The Consequence of the Servant's Suffering for the Relationship between God and the Others in Isaiah 53

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Errata

Page	Line	Correction
17	8 from bottom	transpose מִשְׁחַת and מִשְׁחָה
18	2 from top	read מִשְׁחַת for מִשְׁחָה
31	2 from top	transpose מִשְׁחַת and מִשְׁחָה
	3 from top	transpose מִשְׁחַת and מִשְׁחָה
43	12 from bottom	transpose מִשְׁחָה and מִשְׁחַת

Added to the thesis after the thesis' defense.   Bergen, 20.02.2018

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Abstract

This thesis studies the relation between the servant's suffering and the others' reconciliation with God as it is presented in Isaiah 53.

Commonly, reconciliation in Isaiah 53 is suggested to be by the servant's message causing contrition or faith, or by his suffering being atoning. Reconciliation by message is commonly based on interpreting the servant as a prophet. Reconciliation by atonement is commonly based on expressions in Isaiah 53 which can be related to cultic expiation of sin.

The thesis is based on a thorough study of the text of Isaiah 53. This study suggests uncommon answers to textcritical questions. It also suggests uncommon translations of some verses of Isaiah 53. Further, it suggests that Isaiah 53 is intentionally ambiguous, both concerning the identity of the servant, and concerning reconciliation.

Isaiah 53 depicts the servant both as in need of reconciliation and as righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. This contradiction can be resolved by an ambiguous identity of the servant. Isaiah 53 depicts the servant ambiguously both as the servant Israel, in need of reconciliation, and as a righteous servant, who reconciles Israel.

Isaiah 53 states reconciliation by chastisement and insight, and by transfer of the burden of sin. Isaiah 53 also alludes to cultic expiation of sin. Concerning chastisement, the servant Israel is chastised by being sent into exile. This chastisement fosters the servant's insight and resulting righteous conduct, and thereby, the servant's peace with God. Concerning transfer of the burden of sin, Isaiah 53 states that the we-group's and the many's burden of sin, that is, the guilt incurred by sin and the punishment for this guilt, is transferred to the righteous servant. By this transfer, the others are freed from their guilt and thus reconciled. Concerning cultic expiation of sin, Isaiah 53 clearly alludes to both the Day of Atonement and the liability offering, but does not decisively depict the servant as scapegoat or liability offering.

Reconciliation by transfer of the burden of sin amounts to vicarious suffering. The concept of vicarious suffering has been criticized for being unique to the Old Testament. However, vicarious substitution is a concept commonly found in the Old Testament. Vicarious substitution may have inspired the concept of vicarious suffering as a specific application.

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Abbreviations

1QIs[a]   The almost complete Isaiah scroll from Qumran's cave 1

1QIs[b]   The other Isaiah scroll from Qumran's cave 1

4QIs[d]   Isaiah fragments containing 53:8–12 from Qumran's cave 4

LXX   The Septuagint

MT   The Masoretic Text

NRSV   The New Revised Standard Version

Chapter 1

Introduction

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (for convenience: Isaiah 53) is commonly understood to present an extraordinary constellation. The constellation consists of, on the one hand, groups designated only as "we" and "the many," clearly depicted as sinful, and, on the other hand, "my servant," depicted as suffering and righteous. The extraordinary aspect of this constellation, as it is commonly understood, is that the righteous servant's suffering reconciles the sinful groups with God. However, there is no common understanding on *how* the servant's suffering is related to reconciliation. This relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation is studied in this thesis.

The study starts with reviewing recent influential interpretations of Isaiah 53. These suggest two interpretations of the relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation. One of these depends strongly on the supposed identity of the servant, which in turn depends on the supposed context of Isaiah 53. Consequently, studying the relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation requires studying both the identity of the servant, and the context of Isaiah 53. This thesis studies the context of Isaiah 53, the identity of the servant, and the relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation as follows:

Section 1.1 reviews five recent influential interpretations of Isaiah 53. They disagree both on the context of Isaiah 53, and the identity of the servant, and the relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation. However, the reviewed interpretations exhibit a pattern. The relation between suffering and reconciliation is interpreted to be either by prophetic message or by atoning suffering. The former always coincides with identifying the servant as the prophet Deuteroisaiah, and the so-called servant songs as the context. On the contrary, the latter always coincides with identifying the servant as Israel, and supposing Isaiah 40–55 as the context of Isaiah 53. It seems that whether reconciliation is interpreted to be by atonement or message, is strongly dependent on supposed identity, which in its turn is dependent on the supposed context.

Consequently, Section 1.2 briefly discusses the context of Isaiah 53 and the identity of the servant. Both the question of the context of Isaiah 53 and of the identity of the servant

are debated. Answering them requires a detailed study of both language, structure, and content of Isaiah 40–55, which cannot be undertaken within a master's thesis. However, since the arguments for excising the servant songs do not seem to be compelling, it seems reasonable to assume that Isaiah 40–55 is the context of Isaiah 53, and consequently, that the servant is Israel.

All reviewed interpretations that consider Isaiah 40-55 to be the context of Isaiah 53, interpret the servant's suffering as atoning. This is motivated by expressions in Isaiah 53 which can be related to cultic expiation of sin. Consequently, the next step is to study these. In order to do so, Section 2.1 together with Section 2.5 establish the textual basis of Isaiah 53. Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 study expressions in Isaiah 53 which can be related to cultic expiation of sin. Since sin alternatively can be condemned and punished, Section 2.2.3 studies expressions in Isaiah 53 which can be related to judgment and punishment of sin. Section 2.3 studies expressions related to avoiding to sin, that is, to knowing God and keeping his commandments. Of these three groups of expressions, those related to judgment and punishment of sin seem to constitute the majority. Section 2.4 presents a corresponding translation. Section 2.6 studies the structure of Isaiah 53.

The study of the text of Isaiah 53 shows that the rhetoric device of ambiguity is employed frequently. Section 3.1 lists these ambiguities. The frequency of the rhetoric device of ambiguity suggests that it is employed intentionally, in order to create an ambiguous text. Specifically, verse 11aγ has several meanings which seem to contradict each other, with some stating that the servant is in need of reconciliation, while others state that the servant is righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. Since the ambiguity seems to be intended, this suggests that the identity of the servant is ambiguous. This is discussed in Section 3.2, suggesting that the servant seems to ambiguously designate both the servant Israel in need of reconciliation with God, and a righteous servant, who reconciles the servant Israel.

Chapter 5 studies the relation between the righteous servant's suffering and reconciliation. Section 5.1.1 discusses the reviewed suggestion of reconciliation by the servant's message fostering contrition or faith. This interpretation mixes up elements of reconciliation by transfer of the burden of sin and of reconciliation by chastisement, discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, respectively. Section 5.1.2 discusses the reviewed suggestions of the servant's suffering being atoning. Isaiah 53 alludes to both atoning sacrifices and to the Day of Atonement, but the servant is not decisively depicted as an atoning sacrifice or the scapegoat. Section 5.2 suggests that reconciliation is achieved by transfer of guilt for sin and punishment of this guilt to the servant. Section 5.2.1 discusses potential objections against this suggestion. Section 5.3 suggests that reconciliation also happens by chastisement, fostering appropriate fear of God and corresponding righteous conduct.

Transfer of punishment is traditionally called *vicarious suffering*. The servant suffering as a substitute requires that the servant suffers instead of those he substitutes for. This

in turn requires that the servant suffers alone or at least distinctively more profoundly than the others. Since this is a prerequisite, Chapter 4 studies whether the servant suffers alone or along with others. The descriptions of suffering in Isaiah 53 suggest that both is the case, with the focus of Isaiah 53 on the servant's exclusive suffering.

Since the concept of vicarious suffering commonly is criticized for being unique to the Old Testament, Chapter 6 suggests Old Testament texts which treat vicarious substitution, and thus may have inspired the concept of vicarious suffering.

Chapter 7 summarizes the results.

1.1 Previous Work

To the best of my knowledge, there does not exist an overview over proposals on how the servant's ministry is related to reconciliation. In the following, recent influential interpretations of this relation are reviewed. They present two different conceptions of this relation, reconciliation by prophetic message, or by atonement.

1.1.1 Reconciliation by Message

Both Janowski (1993, 8) and Hermisson (2017b, 417) accept the hypothesis of Duhm (1892, 14), who considers Isaiah 53 together with Isaiah 42:1–4, 49:1–6, and 50:4–9 to constitute four *servant songs* originally independent of Isaiah 40–55. Thus, both Janowski (1993, 8) and Hermisson (2017b, 417) consider the first three servant songs to be the original context of Isaiah 53. Both consider the servant of these songs to be the prophet Deuteroisaiah (Janowski 1993, 10; Hermisson 2017b, 417). They seem to interpret reconciliation as comprising two stages. As a prerequisite for reconciliation, the servant dies as compensation for Israel's guilt. Reconciliation ultimately happens by contrition, fostered by the servant's message, or by faith into the servant's message:

Janowski (1993, 19) interprets Israel as guilty to a degree which made it impossible for Israel to compensate for its obligation. Thus, in order to have a future, Israel had to be released from its obligation. This happens by the servant dying as אָשָׁם, "Schuldtilgung." The servant's death together with the message of Is 52:13–53:1 causes Israel to understand the meaning of the servant's death, and by this, its own situation of being guilty (13, 20). This insight of being guilty causes Israel to confess its guilt in Is 53:4–6. *Only* this contrite Israel is reconciled with God (20) (and identically: Janowski (1997, 90, 82, 91f)). Thus, the servant dying as "Schuldtilgung" constitutes only a prerequisite to reconciliation, which ultimately happens by insight and contrition, fostered by the prophet's message together with his death.

