3, which includes healing/restoration; cf. Lev 5:17-19; Num 5:6-8; Ezra 10:19). Hence, Goldingay rightly adds, “[T]he reparation-offering makes up for the general sense in which the people have behaved in a way that offends and dishonors Yhwh, who has indeed profaned them (43:[27-] 28).” See J. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 511.

<sup>283</sup> S. Cook recognizes this as an ‘inclusive’ place taking in which, “those who understand and identify with him in some profound sense die as well” (“Death of the Isaiah’s Servant,” 122). On this issue, see, esp. Daniel P. Bailey, “Concepts of *Stellvertretung* in the Interpretation of Isaiah 53,” in *Jesus and the*

In response, the ‘we’ must identify with the death of this ‘he’ who bore their guilt by recognizing their guilt/wickedness and acknowledging his righteousness/innocence, by confessing that ‘he’ carried the guilt of the ‘we’ as his own, and by following his way of being Israel.<sup>284</sup> In the apodosis (v.10b), the community recognizes YHWH’s promise and ultimate aim in subjecting this innocent one (v.9b) to such travail: “he will see offspring (זרע), and he will live long (יארִיךְ ימים).” Conversion, healing (vv.4-6), offspring, and life (v.9; 6:13c) express the astounding reversal of 6:10-12b.<sup>285</sup> By this outcome, the dual agency of YHWH’s arm and YHWH’s servant will become plain to all (49:3), for “YHWH’s purpose [חפֿץ יהוה] will succeed by his hand [בִּידוֹ יצלח]” (v.10bβ; || שכל, 52:13). Here again, note, their utterance does not speak of actual fulfillment. What it does express is nonetheless incredibly significant.

First, “by his hand” (בִּידוֹ) may indicate their recognition that ‘he’ was a true prophet;<sup>286</sup> hence, along with his testimony, suffering and dying were critical aspects of his prophetic work. Second, v.10bβ recognizes that being “Israel” and giving his life for Israel’s sake was part of YHWH’s larger purpose (חפֿץ). The term חפֿץ appears twice in chs.1-39 and eight times in chs.56-66 to express human perceptions of interest or delight, want or desire for something.<sup>287</sup> In chs.40-55, however, its seven occurrences appear in

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*Suffering Servant: Isaiah and Christian Origins* (W. H. Bellinger Jr. and W. R. Farmer, eds; Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1998), 223-51.

<sup>284</sup> I have partly avoided the search for the roots of such an account, since my aim in the preceding was to recognize the radical newness of the confession and to follow this counsel from Brevard Childs. “When seen in the light of the unfolding drama of God’s plan to redeem Israel in chapters 40-55, the vicarious role of the servant lies at the very heart of the prophetic message and its removal can only result in losing the exegetical key that unlocks the awesome mystery of these chapters” (*Isaiah*, 418). For discussion of ‘roots’ or traditions that might inform understanding of this account, see Shalom Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 398-99. Paul’s list includes cumulative/intra and trans-generational guilt (Exod 20:5; 34:7; Num 14:18, 33; 25:4; Deut 5:8; Lam 5:7); symbolic action (Ezek 4:4-6; cf. Isa 20:1-6); sacrifice in lieu of a human being (Gen 22:13; Exod 13:13; 34:20; Lev 4:13-21); expiation (Lev 16:22); death of the high priest (release of man-slayer) (Num 35:28); and the annulment of a wife’s vows *post facto* by her husband (Num 30:16).

<sup>285</sup> Confession, healing, offspring, and the blessing of long life in Zion replace sin, recalcitrance, and the appalling desolation and destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. See Bernard Gosse, “Isaïe 52,13—53,12 et Isaïe 6,” *RB* 98 (1991): 537-543.

<sup>286</sup> The prepositional phrase + י (± suf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.) often indicates (prophetic) agency or instrumentality. See, e.g., Isa 20:2-3; Exod 4:13; cf. 1 Kgs 16:34 (Josh 6:26); 1 Kgs 17:16.

<sup>287</sup> The thing desired, of course, varies, e.g., sacrifices (Isa 1:11); silver/gold (13:17); adherence to YHWH’s commands (56:4); nearness to God (58:2); one’s ends (58:3); Sabbath (58:13); Zion (62:4); wrongdoing (65:12); and abominations (66:3, 4).

contexts that state YHWH's purpose, sovereign affairs, or determined will.<sup>288</sup> The first occurrence (42:21) and last occurrence (55:11) appear relevant to 53:10.<sup>289</sup>

יהוה חפץ... יגדיל תורה	42:21
ויהוה חפץ דכאו...	53:10
וחפץ יהוה בידו יצלח	
דברי... עשה את אשר חפצתי	55:11
והצליח אשר שלחתי	

Isaiah 42:21 connects חפץ to תורה, justifying divine retribution for disregarding the תורה (cf. v.24) that YHWH is determined<sup>290</sup> to magnify (יהוה חפץ... יגדיל תורה). Isa 53:10 evokes or possibly alludes to this passage (42:18-25). If so, the 'we' recognize that "YHWH's purpose [יהוה חפץ]" will now succeed by the hand/agency of 'he' (בידו יצלח). Of course, 'he' is none other than YHWH's (and Isaiah's) disciple (50:4; cf. 49:2), the one God designated "Israel" (49:3) in order to bring forth משפט and תורה (49:4), the one YHWH has taught to edify the weary with דבר (50:4).

The second verse (55:11) connects חפץ to דבר, and alludes to the initial commissioning of the same figure in 40:6-8,<sup>291</sup> where, as a prophet, 'he' was charged to proclaim דבר אל הינו. Since 55:11 also highlights the fact that YHWH's word will succeed (דברי... יצלח), the affinity between 55:11 and 53:10 is stronger than the echo of 42:21 in 53:10.<sup>292</sup> Nevertheless, when brought together the three verses connect "by his hand" (בידו) to the word-pairs תורה || דבר and חפץ || צלח. The connection suggests that whereas Jacob-Israel was unfit for its role, 'he' will successfully execute YHWH's purpose as regards תורה and דבר-יהוה. The 'we' recognize, in effect, that 'he' "performs what I purpose and succeeds in what I sent [him] to do" (55:11b). Thus, they

<sup>288</sup> Isa 42:21 (for תורה); 44:28 (for restoration of Zion); 46:10 (YHWH's plan || עצה); 48:14 (for destruction of Babylon || זרוע); 53:10 (in the task of the servant); 55:11 (through דבר יצלח). Isa 54:12 is the sole exception, referring to Zion's "stones of delight" (אבני-חפץ) as material for rebuilding her walls.

<sup>289</sup> The relationship between human and divine delight/purpose (חפץ) in Isa 1-39, 40-55, and 56-66 is analogous to the use of the word-pairs צדקה || משפט and צדקה || שועה in these three sections. On this, see R. Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 183 and chapter 6 (below).

<sup>290</sup> "[This] was the use of the verb 'determine' in 42:21," writes Goldingay, "referring to Yhwh's commitment to being known to the world through the Torah given to Israel... the idea here is that Yhwh's purpose for Israel and the world will flourish through the servant's achievement..." (*Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 513). As Goldingay and Payne write, "Indeed, the *torah* the people is here [42:21] said to have ignored is likely to be that of prophets such as Isaiah more than that of Moses" (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol.1*, 268).

<sup>291</sup> See Isa 42:24; 48:16b; 49:1; 50:4; cf. 42:4.

<sup>292</sup> An observation also made by S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 411.

identify him as the agent of YHWH's purpose,<sup>293</sup> who brings **דבר/תורה** not only by what he says as YHWH's disciple, but also by what he does as YHWH's servant.<sup>294</sup> The testimony of the 'we' in 53:10 recognizes that through righteous suffering 'he' has both expressed and embodied **דבר** for the weary. Their construal of this aspect of his task and what it has accomplished, in fact, manifests their own understanding as 'ones taught' (**למודים**).<sup>295</sup> As disciples too, they have every reason to believe that God will magnify this **תורה** in servant-form (cf. 42:21; 52:13).

Third, v.10bβ shows that YHWH and the 'we' now speak the same language (cf. 28:9-13). The 'we' have internalized the message, and they have begun to articulate the import of the servant's task. Although the clause does not repeat 52:13 verbatim, it suggests they have heard YHWH's speech. The divine perspective and their reflection on the servant's life and testimony have brought them this new realization. Blenkinsopp expresses what this implies: "The most natural meaning is that the Servant's project will be continued and carried to fruition through his disciples."<sup>296</sup> In and through them now, "Israel" will share a future (53:12; cf. 60:22).<sup>297</sup> What is more, this affirmation manifests a reliance on YHWH's purpose analogous to the servant's own reliance on him in 50:7-9. In other words, this confession shows that the 'we' have become disciples. They adhere to the 'voice' of YHWH's servant as they revere YHWH himself (50:10), because they have begun to share YHWH's own perspective on the servant's success (52:13-15; 53:11b-12). In short, the servant's sufferings "were intelligible only within Yahveh's overall purpose [**דפיץ**], which will be brought to a successful outcome (v.10b)."<sup>298</sup> In the context of the entire poem, this shows that 'YHWH/I', the 'servant/he', and 'the many disciples/we' embrace a single view of YHWH's purpose through his servant. If Isa 53 says, "This is the way of unity and success for Israel," then these disciples now recognize what sustaining a successful new society entails. Indeed, only here in FI do all three testimonials agree; in fact, after v.1, there is no disputation, there is only reconciliation.

<sup>293</sup> Observing the correlation between 40:6-8 and 55:10-11, Rolf Rendtorff observes that while at the beginning, the contrast between quickly wilting plants and the life-giving was emphasized (40:6-8), so now the life-giving strength of the word is compared with the fertility-bringing rain and snow (55:10). He adds, "That the word 'remains' is not meant in a static sense but expresses its constant, unending effectiveness" (*The Canonical Hebrew Bible*, 193). That "constant, unending effectiveness" must be embodied in Israel, specifically in disciples, offspring, and long life—a new generation that will continue to make this good confession and make it good (54:13; 17b; cf. 59:21).

<sup>294</sup> See Isa 8:18; 42:21; 42:4; 49:1; 50:4.

<sup>295</sup> See 8:16, 20; 30:20-21; 50:4; 53:11a.

<sup>296</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 355.

<sup>297</sup> So, Childs writes, "He will receive the divine blessing—'a position among the many'—with whom he now shares a future" (Childs, *Isaiah*, 420).

<sup>298</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 353.



### 5.5.2.3. YHWH's Closing Testimony

After the central ‘we’-stanza, a ‘YHWH-stanza’ provides finality. As a unit, this second YHWH-speech (53:11b-12) is linked to YHWH’s opening by mention of “my servant” (עבדִי, 52:15; 53:11b) and by repetition of both רבִּים (3x)<sup>299</sup> and נָשָׂא, though the verb’s occurrence here has a distinct sense.<sup>300</sup> The stanza also begins with two *yiqtol* forms (יִצְדִּיק || יִסְבֵּל) (v.11b; cf. 52:13). After בִּדְעָתוֹ (“By his knowledge”),<sup>301</sup> the first line contains inversely parallel cola, as if to underscore the reversal in expectation: God’s servant will show himself righteous to the many—their guilt he will bear (cf. vv.4-6; 1 Kgs 8:32).

The next verse contains three lines (53:12abc). The first (v.12a) is introduced by לְכֵן (prep. + adv., “for this”), which points to v.11b, and like v.11b, this bicolon is also inversely parallel, perhaps to highlight the pair, רבִּים (+ art.) and עַצְמוֹתַי (cf. 52:15a; 60:22).<sup>302</sup> Verse 12b commences with the prepositional phrase תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר (prep. + rel., “because”), which introduces a causal clause; the phrase points forward, directing the reader’s attention to the rest of v.12bc. Verse 12c begins with *waw* (conj.) and the dislocated constituent, וְהָיָה; hence, it is conjoined with the preceding line (v.12b) as a further causal element (“because...and [because]”). Verse 12c also contains the poem’s final occurrence of רבִּים. Repetition of פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם (“rebels/transgressors”) in v.12bc suggests a significant relationship in the stanza between נִמְנָה (“counted”) and יִפְגִּיעַ (“will intercede”), suggesting intervention through identification with the transgressors and taking their place in suffering and death (cf. vv.5, 9-10). The parallelism of פִּגְעָה with נָשָׂא and the word pair, נָשָׂא || סָבַל, links v.12c to v.11b (cf. 52:13; 53:4-6). Now, before תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר in v.12b, the verbs are all *yiqtol* forms: “For this” (לְכֵן) in v.12a unveils YHWH’s intended reward for the servant’s toil (cf. 49:4-6); that is, it refers to his exaltation. After תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר, one *yiqtol* form (יִפְגִּיעַ) follows the three clauses with *qatal* governed by the

<sup>299</sup> The term is marked (+ art.) in 53:11b-12 to signal the anaphoric connection to ‘many’ in 52:14.

<sup>300</sup> Isa 52:13, נָשָׂא (“exalt,” *nip’al* impf. || רָוַם); Isa 53:12c, נָשָׂא (“carry,” *qal* pf. || סָבַל, “bear” impf., v.11b; cf. נָשָׂא || סָבַל, both pf. in v.4).

<sup>301</sup> I understand this with J. Blenkinsopp, who writes, “The vindication of the many by knowledge will be seen to make sense in the light of the Servant’s statement in 50:4-9. As God promises to vindicate him ([קָרוֹב מַצְדִּיקִי], 50:8), so he will vindicate those who follow his guidance, and he will do this through his teaching ...([דַּבָּר], 50:4).” Verse 3 has, “he was familiar with [knew] sickness.” It was not in vain, since his word/life (50:4) teaches disciples the way of the Lord and his suffering brings healing to others.

<sup>302</sup> Verse 12aα repeats רבִּים from the preceding verse, so it is safe to presume that it has the same referent as before (cf. 52:14). I take it to refer to the community of Israel. But does עַצְמוֹתַי refer to the ‘many nations’ and ‘kings’ from 52:15a? (Cf. Ps 135:10; Zech 8:22; Isa 60:5, 11; 61:6.)

prepositional phrase. These clauses offer YHWH's summative exposition of the servant's successful act of intercession. Therefore, while the opening stanza declares that the servant will succeed, the closing stanza relates how and why he will succeed.

With this closing testimony, YHWH affirms the testimony of both his servant (50:4-9) and the 'we' (53:2-11a = the 'many' in 52:14),<sup>303</sup> who like their teacher must trust YHWH's word as they stand poised between humiliation and exaltation. Happily, he responds to their testimony with assurance of the servant's objective success (52:13-15). Due to his intercession, they too may enjoy a blessed future (53:11b-12). Nevertheless, their stance 'ahead' of his exaltation suggests that their own lives are subject to the quality of their confession. They may not merely share YHWH's assessment of the servant's objective task, they must turn back to God, and walk as disciples in the servant's light.

In sum, through the servant's suffering, the glory of God is manifested (49:3); even though he was brought low, YHWH will exalt him (נִשָּׂא, *nip'al* passive); indeed, the listener-speaker will successfully carry out God's purpose.<sup>304</sup> Yet, the enjoyment of blessing for Jacob-Israel is contingent upon both their faithful recognition of YHWH's arm (זְרוֹעַ, v.1) in the agent of his purpose (בִּידוֹ, v.10) and the quality of their repentance as they adhere to תְּוֹרָה in servant-form (vv.4-6, 8aβ-11a).

## 5.6. Conclusion

The similar temporal station of the 'we' and the connection Isa 53 makes with the previous servant poems suggest that this unified testimony doubles as a further word of instruction, admonition, and exhortation for disciples who wait for YHWH. That is, while everything is promised, nothing is definitively fulfilled. The 'we' thus stand in the same waiting relationship to YHWH's coming and vindication as Isaiah (8:16-23; 30:18-22) and YHWH's disciple (chs.49-50; cf. 51:1-52:12). Now, at last, a community has understood his word for the weary (50:4, 10; 53:1-11a; cf. 40:28-31). Reaching back to 40:6-8, they see that YHWH had commissioned a listener-speaker to proclaim his word. After 41:8-16, where YHWH identified corporate-Israel as his servant with an Abrahamic identity and calling, 42:1-4 (vv.5-9, 10-12) described this servant's מַשְׁפָּט-task as YHWH's image-bearer. But due to its blind and deaf estate, 42:18-25 declared corporate Israel unfit to carry out its righteous mission and magnify תְּוֹרָה. Nevertheless, in 42:24, the listener-speaker, who had begun to grasp the message, uttered a confession of sin in solidarity with

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Isa 53:2-3, 7-8aa, 11b, 12ac.

<sup>304</sup> See Isa 40:8; 42:4; 42:21; 49:6; 50:4; 53:10; 55:11.

Jacob-Israel. Then, in 48:16b, this same figure stepped forth as YHWH's **מַלְאָכִי**-empowered emissary to call Jacob-Israel home (48:17-19, 20-21), and still, Israel refused to assemble (49:5). So, in 49:1, he began to testify before the coastlands about YHWH's **מַשְׁפָּט**, reassuring them of YHWH's purpose and commencing his **תּוֹרָה** (cf. 42:4). He disclosed how YHWH called him to be his mouthpiece (**פִּי**) and designated him "Israel" (v.3)—a servant for the sake of Israel as well as the world (v.6). Then, in 50:4-9, as a disciple with YHWH's **דְּבַר** on his tongue (**לִשׁוֹן**), he faced adversity on every side, and actively testified to YHWH's **מַשְׁפָּט**, offering to the weary (**יָעֵף**) the rationale for his loyalty and reliance upon YHWH-**יְקִי** in the face of profound suffering (v.8). Now, in 53:1-11a, a community of his own disciples testifies regarding YHWH's purpose (vv.6, 10), confident that it too will find reconciliation and vindication through the success (**צִלְחָן** || **שִׂכְלָל**) of YHWH's servant.<sup>305</sup> Their testimony demonstrates loyalty to YHWH through confession of sin and trust in both his word (**דְּבַר**) and the success of his purpose (**צִלְפִּי**, 53:10)<sup>306</sup> through him (**בִּידֹו**), indicating that their perspective now matches the perspective of YHWH and his servant. And this, of course, manifests obedience to the servant's voice out of reverence for God (cf. 50:10). In closing (53:11b-12), as if to seal this deposit, YHWH enfolds their testimony (vv.2-11a) within his own about the servant (52:13-15). His word corroborates the testimony of both the servant (49:1-6; 50:4-9) and the 'we' (53:2-11a), announcing the "success" of this word too (55:11) as a further articulation of YHWH's purpose. YHWH's word, the word of YHWH's servant, and the word of these disciples come together as a summons for the wider community to carry this concerted **דְּבַר** back to Zion as its witness to the world. Indeed, YHWH, servant, and disciples now testify as one regarding this radically new purpose and design for Israel's life.

The servant, it seems, has died to discharge Israel's debt. Understanding something of YHWH's message, which speaks 'prophetically' of the servant's exaltation, the 'we' have looked back at his life and they have discerned the import of what has unfolded. Now they must look forward (cf. 43:18), trusting YHWH, as this poem becomes the blueprint for their own task as disciples.<sup>307</sup> Indeed, as Seitz has observed, Isa 53 is a

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Isa 52:13; 53:10, 12; 55:11.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Isa 42:21; 55:11.

<sup>307</sup> Hermisson writes, "What is crucial is that the whole Servant Song is spoken at the moment at which the meaning of the Servant's suffering is understood. Regarding the Servant's exaltation the song still speaks prophetically, but this does not mean that the Servant himself is only a figure of the future." See H-J. Hermisson, "The Fourth Servant Song," 33.

“decisive boundary line” analogous to the final chapters of Deuteronomy, in which Moses has died and the **תורה** must be taken into the land by his successors.<sup>308</sup> He is referring to FI’s movement from the achievement of the one servant (40:1-52:12) to the work of the many servants (54:1-66:24).<sup>309</sup> Regarding this dynamic, he correctly sees Isa 53 as “an elaboration and ramification of that prior legacy, appropriate for a new dispensation.”<sup>310</sup> Like Mosaic Torah, then, the servant’s legacy as **תורה**, or prophetic catechesis in word and act, continues with the servant-disciples of the servant.

Isa 53 therefore offers disciples’ testimony regarding **תורה** in servant-form. It is a poem about God’s purpose (**יְפִי**) and about coming to see as God sees (cf. 55:8-11). Its ultimate function, therefore, is to inspire change in the perspective of the ‘we’ in order to move them from blindness and deafness to hearing and sight (cf. 6:10; 42:18-25). In this way, it not only brings them back to God, but heralds healing and constitutes a guide for their new life as a servant-community in Zion. In response to this message, then, as a united society in Zion, the survivors of Israel will all become disciples (54:13, 17b). There, as children of Zion, they will take over “the responsibility and the suffering inseparable from servanthood (57:1-2).”<sup>311</sup> That is, they will fulfill their vocation as servants on the other side of this decisive boundary. In this way, Israel will fulfill its peculiar calling (42:1-4) and YHWH will achieve his programmatic vision (2:2-5). For when trusting YHWH Jacob-Israel submits to his purpose without rebellion or complaint; when like the servant they perform no violence, utter no deceit, seek the advancement of others, and bear one another’s burdens, then Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness (1:27).<sup>312</sup> Then, as witnesses to God, they will bring

<sup>308</sup> Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 460.

<sup>309</sup> “Servant” occurs in the singular for the last time at 53:11; thereafter, it only occurs in the plural (54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13 [3x], 14, 15; 66:14). As regards the redefinition of Israel, I see a movement from one (cf. 49:3; 51:1-2) to many, from servant (YHWH’s sg. disciple, a personal figure) to servants (pl. offspring/disciples), involving both a broadening and a narrowing of Israel vis-à-vis this servant. Compare Shalom Paul, who also perceives in DI (= TI) a broadening and a narrowing of the concept of Israel. For him, by contrast, there is a further narrowing in the movement from the servant (as corporate Israel without discrimination), to the servants (plural), where the epithet is now “used in the descriptions of the Lord’s devotees and chosen ones, as opposed to the nation’s miscreants and evildoers” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 433). In his view, apparently without relation to servant-discipleship (cf. 56:6), broadening is a function of DI’s “worldview of universal monotheism” and anti-isolationist polemic (*Isaiah 40-66*, 448).

<sup>310</sup> Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 460. Compare J-P. Sonnet’s reflections on Mosaic Torah’s “ark-aspect” (*The Book within the Book*, 229-30); only here, instead of deposited in the ark, the Isaianic **תורה** is to be deposited on the mind of disciples. Blenkinsopp is near to my meaning when he writes, “...as an active presence among his followers...the Servant may be compared to the teacher who is present to his disciples and whose voice is heard behind them—that is, from the past, from after his death, pointing out the way they are to go” (*Isaiah 40-55*, 355). Blenkinsopp cites Isa 30:20-21.

<sup>311</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 356-57.

<sup>312</sup> Baltzer nicely summarizes what the disciples’ new kind of life involves: “...renunciation of outward renown, the readiness to bear misunderstanding and not to replay evil with evil, the avoidance of violence and deception, intervention for others to the point where life itself is surrendered...[this] is the

light to the many nations, kings, and princes of the earth. Meanwhile, their temporal location indicates that the consummation of the vision remains a future event. Although founded on God's promises, it is contingent on the response of the 'many'.

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special mark of one who is just in God's eyes" (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 429). With a view to the exaltation of YHWH's servant, disciples live and take up the God-given title of 'servants' (54:17).



## Chapter 6

### “Servants Who Tremble at God’s Word”: Justice and Righteousness as Concomitants of Prophetic Fulfillment

#### 6.1. Introduction

Isaiah 56-66 (or TI) remains the final testing-ground for my thesis concerning תַּרְוִיחַ in servant-form. Since Duhm (1892), most scholars regard TI as a literary anthology<sup>1</sup> separate from PI and DI.<sup>2</sup> There is no superscription at 56:1,<sup>3</sup> yet the circumstances,

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<sup>1</sup> Given my approach, it is not necessary to retrace the history of scholarship as regards composition. In addition to commentaries, see, e.g., G. I. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, O. H. Steck, *Studien zu Tritojesaja* (BZAW 203; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah*, and J. Stromberg, *Isaiah after Exile*, 11-39. Here, I continue my exegetical and theological reading rather than reading from the standpoint of composition or sociological theory. I acknowledge affinities with E-N that suggest a broadly similar socio-historical background, but I do not regard these as sufficient to suggest that a redactor who shares Ezra’s precise agenda can be identified. It is not my intention to undermine the legitimacy of Ezra’s reforms (according to E-N), but to discover the *intentio operis* as expressed by the discourse design of FI. I remain open to the view that FI has influenced E-N (for discussion, see Stromberg, pp.171-73). Nevertheless, with John Goldingay, I am struck by the lack of explicit historical references in these chapters, which suggests that the problematic state of society is an ongoing issue (See Goldingay, “About Third Isaiah...,” 375-89, and *Isaiah*, 324.) Regarding the history of composition, Blenkinsopp has written, “[W]e simply do not have the information to locate the composition of these chapters within an absolute chronology with any degree of precision” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 42). For a history of various options posed for dating the material, see B. Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 11-21. P. A. Smith regards Isa 63:7-64:11 as ‘exilic’ (cf. 63:18) and dates the final form of the material within the range 538-515 B.C.E. (p.206). Regarding sociological theory, Paul Hanson observes that Isa 56-66 “is ambiguous enough to be amenable to most any hypothesis, given an ample amount of eisegesis” (*Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 32). Near to my view, Seitz implies that order of approach is significant when handling the complexities of FI: “The secret to proper interpretation of [chs.56-66] lies in the degree of caution one exercises in using other biblical texts to reconstruct the socio-historical context in which it allegedly fits...we must [first] be careful to understand the specific character of what is being said.” He continues by pointing out the problems of reconstructing ‘post-exilic’ life (*Isaiah 40-66*, 484; cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 440-41).

<sup>2</sup> Shalom Paul represents the argument for single authorship of chs.40-66 in his commentary, *Isaiah 40-66*, 5-12. Compare Y. Kaufmann, *The Babylonian Captivity and Deutero-Isaiah* (transl. C. W. Efrayimson; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1970), 67-73, and see Benjamin Sommer, “Allusions and Illusions,” 156-86 and *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 134-40. In my view, the strongest argument against a separate “Trito-Isaiah” is that it leads to a faulty polarizing of chs.40-55 and chs.56-66 as regards fulfillment vs. non-fulfillment, often including a major temporal gap and a shift from the perception of peace to communal strife and sectarian polemic. On this point, Seitz (*Isaiah 40-66*, 473) is worth quoting at length:

The very fact that suffering occurs in connection with the work of the servant—whether at the hands of Israel or others—implies that we are in a situation of conflict that would not leave the community untouched in some way, already within the compass of chaps.40-53. What accounts for the sharp expression of conflict within these final chapters is a distinction between the servants—followers of the servant of Isaiah 40-53—and their unrighteous opponents. Only with the death of the servant and the (contested?) claims made about that death does the possibility open up for yet sharper disagreement within the community.

<sup>3</sup> Isa 55 itself is transitional; it looks back as a kind of epilogue to chs.40-55 (cf. 40:1-11) and forward, forming a ‘bridge’ to chs.56-66 (so, Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 87-88). Although God’s holy mountain is not specified as the place to come in 55:1-5, ch.55 does include bridging features: e.g., an invitation to a banquet (cf. 56:9-12; 65:13-14), the mention of covenant (55:3-5; 56:4, 5; 59:2; 61:8), memorial and name (55:12-13; 56:5; 57:8), God’s summons/judgment (55:6, 7; 65:10-12), and God’s word (55:11; 66:2, 5). Of course, the several features of chs.40-55 (linguistic, thematic, motific, etc.) all appear to flood chs.56-66.

setting, and focus appear to have shifted.<sup>4</sup> TI is more clearly oriented towards a homeland audience<sup>5</sup> and to Zion as place of worship and God's holy mountain.<sup>6</sup> Most significantly, TI points to an eschatological horizon beyond phases of Assyrian and Babylonian judgment, beyond Cyrus,<sup>7</sup> and is chiefly concerned with circumstances presently affecting YHWH's servants (54:17; 65:8-10). Nevertheless, there is also a profound continuity with the agenda of chs.1-55; therefore, TI is not a self-determining unit, but a large section that contributes to the whole of FI by furthering the message and perspective of its previous parts. Isa 49-55 has prepared the way by identifying Zion's children as disciples and servants in their own right (Isa 50:10; 53:10; 54:13, 17; cf. 60:21), and Isa 56-66 specifies their vocation during the period marked by eschatological delay.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, I argue that TI contributes to FI by pressing for a holy society at Mt. Zion of servant-disciples who will seek YHWH, forsake wickedness, and respond when YHWH calls.<sup>9</sup> Despite the absence of the term תורה in Isa 56-66, these chapters function as 'torah in servant-form' too, not because they direct the society to Ezra's interpretation of Mosaic Torah, but because they continue to orient personal understanding and existence to conformity with the life of YHWH's servant as the most important criterion of identity

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<sup>4</sup> Precisely how is difficult to say, for nothing is concrete. As James Muilenburg observed, we are dealing with "poetry in an eschatological context" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 653). In one place, we read that the temple has been "trampled down" (63:18); in another, YHWH promises to bring the children of foreigners into his house (56:6). Rather than presupposing an eschatological context, I think it is better to say that we are dealing with poetry that keeps in view an eschatological horizon.

<sup>5</sup> As Rendtorff explains, "Life in the old-new homeland now asserts its demands" (*Canonical Hebrew Bible*, 195).

<sup>6</sup> See Isa 56:7-8; 57:13, 15; cf. 58:12; 61:4; 62:10. W. A. M. Beuken finds it amazing that in chs.40-55 mount Zion is missing completely. He observes, "Here Zion plays the part of mother and city, especially in chs.49-54 (Only 40:9 rouses association between Zion and a mountain...)." See Beuken, "Isaiah 56:9-57:13: An Example of the Isaianic Legacy of Trito-Isaiah" in *Tradition and Reinterpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature: Festschrift in Honour of J. C. H. Lebram* (J. W. van Henten, et al., eds; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 50.

<sup>7</sup> In both TI and E-N, obedience to the commands of YHWH's prophets (including Moses, according to Ezra 9:10-11; 10:3; cf. Isa 1:19; 48:17-19) is of vital concern and the key to peace and order in both foreign and domestic affairs; in contrast to E-N (Ezra 9:9; Neh 9:36-37), however, TI does not present Persian hegemony (or foreign rule) as an (secondary) obstacle to restoration.

<sup>8</sup> This notion of eschatological delay overlaps with R. P. Carroll's view of 'cognitive dissonance' as regards group reaction to unfulfilled predictions. According to Carroll, the lack of fulfillment of prophecies (true or false) created a psychological dilemma for the community. R. P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 34-35. As a contribution to the history of religions, Carroll's study adapts the work of L. Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). See also, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 135-36. My own view on the problem of unfulfilled and delayed predictions is close to Richard L. Pratt Jr. "Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions," 180-203. As regards the relationship of DI and TI in particular, Childs's explanation for the delay is most helpful: "...the former prophecy is not being repudiated but confirmed. Yet the confirmation is made in terms of a reemphasis on Israel's responsibility, which was always constitutive of her faith...The salvation promised by Second Isaiah is misunderstood if it is not joined with an obedient response" (*Isaiah*, 456). The underlying point is that obedience is a necessary concomitant of prophetic fulfillment. A corollary is that insufficient progress is being made regarding the collective establishment of justice-righteousness in Israel (cf. 56:1; 58:1-2; 59:1-3).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Isa 50:2, 10-11; 54:13, 17; 55:1, 6, 7; 59:20; 60:21; 65:10, 12; 66:4, 14.



for the suffering community.<sup>10</sup> As servant-disciples suffer, sacrificing in the midst of persecution and ‘trembling’ (חָרַד) at God’s word (66:2, 5; cf. 40:8; 55:11), they are securing a stable future for Israel and hastening YHWH’s coming (40:5; 56:1; 65:8-10). As offspring of the servant (53:10), righteous servants thus manifest YHWH’s glory in and through their suffering (49:3; 57:1-2), bearing burdens and awaiting vindication in order to bring eschatological peace and blessing to all humanity.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, I consider how TI contributes to FI’s vision for a society of servants that takes refuge in YHWH alone and joins worship and confession to מִשְׁפַּח וְצִדְקָה without rebellion, complaint, violence, or deceit. To this end, Jacob is exhorted to repent and delight in YHWH’s path and salvific purpose by embracing דְּבַר־יְהוָה.

That דְּבַר in 66:2 does not primarily refer to Mosaic Torah, the interpretation of Mosaic Torah by Ezra, or legislation characterizing Ezra’s reforms (cf. Ezra 10), but to YHWH’s agenda concerning salvation and judgment as disclosed by FI,<sup>12</sup> namely, that what YHWH will provide in salvation-righteousness he demands in justice-righteousness.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in this chapter, I conclude my investigation by showing that within chs.56-66—even presuming knowledge of Mosaic Torah (narratives and legislation)—FI’s ‘vision’ and ‘voice’ remain the dominant ‘word’ of revelation and instruction. The non-use of the term תּוֹרָה in chs.56-66 may thus be significant insofar as it suggests that

<sup>10</sup> See Isa 53:5, 10; 57:1-2, 15; 66:2.

<sup>11</sup> Isa 42:6; 49:6, 8; 60:1-3 (cf. 2:2-5; 55:3-5); 65:17-25; 66:18-24.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Isa 56:12; 57:16; 59:20-21; 61:2; 65:6-7, 17; 66:1-6, 14, 22-24; (cf. 5:12, 19, 24). Trembling (חָרַד) is synonymous with fear (פָּחַד in Isa 41:5; cf. Judg 7:3; 1 Sam 28:5) and refers to the disposition to believe God’s word through his servants the prophets (see Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 485). This is clear from the mockery that occurs in 66:5, which in the context, relates specifically to FI’s proclamation of judgment-salvation (cf. 56:1). See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 416. As R. N. Whybray explains, “This expression is found elsewhere only in Ezr. 9:4; 10:3, where it refers to Law, though here it might well refer to the prophetic rather than the priestly word” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 281). His expression suggests that he views this דְּבַר as prophetic rather than priestly torah. Koole says, “The ‘word’ of Yahweh here is not only his threatening law but also the promise of salvation” (citing 66:5 and 59:21, with support from Calvin and Beuken). See Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 476. These observations indicate that what unites the ‘tremblers’ in Isa 66:2, 5 and Ezra 9:4; 10:3 is the recognition that God judges the wicked who reject the word of his “servants the prophets.” It is not necessary, in my view, to conclude that ‘tremblers’ revere YHWH by obeying the ‘voice’ of FI exclusively, only that the phrase דְּבַר־יְהוָה in 66:2, 5 points internally to the prophetic torah and the expectation of judgment-salvation primarily rather than to Mosaic legislation and its rigorous interpretation, as it apparently does in Ezra 9-10 (9:10-12; 10:3, 9, 44). See J. Stromberg, *Israel After Exile*, 23 and compare J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 299, who says that, especially in Isaiah, ‘trembling’ “cannot exclude intense commitment to the prophetic word,” and adds, “It is fundamentally erroneous to assume an opposition between the prophetic and the legal; witness the insistence on observance of the covenant and Sabbath in 56:1-6 and 58:13-14 by a writer who indubitably thought of himself as a prophet.” Furthermore, although the collage/mosaic of passages influencing Ezra 9:10-12 is primarily deuteronomistic—Blenkinsopp observes the influence of Lev 18:24-30; Deut 1:38-39; 6:11; 7:1, 3; 18:9; 23:7 [6]; 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:2; 2 Kgs 10:21; 21:16—it is noteworthy that, in Ezra, Moses must be identified as God’s servant in his role as a prophet (cf. Deut 18:15-19; 34:10; 2 Kgs 17:13; Isa 48:17). Isaianic usage may reflect this deuteronomistic pattern. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 185. Compare H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 137 and D. J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NCB: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 125.

<sup>13</sup> Isa 56:1; 65:12; 66:4-6; cf. 1:21, 26, 27-28; chs.51-52.

servant-discipleship and righteous suffering—rather than Ezra’s Mosaic Torah-oriented reforms—provide the overarching concepts that determine the final shape of Isaiah, and so this absence actually supports my view of FI’s intention and its internal coherence for readers in the restoration community. Put differently, according to the *intentio operis*, TI does not make FI’s voice subordinate to Moses’ (or Ezra’s) voice, since FI continues to convey its own distinct agenda as guidance and instruction for the community. As the word of God, FI’s vision for restoration makes chosen-servants tremble because it bears faithful witness to YHWH as God, who in advance of his coming, demands their penitent response and humble allegiance.<sup>14</sup> Hence, even if written close to the time of Ezra’s reforms, on its own terms, as prophetic torah, FI corresponds not merely to the authority<sup>15</sup> but also to the function of Mosaic Torah as a separate inspired ‘voice’, which contributes distinctively to Israel’s restoration for the preservation of life under God. As a prophetic book, FI is prophetic torah, not because it points to a separate deuteronomic text or Torah-oriented movement of reforms, but because it functions as דְּבַר־יְהוָה suitable for fashioning Israel’s collective identity, specifying its vocation, and guiding its restoration for life and blessing in the world.

As *Torah*, chs.56-66 of FI uniquely define the community by setting present exhortations against an eschatological horizon that promises Zion’s restoration through the separation of the wicked from the society of the righteous. This horizon of restoration is ‘eschatological’ because YHWH (not Ezra or Nehemiah) is the agent of separation,<sup>16</sup> which will include permanent blessing (and curse) as the defining aspect of Zion’s glorious re-establishment (66:18-24).<sup>17</sup> This vision of restoration and separation also includes the simultaneous redefinition—including both narrowing (65:1-16) and broadening (56:2, 8)—of the concept of Israel based on personal alignment with the ways of YHWH’s servant. At YHWH’s coming, the new heavens and earth that God will create shall endure because he will bring judgment, manifesting before all humanity the destiny of two clearly defined people-groups. The blessed group is Zion’s children, the righteous offspring of the servant (53:10),<sup>18</sup> who tremble at YHWH’s word and delight to worship the Lord Sabbath after Sabbath in Zion (66:2, 5, 23). The cursed group is the offspring of the sorceress, the wicked offspring who will be excluded from Zion—whose corpses will be abhorrent to all

<sup>14</sup> Isa 40:5, 9-11; 52:8-10; 56:1; 59:20; 66:14, 16, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Deut 18:15-19; 2 Kgs 17:13.

<sup>16</sup> The only reported ‘separation’ enacted by humans comes when wicked oppressors push out their ‘brothers’ (66:5). FI may call disciples to be separate, but it never directs them to effect a separation. Perhaps this is because, as offspring of the servant, they must conduct themselves according to the servant’s pattern of life with the recognition that God will vindicate them (cf. 50:4-9; 53:9; 66:2, 5).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Isa 2:2-4; 51:4-6; 60:1-3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 59:21; 61:9; 65:9, 23.

humanity (66:24; cf. 37:36). Present exhortations, however, indicate that YHWH has yet to perform this separation, and so, despite the apparent shift in setting, the temporal location of the audience remains ‘exilic’ as the consequences of exile continue to affect the society.<sup>19</sup> Insofar as the vision anticipates separation and “release” (דָּרֹר, 61:1-2) from this condition, the phrase *separation eschatology* applies to the definitive horizon of FI’s total vision. As regards this ultimate horizon, FI thus continues to address the problem of how to overcome the recurring national apostasy that led to exile in the first place and how to end its ongoing consequences.<sup>20</sup> Throughout my analysis, then, I will pursue three further questions relevant to my thesis concerning תִּוְרָה in servant-form:

- (1) What accounts for the eschatological delay?
- (2) What is the basis of the definitive separation of the wicked from the righteous?
- (3) What criteria of identity characterize members of the righteous community?

In contrast with Sweeney, who holds that the Mosaic Torah (as deuteronomic legislation or the Pentateuch) is the ultimate basis of FI’s vision for separation, I contend instead that FI desires to see תִּוְרָה in servant-form vindicated in application to the servant’s righteous offspring, who comprise, as Beuken has recognized, the main theme and ultimate society of TI.<sup>21</sup> FI has put forth a servant figure, a disciple of Isaiah and YHWH, whom YHWH designated ‘Israel’, and whose mediating and embodying a בְּרִית with people<sup>22</sup> not only provides אֵלֹהִים, מִשְׁפָּחָה, and תִּוְרָה, but constitutes the basis of a new society. That righteous society is comprised of generations of the servant’s offspring, and repentance and waiting-service are the expressions of their life. TI is consistent with this design of chs.1-55 to produce disciples for the establishment and preservation of a people for God. Put differently, YHWH is reconstituting Israel as a community of disciples in

<sup>19</sup> ‘Exile’ is therefore a theological construct that characterizes the temporal location of the implicit audience. For the idea of a theological exile as a state persisting beyond the temporal and geographical bounds of the Babylonian captivity, see, Bradley C. Gregory, “The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1-3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 475-96. He traces the observation that exile was a paradigm of Israel’s experience to Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 232-56.

<sup>20</sup> On the matter of a definitive judgment of God, see, e.g., J. Gordon McConville, “The Judgment of God in the Old Testament,” *ExAud* 20 (2004): 25-42 and the response by T. E. Fretheim, “Response to McConville,” *ExAud* 20 (2004): 43-46.

<sup>21</sup> See Isa 53:10; 54:17; 56:1-8; 59:21; 65:8. “[I]n his whole work TI is occupied with the question of the servants of YHWH.” So, W. A. M. Beuken, “The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah: ‘The Servants of YHWH’” *JSOT* 47 (1990): 68 (67-87), and see Beuken, *Jesaja, Deel IIIA* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G. F. Callenback, 1989), 15. Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, “The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies in an Interpretive Tradition* (C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 155-75; J. Blenkinsopp, “The ‘Servants of the Lord’ in Third Isaiah: Profile of a Pietistic Group in the Persian Epoch,” *PIBA* 7 (1983): 1-23; K. Jeppesen, “From ‘You, My Servant’ to ‘The Hand of the Lord is with my Servants’: A Discussion of Isa 40-66,” *SJOT* (1990): 113-29.

<sup>22</sup> Isa 42:6; 49:6, 8; cf. 55:3-5.

solidarity with his servant as the essential basis of their consecration. As a contribution to FI, then, chs.56-66 make the servant's pattern of life the guide and standard of measure for servants/disciples. Their display of **מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה** identifies whose offspring they are.

## 6.2. *Isaiah 56-66, Concentric Structure or Dramatic Line?*

'Restoration' involves a vision for reconstituting Israel and repopulating Zion. The servant poems in chs.40-55 showed Jacob-Israel that becoming a light for nations, opening blind eyes and releasing prisoners from darkness (42:7) entail assembling the Diaspora from all points of the compass.<sup>23</sup> In 49:8, re-allotment and retribalization expressed aspects of what it would mean to become a covenant for people. At a favorable time of fulfillment (49:8), the heavens would rejoice with the coastlands,<sup>24</sup> because *Israel*, delivered and re-organized by God through his servant, would establish **מִשְׁפָּט** definitively (**לְאָמֶת**) in the earth (42:4). Consequently, chs.49-55 were marked by the servant's testimony and YHWH's response to Zion's complaint regarding the return of her offspring (49:14, 21). YHWH answered Zion through his servant, or better, because YHWH's disciple did not rebel but answered when God called (49:1-16; 50:2, 4-9), he would see offspring (53:10), and Zion would overflow with disciples (54:13). Then, in Isa 53, in accord with YHWH's word (52:13-15; 53:11b-12) and in anticipation of their master's success, a 'we'-group began to see how YHWH's arm was revealed (53:1-11a). According to the pattern set by their master, the servant's disciples must also heed Lord YHWH's call (cf. 50:10).<sup>25</sup>

That call comes in 55:1 as an invitation to a banquet, "Come...drink...eat," followed by the twofold summons: "Listen, so you may live" (v.3),<sup>26</sup> and "Seek YHWH while he may be found" (v.6; 65:1, 10). The implications are that YHWH has come near, that the community is still open (55:1), and that salvation is at hand. God's forgiveness is freely offered and immediately available for the listener's embrace; and yet, it is also plainly contingent upon the faithful response of those promised a servant's inheritance in Zion (54:13, 17). Nevertheless, ch.55 does not provide detail regarding what YHWH wants from them who would pursue righteousness (51:1, 7);<sup>27</sup> it indicates only that the

<sup>23</sup> Isa 43:5-6; 49:5-6, 9-12; cf. 48:20-22; 52:10-12; 56:8; Deut 30:4.

<sup>24</sup> Isa 42:10-12; 48:13; 49:1, 13.

<sup>25</sup> Isa 50:2, 10-11; 53:1; 55:1, 6-7; 65:12bc; 66:4bc, 14b.

<sup>26</sup> Isa 49:1; 51:1, 4, 7, 21; 55:2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Beuken, who recognizes in 54:17b the anticipation of a major theme of chs.56-66, (with O. H. Steck) also sees Isa 56:1-8 as a more concrete expression and interpretation of ch.55. See Beuken, "Isaiah 56:9-57:13," 50-52, and Steck, *Studien*, 41-42. I agree with this view, despite certain discontinuities observed by Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 56-66*, 131); e.g., ch.55 does not mention **מִשְׁפָּט**, **צִדְקָה**, or **שׁוּעָה**, the covenant in view in ch.55 is 'Davidic', and ch.56 does not mention the theme of the efficacy of the prophetic word. Since the invitation of ch.55, which (through the Davidic-type promise) becomes in chs.56-57 an invitation to YHWH's holy mountain (cf. 2:2-4), and since Zion is central to the vision of the entire book, it

desired response begins with repentance: “Let the wicked one forsake his way, the man of trouble his plans; let him turn to YHWH that he may have mercy on him, to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (v.7; cf. 42:24-25). Chapter 55 also suggests that repentance entails allegiance and conformity with YHWH’s thoughts and ways, or God’s purpose (חפץ) as disclosed by his דבר (55:6-11). Thus, as ch.55 evokes 50:2, 4-10 and 53:10, it raises questions about the concrete behavior expected of those who would obey the servant’s voice. How must servant-disciples walk? How can they be distinguished from those who choose their own way and kindle their own light (50:11)? Isa 56-66 answers these questions, demonstrating that righteous conduct is both the evidence of repentance for Zion’s children and the concomitant of prophetic fulfillment.

Chapters 56-66 also convey FI’s intense concern for Zion herself.<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 1-55 connects thematically to chs.56-66<sup>29</sup> via a concentric structure<sup>30</sup> that also distinguishes TI as a large section within FI. Zion’s significant elevation (57:15; 66:1-2) at the center (chs.60-62) reflects its exaltation in FI’s programmatic vision (2:2-4), while Zion’s herald stands exceedingly elevated (52:13) at the peak of TI’s structural mountain (Isa 61),<sup>31</sup> representing and personifying the figure of YHWH’s servant.<sup>32</sup> Zion’s mourners<sup>33</sup> comprise the primary audience (61:1-3) for whom YHWH’s promises (56:1b; 59:21, chs.60-62) ground and motivate present exhortations (56:1a, 56:2-59:20), while YHWH’s *parousia* is kept in view for the broader community (chs.63-66).

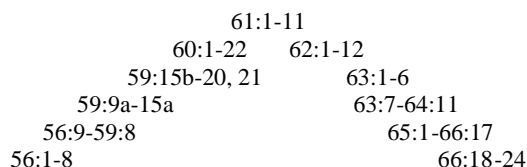
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may be best to see chs.56-66 as a whole as the concrete expression and interpretation of FI’s preceding chapters. As Childs writes, “Second Isaiah’s promise is not adjusted to meet a changing historical situation, but redefined theologically to correct any possible misunderstanding stemming from Second Isaiah’s formulation” (*Isaiah*, 455). For the view that TI is both reader and redactor of the entire book, see Stromberg, *Israel after Exile*.