Similarly, Hermisson (2017b, 418) interprets Israel as guilty of not believing the servant's message. But instead of making the people endure the burden of their guilt, God

diverts it on the servant (Hermisson 2017b, 418), who dies as אָשָׁם, "vollgültige Sühneleistung," a merit which fully compensates for the guilt of the servant's people (398). His resurrection causes Israel to believe in the servant's message of JHWH's plan for salvation. Since their guilt was their unbelief in his message, and they now believe it, they are reconciled with God (424).

1.1.2 Reconciliation by Atonement

Alternatively, the servant's suffering or death is interpreted as cultic expiation of sin. There are different understandings of how exactly the servant's suffering is atoning. In the following, three of them are presented.

The Servant as Scapegoat

Mettinger (1983) sets out by doubting Duhm's hypothesis of four originally independent servant songs. Mettinger (1983, 18–22) suggests that the songs are an integral part of the structure of Isaiah 40–55, and thus must have been part of the original composition. Thus, the servant of the servant songs must be the same as the servant in the other servant passages of Isaiah 40–55, whom Mettinger (1983, 43) identifies as the Israelites in Babylonian exile.

Mettinger (1983, 41) suggests that the exiled community achieves reconciliation by acting as Israel's scapegoat. He substantiates this as follows: First, אֶרֶץ הַיִּים should be interpreted as the opposite of desert. Thus, Is 53:8 describes the servant as being driven into the desert, like the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. Second, the scapegoat's carrying away of the sins is expressed by נשא עון, which Mettinger (1983, 41), following Zimmerli (1969, 236–244), finds alluded to by the expressions נשא הלי (Is 53:4), סבל מכאב (Is 53:4), סבל עון (Is 53:11), and נשא חטא (Is 53:12).

The Servant as Cultmetaphorical Compensation

Berges (2008, 42) assumes that Isaiah 40–55 was written starting in 550 BC by a group closely connected to levitic temple musicians, and that Isaiah 40–55 was connected to Isaiah 1–39 when this group returned to Judah. The servant is interpreted as a fictional figure, a personification of the "Prototyp derer, die ab Jes 54,17b 'Knechte' genannt [werden]," who in turn are those who identify themselves with this fictional servant (Berges 2015, 229f).

Berges (2015, 269) interprets אָשָׁם, and thereby the servant, based on 1.Sam 5f as a "cultmetaphorical" compensation as follows: JHWH diverts "die Exilsschuld des ganzen Volkes" on the servant and consequently strikes the servant with sickness (269). This is legitimate because the servant represents Israel (256). The people first disregard the servant as struck by God, but then realize that since it was for their sins that he was

struck, it was unjust to disregard him. Reconciliation with God and each other is possible, if the people then acknowledge his suffering as their אָשָׁם (269): Just as the Philistines in 1.Sam 5f sent a representation of their suffering as אָשָׁם, so the Israelites can set a representation of their suffering (being exiled and disregarded), that is, their suffering and disregarded representative, as theirs.

The Servant as Guilt Offering

Sweeney (2016, 29f, 33) regards Isaiah 40–55 as originally written by the supposed prophet Deuteroisaiah, and having undergone redaction until the mid-fifth to early forth century BC. The servant is interpreted as all Israelites who have suffered in the period between the Assyrian invasion in the eighth century up to the final redaction of the book of Isaiah in the mid-fifth to early forth century BC (215).

Sweeney (2016, 216) interprets the people's relationship to God as marred by two issues. Regarding the first, the people's sin, reconciliation is achieved by the servant being "led to slaughter like a lamb" (Is 53:7), that is, sacrificed as an אָשָׁם, "guilt offering" (213, 216).

The second issue is less relevant for the following, since it might be characterized as reconciliation of God with the people rather than the other way round. Due to the people's experience of defeat and exile, they doubt that JHWH is still on their side, or that he has the power to protect them. Concerning this issue, God is reconciled with the people by restoring Israel (215).

1.2 The Identity of the Servant and the Context of Isaiah 53

Interpreting the reconciling ministry of the servant to be by his prophetic message seems to be closely connected to identifying the servant with a prophet, as both Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b) do. This is substantiated by that those who interpret the servant as achieving reconciliation by his atoning suffering, do not identify the servant with a prophet. Consequently, this section briefly studies the identity of the servant. As will be seen, the supposed identity of the servant is closely related to the supposed context of Isaiah 53.

עבד occurs 21 times in Isaiah 40–55. In 54:17, it is used in plural, and in 44:26, it is paralleled with מַלְאָכָיו, "his messengers." עבד is used together with both "Jacob" and "Israel" in 41:8, 41:9, twice in 42:19 (together with 42:24), 43:10 (together with 43:1 and 43:22), 44:1, 44:2 (with "Jeshurun" for "Israel"), twice in 44:21, and 45:4. In 48:20, it is used only with "Jacob," but the context "Go out from Babel!" indicates that Israel is meant. Within the servant songs, in 49:3, עבד is used in combination with "Israel", and

in 42:1, 49:7, 50:10, 52:13, and 53:11, without a name connected to it. The two remaining occurrences in 49:5 and 49:6 are discussed below.

Identifying the servant with Israel is commonly based on the following observations: First, עבד in the majority of occurrences designates Israel. Second, עבד explicitly designates Israel in its first occurrence, 41:8. Thus, it can be argued that later occurrences do not need to repeat the designation, but can presuppose that it is already known that the servant is Israel. Finally, the servant of the servant songs is described by the same attributes as the servant Jacob/Israel:

– chosen (servant Jacob/Israel: בְּחַרְתִּיךָ 41:8f; servant of the songs: בְּחִירִי 42:1)
– called (קְרָאתִיךָ 41:9; קְרָאָנִי 49:1)
– upheld (אֶתְמָךְ־בּוֹ 41:10; תְּמַכְתִּיךָ 42:1)
– formed in the womb (יֹצֶרְךָ מִבֶּטֶן 44:2,24; יֹצְרִי מִבֶּטֶן 49:5)
– honored in the sight of JHWH (בְּעֵינַי נִכְבַּדְתָּ 43:4; אֶכָּבֵד בְּעֵינֵי 49:5)
– JHWH will be glorified in him (יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר 44:23, בְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְפָּאָר 49:3)

Identifying the servant as distinct from Israel is practically only possible if it is claimed that Isaiah 40–55 is not the original context of Isaiah 53. This is commonly done by claiming that the four servant songs are originally independent from Isaiah 40–55, as both Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b) do.

Janowski (1993, 8) refers to Steck (1984, 1985). Put briefly, Steck (1984, 372, 381, 387; 1985, 46f) suggests a tripartite content of all songs, treating the mission of the servant, how it is undertaken, and whether it succeeds. Similarly, Hermisson (2017b, 717) argues that the servant songs constitute an independent unit by being bound together by the theme of the servant's success. These arguments are logically not compelling. Since they only show that these four songs have common themes, they do not exclude that there are other passages in Isaiah 40–55 which share the same theme, or which share another theme with (some of) the servant songs. Also the structural arguments of Hermisson (2017b, 717) are not compelling. For example, he argues that after JHWH has called Cyrus from the north in 41:25–29, the original text of Isaiah 40–55 continues with an oracle about Cyrus in 42:5–8*, showing that 42:1–4 must be a later addition. However, it might as well be argued that 42:5–8 thematically belongs to 42:1–4. While it is impossible to analyze the structure and themes of Isaiah 40–55 here, the arguments of Steck and Hermisson do not seem to be compelling.

In addition, it can be observed that in the above list of attributes shared between the servant of the servant songs and the servant Jacob/Israel, the formulations of every attribute differ in at least two ways, for example by switching from first to third person, and switching the suffix from second to first person. Section 2.6 shows that this rhetoric device of varied reference is frequently employed in Isaiah 53. This might substantiate the claim that the servant songs do not constitute an independent textual unit.

However, there are two important objections against the identification of the servant with Israel. First, the servant is depicted as innocent in Isaiah 53, while Israel is depicted as sinful throughout Isaiah 40-55. This objection will be discussed in Chapter 3. The second objection concerns Is 49:5f:

4a But I said, "I have labored in vain,
    I have spent my strength for nothing (תֹהוּ) and vanity;
 b   yet surely my cause is with JHWH,
    and my reward with my God."
5   And now JHWH says,
    who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
5aγ to return (לְשׁוֹבֵב) Jacob to him,
 δ   and that Israel might be gathered to him,
    for I am honored in the sight of JHWH,
    and my God has become my strength —
6   he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
6aβ to raise up (לְהָקִים) the tribes of Jacob
 γ   and to return (לְהָשִׁיב) the survivors of Israel;
    I will give you as a light to the nations,
    that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Apparently, the servant is given a mission concerning Israel. Thus, he must be distinct from Israel.

However, ל in combination with an infinitive "is very often used *after a verb* to express an action which gives more details about or explains the preceding action" (Joüon and Muraoka 1991, § 124o, their emphasis), for example, the common לֵאמֹר after verbs of speech. Thus, verses 5aγδ and 6aβγ might as well be translated as

5aβ who *formed* me in the womb to be his servant,
 γ   *by returning* Jacob to him,
    such that Israel might be gathered to him,
6a   he says: "It is too insignificant for your *being* my servant
    by [me] raising up the tribes of Jacob
    and *by [me] returning* the survivors of Israel;

In this translation, verses 5aγδ and 6aβγ do not give the servant a mission concerning Israel, but describe how JHWH made Israel his servant.

Against this, Hermisson (2003, 354) argues further that verse 4 makes it impossible to interpret the servant as Israel, since it is inconceivable that Israel could complain about having labored in vain for JHWH. However, 49:4 is not necessarily a complaint, nor does it explicitly state that the servant labored for JHWH. תֹהוּ also occurs in 44:9: "All who

make idols are nothing (תֹהוּ)." Thus, 49:4a might rather be a confession: Although JHWH had called Israel to be his servant (49:1–3), Israel had worshipped idols. But now (אָכֵן, 4b), the repenting Israel realizes that its cause is with JHWH.

Thus, the arguments for excising the servant songs from Isaiah 40–55 do not seem compelling. However, even if the hypothesis of the four separate servant songs is wrong, this does not necessarily imply that Isaiah 40–55 is the original context of Isaiah 53. For example, it can be argued that the statement "JHWH has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem" (52:9b) corresponds to "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem [. . .]" (40:1f), and that the message of JHWH's return together with his people in Is 52:7–12 corresponds to Is 40:3–11. Thus, it can be argued that Is 52:7–12 concludes Is 40–52:12, such that Is 52:13–Is 55 comprise later additions (Hermisson 2017a, 2.2.).

Obviously, the question of the context of Isaiah 53 is too complicated to be answered here. It seems reasonable to doubt that the servant songs constitute a context separate from Isaiah 40–55, which in turn seems to be the most reasonable assumption for the appropriate context. However, it cannot be excluded that the original context of Isaiah 53 is different than that.

1.3 Conclusion

To the three questions of the context of Isaiah 53, the identity of the servant, and the relation of his suffering to reconciliation, the reviewed interpretations offer only two sets of answers, which ultimately depend on the the supposed context.

If Isaiah 53 is considered integral to at least Isaiah 40–55, the servant is inevitably identified with Israel or a group of Israelites, since the servant is called by the double designation Jacob/Israel both in the majority of occurrences and in the firs occurrence within these chapters. Concerning the relationship to God being broken because of sin, reconciliation is considered to be by the servant's atoning suffering, based on expressions which can be related to cultic expiation of sin.

If, on the contrary, Isaiah 53 is considered one of four independent servant songs, this allows for a different interpretation of the servant of these songs, since the double designation Jacob/Israel does not occur in them. The servant of the songs is commonly considered to be the prophet Deuteroisaiah, who by his death pays for his people's guilt, but ultimately reconciles them by his message, causing contrition or faith.

Chapter 2

The Text of Isaiah 53

It is commonly acknowledged that Isaiah 53 constitutes a unit (Joachimsen 2011, 50).

The text of Isaiah 53 is commonly acknowledged to be well preserved (North 1964, 28). Apart from the Masoretic text (MT) and the LXX, there are two copies, 1QIs^a and 1QIs^b, and several fragments of the book of Isaiah from Qumran (Goldingay and Payne 2006a, 9). 1QIs^a was probably copied between the early second and the mid-first century BC, and presents a tradition slightly different from MT (9, 12). Its text of Isaiah 53 is complete (9). The other Qumran texts were probably copied in the mid-first century AD (9). 1QIs^b "is closely similar to" MT (10). Its text of Isaiah 53 "hat anfangs kleine, ab 53,7 größere Lücken (bis zu ca. 50% der Zeile)" (Hermisson 2017b, 316).

The LXX translation of the book of Isaiah is dated to the mid-second century BC (Goldingay and Payne 2006a, 13). As will be shown in Section 2.5, LXX' text of Isaiah 53 differs distinctively from MT and 1QIs^a, such that the theological content of LXX' Isaiah 53 differs significantly from the Hebrew versions. Since MT and 1QIs^a agree against LXX, it is likely that LXX is emended because of theological considerations.

2.1 Differences between MT and 1QIs^a

The following differences between MT and 1QIs^a have implications for the understanding of Isaiah 53:

14aβ: 1QIs^a has משחתי instead of מִשְׁחַת. מִשְׁחַת is ambiguous, since it can be the construct state of both מִשְׁחַת, "anointment," or מִשְׁחָה, "disfigurement." This ambiguity is not resolved by 1QIs^a, since משחתי exhibits the same ambiguity.

In the Qumran scrolls, messianic characters are encountered within the context of the last days. The messiah of Israel is also called *Branch of David*. The commentary on Isaiah 10:34–11:1 interprets this passage as being about the Branch of David, and another scroll describes him in the language of Isaiah 11. (VanderKam and Flint 2002, 265f) Isaiah 11:1 states that the branch shall grow out of Jesse's roots (מִשָּׁרָשָׁיו), which might be alluded to by כַּשֹּׁרֶשׁ in Is 53:2. In accordance with supposing a messianic

interpretation of Isaiah 53 at Qumran, Hermisson (2017b, 318) regards מִשְׁחַתִי as derived from מָשַׁח. Contrary to him, Abegg et al. (1999, 359) regard מִשְׁחַתִי as derived from מִשְׁחָה, "my marring." LXX translates it by ἀδοξήσει, "dishonored."

15aβ: 1QIs^a and LXX take עָלָיו together with 15aα instead of 15aβ (Hermisson 2017b, 319). That עָלָיו most likely belongs to 15aβ, is shown in Section 2.4.1.

3aβ: Instead of the passive participle יְדוּעַ, 1QIs^a has the active participle יודע (Hermisson 2017b, 322), which is supported by LXX. The passive unambiguously conforms to the parallel אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת. The active "knowing sickness" is ambiguous, as this for example could also be said about a physician.

3bα: מִמֶּנּוּ is ambiguous, meaning both "from him" and "from us", resulting in an ambiguous "to the point of hiding faces from him / to the point of him hiding his face from us". Instead of the substantive מַסְתֵּר, 1QIs^a has מסתיר, hiphil active participle singular (Hermisson 2017b, 322), thus resolving the ambiguity in favor of the latter. This is also done by LXX.

8bβ: Verse 8bβ was added to 1QIs^a later, probably by a different writer, and has עמו instead of MT's עמי. MT has the lectio difficilior, and is supported by all other textual witnesses (Hermisson 2017b, 326).

Also, apart from Is 53:6, צֹאן as metaphor for Israel is specified only once by טעה. This occurrence is in Jer 50:6, where it designates the exiled community. This might indicate that Is 53:6,8 is a reference to Jer 50:6. In Jer 50:6, the exiled community is at the same time called עַמִּי. If Is 53:6,8 is a reference to Jer 50:6, this supports עַמִּי.

9aα: 1QIs^a has plural ויתנו instead of MT's singular וַיִּתֵּן. Plural is more common than singular for expressing an undefined impersonal subject (Hermisson 2017b, 327), which probably is intended by both versions.

9aβ: Instead of MT's plural בְּמֹתָיו, 1QIs^a has בומתו, "which is unintelligible" (North 1964, 231). It might support singular "his death", which also LXX has. However, the plural most likely is intended, as will be shown in Section 2.6.

10aα: Instead of MT's הֶחֱלִי, hiphil perfect of חלה, 1QIs^a has ויחללהו, piel or polel imperfect of חלל, interpreting הֶחֱלִי based on verse 5aα (Hermisson 2017b, 329). For the following, it is sufficient that both versions express suffering, and that both versions refer back to words in verses 1–9 (the latter will be used in Section 2.6).

11aαβ: Both 1QIs^a,b and LXX add אור as direct object for יִרְאֶה. 1QIs^a takes בְדַעְתּוֹ to 11aγ by inserting ו before it. Concerning both, MT's version seems preferable for the following reasons:

First, as will be shown in Section 2.3, verses 10aβ–11aα allude to Is 41:20, where ראה is used intransitively in its meaning "to understand" (as in English "I see!"). This allusion suggests that ראה is used in the same way here.

Second, as will be shown in Section 2.6, the poet in general varies expressions. The variation transitive/intransitive is employed for פגע (6bβ/12bβ). In verse 10aγ, יִרְאֶה has

זֶרַע as object. This substantiates that יִרְאֶה should not be supplied with an object here.