<sup>28</sup> Isa 56:7; 57:11, 13; 58:12; 61:4; 62:10 (cf. 54:11).

<sup>29</sup> See especially 2:2-4; 40:1-11 and the various servant poems.

<sup>30</sup> Here is a presentation of the concentric design of chs.56-66:



This structure, based on observation of repeated themes and vocabulary, was first proposed by Etienne Charpentier, *Jeunesse du Vieux Testament* (Paris: Fayard, 1963), 79-80, and reintroduced with variations by P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe*, 318; Rémi Lack, *La symbolique du livre d’Isaïe: Essai sur l’image littéraire comme élément de structuration* (AnBib 59; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 125-32; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 307-08; G. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, 20; Gregory J. Polan, *In the Ways of Justice Towards Salvation* (NY: Peter Lang, 1986), 15.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Isa 40:9-11; 41:27; 52:7.

<sup>32</sup> The anointing and commissioning of the herald recalls the empowering of YHWH’s servant from 42:1 (cf. 41:27; 48:16b), and his task recalls the servant’s vocation from 42:5-9 and 49:8-13. See W. A. M. Beuken, “Servant and Herald of Good Tidings: Isaiah 61 as an Interpretation of Isaiah 40-55,” in *The Book of Isaiah: Le Livre d’Isaïe* (J. Vermeylen, ed.; BETL 81; Leuven: Leuven University, 1989), 411-42.

<sup>33</sup> Isa 40:1-2; 57:18, 19; 61:2; 65:19; 66:10.

These units invite a reading from both relational and dynamic perspectives, the former attending to the correlation of parallel sections within the concentric structure of the whole<sup>34</sup> and the latter proceeding along a dramatic line beginning with 56:1, which stands at the point of entry and provides the hermeneutical key.<sup>35</sup> Approaching the structural center, 59:21 purposefully connects chs.56-66 to the dramatic line of FI, acting as a nodal-point or lynchpin,<sup>36</sup> strategically placed to enable the reader to appreciate the dynamic progression from chs.49-55, through the outer frame (chs.56-59), and into the central core (chs.60-62),<sup>37</sup> as each section also takes up significant features from chs.1-55. Isa 56:1 and 60-62, in particular, establish the eschatological horizon of the material, but there is also a vital movement from 56:1 through 59:21 to 66:24.<sup>38</sup> According to this design, then, FI's unfolding drama continues in the vital connection between servant and servants towards the goal of Zion's repopulation with disciples—and only disciples (54:13)—who are also the righteous offspring of YHWH's servant (53:10). Only righteous servants will enjoy their inheritance on YHWH's holy mountain (54:17; 60:21; 65:8-12).

To illustrate this dynamic, in 56:1, righteousness is tethered to YHWH's imminent saving action (“soon,” קרובה). The pair (ישועה || צדקה) foreshadows a case for judgment as a significant aspect of YHWH's salvific purpose (cf. 51:4-6)—a case that builds to a climax in ch.59 and chs.63-66.<sup>39</sup> The movement of chs.56-66 as a whole

<sup>34</sup> As Bradley Gregory observes, the choice between linear and concentric interpretations is a false one (“The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah,” 492-93).

<sup>35</sup> Rendtorff has shown that 56:1 is significant as a compositional and hermeneutical key to the prophetic book. See Rolf Rendtorff, “Isaiah 56:1 as a Key to the Formation of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (M. Kohl, transl.; OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 181-89.

<sup>36</sup> See O. H. Steck, *The Prophetic Books and their Theological Witness* (Transl. James D. Nogalski; St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2000), 160-61 and *Studien*, 193-95. Steck perceives in Isaiah 59:21 the bundling of literary references in a canonical sequence of writings, including Deut 18:18; Josh 1:8; Isa 8:16; 42:1, 6; 49:2, 8; 51:16; 54:10; 53:10; 55:3; 57:21; 58:1; 61:1; Jer 1:9; 4:5; 6:17; Ezek 2:8-10; 3:1; 33:7.

<sup>37</sup> That Isa 59:21 may have a “bridging function” as both a finale to chs.56-59 and a transition to the description of Zion's new salvation in ch.60 was also observed by John Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66*, 169, and (subsequently) by Bernard Gosse, “L’alliance d’Isaïe 59,21” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 116.

<sup>38</sup> Thus, I agree with Childs and Beuken that in the main chs.56-66 contribute to a unified prophetic corpus that moves in a linear progression by means of intra-textual (and inter-textual, canonical) references towards the goal of joining together the diverse parts of the book into a unified whole (B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 449). W. A. M. Beuken also observes a linear dramatic line intertwined with both chs.1-39 and chs.40-66. Without overlooking indications of concentricity, I think that Beuken is correct that this dramatic (linear) structure has the priority, since it is the finished book (chs.1-66) that establishes the proper frame for the interpretation of any of its properly delimited discourse units. W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja, deel III A*, 15. Moreover, when considering the correlation of units in chs.56-66, one cannot avoid observing the advance of the work towards the eschatological horizon.

<sup>39</sup> Rendtorff observes that Isa 56:1 puts משפט and צדקה together with ישועה. צדקה || משפט is common in PI (1:27; 5:7; 5:16; 9:6; 16:5; 26:9; 28:17; 32:1, 16; 33:5) and צדקה || ישועה is common in DI (45:8, 21; 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8), but both pairs appear in TI (צדקה || משפט in 58:2; 59:4, 9, 14 and צדקה || ישועה in 59:16, 17; 61:10; 62:1; 63:1). His conclusion is as follows: “This means that in the book of Isaiah we find two different concepts of צדקה. The one, dominant in chaps.1-39, relates צדקה to משפט, thereby

underscores this point, which depicts in stages the approach of the Divine Warrior. Isa 56:1 announces that salvation is near, and 56:2-8 hints subtly at concerns about a coming separation. That salvation will involve separation Isa 59:15b-20<sup>40</sup> plainly indicates. Then, in 63:1-6, the Warrior is sighted en route from Edom (to the East), and in 66:6 his “voice” (קול = “sound”) is heard as God returns dispensing retribution to his adversaries at the temple. Thus, chs.56-66 open up an eschatological outlook upon the coming of God to Zion and the House of Jacob that includes a two-sided verdict. YHWH still aims to establish a stable kingdom to which all the nations will stream (60:1-3),<sup>41</sup> but according to this eschatological outlook, from the interpretive viewpoint of the implicit reader, enduring peace requires the definitive judgment of the wicked. Thus, according to FI, there remains on the horizon one ultimate judgment-act with a dual outcome:<sup>42</sup> the penitent will experience it as blessing, the impenitent as destruction.

Altogether, the structure and movement of chs.56-66 set up a relationship between present exhortations and future expectations (56:1) that builds a dramatic tension, which will only be relieved by YHWH’s discriminating act of judgment-salvation. YHWH will ultimately establish an enduring ‘post-exilic’ situation characterized by blessings for servants and curses for the wicked;<sup>43</sup> and yet, within the scope of FI, while this outcome is foretold, it is never realized. The effect is that chs.56-66 set up an “eschatological *paraenesis*,”<sup>44</sup> in light of which the present setting of YHWH’s servants and their adversaries must be explicated. In this scenario, present exhortations highlight the situation and vocation of the servant’s disciples/offspring, while the eschatological horizon keeps YHWH’s imminent salvation (and judgment) in view (56:1). What must not be overlooked is that this situation sets the community in a position similar to the disciple of 50:4-9 and the ‘we-group’ of 53:1-11a, thereby confronting them with God’s call (50:2; 55:1) and the choice between idolatry and exclusive loyalty raised throughout FI,<sup>45</sup> but now with special reference to the summons to obey the voice of YHWH’s servant at 50:10. Thus, according to 66:14, “YHWH’s power will be revealed on behalf of his servants, but

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emphasizing the righteousness, which has to be kept and done by the people. The other, specific to chaps.40-55, speaks of God’s own צדקה, whose coming is announced and whose character will be ישועה, “salvation.” See R. Rendtorff, “Isaiah 56:1 as a Key to the Formation of the Book,” 183. See also Gregory J. Polan, *In the Ways of Justice towards Salvation*, 58-60, and T. LeClerc, *YHWH is Exalted in Justice*, 133.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Isa 61:2; 62:11.

<sup>41</sup> Isa 2:1-4, 5; 42:1-4; 51:1-6; 55:3-5; 56:2, 8; 62:1-2; 66:18ff.

<sup>42</sup> J. Blenkinsopp correctly observes that in final-Isaiah, salvation and judgment always come together. In chapters 56-66, the vision of final judgment in 59:15b-20 (58-59) and 63:1-6 (63:7-64:11; 65f) corresponds to the salvation presented in 60-62. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 210.

<sup>43</sup> Isa 57:21; 65:15-16; 66:18-24.

<sup>44</sup> For the terminology ‘paraenetic eschatology’, applied to another context, see George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days: Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 350ff.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Isa 1:19-20; 2:5; 41:5-7, 8-13.

he will show indignation against his foes.” That the vindication is promised but unfulfilled implies that the door remains open until YHWH personally shuts it in discriminating judgment (cf. 50:11; 66:24). Thus, TI contributes to FI’s aim to multiply disciples; it recruits and catechizes, exhorting and admonishing the whole, while leaving the separating to God. In this way, with Brooks Schramm, “ethical conduct is determined by eschatological expectation”<sup>46</sup> (cf. 2:2; 66:2).

The tension begins to build after the inheritance promised in 54:17 (cf. 53:10) is followed by the invitation to YHWH’s banquet at 55:1, and the mention of covenant at 55:1-5. Within chs.56-59, this tension escalates as subsequent chapters introduce another set of offspring with a rival invitation, covenant, and path leading to a separate place. The two paths manifest divergent walks, ways to acquire offspring, and methods for discerning the times. Thus, while the chiastic structure sets Zion as a symbol and her herald at the center, the movement of the whole presupposes a dispute over the way of peace, the recognition of the true God, the identity of true Israel, and the true character of Zion. At stake are justice, righteousness, and peace as the heritage of the servant’s offspring (54:14-17), and at the center, a vital connection forms the basis for discriminating between righteous and wicked offspring and between true and false words.

### 6.3.1. *Present Imperatives Highlight the Servants’ Circumstances and Vocation*

#### 6.3.1.1. *Isa 56:1-8, “I will gather still more to them”*

Isaiah 56:1a and 56:2 continue the pattern of exhortations that commenced with the open invitation in 55:1 (לָבוֹ, 3x). Isa 56:1-8 appears to address the same audience,<sup>47</sup> but the audience changes at 56:9. Thus, after 55:1 extends the invitation to assemble for YHWH’s banquet, 56:1a appropriately reflects on societal dynamics and the required conduct of people in God’s House (56:5, 7; cf. 2:2-4).

Isaiah 56:1a begins with a messenger formula (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה) and a double imperative (masc. pl.): “maintain justice” (שָׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט) and “do righteousness” (עֲשׂוּ).

<sup>46</sup> Brooks Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 119.

<sup>47</sup> In ch.55, there were only two breaks from this pattern of exhortations. The first appears with the jussives at v.7 (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.), where the wicked are specifically exhorted to turn to YHWH. The second appears with the (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. pl.) *yiqtol* forms in v.12, which promise blessings of joy and the flourishing of all creation as a memorial (זֵכֶר) for YHWH—an everlasting sign that shall never be cut off (אוֹת עוֹלָם לֹא יִכָּרֵת). Isa 56:1-8 has the same basic structure; it contains imperatives (vv.1-2) followed by jussives (v.3), focusing particular directives for a more specific group (vv.4-5, 6-7), and promising blessings for obedience (vv.2a, 5, 7). Blessing humanity (v.2) and gathering more (v.8) form an *inclusio* regarding YHWH’s purpose and explaining the delay of salvation. Verse 1 both governs the particular unit and provides a hermeneutical guide for chs.56-66 as a whole (cf. צְדִיקָה || מִשְׁפָּט in 58:2; 59:4, 9, 14 and צְדִיקָה || שְׁוֵעָה in 59:16, 17; 61:10; 62:1; 63:1).



צדקה). This line is followed in v.2 by a psalm-like blessing (אשר, v.2)<sup>48</sup> held out to humanity distributively (אנוש || בן-אדם) for maintaining Sabbath (שמר שבת) and keeping (שמר) one's hand (ידו) from doing anything evil (מעשות כל-רע). While Sabbath is new after chs.40-55,<sup>49</sup> משפט and צדקה are familiar terms. The repetition of forms of שמר and עשה provides cohesion and indicates a close relationship between v.1a (צדקה || משפט) and v.2 (שמר שבת || מעשות כל-רע). Throughout chs.1-55, משפט indicated Israel's collective responsibility to care for the weak and maintain the just order of society (cf. 1:10-17; 42:1-4). In chs.40-55, צדקה signaled YHWH's purpose/agency in deliverance/vindication, as it does in 56:1b (cf. ישועתי || צדקתי), but paired with משפט in v.1a, צדקה pertains to Israel's collective responsibility to conduct themselves ethically (lit., "doing right")<sup>50</sup> in fulfillment of obligations to God and neighbor within Israelite society.<sup>51</sup> Sabbath practice without "profanation" (חלל) and refraining from "evil" (רע) is a symbol of personal faithfulness to God and conduct without harm to society (cf. Lev 25:17).<sup>52</sup> In a covenantal context, then, the word-pair, משפט וצדקה, recalls the prophetic תורה of Isa 1:10-17.<sup>53</sup> Its explication here in v.2, given the collocation of

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Pss.1:1; 2:12, and esp. 34:1-23. The blessing recognizes that people will exercise their human capacity either for or against God, but presupposes (gentile) submission with a view to YHWH's activity through the servant's offspring whose present acts of justice and righteousness express their faith in YHWH's future saving action.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Isa 1:13; Neh 10:31; 13:15-22 (cf. 13:1-3).

<sup>50</sup> The pair have indicated God's requirements for his people (or Israel's corporate responsibility) throughout Isa 1-55 (1:17, 21, 27; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 16:5; 32:16-17; 33:5, 15; 42:1, 3, 4; 45:8; 54:14; cf. 48:1, 18). As the new Abrahamic community (51:1-3), the righteous offspring of the servant are to be known by justice-righteous (56:1a; Gen 18:19).

<sup>51</sup> As Oswalt explains, "[T]he command to *do* righteousness makes it very plain that we are once more, as in chaps.1-39, speaking of God's expectation of certain kinds of behavior from his people." See J. Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah: Chapters 56-66," 187 (his italics).

<sup>52</sup> Maintaining Sabbath expresses this requirement in terms of God's covenant (ברית), since Sabbath stands (by metonymy) for human responsibility in that context. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 135. Blenkinsopp cites Exod 31:12-17, where Sabbath is recognized as a perpetual covenant (ברית עולם; cf. Isa 66:23). J. Koole observes that Sabbath means maintaining covenant in terms of both its requirements and its promises (*Isaiah 56-66*, 8). Sabbath-keeping demonstrates recognition of YHWH as true God, it acknowledges YHWH's activity in creation and redemption (cf. Exod 20:8-11; 31:16; Deut 5:12-15), and it expresses trust in FI's promises regarding the future horizon of new creation and rest. For those commanded to wait, Sabbath-keeping manifests reliance upon God and choosing what delights him in the present. Given FI's development of Sabbath practice alongside fasting in Isa 58 (cf. 58:13-14 and "liberty" or "release" in Isa 61), mention of Sabbath may also presuppose jubilee-release (and Lev 25:8-55), and connects to FI's concern with caring for the weaker members of society. The concern with Sabbath-keeping in Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-22 (cf. 13:1-3) does not contradict Isa 56:1-8; 58:13-14, although the focus of concern there has to do with commercial enterprises.

<sup>53</sup> Isa 1:10-17 similarly called for cult practice with social justice, pointing to the demand for justice-righteousness as the collective responsibility of Abraham's descendants (Gen 18:19; Isa 41:8). On social justice in ancient Israel, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) and the collection of essays edited by H. G. Reventlow, *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence* (JSOTSup 137; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

“doing this” (יַעֲשֶׂה-זֶה) and “holding fast to it” (יִחַזֵּק בָּהּ) with reference to “maintaining Sabbath,” seeks to reunite personal ethical conduct with corporate assembly and ceremonial practice for the new society after judgment (1:27). The close relationship between v.1a and v.2, then, pertains to both personal responsibility and collective responsibility within the covenant community. Put differently, 56:1a, 2 highlight the necessary correlation of justice-righteousness with solemn assembly (1:13, 17).

Now, if “Sabbath” presupposes cult and covenant, then the conditions in view in 56:1a, 2 are conditions of continuance in the covenant rather than obligations that must be fulfilled before entering that bond. Adhering to covenant presupposes being in and so remaining in that relationship. Given the covenant context, then, with a view to the future, these verses instruct the inter-generational community of servants to continue doing what is right because YHWH will do so (56:1b).<sup>54</sup> This instruction also presumes that the people who come to YHWH’s Holy Mountain eagerly await his salvation (שְׁלוֹמָה). In other words, their response expresses the choice to wait and even undergo suffering before sharing in exaltation with YHWH’s servant (50:4-9) and the ‘we’-group of Isa 53.

After the (masc. pl.) imperatives in 56:1a and 56:2, 56:3-7 illustrates the point about continuing in the covenant with cases that reveal concerns arising among members of non-Jewish origin. After the invitation (and new ‘Davidic’ covenant) mentioned in ch.55, the gathering of foreign people is expected (55:5), and welcomed. In other words, as this verse presumes, the restoration community has broadened to include proselytes.<sup>55</sup> Mentioned now are “the descendant of the foreigner” (בֶּן-הַנֹּכְרִי, v.3a), an outsider to ethnic Israel, and “the eunuch” (הַסֵּרִיס, v.3c), or one without hope of physical

<sup>54</sup> John Oswalt suggests that righteousness here emphasizes “God’s faithfulness to his prior promises,” an aspect of righteousness or covenant faithfulness that he finds prominent in chs.40-55. J. N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 528. Childs correctly observes that the reciprocal relationship demanded between God and his people has always been constitutive of the term צְדָקָה and is “fundamental to Israel’s understanding of law and grace” (*Isaiah*, 456). Childs’ comment can be taken as a warning against reading Isa 56-59, 65-66 as ‘law’ and 60-62 as ‘gospel’.

<sup>55</sup> Israel is reconstituted as a multi-ethnic community by YHWH’s servant. While Isa 56:2-7 (56-66) is in practice very much Israel-centered, the nature of “Israel” has nonetheless broadened in 56:2-8 to welcome and retain foreigners and eunuchs who even participate in the cult. Marvin Sweeney observes that this passage speaks of foreigners who have in essence converted to Judaism in keeping with Exod 12:48-49 (cf. Isa 52:1); Lev 16:29; 19:33-34; 24:22; Num 9:14; Deut 16:11, 14; 24:17-28; 26:11. See Sweeney, *Prophetic Literature*, 80. Shalom Paul nevertheless sees a “scathing polemic against the Judean isolationists,” a group which holds to what he labels an “exclusivist ethno-cultic worldview” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 448), citing Ezra 4:3; 9:1-2; 10:11; Neh 9:2; 13:3. “Scathing polemic” does not characterize the tone of Isa 56:1-8, though it is difficult to set aside the differences between this passage and especially Neh 9:2 and 13:3. For the view that Isa 56:1-8 presupposes a debate with E-N as regards land possession and socialization of children, see Clinton Hammock, “Isaiah 56:1-8 and the Redefining of the Restoration Judean Community” *BTB* 30 (2000): 46-57. While the concerns of each document (FI and E-N) are distinct, E-N appears to manifest a rigidity regarding cultic/ethnic boundaries and inclusion/exclusion that is foreign to FI.

descendants.<sup>56</sup> Each group appears concerned with its future, anxious to maintain a place, name, or memorial<sup>57</sup> that will guarantee their position within subsequent generations of God's people, Israel (v.8). The jussive forms (+ לֹא, 56:3ac; cf. 55:7) teach the community how to counsel these foreign parties (cf. 50:4): the eunuch must not worry that he cannot produce offspring (v.3c), and the foreigner must not be afraid that YHWH would separate (בָּרַל, *hip'il*, v.3b) his offspring from the community. In short, their identity *as foreign* does not constitute grounds for separation from the assembly. Instead, having become members of the covenant community, they must adhere to (lit., "hold fast to," חֹזֵק) YHWH's covenant (בְּרִית, v.4), as YHWH requires all his servants to do (56:1a, 2, 6).

To underscore this point, 56:4 repeats the messenger formula (+ כִּי), and then, in vv.4-7, YHWH restates the commands of v.1a and v.2 along with promises oriented specifically towards blessing the eunuch (vv.4-5) and the foreigner's children (vv.6-7). So long as they choose what delights YHWH—here again symbolized by Sabbath-keeping—the Lord assures them that he will reward their faithfulness with an enduring name as their 'monument' or 'enduring place' within the new society. In this context, then, maintaining 'Sabbath' is the defining symbol of YHWH's covenant with his people, Israel. It has become a badge of membership, a mark of servant-identity in the present period of waiting for YHWH's salvation-righteousness to be revealed (v.1b).<sup>58</sup> And once YHWH's delight

<sup>56</sup> Because self-mutilation was forbidden in Israel, Blenkinsopp thinks the eunuch is a subcategory of the 'children of the foreigner' (*Isaiah* 56-66, 136). Even if emasculation of a foreigner is in view, the cause of this 'eunuch's' mutilation is unclear. Is it a result of intentional self-mutilation for religious commitment? Cf. Deut 23:1-2 [2-3], and see McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 348, and J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 210-11. In any event, in contrast to Deut 23, there is no mention of restrictions on foreigners or eunuchs becoming members of God's people. The focus rests positively upon allegiance to YHWH and holding fast to the covenant as justice-righteousness. Justice-righteousness is a key aspect of what is required for the fulfillment of FI's programmatic vision (Isa 2:2-4) and the extension of blessing to all nations (cf. Gen 12:1-3; 18:19). If the descendants of the foreigner and eunuch will be blessed for choosing what pleases YHWH, how much more the ethnic Israelite?

<sup>57</sup> Here I am following the view of F. Delitzsch, who explains that יָד וְשֵׁם "signifies the memorial, equivalent to מַצֵּבָה (2 Sam xviii.18; 1 Sam xv.12)...pointing like a signpost to the person upon whom it is placed" (*Isaiah*, 362). Thus, it ensures they will not be forgotten. Cf. Seitz, who comments, "Here the motif of 55:13 is consciously developed; the brier become myrtle gives God a name that will not be cut off, and in the same way what was lost to the eunuch ("monument" is Hebrew יָד, a euphemism for "penis") is transformed and restored by God's grace, 'better than sons and daughters'" (*Isaiah* 40-66, 485).

<sup>58</sup> According to Roy Wells Jr., "Sabbath reorders everything. The hallowing power of Sabbath observance breaks down proposed limitations of the worshipping community on mount Zion." See, Wells, "'Isaiah' as an Exponent of Torah: Isaiah 56:1-8" in *New Visions of Isaiah* (Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 152. According to B. Gosse, "In Isa 56:1-8 an eschatological perspective is to be observed, as also for example in 66:22-23, in a context where the community is very small. In Ezra and Nehemiah, we have a practical perspective with a population that now can reconstruct a new community. And in Isa 56:1-8 the 'foreigners' who join the community are the 'proselytes' who keep the Sabbath. The foreigners denounced in Ezra and Nehemiah are clearly not doing the same thing" (B. Gosse, "Sabbath, Identity and Universalism Go Together after the Return from Exile" *JSOT* 29 (2005): 370. This suggests that positing a debate or sharp opposition between Isa 56:1-8 and E-N

(חפץ) is chosen (בחר), it must never be profaned (חלל) through evil doing (cf. v.2).

Consequently, subsequent chapters show that as a function of servanthood, Sabbath-keeping is a symbol of solidarity between servants who long for YHWH's new heavens and earth,<sup>59</sup> who express faith that God will consummate his covenant with them; it also demonstrates their acknowledgement that the covenant YHWH has initiated is reciprocal in its content and outworking.

A decree from the sovereign Lord, who gathers the dispersed of Israel (נאם אדני), closes v.8. YHWH hereby declares that he will gather “still more to them” (עוד... על יו).<sup>60</sup> YHWH's servants, as 56:3-7 has shown, not only include ethnic Israelites, but eunuchs and children of foreigners.<sup>61</sup> According to 56:8, the reason vv.1a, 2, 3-7 focus on conduct appropriate for servants is that YHWH has not finished gathering offspring. The case of the eunuch and the foreigner's children—groups that require special reassurance regarding their future—prepares the audience not only for coming salvation, but also for eschatological delay. In 56:1-8, at least, the rationale for this delay is positive: salvation is coming soon, and its hindrance is explained by YHWH's purpose in the further repatriation of Israelites and the inclusion of proselytes.<sup>62</sup> In this way, both YHWH's invitation (55:1) and promised blessings (56:1b-2a) will reach the ends of the earth (45:22; 52:10). They extend to everyone (56:2) who would come and adhere to YHWH's covenant.

Servants must wait, therefore—as Isaiah, the servant, and disciples waited before them—perhaps for generations of their own progeny, but the tone and the reason for it are now (at least initially) constructive.<sup>63</sup> As Childs observes, “The author reveals no

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(as Shalom Paul appears to do) may manifest a superficial reading. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see in FI the same strict/rigorous interpretation of the law discovered in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 9-10, and that supposedly characterizes the tremblers' adherence to the law, according to E-N (Ezra 9:4; 10:3). Moreover, while the concerns of Ezra's community (Ezra 9-10) about marriage to foreign women do not seem relevant to Isa 56:2-8, Neh 9:2 and 13:3 should give pause to both the foreigner and eunuch. See the discussion in J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 142; Childs, *Isaiah*, 458, D. J. A. Clines, “Nehemiah 10 as an Example of Early Jewish Biblical Exegesis,” *JSOT* 21 (1981): 111-117, and H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 133.

<sup>59</sup> Citing P.-E. Bonnard, *Le Second Isaïe*, 493-94), Gregory Polan states, “...the emphasis given to keeping the Sabbath in 56:2, 4, 6 is strengthened by the vision of new heavens and new earth where each שבת remains a day when the Lord is worshipped (66:22-23)” (*In The Ways of Justice*, 82).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Deut 30:4. The antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. pron. (a collective) is “the dispersed of Israel” in the preceding clause.

<sup>61</sup> The eunuch will receive שם עולם, an everlasting memorial (שם עולם) in YHWH's house, which will never be cut off (cf. 55:13). Cf. 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 6:13c. The children of the foreigner will rejoice there too, for the Lord will bring them (בוא, *hip 'il*) to his holy mountain (הר קדש). Consequently, in YHWH's ‘House of Prayer’ and on YHWH's altar, offerings and sacrifices from all nationalities will be accepted (קרבן). Yet, v.8 suggests more than a broadening of the concept of Israel; in fact, this closing verse is the key to understanding the unit.

<sup>62</sup> See Isa 14:1-2; 60:8-9; 66:18-19, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Isa 6:10-13; 46:12-13a.

disappointment in a failed divine response. Rather, he links the same eschatological hope [of DI] to Israel's obedient response."<sup>64</sup> Of course, the timing of it clearly belongs to YHWH (cf. 49:8; 61:2); indeed, as regards servanthood (56:6), it appears that YHWH does not merely transform the nature of Israel, but delays definitive salvation (v.1b) according to his wondrous purpose of ingathering (v.8). To paraphrase the message, then, YHWH exhorts the community to instruct eunuchs and foreigners who have joined the community of servants to maintain justice and do righteousness (56:1a) while "I gather still more to those being gathered" (56:8; cf. 2:3).

The vision appears to presume at least the provisional fulfillment of 49:6b<sup>65</sup> and of 49:6a, including the return of Israel to God and the discharge of Israel's מִשְׁפָּט-vocation (cf. 42:1-4; 56:8). The delay due to YHWH's purpose of ingathering nevertheless suggests that while many appropriately respond to the servant's 'voice', they must continue in relative darkness amidst those characterized previously as 'kindlers of fire' (50:10-11; cf. 51:7-8).<sup>66</sup> Although the invitation has gone out (55:1), and with it the command to repent (vv.6-7), this situation also discloses a problem, namely, that YHWH's servants dwell within a mixed, presently undifferentiated, community. Some answer YHWH's invitation, turning to God, doing justice and righteousness, and holding fast to the covenant. These are the servant-disciples of the servant, who turn from their wicked ways and seek YHWH (55:1, 6-7). There are others, however, who turn away from him, answering an invitation to a false feast on an unholy mountain.

#### 6.3.1.2. *Isaiah 56:9-57:22: Two Ways, Two Offspring, Two Destinies*

The God who gathers Israel (56:8) will also gather the nations to his holy mountain (55:3-5; 56:7; 60:1-3; cf. 2:2-4), accepting as their offering for peace, perhaps, the returning children of Israel (66:20). As 54:11-17 indicated, salvation for disciples ultimately means safely enjoying their inheritance (נִקְלָה) and vindication (צִדְקָה) as servants in Zion.

Thus, the invitation to Zion, to God's house as a refuge and holy place, has become important again (57:13b; cf. 2:5). Still, after chs.54-55, despite what is known about

<sup>64</sup> See B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 456-57. In my view, Isa 56-66 is hardly calling for works righteousness (Duhm's *Werkgerechtigkeit*, in *Jesaja*, 418-419) and here (at least initially) there is no hint of cognitive dissonance as a motive of production due to disappointment over failed prophecy. See R. P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed* and Torsten Uhlig, *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah* (FAT 39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 54.

<sup>65</sup> "I will make you a light of nations, in order that my salvation will reach to the end of the earth" (49:6; cf. vv.8-13).

<sup>66</sup> "Who among you reveres YHWH by obeying the voice of his servant? Even though he walks about in darkness and has no light, he should trust in YHWH's name and rely upon his God. Look, all of you kindlers of fire, who set light to flaming torches: walk by the light of your fire, and by the flaming torches that you burn. From my hand, this comes to you: you will lie down in torment" (50:10-11).

YHWH's servant, his disciples have not been defined clearly as a group. Their definition through instruction amidst escalating societal tension is the theme and contribution of 56:9-57:21. It commences with a contrast set up by two conflicting invitations that also clash with YHWH's invitation to come in 55:1 (cf. 56:2, 8). These conflicting invitations further explicate the eschatological delay, plainly demonstrating why servant-disciples do not yet enjoy their inheritance in Zion but share in the sufferings of the servant.

In 54:14-17a, YHWH had decreed (נִסָּח) to disciples of the servant an inheritance involving freedom from oppression (עֲשָׁק) through threat of iron or false tongue.<sup>67</sup> In 55:1, they were summoned to a banquet of water, wine, and milk, with plenty to eat. In 56:9, however, without indication of a change of speaker, it appears that YHWH also invites every “beast” (חַיָּה, 2x) from “field” and “forest” (יַעַר || שָׂדֵי), saying, “Come to devour [אֲתֵיּוּ לֶאֱכֹל, masc. pl. impv.]!” Verses 10-11 assure these beasts that they may feed without fear of watchdog (כָּל בָּיִם) or shepherd (רֹעִים), for the sheep are neglected and vulnerable to attack. The neglected sheep probably include the suffering righteous of 57:1-2, 13b-19, who are offspring of the servant;<sup>68</sup> yet, it is no longer the sheep, but the watchdog and shepherd that stray (cf. 53:6). These worthless dogs and incompetent shepherds (56:10-12) are linked to the wicked of 57:3-13a, 20-22, the wayward offspring of the sorceress, adulterer, and harlot. Thus, there are two opposing offspring, and 56:9-57:22 alternates between descriptions of each to account for the suffering of the righteous and to mount a case for the judgment of the wicked. It now appears that at his coming, YHWH will vindicate the righteous for their observance and judge the wicked for their neglect of מִשְׁפַּט וְצִדְקָה (56:1; cf. 1:17, 23).

The righteous one suffers because both ‘dog’ and ‘shepherd’ fail in their responsibilities to the sheep. The dogs are supposed to function as sentinels (צִפִּי),<sup>69</sup> like prophets/heralds charged with keeping guard and warning of danger (cf. Ezek 33:2-6). But these sentinels are worthless.<sup>70</sup> They are blind (עֹרֵר, cf. Isa 42:18-25) and lack knowledge (לֹא יָדְעוּ): never mind their bite, these sleeping dogs do not even bark (נִבַּח, 56:10). As

<sup>67</sup> The threat-list includes “terror” (מַחֲתָה), “attack” (גֹּרֵר), “ruin” (חֲבֹל), and “weaponry” (כֶּלִי).

<sup>68</sup> Isa 53:10; 54:13, 17b; 56:6; cf. 60:12.

<sup>69</sup> MT has צִפִּי but suggests reading צִפִּי. The above emendation to צִפִּי (+ 1<sup>st</sup>-per. suf.) was first suggested by Duhm (*Jesaja*, 424), who, correctly understood YHWH as speaker of 56:9-12. For defense of Duhm's view with helpful observations regarding the ‘watchman metaphor’, see Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Watchman Metaphor in Isaiah LVI-LXVI,” *VT* 55 (2005): 378-400; Tiemeyer cites Duhm's emendation on p.386 of her article.

<sup>70</sup> J. Koole recalls that in Isa 52:8 they are the seers, or heralds of Zion, responsible to behold YHWH's coming and the establishment of his royal dominion. He states, “The watchmen referred to here probably form a deliberate contrast with those of 52:8 . . . they feed both on the people and on God's patience” (*Isaiah* 56-66, 35, 38).

for the shepherds—probably the rulers responsible for guiding, directing, and protecting the sheep (cf. Ezek 34:1-10)—they lack discernment (לֹא יָדְעוּ הַבֵּיָן). Every one of these inept leaders turns to his own way (בָּלֵם לְדֶרֶכָם פָּנּוּ, Isa 56:11; cf. 53:6).<sup>71</sup> As a result, the righteous one perishes (אֲבָרָה, 57:1), and no one considers it (אֵין אִישׁ שֶׁם עַל-לֵב). Plainly evoking the figure (צַדִּיק) of Isa 53, the righteous, characterized by covenant-faithfulness (אֲנִשֵּׁי-חֶסֶד), are taken away (אֶסְרָה, *nip'al*), and no one understands why (בְּאֵין מִבֵּין; cf. 56:11).

The reason, it seems, is that the shepherds are preoccupied by a banquet other than YHWH's. In fact, they issue their own perverse invitation, which manifests disregard for 56:1b:<sup>72</sup> “Come [אָהֵן, masc. pl. impv.], [they say], let me take wine, and let us imbibe strong drink, for tomorrow will be just like today—great beyond measure” (56:12).<sup>73</sup> Perhaps, while YHWH carries out his purpose (56:8), the wicked find opportunity to reject the opening exhortation (56:1a) and continue in their perverse path (cf. 57:11). Both sentinel and shepherd fail to recognize that, for those who neglect מִשְׁפַּט וְצַדִּיקָה, YHWH's צַדִּיקָה is not a blessing but a threat. The tragic irony is that, despite their reveling, the beasts have already been summoned to devour them. In the meantime, because of evil/calamity (כִּי-מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָה; cf. 56:2)—perhaps through the agency of the aforementioned “beasts” (cf. 56:9)—the righteous one (הַצַּדִּיק) also suffers and is taken away (אֶסְרָה, *nip'al*). Regardless of the consequences, the righteous differentiate themselves by trusting in YHWH's word, the wicked by their ignorance.

Isaiah 56:9-12 and 57:1, therefore, sharply divorce the wicked from the righteous. The righteous suffer, while the wicked revel; the righteous hunger, thirst, and mourn, while

<sup>71</sup> Seitz rightly observes the connection to Isa 53 and comments, “The servants confessed in 53:6 that they wrongly turned each to his own way, leaving the servant to bear their punishment. Here the shepherds knowingly persist in wrongdoing (56:11), turning to their own ways, ignoring the wisdom imparted at God's feat on Zion (55:8)” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 490). Significantly, the description of both the righteous offspring and the wicked offspring recalls the confession of the ‘we-group’ from Isa 53.

<sup>72</sup> See W. A. M. Beuken, “Isaiah 56:9-57:13,” 50-53. M. Sweeney astutely compares Isa 55:1-5 to “an invitation by personified Wisdom to be a guest at her table” (*Isaiah 1-4*, 88). In support of this view, he cites J. Begrich (*Studien*, 59) and C. Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 281). Westermann observes Begrich's own comments on the affinity between Isa 55:1 and Prov 9, but neither Westermann nor Begrich develop this as regards Isa 56-57. Nevertheless, I think the connection becomes clearer in 56:9-57:21 (cf. 66:13-16), which further suggests the intertextual relationship with Prov 9. There, as here, the disciple must distinguish between Lady Wisdom's summons to true worship (Prov 9:1-6; Isa 55:1-5; 56:1-8) and Dame Folly's temptation to false worship at high places (Prov 9:13-18; Isa 56:9; 57:3-13; vv.6-13 are fem. sg.). The prophetic torah of chs.55-57 confronts disciples with the same question that confronts the simple in Prov 9, namely, “With whom will you dine?” In wisdom's torah too, the disciple must decide between true and false worship, between the true God and idolatry.

<sup>73</sup> This caricature of their activity recalls the case for judgment in Isa 5:11-12, 18-24; 28:1-13. Here, as before, the rulers' behavior indicates their rejection of YHWH's agenda as disclosed through the agency of his prophetic servant.

the wicked eat, drink, and make merry; the righteous wait for YHWH, keeping covenant in hope of the fulfillment of FI's vision, while the wicked reject that vision and expect the present age to last forever. Childs has it right, "The new age was coming as promised...but the old will remain in all its violence and opposition."<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, through waiting and suffering, servant-disciples learn the way of YHWH; in fact, both the positive example and righteous path of YHWH's servant as well as the negative example and sinful path of the impenitent guide them forward.

Isa 57:2-21 continues to contrast these groups, "alternating words of assurance and promise [vv.1-2, 13b-19] with denunciation and threat [vv.3-13a, 20-21]."<sup>75</sup> In this way, the poem articulates an antithesis between offspring and ways of knowing,<sup>76</sup> banquets and mountains,<sup>77</sup> characteristics and destinies.<sup>78</sup> The polarization anticipates escalating opposition to the righteous and a narrowing of the concept of Israel. Once again, it is a tale of two cities (or mountains). Shockingly, after her personification in 49:14-26 and 54:1-17, Zion, it seems, has become a new Babylon,<sup>79</sup> and 57:3-13b, 20-21 is a

<sup>74</sup> B. S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 463.

<sup>75</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 145. As Goldingay observes, this feature of the material recalls Isa 1-12 (*Isaiah*, 319).

<sup>76</sup> In 57:3, wicked opposition to this righteous society is marked linguistically, "But you" (וְאַתֶּם), 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. pl.; cf. 65:11), followed by vocatives: "children of a sorceress" (בְּנֵי עֲנִיָּה) || "offspring of an adulterer and a harlot" (זֶרַע מְנַאֲף וְזֹזְנָה). Both epithets are pejorative, yet their relevance as insults resides in two concerns raised previously in 56:1-8, 9-12, where mention of offspring and children both evoke 53:10 ("he will see offspring," זֶרַע) and underline the striking contrast between the righteous and the wicked. First, concern with offspring is related to maintaining a place/securing a legacy (cf. 56:2-7), but the wicked acquire these by illegitimate means, immorality, and deviant cult practices (57:3-5); hence, their names have already become a curse (cf. 65:15). Second, knowledge is important to the servant's offspring (53:11b; cf. 50:4, 10); yet, the sentinels and shepherds manifest their lack of knowledge and understanding (56:10, 11; cf. 52:15) by disregarding the righteous and by mocking the prophetic word regarding YHWH's imminent appearing (56:1b, 12; 57:4; 66:5; cf. 5:12, 19). As the "offspring of the sorceress," they seek guidance through forbidden means and idolatrous ways (57:6; cf. 2:6; 47:12-15). Indeed, sorcery signals the exchange of the prophetic word for divination and deception (cf. 44:25-26a; Deut 18:9-15).

<sup>77</sup> With unacceptable sacrifices, the wicked offspring also ascend a high hill (הַר־גִּבְהָ, v.7; 40:9), it is both "high and lifted up" (גִּבְהָ וְנִשְׂאָה, 57:7; cf. 6:1; 52:13). I mentioned contrasting banquets above (on 55:1-2, 56:9, 12), yet it is important to note that this aspect of the antithesis, which manifests a struggle to possess the high mountain, anticipates the true and false fast of ch.58 and the separation of the wicked from righteous servants who will feast on "my holy mountain," according to 65:13-14 (cf. 57:13b).

<sup>78</sup> The wicked respond to the vision by attempting to secure their destiny for themselves (cf. 50:11). With their mother, they set up their own memorial (זִכְרוֹן, v.8; cf. שָׁם, 56:5), 'cut' an illegitimate covenant (כָּרַח, 57:8), and gaze on nakedness (lit., "uncover a hand," יָד חֲזִיית, v.8). They lack reverence for God (57:6, 11; cf. 50:10); their tongues mock and tell lies (57:11; cf. 53:9). They will never enjoy rest and cannot keep silent, because their beds are chaotic waters (57:20, 21). The righteous, however, know their King as "exalted and lifted up" (רָם וְנִשְׂאָה, v.15; cf. 6:1). They walk with integrity (נֶכַח), and so enter their beds in peace (57:2; cf. 53:5). Though crushed (דָּכָא, cf. 53:5, 10; 66:2) and abased in spirit (שָׁפַל־רוּחַ), YHWH will revive them (57:15), strengthen their spirit (רוּחַ), and give them breath (נְשָׁמָה, 57:16; cf. v.13). He will vindicate (57:16), comfort (57:19), give peace (2x, cf. 60:17; 65:25; 66:12), and heal them (57:18, 19; 53:4, 5; cf. 6:10).

<sup>79</sup> Or with Mark Biddle, she has become "Lady Zion's alter-ego." Mark E. Biddle, "Lady Zion's Alter Ego: Isaiah 47:1-15 and 57:6-13 as Structural Counterparts," in *New Visions of the Book of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 214, R. Melugin and M. Sweeney, eds. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1997), 137. Personified and addressed directly in vv.6-13 (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. fem. sg.), as Beuken observes, "[she] does not climb the mountain as a



condemnation of the present state of Jerusalem and its leaders (56:9-12). This functions, on the one hand, to clarify the character, situation, and vocation of YHWH's servants, but on the other hand, to build the case for judgment and separation as the remedy for Israel's recurrent apostasy. In this regard, 57:3-13a constitute an indictment of the wicked offspring (vv.3-8), who spread abroad their wickedness (vv.9-10), which is characterized chiefly by idolatry (vv.11-13a). While the repentant righteous are promised redemption and peace (vv.1-2, 13b-19), there is no peace for the wicked (vv.20-21). The several features of 56:9-57:21, therefore, distinguish the righteous from the wicked, demonstrating the importance of solidarity with YHWH's servant and of attending to YHWH's word in servant-form. The description of the righteous matches that of the servant, and that of the wicked, his opposite. Negatively, the profile of the character and destiny of the wicked constitutes a warning that YHWH will discriminate based on the pattern set by his servant. Positively, as he gathers more, the profile and destiny of the suffering righteous also encourage repentance, for they show God's patient 'suffering with' the wicked as he offers them life and healing (56:8).

Isaiah 56:9-57:21 also reveals that the Lord's work in gathering more only partially explains the eschatological delay, though here again positive and negative aspects may be closely related. Isa 57-59 discloses that wickedness in the community hinders God's salvific intention too, not only for his people, Israel, but also (through Israel) for the nations.<sup>80</sup> Most of all, truth (אֱמֶת) is lacking and the repentant (סֹר מַרְעֵ) suffer as prey (59:15a; cf. 56:9; 57:1-2). Presently, therefore, eschatological delay involves hardship and discloses YHWH's purpose and patience, but 'tomorrow' will *not* always be like 'today' (56:12; 57:16). Until 'tomorrow', YHWH's servants must imitate YHWH's character 'today' as befits the disciples of YHWH. Like the servant (and Isaiah), this is their witness to YHWH in the world. They also share the experience of YHWH's servant in suffering; like him, they are crushed (סָכַח); and yet, as the servant also recognized (50:4; cf. 40:28-31), God dwells with the crushed to revive them (57:15-16; 66:2). Through FI's instruction and God's discipline, then, the weary will be both strengthened and sustained—it is YHWH's 'pedagogy of suffering', which develops and displays the character of righteous servants.<sup>81</sup> Although presently they stand in the same temporal location as the servant of ch.50 and the 'we-group' of Isa 53, they too are promised success. Meanwhile,

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herald of good tidings to announce God's arrival (40:9), but she climbs the holy mountain of YHWH in order to bring there to her lovers, the gods, offerings in adultery (57:7)." W. A. M. Beuken, "Isaiah 56:9-57:13," 53. This manifestation of Zion does not receive foreign kings or the wealth of nations (49:23; 60:5, 11; 61:6); instead, she spreads her wickedness to them (57:9).

<sup>80</sup> Isa 58:4b; 59:1-2; and see אֱמֶת...אֱמֶת in 58:8-14; cf. 50:2b; 60:1-3.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. 40:28-31; 50:4; 66:14.

they must maintain justice and do what is right by holding fast to the covenant and choosing what delights YHWH (56:1a, 2). Anticipating 66:2, 5, they tremble ‘today’ because they know that judgment looms. But the eschatological day/time also signals a reversal of fortunes for both the repentant and the wicked. In the meantime, 56:9-57:21 contributes to FI by showing that servanthood is YHWH’s criterion.

#### 6.4. *One Vital Connection as the Basis of Separation*

##### 6.4.1. *The Offspring’s Covenantal Womb (Isa 59:21)*

As YHWH is gathering still more, 56:8 and 56:9-57:21 sharply express what YHWH requires from the corporate community, and chs.58-59 state explicitly that what YHWH requires is still lacking. Having looked for justice and righteousness, truth and peace, he has not found them (59:1-4, 8, 9, 14-15a; cf. 5:7). YHWH saw that there was no justice (כִּי־אֵין מִשְׁפָּט), and was displeased (“it was evil in his sight”; cf. 65:12; 66:4). He saw that there was “no one” (כִּי־אֵין אִישׁ) to maintain the cause of Israel,<sup>82</sup> and even more appalling, there was no intercessor (כִּי־אֵין מַפְגִּיעַ)—no one to intervene in word or deed (59:16; cf. 53:12).<sup>83</sup> For the righteous, however, the present evil age will not last forever (57:16; cf. vv.1-2), because, after this gloom of night, the bright sun of Zion’s new morning will arise over a reconstituted covenant community (60:1; cf. 8:16-9:6).