Third, as will be shown in Section 3.1, Isaiah 53 frequently employs the rhetoric device of ambiguity. Without ו before it, בְּדַעְתּוֹ can be ambiguously taken together with either 11aα or 11aγ. MT emphasizes this by making בְּדַעְתּוֹ its own stich, not resolving the ambiguity. Further, the structure of Isaiah 53 (see Section 2.6) suggests that בְּדַעְתּוֹ should primarily be taken together with 11aα, which rules out to separate the two stiches by ו. Taken together with 11aα, יִשְׂבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ is a parallel to יִרְאֶה. This in turn substantiates that יִרְאֶה here means "to understand," and thus does not need an object.

Consequently, יִרְאֶה should not be supplied with an object, and בְּדַעְתּוֹ should not be separated from 11aα by inserting ו before it.

12bβ: 1QIs[a,b], 4QIs[d], and LXX have "for their transgressions" instead of MT's לַפֹּשְׁעִים, "for the transgressors" (Bons et al. 2011, 2669). Both versions convey that the many are transgressors, which is sufficient for the following. That MT's version most probably is intended, will be shown in Section 2.6.

2.2 Expiation of Sin versus Punishment of Sin

All reviewed interpretations of Isaiah 53 which consider its context to be Isaiah 40–55 interpret the servant's suffering as atoning. This interpretation is based on expressions which can be related to cultic expiation of sin. Therefore, Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 study expressions in Isaiah 53 which can be related to cultic expiation of sin. Since sin alternatively can be condemned and punished, Section 2.2.3 studies expressions related to judgment and punishment of sin.

2.2.1 The Burden of Sin

Sin, the guilt incurred by sin, and the punishment for the guilt constitute a unity which cannot be split up (Knierim 2001, 365). This unity is expressed by

חֵטְא denoting both sin and guilt[1]

עָוֹן denoting both sin, guilt caused by sin, and punishment (for guilt).[2] "Metonymic usages of the term illustrate clearly the relationship in Hebrew thought between 'sin' and resultant 'guilt' and 'punishment,' since 'awôn may denote any of these three senses (or all three meanings) in a single passage. In Gen 4:13, for example, it clearly signifies 'guilt' (forensic and psychological) or 'punishment' (penal), and probably connotes both." (Cover 1992, 32) Because of the insoluble relationship between sin and resultant guilt and punishment, the term עָוֹן expresses the continuity and unity

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1. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "חֵטְא"
2. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "עָוֹן"

of sin and its consequences, a continuity and unity which cannot be partitioned into an act and its various consequences (Janowski 1982, 74).

Zimmerli (1969, 239) suggests that סבל עון and נשא חטא, and also נשא הלי (4aα) and סבל מכאב (4aβ) are variations of the "Formel נשא עון." Despite the broad use of נשא עון in the Old Testament and the variation of this expression in Isaiah 53, Zimmerli (1969, 239f) is convinced that these expressions in Isaiah 53 relate to the priestly use of נשא עון. Zimmerli (1969, 239f) suggests that concerning Isaiah 53, the most important of these priestly uses is the description of the scapegoat and of the sacrificial animal. The scapegoat eliminates the guilt of the people by carrying it away (Lev 16:22). The sacrificial animal atones for the guilt of the people by carrying it (Lev 10:17).

The expressions נשא הלי, נשא חטא, סבל עון, and סבל מכאב are used in the Old Testament as follows:

Apart from Is 53:11b, סבל occurs with עון as object only in Lam 5:7. There, descendants lament that they have to bear the punishment for their ancestors' sins (Lam 5:1–15).

Apart from Is 53:12bα, נשא occurs eight times with חטא as object. It is always the consequence of a specific misdeed. In six instances, it is followed by a specific penalty justified by the misdeed; the death penalty for blasphemy and idolatry (Lev 22:9, Lev 24:15, Num 18:22, and Ezk 23:49); childlessness for adultery (Lev 20:20), and exclusion from the people for not keeping the Passover (Num 9:13). The two remaining occurrences are in Lev 19:17 and Num 18:32. These verses are commandments of the form "do [. . .] and you will not bear offence because of it." Consequently, no penalty is specified.

Thus, סבל עון and נשא חטא express incurring guilt and being punished for sin. They express *bearing the burden of sin*.

Apart from Is 53:4aα, נשא הלי occurs only in Jer 10:19, where Jerusalem laments that she has to bear the wound of being deserted by her children. סבל מכאב occurs only in Isaiah 53.

Contrary to Zimmerli's suggestion, סבל עון, נשא חטא, and נשא הלי refer to bearing the burden of sin or sickness in all its dire consequences, not to eliminating it nor to atoning for it, as in Lev 16:22 and Lev 10:17, respectively. While נשא עון can express elimination or atonement, סבל עון and נשא חטא unambiguously state that the burden is borne.

2.2.2 Expressions Related to Expiation of Sin

15aα יַזֶּה

נזה occurs 24 times in the Old Testament. Four times, it occurs in qal and means "to spatter." All other occurrences are in hiphil. Except for Is 52:15, נזה in hiphil occurs as part of expiation of sin, and means "to cause to spatter," that is, "to sprinkle." Since it evokes the context of cultic expiation of sin, 15aα is translated to "he will sprinkle many nations" by proponents of the servant's suffering being atoning, for example, by Sweeney

(2016, 209) and Berges (2015, 212). However, in all hiphil occurrences of נזה except Is 52:15, נזה has a liquid (blood or water) as direct object, and the target of the sprinkling is specified by the preposition אל, ל, or על. Berges (2015, 214) excuses the lack of a liquid in Is 52:15 by suggesting that in this verse, נזה is used metaphorically. However, this does not excuse the lacking preposition. In general, a verb in hiphil has its direct object as its logical subject. Thus, if נזה here means "sprinkle," it does not mean that something is sprinkled on the many nations, but that the many nations are sprinkled on something. For the sentence to mean "he will cause many nations to sprinkle [something]," the hiphil has to be causative twice, "he will cause many nations to cause [something] to spatter [on something]."

It has been suggested to emend יַזֶּה, or to suppose a secondary meaning "to leap" based on the Arabic *nzw* meaning "to leap" (Hermisson 2017b, 318). Childs (2001, 412) suggests that the issue might rather be a matter of semantic range. That "to be startled" can be within the semantic range of a verb meaning "to spatter", is attested by the Norwegian "skvette", which has both meanings. Because of the lack of liquid and preposition, the primary meaning of the literal translation to Norwegian, "han vil få mange nasjoner til å skvette," is "he will cause many nations to jump/be startled."

Verse 15aβ describes the kings' astonishment to the point of speechlessness, and verse 15b gives the reasons for their astonishment. The translation "startle" conforms best with this context. Further, verses 14-15aα are structured in a chiastic pattern:

14aα	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים
14aβ	כֵּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ
	מַרְאֵהוּ
14b	וְתֹאֲרוֹ
	מִבְּנֵי אָדָם
15aα	כֵּן יַזֶּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים

In the pattern, יַזֶּה corresponds to שָׁמְמוּ. "He will startle" conforms better with this correspondence than "he will sprinkle."

Finally, "he will startle" is supported by LXX' θαυμασονται, "they will be astonished."

ענה pual 4bβ

ענה in piel means "to humiliate," and accordingly "to become humiliated" in pual. To humiliate oneself (four times in piel, once in pual) is required on the Day of Atonement (Levticus 16 and 23).

פֶּשַׁע 5aα, 8bβ; עָוֹן 6bβ, 11b

Both פֶּשַׁע and עָוֹן are used to designate the sins of Israel that the high priest confesses over the head of the scapegoat (Lev 16:21). The third term for sin in Isaiah 53, חֵטְא, is not

used in connection to atonement. In Lev 16:21, הַתָּאָה is used. In Lev 5:6 and Lev 5:15, the terms הַתָּאָה and מַעַל, respectively, designate sin for which an אָשָׁם has to be presented.

שֶׂה 7aβγ; צֹאן 6aα

שֶׂה, a sheep or goat, occurs 47 times in the Old Testament (Waschke 1993, 718). Of these, the following 19 are related to sacrifices:

- Gen 22, two occurrences as burnt offering (עֹלָה). A burnt offering may (Lev 1:4) or may not (Lev 22:17) be atoning. In Gen 22, atonement is not a concern.
- Ex 12, three occurrences as the Passover lamb, not atoning.
- Ex 13:13, 34:19, 34:20, Lev 27:26 within regulations concerning firstborn animals. These were offered as thanksgiving (Miller 2000, 119), and are thus not atoning.
- Lev 5:7, as אָשָׁם, atoning.
- Lev 12:8, as burnt offering. Since a pigeon is offered as a sin offering together with it, the burnt offering is probably not atoning.
- Lev 22:23, as freewill offering (נְדָבָה), not atoning.
- Num 15:11, as burnt offering, sacrifice (זֶבַח), or freewill offering. In general, the זֶבַח is given as thanksgiving offering, votive offering, or freewill offering (Miller 2000, 113), and is thus not atoning. In this passage, atonement is not a concern.
- Deut 14:4, declared as pure for eating
- Deut 17:1, forbidden as offering if defected
- Deut 18:3, in the definition of the priest's part of the offering
- Is 43:22, as burnt offering.
- Is 66:3, as offering.
- Ezk 45:15, as burnt offering, atoning

Only two of these occurrences are explicitly connected to atonement, while at least 13 occurrences do not seem to relate to atonement. Waschke (1993, 721) suggests that שֶׂה is used less often than צֹאן, כֶּבֶשׂ, and עֵז to designate a sacrificial animal, because the emphasis of the term is on the individual.