Isaiah 58:1-59:20 is commonly regarded as a coherent and distinctive poem in five stanzas (58:1-5, 6-14; 59:1-8, 9-15a, 15b-20). The poem is generally understood to comprise a response to the complaint addressed to God in 58:3: “Why do we fast, but you do not see? We humbled ourselves, but you did not notice?” Allied to its theme, the entire poem is characterized by repetition of the words צַדִּיקָה, מִשְׁפָּט, פֶּשַׁע, and חַטָּאת (58:1-2; 59:2-3, 9, 11-15, 16-17, 20).<sup>84</sup> In ch.59, particularly, there are three stanzas. The first stanza (59:1-8) refutes the complaint by prophetic indictment (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. pl.). The second (59:9-15a) offers communal confession of sin (1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.), and 59:15b-20 comprises a warrior theophany (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.). This final stanza ends formally with the oracular formula (נֹאם יְהוָה), labeling the prophetic speech as a decree of YHWH (v.20; cf. 56:8).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Isa 50:2; 59:4; 57:1; 63:3; 2 Kgs 14:26; Jer 12:11.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Jer 7:16; 27:18. The use of this term in Jeremiah suggests circumstances when either it was too late for intercession: YHWH’s longsuffering had come to its end (7:16) or there were no true prophets. This language, then, may be idiomatic as an indictment against false prophecy (27:26). In any event, FI continues to build the case for judgment.

<sup>84</sup> P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 99.

Now, when commented upon at all, 59:21 is usually treated separately, and the reasons for this are evident. After the concluding oracular formula, there is an obvious change from 3<sup>rd</sup>-person in vv.15b-20 to 1<sup>st</sup>-person in v.21. There appears to be a transition too in both the nature of the audience and the subject matter of the address. Speaker, audience, and subject matter appear to shift even more abruptly with 60:1. This new section is introduced by the familiar double imperative,<sup>85</sup> here announcing the salvation of Zion/Jerusalem personified as a woman (fem. sg.): “Arise, shine, for your light has come.” And so it seems, if v.21 can be straightforwardly distinguished in this way from both preceding and subsequent contexts, then perhaps the verse could be safely (re)moved,<sup>86</sup> left to stand in isolation, or even dismissed as an extraneous addition and passed over without comment.<sup>87</sup>

It is my contention, however, that such a decision would be unfortunate, since it would lead effectively to a misreading of this pivotal prophecy. Accordingly, with a growing number of interpreters, I think that even if 59:21 were a redactional element, it functions meaningfully here.<sup>88</sup> Verse 21 is a nodal point,<sup>89</sup> a key verse placed strategically

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<sup>85</sup> As in DI, the double impv. is a characteristic of Isaianic style (see esp. chs. 49-55; Isa 51:1-8, 9, 17; 52:1, 11; cf. 57:14; 62:10).

<sup>86</sup> Claus Westermann declares, “Verse 21 diverges so much in both style and subject-matter from 59:1-20 that this cannot have been its original placing. Practically all editors [sic., critics?] agree in this” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 352 cf. B. Duhm, *Jesaia*, 446-447). In his judgment, the verse is a fragment broken off from another place, and so he finds a better home for it between v.20 and v.22 of Isaiah 66, adding, parenthetically, “See commentary there.” But *there*, it stands alone (on p. 427), isolated in a footnote, without commentary. Despite this silence, it should be noted that even Westermann’s desire to relocate the verse demonstrates his tacit awareness of its import in relation to other parts of the prophetic book. Edward J. Kissane, by contrast, thinks that the real character of this prose verse is revealed by comparison with similar passages which form the conclusions to the other sections of the book (Isa 48:22; 57:21). See E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2, XL-LXVI (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1943), 251. More recently, R. N. Whybray believes its present position is due to the ‘catchword’ פִּיִּי, which appears in v.19 in the sense of ‘wind’ and in v.21 in the sense of ‘spirit’, each time in association with YHWH. R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 228.

<sup>87</sup> Following Volz, Fohrer, Elliger, McKenzie, and Muilenburg—not only in editions of his controversial monograph, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975, rev. ed., 1979)—but also in his 1995 commentary, Paul D. Hanson simply ignores v.21; again, the verse is passed over without comment. As Westermann, he writes, “[V]erse 21...is regarded as a secondary prose addition by nearly all exegetes.” See, Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (rev. ed, 1979), 113. P. Volz, *Das Buch Jesaja II* (KAT 9/2; Leipzig: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932); G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja III* (ZBK; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1964); K. Elliger, *Die Einheit Tritojesaja* (BWANT 45; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928); J. L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB 20; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968); and J. Muilenburg, *Isaiah 40-66*, and Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*.

<sup>88</sup> For instance, Seizo Sekine thinks it is important to ask ‘...warum dieses ‘Bruchstück’ gerade an diese Stelle gesetzt wurde.’ Seizo Sekine, *Die Tritojesajanische Sammlung (Jes 56-66) Redaktionsgeschichtlich Untersucht* (BZAW 175; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 135. And Bernard Gosse declares that Isaiah 59:21 must be considered as an addition; nonetheless, he says it is perfectly placed in context. See B. Gosse, “L’alliance d’Isaïe 59,21” ZAW 101 (1989) 116. Blenkinsopp’s observations can be taken as representative of the present state of scholarship on this verse, “It will not do to dismiss the brief passage, apparently in prose, as totally isolated (Volz 1932, 238) or as a simple addendum to the liturgy (e.g., Muilenburg 1956, 696) or as having migrated from its original place in the last chapter of the book (Westermann 1969, 352, 427), at least not without raising the question of its place in the overall arrangement of Isa 40-66.” He also tacitly recognizes the call for an assessment of its import in the wider context, adding, “Further clarification will depend on the interpretation of the statement itself and to what extent it

here to enable the reader to understand the dramatic line of FI's peculiar restoration and separation vision. Isaiah 59:21 reads:

<sup>21</sup> “As for me,  
     this is my covenant with them,”<sup>90</sup>  
 says YHWH:  
     “My spirit                      that is upon you,  
     and my words                that I have put in your mouth,  
     will never withdraw        from your mouth,  
    or from the mouth of your seed,  
    or from the mouth of your children’s seed,”  
 says YHWH,  
     “from now and forevermore.”

The verse plainly establishes the identity of its speaker, though there is some opacity regarding its subject matter, and it arouses fascination about the identity of the one to whom (and the ones about whom) the speech is addressed.

A clause atom (אני) introduces the principle subject of the verse, “As for me.” This verse-initial constituent is dislocated (*casus pendens*)<sup>91</sup> from an independent nominal clause beginning with the demonstrative pronoun, זאת (fem. sg.), in predicative position with “my covenant” (בריתי, fem. sg.): “As for me, this is my covenant...” Both this initial pronoun (אני) and the resumptive pronoun on covenant (בריתי)<sup>92</sup> are kataphoric, referring to YHWH, the explicit subject of the verb אצטר (qal. pf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.) in the next clause, which indicates direct speech. It is YHWH, the principle subject and speaker of the verse, who has condescended to establish a covenant; v.21 presumes a covenantal arrangement sovereignly initiated by God.

Moreover, this covenantal arrangement has reference to a bond/relationship established by God with certain partners, for he says, “This is my covenant with them”

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corresponds with views expressed throughout this section of the book” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 200). So also, J. Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 212.

<sup>89</sup> Although uniquely collocated, not a single term in this verse is foreign to FI. Among the more significant instances of their distribution throughout this book, see, for בריית: 24:5; 28:15, 18; 42:6, 8; 54:10; 53:3; 56:4, 6; 57:8; 61:8; for דברי: 29:11, 18; 31:2; 41:26; 51:16; for פה: 6:7; 9:17; 11:4; 34:16; 48:3; 49:2; 51:16; 53:7, 9; 55:11; for רוח: 4:4; 11:2; 28:6; 30:1; 31:3; 32:15; 34:16; 40:13; 42:1, 5; 44:3; 48:16; 61:1; 63:10-11, 14; for זרע: 1:4; 5:10; 6:13; 14:20; 40:24; 41:8; 43:5; 44:3; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 57:3, 4; 61:9; 65:9, 23; 66:22; for מוש: 54:10 (“depart”/ “withdraw”, 2x); and for עלם: 9:6; 24:5; 30:8; 32:17; 34:17; 35:10; 40:8; 45:17; 51:6, 8, 9, 11; 54:8; 55:3, 13; 56:5; 60:15, 19-21; 61:7-8; 63:9-12.

<sup>90</sup> MT has איתם; read here, with 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and Mss Syro-Hexapla, Targum, and Vulgate איתם (cf. LXX, αὐτοῖς).

<sup>91</sup> The *casus pendens*, or nominative absolute, according to Joüon (156b), may be occasioned by the importance of the subject in the mind of the writer. In van der Merwe's terminology, this syntactical relation with the main clause is called “a dislocation construction” due to this constituent's isolation to the right of that clause. Christo van der Merwe, et al, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 357.

<sup>92</sup> Even though this pronoun is cataphoric, within the main clause it is resumptive as regards the dislocated constituent אני; i.e., it repeats the number and gender of the previous element.

(אֶתָם). These partners are identified concretely as multiple generations of (physical and/or spiritual) “seed” (זֶרַע) or covenant children. Thus, YHWH has condescended to establish a definite relationship with a peculiar offspring. Yet, the arrangement by which God establishes and administers this mutual bond/relationship “with them” he calls, unilaterally, “my covenant.” Although it draws human partners within its scope, it remains God’s covenant, coming from God alone.

Subsequent to the first direct speech formula, however, there is a notable repetition of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person masculine singular pronoun (“you”/ “your,” 5x). It appears that YHWH addresses a personal figure directly, upon whom his spirit rests (עַל־יָךְ) and in whose mouth he has placed his words (בְּפִיךָ). What is more, this verse suggests to the reader that the one addressed both possesses YHWH’s spirit and words already (שִׁמְתִּי, *qal.* pf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per.)<sup>93</sup> and has some enduring role in conveying YHWH’s benefits to his offspring. This is significant since it appears that not only are the provisions of this covenant bound up with this prominent figure,<sup>94</sup> but that the “offspring” (זֶרַע) ‘born’ of this covenant enjoy a vital bond of solidarity with this mysterious persona. They are “your seed...your children’s seed,” and so, together they constitute one people.

And yet, if taken separately, this verse can only raise questions as regards the identity of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure hereby addressed. It should be acknowledged, then, that despite the prominence of the figure—established by repetition of the pronoun—the identity of this figure is uncertain, even ambiguous. Does the pronoun refer to a present/future individual figure (a personal and representative figure) or is this a collective designation (referring to either the entire assembly or part of a larger assembly, a remnant)?<sup>95</sup> The question raised here then is what special distinction, if any, should be made between the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person singular “you” (individual or collective), who already possesses YHWH’s spirit and words, and the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person singular “seed” (beyond doubt, collective) to whom his spirit and words are subsequently conveyed? *To whom* do the “seed” belong? Related to this, what is the relationship between earlier and subsequent

<sup>93</sup> Inasmuch as the person is addressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> per. sg., YHWH appears to be saying that the benefits now enjoyed by this figure will be imparted henceforth to the offspring of this figure. In the context, then, the perfective aspect is best translated with the past-time reference, “I have put”.

<sup>94</sup> Hence, in some sense, the benefits conveyed are *his benefits*.

<sup>95</sup> If the latter position is correct, then perhaps there is no distinction to be found between this figure and the “them” of the preceding clause. The ambiguity itself is sufficient to evoke questions analogous to those regarding the Servant figure in Isaiah 40-55, although other OT books, esp. Deuteronomy (which also presumes a covenantal context, Abrahamic and Mosaic), are notorious for their apparent ability to move between plural/collective and personal designation.

generations, physical, spiritual, or (in some sense) both? Perhaps a solution to these questions may be found by appeal to biblical theological conceptions of covenant.<sup>96</sup>

Clear enough within this verse-unit itself, subsequent to the direct speech formula, YHWH specifies the content of what he is imparting to them. His covenant arrangement “with them” (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. pl.), addressed to a certain “you” (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg.), consists in this: YHWH commits to their permanent endowment with the extraordinary blessings of this dispensation of his covenant, namely, “my spirit” (רוחִי, 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg.) and “my words” (דברִי).<sup>97</sup> Henceforth, his words and spirit “will never withdraw” (לֹא־יָמוּשׁוּ) from them.<sup>98</sup> And so, at the very least, here is marvelous assurance of YHWH’s stable and perpetual presence<sup>99</sup> with this unique seed. Moreover, as if by a double oath (אמר יהוה, 2x), the covenant Lord personally guarantees the inviolability and permanency of this

<sup>96</sup> A covenant arrangement typically presupposes a verbal deposit (oral and/or written) and a mediator (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.); hence, in this context biblical theological considerations naturally arise by which to explicate this particular vision. Does the verse-unit point up a bond between the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure and offspring to be explicated in terms of the difference between the mediator of a covenant with YHWH and the partners to a covenant with YHWH? Bernard Batto also observes a connection to Isa 54:10 (cf. Jer 31:36; Ezek 34:25; 37:26) concerning “my covenant of peace” (ברית שׁוֹלָמִי). This is YHWH’s assurance that his compassion and covenant faithfulness (חסד) will never depart from his people, strengthened by analogy to his oath and promise “in the days of Noah.” B. Batto, “The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 187-211.

<sup>97</sup> The association of words (דברִי) with YHWH’s spirit (רוחִי) raises the question as to whether the promise refers to the gift of prophecy (Joel 3:1 [2:28-29]; Num 11:29; 12:8; 22:28) or the spirit of post-exilic law-based piety. For the former position, see, e.g., R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 229. For the latter position, see, e.g., A. Rofé, “The Piety of the Torah-disciples at the Winding-up of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Bibel in Jüdischer und Christlicher Tradition: Festschrift für Johann Maier Zum 60 Geburtstag* (eds. H. Merklein, K. Müller, and G. Stemberger; Bonner Biblische Beiträge 88; Frankfurt am Main: Hain, 1993), 75-85. Rofé resurrects the older view of B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja*, and G. H. Box, *The Book of Isaiah* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1908). In Isaiah, the presence of YHWH’s spirit is closely related to the ability of true Israel to do justice-righteousness, i.e., to keep his commandments and so adhere to his covenant (32:15-17; 42:1; 44:3). Hence, in addition, those views that reduce the message of this verse to the validation of the prophet’s message or to the assurance that prophecy will not die out may be off point. For the former position, see, e.g., Brooks Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 141; for the latter, see, e.g., P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 127.

<sup>98</sup> This evocative verb calls to mind YHWH’s presence among his people in the first exodus (Exod 13:22). Given Isaiah’s concern with torah/the word of YHWH (1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 30:9; 24:5; 40:8; 42:4, 21, 24; 44:26; 48:16; 50:4; 51:16; 55:11; 66:2, 5), it may also be significant that this use of the verb, מוֹשׁ (qal., “withdraw, depart”, Judg 6:18; Job 23:10, 12), finds an exact parallel in Josh 1:8 (cf. v.13; Exod 33:11). After the death of Moses, it is used in exhortation to Joshua, Moses’ assistant and chosen successor. The Lord admonishes Israel’s new leader never to let Moses’ book of the torah (סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה) “depart from [his] mouth” (מִפִּי)—he must meditate upon it day and night. Positively, this indicates that Moses (i.e., Mosaic Torah) would be his ever present helper, ensuring his (and his people’s) success on the way (Josh 1:17). That is, as he would recite the book’s contents, muttering the words, they would be upon his lips (literally and) continually. The analogy suggests that FI arises to the level of Mosaic Torah as a guide for the community.

<sup>99</sup> B. Childs observes that although the former things lay behind, the new things are still ahead. He explains, “What is different is that the expected promise of the new age has been radicalized in terms of its eschatology... [it] is increasingly identified with a new heaven and earth” (*Isaiah*, 447). Klaus Koenen recognizes a turning point here from the period of darkness to the time of light. He also suggests that Tritoesaja belongs among the forerunners of the two-aeons structure of apocalyptic teachings. See K. Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie im Tritoesajabuch* (WMANT 62; Düsseldorf: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 239.

covenant promise—he will never withdraw it, not now or forevermore” (וְעַד-עוֹלָם).<sup>100</sup> Thus, bound up with its divinely unilateral character, this covenant is sealed in accordance with the witness of YHWH’s revealed will.

Despite what may be known about this verse-unit, significant questions remain. These questions concern at least (1) the identity of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure, (2) the particular covenant in view, (3) the “words” specified by its dispensation, (4) the specific identity of the covenant partners, and (5) the nature of the bond between the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure and the seed. These questions cannot be answered adequately by appeal to v.21 taken separately.

#### 6.4.1.1. *The Antecedent Context for 59:21 in 59:15b-20 (58-59)*

Three cohesive features connect this verse to the immediately preceding context (chs.58-59; esp. 59:15b-20):<sup>101</sup> (1) “As for me,” (2) “with them”, and (3) “my spirit.” Before treating them in detail, brief consideration must be given to this final stanza of the larger poem (58-59), in which the oracle of YHWH (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) discloses the sovereign Lord’s answer to the complaint and plight<sup>102</sup> of “Jacob” (cf. vv.14-15a).<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, YHWH responds to the complaint in a definitive manner. He saw (וַיֵּרֶא) [2x], vv.15b-16a),<sup>104</sup> and so he came in zeal as a Warrior<sup>105</sup> clothed with garments of

<sup>100</sup> The neg. particle designates the objective denial of a fact (Williams §395; cf. Isa 55:13). The adverbial phrase (“from now and forevermore”) modifies the negated verb מָשָׁח (“withdraw”).

<sup>101</sup> This entire poem also bears a significant relationship to the complaint and response of chs.63-64, 65-66. Regarding 59:15b-20 and 63:1-6, certain parallels may be listed briefly here: (1) YHWH comes as Redeemer for Zion (59:20); in 63:1 he comes from Edom. (2) YHWH is clothed as a Warrior (59:17); in 63:1-2 his raiment is bloodstained. (3) He comes for triumph/ vindication in both (59:16-17; 63:1). (4) He saw that there was no one (59:16); in 63:3, he treads the winepress alone. (5) His single action serves a two-fold end (59:17, 20; 63:1, 4). As regards the establishment of YHWH’s worldwide sovereignty, this judgment against Edom, like Assyria and Babylon, is paradigmatic of YHWH’s rule. Edom serves as a code for an oppressor of the people of God. Come what may they must trust him, for he *will* establish his sovereignty over against *every* competitor. Walter Brueggemann astutely observes that in this manner FI holds together “concrete reference” and “paradigmatic claim.” Thus, YHWH’s plan overrides the self-destructive plans of “Assyria”/“Babylon”/“Edom” that resist YHWH, even Persian (cf. Ezra 6:22). What is significant now, however, is that the front-line is drawn internally; in the place of the instrumentality of an Assyria/Babylonia/Persia, YHWH’s presence threatens Jacob directly. W. Brueggemann, “Planned People/Planned Book?” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition, Vol.1* (C. Broyles and C. Evans, eds.; VTSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 36.

<sup>102</sup> Christopher Seitz explains that their complaint about the lack of justice (v.11) is not entirely a matter of people’s sins (v.12). He writes, “Even those who turn away from evil are vulnerable to abuse. This calls for a response, which God provides, whose culmination is the promise oracle at the close (v.20).” Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 501.

<sup>103</sup> YHWH’s exclusive (nuclear) target for redemption is his true servants “in Jacob.” Hence, “Jacob” itself is a broader category, referring to the entire community.

<sup>104</sup> There is some debate about the time reference in both vv.15b-17 and vv.18-20. The verbal sequence unfolds with clause-initial *wayyiqtol* (8x) in vv.15b-17, expressing a perfective value. In v.16b the form is telic (וַיֵּרֶא), and the sequence is only interrupted by a parallel *qtl* from (1x) in v.16 (וַיֵּרֶא), also telic. There is no chronological succession in view. In the depiction, the action appears to stand already accomplished. Blenkinsopp finds an example of the prophetic perfect here, “a prediction uttered with such certainty that it is as if it had already taken place” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 197). In a prophetic perfect, a prophet uses the *perfect* form due to its sense of completeness and factuality. But here the form is *wayyiqtol*, and by

vengeance (v.17).<sup>106</sup> His own arm gained him victory (וְתוֹשַׁע לוֹ זִרְעוֹ), his own righteousness upheld him (וְצִדְקָתוֹ הִיא סִמְצָתָהוּ, v.16). And now<sup>107</sup> (vv.18-19; cf. 42:13-14), “according to their deeds” (כַּעַל גַּמְלוֹת) he will dispense judgment upon his enemies.<sup>108</sup> The punishment itself is reciprocal, a balanced recompense (גַּמְלוֹת), “according to their deeds...he will repay” (v.18).<sup>109</sup> This action is designed to purge the community of wickedness and sin and to give the wrathful God his due. Because of this just judgment, cosmic in scope (vv.18-19), YHWH’s worldwide sovereignty will be established, his Name and glory universally feared (vv.18-19).<sup>110</sup>

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definition the prophetic perfect is an (already rare) rhetorical use of the *qtl* form (not the impf. cons.) (*BHRG*, 146). Moreover, Blenkinsopp does not account for the shift in v.18 from past to future time-reference. The nature of the prophetic perfect, and this neglect, may suggest an alternative explanation. The strength of Blenkinsopp’s position may be found in analogy with 63:1-6 (if this signals a future time-reference) and in the imperfect consecutive. Since it expresses a perfective value, vv.15b-17 may be the exception that proves the rule. Lau thinks that the past tense excludes an eschatological interpretation of the Divine Warrior motif. See Wolfgang Lau, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie in Jes 56-66: Eine Untersuchung zu den literarischen Bezügen in den letzten elf Kapiteln des Jesajabuches* (BZAW 225; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 221. Childs appears to understand vv.15b-17 as a statement, in contrast to national apostasy, of YHWH’s faithfulness and commitment to his plan for an alternative righteous order, symbolized in a warrior’s raiment, and indicating that he has always purposed to establish just such an eschatological reign. Thus, the past time is used to depict YHWH’s past mode of action in response to the present complaint and plight of Jacob (summarized in vv.14-15a). In this way, it stands as a confident statement that the righteous God alone can shatter the power of sin and bring justice and salvation to suffering Zion (*Isaiah*, 490). The position taken by W. A. M. Beuken is similar to that of Childs. Like him, Beuken takes the past-time reference at face value. His unique contribution, however, is to suggest that the writer’s intention is to strike prophetic indictment (vv.1-8) against communal confession (vv.9-15a) sparking recognition of God’s past intervention (vv.15b-17) and inflaming expectations for a similar action in the future (vv.15b-20). The salvation itself, he says, is announced by YHWH in v.21. W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja, deel III A*, 124 (the metaphor is mine).

<sup>105</sup> Throughout FI, YHWH appears as a mighty warrior who by his outstretched arm and executor-spirit vanquishes his enemies. Hugo Odeberg observes the several occurrences of the Divine Warrior motif in *Isaiah* (42:13; 49:24, 25; 52:10). See H. Odeberg, *Trito-Isaiah: A Literary and Linguistic Analysis* (Upsalla: Lundquist, 1931), 191. Cf. Deut 28:7, 25-26; cf. Exod 14, 15; Num 10:35; Josh 5:13-15; 10:1-15; Judges 7:2; 1 Sam 17:45-47; 2 Kings 6:7; Ps 68:4; Lam 2:5; Dan 7:13; Zech 14:1, 3, 5).

<sup>106</sup> I take the garments/clothing and thus the entire verse together as a unit, portraying YHWH arrayed as a fearsome warrior, indignantly-yet-righteously baring his arm as his offensive weapon. Again, the verse is indicative of one act with a dual outcome. Westermann may be correct to find this dual outcome already in the depiction of the Divine Warrior in v.17. Verse 17a (righteousness || salvation), he says, indicates salvation for the devout; v.17b (vengeance || zeal), however, anticipates retribution for his foes (*Isaiah* 40-66, 350).

<sup>107</sup> The verbal sequence shifts to *yiqtol* in v.18 (שָׁלַם, 2x), “according to their deeds, he will repay.” This statement of YHWH’s reasoned intent is followed by a result clause in v.19a (*waw* conj. + *yiqtol*).

<sup>108</sup> If ethnic and national boundaries have been relativized here (56:1-8), the question becomes, what is the range of God’s “enemies” (v.18)? Odil H. Steck believes that “enemies” is also a broad category including both the Jewish community and the Gentile nations. See further comments in O. H. Steck, *Studien*, 190, n.19. For the view that only the Jewish community is in view, see, e.g., H. Odeberg, *Trito-Isaiah*, 191; Brooks Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 140; Seizo Sekine, *Die Tritojesajanische Sammlung*, 133; and Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 226. For the view that the Gentile nations are included, in addition to Steck, see, e.g., Karl Pauritsch, *Die Neue Gemeinde: Gott sammelt Ausgestossene und Arme (Jesaja 56-66)* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 101. P. A. Smith suggests a judicious compromise, explaining that while internal, community issues may be the primary focus of attention for the author, there is no reason why he could not ultimately set them within a wider context (Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 125).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Jer 51:56; 2 Sam 19:37.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Exod 15:16; 16:10; 23:27; Deut 28:58; Josh 2:9.



Turning to 59:19-20, with 59:21, this verse-unit sets the awesome theophany (vv.15b-19) and the appropriate response to it (v.20) within the context of YHWH's dispensation of covenant. Isaiah 59:21, therefore, is to be understood as the conclusion to the larger poem, 58:1-59:20.<sup>111</sup>

1. “*As for Me*”: The first cohesive feature, indicating a connection to 59:15b-20, is the defective clause atom (״לִּי), “As for me.” Childs correctly notes that “as for me” emphasizes God’s full commitment to the promise that follows.<sup>112</sup> This statement, underscoring the divine side of the covenant, presupposes some obligation from the human partners. Hence, the verse-initial phrase, “As for me” (״לִּי, conj. + pron.) offers a clue that, although this covenant was sovereignly initiated by YHWH, there is an inherent mutuality in the arrangement.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, corresponding to the divine promise, one anticipates a reciprocal response of fealty on the part of the human partners.<sup>114</sup> If there is in the previous context a requirement of devotion on the part of those for whose benefit YHWH has entered into this determined arrangement,<sup>115</sup> one may discover in the preceding context (vv.15b-20) not only what correlative obligations are incumbent on them but perhaps also the identity of the human partners to YHWH’s covenant.

2. “*With Them*”: To ascertain the nature of the particular requirement specified, however, a second cohesive feature must be considered, which directly pertains to the question of the covenant partners’ identity: the pronoun “them” suffixed to the preposition “with” (אִתָּם). This pronoun, although related to the subsequent mention of ‘seed’, is nevertheless anaphoric; it tethers v.21 to the preceding context (59:15b-20), and specifically to v.20:

<sup>111</sup> It reassures the repentant. Compare 57:21, and recall the view of E. J. Kissane mentioned above that the real character of this prose verse (as a nodal point) is revealed by comparison with similar passages which form the conclusions to the other sections of the book (*Book of Isaiah*, 251).

<sup>112</sup> B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 490.

<sup>113</sup> Pace Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah* 56-66, 201), who, despite his recognition of a connection to v.20, regards the covenant mentioned here as a promissory covenant reminiscent of the Priestly covenant with Noah (Gen 9:9). He supports this by appeal to the mention of Sabbath-keeping (in chs.56-59) as a Priestly characteristic. More may be said about the interpretation of the Noahic covenant in Isaiah. On 24:5, see, e.g., M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah* 1-39, 319, 332, and on 54:10, see, e.g., D. M. Gunn, “Deutero-Isaiah and the Flood” *JBL* 94 (1975): 493-508.

<sup>114</sup> Indeed, elsewhere, such loyalty/allegiance is presumed in the nature of the covenant arrangement itself (Gen 17:9, 10, 14; 18:17-19; 22:16-18; Exod 6:7; 19:5, 6; 24:8; Lev 18:5; 26:12; Deut 7:2; 29:13; Ps 78:37; cf. Heb 8:10).

<sup>115</sup> I have arrived at this position independently, but it is a rediscovery of an earlier view, which, as far as I can tell, has not been discussed since J. A. Alexander, *Isaiah*, 378. I cannot account for its neglect, although Beuken does make note of it (W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja, Deel III A*, 150). J. Koole comes closest, observing that God demands that his promise be accepted; thus, correlating promise with obligation. But Koole traces this correlation back to 56:4ff (Koole, *Isaiah* 56-66, 211), suggesting that the foreigners and eunuchs “who adhere to my covenant” in 54:4, 6 should be included “in Jacob.”

- <sup>19b</sup> For he will come as the rushing river<sup>116</sup> that YHWH's wind drives along;  
<sup>20</sup> thus, he will come, as Redeemer,  
 for Zion  
 and for those in Jacob  
 who repent of transgression,  
<sup>21</sup> "As for me,  
 this is my covenant with them..."

Here one can plainly see that the only natural antecedent of the pronoun ("them," **אֲתָם**) in v.21 is "those who turn back from transgression" (**וְלֹשְׁבֵי פֶשַׁע**, 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.)<sup>117</sup> in v.20, of whom, ultimately, Zion will be comprised.<sup>118</sup> The prepositional phrase with **ב** indicates the social location of these contrite ones, i.e., those who repent are either ethnically localized within the group "Jacob" or through contact/participation with/in "Jacob" (**בִּיעֶקֶב**).<sup>119</sup> Therefore, the antecedent of the pronoun "them" demonstrates that YHWH's covenant mentioned in v.21 is conditional for those "in Jacob" (**בִּיעֶקֶב**), and distributively so, for its realization appears to be contingent upon their individual repentance or turning from transgression to the Redeemer.

Furthermore, this same context (59:15b-20) clearly identifies Zion's coming Redeemer (**גּוֹאֵל**) with YHWH, who is also the Lord of the covenant mentioned in v.21. Clause-initial **כִּי** in v.19b is a coordinating conjunction, explaining (together with v.20) not only the manner (v.19b, "as a rushing river") and purpose (v.20, "as Redeemer") of

<sup>116</sup> "...as the rushing river" (v.19): Blenkinsopp suggests that the definite article "the River" (**בְּנַהַר**) indicates the Euphrates. Yet, the presence of the article with the inseparable preposition **עַל** may only serve to enhance the vivid imagery of this simile. Perhaps it is marked to evoke the terrors of the Babylonian judgment and exile. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 199. The article is absent from the LXX (Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian), which has ὡς ποταμός = **כִּנְי**. For my translation, see HALOT, 1015; cf. Isa 30:27-28; 40:7.

<sup>117</sup> Blenkinsopp is representative of many recent commentators when he writes, "[V.21] seems to have little in common with the preceding passage, 59:15b-20, but the link may be the identification of the beneficiaries of the covenant...mentioned here as...those who turned away from transgression in the previous verse. The covenant promised would in that case be restricted to one section of the people—the group that emerges with increasing clarity as we read on through these chapters." Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 200; cf. Grace I. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, 74-75. This conclusion depends on the view that the covenant is without condition. But if this view proves incorrect, then it is not necessary to conclude that the covenant promises are offered to only one section of the people. More likely the covenant community (broadly conceived) is upon this condition narrowed to a select group of truly contrite covenant keepers within Jacob. In other words, the community itself may remain mixed until a definitive separation is effected by YHWH's coming.

<sup>118</sup> Again, the prepositional phrase indicates that YHWH comes for the sake of Zion; it has the force of advantage (see *IBHS*, 207). Zion is a place, indeed; but in parallel with "for those who repent (**לֹשְׁבֵי**)" the **ל** here must indicate not that YHWH comes to Zion but *for Zion's benefit* (cf. 60:1). The LXX has ἐνεκεν "for the sake of" (compare Isa 66:6; Romans 11:26). On this interpretation of the preposition, see the discussion in S. Sekine, *Die Tritojesajanische Sammlung*, 133-135.

<sup>119</sup> The nuance provided by the second category makes "Jacob" potentially much broader than the first (it is not merely an ethnic designation), and so "Jacob" could include foreigners, eunuchs, and the Diaspora population who adhere to YHWH's covenant, and provide some explanation for early Jewish proselytizing activity. In either case salvation is from the Jews (cf. John 4:22). For the force of the preposition, see *BHRG*, 280.

YHWH's coming, but also supplying a further reason (cf. v.18) for the widespread reaction to his coming (v.19a): fear of YHWH's name and glory-presence. The close relationship of these utterances can be seen from the lexical and syntactical parallelism between v.19b and the opening clause of v.20. Both v.19b and v.20 begin with the verb **יָבֹא**; the clause initial *yiqtol* form (v.19b) precedes the relative *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* form (v.20), so that their time-references are identical ("he will come," 2x). YHWH is the implicit subject of v.19b,<sup>120</sup> "for he will come..." (**כִּי־יָבֹא**), and in the parallel v.20, "...he will come, as Redeemer" (**וְיָבֹא...לְגֹאֲלֵךְ**). From this vantage point, there is only one coming of YHWH on Zion's horizon, and a positive outcome in merciful redemption is contingent upon true contrition within Jacob (cf. 57:15; 66:2).

In sum, YHWH is the covenant Lord and Jacob's Redeemer. He is coming, but not to curse/bless all indiscriminately; rather, the conditional aspect suggests a two-fold particularizing outcome with reference to his demand. He demands that his true covenant partners in Jacob meet the requirement of repentance; that is, that they recognize truly that they are indeed, as Seitz calls them, "despoiled,"<sup>121</sup> seek YHWH as their only refuge, and turn from idolatry and transgression (cf. 55:6-7; 57:13b) to offer their unreserved commitment to the true God. Only this action is appropriate to their faithful preparation for the Redeemer's coming heralded by this oracle of divine judgment. On that day, proper humiliation and contrition will be the criteria of identity of his true servants, and YHWH's coming will mean joy and peace for the repentant ones in Jacob.

Nevertheless, it must be reiterated that this "condition" is not a condition that, once met, establishes the covenant in view, for this is YHWH's covenant (**בְּרִיתִי**, v.21); the Lord has already established it unilaterally and unconditionally. Rather, as an expression of active faith, repentance is the means/instrument through which the covenant blessings sovereignly purposed by God will be realized and enjoyed. In other words, it is not the case that first they repent, and only then will YHWH establish his covenant with them. Instead, v.21 implies that YHWH's covenant grace precedes penitence as its reciprocal response; hence, the covenant itself supplies the context for the requisite response. In a word, repentance is not the condition of inauguration but of realization.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> The antecedent of the pronoun "he" in v.19 is tracked easily to v.15b, "YHWH saw" (**יָדָה** **וַיַּרְא**), and so the Redeemer's coming is the direct result of his assessment of "Jacob's" dark circumstances (vv.9-15a).

<sup>121</sup> This, according to Seitz is their predicament (cf. 64:5[6], Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 501).

<sup>122</sup> The arrangement itself is presupposed. As Seitz explains, "The covenantal promise is of eternal prophetic speech and spirit for those who turn aside from evil" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 502).

Moreover, the broader co-text (vv.15b-21) shows that, distinctively, as regards this covenant, the context from which this repentance is born is qualified by the anticipated return of the Divine Warrior, the eschatological glory-theophany of Zion's holy Redeemer and covenant Lord, foretold by this oracle of YHWH (נאם יהוה, v.20). Thus, it is the eschatological coming of YHWH, the Holy Redeemer, which makes repentance necessary for everyone who would be found in Jacob.<sup>123</sup> As the communal confession shows (vv.9-15a), everyone in Jacob is shut up under sin ("we all," כלנו); hence, only the Redeemer's covenant mercy makes repentance possible. Yet, those who repent in Jacob (v.20) are the blessed offspring (זרע) upon whom YHWH's word and spirit rests (v.21). Within the covenant arrangement, then, YHWH's blessings are offered to those in Jacob who repent by virtue of his disposal in the covenant. Thus, the womb of repentance (v.20) is the womb of covenant grace (v.21).

3. "My spirit": There is yet a third cohesive feature pulling v.21 towards the preceding context. In response to Westermann's decision to relocate v.21 to 66:20-24, R. N. Whybray suggests that the placement of v.21 after 59:15b-20 is due to the catchword, רוּחַ ("spirit," "breath," or "wind"). This lexeme, which appears in v.21 with the sense, "spirit" (רוּחַ), is also found in v.19 with the sense "wind" (רוּחַ יהוה); hence, according to him, v.19 has provided a redactor with a useful hook on which to hang v.21.<sup>124</sup> Verse 18 declares that YHWH will dole out retribution, and then v.19 reads as follows:

<sup>19</sup> So they will fear<sup>125</sup> from the west the name of YHWH  
and from the east his glory,  
for he will come as the rushing river that YHWH's wind [רוּחַ יהוה] drives on.

<sup>123</sup> Steck observes that into the circle of enemies and adversaries of YHWH, in addition to the people of the world, "unrepentant Israelites are also included" (auch unbußfertige Israeliten eingeschlossen). O. H. Steck, *Studien zu Trito-Isaiah*, 189. From this and other passages within Isaiah (and 1:24-26; 42:13; and 52:10), Seitz suggests a principle: "Judgment on God's enemies includes the expression of divine wrath on Israel" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 501). Blenkinsopp concedes the point that the necessity of "turning" (תשובה) is often emphasized throughout Isaiah (6:10; 9:12; 19:22; 31:6; 44:22; 55:7; see esp. 1:27-28), but he also points out that it is brought out most strongly in chs.65-66 (*Isaiah 56-66*, 197). J. N. Oswalt, *Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 530 and B. Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 140.

<sup>124</sup> With Westermann (and citing him) Whybray believes that v.21 is a displaced fragment of a larger composition; hence, it was originally unconnected with the preceding passage. Regarding the verse, he concludes that the close association of YHWH's spirit and words suggests a date considerably later than that of the remainder of ch.59. This redactional addition, he suggests, reveals the influence of P and/or D. Nevertheless, it is his observation of this catchword-linkage that prevents his following Westermann in relocating it to 66:20-24. R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 228. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 56-66*, 200) notes an analogy with נשפט, a catchword linking 59:1-15a and 59:15b-20, but overall, he disagrees with Whybray regarding such a linkage between vv.20 and 21. His view is like that of E. J. Kissane before him, stating that the verse is best explained "as a prose colophon to chs.56-59."

<sup>125</sup> "So that they will fear": BHS proposes with multiple Medieval mss וירא (ראה), "So they will see," instead of וירא (ראה).

As Whybray notes, in each instance (v.19b and v.21) רוח appears in association with YHWH, standing in the subject role (ad-nom. gen.) with רוח in the construct state. This רוח (“wind”/“spirit”) is intrinsic to YHWH alone; it is his possession.<sup>126</sup> Hence, while the spirit comes to rest on the repentant, it is nevertheless YHWH’s spirit (רוח־י) which they possess (or possesses them); and while the wind drives the rushing stream in a fearsome portrayal of the coming glory-theophany (כבודו), it is nevertheless YHWH’s wind that rages so. That is to say, in both v.19 and v.21, from the perspective of his immanence, YHWH’s רוח is inalienably associated with him as the effective extension of his might/energy in the created order. Each occurrence has to do with his personal and active engagement with his creation, whether life-giving or life-taking.<sup>127</sup> Like the arm of YHWH, his wind/spirit is an extension of his power to redeem or to destroy (cf. 45:7). So, in v.19, the “wind of YHWH” is the potent force that will drive the torrent of destruction he is about to unleash against his foes (v.18). In v.21, however, YHWH’s spirit is the mode of his life-giving presence among the lowly and contrite. This means that there is no inherent tension between רוח יְהוָה (“YHWH’s wind”) dispensing judgment in v.19 and רוח־י (“my spirit”) bestowing covenantal blessing in v.21. רוח has the same source in both verses; each discloses a distinct facet of the singular sovereign activity of Jacob’s Redeemer and covenant Lord by his spirit.<sup>128</sup>

Therefore, from the interpretive perspective of the implicit reader, one expects a single act with a dual outcome:<sup>129</sup> one repents in order that the impending ordeal will be for redemption and not for destruction, for salvation and blessing, and not for rejection and curse. According to the terms of this covenant, then, YHWH’s coming will bring division in Jacob, “drawing a line running through the community.”<sup>130</sup> On the one hand, YHWH’s

<sup>126</sup> That is, in my judgment each occurrence is an instance of what Waltke and O’Connor call the subj. gen. of inalienable possession, referring to something/one intrinsically proper to its possessor (*IBHS*, 145).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Ps 33:6; Judg 3:10; 14:6; Ezek 3:12, 14; 11:1; cf. 1 Kgs 18:12.

<sup>128</sup> This conclusion obtains support from other passages in FI (Isa 4:4; 11:1, 4; 32:15-16; 42:1).

<sup>129</sup> Based on the covenant arrangement, acknowledgement of sin and true contrition are held out as instrumental for salvation. Seitz states, “The prophet does not sympathize with [their complaint/plight], but instead calls forth God’s righteous judgment as the means by which their reinstatement will be accomplished . . . . God comes with garments of righteousness, which simultaneously expose or cleanse our filthy garments and fully contend with the evil around us we were convinced could not be eradicated” (C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 503).

<sup>130</sup> Westermann neglects v.21, but nevertheless understands the poem to indicate two aspects of God’s action in the theophany, namely, “...the destruction of Israel’s foes, which are here equated with the destruction of the transgressors, and a release for Israel, which is restricted to the devout in her midst.” C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 350. J. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 56-66*, 197) writes, “What is being said here is the simple but often overlooked point that salvation and judgment are inseparable (35:4)...a setting right of what has been skewed and distorted by sin” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 198-99). B. Schramm also supports this view, and is closer to my position. Appealing to Isa 1:24, 27-28b, he writes, “[T]he cutting edge of the passage...is that

spirit will revive the lowly and contrite (57:15), enabling his human partners to recognize, confirm and witness to the truth of his words.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, for the haughty and unrepentant, YHWH's wind is his supernatural energy and power for judgment. They who (possessed by his spirit) tremble at his words, will testify to his coming and see their joy. But (even) "your brothers" (אֶחָיו), who reject YHWH's words, will be put to shame (66:2, 5), for "There is no peace for the wicked."<sup>132</sup>

The covenantal nature of YHWH's action on behalf of the contrite and against the wicked, clarified by 59:21, is consistent with the total picture provided by 59:15b-21 of unmediated saving action in faithfulness to YHWH's revealed will for his people in Jacob. Their possession of YHWH's spirit, conjoined with his words, and their experience of salvation and joy are correlative, and it is his covenantal mercy which engages their response in both repentance on its negative side (59:20) and obedience on its positive side (cf. 56:1a). Thus, by virtue of this bestowal of YHWH's word and spirit the repentant in Jacob become partakers of redemption,<sup>133</sup> and so, in the vision of FI, the great day of Zion's salvation will be the day of YHWH's spirit,<sup>134</sup> for God's covenant and word has saving effects by the spirit alone. It is the gift of the God of truth for true Israel's salvation, and the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will bring it to pass (59:18; cf. 9:7; 37:32). Indeed, a vital connection emerges between the gift of God's spirit and the realization of

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the new act of judgment on YHWH's part is not the kind of judgment traditionally proclaimed by the prophets. Instead, what we have here is the announcement of a judgment that will divide 'Israel' from 'Israel.'" With Steck, he observes the significant collocation of the terms צַר ("adversary") and אֹיִב ("foe") in the plural in both 59:18 and 1:24. B. Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 141 and Steck, *Studien*, 189. This is an important observation. Nevertheless, although some range may be discerned in the various instances of these motifs (perhaps suggesting development/reinterpretation) neither the particularizing aspect of this covenant administration nor the notion of a remnant/survivors after judgment is new to the FI. The important point, however, is that exegetes are recognizing that salvation for the penitent comes in and through the judgment ordeal as regards what the Redeemer (גֹּאֲלֵנוּ) ultimately comes to accomplish.

<sup>131</sup> This element of their dispensing "witness" is implicit *both* in the placement of the words "in your mouth" (בְּפִיךָ, 59:21, i.e., not the ear, the organ of reception) *and* in the fact that the wicked mock their testimony to YHWH's coming (66:5). They are presumably sustained in their mission by the presence of YHWH's spirit.

<sup>132</sup> Isa 48:22; 57:21; cf. 39:8; 66:24.

<sup>133</sup> Of interest in this connection is the use of the negated verb מָוַשׁ ("depart"). P. A. Smith notes the play on the theme of turning/departing within the poem as a whole, using the roots סָוַר (*hip'il*, "take away" in 58:9; *qal*, "turn aside" in 59:15), סָרַח (n. "apostasy" in 59:13), סָוַר (*nip'al*, "turn back" 59:13, 14) and שָׁוַב (*hip'il*, "refrain" 58:13; *qal*, "turn back from" 59:20). The verb מָוַשׁ ("withdraw"/"depart" in v.21) falls within the same semantic range. Smith misses this connection, and so he overlooks the covenantal arrangement. But he comments helpfully on the theme pointed up by the aforementioned roots. "The use of terms from this semantic field functions to give coherence to the whole poem and also to emphasize one of the principle themes of the poem, viz. the necessity of repentance on the part of the people for the hastening of the dawn of salvation and for their participation in that salvation" (*Rhetoric and Redaction*, 100). This supports my view that the power-presence of YHWH's spirit is correlative to the response of repentance offered within this covenantal context.

<sup>134</sup> Brevard Childs recognizes a significant thematic connection with Isaiah 42:1 and 61:1 here, namely, "the outpouring of the spirit as the agent of divine salvation (42:1//61:1) is also an essential component of the promise" (*Isaiah*, 446).

justice-righteousness in this and future generations.<sup>135</sup> As a lasting gift, the benefits that flow from this bestowal of YHWH's spirit are the vital supply of what is presently lacking in the community (57:16),<sup>136</sup> namely, righteousness.

In sum, by means of the aforementioned cohesive features, the reader is to recognize the connection between 59:21 and 59:15b-20, the fifth stanza of the preceding poem (chs.58-59). By his wind (v.19)/spirit (v.21), for Zion's sake (59:20; 60:1-3), the Redeemer will come to reveal his glory and his Name. He will accomplish this self-disclosure in a most just and righteous eschatological judgment. In that day, only those who repent in Jacob will be able to stand (cf. 1:27-31). Isaiah 59:21 sets the repentance of v.20 within the context of a covenant.<sup>137</sup> Perfectly placed, then, this verse indicates that YHWH's covenant administration is the very womb of repentance. Unto those in Jacob who repent (v.20), the blessings of YHWH's words and spirit are offered contingently (v.21), and yet they are correlative with repentance by virtue of the prior establishment of his covenant. Their relationship within this context is reflected in the inseparability of indicative and imperative constitutive of life in covenant with God (56:1), and its dynamic is YHWH's own presence with them by his spirit (cf. 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; 61:1). Nevertheless, this covenant dispensation is particularizing; it will have a narrowing effect, for its design is to separate the true from the false *in Jacob*. True Israel, reconstituted of those in Jacob who embrace YHWH's words and enjoy the fellowship of his spirit, will disclose its identity in repentance, bearing fruit in the exercise of active faith and servanthood.<sup>138</sup> That is to say, the mercy of their covenant Lord and Redeemer makes their repentance possible, for those who repent in Jacob (v.20) are the offspring (זרע) upon whom YHWH's words and spirit rest (v.21). Only by virtue of this covenantal

<sup>135</sup> See Isa 32:15f; 44:3; cf. 11:1; 42:1.

<sup>136</sup> See 56:1-8 for the ethical significance of justice-righteousness. Following K. Koenen, P. A. Smith observes the use of עשה with צדקה as its sole object in both 56:1 and at the start of the poem in 58-59, the only use of the verb with צדקה as its sole object in the OT (59:17). Nevertheless, given the covenantal context of 56:1-8 and 58:1-59:21, are the stipulations to be understood as the criteria for establishing a relationship with YHWH or are they rather criteria that witness to the vitality of a previously existing relationship? See the discussion in Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 100 and Klaus Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie*, 13.