However, שֶׂה in general designates an individual of צֹאן, a flock (Waschke 1993, 718). צֹאן commonly designates sacrificial animals (Waschke 1989, 866f). Specifically, צֹאן is used as atoning אָשָׁם in Lev 5. In Lev 5:6, the animal has to be female, and in Lev 5:15ff, is is emphasized that the animal should be without blemish.

טֶבַח 7aβγ

טֶבַח, slaughter, appears twelve times in the Old Testament, but never in the context of cultic expiation of sin. The nine occurrences in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are all within the context of God's judgment and punishment. In the other three occurrences,

Gen 43:16, Prov 7:22, and 9:2, טֶבַח is used for secular slaughter of animals. טבח occurs only once with שֶׂה as object, in Ex 12:37, specifying the punishment for slaughtering a stolen sheep. In the Old Testament, טבח is always related to the profane slaughter of animals for the purpose of a meal (Hamp 1982, 303). While it is likely that in Israel, any kind of slaughter was connected with sacrificial rites (303), this does not imply that any slaughter can be related to atonement. Rather, conforming to rites and rules when preparing or eating meals (for example, not eating blood) was necessary to avoid to sin (1Sam 14:34).

7aβγ גזז, רָחֵל

Except for in Is 53:7, רָחֵל, ewe, appears twice in Gen 31f concerning ewes of Laban and Jacob, and once in Song 6:6. None of these occurrences is related to atonement.

גזז, to shear, appears 15 times. In Jer 7:29, Mic 1:6, and Job 1:20, shaving one's head is a sign of lamentation. In Nah 1:12, JHWH "shaves off" the evildoers as part of taking vengeance on Nineveh. Otherwise, גזז is used for regular shearing of sheep as part of sheep keeping. None of these occurrences is related to atonement.

רָחֵל and גזז occur together only in Gen 31:19, albeit in a completely different manner: "Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel (רָחֵל) stole her father's household gods." This only other combination of רָחֵל and גזז in Gen 31:19 and the only combination of טבח with שֶׂה in Ex 12:37 have theft as common theme. This may indicate that an allusion to a common theme of theft in 7aβ and γ is intended.

8aα לקח

לקח in qal is used for presenting a sacrificial animal, for example, in Lev 12:8, 14:12, and 16:5.

10aβ אָשָׁם

The word occurs 47 times in the Old Testament. The vast majority of occurrences is within priestly writings, in Leviticus, Numbers, and Ezekiel, where it designates a guilt offering. אָשָׁם also designates a guilt offering in 2Kings 12:17 and Ezr 10:19. It designates "compensation [for a committed sin]" in Num 5 (three occurrences) and in 1Sam 6 (four occurrences). Apart from these and Is 53:10, אָשָׁם occurs in Gen 26:10, Jer 51:5, Ps 68:22, and Prov 14:9. In Prov 14:9, none of the meanings of אָשָׁם fits into the context. Most likely, the text is corrupt (Kellermann 1973, 470). In Gen 26:10, Jer 51:5, and Ps 68:22, it means a state of being guilty.

"The term comes originally not from the cultic but from the legal context, from a situation of guilt with the resulting obligation to discharge it" (Spieckermann 2004, 3). The

two key aspects of the Old Testament's use of אָשָׁם are "eine Situation der Schuldverpflich-tung, in der jemand etwas gibt" and "eine Situation, in der jemand zur Schuldableistung verpflichtet ist oder wird, in der er etwas geben soll" (Knierim 1971, 252f). "Der Primär-gesichtspunkt ist die aus einem Urteil folgende Situation der Schuldverpflichtung, des Haftpflichtig-Seins, und ihrer Erfüllung. [...] In diesem Sinne bedeuten dann die Nomi-nalformen [...] das Schuldverpflichtet*sein*" (254, his emphasis). Since אָשָׁם was used for the several aspects of being obliged by guilt, including paying a compensation, it also became a designation for the means of compensation (255). Knierim (1971, 256) suggests that אָשָׁם is to be translated as "Schuldpflicht, Haftpflicht, Schuldverpflichtung." Trans-lating it by "guilt offering" is problematic if not wrong, since "offering" implicitly denies the term's aspect of punishment (256).

However, in Leviticus, the אָשָׁם is "most holy" (קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים, Lev 7:1, 14:13), is ritually slaughtered (שׁחט, Lev 7:2) at the same place as the burnt offering, its blood is dashed (זרק, Lev 7:2) against the altar, and its fat is burnt on the altar. The אָשָׁם is declared to be like the sin offering (Lev 7:7). The אָשָׁם is not simply delivered to the priest as a compensation, like the Philistines send their golden אָשָׁם in 1Sam 6. In Leviticus, אָשָׁם clearly designates an offering. Thus, while Knierim (1971) has a point that the translation "guilt offering" somewhat denies the term's aspect of punishment, his suggested translations "Schuldpflicht, Haftpflicht, Schuldverpflichtung" certainly deny the sacrificial character of אָשָׁם in Lev 7. In instances where אָשָׁם designates a sacrifice, a better German translation might be "Schuldpflichtopfer." English seems to lack an equivalent. Maybe *liability offering* comes closest.

The two verbs used in connection with אָשָׁם in 10aβ are שׂים and דכא. Presenting a sacrifice is never expressed by שׂים, but in general by בוא hiphil (Berges 2015, 268). Presenting an אָשָׁם is expressed by בוא hiphil in all instances in Lev 5, Lev 19:21, Num 6:12, and (in hophal) in 2Kings 12:16, and by שׁוב in Num 18:9, but by לקח in Lev 14:21, followed by the priest taking (לקח) it.

דכא is used 18 times in the Old Testament, but never in connection with atonement.

Expressions Lacking

Isaiah 53 lacks significant expressions which commonly are associated with cultic expiation of sin and atonement, most notably כפר and the atoning blood דָּם, and also the verbs for ritual slaughter, זבח and שׁחט.

2.2.3   Expressions Related to Judgment and Punishment of Sin

אָשָׁם (10aβ): "being liable by guilt." See Section 2.2.2.

זְרוֹעַ יהוה (1b): In Deuteroisaiah, JHWH's arm often is his instrument of deliverance and of judgment.[3]

חֵטְא (12bα): "offence."[4] "Der Ausdruck 'Vergehen, Verfehlung' steht dem ursprünglich profanen und dem rechtlichen Charakter der Sache grundsätzlich näher als der Ausdruck 'Sünde,' da er die Disqualifizierung einer Tat durch Israel in Form der Rechtskategorie exakt wiedergibt." (Knierim 1965, 67)

טֶבַח (7aβ): "slaughter" as part of God's punishment, see Section 2.2.2

מוּסָר (5bα): "God's punishment." מוּסָר in general means "discipline, chastisement." יסר aims at fostering proper conduct, which can happen by instruction, rebuke, punishment, or combinations thereof (Sæbø 1971, 739). Similarly, מוּסָר aims at fostering proper conduct, except when used in a juridical context, where it means "punishment" (740). Within the prophetical judgment speeches, יסר and מוּסָר always mean God's punishing judgment of his people (741). On the one hand, Isaiah 53 is not a prophetical judgment speech. On the other hand, Isaiah 53 constitutes a juridical context, which favors the translation "punishment."

Within Deuteroisaiah, מוּסָר occurs only in Is 53:5. Within the prophets, מוּסָר occurs 14 times. God is its source except in Jer 10:8, "the teaching of idols is wood." In Ezk 5:15, JHWH announces to destroy Jerusalem, and thus make her a מוּסָר ("lesson") for the nations around. In eight instances, מוּסָר is the object of לקח. In these instances, God generally accuses the Israelites for not taking מוּסָר, thus מוּסָר there means "teaching, instruction." This leaves the three instances Is 26:16, Jer 30:14, and Hos 5:2.

Hosea 5:2 is part of a prophetic judgment speech. מוּסָר here clearly means "punishment." JHWH is speaking through the prophet, thus, מוּסָר here is God's punishment.

Isaiah 26:16 is not part of a prophetic judgment speech, but of a song of lamentation. Judah's inhabitants lament their distress when JHWH's מוּסָר was on them. The distress is likened to that of giving birth. Thus, מוּסָר here can hardly have positive connotations, and means "punishment." The verse states JHWH as the source of the punishment: "JHWH, [...] your punishment was on them." Thus, מוּסָר here is God's punishment.

Jeremiah 30:14b is the instance most similar to Is 53:5:

> I struck you (הִכִּיתִיךְ, from נכה, as מֻכֵּה in Is 53:4bβ) with an enemy's strike
> with the punishment (מוּסָר) of someone cruel
> because your misdeed (עֲוֺנֵךְ) is great, your sins (חַטֹּאתָיִךְ) are numerous.

JHWH is speaking, thus, it is implied that מוּסָר is God's punishment.

Since God is the source of מוּסָר in all its occurrences within the prophets except for Jer 10:8, where it is explicitly stated that the source are the idols, it is likely that God is the source of מוּסָר also in Is 53:5. In Ezk 5:15, JHWH's מוּסָר is not directed at Israel,

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3. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. "II זרע 1.c"
4. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "חֵטְא 1."

but at the neighbouring nations. In all other instances where it is not the object of לקח, מוּסָר means "God's punishment." This suggests that "God's punishment" is one of the meanings of מוּסָר in Is 53:5. Like many other expressions in Isaiah 53, מוּסָר most likely is ambiguous, and also means "chastisement." This is discussed in Section 2.3.

מִשְׁפָּט (8aα): "judgment."

עָוֹן (6bβ, 11b): "sin." The term comprises both sin, guilt incurred by sin, and punishment for that guilt.

עֹצֶר (8aα): "arrest." The verb עצר is used for putting in prison or being kept in the court of the guard in 2 Kings 17:4, Jer 33:1, and Jer 39:15. In all instances, the one imprisoning is a law enforcement authority (the king or his guards), implying that עֹצֶר means arrest.

ענה pual (4bβ): "to become humiliated." The cultic use of ענה is closely linked to juridical language (Gerstenberger 1989, 254). "Rechtliche und kultische Verwendung von 'ānāh II pi/pu greifen so stark ineinander, daß die Priorität eines Bereiches noch fraglich ist. [...] Hauptvertreter des Verbs ist der pi-Stamm. Er hat rechtlich-kultische oder kultisch-rechtliche Bedeutung" (255f).

פֶּשַׁע פשע (5aα, 8bβ), פֹּשְׁעִים (12aδ, 12bβ)): "felony," "acts which break relationships within the community and with God."[5] The term is strongly forensic (Knierim 1965, 179). Since JHWH is the law-giving authority, every felony constitutes an act against God (182) and provokes JHWH's judgment (184). In Isaiah 40–55, the emphasis is on the severity of the act and its consequence of breaking the relationship between JHWH and Israel or between persons (183).

צדק (11aγ): צדק in hiphil occurs twelve times in the Old Testament. In the other eleven occurrences, it has a forensic meaning, "to obtain rights for", "to admit as right", "to declare as innocent", "to treat as innocent", and "to assist someone towards his rights."[6]

צַדִּיק (11aγ): "juridical; persons whose conduct will be checked and found irreproachable, innocent, in the right."[7] The root צדק has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, it designates forensic righteousness, that is, conformity with the given norm. God judges this conformity and rewards and punishes accordingly. On the other hand, it designates a right relation to God, almost a synonym for salvation. (Johnson 1989, 903)

שֶׂה (7aβ): "lamb." Six occurrences as being judged by God (Ezk 34:17,20,22).

2.2.4   Conclusion

The expressions סבל עון and נסא חטא seem to belong to the framework of judgment and punishment of sin rather than to that of cultic expiation of sin. Thus, the expressions

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5. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "פֶּשַׁע 2."
6. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "צדק hif."
7. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "צַדִּיק 2."

related to cultic expiation of sin in Isaiah 53 are עָנָה ,עָוֹן ,נזה ,לקח ,אָשָׁם pual, פֶּשַׁע ,צֹאן, and שֶׂה, a total of ten expressions.

The expressions related to judgment and punishment of sin in Isaiah 53 are סבל עון and נסא חטא, and the expressions listed in Section 2.2.3, a total of 17 expressions. Even though אָשָׁם occurs mostly in relation to cultic expiation of sin, thus supporting a cultic framework for Isaiah 53 more than a juridical framework, the expressions in Isaiah 53 seem to relate primarily to judgment and punishment rather than to atonement.

2.3 Expressions Related to Knowing God and Keeping His Commandments

Committed sin is dealt with by expiation or punishment. However, sin can also be dealt with preemptively, by avoiding to sin. This is achieved by appropriate fear of God, and corresponding righteous conduct. Isaiah 53 contains a comparatively small, but significant number of expressions related to knowledge of God and keeping his commandments. These are:

שכל (13a): "to have insight." The majority of occurrences of the root is within wisdom literature (Koenen 1993, 785). שכל conveys both secular prudence and recognition of, faith in, and appropriate fear of JHWH. This acknowledgement of JHWH leads to keeping his commandments (786f).

ראה (15bα, 11aα): "to understand." In its theological use, ראה comprises the entire spectrum of visional encounter between humans and God (Fuhs 1993, 250). Most occurrences refer to experiencing God's presence through his actions in history (252f). This experience leads to analyzing one's own actions and conduct, in order to turn the personal relationship, which is based on the act of ראה, into reality (254).

בין hithpael (15bβ): "to consider diligently, understand."

מוּסָר (5bα): "chastisement." On the one hand, מוּסָר means a content to be learned. In the theological realm, it comprises knowledge necessary to lead a life pleasing to JHWH (Branson 1982, 692f). On the other hand, מוּסָר means a method of instruction (694). If its source is JHWH, it is in most cases redemptive by restoring the chastised to proper conduct (694f).

דַּעַת (11aβ): "knowledge." דַּעַת occurs 40 times in proverbs (Bergman and Botterweck 1982, 496). These occurrences can be partitioned into older occurrences, where דַּעַת refers to secular knowledge, and younger occurrences, where דַּעַת is closely related to fear of JHWH (496). For these younger occurrences, דַּעַת means acquaintance with God and walking in his ways (497). It comprises a veneration for God, which constitutes itself in righteousness and piety (497). דַּעַת is also paralleled with יִרְאַת יהוה in Is 11:2.

דַּעַת can also mean "knowledge of God."[8] "To know JHWH" indicates a relation-ship with JHWH, who wants to deliver and protect those who know him (Bergman and Botterweck 1982, 499).

צַדִּיק (11aγ): a pious person, who delights in JHWH's commandments, thus behaves according to them, and thus belongs to the community of JHWH.[9]

שִׂים (10aβ) can also have an intellectual meaning of "to direct attention to" (Vanoni 1993, 770). As will be shown in Section 2.4.1, this is probably not meant here. However, the expressions in this section together with יהוה and יד (both in verse 10b) allude to Is 41:20:

> so that all may see (יִרְאוּ) and know (וְיֵדְעוּ),
> all may direct attention to (וְיָשִׂימוּ) and understand (וְיַשְׂכִּילוּ),
> that the hand of JHWH (יַד־יהוה) has done this,
> the Holy One of Israel has created it.

The verse concludes a passage assuring Israel of JHWH's help. In this verse as in the Old Testament in general, knowledge of JHWH's deeds mainly concerns his deeds of salvation (Vanoni 1993, 788). The allusion to Is 41:20, where ראה is used intransitively, substantiates that יִרְאֶה in 53:11aα should not be supplied with an object.

2.4 Translation

Isaiah 53 exhibits several ambiguities. The translation lists their various meanings.

13a	Behold, he will succeed, my servant,
	understand,
b	he will be exalted, lifted up, and be very high.
14aα	Such as they were appalled at you, the many —
β	such a disfigurement from that of man were his looks
	an anointment beyond
b	and his appearance from that of a human —
	beyond
15aα	so he will startle many nations
β	because of him, kings will shut their mouths
bα	because what had not been recounted to them, they saw
β	and what they had not heard, they understood.
1a	Who believed what we heard?
b	and JHWH's arm, to whom was it revealed?

8. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "דַּעַת I 3.a"
9. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "צַדִּיק 5."

2aα	He grew like a sapling before him
	on his own
β	and like a root from dry earth
γ	he had neither appearance nor majesty
b	that we should look at him, nor had he good looks that we should take pleasure in him.
3aα	Despised and lacking men
β	a man of pains, known by sickness
bα	to the point of faces' hiding from him
	his face's hiding from us
β	despised, such that we did not value him.
4aα	However, our sicknesses *he* bore
β	and our pains, he carried them
bα	whereas *we* evaluated him
β	struck, smitten by God, and humiliated.
5aα	But *he* was pierced because of our felonies
β	crushed because of our sins
bα	God's punishment for our peace was on him
	which we deserved as retaliation
	God's chastisement for our peace was on him
β	by his slash we were healed.
	his being allied
6aα	We all like a flock of sheep went astray
β	each to his own way we turned
bα	but JHWH pushed off on him
β	the burden of the sin of us all.
7aα	He was oppressed but *he* submitted and did not open his mouth
β	like a sheep he was led to slaughter
γ	and like an ewe before her shearers is silent
b	he did not open his mouth.
8aα	From arrest and because of judgment he was taken
β	but as for his contemporaries, who pondered
bα	that he was cut off from the land of the living
β	because of the felony of my people, he was struck?
9aα	One assigned with the wicked his grave
β	but he was with a rich in his violent death
bα	because no violence he had done
	although
β	and no deceit in his mouth.
10aα	And JHWH willed crushing him, made sick

β	if you appoint as liable	his soul
	liability offering	
γ	he will see offspring, he will prolong days	
bα	and the will of JHWH, by his hand will succeed.	