<sup>137</sup> Brevard Childs has come closest to this view. He writes, "...v.21 provides an interpretive epilogue...a summarizing commentary (cf. Eccl. 12:13f). The relationship that has been described in chapter 59 is now identified with God's covenant (ברית)." B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 486. Even closer to this position, Childs writes: "The role of v.21 is to articulate this relationship as *constituting God's purpose in terms of his covenant*. It thus interprets the preceding will of God to intervene in righteousness (vv.15b-16) as covenant." (*Isaiah*, 490, my italics)

<sup>138</sup> Covenant is a broader category than election; thus, the covenant partners may be conceived of both broadly and narrowly. J. Koole notes that the most common view of these verses is that all God's people are addressed. This is the view of Ibn Ezra, Kimchi, Vitringa, Alexander, Delitzsch, and "the large majority of new exegetes." He writes, "This explanation fits well with the covenant theology of the OT" (*Isaiah* 56-66, 212). Only those in Jacob who embrace the words of YHWH and enjoy the fellowship of his spirit will repent. True repentance bears fruit in justice and righteousness.

bestowal of his words and spirit are they made partakers of this redemption. All told, YHWH graciously deigns to save them by means of his word and spirit, but his sovereign gift is simultaneously their act. By the dynamic activity of YHWH's spirit upon them, they will embrace his words through the prophet, and their reliance and trust will be directed towards none other than their Holy Redeemer as object. In this way, for those in Jacob who repent, the ministry of YHWH's word and spirit produces the *telos* of the prophetic torah instead of its condemnation (cf. 42:18-25). In this way, for those who seek him, YHWH is both Refuge and Redeemer.

#### 6.4.2. *From Servant to Herald and Servants (Isa 61:1-11)*

Now, the transition from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person plural ("those repentant in Jacob") to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person singular (the "you"/"your" forms in v.21) still requires explanation. At the very least, this abrupt change of both person and number raises the question of identity pertaining to the figure addressed by YHWH. In my view, the identity of the figure becomes clearer once 59:21 is seen to unite the task/or role of YHWH's servant figure to the central section of chs.56-66 (chs.60-62) and specifically to the herald of ch.61.

Isaiah 61 contains three strophes distinguished by change of speaker (vv.1-7, 8-9, 10-11). Verses 1-7 consist of three stanzas distinguished by subject matter to express how the fulfillment of the figure's commission (vv.1-3b) will enable God's people to both rebuild (vv.3c-4) and attain new standing in the world (vv.5-7). In vv.10-11, the same 1<sup>st</sup>-person speaker who outlined his commission in vv.1-7 rejoices personally in the Lord's commitment, expressed in vv.8-9.<sup>139</sup> The poem is particularly striking because in both form and content it resembles the servant poems from chs.40-55.<sup>140</sup> In fact, the speaker requires no introduction;<sup>141</sup> he simply builds his profile on that of the servant by way of allusion and echo. Although the speaker is a prophet, ch.61 does not recount his initial call/commissioning, but explains a current commission.<sup>142</sup>

In 61:1, the speaker evokes the presentation of corporate Israel as YHWH's image-bearer equipped with נִרְאָה from 42:1. Here too, the focus turns immediately to the figure's

<sup>139</sup> 62:1-5 continues with testimony reassuring the audience that the herald will not keep silent until he has fulfilled his charge and YHWH realizes his purpose. Verses 6-9 contain an oath of eternal protection for Zion, and vv.10-12 call for the preparation of YHWH's way (cf. 40:3-5, 9-11). In v.11, "Your savior comes"; in 63:1-6, he also comes in judgment (cf. 59:15b-20).

<sup>140</sup> On this point, see especially, W. A. M. Beuken, "Servant and Herald of Good Tidings," 441-442.

<sup>141</sup> Paul D. Hanson sees here "the studied reiteration of an earlier prophet's message" (*Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 65).

<sup>142</sup> P. A. Smith identifies him with the prophet 'TI' (*Rhetoric and Redaction*, 24). If this is the voice of the prophet, even 'TI', we only now receive an explanation for the preceding words, which YHWH, clearly, has placed in his mouth (cf. 59:21). The passage evokes the call of Isaiah ben Amoz with its placement at ch.6. See Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 514.



task (61:1-3; cf. 42:1-4). Although the speaker does not have a judicial role like the figure in 42:1-4, his task is nevertheless relevant to the exercise of **משפט**, which YHWH loves and does not neglect (61:8; cf. 40:27). Liberation (**פִּקְחָהּ-קוֹחַ**) of ‘prisoners’ (**אֲסוּרִים**) in 61:1c connects to opening eyes (**פִּקְחַ עֵינַיִם**) and freeing from ‘prison’ (**אֲסִיר**) at 42:7. In fact, the entire poem parallels the three-part structure of 42:1-12, from the figure’s presentation and task (61:1-7; cf. 42:1-4), to YHWH’s commitment (61:8-9; cf. 42:5-9), to the anticipation of joy at fulfillment (61:10-11; cf. 42:10-12). Thus, it is safe to conclude that this figure presents himself as the personification of Israel, YHWH’s servant, from 42:1-9.

Even so, the 1<sup>st</sup>-person testimony (61:1-7, 10-11) and repetition of the verb, **קָרָא** (3x, vv.1-3), also evoke the ‘voice’ of the listener-speaker from 40:6-8 (cf. 42:24), who grasped YHWH’s instruction. This personal figure was similarly sent with YHWH’s spirit and **דָּבַר** at 48:16b.<sup>143</sup> That figure—subsequently identified as YHWH’s prophetic servant and designated “Israel” (49:3)—was (Isaiah’s and) YHWH’s disciple (50:4). His task involved edifying the weary with **דָּבַר** and enabling Jacob-Israel to fulfill its own **משפט**-vocation in accord with YHWH’s desire (42:1-4; 49:6, 7). He would restore them to the land and reassign the desolate heritages (49:8; 61:4). The connection between **רוּחַ**-empowering and being ‘sent’<sup>144</sup> in 48:16b and 61:1 suggests that this figure also assumes the role of YHWH’s prophetic servant from chs.49-53.

Therefore, despite the fact that this (apparently) new figure is never called or identified as YHWH’s “servant,”<sup>145</sup> “disciple,” or “Israel,” he is sent with a similar task and speaks in a similar fashion about his own role as agent of the Lord YHWH (**אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה**). Indeed, like the suffering servant, “my Lord YHWH” (**יְהוָה שְׁלִי חַנִּי**) has personally prepared him for his charge (61:1, 11). The repetition of this phrase, familiar due to its association with YHWH’s servant-disciple,<sup>146</sup> envelops the whole poem

<sup>143</sup> **וַעֲתָה אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה שְׁלִי חַנִּי וְרוּחוֹ** (cf. 40:8; 50:4).

<sup>144</sup> In other contexts, anointing applies to kings (1 Sam 16:13) and to priests (Exod 28:41; 29:7; 30:30). But Shalom Paul may be right that the Davidic line has “no part or portion in the prophet’s eschatology” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 538) and despite allusion to ‘jubilee’ (Isa 61:1b; Lev 25:9-10) and the anticipated ‘kingdom of priests’ (Isa 61:6), a priestly role seems unlikely. Sending is of course characteristic of the call to prophetic office, and given the repetition of verbs of speaking (**בִּשְׂרָא**, **קָרָא**, **נָחַם**), the prophetic role is the prominent one here. For sending with YHWH’s spirit, see, e.g., Exod 3:14-15; 1 Sam 15:1; 16:1; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 2:2-6; Isa 6:8; Jer 1:7; 7:5; Ezek 2:3-4; 3:5-6; Hag 1:12; Mic 3:8. See P. A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 24; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 72; H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 176.

<sup>145</sup> An observation made by W. A. M. Beuken, “Servant and Herald,” 413.

<sup>146</sup> See Isa 50:4, 5, 9; in chs.56-66, see 56:8; 65:13, 15.

(61:1 and v.11) and identifies this figure as one of the servant's disciples.<sup>147</sup> The *inclusio* showcases YHWH's ultimate design through this figure in parallel with מַשְׁפָּט (v.8): "The spirit of יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי rests upon me..." (v.1); "יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי will cause righteousness [צִדְקָה] to spring up, even praise before all nations" (v.11; cf. צִדְקָה: v.3b). As a servant and disciple, then, for the glory of God (cf. 49:3), he is charged with preparing the community for its new role (61:3c-4, 5-7).<sup>148</sup> In fulfillment of his task, Zion's children will become "oaks of righteousness" (אֵילֵי צִדְקָה; v.3, cf. 60:21).

According to 61:1-3b, this figure's role and task evokes not only that of corporate Israel and YHWH's personal servant and disciple, but also that of YHWH's herald (40:9; 41:27; 52:7).<sup>149</sup> Absorbing this additional role,<sup>150</sup> then, he is specifically charged with bringing good news (לְבַשֵּׁר) to the poor (עֲנִיִּים) and comfort<sup>151</sup> to the mourners of Zion (אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן, 61:2; cf. 49:13). Unto these future oaks of righteousness, this herald promises a share in the task of rebuilding "the olden ruins, the desolations of former things" and reconstructing "the devastated cities, the desolations ages-old" (61:4; 40:9; cf. 49:8-12). At that time,<sup>152</sup> they will become a kingdom of priests (61:5-7).<sup>153</sup> They will enjoy the servitude of foreign peoples and the wealth of nations (vv.5-7, 8-9).<sup>154</sup> They will no longer be a prey for beasts.<sup>155</sup>

Thus, absorbing the roles of true 'Israel', YHWH's servant-disciple, and herald, it becomes clear why—in the concentric structure of chs.56-66—this particular servant and herald is exceedingly exalted. Indeed, as herald, this figure stands, as it were, atop Mt. Zion itself (40:9; chs.60, 62), bringing good news to the cities of Judah (61:4; 40:9) as well

<sup>147</sup> J. Goldingay observes the succession from Isaiah ben Amoz: "...as Second Isaiah stands in the shoes of First Isaiah, so Third Isaiah stands in the shoes of Second Isaiah" (*Isaiah*, 346). My point is not so much about authorship as discipleship. Just as Isaiah and children were disciples of YHWH, so also the servant and his offspring are disciples of YHWH.

<sup>148</sup> See Isa 57:14; 58:12; 62:10.

<sup>149</sup> In Isa 40:9, Zion is herald (מְבַשֵּׂרֶת, fem. sg. ptc.); compare מְבַשֵּׂר (masc. sg. ptc.) in 41:27 and 52:7 (2x). The distinction between 40:9 and 61:1 too is a matter of gender. On my reading, Zion is personified as the herald of 40:9, but at 41:27 and 52:7, as here, the herald is a masculine singular figure. "Regardless of the continuing controversy over the identification of the herald in 40:9," Childs writes, "the fact that a herald, expressed with a masculine participial form (מְבַשֵּׂר), was sent in 41:27 and 52:7 would indicate that the herald of good tidings and the servant were shortly identified" (*Isaiah*, 505).

<sup>150</sup> The language of "absorption" is Williamson's (*Variations*, 182); he explains that the figure absorbs this role along with the others into his own persona.

<sup>151</sup> See Isa 40:1; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9 (|| אֲנַחֵם); 66:13.

<sup>152</sup> Williamson perceives the connection with 40:9-11 and 49:1-6, which focus on the needs of Zion/Jerusalem in particular. Here too, there is the "need for a transition to this preliminary task, before the gentiles could be addressed" (*Variations on a Theme*, 187).

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Exod 19:6; Isa 55:3-5. Shalom Paul thinks this is a revolutionary idea: "The status of the nation of Israel as a whole vis-à-vis the foreigners will be similar to the status of the priestly class within Israel, as promised at Sinai...Exod 19:6" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 543).

<sup>154</sup> Isa 49:6, 7; 52:15; 55:3-5; 60:1-3.

<sup>155</sup> Isa 56:9; 57:1-2; 59:15a; 60:21.

as Zion's afflicted-poor (61:1; cf. 40:1-2; 49:13). His success and that of his community mirrors the success of YHWH's servant in 52:13.

The figure's precise identity within FI nevertheless remains obscure. Although classified as both a servant and a herald, relevant dissimilarities caution against the facile identification of this figure with YHWH's servant from chs.49-55.<sup>156</sup> Regarding the figure's identity, Childs may offer the finest solution. He recognizes in the profile of this figure a representative/representation of the suffering servant's offspring (cf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. suf., v.2).<sup>157</sup> On this view, the fact that the figure is 'anointed' (משח) actually points to a connection with corporate Israel's new Davidic commission (55:3-5), seen here as the speaker takes up the king's responsibility to the poor and needy (cf. 42:1-4; Ps 72).<sup>158</sup> Williamson, who sees the figure as a "composite character"<sup>159</sup> notes the "precise echo" of 55:3 in 61:8: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." He writes, "The prophet thus seems to reaffirm Deutero-Isaiah's notion of the transference of the Davidic promises to the community as a whole...continued in the next verse by the promise extending to 'their seed'"<sup>160</sup> (an allusion to 53:10). Consequently, 53:10 (offspring) and 55:3 (Davidic covenant) come together in Isa 61, where a figure is endued with YHWH's רוח (v.1) and where covenant promises (v.8) extend to the community and its offspring or descendants (v.9). Thus, both his role and task are matters of covenant solidarity, for YHWH has contemplated a succession of generations within his covenant with the servant's offspring.

This observation based on intra-textual connections actually flows through the nodal point at 59:21. That is, "spirit," "covenant," and "seed" in 61:1, 8-9 also connect to

<sup>156</sup> Along with the other roles (e.g., servant, prophet, king), the commissioning of this speaker as a herald in ch.61 is "a new manifestation instead of an identical copy." So, rightly, says Beuken, "Servant and Herald," 439. Cf. F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 424, who thinks the servant and herald are one figure.

<sup>157</sup> Brevard Childs, *Isaiah*, 503. Observing the subtle connections with the servant poems of chs.40-55, Childs cautions against identifying the speaker too quickly with the servant of Isa 53 or identifying ch.61 as the personal prophetic call of 'TI'. Here too, parallels between chs.40-55 and 56-66 call for identification, but there are differences that suggest a new phase and setting. For instance, 42:7 reflects the movement from bringing forth prisoners (from Babylon), while 61:1 reflects the release of prisoners (from 'slavery', particularly within the homeland). Nevertheless, the common denominator is the shared 'exilic' situation.

<sup>158</sup> John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 346, suggests this understanding; see also, J. Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 264, who (commenting on 'liberation') adds, "...a general amnesty is proclaimed by a royal edict." As regards Isa 55:3, Seitz states wisely, "[T]hat aspect of the Davidic covenant pertaining to David's role vis-à-vis the nations has been enlarged to encompass God's people at large...What would be saying too much is that the promises associated with David have now ceased" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 482). There is no contradiction, then, between this figure's royal 'anointing' and his prophetic assignment. As one of the servant's disciples (54:13, 17)/offspring (53:10), Blenkinsopp explains, he has "full and permanent authorization to carry out [a] prophet's God-given assignment" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 221). Williamson adds, "...the speaker is marking himself out as in the succession not just of the old established offices of king or prophet, but of the newer role of the servant (*Variations on a Theme*, 176).

<sup>159</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 188.

<sup>160</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 172.

the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person singular figure of 59:21 and the “words” put into his mouth.<sup>161</sup> These affinities, which link the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person figure to the servant and herald of Isa 61, also underscore a vital connection between this figure (and generations of his offspring) and the servant of Isa 53, as his (and their) ancestor (cf. 50:4, 10; 53:10). Put differently, by an everlasting covenant (ברית עולם: 55:3-5; 59:21; 61:8-9), God has promised to give the servant’s offspring what also belonged to the servant, benefiting them considerably. In other words, the servant has secured both a blessed multitude for himself and YHWH’s spirit and words for generations of his disciples (44:3; 48:16b-19; 59:21).

In sum, the voice proclaiming in ch.61 is one of the disciples of the servant, and so he is one of the servant’s offspring. Despite changing circumstance, and the vital solidarity established between servant and offspring, therefore, YHWH equips and enables this servant as herald to carry out his mission. He can conduct his charge successfully due to the covenant continuity YHWH has established between the servant figure and generations of his offspring (as servant-disciples, 54:13, 17; 59:21). Furthermore, this servant-servants connection means that the servants who benefit from the servant’s work are also the listeners who benefit from the herald’s ministry. As Beuken helpfully comments, “The ‘prophet’, by executing his mission, transmits his own features to the afflicted. He makes them and also their descendants into bearers of God’s spirit. In this way God’s new people, a people with progeny, comes into being.”<sup>162</sup> It is just as God had promised, “I will pour my spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (44:3), and these descendants will play a key role in the reestablishment of the community. The result is as follows: “Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the offspring YHWH has blessed” (61:9). Thus, in the succession from servant to herald, a righteous society of servant-offspring and disciples continues to exist in anticipation of the coming of YHWH.

Now, this relationship between covenant, spirit, and words is highlighted in the herald’s task, expressed via a string of infinitives involving mainly speech. Indeed, every aspect of his commission reveals that YHWH has endued him for a singular prophetic

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<sup>161</sup> Seitz observes that at 59:21 “we have the announcement of spirit endowment for the prophet...In chap.61, the prophet acts in the spirit of the covenant announced in 59:21...the content of the covenant is his actual prophetic (speech and spirit) relationship to the repentant” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 513). Blenkinsopp adds, “In this statement (59:21) addressed to a disciple, the essence of prophecy is expressed in association of spirit-endowment with a mission to speak, using the Deuteronomic idiom of putting words in the mouth (Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9)” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 221).

<sup>162</sup> Beuken, “Servant and Herald,” 432. He later summarizes, “What connects the commission of this speaker with that of the Servant, are the coordinating themes of being moved by God’s spirit, good tidings and consolation, and ultimately the ascent of a righteous progeny” (“Servant and Herald,” 439).

purpose involving words.<sup>163</sup> The chief concern of his mission are the afflicted-poor (עניים), who live under social and economic pressure.<sup>164</sup> For them his mission involves proclaiming (לקרוא) release (דרור), liberation (פקח-קוה), and the advent of YHWH's saving action with retribution against his (and their) foes.<sup>165</sup> Through his proclamation, he will comfort all who mourn (61:2, 3; cf. 40:1-2; 50:4) and bring good news (לבשר). Yet, his comforting also involves healing,<sup>166</sup> binding up (לחבש; cf. Isa 1:6) the broken-hearted (לנשברי-לב) and providing (לשום) for Zion's mourners through giving (לתת) them symbols of gladness and praise in exchange for a disheartened spirit (תחת רוח כהה). The latter prepares them for their role as a kingdom of priests (vv.5-7; Exod 19:5-6). In short, his task is to clothe them with garments of salvation (בגדי-ישע), the very robe of righteousness (מעיל צדקה) with which God has covered him (v.10; cf. 56:1b).

Here especially though, it should be recognized that the covenant established between God and Israel as a corporate entity has implications for every person under it. Chapter 57 has singled out wicked offspring who clearly run astray (56:9-57:21), and the community as a whole are not a people without transgression (55:6-7; 58-59). Therefore, chs.58-59 address them collectively as a people who must turn to God in repentance and new obedience (cf. 42:24; 59:20). More specifically, they are summoned to respond personally as disciples whose turning from transgression demonstrates their solidarity with the righteous servant. As Seitz expresses the relationship, "The prophet's mission is comprehended through the lens of his relationship to that segment of the community God seeks to redeem (59:20)."<sup>167</sup> Only the repentant are true servants of YHWH; only they are the "Redeemed of the Lord" (62:12). Again, ch.61 also discloses a dual-aspect to

<sup>163</sup> C. Westermann writes, "All that he has to do is speak. Nevertheless, in and through this proclaiming he is to effect a change on those to whom he is sent" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 366).

<sup>164</sup> For the notion that a tradition of עניים piety (cf. esp. Ps 22) existed in this period, see Albert Gelin P.S.S., *The Poor of Yahweh* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1964). J. Koole (*Isaiah 56-66*, 265) identifies them with the people who fear God's word (חרריים). According to Blenkinsopp, it is these 'poor ones' (Pss 22; 69) who, above all, "seek YHVH" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 223). In my view, the diversity of labels for the community argues against the view that we are witnessing the rise of sectarianism in the early Persian period (pace Blenkinsopp). For this view, see J. Blenkinsopp, "The 'Servants of the Lord' in Third Isaiah: Profile of a Pietistic Group in the Persian Period," in *The Place is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (R. P. Gordon, ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 392-412.

<sup>165</sup> The servant and herald's missions appear to be entirely positive throughout. YHWH's disciples never strike out at evil doers (cf. 53:9).

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Ps 147:3; Isa 53:5; 57:18-19.

<sup>167</sup> C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 514. Elsewhere he states, "The emphasis on salvation remains in all its force, but it has been directed towards those within Jacob who are obedient to the prophetic word delivered from the servant and 'his offspring'" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 502).

YHWH's *parousia*: for the repentant, he comes to deliver; for the wicked, he comes in vengeance (61:2).<sup>168</sup>

Furthermore, the details of this task, which have clear socio-economic connotations, directly parallel the ethical and cultic conduct stipulated in view of YHWH's coming redemption (chs.1; 56-59).<sup>169</sup> They evoke the demand for **מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה** in the opening exhortation at 56:1a and underscored at 61:8 with YHWH's love of justice (**אֲהַב מִשְׁפָּט**) and hatred of robbery and iniquity (**שֹׂנֵא גִזְלָה בְּעוֹלָה**). God will give them their recompense (**פַּעַל הָ**) definitively (**בְּאַחֲמָה**, cf. 42:3) as sanctions of the covenant he establishes. Hence, the Lord's coming is both a blessing and a threat, accentuating the import of the herald's task. Here the task focuses specifically on announcing "release" (**דִּרְוֹר**) and "liberation" (**פִּקְחֻ-קְיוֹחַ**) (61:1c), tethering this pair to "YHWH's year of favor" and "God's day of vengeance" (v.2)<sup>170</sup> by the repetition of the verb "to proclaim" (**לִקְרֹא**). To proclaim 'release' may be a technical term for the discharge of debts or emancipation from debt slavery.<sup>171</sup> Shalom Paul links it to the (6<sup>th</sup>-c.) Neo-Babylonian proclamation of *andurāru* ("reformation"), which included acts of social justice;<sup>172</sup> yet, there is a depth dimension to both this language and this proclamation. J. S. Bergsma is right to see an allusion in 61:1c-2 to the 'jubilee'-release of Lev 25:9-10, "a year proclaimed on a day"<sup>173</sup> with the **שׁוֹפָר** (cf. 58:1). This pair (**דִּרְוֹר || פִּקְחֻ-קְיוֹחַ**) signals symbolically the end of 'exile' and of 'exilic' conditions (cf. 58:1),<sup>174</sup> and inaugurates a Sabbath rest (cf. 58:13-14).<sup>175</sup> In this light, the tokens of gladness and praise in v.3 are accompanying symbols that manifest the reversal of behaviors associated with mourning

<sup>168</sup> Bergsma helpfully points out that 'favor' and 'vengeance' are flip-sides of the Lord's role as **גִּבּוֹר**. J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 201. Recalling 59:15b-21, Beuken puts it this way: "...the frontline runs between those people that persevere in their injustice and are therefore called 'his adversaries/his enemies' ([59:18], and 'those in Jacob who have returned from transgression' (v.20))" ("Servant and Herald," 424).

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Isa 1:17, 27; 5:7; 60:21; 61:3c.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Isa 34:8; 49:8; 56:1; 58:5; 60:22b; 63:4.

<sup>171</sup> See **דִּרְוֹר** at Jer 34:8, 15, 17; Ezek 46:17; cf. Exod 21:2 (**חֲנֹם**); Deut 15:1-11 (**שְׁמִטָּה**).

<sup>172</sup> Paul mentions acts such as re-embracing the disenfranchised, remission of (commercial) debts, manumission (of private slaves), return of the banished, tax reform, the return of ancestral plots to their owners and the granting of pardons, citing M. Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, 75-96 (S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 538). See also J. Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 272; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 225; and B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 505, who sees a refocusing of DI's promise in the transition from liberation from captivity/exile to release from economic slavery within the land.

<sup>173</sup> See J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 201. See also, J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (AB 3B: New Haven: Yale University, 2000), 2265.

<sup>174</sup> Bergsma writes, "In Isa 61:1-3, as in Isa 49:7-9, an individual is portrayed as personally enacting the provisions of the Jubilee...in which the exile...symbolized as a period of corporate debt-slavery for Israel is terminated by the 'jubilee' of return and restoration." See J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 201. R. N. Whybray thinks the prophet uses it metaphorically to signal the coming 'liberation' of the community from all its frustrations (*Isaiah 40-66*, 241).

<sup>175</sup> Claus Westermann (*Isaiah 56-66*, 340) has observed that chs.56-58 are framed by admonitions concerning Sabbath (56:1-8; 58:13-14).

due to ‘exilic’ conditions. Beuken sees this too as an aspect of the herald’s activity in transferring his own features to the afflicted-poor.<sup>176</sup> Their new names—‘Priests of YHWH’ and ‘Ministers of our God’ (61:6)—demonstrate recognition and acknowledgement on the part of the nations that these servants are blessed; consequently, the nations will stream to Zion in fulfillment of Isa 2:2-4 (55:3-5; 60:1-3).

Bergsma has shown that language from 61:1-3 connects the herald’s mission to those who mourn with the practice of fasting and Sabbath-keeping in chs.56-58, and both sections may be clarified by the priestly torah regarding ‘jubilee’ in Lev 25:8-55.<sup>177</sup> J. Blenkinsopp<sup>178</sup> also observes that mourning is appropriate to a time of fasting, which often commemorated the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The lament of Isa 63:7-64:11 [12] might also presuppose such a setting.<sup>179</sup> Consequently, while the herald’s task points to the horizon of salvation, it also explicates FI’s present exhortations for the conduct of the community. Within the finished form of the book, therefore, ch.61 further underlines the message of 56:1, that for those who seek his coming what YHWH will provide in salvation-righteousness he presently demands in justice-righteousness. For those who respond in Jacob, their present conduct will manifest the quality of their repentance in word and deed as well as their identity as offspring of the servant (59:20-21).

#### 6.4.3. *Conduct and Confession*

By turning attention briefly to ch.58 (fasting) and chs.63-64 (lament), we see that the design of the whole recalls ch.50, which supports FI’s aim to produce model readers who will continue as disciples across generations of the servant’s offspring. At 50:2, YHWH asked, “Why was no one there when I came? Why was there no answer when I called? Is my hand too short to redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” These questions were answered by the listener-speaker in 50:4-9, the one YHWH taught (50:4), the one on whom YHWH’s arm was revealed (53:1), the one through whom YHWH’s purpose (יְפִיָּה) was

<sup>176</sup> W. A. M. Beuken, “The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah,” 71, “As the spirit of YHWH rests on him, so shall ‘the faint spirit’ of those who mourn depart (vv.1, 3; cf. 42:1, 3, ‘fainting wick’). As he has been anointed, so must he bring the oil of joy to those who mourn (vv.1, 3). As he proclaims good tidings, so shall his audience start the song of praise (vv.1, 3; cf. 60:6...). The person speaking not only works as the Servant, but through his service, he also passes his resemblance to the Servant onto those who mourn” (cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 347).

<sup>177</sup> See J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 192-201. There too, as he points out, ethical injunctions include freeing of debt slaves (Isa 58:6, 9c; Lev 25:39-55), the protest against the abuse of workers (Isa 58:3d; cf. Lev 25:36, 39, 43, 46, 53), and the sharing of food and shelter (Isa 58:7, 10a-b; cf. Lev 25:35-38). Again, throughout Isa 40-55 and in chs.58 and 61, the conditions of ‘exile’ are seen in terms of debt slavery and the return as an act of redemption with YHWH’s servant and herald (42:1; 48:16b; 61:1), equipped to perform acts proper to the Lord—acts that must characterize the conduct (and repentance) of offspring (59:21).

<sup>178</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 225. Cf. Isa 58:1-12; Zech 7:1-7; 8:18-19.

<sup>179</sup> See H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah 63,7-64,11: Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?” *ZAW* 102 (1990): 48-58.

found success (53:10; 55:11). Another prophet, also presumably a disciple, answers this question at 59:1: “No, the hand of YHWH is not too short to save!” The servant’s offspring must answer just as the servant had answered in 50:4-9, as witnessed by the ‘we-group’ in 53:1-11a, as a righteous one answered in 57:1-2 and as the herald proclaims (61:1-3). That is, the choice remains: revere YHWH by obeying the servant’s voice or receive torment from his hand for the idolatrous disregard of **דְּבַר־יְהוָה**.<sup>180</sup> Isaiah 56-66 presents the same choice by means of the refrain at 65:12bc and 66:4bc. It declares that torment (50:11; 66:24) comes for one reason: “Because when I called, you did not answer, and when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what is evil in my sight, and you chose what I did not desire” (cf. 56:2). As a whole, the message anticipates the definitive judgment of the wicked offspring and deliverance of the righteous offspring, but this **דְּבַר** presently comes to an undifferentiated community. While the eschatological horizon holds out peace, rest, and ultimate vindication for the servant’s offspring, present imperatives highlight the circumstances and vocation of the community (cf. 50:10). Consequently, the announcement of imminent salvation and the case for judgment both seek to prompt repentance and new obedience. Positively and negatively, as Isa 58 and 63:7-64:11 (65:1-16) direct disciples to YHWH’s holy mountain, they underscore the point that servanthood makes all the difference.

#### 6.4.3.1. *Fasting and Sabbath-Keeping (Isa 58:1-12, 13-14)*

Isa 58 contrasts true righteousness with false righteousness, and it includes features that manifest poignant affinities with chs. 56 and 61. Verse 1 begins with a fourfold imperative in which YHWH commands a prophet to proclaim (**אָמַר**, cf. 61:1c-2a) to a community identified as ‘my people’ (**עַמִּי**), ‘the House of Jacob’ (**בֵּית יַעֲקֹב**, cf. 59:20). YHWH directs him to raise his voice like a trumpet (**שׁוֹפָר**). However, this ‘trumpet-blast’ does not herald the end of exile or promise divine favor (**רַצוֹן**, cf. 58:5; 61:2); instead, it contains *paraenesis*, and it builds the case for judgment.<sup>181</sup> Through this prophet’s mouth (**פִּי יְהוָה**), YHWH exposes the community’s rebellion and lack of discernment regarding sin (58:1-2). The Lord seeks justice (56:1; cf. 5:1-7), but their response has displayed injustice (58:2). YHWH’s assessment thus undermines the people’s subsequent complaint (v. 3a; cf. 40:27; 49:14), which audaciously charges God with failing to render the right decision about their conduct. The prophet responds directly to their complaint in 58:3b-5,

<sup>180</sup> Isa 50:4, 10-11; 57:3-13a, 20-21; 65:1-7, 11-12; 66:2, 3-6, 14.

<sup>181</sup> Isa 59:15b-21; cf. Amos 3:6a; Isa 66:6.



exposing their fast as superficial righteousness, and teaching (in vv.6-14) about the fast God would choose (בחר, vv.6-7). YHWH then accompanies his commands with a succession of verses promising recompense (אס, vv.8, 9a, 14) for the fulfillment of stipulated conditions (אס, vv.9b, 13). The chapter closes with the formula כִּי פִי יְהוָה דבר (v.14).<sup>182</sup>

Chapter 58 expresses prophetic תורה in servant-form. Isa 56:1 requires people to walk in the way of the God who comes to save (58:2). Ch.58 delivers this message more concretely<sup>183</sup> by playing subtly on the root חפץ.<sup>184</sup> It is important to recall its appearance in Isa 53 (v.10 [2x]; cf. 42:21; 55:11), where the ‘we-group’ testified to the servant’s success as the agent of YHWH’s salvific purpose. Here its verbal form reappears at both the beginning (vv.2-3) and end (vv.13-14; cf. 56:4) of the chapter. The root also appears, significantly, at the close of the first and last line of 58:2 (אב, צב), forming an envelope around its virtual quotation of 56:1a. “Day by day” (יום יום), according to v.2aα,<sup>185</sup> the community expresses its “desire” (חפץ) to discern (דעת) YHWH’s ways, playing the part of the nation that does צדקה without forsaking the משפט of God (58:2b). Hence, they are emboldened to ask YHWH for “a righteous decision” (משפטי צדק) regarding their collective performance. In a word, they “desire” (חפץ) the approach of God (קרבת) אל הים promised by 56:1b. In fact, according to v.3, the people think that they deserve salvation, because in their eyes their performance convincingly renders משפט וצדקה. But YHWH responds to their claim and complaint with a counter-claim. They indeed find what they “desire” (תמצאו חפץ); yet, it is hardly what YHWH would choose, for while fasting, they oppress their debtors (v.3). They do not see that what YHWH wants/chooses is self-denial in conformity with his way and will, and this, as vv.6-14 show, would benefit the entire community. Their fast only demonstrates that the people lack knowledge; therefore, ch.58 instructs them in the chosen way of YHWH. Clearly, they are not (at least

<sup>182</sup> Cf. 1:20; 40:5. Chapter 59 returns to the subject of sin (cf. 58:1), explaining again how Jacob’s iniquities separate the community from God and salvation (vv.1-15a). Isa 59:15b-20 indicates why God is forced to act in discriminating judgment. Termination of exile requires a definitive separation of the wicked and repentant in Jacob.

<sup>183</sup> G. Polan, *In the Ways of Justice*, 315.

<sup>184</sup> See Childs, *Isaiah*, 477. There are ten occurrences in chs.56-66 and five in ch.58: vv.2 (2x), 3, 13 (2x); 56:4; 62:4; 65:12bc; 66:3, 4bc; cf. 53:10; 55:11.

<sup>185</sup> Perhaps evoking 50:4, where YHWH’s servant had received דעת “morning by morning” (דבר בבקר) to edify the wear with דבר.

not corporately) following the path to YHWH's holy mountain (vv.2, 13; cf. 55:8-11).<sup>186</sup> Once again, therefore, the Teacher delivers prophetic **דבר** to guide them ("this way, not that way," cf. 30:20-21). As YHWH's agent, a true sentinel/herald (58:1; cf. 56-9-12) acts as the people's shepherd and protector (58:3b-14). His instruction illustrates, once again, the ultimate design of FI's catechesis: to produce penitent disciples (or offspring) whose character reflects the way of YHWH's servant (chs.40-55). In other words, in and through servants who heed his 'voice' (or **דבר**), YHWH's purpose (**חפץ**) by the servant's hand will continue to succeed (cf. 53:10; 55:11). Yet, what is most striking about ch.58 is how their motive and standard of conduct ahead of YHWH's coming must (also) conform to the task and aims of YHWH's herald (ch.61).

The problem, however, is that the House of Jacob (58:1) is utterly self-serving. The fast they enact only superficially corresponds to the prescribed Sabbath of jubilee, and its design is to coerce YHWH into bringing the day of favor (**יום רצון**, 58:5; 61:2).<sup>187</sup> To this end, they willingly bend like reeds and adorn themselves with symbols of mourning (e.g., sackcloth and ashes). Acts of oppression (vv.3-4), violence (58:4), finger-pointing, and worthless speech (**דבר-און**, v.9;<sup>188</sup> cf. 53:9) expose their desire for selfish gain. They do not experience healing, vindication (58:8; cf. 50:8; 53:5), or divine protection (52:12) because they do not follow YHWH's way as disclosed by his servant and herald. Their own conduct causes frustration.

Their fast fails because it does not conform to God's design. It does not loosen bonds of wickedness, smash the bands, tear apart every yoke, or liberate the oppressed (58:6; 61:1-3). The fast YHWH chooses involves self-sacrificing service: sharing one's bread, sheltering the homeless, covering the naked, refusing to hide from a neighbor in need (53:2-3; 57:1-2; 58:7). If the House of Jacob would choose this fast, YHWH says, "Then [**ואם**] your light would break forth as the dawn...indeed, your light would shine in the darkness" (vv.8a, 10b).<sup>189</sup> Thus, it appears that chs.58 and 61 agree: the true fast

<sup>186</sup> Noting the shift from 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. forms to pl. and back again at v.5b, Jan Koole writes, "The well-being of the larger whole cannot be separated from the individual's responsibility" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 120). This is an important point, underlying the desire of YHWH for corporate solidarity in right living. The community must strive for unity in this regard. Indeed, in order to ensure its ultimate stability YHWH must purify the community by a discriminating judgment (59:20).

<sup>187</sup> Williamson agrees, commenting that fasting is here presented as if it were a means for coercing God into activity. See H. G. M. Williamson, "Promises, Promises! Some Exegetical Reflections on Isaiah 58," *Word & World* 19 (1999): 156.

<sup>188</sup> Given the aforementioned socio-political and economic features of the discourse, Goldingay is probably right that "speaking evil" does not refer to gossip, but "proposals for political, legal, or social policy, or legal accusations" (*Isaiah*, 328). Might it also refer to the complaint of 58:3 (cf. 40:27) and anticipate 63:7-64:11?

<sup>189</sup> See Isa 2:5; 9:1; 30:26; 42:6, 16; 42:6; 49:6, 8; 51:4; 59:9; 60:1, 3, 19, 20.

brings freedom and liberty to all who mourn (58:6; 61:1-3).<sup>190</sup> Evidently, what ch.61 promises in salvation-righteousness, ch.58 presently demands in justice-righteousness. This connection unveils the responsibility of the present society for alleviating the conditions of exile, including (e.g.) affliction, debt-slavery, bondage, oppression, poverty, and mourning. The earnest fulfillment of this calling requires turning from sin and seeking YHWH according to the pursuit of what YHWH desires. In this way, through the offspring of the servant, YHWH's purpose (יְפִי) will continue to have success in advance of its consummate realization. In short, YHWH desires conduct that manifests the servant's success and the end of exilic conditions (56:1).

The word “desire” (יְפִי) reappears in 58:13-14, where it is paired with עֲנֵנִי (“delight/pleasure” 2x, vv.13, 14). These verses also link ch.58 to 56:1-8 and ch.61; hence, Sabbath-keeping is tied retrospectively to מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה in 56:1 and prospectively to the fast day declared for the year of jubilee in 61:1-3. In ch.58, vv.13-14 clearly allude to 58:2-3, for YHWH says, “If [אַם] you turn back from...doing what you desire [יְפִי] on my holy day, and you call the Sabbath, ‘Delight’ [עֲנֵנִי]...if you honor it without finding your own desire [מִמְצֹא חֶפְצְךָ], then [אַם] you shall find delight [תִּתְעַנֵּנִי] in YHWH.” Yet, how, in this context, does Sabbath-keeping relate to fasting as מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה?

Relevant to this question, Koole recognizes that Sabbath gives rest to all.<sup>191</sup> If 58:13-14 alludes to Exod 20:8-11 and Deut 5:12-15, then the reader must recognize that Sabbath-keeping, which imitates YHWH's rest as Creator and Lord of history, forbids any distinction in what it affords to all members of earthly society.<sup>192</sup> Since by the Isaianic ‘logic’, God chooses a fast that requires relieving oppression and feeding the hungry (Isa 58:9-10), when taken together, Sabbath-keeping and God's chosen fast should lead to the removal of hunger and by extension every manner of social oppression in Zion. This correlation also highlights why God rejects the fast chosen by the community. Not only is it accompanied by oppressive acts and wickedness, its neglect of the מִשְׁפָּט YHWH loves (61:8-9) only worsens ‘exilic’ conditions—especially for the afflicted who cannot go without food and drink because their entire life is marked by crushing poverty (57:15).<sup>193</sup>

<sup>190</sup> See Isa 42:6-7; 49:8-10; 51:14; 52:2; cf. Deut 15:12-15, 18; Jer 30:8; 34:8-16; Ps 105:20; 146:7. The herald's promises to the community for the termination of exile in ch.61 are the prophet's commands in ch.58.

<sup>191</sup> See J. Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 118.

<sup>192</sup> Milgrom observes how the Sabbath stood out from all other holidays by its “egalitarian character.” Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 1961.

<sup>193</sup> As Williamson explains, “Fasting, denying oneself food, is of no value in itself; it should be part of an exercise that both voluntarily foregoes those things that others are forced by circumstances to do

The fast YHWH chooses requires the entire ‘Davidic’ community to bear witness to God by demonstrating its solidarity in the care of Zion’s afflicted-poor (cf. 32:1; 42:1-4; 55:3-5). Thus, as a whole (vv.1-12, 13-14), ch.58 clarifies what it means to delight in YHWH, as fasting and Sabbath-keeping constitute the ritual expression of being in harmony with YHWH’s just ordering of creation and servanthood in imitation of the Creator-King.

In conclusion, ch.58 shows what justice-righteousness must look like for servants who answer YHWH’s call. Sustaining the future of Jacob’s House requires righteous offspring marked by true contrition and self-sacrificing service (cf. 57:14; 66:2).<sup>194</sup> The instruction ch.58 provides, with its patent alternation between admonition and promise, aims to prompt repentance and new obedience ahead of the coming day (56:1; 59:20; 61:2). As a criterion of their identity, the repentant in Jacob do not respond to their neighbor with oppression, violence, or deceit. As offspring of the servant, they do not respond to YHWH with rebellion (58:1), coercion (v.2), or complaint (v.3). Instead, like the servant, disciples answer the call (50:2, 4-9, 10-11), revering YHWH and relying upon him for protection and vindication (50:8). As they do, they will treat one another, and even their adversaries, according to the manner of YHWH’s servant (42:1-4; 53:9). Put differently, they will take up the confession of the ‘we-group’ and treat others contrary to how the servant was treated (53:2-11a); thus, the servant’s testimony and life of suffering continue to illumine the path his offspring/disciples must follow as heralds of the end of exile.

#### 6.4.3.2. *Communal Complaint (63:7-64:11) and YHWH’s response (65:1-16)*

The case for judgment in 56:1-59:20 calls for a penitential response from the House of Jacob. Isa 63:7-64:11 offers such a response,<sup>195</sup> embedded in a communal lament (cf.

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without and that at the same time gives to those in need that provision that we enjoy in excess” (“Promises, Promises!,” 156).

<sup>194</sup> This answers the particular question raised by 56:2, namely, “What is involved in keeping one’s hand from evil and choosing what pleases YHWH?” (cf. Isa 65:12bc; 66:4bc).

<sup>195</sup> Throughout my discussion of this prayer, I will follow the verse and chapter divisions of BHS: Isa 63:7-19 [ET: 63:7-18], Isa 64:1-11 [ET: 64:1-12]. Many important questions have been raised and important answers have been given about this penitential prayer; e.g., its date and *Sitz im Leben*, and whether it was written with or without consideration for its present position, perhaps even as an earlier conclusion to the book of Isaiah. For the catalogue of scholarly opinion regarding date (as early as 586), see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 258-59. For a catalogue presenting various form and redaction critical approaches, see Judith Gärtner, “‘...Why Do You Let Us Stray from Your Paths...’ (Isa 63:17): The Concept of Guilt in the Communal Lament Isa 63:7-64:11” in *Seeking the Favor of God, Vol. 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (Mark J. Boda, D. K. Falk, and R. A. Werline, eds.; EJS 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 145-46. On a holistic reading, I am after the contribution that this prayer makes to FI as received. That is to say, I am interested in the contribution it makes to its setting in the finished book (*Sitz im Buch*).

58:3a).<sup>196</sup> Does this penitential response provide YHWH with what he will look for at his *parousia* (59:20)? If so, why does YHWH respond as he does in 65:1-7?<sup>197</sup> Does YHWH's response presume criteria or an interpretive logic that FI supplies or does it point exclusively to a program and criteria external to its message? Whereas chs. 58 distinguishes true from false servanthood as regards corporate *action* (worship and fasting), 63:7-64:11 distinguishes true from false servanthood as regards corporate *speech* (penitent-confession).

Isaiah 63:7-64:11 is a communal lament directed to God in six parts (63:7-14, 15-19a, 19b-64:4a, 4b-6, 7-10, and v.11).<sup>198</sup> It recognizes YHWH as “our Father [אֲבִינֵנוּ] from of old” (מֵעוֹלָם [2x] 63:16 [cf. v.19]; 64:7), expressing hereby the community's understanding of its corporate sonship (cf. 1:3) and solidarity with God's people. Yet, the supplicants boldly declare that YHWH alone—not Abraham or Israel—is their patriarch for redemption (גֹּאֲלֵנוּ, 63:16; cf. 59:20; 61:2). The speaker is not identified; yet, the repetition of both 1<sup>st</sup>-person singular (“I”: 63:7) and plural (“we”: 63:7, 16-18 [10x]; 64:2-11 [18x]) pronominal forms recalls the previous testimony/confession of the servant (49:1-6; 50:4-9), the ‘we-group’ from 53:1-11a, and the herald as representative offspring (61:1-3).<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, the speaker identifies those he represents as “your servants” (עֲבָדֶיךָ), the tribes of “your inheritance” (נַחֲלֶיךָ, 63:17), and the work of “your hand” (יְדֶךָ, 64:7). Historical (and prophetic) memory are important here, and at first glance, the poem's several features suggest a positive answer to the question concerning what YHWH demands.

The first stanza (63:7-14) contains an historical recital. The petitioner remembers the Divine Warrior's saving action as Redeemer (גֹּאֲלֵנוּ, v.9b) in the former exodus and evokes the suzerain-vassal relationship YHWH established with the House of Israel (vv.7-14).<sup>200</sup> Significantly, he retells the story of their rebellion (מִרְדֶּךָ) under Moses, how they offended (עָצַב, *pi'el*) YHWH's spirit and how the Heavenly Warrior fought against them

<sup>196</sup> See J. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 56-66*, 257), who observes the features of psalms of lament (Pss 69:31-37 [30-36]; 79:13) and notes the conspicuous absence of the assurance of a hearing.

<sup>197</sup> From 65:1-7, it appears that YHWH does not respond favorably; consequently, I disagree with R. N. Whybray, who thinks no connection exists between 63:7-64:11 and 65:1-7 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 266).

<sup>198</sup> See Richard J. Bautch, “Lament Regained in Trito-Isaiah's Penitential Prayer,” in *Seeking the Favor of God, Vol. 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (Mark J. Boda, D. K. Falk, and R. A. Werline, eds; EJS 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 86-87.

<sup>199</sup> These forms also suggest a relationship to the preceding dialogue (63:1-6) and prepare the reader for YHWH's 1<sup>st</sup>-person response (65:1-7).

<sup>200</sup> Blenkinsopp also recognizes its “conformity with the treaty-covenant pattern,” appealing to language (e.g., מִרְדֶּךָ, “rebellion” מִרְדֶּךָ, my people, and the father-son axis) that “presupposes the existence of a covenant relationship” (*Isaiah 56-66*, 259-60).

(נל חם-בם, v.10). The speaker nevertheless recalls the days of old in hope that YHWH will act as their savior once more (v.11a).<sup>201</sup> This purpose is signaled by repetition of the interrogative ה"א ("Where is [YHWH]...?" + masc. sg. ptc. [2x], v.11), which also signals the community's assessment of its present crisis: YHWH is absent or simply needs to be reminded about their relationship. Consequently, the speaker asks YHWH to act for his glory once more, to respond as he had done in the exodus of Moses' day (vv.11b-14).

The next stanza contains a lament (63:15-19a) with interrogative forms of its own: ה"א ("Where...?" v.15) and למה ("Why...?" v.17). The lament accounts for the present crisis and justifies the community's supplication. As before, the speaker acknowledges solidarity with the original "House of Israel" and asks YHWH to remember them (v.17b-18). The prayer continues its appeal in 63:19b-64:4a with further reminiscences, this time alluding to Deut 4:32-36 to build its case for why YHWH should respond to their plea (64:3).<sup>202</sup> The supplicants express trust that YHWH is capable of performing exodus-wonders again. Is this not what one who "waits" (חכה, *pi'el* ptc., v.3; cf. 40:31) for YHWH, "who joyfully does what is right" (שש ועשה צדק) can expect? Have they not remembered his former ways (v.4a)? Are they not, therefore, in a relative sense, "righteous" (צדק)? Yet, 'new exodus' does not characterize their experience; instead, a further articulation of their predicament follows with a considerable confession of sin (vv.4b-6) that highlights again this community's solidarity with the rebellious generation<sup>203</sup> and their share in its guilt (v.4b): "...in them, a long time—so can we be saved [ונושע]?"

In the central section, the phrase כלנו ("all of us," v.5 [2x]; cf. 53:6) is repeated, further emphasizing the "culpability of the nation as a whole."<sup>204</sup> The repeated phrase also forms an *inclusio* around this central confession.

"We have become as an unclean thing, all of us [כלנו], and a menstrual rag, all our righteous deeds [כל צדקתינו]; we wither as a leaf, all of us [כלנו]" (64:5).

<sup>201</sup> Mark Boda writes, "[T]he God whose covenant faithfulness he is remembering (63:7) is also the God who, after discipline, 'remembered' (63:11)" (*Severe Mercy*, 217).

<sup>202</sup> According to J. Koole, it expresses a typical monotheistic formula: "There is no God 'except' Yahweh, who reveals his essence in fearsome deeds" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 389).

<sup>203</sup> Seitz is right to see this present rebellion as "figurally congruent with but also distinct from the rebellion in the wilderness" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 526). His significant point is that the sins are their own, although the confession acknowledges alignment with the generation that perished in the wilderness (and cumulative guilt).

<sup>204</sup> S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 584.

Finally, they acknowledge the truth of 50:2 (cf. 55:6-7) that no one calls on “your name” (שׁוֹמֵר, 64:6).

The supplicants’ only hope and final plea comes in 64:7-10, which introduces the conclusion of the matter, “In view of all this....” (וְעַתָּה), and contains an assertion regarding the community’s position before YHWH (vv.7-8) with a further lament (vv.9-10), closely linked to the previous one (63:18-19a) about adversaries not called by God’s name who have trampled the sanctuary. This lament adds that these foes have also destroyed Zion-Jerusalem (cf. 6:11-12), razed its temple, and turned Judah into wilderness. Surely, the suzerain is obligated to respond to his vassal’s cry. In hope, therefore, referring to v.4b, v.8 pleads, “Do not be severely angry, YHWH; do not remember iniquity forever.” The conclusion of the prayer (v.11) connects directly to this assertion by repetition of the phrase, עַד־מָאֵד:

Do not be so severely angry, YHWH...  
Please look, your people, all of us [כָּל־נָנוּ]” (64:8)

Concerning these things...YHWH,  
will you keep silent  
and afflict us so severely? (64:11)

The entire poem expresses collective dissatisfaction and disillusionment yet unambiguously identifies YHWH as the community’s only hope.

On the surface, this prayer appears well intentioned. The people express solidarity in affliction; they mourn for Judah and Jerusalem (63:18-19a; 64:9-10), remember YHWH’s covenant faithfulness (זָכַר, 63:7-9, 11-14), confess sin and iniquity (64:4b-7), and wait for YHWH. They even assess their own righteousness as “filth” (64:5; cf.57:12), acknowledging that as their Father YHWH can redeem them (cf. 50:1-3). For this reason, the speaker beseeches, “Please look...rend the heavens, come down” (63:19b). The prayer (63:7-64:11) aims to move YHWH to act for the people’s deliverance (cf. 58:2). Is this not the penitential response YHWH desires?

Yet this prayer is problematic. First, these “servants” define their community with exclusive reference to the former things, associating themselves specifically with the generation that perished in the wilderness. After recalling his spirit-presence with Moses before that generation’s rebellion and enmity, they complain, “Where is YHWH?” (63:7-14). Next, they identify YHWH as their chief problem. If they do not revere God, it is

God's fault (v.17).<sup>205</sup> "Look, because you were angry, we sinned" (הִנֵּנּוּ אֲנִי קָצַפְתָּ).<sup>206</sup> Drawing on 6:9-10, 11-13 they complain that YHWH has hardened their hearts to make them wander (cf. 53:6; 59:11; 57:8), and when they complain that Zion lies in ruins, they point their accusing finger<sup>207</sup> at God (58:9; cf. 58:1; 59:1): "...how could you!?" The prayer is troubling because it blames YHWH for the community's woes, concluding that YHWH must repent (שׁוּב, 63:17b).

The question remains, does YHWH desire this lament or is it the verbal equivalent of a false fast? Perhaps the answer resides in the poem's *Sitz im Buch* and in the comparison of this complaint with the conduct and testimony of the servant (50:4-9) and the confession of his offspring (53:2-11a). On form critical criteria,<sup>208</sup> or if 63:7-64:11 were isolated from its present position, such an approach might seem anachronistic. Although it clearly desires a second exodus, this lament knows nothing about the new things, new offspring, new names, or new creation YHWH has promised to the offspring of the servant. Even its use of the term 'servants', as Blenkinsopp explains, "...designates the community as a whole, following Deuteronomic and earlier Isaianic usage."<sup>209</sup> As Schramm observes, "The passage is occupied with...the very questions that Second Isaiah was designed to answer."<sup>210</sup> In other words, it is ignorant of YHWH's purpose and entirely preoccupied with the former time and its destructive entanglements. Its words do not herald the end of exile. So, is it a mistake to assess the complaint according to what chs.40-66 set forth as the logic of servanthood?

Its *Sitz im Buch* not only raises the question of its contribution to FI, but also warrants an assessment based on correlation with other passages in FI. In fact, after chs.40-55, this lament appears inappropriate and its contents out of line. In its present literary setting, the communal lament reads as an ill-timed expansion of the complaint of

<sup>205</sup> "Why [do you do this to us]?" לָמָּה, 63:17; cf. 50:10; 57:11. Compare J. Goldingay (*Isaiah*, 362), "...we are what we are because of what you have made us. Your turning away came first. If you turned back to us, things would be different."

<sup>206</sup> Delitzsch identifies this as legal discourse, and explains that God's anger is recognized as his righteous verdict (*Isaiah*, 468). Whybray (*Isaiah 40-66*, 264) takes it as concessive: "you became angry, yet we sinned." Nevertheless, the connection between divine anger and human sin here reflects the previous statement (at 63:17a), where hardening is spoken of as if God brought it about (cf. 6:10). The entire poem expresses the problem that due to their solidarity with the former generation, they have become "entangled" in sin (so, J. Gärtner, "Why Do You Let Us Stray," 148). But here there is more. Entanglement in sin leads to God's anger, which hardens the sinner in sin, and there is no escape; the community does not recognize any way out of this predicament. Similarly, S. Paul (*Isaiah 40-66*, 581) sees a "destructive circle," "a logical connection between divine anger and human sin...The nation's sins bring about God's anger, which, in turn, causes the nation to stubbornly persist in their wayward course." As J. Koole writes, "...there is no escape from the gravity of God's anger and the power of sin" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 393).

<sup>207</sup> So, Shalom Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 581.

<sup>208</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 63,7-64,11: Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?" 48-58.

<sup>209</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 275. He cites Isa 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2; 49:7.

<sup>210</sup> B. Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 150, n.2.



40:27 (cf. 42:18-25). Despite the fact that the community identifies itself as “YHWH’s servants” (63:17b), by analogy with the false fast, it amounts to one last effort to force YHWH’s hand through superficial righteousness. According to the design of the work, FI casts 63:7-64:11 as the tragically ironic complaint of would-be ‘servants’ entrapped by the sins of a former generation (cf. 40:27 and 42:18-25).<sup>211</sup> Therefore, with Schramm, rather than presenting the theological progression of a single tradition, the reader anticipates that 63:7-64:11 serves as a foil for the proclamation of 65:1-7.<sup>212</sup>

L.-S. Tiemeyer provides further insight, suggesting that the author of 56:9-59:21 and 65:1-66:17 habitually used sayings attributed to interlocutors as a stylistic device and that 63:7-64:11 is a large-scale example of this practice (cf. 40:27). In connection with 65:1-7, this device guides the audience by declaring, “*That is what my opponents say, and this is how I respond to it.*”<sup>213</sup> As a communal complaint, then, 63:7-64:11 corresponds to the misguided complaint at 58:3, “Why do we fast, but you do not see...?” (למה צמנו ולא ראינו). Just as the rest of ch.58 supplied the correct response to 58:3, so 65:1-7 (8-25) responds to 63:7-64:11,<sup>214</sup> exposing the community’s lack of knowledge concerning YHWH’s ways and building the case for judgment (cf. 63:1-6).<sup>215</sup>

<sup>211</sup> In other words, its meaning within the context of FI is quite different from what the prayer expresses. My view differs from that of Goldstein, who thinks “servants” (63:17b) identifies the community represented by this prayer with the servant-figure. According to Goldstein, their problem is that they do not embrace the idea that the servant bears the burden of their transgressions (53:1-11a, 11b-12). See Johannes Goldstein, *Das Gebet der Gottesknechte: Jesaja 63,7-64,11 im Jesajabuch* (WMANT 92; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001), 164-67. I do not think “servants” is intended to mean “offspring of the servant figure” (53:10), despite the fact that these latter “servants” will be delivered when YHWH returns in judgment. Moreover, I do not observe any evidence for a division based on particular assessments of the servant’s achievement or a theological dispute over the basis for the solidarity that obtains between the servant and offspring. The comparison of the testimony of the ‘we-group’ of Isa 53 to the ‘we-group’ of Isa 63-64 is illuminating, given the presence of the two confessions within the finished book. What is most striking about the complaint is its consistent affirmation of solidarity with the ‘pre-exilic’ (even wilderness) generation and its iniquity. What is most striking about Isa 53 is the solidarity of the servant with his offspring as reward for suffering.

<sup>212</sup> See Brooks Schramm, *Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 155-56.

<sup>213</sup> She cites examples such as the drinking song of the watchmen and shepherds, “Come, let us drink...” (אִתִּי אֶקְחָה־יַיִן, 56:12); the communal complaint at 58:3, “Why do we fast, but you do not see” (למה צמנו ולא ראינו); the claim to holiness at 65:5, “The ones who say...I am holier than you,” (הַאֲמָרִים...קִדְשָׁתִיךָ); and the taunt of 66:5, “Your brothers have said...‘Let YHWH be glorified’” (אָמְרוּ אֶחָיִכֶּם...יִכְבֹּד). This device has been a consistent mark of Isaianic style (e.g., Isa 5:19; 28:9-10; 30:10-11; 40:27; 49:14). Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: A Post-Exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood* (FAT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 65 (her italics). She is developing insights of K. Koenen, *Ethik und Eschatologie*, 159-68 and especially, B. Schramm, *Opponents*, 154-55.

<sup>214</sup> For a catalogue of affinities in its response to the preceding chapter, see especially, J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 635 and Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 541-42. Here is Seitz’s list: “The ‘where is the one?’ of 63:11 finds its proper response at 65:1, ‘Here I am, Here I am’. The ‘there is no one who calls on your name’ (64:7) is followed in 65:1 by ‘a nation that did not call on my name’. The rebellious people of 65:2 are foreshadowed in 63:10. The phraseology ‘walk in a way that is not good’ (65:2) likewise recalls 63:17 and 64:5; ‘keep silence’ in 65:6 and 64:12; ‘iniquities’ in 65:7 and 64:6-7, 9 ‘all of you’ in 65:12 and 64:6, 9.”

<sup>215</sup> Isa 56:10-11; 58:2; cf. 53:10-11b; 55:11.

Inasmuch as these lamenters cling to the former things, YHWH's response acknowledges that the sin of the rebellious generation still clings to these servants. While they wish that YHWH would rend the heavens and come down (63:19b), 63:1-6 have already announced his coming (cf. 56:1; 59:20), and ch.65 declares that the Warrior rends the heavens *to enact judgment upon them*.<sup>216</sup> Consequently, these "servants" (of 63:7-64:11)—who claim solidarity with the rebellious generation (63:10) and on this basis assert, "we are all your people" (64:8)—actually incite the divine assize (65:1-12). According to YHWH's verdict, their words turn desire for consolation into provocation for judgment. In addressing these servants, "as it stands written," says YHWH (65:6), "I will repay unto their bosom—your iniquities and the iniquities of your ancestors together" (65:6a-7). It is as Tiemeyer says; in response to the assertion, "We are all your people," YHWH answers, "No, you are not!"<sup>217</sup> The description of wickedness in 65:3-5, 7 makes this utterly patent by echoing detail (from ch.57) that exposes these "servants" as the offspring of the sorceress, adulterer, and harlot (cf. 57:3-4).<sup>218</sup>

Nevertheless, as ch.65 also demonstrates, YHWH's verdict is not one-sided; rather, it will involve a dual-outcome in just recompense.<sup>219</sup> Upon the offspring of the wicked (עֲרֵסָה, 65:11; cf. 57:3) it brings eschatological reversal and retribution. Because they have forsaken YHWH, they will know hunger, thirst, shame, and torment (65:11, 13; cf. 50:11; 56:12), and their names will be left to YHWH's chosen ones as a curse (65:15; 56:3-5). But for the offspring of the servant, it means vindication. Because they have sought YHWH and answered his call (65:1, 8-10),<sup>220</sup> they will eat, drink, and rejoice at the eschatological banquet on God's holy mountain (65:13-16; cf. 55:1). True servants will be publically acknowledged and acquitted, and אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת will call these blessed offspring by a new name (65:16).<sup>221</sup>

Presently, the two parties are distinguished only by their response to YHWH's word (66:2, 5). Remarkably, however, FI nowhere advocates forming sects on this basis, or forcing separation. Such an act would be premature. Definitive separation remains on

<sup>216</sup> This tragic irony is enhanced upon observation of the linear sequence of chs.56-66. In Isa 63:1-6, the Divine Warrior has already trodden the winepress of Edom. As the complaint comes, the Lord is poised to tread the winepress in Zion (65:8; cf. 59:20).

<sup>217</sup> L.-S. Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage*, 64.

<sup>218</sup> See Childs, *Isaiah*, 535, who also notes that judgment "picks up the language of chapter 57."

<sup>219</sup> Isa 65:6-7, 8-10, 11-12; cf. 59:20; 61:2. Again, as Hanson says, "...the classical forms of the judgment and salvation oracles have been fused to account for the new division within the people." See P. D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 153.

<sup>220</sup> Isa 50:2, 4-9; 53:2; 57:1-2; 55:6; 57:13b; 58:9; 64:6 [7]; 65:1, 10, 12, 24; 66:2, 4, 5.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Gen 12:3; Isa 51:1. As Blenkinsopp rightly observes, "This play upon curse and blessing has undertones of Abraham's story. YHWH's name is invoked in both curse and blessing, and the name Amen signifies that he gives reliable warranty for both, as he did with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)" (*Isaiah 56-66*, 283). By contrast, as Gärtner ("Why Do You Let Us Stray," 148) asserts, the apostates "can no longer be recognized as the assumed heirs of the Abrahamic tradition" (cf. 63:16a).

the horizon—but YHWH will see to that (61:2). Thus, the present community is mixed. Only their exercise of servanthood distinguishes the righteous from the wicked. Servant offspring (‘Israel’, 49:3) do not rebel (50:5; 53:6; 65:2). When afflicted, they do not open their mouth (53:7; cf. 57:1-2; 58:3); when oppressed, they neither complain nor utter worthless words (cf. 53:9; 58:9). While YHWH gathers still more (56:8), they suffer and mourn, hunger and thirst, and pray for ultimate vindication. Thus, they live amidst a mixed multitude, often disregarded, familiar with grief, persecution, and shame (57:1-2; 59:15a).

Nevertheless, suffering servants are also the hope of society, a key to its preservation, restoration, and blessing. In and through this community, God will realize his promises to Abraham,<sup>222</sup> and presently, as “Abraham’s seed,” they benefit the community as a righteous remnant (cf. 1:9). Therefore, YHWH says,

Just as the wine is found in the cluster, and one says, “Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,” so also will I do on account of my servants—I will not destroy the whole. So [in this way?], I will bring forth out of Jacob a seed. (65:8-9a)

Indeed, this verse may contain another significant allusion to Abraham, specifically to his intervention on behalf of Sodom.<sup>223</sup> Like Abraham, standing in that temporal gap between humiliation and vindication, servant-disciples wait for God, intervening for the community’s wellbeing.<sup>224</sup> “On account of my servants,” says YHWH, “I will not destroy the whole” (v.8).<sup>225</sup> As Beuken explains, “God does not want to destroy the bunch of grapes, Israel, because in it his servants are the...blessing on which he has set his expectation.”<sup>226</sup>

Servants are the offspring of the servant (53:10) who revere YHWH and tremble at his word (66:2, 5),<sup>227</sup> following his way, seeking him as a refuge, finding their delight in his delight, and manifesting his glory as witnesses. As they walk in God’s way, they obey the ‘voice’ of God’s servant (50:2, 4-10), confident that YHWH will execute his agenda for their vindication (50:10; 66:5). Thus, they wait for YHWH and hope for his appearing, adhering to the covenant and promises of God until their definitive realization (52:6; 59:21). As servant-disciples, they manifest YHWH’s glory by doing **מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה**. The

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Gen 12:1-3; Isa 48:16b-19.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Gen 18:22-32; 19:15; cf. 20:7; Isa 1:9. This, of course, recalls the remnant theme of 1:8-9; 6:13; 17:4-6; 30:17-18.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. 6:13; 59:21; 61:9. Christopher Seitz helpfully observes, “The seed of the servants are the disciples (servants) who bear the same relationship to him as he did to the former Isaiah; they are taught by him (see 50:4 and 8:16). As disciples of Isaiah in his day guarded the testimony vouchsafed by God to Isaiah, so, too, the disciples of the servant in this generation” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 543).

<sup>225</sup> **לֹא אֶשְׁחִיתָהּ**, Isa 65:8; **לֹא אֶשְׁחִיתָהּ**, 3x in Gen 18:28, 31, 32.

<sup>226</sup> See W. A. M. Beuken, “Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah,” 77.

<sup>227</sup> Isa 40:6-8; 55:11; 56:1.

wicked, by contrast, choose their own ways and delight in abominations (66:3-4). They will lie down in torment.<sup>228</sup>

### 6.5. Conclusion

In Isa 66:2 (1-4, 5-6), YHWH speaks directly to members of the righteous community, further identifying them (in contrast with his and their enemies, v.5) as the object of God's favor. YHWH employs new terminology, which nonetheless connects ch.66 to chs.1-65 and to the servant figure (53:5, 10; 57:1-2, 15), as God's speech succinctly captures the identity of YHWH's righteous servant-disciples:

To this one (אֶל־זֶה)<sup>229</sup> I will look:

To a humble (עֲנִי) person with a contrite spirit (וְנִכְבְּדֵרוּחַ),<sup>230</sup>  
who trembles at my word (וַיִּחַרְדּוּ עַל־דְּבָרִי).

In this one verse we have the chief description of the righteous offspring (and the model reader of FI), "prepared," as Seitz observes, "with new ears and new voices by God."<sup>231</sup> In contrast to 66:1 (אֶל־יְהוָה), YHWH's gaze does not turn automatically to the temple or to one who would build a house for him, but to the humble and repentant in Jacob who trembles at his word (57:15; 59:20; 66:2, 5). To this one the Redeemer looks with favor,<sup>232</sup> for the true worshiper is one who finds sufficiency in God and who has embraced the prophetic torah disclosed by FI.<sup>233</sup> The "trembler" is the true worshiper because this penitent one joins proper cult practice to God's revealed will concerning justice-righteousness (מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה) and salvation-righteousness (יְשׁוּעָה וְצִדְקָה, 56:1).<sup>234</sup> Thus, according to the pattern set by the servant as 'listener-speaker', these servant-disciples humbly heed YHWH's call.<sup>235</sup>

In my analysis of chs.56-66, I have pursued two other (related) matters, relevant not only to my thesis concerning הַיְיָ in servant-form but also to the place of TI in the structure of the book. The first matter pertains to the eschatological delay, which FI justifies both positively and negatively. According to 56:8, vv.1a, 2-7 focus on conduct

<sup>228</sup> Isa 48:22; 50:11; 57:21; 66:14, 24.

<sup>229</sup> "to this one" (66:2): The (deictic) pron. points to the description of the one YHWH esteems.

<sup>230</sup> "contrite" (v.2): a few Medieval mss have וְנִכְבָּשׁ, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וְנִכְבָּשׁ; BHS proposes וְנִכְבָּשׁ, "who is contrite" (*nip'al* ptc.); cf. 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>231</sup> C. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 546-47.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. 40:1-2; 42:1; 61:2.

<sup>233</sup> Isa 40:8; 48:16b-17; 49:1; 50:2, 4, 10; 56:1; 58:1; 61:1-3; 65:12bc; 66:4bc; cf. Exod 14:31; Deut 18:15-19; 2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chron 20:20b. See J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 301, who notes the correspondence to the deuteronomic model of words of successors (Deut 18:15-19).

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Isa 1:10-17, 27.

<sup>235</sup> Isa 50:2, 4-9, 10; 55:1, 6-7; 56:1-2; 65:12bc; 66:4bc, 14.

appropriate for servants as YHWH positively fulfills his objective in the further repatriation of Israelites and the inclusion of proselytes. YHWH exhorts servants to “hold fast” to the covenant (56:2-7) while “I gather still more to those being gathered” (56:8; cf. 2:3). In this way, both YHWH’s positive invitation (55:1) and promised blessings (56:1b-2a) will reach the ends of the earth.<sup>236</sup> Negatively, in 56:9-57:21 and 58:1-59:15a, the prophet exposes the wickedness in the community, which hinders God’s salvific intention, not only for his people, Israel, but also (through Israel) for the nations. The chief obstacles are that truth (אמת) is lacking (cf. 48:1) and that the repentant (סר מרע) suffer as prey (59:15a). Presently, therefore, the delay entails hardship for the righteous/innocent as it also manifests YHWH’s patience with the wicked/guilty. But tomorrow will not always be like today (56:12; 57:16). ‘Today’ means that the servants’ vindication is promised yet unfulfilled, and it implies that repentance is held out for the restoration of still more until YHWH shuts the door in discriminating judgment (55:6-7).<sup>237</sup> Thus, through instruction in the true (versus false) way (ch.57; 30:20-21), applied to fasting, Sabbath-keeping (ch.58), and prayer (63:7-64:11), TI contributes to FI’s aim to multiply disciples. Through these instructional cases, it recruits the “still more,” catechizing, exhorting, and admonishing those with ears to hear (50:4) to do משפט (cf. 1:17), while leaving the eventual judgment and separation to God.

The second matter pertains to the basis for YHWH’s salvation-righteousness, for God will remove the wicked from the righteous community. For Zion’s sake (60:1-3), according to 59:15b-20, the Redeemer will disclose his name and glory definitively in one judgment-act with a dual outcome. In that day, only those who repent in Jacob will survive (cf. 1:27-31); for unto them (59:20), the blessings of YHWH’s words and spirit are offered contingently yet correlatively with their repentance by virtue of the covenant YHWH has established with them in solidarity with his servant and herald (59:21; cf. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 61:8). That is to say, without the mercy of their covenant Lord and Redeemer, repentance is impossible; but those who repent in Jacob (v.20) are the servant’s offspring (זרע) upon whom YHWH’s words and spirit rest.<sup>238</sup> Israel has broadened into a multi-ethnic community (56:3-8), yet this covenant dispensation also has a narrowing affect, for its design is to distinguish false from true in Jacob/Zion (59:20) and deliver those servants with whom God is reconciled (52:13-53:12).

<sup>236</sup> Isa 40:3-5; 45:22; 52:10; 66:18-24.

<sup>237</sup> See Isa 50:10-11; 59:20; 65:1-16; 66:14-15, 24.

<sup>238</sup> Isa 59:21; cf. 42:1; 48:16b; 44:3; 59:21; 61:1; cf. Ps 51:13-14, 15, 19.

Isa 56-66 hereby contributes to FI by expressing a vision of the true Israel as a holy covenant community of servant-disciples dwelling in holy Zion, uttering the Holy One's true words, and enjoying the fellowship of YHWH's spirit forevermore. True disciples in Jacob disclose their identity in repentance that bears fruit in **מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה**.<sup>239</sup> By the dynamic activity of YHWH's words and spirit upon them, like the servant (42:1; 48:16b; 50:4) and herald (61:1), this true Israel will answer the prophetic voice with full reliance upon their holy Redeemer. In this way, at the center of FI, a vital servant-servants connection<sup>240</sup> forms the ultimate basis for YHWH's judgment that discriminates between righteous offspring and wicked offspring and between true and false ways. For those in Jacob who repent, YHWH's **רוּחַ** and **דְּבָרִים** will bring about the positive aims of FI's purpose to magnify **תִּירוּרָה** in vindication rather than condemnation and the glorious realization of its programmatic vision for the cosmopolitan city.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Isa 55:1, 6-7; 56:1-2; 65:12bc; 66:4bc.

<sup>240</sup> Isa 53:10; 55:3-5; 59:21 61:1-3, 8-9.

<sup>241</sup> Isa 2:2-5; 40:1-11; 42:1-4; 59:20-60:3; chs.60-62; 66:18-24.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion: The Book of Isaiah as Torah for Disciples

#### 7.1. A Holistic Reading

In order to prove my conjecture that FI intends to produce model readers who are servant-disciples, I set out to understand the prophetic book as a coherent whole. Given the complexity of the material, rather than read it retrospectively, I have taken FI as received and pursued a robust theological exegesis. Bracketing theories about FI's origins or the motives for its production, I have approached FI from a perspective particular to its own discourse structure, examining the text according to its own dynamic order of presentation. In prioritizing this kind of approach, it was my goal to listen to the received text in order to surmise the *intentio operis*.

My investigation of FI has observed intra-textual connections that suggest a linear progression in which the diverse parts of the book unfold to comprise a well-integrated whole. I observed profound continuities between chs.1-39 and 40-55 in the bond involving the prophet, servant, and disciples, between 40-55 and 56-66 in the solidarity connecting the servant and servants, and pervasive concerns for Zion and **משפט**, or the cosmic order of justice reflected in the (foreign and domestic) affairs of society. Since each section manifests a consistent Isaianic 'logic' pertaining to the theme of servant-discipleship and involving strategic reflection on the redemptive meaning of Israel's history, the use of **תורה** within the broader lexical and conceptual framework of FI is best understood according to the servant theme. This does not mean that the term itself has a technically precise sense in chs.1-39 (1:10; 2:3; 5:24; 8:16, 20; 24:5; 30:9) or chs.40-66 (42:4, 21, 24; 51:4, 7); instead, it has legal, didactic, and sapiential connotations analogous to the deuteronomic model, yet refers primarily to the words and actions of YHWH's servants and disciples as a prophetic torah, independent of Ezra's reforms, and without subordination to Mosaic Torah (or wisdom torah). Associated with other terms, concepts, motifs, and images internal to the book, **תורה** in FI denotes the revelation of God's purposes concerning Zion as regards **משפט**, **צדקה**, and **שועה**, as YHWH discloses an agenda for Zion's children in and through the words and deeds of his prophetic agents. Servants and disciples in turn recruit still more (56:8) by their witness to YHWH, adherence to YHWH's covenant, and maintenance of **משפט וצדקה** (56:1).

In my view, given FI's use of **תורה** and the *intentio operis*, FI's message is not merely distinguished from Ezra's (legitimate) reforms but transcends them. Its linguistic

and rhetorical organization, poetic forms, and lack of historical precision contribute to FI's character as a canonical unit that invites the reader to look longer and deeper than Ezra's reforms of Persian Yehud. In short, in FI, תורה signals a message of intrinsic Isaianic import for servant-disciples with a paraenetic orientation and an eschatological horizon. It therefore strikes me as illegitimate to reduce or restrict FI to propaganda literature urging the adoption of Ezra's reform measures or interpretation of Mosaic Torah, as if, according to FI, these 'external' standards comprise the most important basis for reconstituting the Judean community. Instead, with its profiles of Isaiah and of the servant figure, FI continues to summon and shape the kind of disciples YHWH esteems, namely, the humble and contrite, who wait for YHWH and tremble at his word.<sup>1</sup> Their confidence in the near fulfillment of the prophetic vision is the reason they adhere to the covenant (56:1), their trembling at his word is the reason they are esteemed (66:2), and their active faith, exhibited in servanthood, demonstrates their hope of vindication at the arrival of his kingdom (cf. vv.5-6), whence they will have rest. Such disciples abandon evil ways and seek refuge in YHWH, listening, waiting, speaking, and serving in order to hasten the fulfillment of Isaiah's programmatic vision for a 'day' marked by international peace and cosmic order 'beyond the days' (2:2-5).<sup>2</sup>

### 7.1. *Isaiah 1-39 as Torah for Disciples*

In Isaiah 1-39 the vision (חזון, 1:1; cf. 2:1) contains prophetic torah suitable for teaching (למד) both rulers and people the way (דרך || ארח) of YHWH's משפט (1:17; 2:2-5; 30:18). The reach of its curriculum is ultimately global, but YHWH begins with Isaiah (6:7) and with Israel (1:2-9, 10-17, 18-20; 2:2-4, 5). Isaiah's activity in witness and writing demonstrates that God himself has taught him (8:16; 28:26, 29), and his תורה refers to the disclosure of God's agenda through the words (אמרה, דבריים) he has given his servant (5:12, 19, 24; 30:8-17). Isaiah faithfully expresses and enacts God's words not only as a witness against the society (6:10; 8:1-4, 5-10; 20:3), but also as a teacher of particular disciples (למודים) who would form the basis of a new society (8:16-23; 30:20-21; cf. 50:4). To this end, his catechesis involves *paraenesis*, exhortation and admonishment seeking to prompt the community taught by God to accept God's purpose and adopt God's ways. As a word from God and a prophetic guide for life, Isaiah's תורה thus corresponds to the Mosaic model of catechesis; as revealed by the hand of his

<sup>1</sup> See Isa 8:17, 20; 9:1; 40:8; 50:4, 10; 66:2.

<sup>2</sup> Isa 42:1-4; 51:1-6; 61:1-3; 66:18-24.



emissary, Isa 1-39 comprises a **תורה** that YHWH desires his people to take up, teach, and dynamically fulfill in new words and actions (Deut 18:9-14, 15-19, 20-22). Its acceptance brings blessing, its rejection curse (Isa 1:19-20; 5:24). Consequently, the response that God's people make to Isaiah and his **תורה** is inseparable from their response to YHWH's words. The prophet, his words, and Israel's response are among the means that YHWH has chosen to bring about his worldwide reign, characterized by **משפט וצדקה** (1:27).

Those who listen to the prophet and attend to his word demonstrate trust in YHWH (30:15), and it is for this reason that Isa 1-39 begins to call them disciples (8:16). They are Isaiah's disciples because they follow the prophet and allow YHWH to teach them. As they follow the path of the Holy One of Israel, they align themselves with Isaiah (8:16-23) and with God's ways (2:3, 5). Isaiah's disciples recognize that YHWH controls the world, and they embrace his agenda to rule the world from Zion. Like Isaiah, they wait and hope in God (8:16; 30:18b) because they long for YHWH's arrival there. Thus, they even persevere in 'days' of judgment because they realize that their God waits to be gracious to them and to teach them (30:18a, 20-21). Finally, with Isaiah, their hope embraces the future of all nations, who will one day come to Zion to learn from YHWH (2:2-4).

While the scope of FI's vision involves and affects all nations, chs.1-39 are primarily oriented towards Israel's survivors (2:2-4; 4:2-6). In fact, the message may be targeted more narrowly at those among Isaiah's own followers (8:16; 30:20-21). The overarching design, however, is to offer an integrated and coherent message not only for them but for anyone who would become Isaiah's disciple. Consequently, while the prophet's paradigmatic witness (chs.6, 20), service before Judah's kings (chs.7, 36-39), and activity in writing (chs.8, 28-33) are circumscribed by the period established in the superscription (1:1), both Isaiah's witness and FI's programmatic vision transcend this period (2:2). As Richard Briggs has observed, Isaiah's witness summons readers to discover renewal through a process of judgment and salvation.<sup>3</sup> The model audience presupposed by chs.1-39 is therefore invited to find in Isaiah's own prophetic vocation a paradigm of the very witness YHWH requires from his people (6:1-13; 20:1-6). As *the*

<sup>3</sup> 'Judgment and salvation' corresponds to the movement of exile and restoration or the movement from old (former) to new. This movement raises the question of the temporal placement and identity of the implicit/model reader, which I explored more fully in my study of chs.40-66. In his stimulating essay on the virtue of receptivity, Richard S. Briggs asks about model readers of Isa 6, recasting his initial query into one about who can read the book of Isaiah. His answer is as follows: "[O]nly readers who hold their theological nerve before the terrible and entirely unnerving spectacle of Isaiah's vision [Isa 6] will be able to see that they are invited to be transformed through the process of judgment and restoration." The essay explains that such readers are "summoned" to this *way of life* by the presence of the Holy One of Israel. In my view, Brigg's description of the ideal reader matches the depiction of the 'tremblers' in Isa 66:2, 5. See Richard Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader*, 187.

*King* (6:1; 32:1), YHWH directs events within his creation, manifesting his purpose as regards מִשְׁפָּט, and the appropriate response includes the humble recognition that YHWH is sovereign, present, and powerful in civil and international affairs.<sup>4</sup>

For those who open the sealed writing, Isa 8:16-9:6 and 28-33 (36-39) are particular examples of why Isaiah's prophecy was retained and of its capacity to be read anew. These chapters demonstrate that the judgment had come because Judah's officials would neither hear (28:12) nor consent (30:15) to YHWH's plan as revealed by his faithful servant, Isaiah. In short, they were unwilling to heed the prophetic torah (30:9, 15). Negative oracles in chs.28-33, in particular, continue to warn of exceedingly severe punishments for any failure to heed Isaiah's message concerning Israel's Holy One; in fact, they foretell a succession of nations that would come as YHWH's instruments against Jerusalem (29:1-9; 39:5-7). Yet, positive oracles in chs.28-33 offer consolation and healing, contingent upon repentance (30:18-22; 37:1-2; 38:1-6). The more concrete expression of these themes in the narratives of chs.36-39 demonstrates that these chapters presume both types of oracles, such that, for the survivors of Israel, inasmuch as chs.28-33 point to Hezekiah, the king becomes the model of both penitence (chs.36-37, 38) and pride (ch.39); his reign becomes the parade example of YHWH's exercise of מִשְׁפָּט in both retribution and deliverance. Thus, with a view to Isa 40-66, chs.28-33 and chs.36-39 provide a powerful witness to Jacob-Israel in contexts of exile.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the new generation will understand that Isaiah's words were written for their instruction. Moreover, chs.28-33 and 36-39 invite these survivors of judgment to act as true disciples of Isaiah's word. When they open the sealed book, they will rely on Isaiah's words for life, for "in returning and rest you will be saved" (30:15). When taken together with chs.36-39, then, chs.28-33 demonstrate that YHWH's word stands forever (40:8) as both a blessing and a threat.

Part and whole in chs.1-39 therefore suggest that FI aims to instruct survivors dwelling under 'exilic' circumstances (in Jerusalem or in Diaspora settings). On this basis, FI invites Israel's survivors to respond to YHWH in trust (7:9b; 30:15; 40:1-2, 8). They must not walk in self-reliance or conclude that earthly alliances or idols can offer them more superior protection than the Holy One of Israel. Instead, like Isaiah and his disciples (8:16-23, cf. Hezekiah in 37:1), they must reject false paths and false gods (30:22). Although they have suffered exile, there is no power, foreign or domestic, heavenly or earthly, that can contend with the true God (cf. 40:12-26). Furthermore, despite the failure

<sup>4</sup> See Isa 6:1-3; 7:1-17; 28:8-13; 30:8-17, 18-22.

<sup>5</sup> See Rolf Rendtorff's discussion of "reciprocal relationships" between chs.1-39, 40-55, and 56-66 in *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 190.

of the pre-exilic generation to heed the message or understand its purpose, Israel's survivors must recognize that YHWH's purposes are international. In Isa 1-39, this truth about God was manifested principally in divine judgment, but there is hope enough in these chapters to sustain survivors who would take up Isaiah's **תורה** and eagerly await YHWH's return (40:9-11, 28-31). In that time, YHWH will teach his disciples to fashion a new society characterized by justice, righteousness, and peace (30:21-22; cf. 48:17).

## 7.2. *Isaiah 40-66 as תורה for Disciples*

In chs.40-66, this objective begins to find fulfillment for a community after judgment via a listener-speaker, who is also YHWH's prophetic-messenger (40:6-8; 42:24-25). This figure steps forth as YHWH's servant with **רוח** (48:16b; 49:6) to facilitate Jacob-Israel's Abrahamic (41:8) and Davidic (42:1-4; 55:3-5) calling to bring **משפט** to the nations. His specific task involves the reconstitution of Israel and the realization of a new salvific order for the world (42:6; 49:6, 8) in which his **תורה** defines the principles of conduct (42:4). Isa 50:4 reveals that YHWH's servant and disciple is also Isaiah's successor, prepared by God according to the deuteronomic pattern.<sup>6</sup> He does not rebel against **דברי יהוה** (**תורה**) cf. 30:9), but turns towards YHWH with ears to hear and towards the world with a taught one's tongue (50:4). In and through his words and actions, God's servant becomes the model for disciples to follow and the pattern of things to come. As one taught he knows how to edify the weary with **דבר** (50:4; cf. 40:28-31), and the afflicted are called (in turn) to respond as ones taught by him. They do so when by obeying the servant's voice (**קול**) they exchange the darkness of self-sufficiency for the light of loyalty in reverence for God (50:10-11). In this way, all Zion's children will become disciples (**למורים**, 54:13).

This figure, whom YHWH designates "Israel" (49:3), also brings **תורה** to the coastlands (42:4; 49:1), testifying before the world as YHWH's image-bearer who personally embodies Jacob-Israel's role in submission to YHWH (49:3-6; 50:4-9). Thus, the listener-speaker assumes the task assigned to corporate Israel (42:9) and personally brings the new things YHWH has foretold, promising light and salvation for people, and eagerly awaited **תורה** for the coastlands (cf. 51:4-5). The goal is to produce a new society of servant-disciples with the servant's **תורה** 'inscribed' on their minds (51:7). This result requires a rigorous 'pedagogy of suffering' (50:4-9; 53:1-11a; 57:1-2) and presumes the successful fulfillment of the servant's vocation (52:13-53:12) for the 'many' with whom

<sup>6</sup> Deut 18:15-19; cf. Isa 49:1-3; 8:16, 20; 50:4-9; Jer. 1:5.

God is reconciled. These servants inherit God's promises in order to fulfill Israel's vocation in the world (54:17). Thus, the servant's offspring comprise a righteous community of servant-disciples in Zion (60:21). Having their ears and eyes prepared to respond to God's call,<sup>7</sup> their own witness (53:1-11a) converges with the divine witness (52:13-15; 53:11b-12), as YHWH and the servant's offspring together testify that God's purpose (יְפִי) will succeed by his hand (53:10).

To these servants, God promises salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) and vindication (צִדְקָה), for he is coming soon (56:1). The servant's offspring trust YHWH, and they are called, just as the servant, to submit to God's righteous purpose without rebellion or complaint. This they do, when like the servant they take refuge in YHWH alone and join worship and confession to the practice of צִדְקָה וְשִׁפְטִי (56:1-2; cf. 1:10-17). As servants, though they suffer presently (57:1-2, 15), like the servant, they adhere to YHWH's covenant without violence or deceit, seek the advancement of others, and bear one another's burdens, for Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness (cf. 1:27; chs.57-58). Thus, the *paraenesis* with which FI began becomes in chs.56-66 an "eschatological paraenesis." Present imperatives highlight the circumstances and vocation of servants during the eschatological delay (56:8; 58:1; 59:1). But YHWH is coming soon. When the Redeemer arrives at Zion (59:20; 63:1-6; 66:6), YHWH's covenant and the vital servant-servants connection form the basis for the redemption of the repentant in Jacob (59:20-21). In the meantime, chs.56-66 show that what God promises in salvation-righteousness (61:1-3), he presently demands in justice-righteousness from his people (ch.58), and תּוֹרָה in servant-form operates as the guide and standard for the preservation of their life. In this way, YHWH furthers his project to establish a salvific order of servant-disciples whose righteous behavior will enable Zion to flourish according to his plan for the peace and just ordering of the world (2:2-5; 60:1-3; 65:17-25).

### 7.3. Concluding Remarks

Between Mosaic Torah traditions (narrative and legal), the תּוֹרָה/תּוֹרָה of Isaiah ben Amoz, and the extraordinary words and actions of the servant figure, there remains a salutary interplay—a harmony-in-diversity which enables a transformation of the 'former things' into the 'new things' of שְׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ וְצִדְקָה that YHWH unveils (cf. 51:1-6; 56:1). Hence, like Mosaic Torah, Isaianic Torah is simultaneously old and new. Through this

<sup>7</sup> Isa 41:8-13; 42:1-4, 6; 49:6, 8; 50:2; 51:1-6; 54:13, 17; 55:1, 3-5; 56:1; 65:12; 66:4; cf. Isa 32:1; Gen 18:19; Exod 19:5-6; Ps 72.

interplay the old remains valid, because in the new things themselves earlier revelation is continually re-conceived and re-expressed in keeping with FI's situational-rhetorical purposes. It is a canonical impulse, for the new things foretold are based on the recollection of former things in Israel's history and the prophecy of judgment from chs.1-39 (especially ch.6). Thus, the book of Isaiah honors the place of memory (remembrance of the former things); yet, because the servant figure speaks new words and embodies them in new acts, there is a sense in which it is not necessary to look for a **תורה** external to the vision itself for the express content of 'his **תורה**' (42:4; 51:4, 7). The new things of the servant are truly new, comprising something unthought-of and unheard-of before (43:19; 48:6), and the success of the Isaianic servant figure in accomplishing YHWH's purpose (42:21; 53:10; 55:11) is what enables his people to turn back to YHWH and to hold fast to his word and covenant. As Eep Talstra writes,

The 'new' means a change of Israel that gives up resistance and hesitation and gains insight from seeing the fate of the Servant, whose suffering and justification provokes identification: a new Israel begins (48:10; 49:5ff).<sup>8</sup>

The former things may thus be forgotten as the newness of the new things promised and realized have their effect, overwhelming the reader intellectually and spiritually, providing fresh insight, and prompting the response that the revelatory witness demands.

The servant figure learns from YHWH's earlier words so that he may internalize and incarnate them to instruct disciples with new words from God. He is Israel's prophetic-witness personified with a view to the fulfillment of Isaiah's programmatic vision. The ultimate design of his task is for **תורה**, or **דבר-יהוה**, to take shape not only in a servant's redemptive suffering, but also in the lives of his humble and repentant offspring, for they are the fruit of the servant's suffering as an **אשם** for Zion's restoration (53:10; 59:21). As Zion's repentant, these servant-disciples are identified as the offspring of the servant figure. As the offspring of the one who died but will see success, these new offspring are the holy seed (6:13). Since they belong to him in a relationship of solidarity, the criterion of their identity includes their genuine repentance and conduct as regards **משפט וצדקה**. As beneficiaries of YHWH's covenant, FI conceives of them as disciples and servants equipped with **דבר** and **רוח** from now on and forevermore (59:21; cf. 51:16). The servant's legacy is thus written on their minds, internalized, to be embodied

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<sup>8</sup> Eep Talstra, "Second Isaiah and Qohelet: Could One Get Them on Speaking Terms?" in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy* (F. Potsma, K. Spronk, and E. Talstra, eds.; Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker, 2002), 234.

and expressed both for their benefit and for that of subsequent generations as a covenant for people. In this way, a servant-servants connection continues to be manifested (cf. 61:1-3) as the servant's offspring adhere to the covenant YHWH has established with them, answering God's call and following God's way, according to the servant's own pattern—a light for nations. As humble and contrite servants who tremble at God's word (66:2, 5), these servants comprise the true Israel, waiting and serving to alleviate affliction in contexts of 'exile' in advance of God's definitive *parousia*. Reconstituted around the servant, their expectation of YHWH's judgment is defined not only by their recognition of YHWH's sovereignty, but by their humble adherence to FI's total vision as תורה in servant-form.

Appendix A:  
The Law of the Prophet:  
Deuteronomic Analogies Illustrated by Deuteronomy 18:15-22

In my introduction, I suggested several analogies between prophetic revelation and the deuteronomic view of prophecy: the rhetorical movement from indicative to imperative, the pre-eminence of Moses as *primus inter pares*, catechesis, dual agency, and the expectation that old words of God will be taken up, taught, and fulfilled in new words of God. In this appendix, I illustrate the features profiled in the introduction by considering their integration in the law of the prophet from Deut 18:15-22 (cf. vv.9-14). The unit appears as the final segment in Moses' extended outline for the religio-political organization of Israel's life (Deut 16:18-18:22), and it properly rounds off the larger section with a closing statement about recognizing and obeying the voice of YHWH (לִשְׁמַע אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה). The Canaanite nations might have heeded (שָׁמְעוּ) the services of diviners and magicians in the land, but Israel must not resort to Canaanite practices. Instead, YHWH will raise up a succession of prophets like Moses who will be the exclusive agents of divine communication with(in) Israel (vv.14-15). Thus, for its life in the land, just as they had regarded Moses, Israel must continue to listen to YHWH's prophets. This law therefore underwrites the divinely superintended extension of Moses' role to his successors (וְנָבִיא ... כְּמֹשֶׁה). Consequently, the principle stands: at particular times, God will continue to speak to his people by the instrumentality of a chosen prophetic servant (dual agency).

According to Jeffrey Tigay, this law also means that, after Moses, YHWH's servants the prophets would become the chief bearers of Israel's religious and moral ideology.<sup>1</sup> The prophets would bring new words from YHWH to guide Israel's religious and political affairs; as a result, all civil and religious authorities would remain subordinate to YHWH's sovereign voice. Indeed, judges (16:18-17:13), monarchs (17:14-20), and priests (18:1-8) all carry out their covenantal obligations under the foremanship of these divine ministers. Their role in deuteronomic legislation thus indicates that the prophetic office will represent the highest authority in the land. In this manner, after the death of Moses, the heavenly king will continue to govern Israel by other servants who will faithfully utter YHWH's words. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that YHWH's further utterances do not start with the subsequent time or

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<sup>1</sup> See Jeffrey Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 176.

its particular circumstances; instead, they build on previous utterances of God by the hand of previous prophetic servants. Subsequent prophetic servants (or successors) will take up, teach, and fulfill these old words of God with both new words and actions on God's behalf. The clear implication of this legislative provision for successors of Moses is that Moses' 'Law' (תורה) and the 'words' (דברים) of YHWH's prophets (נביאים) are equal, authoritative, and complementary voices designed to guide the life of Israel and Israel's institutions under God.