11aα   Because of the trouble of his soul he will see, he will be satisfied

β   by his insight

sweat

γ   a righteous one will assist my servant towards his rights concerning the many

reconcile my servant with God before the many

one will assist my righteous servant towards his rights concerning the many

the righteous one, my servant, will assist the many towards their rights

reconcile the many with God

prove himself to be righteous to the many

b   and their sins' burden *he* will carry.

12aα   Therefore, I will give him a share in the many

β   and with strong ones he will share spoil

γ   in recompense for that he stripped to death his soul

δ   and was counted among felons

bα   but *he* bore the burden of the many's offence

β   and will push on behalf of the felons.

2.4.1 Comments

13a יַשְׂכִּיל

The parallel 13b makes "he will succeed" the primary interpretation.

14aα עָלֶיךָ

עָלֶיךָ is commonly and recently emended to עָלָיו (Hermisson 2017b, 317, 314). Against emendation, it is commonly argued that MT has the lectio difficilior, and that prophets commonly switch between second and third person. Concerning the former, Hermisson (2017b, 317) argues that since עָלֶיךָ is an impossible reading, this is not a case of lectio difficilior, but a scribal error. Concerning the latter, he argues that prophets do not switch that abruptly (317). Nevertheless, עָלֶיךָ should most likely not be emended, albeit for a different reason; see **15aβ** below.

מִשְׁחַת 14aβ

מִשְׁחַת can be the construct state of both מִשְׁחַת, "anointment," or מִשְׁחָה, "disfigurement." מִשְׁחַת occurs 21 times in the Old Testament, but always together with שֶׁמֶן. For מִשְׁחָה, this would be the only occurrence in the Old Testament. The verbal roots do not resolve the issue. שׁחת and משׁח are used 142 and 70 times, respectively, and משׁח can be used without שֶׁמֶן, for example in Is 61:1. That the ambiguity is intentional, is substantiated by the chiastic structure of verses 14-15aα:

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים	14aα
כֵּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ	14aβ
מַרְאֵהוּ	
וְתֹאֲרוֹ	14b
מִבְּנֵי אָדָם	
כֵּן יַזֶּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים	15aα

In the pattern, מִשְׁחַת is the only expression which does not have a corresponding expression. This suggest that מִשְׁחַת is regarded as its own corresponding expression by virtue of its double meaning. This in turn is substantiated by 14aα describing the many's negative horror over the servant, whereas 15aα describes their positive astonishment, as made clear by the parallel 15aβ. While their horror is caused by the servant's disfigurement, his anointment might be a reason for their astonishment.

יַזֶּה 15aα

See Section 2.2.2.

עָלָיו 15aβ

Against MT, עָלָיו is sometimes taken together with 15aα, for example by 1QIs[a], LXX, and recently, by Joachimsen (2011, 92). However, judging from the chiastic construction of verses 14-15aα, verse 15aα ends with רַבִּים, corresponding to 14aα.

Further, splitting verse 15a between רַבִּים and עָלָיו is in line with several other rhetoric devices applied to these two words in order to emphasize the content of verse 15. First, the order of the two words is reversed relative to עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים in 14aα. This emphasizes the reversal from negative horror in verse 14 to positive astonishment in verse 15a. Second, several unexpected formulations underline the unexpectedness of what is described: Verse 15 has עָלָיו instead of the expected עָלֶיךָ (supporting that עָלֶיךָ in verse 14 should not be emended to עָלָיו). עַל has different meanings in verses 14 and 15. Finally, as they correspond to עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים in 14aα, the two words רַבִּים עָלָיו are expected to be part of the same stich, but they are not; עָלָיו belongs to 15aβ.

2aα לְפָנָיו

The last previously mentioned third person singular is JHWH, thus one meaning is "before him [JHWH]." In addition, "das Suff. 3. Pers. Sg. in *M*, ebenso Q^a Q^b *A S*, könnte sich auf den Knecht selbst beziehen ('für sich hin' [...]); die zu erwartende Disqualifikation wäre dann die Isolation des Knechts" (Hermisson 2017b, 320). This interpretation conforms with "lacking men" in 3aα.

3bα כְּמַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ

Since verses 3f describe the we-group's negative assessment of the servant, "[us] hiding our faces from him" most likely is the primary interpretation.

5bα מוּסַר

As shown in Section 2.2.2, מוּסַר most likely means "God's punishment." The meaning "punishment" is substantiated by the parallel חַבּוּרָה, "slash." Thus, "God's punishment" most likely is the primary meaning.

In general, מוּסָר means "discipline, chastisement," leading to insight which itself can be designated by מוּסָר. That מוּסָר here can mean chastisement which leads to such insight, is substantiated by the proclamation that the servant will understand (13a, 11a). As shown in Section 2.2.2, within the prophets, God is the source of מוּסָר except for Jer 10:8, where the idols are stated as its source. Thus, God is most likely the source of chastisement also here.

5bα שָׁלוֹם

שָׁלוֹם in general means wholeness, abundance, peace. Here, in contrast to מוּסַר, "God's punishment," it probably means "peace with God". Within the construction מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ, the word שָׁלוֹם can also be interpreted negatively as "retaliation", yielding "the punishment we deserved as retaliation" (Gerleman 1976, 930). Given the parallel "healing for us" (5bβ), the primary meaning is most likely "peace with God."

5bβ חַבְרָתוֹ

חַבְרָתוֹ is commonly derived from חַבּוּרָה, "slash," but it also is the passive participle from חבר. The female passive participle expresses the abstract "being allied." The context suggests "slash" as primary interpretation.

6b הִפְגִּיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֲוֹן

"'stoßen' kommt der Grundbedeutung und den Anwendungsmöglichkeiten von hebr. *pāḡaʿ* noch am nächsten" (Maiberger 1989, 502). The twofold meaning of פגע in Is 53:6bα

and 12bβ can be imitated using "to push." Concerning 12bβ, "to push" can mean "to exert oneself continuously, vigorously, or obtrusively to gain an end."[10] Concerning 6bα, the American idiom "to push something off on somebody" means "to place one's task onto another person; to make someone else do an unwanted job."[11]

The two expressions סבל עון and נשא חטא attest that the consequences of sin are compared to a physical burden which must be carried, and thus also can be pushed. "He pushes the burden off on him" captures the causative sense of the hiphil of פגע ב, since one makes something push into someone by pushing it onto him.

מֵעֹצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט 8aα

North (1956, 124) argues that since מִן has three meanings (away from, because of, without), there are three possible translations of this expression, implying that מִן must have the same meaning in both composites. Likewise, all translations collected by Joachimsen (2011, 385) translate מִן to have the same meaning in both composites. Obviously, it is strongly expected that מִן has the same meaning in both composites. However, just as the unexpectedness of the content is emphasized by using עָל ... עָל in two different meanings in verses 14f, מִן here might be used in two different meanings to emphasize the unexpectedness of the content. If a righteous is arrested and subsequently tried, the righteous is expected to be acquitted. Contrary to what is expected, the servant is sentenced to be taken from the land of the living.

בְּמֹתָיו 9aβ

The word is commonly emended, since the literal "in his deaths" is considered meaningless, for example by North (1956, 125). It is emended both to singular or to different words, usually by attempting to find a parallel to "grave" (125f). That בְּמֹתָיו most likely is intended, will be shown in Section 2.6. מוֹת in plural is also found in Ezk 28:10, where it is a plural of intensification (Hermisson 2017b, 328). Also here, it is a plural of intensification, "his violent death."

עַל 9bα

עַל can mean both "although" and "because." "Although" relates to 9aα, "because" to 9aβ.

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10. *Merriam-Webster OnLine*, s.v. "push," accessed October 4, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/push

11. *McGraw-Hill's dictionary of American idioms and phrasal verbs*, s.v. "**push** something **of on(to)** someone"

10aα, 10b חפץ

In the context of Is 40–54, חפץ refers "not to a reactive delight but to a proactive determining" (Goldingay and Payne 2006b, 318).

10aβ תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ

This expression has been notoriously difficult to interpret, and as a result, various emendations have been suggested (Joachimsen 2011, 386–390). It is reasonable to first try to interpret MT, which is supported by 1QIsᵃ.

תָּשִׂים can be third person female singular, implying נַפְשׁוֹ as subject, or second person male singular. שִׂים occurs 582 times in the Old Testament (Vanoni 1993, 763). In only 7% of the occurrences, שִׂים has only one dependent syntagma (769). Thus, it is reasonable to first examine whether there are two dependent syntagmata available. These must be אָשָׁם and נַפְשׁוֹ. With these objects, שִׂים can hardly have a local meaning. A factitive construction of שִׂים with a double object is common, with about 130 occurrences (770). The construction means "to set/make/appoint x to be y." Often, x is specified by אֶת or as an object suffix to שִׂים, or y is specified by ל, but a factitive שִׂים may also be constructed with a double accusative. The predicative accusative "can be recognized [...] by the indetermination" (Joüon and Muraoka 1991, §126a1), thus, it must be אָשָׁם. Consequently, the translation "you appoint his soul liable by guilt / as a liability offering" is the one which best conforms to the general use of שִׂים. This also avoids נַפְשׁוֹ as subject, conforming to that "the substitution of נפש with a pronominal suffix [...] for the personal pronoun [...] as the subject of an active verb having no intrinsic emotional content is extremely rare" (Whybray 1978, 64).