In Deut 18:16, to explain this legislation, Moses alludes to a well-known narrative tradition; hence, appropriately, the 'law of the prophet' itself involves deliberate commentary upon 'the former things' of Israel's shared experience with YHWH, specifically, the fiery-theophany at Horeb (Exod 19:16ff.). In the former narrative (Deut 5:23-27), Moses had recounted how, when responding to the voice (קול)<sup>2</sup> from the fire, the people had turned to him and said, "You go closer and hear all that YHWH our God says, and then tell us all that YHWH our God tells you, and we will do it" (5:25). Why did the people make this request, why did it meet with YHWH's approval (5:25; 18:17), and why does Moses allude to this narrative? The request plainly shows that the people had recognized YHWH as the true God, but there is more: in Deuteronomy, Moses' allusion to this tradition underscores the deuteronomic interest in the preservation of life; this demonstrates that the law of the prophet is for Israel's good (cf. 6:24-25; 10:13). According to his account, in the face of this theophany, the people of God were appropriately frightened. Certainly, for unholy Israel to stand before the Holy One is life threatening—God is a consuming fire (4:24); for Israel to see their God means death (5:23; 18:16). Naturally they ask, "Why should we die?" (5:25). This rhetorical question and their request essentially amount to a plea for Moses to intervene on their behalf so YHWH might let them live; they recognize that only through the mediation of Moses could they continue to receive YHWH's words and obey them for life and blessing. In fact, their response shows that they had begun to learn the fear of YHWH (5:29). For this reason, YHWH tells Moses that they have spoken well (v.28). Their word was consistent with the deuteronomic exhortation to fear YHWH and so to teach their children (4:10; 6:20-25; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12-13). Evidently, then, in his third speech, to explain the law of the prophet, Moses evokes his earlier words from 5:23-27. The aim of the allusion is to promote obedience to the voice of YHWH's servant(s) with reverence for YHWH, to enable God's

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<sup>2</sup> קול דברים אתם שמעים ותמונה אינכם ראים זולתי קול (Deut 4:12).



corporate son to enjoy long life in the land (5:16, 22), and to quiet the people's misplaced fears regarding Moses' death. Thus, the alluding text plays off Israel's prior recognition in the evoked text that their ongoing existence depends on revering YHWH by heeding the voice of YHWH's prophet who intervenes on their behalf.

The earlier passage therefore provides a clear picture of the deuteronomic understanding of Moses' role as this informs the role of Moses' successors. Moses was to stand before YHWH as Israel's intercessor and return to Israel to teach them YHWH's words to perform. Resting upon and appealing to this 'old' narrative tradition, then, the 'law of the prophet' extends Moses' intercessory and mediatorial role to future prophets (נביא...כמני). As Jeffrey Tigay says pertinently, "[T]he role established for Moses as a result of the people's request is the precedent for making prophecy the permanent channel of God's communication with Israel."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the allusion in Deut 18:16-17 and Moses' commentary in vv.18-19 reassure the people that this law is just what they had requested (18:16, ככל אשר-שאלת). As such, it addresses both their and YHWH's concern for the ongoing preservation of Israel's corporate life. YHWH is a consuming fire, but he wants his chosen people to live. By promising successors to Moses, he hereby pledges to sustain their life—provided that they heed every word that comes from the mouth of God (cf. 8:3). Therefore, even after the death of Moses, the divine word would continue to uphold an obedient people; the righteous ones need not fear any earthly circumstance, because by divine initiative, for blessing and life, they would humbly receive God's words from the mouth of another prophet, a servant like Moses.

After the death of Moses, then, his prophetic legacy would continue, but in two modes: Moses' Torah would abide as a witness and Moses' prophetic function would carry on through successors raised up by God. The 'law of the prophet' outlines the role of both these successors and Israel in discerning true from false (Deut 18:21-22). True prophets like Moses will arise, mediating YHWH's words and interceding for the people. When these successors come, the people must trust them just as they had trusted God's servant Moses (Exod 14:31; 2 Chr 20:20b). Indeed, God will call to account anyone who fails to heed the word of these prophets (Deut 18:19). Thus, YHWH's intent is to bless and to protect Israel. And the entire community is invested in the process (Deut 28:69 [MT]-30:20), as each new generation was held responsible for discerning (and maintaining) the distinction between true and false in

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<sup>3</sup> J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 176.

Israel.<sup>4</sup> Under God, therefore, Israel's collective weal or woe would depend upon their appropriate response to תורה and דברים.

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<sup>4</sup> "Do not stand in dread of [the false prophet]" (v.22) indicates that the people must punish the false prophet (cf. 13:5).

## Appendix B: Translation of Select Passages

### B.1. Isaiah 1:10-17

<sup>1:10</sup> Hear דְּבַר־יְהוָה, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the תּוֹרָה<sup>1</sup> of our God, you people of Gomorrah! <sup>11</sup> “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?” says YHWH, <sup>2</sup> “I have had my full of burnt offerings of rams<sup>3</sup> and suet of fed steers; in the blood of bulls, or lambs, or he-goats, I take no pleasure. <sup>12</sup> That<sup>4</sup> you come to appear before me—who has required this<sup>5</sup> trampling<sup>6</sup> my courts from you?<sup>7</sup> <sup>13</sup> Bring no more<sup>8</sup> worthless tribute. Incense, it<sup>9</sup> is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath, calling an assembly<sup>10</sup>—I cannot abide wickedness and festive assembly! <sup>14</sup> Your new moons and appointed feasts, my soul hates. They have become a burden on me;<sup>11</sup> I am weary of bearing them.<sup>12</sup> <sup>15</sup> And when<sup>13</sup> you spread out your hands, I turn away<sup>14</sup> my eyes from you; even though<sup>15</sup> you

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<sup>1</sup> דְּבַר־יְהוָה || תּוֹרָה (1:10): Here, this pair must refer to the contents of the paraenesis.

<sup>2</sup> **says YHWH** (v.11): In the prophetic formula, an imperfect is used in the sphere of present time (GKC, 107f). This form is used to express facts “which occur at all times, and consequently hold good at any moment.” Perhaps a particular nuance is added by the imperfect aspect here: YHWH has not changed his policy; iniquity and solemn assembly he has never been able to abide (cf. Exod 32).

<sup>3</sup> **of burnt offerings** (v.11): *IBHS*, 168, a complement accusative is associated with the intransitive verb, שָׁבַע (cf. GKC, 117z).

<sup>4</sup> **That** (v.12): This translation, following NJPS, indicates the nuance of distancing. YHWH does not see their approach as a welcome act; rather, it is an intrusive and unwarranted trampling of his courts.

<sup>5</sup> **this** (v.12): “This” is a fem. sg. demonstrative, pointing ahead (kataphoric) to the action of the inf. const. (“trampling”).

<sup>6</sup> **trampling** (v.12): MT proposes רָוַם־סִי. The proposal to change the form to a participle is perhaps easier for the English reader, but no change is necessary; it is sufficient to translate the inf. const. as an English gerund in relation to the preceding demonstrative. That is, the deictic (זֶה) refers to an action clearly defined in this verse by the inf. const.

<sup>7</sup> **from you** (v.12): Lit. “from your hand” (מִיָּדְכֶם), but here “hand” is a synecdoche—hands do not trample, people do.

<sup>8</sup> **Bring no more** (v.13): the inf. const., הִבֵּי, is the verbal complement of תּוֹסִיפוּ, lit., “Do not continue to bring...” Thus, the decision of NJPS to link the neg. particle + verb (אַל־תִּסְּ) to the preceding clause disregards the syntax of the verb with its complement inf. const.

<sup>9</sup> **it** (v.13): The subject, “incense,” is isolated. The verbless clause with pron. subj. (f. sg.) introduces a pregnant pause. The syntax focuses the reader’s attention on the incense offering: instead of a fragrant offering, it is an abomination.

<sup>10</sup> **calling an assembly** (v.13): Here the inf. const. קָרָא manifests its verbal character.

<sup>11</sup> **on me** (v.14): the burden is laid *upon* the object, here YHWH, who is the speaker (עָלַי + 1<sup>st</sup> per. suf.). Something which is on someone weighs him down (Joüon, 133f).

<sup>12</sup> **I am weary of bearing them** (v.14): The inf. const. is a complement to the main verb; i.e., it is used as an accusative for the object (them = appointed feasts, GKC, 114c; Joüon, 124c). The *nip’al* stem of the main verb (לָאָה, reflexive) suggests that YHWH has been longsuffering: he has borne with them, but has become tired of doing so.

<sup>13</sup> **And when** (v.15): This syntax, conj. + prep. כַּ + inf. const. + 2 masc. sg. pron. suf. (subj.), introduces a temporal clause (cf. GKC, 164d).

<sup>14</sup> **turn away** (v.15): The verb means “to hide/conceal” (הִלֵּךְ, *hip’il*). The translation follows the NJPS, which recognizes that YHWH is the actor. Israel’s spreading out of hands in prayer only results in YHWH refusal to look upon them.

<sup>15</sup> **Even though** (v.15): כִּי־גַם is concessive, and the clause has the sense of a concession, ‘even though’ (Joüon 171c; Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 382). It is conditional with כִּי + impf. in the protasis, indicating that no matter how many prayers they offer, the consequence will never occur (GKC, 159bb), the Holy One of Israel will not hear them (HALOT, 196).

make many prayers, I will not listen.<sup>16</sup> Your hands,<sup>17</sup> they are full of blood-stains.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Wash, purify yourselves! Remove the evil of your deeds<sup>19</sup> from before my eyes! Cease to do what is evil! <sup>17</sup> Learn to do what is good! Seek justice, lead<sup>20</sup> the oppressed,<sup>21</sup> defend the orphan, and plead the widow's cause."

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<sup>16</sup> **I will not hear** (v.15): יִשְׁמָע + 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. negates the veracity of a statement expressed with a nominal clause (Joüon, 160g).

<sup>17</sup> **your hands** (v.15): The nominal phrase is fronted, a nominal absolute (*casus pendens*) calling attention to the hands lifted in prayer.

<sup>18</sup> **full of bloodstains** (v.15): Preceding the verb for emphasis (GKC 117z), "bloodstains" is a complement accusative, the obj. associated with the stative verb, שָׂבַע (*IBHS*, 168), a verb of abundance (Joüon, 125d). Gesenius (GKC, 124n) states that whereas the singular is used for the blood of sacrifices, the plural denotes blood that is shed, suggesting the bloodguilt of murders crying out for vengeance (cf. Gen 4:10-11; Isa 1:21; 5:7). Cf. NJPS, "Your hands are stained with crime."

<sup>19</sup> **the evil of your deeds** (v.16): cf. Deut 28:20. Their actions are characterized by evil.

<sup>20</sup> **lead** (v.17): This translation depends on the decision to follow the proposal of BHS regarding לְהַנְיֵיךָ. Traditionally, the verb means to reprove, to keep within reasonable limits. But it cannot have this sense if the object is they who are the oppressed. I have followed HALOT, which suggests "to lead" (cf. Isa 3:19; 9:15; Prov 23:19). Due to the failure of their oppressive leaders (בְּאֲשֶׁרֶיךָ, "your leaders", Isa 3:19; cf. 9:15), YHWH rises up to contend against his people.

<sup>21</sup> **the oppressed** (v.17): read, with BHS, Qal pass. ptc. מְדוּבָּרִים. With the next two clauses, the prophet declares for whom *especially* justice must be sought in the society, namely, the oppressed, the widow, and the orphan.

## B.2. Isaiah 2:2-5

<sup>22</sup> After the days to come,<sup>22</sup> the mount of YHWH's House will rest established<sup>23</sup> at the head of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills. Accordingly,<sup>24</sup> all nations<sup>25</sup> will stream brightly to it.<sup>26</sup> <sup>3</sup> Many people-groups will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the House of the God of Jacob, so that he may teach us his ways and that<sup>27</sup> we may walk in his paths." Because<sup>28</sup> from Zion will go forth תורה, דבר יהוה from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> Henceforth,<sup>29</sup> he will be judge between the nations and arbitrate<sup>30</sup> for the many peoples.<sup>31</sup> They will beat their swords to plowshares their spears to vine-knives. No nation<sup>32</sup> will lift a sword against<sup>33</sup> another nation; they will no longer train for war.

<sup>5</sup> O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in Yahweh's light.

<sup>22</sup> **After the days to come** (2:2): v.2 is especially noteworthy due to its clause initial syntax. It functions macro-syntactically to introduce the unit. יהוה is typically used for future action at the beginning of a prophecy (Joüon 119c; GKC 112y; *IBHS*, 539), though nothing more should be read into יהוה than its usual meaning 'after' or 'later' (see B. Schwartz, "Torah from Zion," 13).

<sup>23</sup> **rest established** (v.2): The clause initial syntax (ptc. + impf. יהוה) differs from the parallel passage in Mic 4:1, where the ptc. is transposed after יהוה (cf. Isa 2:2 in Syriac Peshitta). The ptc. + impf. is used to emphasize an action continuing in the future (GKC 116r). I have tried to bring out this durative nuance in translation.

<sup>24</sup> **Accordingly** (v.2): Here, the *waw* consec. indicates a logical relationship to the preceding. In view of the exaltation of Zion, the nations will see, and they will come.

<sup>25</sup> **all nations...at it** (v.2): אל יו כל הגוים, notably with כל (cf. Gen 12:1-3), absent from Mic 4:1, which has על יו עמים and thereafter גוים רבים; Isaiah has עמים רבים. In this context of Isaiah, the use of אל (instead of על) is consistent with the repetition of this same preposition in subsequent clauses (cf. v. 3), also indicating movement /direction towards (*IBHS*, 194).

<sup>26</sup> **stream brightly** (v.2): *qal* pf. 3 masc. pl. + *waw* consec. (*wqtl*). נהר a homonym (I) "stream"; (II) "shine" or "be radiant with joy" (HALOT, 676 || Mic 4:1). My translation seeks to bring out the sense of each word as if the Hebrew double entendre were two verbs in English hendiadys.

<sup>27</sup> **calling, "Come...let us go...so that...and that"** (v.3): ושמעו introduces the direct discourse of the nations (embedded in the vision). In prophetic speech, the *waw* conj. + impf. follows an imperatival sequence (לכו impv. + ונעלה *waw* conj. + cohortative) to indicate purpose. (For conj. *waw* connecting volitional forms, see *IBHS*, 654, and cf. v.5 below).

<sup>28</sup> **because** (v.3): כי is plainly explanatory.

<sup>29</sup> **Henceforth, he will judge** (v.4): In prophetic discourse, the *wqtl* form takes on the future sense of the preceding impf. (הצני). From this day on, YHWH will judge.

<sup>30</sup> **arbitrate** (v.4): In the *hip* 'il, כח can have the sense of mediate/arbitrate (HALOT, 410).

<sup>31</sup> **for many peoples** (v.4): Here in v.4, noting the parallel to Micah, the phrase is absent from Mic 4:3, which has, לגוים עצמים עד־רחוק ("for numerous nations far off"). Even if Isaiah knew Mic 4:3, Isa 2:4 omits "far off." Isaiah's usage may be consistent with his communicative intention. Perhaps, in Isa 2:4, by עמים רבים, the omission (if such) maintains the impression that *all* nations will come near to Zion; indeed, only the house of Jacob is (metaphorically and spiritually) "far off."

<sup>32</sup> **No nation** (v.4): ind. verbal clause negated with negative adverb לא (cf. *IBHS*, 660-61).

<sup>33</sup> **against** (v.4): אל, expressing disadvantage.

## B.3. Isaiah 6:1-13

<sup>6:1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the sovereign Lord<sup>34</sup> sitting upon a high and lofty throne, and the skirts of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphs were attending him, each one had six wings: with two it covered its face, with two it covered its feet, and with two it would fly. <sup>3</sup> One was calling to another, “The Holy One, the Holy One, the Holy One<sup>35</sup> is YHWH of Hosts; his glory is the fullness of the whole earth.” <sup>4</sup> The foundations of the thresholds shook at the sound of the calling, and the house was filling<sup>36</sup> with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> I cried, “Woe is me! I am cut off! For I am a man with unclean lips, I live among a people with unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the true King, YHWH of Hosts.” <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me. In his hand, he had a glowing coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> And he touched it to my mouth. Then he said, “Here, this has touched your lips, and so it has removed your guilt, your sin is purged away.”

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the sovereign Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I, Send me.” <sup>9</sup> So he said, “Go, and say to this people, ‘Hear,<sup>37</sup> indeed, but do not understand; see, indeed, but do not acknowledge.’ <sup>10</sup> Make insensitive the mind of this people, make its ears dull, and seal its eyes, lest<sup>38</sup> it see with its eyes, and it hear with its ears, and with its mind understand, repent, and be healed.”

<sup>11</sup> Then I said, “How long, sovereign Lord?” So, he said, “Until cities lie desolate without residents, and houses without inhabitants,<sup>39</sup> and the ground is a desolate waste.” <sup>12</sup> Thus, YHWH will remove the inhabitants, and the uncultivated places will abound in the land. <sup>13ab</sup> If in it a tenth persists, it will be destroyed again,<sup>40</sup> as the terebinth or oak leaves behind a stump when felled.<sup>41</sup> The holy seed is its stump.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> **sovereign Lord** (6:1): according to *IBHS*, §7.4.3e, מְלִיכָא may mean “my Lord,” suggesting an intimate relation, or “Lord of all”, expressing sovereignty. Sovereignty makes better sense in this context.

<sup>35</sup> **The Holy One** (v.3): I am following the suggestion of Baruch Levine, “The Language of Holiness,” 253.

<sup>36</sup> **was filling** (v.4): The impf. expresses the progressive continuance of this action.

<sup>37</sup> **Hear, indeed, but...see, indeed, but** (v.9): According to *IBHS*, 586, the inf. abs. expresses affirmation, indicating a strong contrast with what follows.

<sup>38</sup> **lest it see...hear...understand** (v.10): לֹא negates the subsequent clauses, indicating the purpose for the making insensitive, dulling, and sealing of the mind, ears, and eyes (see *IBHS*, 661).

<sup>39</sup> **inhabitants** (v.11): Lit. ‘human beings’; אָדָם is collective (cf. v.12).

<sup>40</sup> **be destroyed again** (v.13a): לִבְעֹר is *pi’el* inf. constr. may mean ‘to burn (wood)’, ‘destroy’, or ‘purify’, and שׁוּב comes before it, functioning in this syndetic construction to indicate the manner, “again” (Joüon §177b; GKC §120d).

<sup>41</sup> **when felled** (v.13b): I am following J. A. Emerton, who explains that if *beshalleket* consists of a noun denoting a state of being cast down preceded by the preposition *b*, the meaning may be rendered idiomatically in English ‘when they have been felled’ (“The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13,” 106).

<sup>42</sup> **The holy seed is its stump** (v.13c): מְצַבֶּת = “stump.” I take אֶלֶּל (= “terebinth” [+ אֶלֶּל, “oak” = ‘their stump’]) as the antecedent of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg. pron. suf. *BHS* identifies this clause as a gloss for deletion. The Old Greek omits קָדַשׁ בָּם זֶרַע מְצַבֶּת from MT v.13, leaving “when their/its stump is felled” (בְּשִׁלְכָת מְצַבְתָּהּ). The clause may be a redactional element, which nevertheless should be retained since it underscores the point that purifying judgment leads to the production of ‘holy seed’ fit to dwell in Zion with the Holy God.

## B.4. Isaiah 8:16-23

<sup>8:16</sup> Secure the תַּעֲוִדָה; seal the תּוֹרָה with<sup>43</sup> my disciples,<sup>44</sup> <sup>17</sup> because I will wait for YHWH, who is hiding his face from the House of Jacob, and I will hope in him.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Look,<sup>46</sup> I and the children YHWH has given me are signs and portents in Israel from YHWH of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

<sup>19</sup> Now,<sup>47</sup> should<sup>48</sup> they say<sup>49</sup> to you, “Inquire of the spirits of the dead and the familiar spirits who chirp and moan.” Should not a people inquire of their God? [Should they inquire] of the dead on behalf of<sup>50</sup> the living? <sup>20</sup> To the תּוֹרָה and the תַּעֲוִדָה!<sup>51</sup> If they will not<sup>52</sup> speak according to this word,<sup>53</sup> they will have no dawn!<sup>54</sup> <sup>21</sup> One<sup>55</sup> will roam

<sup>43</sup> **with** (8:16): ׀ preposition with a verb of movement has a locative force; this testimony is to be sealed with or among (amid the domain of) Isaiah’s disciples.

<sup>44</sup> **my disciples** (v.16): the referent of the 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. is ambiguous. It is hard to tell whether these disciples are YHWH’s disciples (NJPS) or Isaiah’s disciples (NIV, NRSV, NLT).

<sup>45</sup> **I will hope in him** (v. 17): פָּקַד, *pi’el* with ל of the person = to hope in someone (HALOT, 1082). This is hope directed towards a target. It is a hope that waits for the appearing of YHWH himself (the antecedent of the 3 masc. sg. pron. suf.), it is the believer’s expectation that he will be true to his word (cf. v.19f).

<sup>46</sup> **Look** (v.18): Here הִנֵּה indicates the speaker’s point of view as a character in the narrative. The reader is given the prophet’s perspective regarding the symbolic value that he bears along with the children YHWH has given him.

<sup>47</sup> **Now** (v.19): The disjunctive *waw* (+ non-verb) introduces next segment of the discourse.

<sup>48</sup> **should** (v.19): כִּי introduces a protasis + impf. (modal), a conditional clause entailing a logical and temporal sequence.

<sup>49</sup> **they say** (v.19): It is difficult to decide where this embedded quotation ends, and this difficulty is exacerbated by the nature of the conditional sentence. There are two choices: (1) ESV, NIV, RSV end the quotation after “moan” (וַיִּמְהַרְגֵם); (2) NJPS, NRSV continue the quotation to v. 20, “testimony” (וְלַתַּעֲוִדָה). At first glance, the latter solution appears preferable, because the repetition of the verb אָמַר in vv.19 and 20 suggests an inclusio, the quotation is bracketed between these two verbs:

Introduction:	v.19a,	Now, should they say to you:
Quotation	v.19b,	“Inquire of the spirits...”
Evaluation:	v.20,	Surely, they who speak like this...

The first אָמַר introduces the quotation; the second אָמַר prescribes the destiny of those who speak in this way. Between these two verbs lies their entire speech. As appealing as this solution appears the presence of אִם־לֹא in v.20 (the negative protasis of a real conditional) tells against it. The verse reads, “If they will not speak according to this word, then...” According to this solution, the first conditional, introduced in v.19 (“Now, should they say...”), must have its apodosis after “moan” in v.19. That is, the next clause, an interrogative beginning with הֲלֹא, is the response that the prophet makes to this speaking. He instructs his disciples to direct the people to inquire of YHWH, specifically to the תּוֹרָה and the testimony. It is as if he writes, “Should they say X, you will say Y.” That is, you will respond by directing them to the true place of inquiry. They must not inquire of the dead on behalf of the living; the people must inquire of the living God! The all-important thing, then, is where his revelation is found. The wicked will inquire of the dead on behalf of the living, but disciples will seek Isaiah’s תּוֹרָה.

<sup>50</sup> **on behalf of** (v.19): The preposition בְּעַד designates advantage, arising from the idea of protection (IBHS, 202).

<sup>51</sup> **To the instruction and to the testimony!** (v.20a): the *lamed* preposition (2x) points to that ‘word’ (cf. v.20b) already mentioned in the context (v.16); in each case, it gives the expression imperatival force.

<sup>52</sup> **If...not** (v. 20): This is the negative protasis of a real conditional. The message is as follows: If they choose to inquire of the dead, they will become like the dead—they will have no dawn! By inquiring of the dead, only disadvantage can come to the living.

<sup>53</sup> **according to this word** (v. 20): The כִּי preposition describes a relationship of correspondence, and, together with the demonstrative adjective (זֶה), the phrase points back to the תּוֹרָה and the testimony.

about in her<sup>56</sup> dejected and hungry.<sup>57</sup> When he is hungry he will be enraged and curse his king and his god,<sup>58</sup> and he may either turn his face upwards,<sup>22</sup> or look to the earth below<sup>59</sup>—but [wherever he looks], see,<sup>60</sup> distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, he is cast into darkness!<sup>61</sup>

<sup>23</sup> But there will be no<sup>62</sup> gloom for her who was in distress. According to the former time,<sup>63</sup> he treated with contempt the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the latter time, he will make glorious<sup>64</sup> the way by<sup>65</sup> the sea, beyond the Jordan—Galilee of the Nations!

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<sup>54</sup> **they have no dawn** (v.20): Lit. “there is not to him dawn,” with **לֹא** (predicator of non-existence) and **ל** (prep. + suf. 3 m. sg.), indicating non-possession. In contrast with those who wait for YHWH (v.17), this clause indicates that the (3 per. pl.) subjects of the preceding verb (**יִמְנוּ**) have no hope. (On the frequent use of suffixes in the singular [distributively] referring to plurals, see GKC 145m.) LXX (cf. Syriac Peshitta) has  $\delta\omega\rho\alpha$  = **תְּנִיחָה**, “gift” or “a bribe,” but there is no need to amend the text.

<sup>55</sup> **One** (v.21): 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg., “one,” expresses the continuation of participant tracking from the preceding verse.

<sup>56</sup> **in her** (21): BHS proposes **בָּאָרֶץ** (in the earth) for **בָּהּ** (“in it/her”). The pronoun may be cataphoric, pointing to the same pronominal suffix in v.23 (**לָהּ**).

<sup>57</sup> **dejected and hungry** (v.21): the accusatives are adjectives of state, describing more precisely the manner and condition in which their roaming about takes place (GKC 118n).

<sup>58</sup> **curse his king and his god** (v.21): It is difficult to know if the compound object of the verb (**בָּ + לָהּ**) refers to YHWH, or to an earthly king (Ahaz or Hezekiah?) and (false) god(s).

<sup>59</sup> **upwards...below** (vv.21-22): perhaps an allusion to Isa 7:10-11?

<sup>60</sup> **but ...see** (v.22): **וְהָיָה** gives you the perspective of the one who looks as if to say, “Wherever he looks (upwards or below) there is only darkness and distress.” Light is only found in the **תְּהִלָּתוֹ** and the testimony. That it is sealed indicates that the people will enter a span characterized by darkness and gloom.

<sup>61</sup> **cast out** (v.22): MT has **מִן־הַדֹּאֵר** (“be cast out,” *pu'al* ptc. masc. sg. abs.), but based on the similarity of the consonants **ד** and **ל**, BHS proposes **מִן־הַדֹּאֵר** (“without dawn,” cf. LXX, ὥστε μὴ βλέπειν). “Without dawn” creates a nice inclusion with the end of v.20, “no dawn.” Nevertheless, there is no textual evidence for such an emendation.

<sup>62</sup> **no** (v.23): BHS proposes **לָהּ** (“for him”), but this erases the transition that this verse provides from darkness and gloom (8:20-22) to glory and light (8:23-9:6).

<sup>63</sup> **former time...latter time** (v.23): **עַתָּה הִרְאִינוּ...וְהָיָה**. This pair is used of things written as a witness for a time to come (30:8), and of YHWH himself, the first and the last (cf. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

<sup>64</sup> **he will make glorious** (v.23): According to Waltke and O'Connor, Galilee will be subjectively regarded as having obtained glory, i.e., it will be so esteemed in the mind of others (*IBHS*, 439n15).

<sup>65</sup> **by the sea** (v.23): In 8:23, “of the sea” is an objective genitive (GKC 128h). Galilee is a region “by the sea” of the same name.



B.5. *Isaiah 30:8-17, 18-22*

<sup>30:8</sup> “Now go, write it upon a tablet [for them],<sup>66</sup> inscribe it in a document,<sup>67</sup> so that it may be an enduring witness<sup>68</sup> for the latter day. <sup>9</sup> For this is a rebellious people, untruthful children, children who are unwilling to heed YHWH’s דְּבָרָיו,<sup>10</sup> who say to the seers, ‘Do not see’,<sup>69</sup> and to the prophets, ‘Do not perceive true things for us, speak to us flattering things—prophecy deceptions!’ <sup>11</sup> Leave this ‘way’, turn off this ‘path’, stop confronting us with ‘the Holy One of Israel’!”<sup>70</sup> <sup>12</sup> Now then, thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because<sup>71</sup> you have refused this word, and trusted in disparagement<sup>72</sup> and relied upon disloyalty,<sup>13</sup> retribution will come upon you like a breach in a high wall, leaning, bulging, breaking suddenly, in an instant. <sup>14</sup> It will break just as one breaks a potter’s jar, unsparingly crushed,<sup>73</sup> so that among its fragments no shard can be found to snatch a coal from the hearth or skim water from a puddle.” <sup>15</sup> For thus says the sovereign Lord, YHWH, the Holy One of Israel: “By repentance and rest you will be saved, calmness and confidence will be your strength. But you would not consent,<sup>16</sup> you said, ‘No, we will flee on horseback.’ Therefore, you will flee! ‘We will ride off swiftly.’ Therefore, your pursuers will be swift. <sup>17</sup> At the shout of five you will flee,<sup>74</sup> until you are left like a flagpole on the top of a mountain, like a banner on a hill.”

<sup>18</sup> Now, that being so, YHWH is waiting to be gracious to you; he will arise to show you mercy, for YHWH is a God of justice; everyone who waits for him is blessed. <sup>19</sup> Indeed, people in Zion, inhabitants<sup>75</sup> of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; as soon as he hears it he will answer you.

<sup>20</sup> Although the sovereign Lord gave you meager bread and scant water,<sup>76</sup> your teacher will

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<sup>66</sup> **for them** (30:8): BHS suggests deleting דָּבָרָיו for reasons of meter (cf. Vulgate; GKC 135p). It may be an instance of textual corruption, but I retain it because it provides a tantalizing link between 30:8 and the disciples of 8:16.

<sup>67</sup> **document** (v.8): סֵפֶר refers to a scroll, inscribed on one side and then sealed, as in Isa 8:16 (see J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 415).

<sup>68</sup> **an enduring witness** (v.8): reading with Mss Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate, I take עֵד (“witness”) to be the object of the verb הִיטָה, designated by the *lamed* preposition.

<sup>69</sup> **see** (v.10): The Old Greek inserts ἡμῖν in parallel with the next clause; hence, BHS suggests inserting לוֹ. This is attractive, but unnecessary.

<sup>70</sup> **‘way’...‘path’...‘Holy One of Israel’** (v.11): I take these expressions to be shorthand for Isaiah’s message.

<sup>71</sup> **Now then...because** (v.12): This pair (עַתָּה and כִּי) is familiar from Isa 7:5, 14 and 8:6-7, where it expressed YHWH’s just retribution for wrongs previously articulated.

<sup>72</sup> **disparagement and disloyalty** (v.12): the gloss, “oppression” (ESV, NIV, NLT) does not work well in this context. Vulgate has *calumniam*, which suggests misrepresentation and denigration. עֲשָׂק, here, denotes “disparagement” or “slander” (cf. D. J. A. Clines, “עֲשָׂק” II,” *CDCH*, 350, “calumny, slander,” Eccl. 7:7; v.6 refers to the laughter or mocking of fools.). This choice works well in a context where the prophet’s audience has shown contempt for his message. For the second word, rendered “disloyalty,” Holladay has “deceit,” citing this verse (W. L. Holladay, *HALOT*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans], 174). The larger context suggests treachery or betrayal, turning to Egypt rather than relying upon YHWH.

<sup>73</sup> **unsparingly crushed** (v.14): the expression + neg. particle may be regarded as a negative adverbial idea (GKC 156g).

<sup>74</sup> **At the shout of...** (v.17): I agree with BHS that “One thousand shall flee at the shout of one” (אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף) is probably an addition, because it is inconsistent with the next clause.

<sup>75</sup> **inhabitants** (v.19): reading יֹשְׁבֵי (masc. sg. ptc.) instead of the impf. יֹשְׁבִי. It is pl. in my English translation because it has the collective עַם for its implicit subject.

<sup>76</sup> **meager...scant** (v.20): accusative of measure (Joüon 127b), indicating their present experience of going without. BHS proposes inserting a מִן preposition (specification) before each noun.

no longer be hidden. But your eyes will see your teacher, <sup>21</sup> and your ears will hear a word from behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you stray to the right side or drift to the left. <sup>22</sup> Then you will declare impure your silver-plated idols and your gold cast-ephod; you will cast them away as a menstrual cloth. “Get away,” you will say to them.

B.6. *Isaiah 40:1-11*

<sup>40:1</sup> “Comfort, comfort my people,”<sup>77</sup> your God begins to say.<sup>78</sup> <sup>2</sup> “Encourage<sup>79</sup> Jerusalem, proclaim to her that<sup>80</sup> her term of hard service<sup>81</sup> is completed, that her debt is accepted as satisfied,<sup>82</sup> that she received double<sup>83</sup> from YHWH’s hand due to all her sins.”<sup>84</sup>

<sup>77</sup> **Comfort, comfort my people** (40:1): The double imperative is emphatic, expressing urgency, and is an important syntactical feature of the poet’s style in chs.40-55 (cf. 41:1; 49:1; 51:9, 17; 52:1, 11; 54:1; 55:6). The distribution of this feature in chs.49-55 suggests movement towards a climax. Here the form of the imperatives is *pi’el* masc. pl., taking עַמִּי as the (sg. collective) object of the transitive verb נָחַם. Isa 49:13 has the similar expression, בִּינְחָם יְהוָה עַמּוֹ. “My people” is parallel to “(the heart of) Jerusalem,” the object of the preposition in v.2aα. See also 51:12, and cf. 51:3, 19 where the object includes Zion, previously not comforted (54:11; cf. Lam 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; 2:13). People and Jerusalem are also parallel in 52:9, where the pair suggests that the city stands for the people by metonymy. From YHWH’s perspective, people and city are inseparable; thus, already in this context “Zion” may stand for the people of God associated with Jerusalem. According to Shalom Paul, Jerusalem is “anthropomorphized” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 129); i.e., Zion (personified) is an important character in the drama (cf. 40:9).

<sup>78</sup> **your God begins to say** (v.1): The impf. in the prophetic formula (יֹאמַר יְהוָה) is in the sphere of present time, beginning and continuing at the time of speaking. B. Waltke and M. O’Connor refer to this usage as the incipient present non-perfective (see *IBHS*, §31.3.d; cf. GKC §107f).

<sup>79</sup> **Encourage** (v.2): עֲלֵ-לֵב (lit., “to the heart”; cf. 42:25; 46:8). English versions translate “tenderly” (e.g., NRSV, NJPS, NIV), understanding God to have commissioned emissaries to address Jerusalem as one courting a maiden (Ruth 2:13; cf. Gen 34:3). The pair appears in Gen 50:21 (וְעָלְמָה || דָּבַר). Here (in 40:1-2) as elsewhere the aim is to encourage an audience (cf. Judges 19:3; 2 Sam 19:8; 2 Chr 30:22). Thus, parallel to comfort in v.1, the phrase signals YHWH’s aim to win Zion over (so, E. J. Young, *Book of Isaiah, Vol.3, Chapters 40-66* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 21). Jan Koole translates “convince” (*Isaiah 40-48*, 51).

<sup>80</sup> **that...that...that** (v.2): the repetition of the conj. כִּי indicates that all three consecutive clauses are objects of the verbal-pair דָּבַר || קָרָא.

<sup>81</sup> **term of hard service is completed** (v.2): צָבָה may signal the military sphere of “warfare” (cf. Isa 47:1-2), but here it probably has the sense of “service” in the sphere of hard labor or the fruitless toil that reflects a troubled life (BDB, 838; Job 7:1; 10; 10:17; 14:14). According to HALOT (p.583), מַלְא + צָבָה indicates that the time of service is fulfilled, its end has arrived. The expression may refer to the yoke of foreign oppression; hence, Koole thinks *Fronddienst* (“corvée”) is the right translation (cf. Zürcher Bibel). For him, the context (and 50:1) suggests debt slavery (Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 51). On exile as a period of debt-slavery and restoration as YHWH’s enactment of Jubilee, see J. S. Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 192.

<sup>82</sup> **debt is accepted as satisfied** (v.2): רָצָה II. See, in the priestly torah, Lev 1:4; 26:41 (which also has רָצָה + עָוֹן), where it suggests divine satisfaction (or expiation) at the payment of a debt (cf. BDB, 953). Whatever Jerusalem’s role, the context makes clear that the discharge of debt is due to God’s gracious initiative (cf. 43:25; 44:22; 48:9; see K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 51). Walter Brueggemann explains: “The offer of comfort is not based on the suitability or qualification of the people but upon the resolve of God” (*Isaiah 40-66*, 19).

<sup>83</sup> **double** (v.2): כַּפְּלִים, masc. dual abs. Does ‘double’ indicate that retribution was equivalent to what Jerusalem owed? For this view, see G. von Rad, “כַּפְּלִים in Jes 40,2 = Äquivalent?” *ZAW* 79 (1967): 80-82. The statement probably has its background in the laws of restitution in BC (שְׁלֵם שְׁנַיִם) in Exod 22:4, 7, 9; cf. מִשְׁנָה in Jer 16:18; 17:18; so also, B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 297). Jerusalem’s experience of punishment may be viewed here as sufficient restitution or balanced recompense, one that has purged the city (Isa 1:25ff) and is accepted as due (reparation). In another context (Deut 15:18), the use of “double” [מִשְׁנָה] refers to the value of labor rendered during a period of indentured servitude. Taking all three כִּי clauses together suggests a relationship of logical progression: the time of debt servitude is up, because the labor for debt is accepted; YHWH regards the service rendered as a sufficient restitution. The verse therefore reflects a theology of just retribution; it uses language from the spheres of priestly torah (H) and criminal law (BC, D) to declare that Zion has no further reason to fear. It may be worth recalling that the personified Jerusalem of Lamentations (without comfort) felt her suffering was excessive even if punishment was justified (1:18, 20; 2:20-21; 4:11-14; 5:7, 21-22). Likewise, Isa 51:19 raises the question, “Who will comfort Zion?” and suggests “double” has specific content, namely, famine and sword. In that context, YHWH says she will never experience such suffering again (v.22). K. Baltzer points to Jerusalem’s role as the “mother city” and thinks “double” refers to Jerusalem’s “widowhood” and “childlessness” (see Isa 47:9; *Detuero-Isaiah*, 51).

<sup>3</sup> I hear a voice proclaiming:<sup>85</sup> “In the wilderness clear YHWH’s way, make a straight highway in the desert-plain for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley will be raised up and every mountain and hill made low; let the rough terrain become level and the ridges a valley-plain. <sup>5</sup> The glory of YHWH will be revealed, and all humanity will see it together.” For the mouth of YHWH has spoken.

<sup>6</sup> I hear the voice speaking: “Proclaim!” So I said,<sup>86</sup> “How can I<sup>87</sup> proclaim? All humanity<sup>88</sup> is grass, and all its constancy<sup>89</sup> as the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup> Grass withers,<sup>90</sup> flowers fade, when<sup>91</sup> YHWH’s wind<sup>92</sup> blows on them. Surely,<sup>93</sup> these people are grass!”

<sup>8</sup> “Grass withers, flowers fade, but the word [דבר] of our God will stand forever.”

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Perhaps “double” refers to the two phases of judgment (Assyrian and Babylonian) from chs.36-39. Nevertheless, the view that “double” is positive is unlikely in my judgment. I disagree with Blenkinsopp who thinks “double from YHWH’s hand” refers to “the bestowing of benefits that will outweigh the punishment inflicted for sins committed” (*Isaiah 40-55*, 179). This was of course the experience of Job (יהוה את-כל אשר לאיוב למשנה, ויסיף יהוה את-כל אשר לאיוב למשנה, Job 42:10), but מיד יהוה has a negative connotation elsewhere (cf. Josh 22:31) and refers specifically to wrath in Isa 51:17 (cf. Jer 25:17).

<sup>84</sup> **due to all her sins** (v.2): causal כ marks the reason for the “double” retribution Jerusalem has received (*IBHS*, 11.2.5e). In chs.1-39 “sin” (חטאת) is associated with the impurity that comes from injustice (3:9), false worship (6:7; 27:9; cf. 43:24-25; 58:1; 59:2, 12), and foreign alliances (30:1). Notably, ch.5 understands such retribution to result from a lack of faith in YHWH’s plan disclosed by the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz (5:18-19).

<sup>85</sup> **I hear a voice proclaiming...I hear the voice speaking** (vv.3, 6): קול (“a sound” + the following ptc., קורא) is taken as an exclamative (cf. Gen 4:10; Isa 13:4; 66:6). Here, as in v.6 (“I hear the voice speaking...”), the phrase is immediately followed by direct speech (GKC 146b, Joüon 163e). I translate the second occurrence with the article to show that the ‘sound’ (v.6) comes from the same source as v.3.

<sup>86</sup> **So I said** (v.6): ואמר is probably corrupt (Joüon 112qq); cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (ואמר). I have followed BHS, reading אמר with LXX (καὶ εἶπα) and Vulgate.

<sup>87</sup> **How can I proclaim?** (v.6): It is not a request for clarification regarding the content of the communiqué; instead, taking “people are grass” as given, the speaker is skeptical, and perhaps regards this as a vain commission. Thus, the question is not *what* but *how* can I proclaim the Lord’s coming as a word of comfort. In other words, if all humanity is grass, then what is the point? For this rendering of the interrogative מה, see GKC 148aß; JM 144e; *IBHS*, 18.3.f.

<sup>88</sup> **All humanity** (v.6): כל + the determinate genitive (הבשר) does not have the distributive sense here; rather, it has the idea of totality: “all living creatures”/ “all humanity” (GKC 127c). Moreover, humanity means mortality as in Gen 6:3, “My breath will not abide with humanity forever, since he is mortal [בשר].” The notion is similar to Isa 31:3, “...the Egyptians are mortal, not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit,” where בשר and אדם form a word-pair (ולא-רוח) (ומצרים אדם ולא-אל וסוסיהם בשר ולא-רוח).

<sup>89</sup> **constancy** (v.6): LXX (Peshitta, Vulgate) and 1 Peter 1:24 read δόξα; BHS proposes הדר (“its splendor”), others חמד (“its delight”). There is no reason to amend the text, for חסד is significant, not least because of its double consonance with הציר. חסד denotes steadfast commitment and loyalty regarding one’s obligations (or covenant faithfulness). The future of Jacob-Israel does not depend on its חסד but YHWH’s חסד (cf. v.1), which corresponds to YHWH’s דבר (v.8).

<sup>90</sup> **Grass withers, flowers fade** (2x, vv.7-8): Here present-tense forms used for the perfect express a permanent truth regarding a representative case: grass and flowers, they wither and fade. This gnomic (or proverbial) perfective (*IBHS* 488; cf. Joüon 112d; *IBHS* 30.5.1c, gnomic *qatal*) enhances the contrast between transient (humanity) and the enduring word of God.

<sup>91</sup> **when** (v.7): כ introduces a temporal clause after the main clause.

<sup>92</sup> **wind** (v.7): רוח utilizes a metaphor in which the primary subject is portrayed as the hot Mediterranean sirocco (Jer 4:11-12; 18:17; Ezek 17:10; 19:12, 27; 27:26; Hos 13:15; Jon 4:8; cf. Gen 8:1; Jer 10:13; 51:16; Ps 135:7). Here it relates to the destruction (cf. Isa 5:24; 11:15; 27:8; 30:28; 59:19).

<sup>93</sup> **Surely, these people are grass** (v.7): אכן has an emphatic sense (*IBHS*, 670n.97) as an adverb with strong asseverative force. BDB (p.38) provides the glosses “surely” and “truly” (Gen 28:16; Exod 2:14; 1 Sam 15:32; Isa 45:15; Jer 3:23). If the voice utters a response, the question is where this response begins. According to Goldingay, the voice likely begins its response with this adverb (*Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 1, 83), but it seems more natural to me to place this clause in the mouth of the listener-speaker, since the predication “all

<sup>9</sup> “Unto a high mountain, get yourself up,<sup>94</sup> herald of good news,<sup>95</sup> O Zion;<sup>96</sup> raise your voice mightily, herald of good news, O Jerusalem. Raise it up, do not fear,<sup>97</sup> and say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here<sup>98</sup> is your God!’ <sup>10</sup> The sovereign Lord, YHWH, is now coming<sup>99</sup> as a warrior<sup>100</sup> and his arm<sup>101</sup> rules for him. See,<sup>102</sup> his reward is with him, his<sup>103</sup> recompense

humanity/these people are grass” would then form an inclusio. What is more, the pair, “humanity” and “these people,” may serve to reintroduce God’s people from v.1 (עַמִּי). If so, the listener-speaker acknowledges/laments the solidarity God’s people share with all transient humanity, the immediate clause (v.7) therefore connects the experience of God’s people with the earthly powers that perish—there can be no point in preaching to them. Positively, however—given the announced preparations for a glory-theophany (v.5)—the solidarity of all humanity with God’s people underscores the fact that YHWH’s coming is a world-embracing event. All humanity (including these people) will behold the glory of YHWH (v.5)! Thus, the proclamation’s potential impact is far-reaching, anticipating the extension of God’s message of hope from Israel to the nations. If this is so, Isa 40:1-11 already raises questions about the nature and role of Israel after judgment. The NJPS translation, “Indeed, man is but grass” sees “humanity” and “these people” as synonymous rather than overlapping, and so it effaces the possible import of the connection.

<sup>94</sup> **Get yourself up** (v.9): לָ + pron. suf. (2<sup>nd</sup>-per. fem. sg.) after the impv. (עַל) here is an example of the *dativus commodi* (a.k.a., *lamed* of interest), which gives expression to the significance of the occurrence for the subject, Zion (GKC 119s). The news Zion must proclaim is of tremendous concern to Zion herself.

<sup>95</sup> **herald of good news** (v.9): מְבַשֵּׂרִית (2x), simply means “one who bears news” (i.e., בִּשְׂרָה is a neutral term). “Good news” expresses its connotation here and follows the LXX εὐαγγελίζω. Elsewhere, the quality of the news (as good or bad) appears to rest in the eye of the beholder; nevertheless, the term clearly carries the positive connotation when it occurs in contexts of peace, deliverance, and the praise of YHWH (Nah 2:1; Isa 52:7; 60:6). See also 1 Sam 4:17; 31:9; 2 Sam 4:10; 18:19-20, 26; 1 Kgs 1:42; Ps 68:11; Isa 41:27; 61:1; Jer 20:15; 1 Chr 16:23 (= Ps 96:2).

<sup>96</sup> **Zion...Jerusalem** (v.9): Zion (|| Jerusalem) is personified (cf. NRSV; NLT; NASB); that is, the verse metaphorically represents Zion in human terms as a herald bearing good news to the towns of Judah. Hence, in my view, “Zion, herald of good news” is appositional, rather than an objective genitive (or accusative). For this view, see also, e.g., NJPS, NIV; LXX (fem. sg., Σιων || Ἱερουσαλημ); C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 43; B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 301; K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 61; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 185; J. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 71; C. C. Torrey, *Second Isaiah*, 306-7; M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 66. Seitz, of course, is right that the fem. gender of the messenger (fem. sg. ptc., מְבַשֵּׂרִית) does not require the appositional reading (cf. קְדָלָה, Eccl. 1:1; Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66*, 336) and that Zion is not personified elsewhere *as a herald* (though Zion is personified regularly). Still, the appositional reading seems more natural in the immediate context of this poem, because Zion is a place name commissioned to address surrounding places; namely, the towns of Judah. “Zion” can stand, by metonymy, for the city’s heralds, and, although elsewhere heralds (as YHWH’s emissaries) are sent *to* Zion (41:27; 52:7), there is no contradiction, and I can see no reason to reverse the picture in the immediate context as Seitz does. The context of 40:9-11 (and 52:1-12) focuses on Zion and underscores the reversal of events depicted in chs.36-39. In 52:7-12, the herald is there (52:7), YHWH’s return is mentioned (52:8), the people receive comfort (52:9), and salvation reaches to the ends of the earth (52:10). This shows that Isa 40 continues the story of YHWH and Zion (cf. 44:26): after judgment, from her elevated vantage point, Zion will witness the coming of YHWH. Thus, two features stand out in the poem: the central, elevated (cf. 2:2), position of the city and the return of YHWH.

<sup>97</sup> **do not fear** (v.9): “Fear not” is a leitmotif in chs.40-66 (a jussive, negated with אַל + 2<sup>nd</sup> per.; + fem. sg. in Isa 40:9; 41:14; 54:4, 14; 57:11 [2x]; + masc. sg. in Isa 7:4; 10:24; 37:6; 41:10, 13, 43:1,5; 44:2; + masc. pl. in 8:12; 35:4; 51:7). YHWH is the true God who comforts his people (cf. 51:12); therefore, God’s people have nothing to fear. In other contexts, the fear of YHWH is encouraged (50:10; 59:19), for his word and deeds are awesome to behold, and he will bring them about (עֲשׂוֹתָךְ נִרְאָה, 64:2; cf. Exod 19:16; Isa 40:8; 59:21; 66:2, 5). See E. W. Conrad, “The ‘Fear-not’ Oracles in Second Isaiah,” *VT* 34 (1984): 129-52.

<sup>98</sup> **Here is your God** (v.9): הִנֵּה in direct discourse registers attention.

<sup>99</sup> **is now coming** (v.10): I have translated the impf (בֹּאִי), “YHWH is now coming,” due to its collocation with הִנֵּה. The interjection adds vividness and import to the fact that YHWH’s arrival is imminent (cf. Exod 7:15; Gen 6:17; 1 Sam 3:11); הִנֵּה emphasizes the “immediacy, the here-and-nowness, of the situation” (See *IBHS*, 37.6f; 40.2.1).

<sup>100</sup> **as a warrior** (v.10): Lit. “as a mighty one.” גִּבְרִיָּה, here with an adjective indicating the predicative (Joüon 133c). The processional presumes the victory of the mighty Warrior.

<sup>101</sup> **arm** (v.10): The arm of YHWH is a source of comfort (cf. v.11) and a display of might (v.10), recalling the deliverance of the exodus (cf., e.g., Exod 6:6; 15:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19). YHWH’s arm is a

before him. <sup>11</sup>As a shepherd he will tend his flock, with his arm he will gather lambs and in his bosom carry [them]; the mother sheep he gently leads.”

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recurring image in Isaiah, signaling a second exodus; i.e., along with other metaphors and language, it transforms the original exodus by application to promises for deliverance from exile and a new exodus (cf. Isa 30:30; 33:2; 48:14; 51:5 [2X]; 51:9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8; 63:5; 63:12).

<sup>102</sup> **See** (v.10): **וַיִּבֶן** is deictic, directing the reader to look and perceive that YHWH is indeed coming, complete with “reward” and “recompense” in train.

<sup>103</sup> **his** (v.10): I have left *waw* untranslated; it may be epexegetical, but probably serves to intensify (cf. *IBHS* 652, “moreover”).

B.7. *Isaiah 41:8-16*

<sup>41:8</sup> But you,<sup>104</sup> Israel, are my servant,<sup>105</sup> Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham who loved me,<sup>106</sup> <sup>9</sup> whom I secured from the ends of the earth and from its remotest parts, and called. I say to you, ‘You are my servant, whom I have chosen and have not rejected.

<sup>10</sup> Fear not, for I am with you; do not be frightened, for I am your God. I am<sup>107</sup> strengthening you and<sup>108</sup> helping you, upholding you with my saving right hand. <sup>11</sup> Lo, they will be ashamed and humiliated, everyone who was angry<sup>109</sup> with you. They will be as nothing, and they will perish,<sup>110</sup> your legal adversaries.<sup>111</sup> <sup>12</sup> Though you may look for them, you will not find them, your opponents. They will be as nothing, and as naught, your enemy combatants, <sup>13</sup> for I am YHWH, your God, who grasps your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I myself am helping you.

<sup>14</sup> Fear not, you worm, Jacob, men of<sup>112</sup> Israel, I myself am helping you’—the declaration of YHWH. ‘Your Redeemer<sup>113</sup> is the Holy One of Israel.’ <sup>15</sup> Look, I will appoint<sup>114</sup> you<sup>115</sup> a threshing-sledge, new, having spikes; you will thresh mountains, and crush (them), the hills<sup>116</sup> you will make like chaff. <sup>16</sup> You will winnow, and the wind<sup>117</sup> it will bear them off, the high wind will scatter them. But you<sup>118</sup> will rejoice in YHWH, in the Holy One of Israel, you will boast.

<sup>104</sup> **But you** (41:8): The repetition of this phrase in v.16 forms an *inclusio*.

<sup>105</sup> **you, Israel, are my servant** (v.8): I have translated this as a verbless clause. Modern translations (ESV, NRSV, JPS, NIV) translate this adequately as a simple case of apposition in direct address, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob...” The design, however, is to stress the fact that Israel is YHWH’s servant and YHWH’s servant must not serve idols.

<sup>106</sup> **who loved me** (v.8): The construction is ambiguous, and it is often translated “Abraham, my friend.” Its form is *qal* active ptc. masc. sg. + 1cs. object suf., lit., “...who loved me.” Aquila has ἀγαπητοῦ μου (cf. LXX, Symmachus, Vg.), and BHS proposes יְיָ אֱהֵבָה, passive, “whom I loved.”

<sup>107</sup> **I am strengthening...helping...upholding you** (v.10): I have followed Goldingay in translating this as an ‘instantaneous perfect’ after a verb of speaking; the event is *actual* by virtue of the speaker’s commitment to effecting it. He explains, “Theologically, the use of such *qatal* verbs brings out the significance of a ‘salvation oracle’ as relating to the future, but to a future that has already begun.” See Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1*, 164 (cf. *IBHS*, 488; Joüon 112g; GKC §106m).

<sup>108</sup> **and** (v.10): The coordinator וְ is “hardly distinct from” *waw*, although there is certainly an asseverative aspect to it (*IBHS*, 663-64).

<sup>109</sup> **were angry** (v.11): BHS proposes אֲרִיזִים as an alternative to אֲרִיזִים. No change is demanded.

<sup>110</sup> **will perish** (v.11): 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> has יִשָּׁרְפוּ. This could be explained by dittography from the first clause of the verse. No change is demanded.

<sup>111</sup> **your adversaries** (v.11, cf. v. 12): GKC §128t, The genitive relation presents the opponents of YHWH’s people as possessing the qualities named or being in a state of legal disputation/striving against/engaged in combat against Israel.

<sup>112</sup> **men of** (v.14): Peshitta has (w)mnjnh, BHS proposes מְתֵי “dead ones” = Akk. *mutu* curculio. The difficulty is that “men of” hardly seems a likely parallel to “worm.” The point of comparison with worm is helplessness/insignificance (Ps 22:6; cf. Deut 4:27; Gen 34:30, with מִתִּי מְסַפֵּר “few in number”; cf. LXX, ὀλιγοστός), suggesting “little Israel” (NIV) and “insect” (cf. NRSV). Regarding the latter, many today advocate amending to מַגְגֹּת ‘maggot’ (cf. 14:11; Job 25:6). See, e.g., J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 199; J. Koole, *Isaiah 40-48*, 168. Baltzer is probably correct to say that the phrase has the connotation of “a small number of people” (|| “remnant”) (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 104).

<sup>113</sup> **Redeemer** (v.14): The legal term, גֹּאֵל, appears here for the first time in Isaiah 40-66 (cf. 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8).

<sup>114</sup> **appoint** (v.15): This translation of אָשָׂא is more consistent with installation than “make you.”

<sup>115</sup> **you** (v.15): referent is still Israel.

<sup>116</sup> **Mountains and hills** (v.15): = obstacles that separate the exiles from their destiny (Zech 4:7); related to preparation (cf. 40:1-9).

<sup>117</sup> **the wind** (v.15): metaphor of judgment against the mountains and hills (cf. 40:6-8, 24).

<sup>118</sup> **But you** (v.16): see v.8, *inclusio*.

## B.8. Isaiah 42:1-12

42:1 Here is<sup>119</sup> my servant,<sup>120</sup> the one<sup>121</sup> I support;<sup>122</sup> my chosen one,<sup>123</sup> whom my soul accepts.<sup>124</sup> I put my רוּחַ upon him,<sup>125</sup> מִשְׁפָּט<sup>126</sup> he will bring forth for the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will neither cry out nor lift up nor make his voice heard in the street. <sup>3</sup> A bent<sup>127</sup> reed he will not snap,<sup>128</sup> and a faint wick, he will not snuff out,<sup>129</sup> definitively<sup>130</sup> he will bring

<sup>119</sup> **Here is...** (42:1): The interjection, הִנֵּה, is a macrosyntactic sign (*IBHS*, §38.1e), often translated “behold,” “look” or “see.” It may close a section (as a concluding statement) or introduce the next major segment of a text. Here, it introduces 42:1-4, the presentation of YHWH’s servant. In 41:29, the same particle closed the stanza by means of a summarizing statement regarding the numerous worthless idols. I have translated “Here is” to highlight the contrast of 42:1 with that preceding verse, since YHWH is now pointing to the figure he presents to court.

<sup>120</sup> **my servant** (v.1): LXX has “Jacob (Ἰακωβ), my servant” (see 41:8, 9). The context (41:8-16; 42:18-19) suggests that this figure is communal/collective Israel.

<sup>121</sup> **the one** (v.1): Although the figure is unidentified, *this* servant-figure is the one the Great King supports.

<sup>122</sup> **I support** (v.1): אֲחַזְקֶהְיָ, *qal* impf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. אֲחַזְקֶה (cf. 41:10, “...surely, I uphold you” אֲחַזְקֶהְיָ, spoken clearly, in that context, of Israel/Jacob). Once again, the prep. + pron. suf. indicates syllepsis of the person; hence, the 3<sup>rd</sup> masc. sg. pron. suf. corresponds to its antecedent (עַבְדְּךָ). The phrase “whom I support” is used of kings of Israel (cf. Ps 63), of Israel itself (Isa 41:10, 13; 42:6), and of Cyrus (45:1).

<sup>123</sup> **my chosen one** (v.1): בָּחַרְתִּי adj. masc. sg. cstr. + 1cs. LXX has “Israel (Ἰσραήλ), my chosen one” (again, following 41:8-9).

<sup>124</sup> **accepts** (v.1): *qal* pf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg. קָבַץ recalls the use of the same vb. root in 40:2. Like Israel, this figure is not rejected (נָאֵס) but accepted (קָבַץ). Accepted in “my soul” (נַפְשִׁי), indicates the center of the person, the core of God’s being; i.e., YHWH accepts this figure whole-heartedly (cf. Jer 14:10). This servant is the one YHWH favors. As with God’s decision to choose Jacob, this is as close as we get to an explanation for *why* God has chosen this servant (cf. Deut 7:7; Pss 44:4; 149:4). Support for Jacob-Israel’s *continued* role in God’s plan comes from God’s forgiveness of them (cf. 40:2; 44:22) and Israel’s privilege according to God’s promise to Abraham (41:8).

<sup>125</sup> **I put my רוּחַ on him** (v.1): רוּחַ is positive (cf. Isa 41:29; 61:1-3; 59:21). Anointing may suggest equipment for war (cf. Jdgs 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14) or a royal orientation (e.g., Saul/David in 1 Sam 9:17; 10:24; 12:13; 16:8-13; cf. Isa 11:2; 61:1; Zech 9:9). The point is that the servant figure is designated and equipped with God’s רוּחַ in order to perform a task/office (K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 127). As a declaration of YHWH, this clause may be a performative speech-act: “I hereby put...” (cf. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol. I*, 213). In contrast with the images of the false gods, who can neither speak nor perform acts in history (41:21-29), this figure has the (wind/breath) spirit of God. Bearing the Creator’s image, the servant is fit to fulfill the Creator’s purpose (cf. 42:5ff).

<sup>126</sup> **מִשְׁפָּט** (v.1): 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וּמִשְׁפָּטוֹ, “and his מִשְׁפָּט” (cf. vv. 3, תּוֹרָתוֹ, v.4). The inversion of the normal word order places emphasis on the fronted word מִשְׁפָּט, and its repetition signals the passage’s theme. Repetition is the “key to understanding the passage” (C. R. North, *The Second Isaiah*, 107). Bringing/implementing מִשְׁפָּט (v.3) may point to the responsibility of the king (cf. 1 Kgs 3:28; 7:7; Ps. 72:1-2); hence, the task outlined here appears to be most consistent with the royal orientation of Isa 7-39 (9:1-6; 11:1-5; 16:4b-5; 32:1-5; 37:35). Nevertheless, in 42:1-4, it appears that the royal vocation applies to communal (or collective) Israel (cf. Isa 55:3ff.).

<sup>127</sup> **bent** (v.3): *qal* passive ptc. masc. sg. רָצַץ “bend, snap, be broken.” רָצַץ may be a forensic term, “broken” (with respect to law), *HALOT*, 1285.

<sup>128</sup> **he will not snap** (v.3): The verb is transitive, its object is the reed (קָנֶה). A bamboo reed/cane used for a walking stick or for support is bent and broken, but the servant will not snap it or break it in pieces. “Break” (שָׁבַר) is used elsewhere for crushing oppression (Isa 58:6; Deut 28:33).

<sup>129</sup> **he will not snuff out** (v.3): יִכְבֶּה *pi’el* impf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. + 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg. obj. suf., the antecedent is כֹּהֵן. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has יִכְבֶּה. The absence of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. fem. sg. suf. is insignificant, for in either case the verb is transitive.

<sup>130</sup> **definitively** (v.3): אִמְרָתָא + ל occurs only here. Like מִשְׁפָּט above (v.1), it is fronted (v.3b). English translations usually render it “faithfully” (NRSV, NASB, NIV has “in faithfulness”), an accusative of manner (Williams, *Syntax*, §274; cf. *HALOT*, 69).



about<sup>131</sup> מַשְׁפֹּט. <sup>4</sup> He will neither grow faint, nor be broken,<sup>132</sup> until<sup>133</sup> he establishes<sup>134</sup> מַשְׁפָּט in the earth;<sup>135</sup> for תּוֹרְתוֹ the coastlands wait.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the true God,<sup>136</sup> YHWH, he who created the heavens and stretched them out, spreading out<sup>137</sup> the earth and what emerges from it, giving breath to the people in it and לַרְוּ to those who walk upon it: <sup>6</sup> “I am YHWH. I call you for the cause<sup>138</sup> of righteousness, and I grasp [you] by your hand.<sup>139</sup> I will fashion<sup>140</sup> you, and I will make you into a covenant for people,<sup>141</sup> into a light<sup>142</sup> for nations, <sup>7</sup> opening<sup>143</sup> blind eyes and bringing forth prisoners from prison, from imprisonment those sitting in darkness. <sup>8</sup> I am

<sup>131</sup> **bring about** מַשְׁפֹּט (v.3): This is a repetition of the phrase from v.1, but it points to the fulfillment of the servant’s task rather than its beneficiaries.

<sup>132</sup> **be broken** (v.4): *qal* impf 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg., GKC §67q with orig. *qibbûš*, has *šûreq*, if רָצַץ MT. BHS suggests pointing רָצַץ, *nip‘al*. LXX has θραυσθήσεται, “be broken/oppressed” (cf. Tg). I have followed this suggestion in my translation.

<sup>133</sup> **until** (v.4): עַד for degree has the sense of “culmination point,” or “ultimate goal”; “to the point that” he will realize the Lord’s purpose (Williams, *Syntax*, §312).

<sup>134</sup> **establishes** (v.4): Better than “puts” or “sets,” this rendering of שִׁים has the connotation of something accomplished, as confirmed from the context.

<sup>135</sup> **in the earth** (v.4): Mention of nations and coastlands in this context suggest that the scope of his activity includes the entire earth rather than a particular land (e.g., Israel or Babylon).

<sup>136</sup> **the true God** (v.5): יהוה האל is used here in the messenger formula, referring again to the incomparable one (cf. 40:12-31). Here, I am following an observation of Georg Braulik, who writes, “In Deutero-Isaiah, אל is usually an appellative, but with a very clearly defined meaning: a god who really exists. . . . YHWH as אל, that is, as the god who alone is truly God, cannot be compared to any other (god).” See Georg Braulik, *Theology of Deuteronomy: The Collected Essays of Georg Braulik, O. S. B.* (Ulrika Lindblad, transl.; D. & F. Scott Publishers, 1998), 123. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has האל האל האל.

<sup>137</sup> **spreading out** (v.5): נִטְיָהִם looks like *qal* ptc. masc. pl. constr. + 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. pl. suf., but this is *lāmed-hê*, and so the pl. may only be apparent (cf. Joüon §136e).

<sup>138</sup> **for the cause of righteousness** (v.6): This could be כּ of cause; lit., I called you “because of righteousness.”

<sup>139</sup> **I grasp...form...turn** (v.6): BHS suggests reading *waw* consec, i.e., “I take” (Syriac, Tg., and Vg.); “I watch over” (Syriac, Vg.); “I made” (LXX, Syriac, Vg.) (cf. 41:13).

<sup>140</sup> **fashion** (v.6): Morphologically ambiguous, is it צָר (“fashion”) or נָצַר (“watch over/keep”)? The former would be parallel with the vb. in the next clause (and 49:5). YHWH’s servant is formed/fashioned by YHWH, the Creator-potter, competent for the task, reconstituting a people organized under covenant (see 43:1; 44:3, 21, 24; 49:5).

<sup>141</sup> **a covenant for people || light for nations** (v.6): *waw* conj. + impf 1<sup>st</sup> per. sg. נָתַן + 2<sup>nd</sup> per. masc. sg. suf. (acc.) + ל. נָתַן with acc. + ל = “to turn someone into something”/“make,” parallel with preceding clause (צָר) and with שִׁים (HALOT, 734). “I will make you...” + ל prep. phrase (2x): (a) עַם בְּרִית (b) אֻמִּים גּוֹיִם. The objects of the preposition ל, (a) and (b), are parallel phrases: בְּרִית || אֻמִּים (n. sg. const.), עַם (n. masc. sg. collective abs.) || גּוֹיִם (n. masc. pl. abs.). The half-line parallelism suggests that both phrases are to be understood after the same fashion; i.e., that the force of the preposition and the genitive function in each phrase correspond. According to IBHS (9.5.2e), a special genitive of this sort is the genitive of advantage, in which the genitive is the recipient or beneficiary of a favorable action denoted by the construct term. Thus, appositional, “covenant people,” seems ruled out by the parallel expression “light for nations.” The nations receive light, and people benefit from the covenant.

<sup>142</sup> **light** (v.6): To what does “light” refer (cf. Isa 2:5; 9:1; 42:16; 45:7)? It appears to have not only an epistemological function (“opening blind eyes”) but also a redemptive function (“bring out prisoners from the dungeon”).

<sup>143</sup> **opening...and bringing forth** (v.7): The sequence of infinitives (ל + inf. constr.) is often understood as infinitive of purpose; hence, these would be final clauses indicating YHWH’s purpose in his commitment to the servant (cf. IBHS, 36.2.3.d). I follow Goldingay, however, and see each inf. const. as a gerund, further explicating the nature of the preceding action (vb. נָתַן). See Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1*, 229.

YHWH, that is my Name.<sup>144</sup> My glory I will never give to another nor my praise to idols.

<sup>9</sup> The former things, look, they have come, and new things I am declaring. Before they spring up, I announce [them] to you.”

<sup>10</sup> Sing to YHWH a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who descend to the sea and its fullness, to the coastlands<sup>145</sup> and their inhabitants. <sup>11</sup> Let the wilderness and its towns lift their voices, the villages where Kedar dwells. Let the inhabitants of Sela cry aloud, from the mountaintops, let them shout aloud. <sup>12</sup> Let them give glory to YHWH, and let them declare his praises in the coastlands.”

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<sup>144</sup> **Name || glory** (v.8): Note the repetition of the divine name after **לשׁ** in vv.5, 6, and 8, and note the word pair “Name” and “glory” associated with “praise,” forming an inverted parallel relationship with the repetition of these words in vv.10-12. Since YHWH will realize his objective through this Servant, he demands the glory of it. By contrast, the images of the false-gods have never proved themselves in creation or redemption.

<sup>145</sup> **those who go down to the sea...to the coastlands** (v.10): The construct function here expresses a genitive of location (the sea) and its force continues to the parallel (coastlands). See *IBHS*, §9.5.2f.

## B.9. Isaiah 42:18-25

<sup>42:18</sup> “You deaf ones, hear! You blind ones,<sup>146</sup> consider, so that you<sup>147</sup> might see! <sup>19</sup> Who is as blind as<sup>148</sup> my servant, or as deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is as blind as my sent one,<sup>149</sup> or blind<sup>150</sup> as the servant of YHWH?<sup>151</sup> <sup>20</sup> You witness<sup>152</sup> many things, but disregard them; his ears are open,<sup>153</sup> but he never listens. <sup>21</sup> For his<sup>154</sup> righteousness’ sake, YHWH desires to magnify<sup>155</sup> תוֹרָה, and<sup>156</sup> make it glorious, <sup>22</sup> but<sup>157</sup> this is a people

<sup>146</sup> **you deaf...you blind** (42:18): The substantives, “deaf ones” (הַחֲרָשִׁים) and “blind ones” (הַעֲרִיִּים), are both marked (+ art.) masc. pl. adjectives; they stand in apposition to the personal pron. 2<sup>nd</sup>-per., virtually present with each impv. (GKC 126f). Hence, the deaf and the blind are nominatives of address, indicating the ones to whom the speaker is addressing this statement (*IBHS*, 130).

<sup>147</sup> **so that you may see** (v.18): The non-finite verb, לִרְאוֹת (inf. const.), is related to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. masc. pl. subject of the impv. (הַחֲרָשִׁים).

<sup>148</sup> **as my servant** (v.19): אֲנִי אֶמְצָא can express a counter-statement after a negative statement. Here it occurs in a rhetorical question (מִי), “Who is blind?” which expresses the idea that “No one is blind, but my servant,” and so requires the neg. particle, אֵין. The hyperbole expresses YHWH’s frustration, as if to state that there is no possible alternative. Followed by the preposition, כִּי (3x), it has the sense of a superlative. “Who is as blind as my servant?” The answer is “No one” (see BHRG §40.9.3).

<sup>149</sup> **my sent one** (v.19): MT has כַּמְשָׁל (lit., “as one compensated,” prep. כִּי + *pu’al* ptc. masc. sg. abs.). The meaning of this participle is uncertain (HALOT, 1535). BHS proposes the emendation, “like my sent one” (כַּמְשָׁל חֵי), a semantic parallel to the preceding clause, “my messenger I send” (כַּמְלֵאכִי אֶשְׁלַח). As an attractive alternative, both Koole (*Isaiah 40-48*, 269, citing Kissane, Muilenburg, and North) and Goldingay (*Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 1, 258) follow BDB (p. 1,023) and translate, “one in a covenant of well-being,” from the denominative vb., שָׁלַם. Koole appeals to 54:10 (בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם) and to the link this would make with 42:6 (בְּרִית עֵם). This solution is also found in the English versions: NRSV and ESV have “dedicated one”; NASB has “he that is at peace with me”; TNIV has “one in covenant with me;” NJPS has “chosen one;” and NLT “chosen people.” Blenkinsopp thinks its meaning cannot be determined, and compares Meshullam to Jeshurun (44:2) as a sobriquet for Israel (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 218). This suggestion is also found in Zürcher Bibel, which transliterates, Meschullam. There is nothing in the context to indicate that this is a proper noun referring to Meshullam, son of Zerubbabel (1 Chr 3:19). This view was first suggested by J. L. Palache (cited in C. North, *Servant of YHWH*, 89-90), and recently revived by J. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66, Revised* (WBC 25; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

<sup>150</sup> **or as blind** (v.19): BHS recommends reading with two Mss, Symmachus, וְחָרָשׁ “or as deaf” to consistently maintain the notion of the dual plight of the servant as one who is both blind and deaf. Nevertheless, “blind” is well attested and the more difficult reading.

<sup>151</sup> **servant of YHWH** (v.19): Although others, esp. prophets, are called YHWH’s servants, this is the only time that this phrase is used in Isaiah. Everywhere else in the OT it refers to Moses (cf. Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1; 15; 8:31, 33; 11:12; 12:6 [2x]; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2; 4, 5; 2 Kgs 18:12; 2 Chr 1:3; 24:6) or Joshua (Josh 24:29; Judges 2:8).

<sup>152</sup> **you witness...but never heed them** (v.20): MT recommends reading, “see” (רְאוּת, inf. abs.), which is syntactically parallel to “open” (פָּקֹחַ, inf. abs.). Likewise, two Mss have 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg., “he does not” (שָׁמַר), instead of 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. (תִּשְׁמַר), “you.” There is an alteration between 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. and 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. sg. throughout this segment, and Mss evidence does not suggest emendations, making for consistency. Gesenius sees this as a peculiarity of poetic (or prophetic language), where there sometimes occurs (supposing the text to be correct) a more or less abrupt transition from one person to another (GKC 144p, citing Gen 49:4; Isa 31:6; 52:14; 61:7 and Ps 22:9). “You” is masc. sg.; if it refers to the people (עַם), it is a collective sg.

<sup>153</sup> **his ears are open** (v.20): The infinitive absolute is used as a finite verb in a proverbial saying without *waw* conj. The “subject” of the verb is supplied by the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. impf. in the subsequent clause.

<sup>154</sup> **his** (v.21): The pron. is kataphoric, referring to YHWH and not the servant, *pace* NJPS, which inserts “servants,” reading “his servant’s vindication.”

<sup>155</sup> **YHWH delights to magnify** תוֹרָה (v.21): Here the complementary verbal idea in the imperfect (יִגְדִּיל, “to magnify”) is subordinate after the perfect (GKC 120c). It is an objective clause (Joüon 157b); YHWH pleasure is to increase and glorify his תוֹרָה.

despoiled and plundered, trapped<sup>158</sup> in holes all of them, and in prison houses they are hidden. They have become spoil, with no one to deliver; [they have become]<sup>159</sup> booty, with no one to say, ‘Bring back!’ <sup>23</sup> Who among you will give heed to this? Who will pay attention and listen regarding the time to come?”

<sup>24</sup> “Who gave up Jacob for booty<sup>160</sup> and Israel to plunderers? Was it not YHWH whom<sup>161</sup> we sinned against, in whose ways they were not willing to walk,<sup>162</sup> and in whose דרכיו they did not obey? <sup>25</sup> Therefore,<sup>163</sup> he poured out wrath upon him,<sup>164</sup> his anger and the might of war. Although it scorched all around, he did not care; although it burned him, he did not take it to mind.”

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<sup>156</sup> **it** (v.21): BHS recommends reading יָדָה—cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>; this emendation communicates the meaning of the text, for דרכיו is the antecedent.

<sup>157</sup> **But** (v.22): disjunctive *waw* (*waw* + non-verb) indicates a contrast here.

<sup>158</sup> **trapped in holes** (v.22): BHS proposes the passive *hop'al* pf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. pl. (הִפְחוּ, cf. Tg.) instead of *hip'il* inf. abs. (with MT).

<sup>159</sup> **[they have become] booty** (v.22): 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and Medieval mss, Syriac (Peshitta), Tg., and Vg. make this clearer by adding the preposition ל, designating “booty” as compound object of the verb הָיוּ and strengthening the parallelism. It is possible that a second ל may have fallen out after the first ל; nevertheless, in poetic parallelism, the governing power of the preposition is extended to the corresponding substantive of the second member (GKC 144hh).

<sup>160</sup> **for booty** (v.24): The MT recommends reading לַמְשִׁסָּה instead of לַמְשֻׁסָּה, with un-pointed *waw*. BHS proposes *holem-waw*. MT maintains the I-class vowel of the root.

<sup>161</sup> **whom** (v.24): the demonstrative pron. הוּא is used more frequently in poetic language than in narrative to introduce a dependent relative clause. It is used like אֲשֶׁר, and there is a resumptive element (וְהוּא) as a constituent in its clause (*IBHS*, 337).

<sup>162</sup> **willing to walk** (v.24): Just like the inf. const. (*IBHS*, 597) when it is used as a verbal complement, here, the inf. abs. (הָלַךְ) is used as an object of the finite verb (אָבַד), and the statement of place (“in his ways”) precedes it in order (Joüon 123bN; GKC 113d, 114m).

<sup>163</sup> **Thus** (v.25): *waw* consec. + impf. in a reason/result clause.

<sup>164</sup> **Wrath...his anger** (v.25): MT has fem. sg. abs., which, with “his anger” (אָפַר), Gesenius calls permutation. It is a variety of apposition (GKC 131k), but rather than complementary to the preceding substantive, it defines it. (Cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, which has f. sg. const. אָפַר.)

B.10. *Isaiah 49:1-13*

<sup>49:1</sup> Listen to me, coastlands; pay attention, peoples from afar. YHWH has called me from the womb; from the belly of my mother, he pronounced<sup>165</sup> my name. <sup>2</sup> Then he made<sup>166</sup> my mouth as a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand, he hid me. He made me a choice arrow; in his quiver, he concealed me. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, “You, my servant, are ‘Israel’,<sup>167</sup> by whom<sup>168</sup> I will display my glory.” <sup>4</sup> As for me,<sup>169</sup> I said, “It was for nothing that I labored;<sup>170</sup> for an empty breath<sup>171</sup> I wasted my strength. Nevertheless,<sup>172</sup> my מִשְׁפָּט<sup>173</sup> rests<sup>174</sup> with YHWH, my compensation [rests] with my God.” <sup>5</sup> But now,<sup>175</sup> YHWH says—he who formed me from the womb to be his servant<sup>176</sup> in order to<sup>177</sup> return Jacob to him, but Israel would not assemble.<sup>178</sup> Still, I am honored<sup>179</sup> in YHWH’s sight, and my

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<sup>165</sup> **pronounced my name** (49:1): זָכַר (*hip ‘il pf 3<sup>rd</sup> per. masc. sg.*) + שָׁם = “to name” (*HALOT*, 270). In 2 Sam 18:18, the form has the sense of causing the name to be remembered (the point of Absalom’s memorial). In Isa 48:1, Israel invokes YHWH’s name, but hypocritically. Here, naming is in view, raising the question of the speaker’s given name.

<sup>166</sup> **Then he made...and he made...and he said** (vv.2, 3): *Wayyiqtol* forms usually indicate a storyline. The use of the preterit suggests one here as the servant figure narrates his story and conversation with the Lord of history.

<sup>167</sup> **you...are ‘Israel’** (v.3): Westermann sees “Israel” as an addition that signals early evidence for the collective interpretation (*Isaiah 40-66*, 209). Similarly, Whybray supposes it to be a gloss. Others support its removal. See, e.g., H. M. Orlinsky, “The So-Called ‘Servant of the Lord’,” 79-89; N. Lohfink, “‘Israel’ in Jes 49,3,” 217-29. I favor its retention as an integral part of the presentation. “Israel” is only missing from one Ms<sup>K</sup> (cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, Vg., LXX, Tg.). After the per. pron. אֲנִי, I take the proper n. שְׂרָאֵל as predicative, a clause rather than a vocative or appositional phrase.

<sup>168</sup> **by whom I will display my glory** (v.3): The prep. expresses means or instrument (Williams, §243), and the verb is *hitpa ‘el* (reflexive), “to display one’s glory” (CDCH, 352).

<sup>169</sup> **As for me** (v.4): A clause atom (וָאֲנִי, *waw conj.* + 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. subj. pron.) introduces the subject of the verse, “me.” This verse-initial constituent is suspended (or dislocated, a *casus pendens*). The *casus pendens* (or nominative absolute) may be occasioned by the importance of the subject in the mind of the writer (Joion 156b; see also, *BHRG*, 357). Here, it brings out the contrast in the assessment of the two partners in the dialogue, YHWH and his servant.

<sup>170</sup> **It was for nothing that I labored** (v.4): The adverbial expression is fronted here as in the subsequent clause, “for an empty breath my strength I have wasted.” Labor/toil recalls Isa 40:28-31.

<sup>171</sup> **empty breath** (v.4): Hendiadys: the two nouns (לֵתֵהוּ וְהַבֵּל) present a single, coordinate, idea. Compare רוּחַ וְתֵהוּ in 41:29, where YHWH characterizes the worthless images of false gods as empty. In 30:7, Egypt is empty, “utterly useless” (הַבֵּל וְרֵיקָה, TNIV).

<sup>172</sup> **Nevertheless** (v.4): According to C. van der Merwe, אָכֵן may be used to deny, with great conviction, the implications of an expression that directly precedes it (see *BHRG* §41.3.4), reversing or restricting what immediately precedes it (cf. *IBHS*, 671).

<sup>173</sup> **my מִשְׁפָּט** (v.4): מִשְׁפָּט has the sense ‘judicial decision’ or ‘vindication’ here, but subsequent verses link this poem to the מִשְׁפָּט-theme of 42:1-4. Koole captures the sense, “God will put the Servant in the right. Not the judgment of people but that of God decides, and he will show that the task has not been given for nothing” (*Isaiah 49-55*, 15).

<sup>174</sup> **rests** (v.4): English idiom requires the verb ‘to be’ in the translation of the nominal clause. The context contrasts the figure’s assessment with YHWH’s, and the listener-speaker recognizes with whom the true assessment resides.

<sup>175</sup> **But now** (v.5): וְעַתָּה is a transitional signal in the dialogue, introducing a shift in YHWH’s argumentative tact. YHWH answers the servant’s objection in v.4 with reaffirmation and not only renewed but also extended purpose in v.5 (see *IBHS*, 39.3.4f). This latter observation suggests that וְעַתָּה may be both temporally and logically connected to the figure’s own statement of trust in YHWH.

<sup>176</sup> **formed me to be his servant** (v.5): The prep. + 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. pron. (לוֹ) indicates possession (on צִוָּר, see 42:6).

<sup>177</sup> **in order to** (v.5): The parenthesis continues here, so that the contents of what YHWH *now* says begins in v.6 after וַיֹּאמֶר.

<sup>178</sup> **but Israel would not assemble** (v.5): The form is *nip ‘al* impf. Syriac and Arabic texts propose 1<sup>st</sup>-per., אֲסַכֵּי. I take a risk here, perhaps, by following the Kethib rather than the Qere. The Q, לוֹ, here,

God, he is my strength.<sup>180</sup> <sup>6</sup> He said,<sup>181</sup> “It is not enough, since<sup>182</sup> you have become my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and the preserved<sup>183</sup> of Israel to bring back; consequently,<sup>184</sup> I will make you into a light for nations,<sup>185</sup> so that<sup>186</sup> my salvation<sup>187</sup> may reach to<sup>188</sup> the ends of the earth.”

<sup>7</sup> Thus says YHWH, the Redeemer of Israel, its Holy One, to one deeply despised,<sup>189</sup> abhorred by nations,<sup>190</sup> slave<sup>191</sup> of rulers: “Kings will see<sup>192</sup> and arise, princes, they will

makes the statement positive, as in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, a few Mss LXX, Aquila, and Arabic (cf. Tg). YHWH has a servant, designated 'Israel', with a commission to fulfill as regards Israel, but Israel has frustrated his objective. The K retains the negative particle, suggesting an antithetical parallelism, and I think the syntactical differences between v.5b $\alpha$  (inf const. +  $\text{וְ}$  + n. + prep. + suf.) and 5b $\beta$  (*waw* dj. + neg. part. + impf.) actually support this view. The *waw* disjunctive indicates the contrast, and as is well known, conjunctions are frequently omitted in the terse parallelism of BH poetry. On the positive reading (with  $\text{וְ}$ ), one might expect a second infinitive (with  $\text{לְ}$ ) in v.5b $\beta$ , as is common in these poems. Moreover, the MT's Q may be theologically motivated, and removing the neg. particle keeps the focus positively upon assembling Israel *to him*, that is, to God. The strength of my translation is that it makes explicit the nature of the speaker's frustration.

<sup>179</sup> **I am honored** (v.5): The *waw* conj. + impf., here, may indicate a result clause, which may be parallel (across lines) with v.4, “my decision was with YHWH, and my result with my God” (note the repetition of divine names). Peshitta, Vulgate, and BHS read ״ (waw consec.); cf. v.8, same syntax: perf. + impf + *waw* conj., 2x (1<sup>st</sup> time: LXX<sup>b</sup> καὶ ἔπλασά σε; cf. Peshitta, Arabic, and Vg.; 2<sup>nd</sup> time: LXX καὶ ἔδωκά σε; cf. Syriac and Vg.). Verse 5, “so I shall be honored”; v. 8, I have formed you...I have made you.”

<sup>180</sup> **Still, I am honored...he is my strength** (v.5): BHS suggests transposing this line with the end of v.4, but there is no textual warrant for this. The intervening clauses are important to the message. I have translated the conj. *waw*, “still,” to make this plain.

<sup>181</sup> **He said** (v.6): The divine speech, interrupted by the parenthesis in v.5, needs to be introduced again.

<sup>182</sup> **not enough, since** (v.6): נִפְּלָא (*nip'al* pf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per masc. sg.) + וְנָתַן indicates a causative expression regarding the servant figure's task: what was "too insignificant" (= "not enough") for God's servant will be expanded now in keeping with YHWH's purpose through him as God's agent (*HALOT*, 1103). It is as if to say, "Because you have been designated as 'Israel', my servant, it is not enough for you to fulfill a prophetic vocation to Israel, you must also fulfill Israel's vocation to the nations." J. Goldingay (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol.2*, 164) thinks the comparative understanding is forced and understands the וְנָתַן as causative. He says that this makes the two clauses the effective, indeed actual, subject of *nāqāl*. He translates, "It is slight, because of your being my servant, to raise...and to turn..."

<sup>183</sup> **the preserved** (v.6): The text is written וְנִצְרִי, but BHK suggests וְנִצְרִי, adj. or, corrected, *qal* passive ptc. masc. pl. constr. נִצְרִי. The root may recall 11:1, ‘branch’ נֶצֶר (Michaelis, cited in Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol.2*, 165); in 10:20-22, as here, it refers to a remnant or the survivors of Israel.

<sup>184</sup> **consequently** (v.6): The independent clause represented by *qtl* (נִקְלָ) also constitutes the logical basis or cause for the situation expressed by the relative *wqtl* (וַיִּתְּתִיךְ).

<sup>185</sup> **a light of nations** (v.6): Here the order is changed as regards the parallel phrases, “covenant of/for people” and “light of/for nations” (cf. 42:6). It appears that in the calling of this servant this purpose is God’s main purpose, and a fruit of the covenant’s re-realization.

<sup>186</sup>**so that** (v.6): לְ + י״ן inf. const. indicates intention (HALOT, 510), expressing what YHWH's ultimate purpose will achieve and the result in parallelism with the preceding prepositional phrase. Woodenly, "I will make you...to be my salvation."

<sup>187</sup> **salvation** (v.6): This is the first time **ישועה** appears in DI (v.8; 51:6, 8; 52:7, 10; cf. 12:2, 3; 62:1).

<sup>188</sup> **to** (v.6): The prep. **כִּי** has the sense “as far as.” Compare its use at the close of the first strophe in ch.42 (v.4). Both 42:4 and 49:6 are statements about the servant’s success.

<sup>189</sup> **deeply despised** (v.7): The genitive function with נִפְסָא, ‘despised of soul’, may be subjective, ‘self-despised’. Compare v.4, and contrast this assessment with YHWH’s own assessment of his servant, ‘Israel’, in 42:1. Koole (*Isaiah* 49-55, 32) thinks the context demands a passive interpretation, and this may be based on 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Syriac (cf. Tg), which read, לְבִזּוּי, ‘being despised’. The phrase may be rendered “deeply despised” (NRSV), treating נִפְסָא as an adverbial accusative.

<sup>190</sup> **abhorred by nations** (v.7): read with LXX (Vulgate) the passive *βδελυσσομενον*; cf. Tg., **לְמַתְעַב**, with the nations (גוֹיִם) as collective agent (a subjective genitive of agency, *IBHS*, 9.5.1).

bow down with reference to<sup>193</sup> YHWH, the Faithful One, the Holy One of Israel, since<sup>194</sup> he chose you.”

<sup>8</sup> Thus says YHWH, “In a time of favor I answer you; and in a day of salvation I will help you.<sup>195</sup> I will fashion you;<sup>196</sup> I will make you into<sup>197</sup> a covenant for people,<sup>198</sup> restoring<sup>199</sup> the land, allotting the uninhabited property,<sup>9</sup> saying to the prisoners, ‘Come forth!’, to those in the darkness, ‘Be free!’<sup>200</sup> They will pasture along the ways, on all the bare plains, their pasture. <sup>10</sup> They will not hunger or thirst, neither heat nor sun will strike them down; for he who loves them will lead them, unto springs of water he will escort them. <sup>11</sup> Then I will make all my mountains<sup>201</sup> a road, and my highways will rise up. <sup>12</sup> Look, these will come from afar; look, these from the North and from the Sea, and these from the land of Syene.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Shout for joy,<sup>203</sup> Heavens, and rejoice, Earth, break forth<sup>204</sup> in cheerful song, Mountains, for<sup>205</sup> YHWH comforts<sup>206</sup> his people, on his afflicted he will have compassion.”

<sup>191</sup> **slave** (v.7): Although the word עַבְד is translated “servant” elsewhere, the title is not expressed in honor of the servant’s association with YHWH or as an identification of the character of his servanthood here, but as a disparaging comment in view of the nation’s experience of oppression by foreign tyrants.

<sup>192</sup> **Kings will see** (v.7): A direct object is lacking, but the immediate context may suggest that what will be seen is YHWH’s chosen one(s) as the embodiment of light (אֱלֹהִים) in v.6.

<sup>193</sup> **with reference to** (v.7): It is difficult to know whether the complex prep. לְמַעַן indicates cause (‘because of YHWH’) or purpose (‘for the sake of YHWH’), or perhaps better, the one with respect to whom the action is made (‘with reference to YHWH’), the one whose glory is displayed through the servant (v.3).

<sup>194</sup> **since** (v.7): This translation aims to express the logical relationship of this *wayyiqtol* clause to the preceding. The fulfillment of YHWH’s purpose in connection with the servant will result in the subjugation of the nations and the glorification of YHWH (v.3; cf. 42).

<sup>195</sup> **I answer you...I help you** (v.8): The verbs are not preterits; rather, the perfect forms offer assurance as regards YHWH’s commitment to his servant, of which he can be certain (cf. v.4).

<sup>196</sup> **fashion** (v.8): This verb is morphologically ambiguous. The root could be either I-*nun* (נָצַר) or historically I-*waw* (צָר). I-*nun* would indicate YHWH’s preservation of his people (cf. נָצַר, v.6), but in parallel with נָתַן, צָר appears to be the better choice exegetically. (See the parallel expression in 42:6.)

<sup>197</sup> **I will make you into** (v.8): לָ + נָתַן with acc. = make/turn *into* (CDCH, 288; HALOT 734).

<sup>198</sup> **covenant of people** (v.8): On the genitive function and for the idea that this utterance points to a reconstituted/restored people organized by covenant, see comments on 42:6 in the previous chapter, and note the parallel with v.6. NJPS translates, “to be a covenant of people”; ESV and NIV translate “to be a covenant for the people.”

<sup>199</sup> **restoring...allotting...saying** (vv.8-9): The verb is identical to that of v.6 as regards the tribes of Jacob (לָקַח, “to restore”); here the object is the land, which is not ‘raised up’ but restored and re-inhabited (v.9). As in 42:6, the infinitives (לָ + inf. constr.) are understood as gerunds, rather than infinitives of purpose, because they further explicate what results from YHWH’s action in making the servant a covenant for people.

<sup>200</sup> **be free** (v.9): GKC 110c sees in this use of the impv. an expression of direct assurance or promise, most clearly in the case of the imperative *nip‘al* (passive). Thus, the fulfillment of the command remains correlative to the response of the persons addressed. BHS suggests transposing *sof passuq* here, but no such change is required.

<sup>201</sup> **my mountains...my highways** (v.11): LXX has sg. ὄρος = אֶרֶץ, without the additional 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pron. suf. Peshitta (Tg.) has pl. The plural with suf. seems odd, but the MT retains the harder reading; either way, the suf. does not make a significant difference for interpretation.

<sup>202</sup> **Syene** (v.12): This is a proper noun, trad. Sinim = ‘China’, HALOT, 752, “a land from which the exiles will return home.” LXX = Persia (ἐκ γῆς περσῶν); ESV has “Syene,” JPS “Sinim,” NIV “region of Aswan.”

<sup>203</sup> **for joy** (v.13): Joüon 125o, accusative of result. Cf. 14:7; 44:23; 54:1; 55:12.

<sup>204</sup> **break forth** (v.13): pointing as פָּצְחוּ.

<sup>205</sup> **for** (v.13): with a causal sense, motivating the hymn of praise.

<sup>206</sup> **comforts** (v.13): The *qatal* form indicates YHWH’s activity presently, with reference to the time point of the song of praise.

## B.11. Isaiah 50:4-11

<sup>50:4</sup> My Lord YHWH<sup>207</sup> gave me a disciples' tongue<sup>208</sup> to know<sup>209</sup> how to edify<sup>210</sup> the weary<sup>211</sup> with דבר.<sup>212</sup> He wakes [me]<sup>213</sup> every morning;<sup>214</sup> he wakens my ear to obey<sup>215</sup> as the disciples do.

<sup>5</sup> My Lord YHWH has opened my ear.<sup>216</sup> As for me,<sup>217</sup> I did not rebel; I did not turn away.<sup>218</sup> <sup>6</sup> My back I have given to scourging, and my cheeks to those who pluck the beard;<sup>219</sup> my face I did not hide<sup>220</sup> from insults or spitting.

<sup>207</sup> **My Lord YHWH** (50:4): Cf. 48:16b. According to *IBHS*, 7.4.3e, יהוה may mean 'my Lord' or 'Lord of all'. In cases where the divine epithet is used in conjunction with YHWH, as it is here, the former ('my Lord') may be intended. I have followed this suggestion, since it corresponds to 'my servant' (v.10) and communicates an intimate bond. Compare "my people" || "your God" (40:1).

<sup>208</sup> **disciples' tongue...as a disciple** (v.4): The substantive adjective is masc. pl., an attributive genitive (*IBHS*, 9.5.3b), representing the quality or characteristic of this figure's tongue. It is that of one taught (i.e., a disciple). Each occurrence of "disciple" is distributive plural. Lit., he has "a taught ones' tongue" and "an ear to obey as the ones who are taught by YHWH do." The figure is YHWH's obedient student or disciple, speaking as one who has first listened to the Master-Teacher.

<sup>209</sup> **to know how** (v.4): לדע, a final infinitive, indicating purpose. The collocation of this form with a second infinitive (verbal complement) suggests the sense, "know how (to do something)."

<sup>210</sup> **to edify** (v.4): The verb, "to know," is followed by another infinitive constr. + definite obj. יער (את), perhaps referring to those whom the figure addresses. The verb only appears here in BH: qal inf c., עות + ל prep., and in Aramaic it means "to help." The root (*pi'el*) is usually glossed "bend," "twist," which makes little sense in this context. LXX has τοῦ γινῶναι ἐν καιρῷ ἡνίκα δεῖ εἰπεῖν λόγον (lit., "to know when in time to speak a word"). This takes the form as a denominative from עת ("time"). BHS proposes לרעת (from רעה, "to shepherd"), others the *pi'el* לעות, לעות. Holladay (p. 269) suggests לעות. The sense of the Aramaic verb, עות, glossed "to help," is the simplest solution and in this context, where it conveys knowledge received through teaching, it may be rendered "to edify."

<sup>211</sup> **the weary** (v.4): Although the article is absent (i.e., ער is indeterminate), the noun is preceded by את, (the sign of the definite direct object), to indicate the object clearly (Joüon 125h; cf. GKC 117c). Hebrew fragments from the Cairo Geniza have ער.

<sup>212</sup> **דבר** (v.4): Lit., "a word," which in the context has the sense of instruction. The inf. constr. "to edify" takes the direct object accusative, "the weary," and it could take the adverbial accusative, "with דבר." According to the MT, which places the *ātnah* after דבר, this is the logical midpoint of the verse. Hence, "tongue" and "word" belong together. Compare the colometry of BHS, which suggests the translation, "with דבר he wakes" || "every morning he wakens..." Thus, BHS places the focus upon listening rather than speech. The rationale would be that a disciple does not speak, a disciple listens. He edifies others in the fulfillment of his vocation by example alone (cf. 42:1-4; 53:7). After a lengthy survey of opinions, Jan Kooze says, "The diversity of opinions shows that every solution is debatable" (*Isaiah* 49-55, 108, 106-109). He also notes that the text is talking about the word that the Servant must speak and is speaking. Therefore, דבר goes with the first line and the mention of his 'tongue'. The second line mentions the servant's 'ear'. In my view, God has given this figure a disciple's tongue so that he may address 'the weary' with דבר.

<sup>213</sup> **he wakes** (v.4): BHS suggests deletion of the verb ער after דבר. A repetition may have occurred in copying, but this suggestion is without support in ancient texts and versions. The verb is a favorite word in chs.50-52, and it appears throughout DI for stirring up military figures/images (41:2, 25; 42:13; 45:13; 51:9) and for wakening or rousing Jerusalem-Zion (51:17 and 52:1).

<sup>214</sup> **every morning** (v.4): The imperfect is used in connection with this repeated phrase (2x, בבקר). Mss, LXX, Old Latin, and Arabic delete one occurrence, leaving ער בבקר, "he awakens me early."

<sup>215</sup> **to obey** (v.4): שמע ל (inf. constr.) is parallel to the preceding לדע + ל, a final infinitive indicating purpose: "to obey/hearken." Both infinitives are dependent on the preceding verb in the independent clause. In the previous case, the inf. depends on the preceding, נתן לי לשון, "he gave me a tongue." In this case, the inf. depends on the preceding, ער לי און, "he rouses my ear."

<sup>216</sup> **My Lord YHWH has opened my ear** (v.5): BHS thinks this somewhat redundant expression may be an addition, but no change is required.



<sup>7</sup> My Lord YHWH helps me; therefore, I am not disgraced. Therefore, I set<sup>221</sup> my face as flint; I know I will not be shamed.<sup>222</sup> <sup>8</sup> My Vindicator<sup>223</sup> is near, who would contend with me? Let us stand up together! Who would be my adversary?<sup>224</sup> Let him approach me!

<sup>9</sup> Look, my Lord YHWH helps me.<sup>225</sup> Who is he<sup>226</sup> that would condemn me? Look, each of them would wear out as a garment—a moth would devour them!

<sup>10</sup> Who among you<sup>227</sup> reveres<sup>228</sup> YHWH by obeying the voice<sup>229</sup> of his servant? Even though<sup>230</sup> he<sup>231</sup> walks about in darkness and has no light, he should trust<sup>232</sup> in YHWH's name and rely upon his God. <sup>11</sup> Look, all of you kindlers of fire, who set light to flaming

<sup>217</sup> **As for me** (v.5): The clause begins with *waw* + non-verb and a dislocated construction (or nominative absolute), introducing background information to express the content of the “teaching.” Note the phonetic parallel between “my Lord” (אֲדֹנָי) and “as for me” (אֵנֹכִי).

<sup>218</sup> **turn away** (v.5): I am following HALOT (p.744), “...with אָחָז ‘to turn back’.” Similarly, BDB (p.690) expresses its figurative sense as “prove faithless.”

<sup>219</sup> **Those who pluck the beard** (v.6): Lit., “those who make bare.” Cf. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> לִמְטִילִים

<sup>220</sup> **I did not hide** (v.6): Instead of הִסְתַּרְתִּי, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has הִסְיִרְתִּי “turn aside” *hip ‘il* pf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg. סֹר.

<sup>221</sup> **I set** (v.7): The verb form is perfect, שָׁמַתִּי. The present outlook of the speaker is the result of his assurance that YHWH will be his helper (cf. *IBHS*, 484).

<sup>222</sup> **I know that I am not shamed** (v.7): a further consequence of YHWH's help: just as the resolve is based on Yahweh's help, so also the closely related assurance that he would not be shamed. The prophet describes the result of the truth stated in v.7 (“YHWH helps me”).

<sup>223</sup> **My Vindicator** (v.8): מַצְדִּיקִי, *hip ‘il* ptc. masc. sg. צִדֵּק + 1<sup>st</sup> sg. suf., as a noun: ‘one who declares righteous’ (CDCH, 374). The participle, even when the meaning is verbal, takes nominal suffixes (Joüon 121k).

<sup>224</sup> **my legal adversary** (v.8): The genitive (מִשְׁפָּטִי) is used in a conventional idiom with בֹּעַל (lit., “owner of my dispute”) to represent the nature of the challenger (*IBHS*, 149n27, cf. HALOT 651). The term בֹּעַל, here, is a status word, indicating the owner of an object which embodies his manner, character, occupation. The phrase recalls the court context of chs.40-48 (40:27; 49:4).

<sup>225</sup> **Lord YHWH helps me** (vv. 7, 9): יְעֹזֵר־לִי (2x).

<sup>226</sup> **Who is he** (v.9): the demonstrative pron. is used almost as an enclitic (הֵוֹאֵ) to emphasize the interrogative, הִי (GKC 136c).

<sup>227</sup> **Who among you** (v.10): I take this as a straightforward interrogative, though Gesenius takes it rhetorically, in which case הִי functions as an indefinite pronoun (cf. GKC, 137c). The 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. pl. is distributive.

<sup>228</sup> **reveres** (v.10): The connotation is positive, not fear and trembling (however appropriate), but reverence and awe.

<sup>229</sup> **by obeying the voice** (v.10): I understand the participle as adverbial, indicating the specific manner by which reverence for YHWH is displayed. LXX ἀκούσάτω (Peshitta) read as jussive, יִשְׁמַע, “let him obey...” It implies obedience rather than rebellion (בָּרַדִּי) to a word spoken with authority (cf. Gen 22:18; Exod 4:1; Deut 8:20; 21:18; Josh 22:2).

<sup>230</sup> **even though** (v.10): The notion is concessive. I do not take the relative clause as a reference to the servant, though I acknowledge the syntactical ambiguity. Those “walking about in the dark” are members of the audience addressed by this passage. The relationship of vv.10-11 makes this clear: the passage presents a choice between servant-discipleship and rebellion. It challenges its audience to choose between following YHWH's light, which entails life as YHWH's servant-disciple, or setting light to one's own torch, which constitutes rebellion, autonomy, and death (cf. Deut 30:15).

<sup>231</sup> **he** (v.10): I take the antecedent of the implicit subject of הָלַךְ (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.) to be the one who reveres YHWH and obeys his Servant, rather than the Servant himself. “He” is of course grammatical and generic. “They” distorts the sense, and the gender inclusive “one” is awkward and gives the verse a gnomic quality. To paraphrase: “Even though the one who reveres YHWH may walk in darkness presently, he should trust and rely upon his God.”

<sup>232</sup> **one should trust...and rely upon** (v.10): I read these verbs in the modal (and ethical) sense of should/ought/must.

torches:<sup>233</sup> walk by the light of<sup>234</sup> your fire, and by the flaming torches you burn. From my hand, this<sup>235</sup> comes to you: you will lie down in torment.

<sup>233</sup> **all of you kindlers of fire, who set light to flaming torches** (v.11): The whole phrase is understood as a vocative.

<sup>234</sup> **by the light of...and by...** (v.11): BHS proposes the construct plural **לְרֵשֶׁתָּם** to agree in number with the pron. suffix on the absolute **רֵשֶׁתָּם**. The two prepositions (**בְּ**, 2x) have the force of means/instrument.

<sup>235</sup> **this** (v.11): I take the *demonstrate* to refer forwards (i.e., it is cataphoric).

B.12. *Isaiah 52:13-53:12*

<sup>52:13</sup> Look,<sup>236</sup> my servant will have success.<sup>237</sup> He will be lifted up<sup>238</sup> and exalted,<sup>239</sup> he will be highly<sup>240</sup> elevated. <sup>14</sup> Just as<sup>241</sup> many were appalled concerning him<sup>242</sup>—truly<sup>243</sup> his

<sup>236</sup> **Look** (52:13): Compare 42:1, where the contrast between the idols of false gods (41:29) and the servant-image YHWH supports was similarly introduced by הִנֵּה. Here, however, the interjection, הִנֵּה, does not present a new figure, but registers attention. Thus, Koole calls it an “Aufmerksamkeitserreger.” As a deictic interjection, it points to the immediately following שָׂכֵל (Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 264). Baltzer understands the function of the interjection and verb correctly when he says, “The outcome of the proceedings has already been anticipated” (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 394).

<sup>237</sup> **he will have success** (v.13): The verb שָׂכֵל (*hip ‘il* 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.) is typically rendered, “he shall prosper” (e.g., NRSV, NJPS) or “act wisely” (e.g., ESV, NIV). BDB (p. 968) provides six senses: “look at,” “consider, ponder,” “have insight, comprehension,” “teach, cause to consider/give insight,” “act circumspectly, prudently,” “prosper, have success...Isa 52:13.” LXX translates συνήσεται; Vg. ‘intelliget’ (cf. Dan 9:22; 11:33, 35; 12:3, 10). The larger context and the collocation of this verb with the three verbs in the subsequent clauses suggest exaltation (after humiliation) and the sense, “prosper, have success” (cf. v.10, “will succeed,” צִלַּח). Yet, v.15 also suggests a correlation with sight and understanding, and the whole passage involves not only movement from low to high, but also progression as regards insight (52:15; 53:11a). The emphasis, then, may be upon the instructive aspect of the servant’s sufferings (as knowledge of צִדִּיק, 51:7), knowledge possessed by the servant as an aspect YHWH’s instruction (50:4-9; 53:11b), which he conveys to weary disciples (53:1-11a; 54:13). As an adventurous paraphrase, I am tempted to render the clause, “...have success through what he teaches.” This translation is close to V. De Leeuw, *Die Ebed-Jahwe Profetieën* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1956), 220 (cited in J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 265), “success through insight.” In his modern classic on Isa 53, David Clines also combines the two typical renderings, perceiving a double entendre here: “His wisdom prospers!” (*I, He, We, and They*, 11). Elsewhere, the term is used of the success of Joshua (Josh 1:7) and Solomon (1 Kgs 2:3) as YHWH and David, respectively, exhort them to follow Moses’ instruction (cf. Ps 1:3). The *hip ‘il* (used here) is also used in contexts where the success of David (1 Sam 18:5, 14) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7) is due to YHWH’s presence with them. Although the figure is YHWH’s disciple, God’s presence, indicative of a dual agency, may be in view here (cf. Isa 53:2, 4b, 10). The verb also appears in Proverbs (16:23; 17:8), but each occurrence refers to the sage’s success/effectiveness because of instruction rather than insight/wisdom directly. My own translation follows BDB, observing, with Westermann, that this line only refers to the result: my Servant will succeed; i.e., achieve what YHWH proposes (*Isaiah 40-66*, 258). See also, J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 351 and J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 470, 488). The latter (closer to Clines) sees in the term a Davidic royal motif of both knowledge and success.

<sup>238</sup> **He will be lifted up** (v.13): This clause is omitted from the LXX for theological reasons, perhaps, since the phrase is uniquely used of YHWH, exalted as *the* King, in Isa 6:1, אֲנִי וְנִשְׁבַּח. The pair also appears in Isa 2:9-22, referring to self-exultant humanity, brought low by YHWH (אֲנִי וְנִשְׁבַּח, 2:9; cf. 2:12; 5:16; 33:10; 57:7, 15). Similarly, here, the negative description of his appearance (מַרְאֵה) compares him with humanity (אֲנִי וְנִשְׁבַּח, 52:14, though he appears sub-human) or to a plant that has struggled to grow (53:2). “The implication,” according to Wilcox and Patton-Williams, “is not necessarily that the servant is Yahweh or even divine; but there *is* an implication here that the servant’s work is Yahweh’s work, and the language used to make the point is daring, to say the least” (“The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,” 96, their italics). The point is well taken; nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the one who will be “exalted” (נִשְׁבַּח, 52:13) is the one who was first brought low in bearing the sin of others (נִשְׁבַּח, 53:12). For this observation, I am grateful to J. Alan Groves, “Atonement in Isaiah 53,” in *The Glory of the Atonement* (C. E. Hill and F. A. James, eds; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 81.

<sup>239</sup> **exalted** (v.13): The *nip ‘al* is passive not reflexive (*pace* Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 305 and J. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, Vol. 2, 289).

<sup>240</sup> **highly elevated** (v.13): מְאֹד is an intensifying adverb—‘extremely’ exalted (*IBHS*, 668).

<sup>241</sup> **Just as...so also** (vv.14-15): The compound כִּי ... כַּאֲשֶׁר indicates a comparison (Williams, *Syntax*, §264; GKC §161b); the relationship expresses both the temporal and vertical dynamics from (before) being brought low to (future) being exceedingly elevated.

<sup>242</sup> **him** (v.14): BHS suggests reading “about him,” עָלָיו (3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg.) along with 2 Medieval Mss, Peshitta, and Tg. (so also, Fohrer, Westermann, McKenzie, and Clines). These commentators perceive a scribal error due to the similarity between הֵן (3<sup>rd</sup>-per.) and הֵן (2<sup>nd</sup>-per.). LXX has οὗ (acc. sg. per. pron.), and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and Vg. also have 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. Given this strong textual witness, Goldingay follows Gesenius (GKC §144p), who observes how in prophetic language sometimes there occurs a more or less abrupt change from

appearance was marred,<sup>244</sup> so it was not<sup>245</sup> of a man, and his form, so it was not of the sons of men—<sup>15</sup>so also, he will astonish<sup>246</sup> many nations; concerning him, kings will shut their

one person to another. Goldingay thinks this simply reflects the way a prophet works; hence, YHWH is referring directly to his prophet (*Message of Isaiah* 40-55, 490). Seizo Sekine also defends the retention of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. sg. suf., though for a separate reason. According to him, the reader may still identify Israel (from 52:10-12) as the most likely audience of YHWH's speech in this prologue (vv.13-15); thus, the comparison drawn is between the servant's suffering and Israel's experience of exile: "just as many [nations] were appalled concerning you [Israel]" (v.14), "so also he [the servant] will shock many nations" (v.15). See Seizo Sekine, *Transcendancy and Symbols in the Old Testament* (BZAW 275; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 396. Nevertheless, Koole is right that in Isa 53 the servant's fate is described in contrast to the 'we' (*Isaiah* 49-55, 267); it is about what 'he' has borne for them. Reading 3<sup>rd</sup>-per., his view is that a comparison is made between the two referents of "many." The first "many" refers to the servant's Israelite opposition (v.14; 'we' in 53:1-11a; cf., e.g., Ps 3:1) and the second "many" refers to opposition from the "many nations." Hence, "Just as [his own people] were appalled at him, so he will astonish the many nations." So also, J. L. McKenzie, Young, Blenkinsopp. Yet, this appears to risk loss of the temporal and vertical movement indicated in vv.13-15. If the choice is made to follow BHS, "him" (in v.14), then a masc. sg. figure appears both to appall and to astonish. But if the comparison expresses degree and a change of time, this must be reflected in the sense of the two verbs: "Just as many [of his own] were appalled at him [the profound humiliation of my servant]" (v.14), "so he [my servant] will astonish many [foreign] nations [at his profound success]" (v.15). Thus, the view of Koole (*et al*) is not problematic if the comparison signals a movement from (earlier) depth of humiliation to (later) height of exaltation. Westermann comments, "The astonishment with which men later greeted the Servant's exaltation was exactly as great as had been their previous horror at the way in which he suffered and was treated with scorn" (*Isaiah* 40-66, 258). He appears to forget, however, the escalation in v.13: he was brought low, yes; but he will be *exceedingly* elevated.

<sup>243</sup> **truly** (v.14): the adverb כֵּן has an asseverative function here.

<sup>244</sup> **marred** (v.14): The form in MT (מַשְׁחָה, n. masc. sg.), "inhumanely disfigured." BHS conjectures *hop'al* ptc. masc. sg., מַשְׁחָה (מַשְׁחָה), "marred" or "ruined", which makes sense with "his appearance." 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has מַשְׁחָה, which suggests the transitive verb "anoint" (1<sup>st</sup>-per. sg.), requiring "his appearance" as the object, "I anointed his appearance" (so *HALOT*, 644). Based on the same scroll, David Clines (*CDCH*, 249) suggests *qal* pf. 1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl. "mar." It is difficult to know how "anoint" would fit the context, even if, based on its predominant sense elsewhere, one chooses to render נָזַח (נָזַח) "sprinkle/spatter" (cf. E. J. Young, "The Interpretation of *Yazzeḥ* in Isaiah 52:15" *WTJ* 3 [1941]: 125-32). For an interpretation that selects 'anoint', referring to the anointing of a priest as the prerequisite for "spattering" in v.15, see J. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah* 40-55, 479-80 and 491-92, though I find his reading uncharacteristically forced and unconvincing within a verse that refers to the servant's abhorrent appearance. Cf. James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1968, 1987r), 284-85. Goldingay's position is attractive because נָזַח is a priestly term (cf. Lev 6:20; Exod 29:21), as he thinks מַשְׁחָה in Isa 53 also is (Lev 5:19). This would add to the account of a prophetic figure with royal features a priestly metaphor, tying 52:13-15 not only to 52:10-12 but also to 53:7-8a, 10—if allusions to priestly torah can be sustained for the latter context. Seitz's comments walk the razor's edge. Without wanting to introduce too sharp of a distinction between the cultic and the juridical realms, he advises that moving directly from a single contested word into the full-orbed universe of Leviticus (esp. Leviticus 5; see also Ezekiel 40-48) is pushing things too far (leaving aside arguments for this or that dating of Israel's cultic theology) (Seitz, *Isaiah* 40-66, 467).

<sup>245</sup> **so it was not** (v.14): The prep. כֵּן (2x) here has the privative force with each element of the pair "man || sons of men." The servant is so inhumanely deformed (מַשְׁחָה) as to be unrecognizable as a man. If he no longer looks human, how does he bear the image of God? How can YHWH manifest glory through him? It appears safe to disregard him as insignificant (53:1-2).

<sup>246</sup> **astonish** (v.15): The MT yields *hip'il* impf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. נָזַח, "he will sprinkle" (ESV, NIV, NASB), here with the object "many nations" (*CDCH*, 267). BHS also proposes נָזַח (*qal* "spatter") or נָזַח (with subj. = the nations). Others נָזַח ("they will shake") and נָזַח ("despise him") נָזַח/"plunder him" נָזַח). Clines provides a second sense of the homonymous root, נָזַח, 'startle' (NJPS, NRSV), making this a *hapax legomena* (lit., "cause to leap"). LXX has fut. middle indic. 3<sup>rd</sup> per. pl., θαυμασονται, "[subj. nations] will marvel..." which fits the contextual parallel with v.14, "just as many were *appalled* (= shocked, LXX, ἐξίστημι) at you...so also he will *startle* [= astonish] many nations." As affirmation or denial of the first reading ("sprinkle/spatter") may be motivated partially by judgments of theology or history of Israelite religion and literature; it seems best to observe the parallelism in the context and gloss, "startle." Especially if מַשְׁחָה means "marred" rather than "I anoint," "startle" makes better sense here. Compare Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah* 40-55, 492-93. Here again, now with Childs, it is an exegetical misconstrual to heighten

mouths. For what was not recounted to them, they will have seen;<sup>247</sup> and what they had not heard, they will have considered.

<sup>53:1</sup> Who would believe<sup>248</sup> what we heard?<sup>249</sup> And YHWH's arm, on what sort of figure<sup>250</sup> has it been revealed? <sup>2</sup> He came up as a shoot before him,<sup>251</sup> as a root out of dry earth. He had neither form nor splendor that we would have noticed him,<sup>252</sup> no appearance that we would have esteemed him. <sup>3</sup> Despised and abandoned by men,<sup>253</sup> a man of sufferings and familiar with sickness.<sup>254</sup> As one would hide their face<sup>255</sup> from him, being despised,<sup>256</sup> we held him of no regard.

<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless,<sup>257</sup> our sicknesses, he carried,<sup>258</sup> and our sufferings, he bore them. While we regarded him plagued, stricken by God,<sup>259</sup> and afflicted, <sup>5</sup> he was pierced<sup>260</sup> because of<sup>261</sup> our transgressions, and crushed because of our guilt. Our chastisement that brought reconciliation<sup>262</sup> was on him, and by<sup>263</sup> his bruises, we are healed.<sup>264</sup> <sup>6</sup> We all like sheep

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the cultic context of the passage, which, he says, “never actually surfaces to the foreground” (*Isaiah*, 412-13). Since v.14b explicates v.14a and v.15b explicates v.15a, on any reading, v.14a (שָׁמְמוּ עַל יוֹ רַבִּים) and v.15a (כִּן יִזְה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים) must be understood together.

<sup>247</sup> **will have seen...will have understood** (v.15): The verbs are rendered as future perfect (and proleptic), since they refer to a state resulting from an antecedent action that appears to be future as regards the time of this utterance.

<sup>248</sup> **Who would believe** (53:1): Clause initial מִי expresses a rhetorical question with an indefinite pron. This rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer (or denial): “No one has or would believe what we have heard” (GKC §151a).

<sup>249</sup> **what we heard** (v.1): Lit., “our report” (שְׁמַעְתֶּנּוּ). Since the arm of YHWH in the parallel colon is a revelation, this first part may refer to what “we” have heard regarding this revelation (from YHWH? cf. Isa 51-52; 52:13-15). If so, then the body of the poem (vv.1-11a) constitutes the report and interpretation of the revelation that they have just seen through new eyes due to what they have (just) heard.

<sup>250</sup> **on what sort of figure** (v.1): Lit., “on/against whom” (עַל-מִי), expressing the object. The report involves the shocking disclosure of YHWH's arm on/against the figure (“he”) whose suffering the subsequent verses portray. In addition to Bonnard and Goldingay, see H.-J. Hermisson: “On what sort of figure has it now been revealed” (“The Fourth Servant Song,” 24) and Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 166.

<sup>251</sup> **before him** (v.2): BHS proposes לִפְנֵינִי, making the speakers the antecedent (1<sup>st</sup>-per. pl.) rather than the 3<sup>rd</sup> masc. sg., most likely YHWH (with YHWH's arm as antecedent) who is recognized as an agent throughout vv.1-11a.

<sup>252</sup> **that we would have noticed him** (v.2): The imperfect expresses *irrealis* (conditional), and the context suggest the translation (Eng. 3<sup>rd</sup> conditional). BHS proposes transposing the major disjunctive accent here, since this makes good sense as the logical midpoint of the verse.

<sup>253</sup> **by men** (v.3): The construct relation has the genitive function of agency.

<sup>254</sup> **familiar with sickness** (v.3): NIV has “familiar with suffering,” ESV has “acquainted with grief,” and NJPS, “familiar with disease”. יָדוּעַ is *qal* passive ptc. masc. sg. + *waw* conj. (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, LXX, Peshitta, and Vg. have *hip* ‘il יָדוּעַ) (Cf. v.11a).

<sup>255</sup> **As one would hide their face** (v.3): Lit., “as the hiding of a face.”

<sup>256</sup> **being despised** (v.3): 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וְנִבְזְזָהוּ; cf. Syriac, *wšḥjh*, BHS proposes וְנִבְזְזָהוּ, “we despised him.”

<sup>257</sup> **nevertheless** (v.4): כִּן may be used to deny the implications of an expression that directly precedes it (see *BHRG* §41.3.4; Isa 49:4; cf. *IBHS*, 671; *HALOT*, 47).

<sup>258</sup> **he carried** (v.4): The subject (הוא) is made explicit, emphatic.

<sup>259</sup> **stricken by God** (v.4): *Hop'al* ptc. constr., a genitive of means/with God = personal agency (Williams, *Syntax* §45a; Joüon §121p; *IBHS*, 143, 617). The sense is that God had done it for “our” sins.

<sup>260</sup> **he was pierced...crushed** (v.5): the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. figure is the understood subject of the two participles. BHS proposes reading the passive מְחַלֵּל, understood in my translation.

<sup>261</sup> **because of...because of** (v.5): The prep. בְּ in both cases is causal.

<sup>262</sup> **chastisement that brought reconciliation** (v.5): The genitive function here is that of purpose/result; lit., “resulting in peace/well-being” (Williams §44a, GKC §128q; *IBHS*, 146, genitive of effect). “Reconciliation” anticipates the final clause of v.6 and שָׁשׁ in v.10.

<sup>263</sup> **by his bruises** (v.5): the prep. בְּ has the force of means/instrument.

have gone astray; each to his own way, we have turned; as for YHWH, he laid upon him the guilt of us all.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, yet submissive; he did not open his mouth. As a lamb is brought to slaughter, and as a ewe before her shearers is silent, he did not open his mouth.<sup>265</sup> <sup>8a</sup> From protective justice, he was taken away.<sup>266</sup>

<sup>8a</sup> Now, among his generation—who would have considered [it]?<sup>267</sup> <sup>8b</sup> For, he was cut off from the land of the living. Because of my people's<sup>268</sup> transgression, the plague was upon him.<sup>269</sup> <sup>9</sup> So, he made<sup>270</sup> his grave with the wicked and with the rich<sup>271</sup> his tomb,<sup>272</sup> although<sup>273</sup> he had performed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> As for YHWH, he purposed to crush him, making him sick:<sup>274</sup> when<sup>275</sup> his life makes reparation,

<sup>264</sup> **we are healed** (v.5): lit., “there is healing for us,” an impersonal passive (Joüon §152fa) with the preposition ל governing the subject of the passive verb (*IBHS*, 210, 384).

<sup>265</sup> **he did not open his mouth** (v.7): BHS suggests this should be deleted (dittography).

<sup>266</sup> **From protective justice he was taken away** (v.8): The clause is most difficult. The Hebrew reads קח לִקַּח מִמִּשְׁפַּט וּמִעֶצֶר (prep. מִן + n. masc. sg. עֶצֶר + waw conj. prep. מִן + n. masc. sg. מִשְׁפַּט). Passive *qal* לִקַּח + מִן + obj. suggests the notion of spatial positioning or removal away from an object. If מִשְׁפַּט may be translated “justice,” then עֶצֶר may have the sense of “protection.” Together, as a hendiadys, the phrase has the sense, “protective justice,” as in, “away from protective justice he was taken.” This means he was denied the protection a just order could have afforded. See *CDCH*, 340, עֶצֶר, IV.; *HALOT* (p.871) has (i) “oppression” or (ii) “imprisonment” (cf. *CDCH*, 340, עֶצֶר, I), with the force of the prep. indicating *cause*. “By oppression/imprisonment and judgment he was taken away.” Compare NJPS, which takes this as hendiadys and translates, “oppressive judgment.” NRSV and NIV also understand the prep. as causal; NIV has “by oppression and judgment” (cf. ESV), but NRSV has “by a perversion of justice,” which is closer to the first option (i.e., the removal of protective justice). Either through the removal of protective justice or by means of active oppression, this servant, though righteous, has suffered God’s judgment.

<sup>267</sup> **Now, his generation...For** (v.8a<sup>β</sup>): דָּוִד is generally taken to refer to his contemporaries or the present generation (NASB, ESV, TNIV; Childs, Seitz, Westermann, Goldingay). Thus, the clause recalls v.1, “Who would believe what we have heard?” ESV connects it to the subsequent clauses, and so it has “as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off...stricken...” But this connection adds nothing new. The strophe follows such recognition (cf. v.4). And even now talks about the figure as ‘cut off’ and making his grave; it does not doubt that anyone would consider his demise. Instead, it begins to recognize that he will have a future in a new generation of offspring (זָרַע, v.10; cf. 6:13). Hence, כִּי is causal. NRSV paraphrases, “Who could have imagined his future [generation]?” The rhetorical question in v.8 (cf. v.1) thus introduces a new phase in the response of ‘we’ to YHWH’s announcement of the servant’s destiny (52:13-15). NLT captures the meaning, but turns the rhetorical question into a proposition, “No one cared that he died without descendants...yet...he will have many descendants.”

<sup>268</sup> **...of my people’s** (v.8): The 1<sup>st</sup>-per. suf. appears awkward, so BHS proposes מִפְשָׁעֵם “their transgressions,” eliminating “my people.” 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has the 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. suf., “the transgressions of his people.”

<sup>269</sup> **The plague was upon him** (v.8): Following MT, this is a noun clause. BHS, however, suggests reading נָגַע as a *pu’al*, “he was stricken.” LXX εἰς θανάτου reads לָמוּת as if מָוֶת were written, making the death of the servant figure explicit. Compare the next line, ending with בְּמָוֶתוֹ.

<sup>270</sup> **he made** (v.9): 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reads וַיַּעֲשׂוּ, masc. pl., “they made,” but BHS proposes the passive, יִיָּעַשׂ, “[his grave] was made”.

<sup>271</sup> **rich** (v.9): BHS proposes the plural “rich men” (שְׂעִירִים) || to “the wicked.” Goldingay thinks it makes best sense to see ‘wicked, rich’ as a description of Babylon (*The Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 508).

<sup>272</sup> **his tomb** (v.9): Tomb is parallel to grave. The problem is that the noun is plural (cf. Ezek 28:10). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has בְּוִמָּתוֹ, “tomb,” which parallels “grave.” LXX (Peshitta, Vg.) ἀντι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ = בְּמוֹתוֹ (cf. Tg). BHS proposes בְּמָתוֹ (בְּמָה) *sepulchum suum*; i.e., not a high place, but a burial place.

<sup>273</sup> **although** (v.9): The prep. is concessive (Williams, *Syntax*, §288b, 531; GKC §160c; Joüon §171e).

<sup>274</sup> **making him sick** (v.10): הִחֲלִי, *hip’il* pf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. BHS proposes הִחֲלִי אֶת־שָׁם, “healed the one who made his life” (1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וַיַּחֲלֵל הוּא), and for וַיַּעֲשׂוּ, the passive הִיָּעַשׂ, “is made.”

then he will see offspring [and] live long. Thus, YHWH's purpose will succeed by<sup>276</sup> his hand. <sup>11a</sup> After the labor<sup>277</sup> of his life, he will see [these things] and be satisfied.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>11b</sup> By his knowledge,<sup>279</sup> my Servant will show himself<sup>280</sup> righteous<sup>281</sup> to the many and their guilt he will bear. <sup>12</sup> For this, I will divide his portion with the many, and with the numerous he will share the spoil. Because<sup>282</sup> he poured out his life in death, and among<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> **when** (v.10): **כִּשְׁ** introduces the protasis of a conditional and introduces a temporal clause. The next clause introduces the apodosis.

<sup>276</sup> **by his hand** (v.10): The preposition indicates means.

<sup>277</sup> **After the labor** (v.11a): **אַחַר עֲמָל** + **זֶמן** of time, marking the period immediately succeeding the limit (BDB, 577).

<sup>278</sup> **see [these things] and be satisfied** (v.11a): 1QIsa<sup>ab</sup> and LXX have the additional object, **וְרָאוּ**/φῶς, and conjunctive accents in MT suggest reading **וְרָאוּ** and **וְשָׂבַע** together. Regarding the coordination of “see” and “be satisfied,” Gesenius (GKC §120h) explains that the verb representing the principle idea comes first, for the satisfaction does not come until after the enjoyment of the sight. Thus, something must first be seen if satisfaction is to be enjoyed. “Light” is an attractive solution. But if the understood object is ‘offspring’ + ‘long life,’ the addition is unnecessary. Hence, ‘he’ will be satisfied with this resulting blessing (so BDB, 959).

<sup>279</sup> **By his knowledge** (v.11a): The servant ‘actively’ communicates **דָּבַר** by means of ‘a pedagogy of submission’. The **בְּ** is instrumental, and the prepositional phrase begins the next clause, yet the suffix is ambiguous. I note the ambiguity, but render it as subjective and understand the knowledge to be what he imparts in word and action. Here, again, I am following MT (Tg.; 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), which connects this with what follows. See B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 419, J. Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 2*, 325, and J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 350. Blenkinsopp’s reading seems also to depend on Dan 12:3-4. On this question, with discussion of the literature, various other options (e.g., humiliation, rest, obedience, sweat), and the proposal to emend to **וְרָאוּ** (**רָעָה** “suffering”), see A. Gelston, “Knowledge, Humiliation or Suffering: A Lexical, Textual, and Exegetical Problem in Isaiah 53” in *Of Prophets’ Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honor of R. Norman Whybray on his Seventieth Birthday* (H. A. McKay and D. J. A. Clines, eds.; JSOTSup 162; New York: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 126-41.

<sup>280</sup> **show himself righteous** (v.11): **הִפְּדִי** **לְעַלְמָא**, “vindicate the cause of” (BDB, 842); “to assist someone towards his rights” (see Isa 1:16-17; 40:27) (HALOT, 1004). Probably, the forensic and ethical aspects of this term should not be ignored, for the servant is vindicated and brings **וְרָאוּ** (42:4) and healing (53:6) with a view to the establishment of a just and righteous universal order (**מִשְׁפָּט**) (42:4; 53:8a). For the forensic reading (with HALOT and BDB), see, e.g., S. M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 412; G. R. Driver, “Isaiah 52:13-53:12,” in *In Memoriam: Paul Kahle* (BZAW 103; M. Black and G. Fohrer, eds.; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968); 101; J. Muilenburg, *Isaiah 40-66*, 630; J. Koole, *Isaiah 49-55*, 335; B. Childs, *Isaiah*, 419, and J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 346-48. Compare J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 180-81. In this context, however, the servant has demonstrated his innocence by intervening on behalf of the many. This is the testimony of the ‘we’, and God underscores its truth with this closing word. ‘My servant’ demonstrates the way of the righteous sufferer and bears guilt. Goldingay rejects the idea that the servant justifies, vindicates, or brings righteousness to anyone because this is unparalleled in the OT (cf. 1 Kgs 8:32). He also translates with an intransitive, ‘one place’ or ‘internal *hip’il*’: “my servant will show many that he is indeed just” (*Isaiah 40-55, Vol. II*, 325); thus, the many = the indirect object (+ **לְ**). Cf. C. Westermann, who nevertheless rightly perceives YHWH’s agency behind his vindication (*Isaiah 40-66*, 268). Regarding the ‘internal’ *hip’il*, Waltke and O’Connor cite T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 212: “Lambdin remarks that these inwardly transitive usages constitute a translation problem since nearly all of the verbs have a transitive causative meaning as well. In fact, the senses are rarely confused with one another because the internal *Hiphil* is formally intransitive, whereas the transitive causative *Hiphil* generally has an expressed object clearly different from the subject” (IBHS, 441). I merely note the ambiguity of the syntax here and recognize the alternative translation, which takes ‘many’ as the direct object. On my reading, however, Goldingay’s conclusion does not follow, since “bearing guilt” for the many is expiatory. Indeed, after the first clause, one does not expect to read “...and their guilt he will bear.” Based on the analogy with 1 Kgs 8:32, one expects God’s servant to show himself righteous—by condemning the guilty!

<sup>281</sup> **righteous** (v.11b): Lit., “an innocent/righteous one.” Grammatical ambiguity appears in the shape of adj. + n. The adjective can be construed as a modifier, but I take it as a substantive (cf. IBHS, 262).

<sup>282</sup> **Because** (v.12): Here **וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר** introduces a causal/explicative clause (Joüon §170g). Compare J. Koole, *Isaiah III, Vol. 2*, 336, who translates, “in exchange for this,” which seems to refer to v.12a. I take the causal clause to be introducing v.12bc, as a summary reflection on the servant’s successful mediation.

the transgressors he was counted, and the sin of many he carried, for<sup>284</sup> the transgressors<sup>285</sup> he would intercede.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> **counted among** (v.12): מִנְּהָם + חָשַׁב = “be counted among” (*HALOT*, 599).

<sup>284</sup> **for** (v.12): The prep. has force of advantage.

<sup>285</sup> **the transgressors** (v.12): BHS proposes וְלִפְשָׁעָם, “their transgression”; cf. 1QIsa<sup>ab</sup>, LXX τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν.

<sup>286</sup> **would intercede** (v.12): A modal impf.. I agree with Westermann that חִפִּי' (hip 'il) here does not indicate that he made entreaty through making many prayers on behalf of the ‘many’. Instead, he would intercede for the transgressors by giving his life, suffering, and dying in their place. Moreover, for standing in the place of transgressors, YHWH will highly exalt him (*Isaiah* 40-66, 268). Cf. חִפִּי' hip 'il, v.6b, where the sense is “laid/imposed upon him,” with YHWH as the subject (a dual agency).



## B.13. Isaiah 61:1-11

<sup>61:1</sup> The Spirit of my Lord YHWH rests upon<sup>287</sup> me, because<sup>288</sup> YHWH has anointed me to bring good news<sup>289</sup> to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,<sup>290</sup> to proclaim release<sup>291</sup> for captives<sup>292</sup> and liberation<sup>293</sup> for the prisoners,<sup>294</sup> 2 to proclaim YHWH's year of favor<sup>295</sup> and our God's<sup>296</sup> day of vengeance,<sup>297</sup> to comfort all who mourn. <sup>3</sup>To provide for the mourners of Zion,<sup>298</sup> to give<sup>299</sup> them a turban instead of ashes, oil of gladness instead of mourning, a mantle of praise instead of a disheartened spirit.<sup>300</sup>

Then<sup>301</sup> they will be called, "Oaks of Righteousness," planted by YHWH<sup>302</sup> to display his glory.<sup>303</sup> 4 They will rebuild the olden<sup>304</sup> ruins, the desolations of former things<sup>305</sup> they will raise up; they will renew the devastated cities, the desolations ages-old.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> **rests upon me** (61:1): In this nominal clause, עָלַי appears as the comment; the English verb 'rest' is supplied.

<sup>288</sup> **because** (v.1): כִּי is a conj. of cause, explaining that the figure's anointing with YHWH's spirit is for the tasks expressed by the series of final clauses.

<sup>289</sup> **to bring good news** (v.1): בְּרָא with inf. constr. (complement of the preceding vb.) indicates the purpose of the spirit-anointing (*IBHS* §36.2.3d), the first in a series of seven final infinitives.

<sup>290</sup> **the broken-hearted** (v.1): The genitive function is epexegetical, "as to, with regard to"; they are lit., "broken as to the heart" (see *IBHS*, 151).

<sup>291</sup> **release** (v.1): פָּדוּת may be a technical term (cf. Lev 25:10; Ezek 46:17). According to J. P. J. Oliver, "it refers to the release of slaves from debt servitude, and of the restoring to its original owner of the ancestral land that had been alienated as a result of poverty and debt, every 50 years (Jubilee, cf. Lev 25:10)" (*NIDOTTE* 1: 986).

<sup>292</sup> **for captives** (v.1): In this context, the prep. לְ indicates advantage (Williams, §271a).

<sup>293</sup> **liberation** (v.1): פְּקוּחַ קוֹחַ (n. masc. sg.), "liberation." *CDCH* (p.364) suggests, perh. lit., "'opening up (of eyes)' after release from prison." BHS suggests reading with 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and several Medieval Mss פְּקוּחַ קוֹחַ; others have only the inf. constr. פָּקַח "to open (eyes)." Liberation makes best sense in parallel with פָּדוּת ("release") as something to be proclaimed with reference to the release or manumission of captives/slaves, unless what is proclaimed is an exhortation for prisoners to "open (their eyes)" to experience the light of deliverance after captivity.

<sup>294</sup> **for the prisoners** (v.1): לְ of advantage (Williams, §271a).

<sup>295</sup> **year of YHWH's favor** (v.2): Possessive לְ, a year of favor belonging to YHWH. The genitive function is adjectival, attributive—the year characterized by favor.

<sup>296</sup> **our God's day of vengeance** (v.2): Possessive לְ, a day of vengeance belongs to YHWH, and the genitive function is adjectival, attributive—the day characterized by vengeance.

<sup>297</sup> (v.2): BHS suggests transposing *sof pasuq* here, which makes sense, though it is without textual support.

<sup>298</sup> **mourners of Zion** (v.3): Related to the previous comment, BHS suggests that this phrase was an addition. It is difficult to discern the genitive function. Is Zion a spatial location (mourners *in Zion*) or object (mourners *for Zion*)?

<sup>299</sup> **to give** (v.3): LXX (cf. Syriac) delete the prep. + inf. const. לְתֵת. Following this and the two previous suggestions made by BHS, the verse would read as follows: "To comfort all who mourn, to provide a turban for them..." rather than, to provide for the mourners of Zion, to give a turban to them..." It does appear that a decision here requires further emendation, but unlike what we find in the LXX, there is no manuscript evidence to support further emendation. Emendation is attractive because it makes the syntax much smoother, but the more difficult reading may be sufficient reason to stay with MT. Proclamation and comfort by a herald of good tidings recalls 40:9.

<sup>300</sup> **a disheartened spirit** (v.3): כַּהֵלֶּה is fem. sg. adj., attributive (cf. "faint wick" in Isa 42:3).

<sup>301</sup> **Then...at that time** (vv.3, 5): My translation aims to show the relationship to YHWH's year of favor/God's day of vengeance.

<sup>302</sup> **planted by YHWH** (v.3): Although this pronouncement may be taken in parallel to the preceding—and with the pair in v.6, "Oaks of Righteousness" || "YHWH's Planting" and "Priests of YHWH" || "Ministers of our God"—the line goes further to indicate agency and in the subsequent clause, purpose.

<sup>303</sup> **to display his own glory** (v.3): the force of the preposition is to express purpose, and the verb is *hitpa'el*, reflexive "to display one's glory" (לְהַתְּפַאֵר; cf. 49:3).

<sup>5</sup> At that time, strangers will stand, and they will tend your flocks, children of foreigners will be your ploughmen and your vinedressers. <sup>6</sup> But as for you,<sup>307</sup> “Priests of YHWH,” you will be called; “Ministers of our God,” it will be said of you. The wealth of nations you will eat, and in their abundance, you will boast.<sup>308</sup> <sup>7</sup> Instead of your<sup>309</sup> shame, the best portion;<sup>310</sup> and [instead of]<sup>311</sup> an insult, they<sup>312</sup> will shout with joy<sup>313</sup> at their territory.<sup>314</sup> Surely,<sup>315</sup> in their own land,<sup>316</sup> they will possess the best portion; everlasting joy will be theirs.

<sup>8</sup> For I, YHWH, am he<sup>317</sup> who loves justice, who hates robbery and injustice.<sup>318</sup> I will give their reward in faithfulness, and an everlasting covenant I will make for them. <sup>9</sup> At that time, their offspring will be known among the nations and their descendents amid the peoples. All who see them will recognize them, because<sup>319</sup> they are the offspring YHWH has blessed.

<sup>10</sup> I will rejoice greatly<sup>320</sup> in YHWH. Let my soul exalt in my God, because<sup>321</sup> he has clothed me with garments of salvation, with a robe of righteousness he has covered me,

<sup>304</sup> **olden** (v.4): the adj. is עולם.

<sup>305</sup> **of former things** (v.4): ראשונים is anarthrous (cf. Joüon §137i). ‘The former things’ here encompasses not only the ruins but what led to them; i.e., the sins of the forefathers that brought about the devastations of the Assyrian and Babylonian periods. See the discussion in J. L. Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 281.

<sup>306</sup> **ages-old** (v.4): 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> adds קומו, “they will raise up,” completing the parallelism and the idea rather neatly.

<sup>307</sup> **But as for you** (v.6): the verse begins with *waw* + non-verb in a dislocated construction, expressing the contrast between the beneficiaries of this action and the subordinate lot of the strangers in v.5.

<sup>308</sup> **you will boast** (v.6): אטר hitpa ‘el impf., “boast.” BHS proposes אטר or אטר (מר = מר); others אטר (cf. Arabic *māra* ‘he has brought provisions’). If amended to אטר, “you will graze” (*CDCH*, 244); cf. 11:6 (מר) of a calf, feeding on the fat of the land. מור, ‘exchange’, is adopted by Scullion, who suggests the translation “barter with...trade with their wealth.”

<sup>309</sup> **your shame** (v.7): BHS suggests reading אטר instead of אטר; others simply אטר. No change is required.

<sup>310</sup> **a best portion** (v.7): For this gloss of משה, see *CDCH* (p. 252), a superlative.

<sup>311</sup> **instead of** (v.7): Here אטר is missing in the parallel expression, but in poetic parallelism, the governing power of the preposition is extended to the substantive in the second member (GKC §119hh).

<sup>312</sup> **they** (v.7): note the change from 2<sup>nd</sup>-per. to 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. Gesenius (GKC §144p) states that in prophetic language there sometimes occurs (supposing the text to be correct) a more or less abrupt transition from one person to another.

<sup>313</sup> **they will shout with joy** (v.7): BHS proposes אטר, recalling Isa 53, but without further emendation this does not appear to fit the context.

<sup>314</sup> **at their territory** (v.7): “at the sight of”?

<sup>315</sup> **surely** (v.7): א + א has an asseverative force here.

<sup>316</sup> **their own land** (v.7): I have supplied own to express the notion of continuity as regards restoration; it is restoration to their own possession/property.

<sup>317</sup> **I, YHWH, am he who loves** (v.8): אני יהוה אטר; I take YHWH in apposition with the independent per. pron. with the participle form expressing what is true of YHWH past, present, and future, though this may be an identifying clause, indicating that it is the true God: YHWH, who loves justice and hates hypocritical offerings.

<sup>318</sup> **robbery as injustice** (v.8): BHS suggests reading (instead of אטר ‘with burnt offering’) אטר = ‘with injustice’ with LXS, Syriac, Tg., and Arabic; if so, the prep. must be א of identity or specification: ‘robbery, i.e., injustice’ (see Williams, §§249-50).

<sup>319</sup> **because** (v.9): the prep. א is causal, introducing an interpretation.

<sup>320</sup> **rejoice greatly** (v.10): the imperfect is preceded by an inf. abs. with the same verbal root.

<sup>321</sup> **because...because** (v.10, 11): the prep. א is causal.

as<sup>322</sup> a bridegroom acts as a priest<sup>323</sup> with a turban,<sup>324</sup> and as a bride adorns herself with her finery. <sup>11</sup> Surely,<sup>325</sup> just as the earth brings forth what sprouts,<sup>326</sup> and as a garden causes its seedlings to spring up, so also my Lord, YHWH, causes righteousness to spring up, even praise before all the nations.

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<sup>322</sup> **as...as...just as...as...so also** (v.10-11): here relative sentences are attached to substantives with the particle of comparison (כ) (see GKC §155g; Joüon §174d).

<sup>323</sup> **acts as a priest** (v.10): BHS suggests הִכִּין, “makes ready,” *hip ‘il* impf. 3<sup>rd</sup>-per. masc. sg. הִכִּין. This fits the context, but it lacks textual support, and so it does not address the more difficult rendering of the consonantal text.

<sup>324</sup> **with...with** (v.10): “with” is preceded in both instances by a verb of wearing; these require the accusative (Joüon §125d); פֶּאֶר (‘turban’), in the first instance, must be regarded as an adverbial accusative.

<sup>325</sup> **surely** (v.11): Asseverative כִּי (Williams, *Syntax*, 449).

<sup>326</sup> **what sprouts** (v.11): lit., “its sprouting,” collective, cf. HALOT, 1034.



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