As shown in Section 2.2, the expressions in Isaiah 53 seem to relate primarily to judgment and punishment of sin rather than to atonement. Thus, "liable" most likely is the primary meaning.

The second person male singular "you" may be understood to be addressing God, but since God is referenced in third person in 10aα and 10b, this seems unlikely. Thus, the "you" seems to address the one hearing or reading the poem.

10aβ–b [...]אִם־

In this context, אִם can introduce two types of clauses: A conditional sentence, or an optative clause. An optative clause ("If you would appoint his soul as liable!") would make verse 10aγb an unconditioned statement. As such, verse 10aγb would logically belong to the unconditioned statements following from verse 11. MT's separation of verses 10 and 11 conforms with the overall structure of the poem (see Section 2.6), according to which verse 10aγb belongs to verse 10aβ. Thus, verse 10aγb is most likely the apodosis of a conditional sentence introduced by אִם in 10aβ.

דַּעַת 11aβ

דַּעַת means "insight," but can also mean "sweat." The meaning "insight" is substantiated by the parallel יְרָאֶה, he will understand. Also, for the meaning "sweat," this is the only occurrence in the Old Testament. Thus, "insight" most likely is the primary meaning.

יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים 11aγ

Both deletion (following three manuscripts) and transposition of צַדִּיק have been proposed. While North (1956, 126) supported deletion of צַדִּיק as a dittograph of יַצְדִּיק, North (1964, 232) argues that such a mistake hardly could "have been perpetuated in the versions and in all but three Hebrew MSS." It is most likely that the mistake is with those three manuscripts, having omitted צַדִּיק by homoioteleuton (232). Transposition "is theologically motivated and lacks manuscript support" (Sapp 1998, 174).

The verse is ambiguous both because of the various meanings of צדק in hiphil, and because it is unclear who is the subject of the sentence.

צדק in hiphil occurs twelve times in the Old Testament. In the other eleven occurrences, it has a forensic sense of "to obtain rights for", "to admit as right", "to declare as innocent", "to treat as innocent", and "to assist someone towards his rights". The hiphil יַצְדִּיק can also be intransitive, "[...] will prove himself to be righteous." Since צַדִּיק also designates a "right" relation to God, צדק can also have a causative meaning concerning this relational meaning of צַדִּיק, "will cause the 'right' relationship with God."

The most straightforward interpretation of 11aγ is צַדִּיק as subject and עַבְדִּי as object: "A righteous will cause my servant to be righteous before the many."

However, the straightforward interpretation of 11aγ leaves unanswered who could be the subject, "a righteous." It cannot be the servant Israel, who is the one who is made righteous in 11aγ. It cannot be anyone of the we-group, who confess that כֻּלָּנוּ have sinned (6a, 6b). It can hardly be any of the many nations. It could be God, but since God refers to himself in the first person both by the first person suffix of עַבְדִּי and by the first person אֲחַלֵּק in 12aα, it seems unlikely that he refers to himself in third person here. Thus, there seems to be no righteous subject available.

This leads to considering secondary interpretations of the sentence. One alternative is to take צַדִּיק to belong to the object עַבְדִּי, resulting in an impersonal subject, "one will cause the righteous servant to be righteous before the many."

Another alternative is to take the subject to consist of both צַדִּיק and עַבְדִּי, such that עַבְדִּי is apposition to צַדִּיק. Sapp (1998, 173) defends this interpretation against the objection that צַדִּיק lacks the definite article, stating that this is common, and that the apposition functions as a definite article.

Thus, there are three possible subjects, צַדִּיק, impersonal, or צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי. צַדִּיק can be combined with the forensic or relational meaning of צדק. צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי can additionally be

combined with the intransitive meaning, since there is no direct object left in the sentence. An impersonal subject can only be combined with the forensic meaning, since a righteous servant is not in need of reconciliation. This results in six possible interpretations:

– "A righteous one will assist my servant towards his rights concerning the many." (or any other forensic meaning, for example "[. . .] will declare my servant as righteous before the many.")
– "A righteous one will reconcile my servant with God before the many."
– "One will assist my righteous servant towards his rights concerning the many." (or another forensic interpretation)
– "The righteous one, my servant, will assist the many towards their rights."
– "The righteous one, my servant, will reconcile the many with God."
– "The righteous one, my servant, will prove himself to be righteous to the many."

Some of these interpretations seem to explicitly contradict each other, with some amounting to the servant being in need of reconciliation, and others amounting to the servant being righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. This is discussed in Chapter 3.

12bβ יַפְגִּיעַ

See **6bα** above.

2.5   The Text of the LXX

The text of LXX' Isaiah 53 differs distinctively from the texts of MT and 1QIsᵃ, such that the theological content of LXX' Isaiah 53 differs significantly from the Hebrew versions. The emendations of LXX have at least two effects:

– God is not depicted as willing and causing the servant's suffering, but as wanting to save and vindicate him (4b, 5bα, 6b, 9a, 10aα, 10b–11a)
– The we-group is depicted as siding with God and the servant throughout the events reported (1a, 2b–3, 4b, 8aα)

1a LXX adds χυριε at the beginning of verse 1. Thus, it depicts the speakers as siding with God, and thereby, with the servant.

2b–3 LXX translates וְנִרְאֵהוּ as indicative instead of as indirect cohortative. LXX interprets וְנֶחְמְדֵהוּ as οὐδε χαλλος, resulting in translating verse 2b as "and we saw him, and he had no good looks nor beauty." Further, LXX adds ἀλλα το εἶδος αὐτου at the beginning of 3aα, and translates נִבְזֶה by ἀτιμον, and וַחֲדַל אִישִׁים by ἐχλειπον παρα παντας ἀνθρωπους. Both ἀτιμον and ἐχλειπον are neuter, and therefore attributes to εἶδος. This

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results in LXX translating verse 3aα as "but his looks were unhonored, failing behind those of humans." LXX resolves the ambiguity of מַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ in 3bα in favor of "him hiding his face," maybe because its Hebrew original has מסתיר like 1QIsᵃ. Finally, LXX changes the first person plural חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ to third person singular passive ἐλογισθη: "he was not valued." Thus, LXX removes *all* references to the we-group despising the servant.

4b: LXX omits אֱלֹהִים, resulting in " 'And we considered him to be in distress and *under a stroke (of misfortune)* [ἐν πληγη] and *under oppression* [ἐν κακωσει].' The final word in the LXX suggests violent opposition by men, as opposed to humbling affliction allowed by God according to the final word of the Hebrew. [...] LXX has removed any suggestion of divine intent in the Servant's misfortune" (Sapp 1998, 176, his emphasis). The speakers are depicted as sympathetic to the suffering and oppressed servant.

5bα As shown in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.4.1, מוּסָר here primarily means "God's punishment." LXX translates מוּסָר by παιδεια, which corresponds to the more positive meaning "chastisement."

6b, 12bβ LXX conforms these two verses to each other. It has plural ταις ἁμαρτιαις instead of MT's singular עָוֹן in 6bβ, and τας ἁμαρτιας instead of MT's הַפֹּשְׁעִים in 12bβ. פנע is in both verses translated by παραδιδωμι. LXX has passive in 12bβ, maybe due to its Hebrew original having יפנע like 1QIsᵃ (Hermisson 2017b, 333): "And the Lord delivered him for/because of our sins" (6b), "and he was delivered because of our sins" (12bβ).

8aα: LXX has ἐν τη ταπεινωσις instead of מֵעֹצֶר, and continues ἡ κρισις αὐτου ἠρθη, deleting מִן before מִשְׁפָּט, and adding "his" to it, resulting in "When he was humiliated, his right was taken away". Thus, LXX substitutes the reference to arrest and condemnation by humiliation.

9a: LXX translates "And I will give the wicked instead of his grave and the rich instead of his death", changing the verb's third person to first person (implying God as subject), changing the ו-imperfect to future, inserting ἀντι before קִבְרוֹ, and changing ב to ἀντι before מֹתָיו. The result depicts God as vindicating the servant and saving him from death.

10aα: LXX interprets דכה here, but not in verse 5aβ, based on the Aramaic meaning "to cleanse", and interprets החלי as substantive, resulting in "The Lord desired to cleanse him from sicknesses". "The effect of the LXX's translation is to *avoid identifying the Servant's suffering with the Lord's will*. The Lord wants to save the Servant from his unjust suffering" (Sapp 1998, 180, his emphasis).

10aβγ LXX changes the person of תָּשִׂים to 2. person plural. It translates אָשָׁם by περι ἁμαρτιας, which designates the sin offering in Leviticus and Numbers (Bons et al. 2011, 2668). It changes the suffix of נפש to 2. person plural and takes נפש as the subject of יִרְאָה, despite נפש being female. יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים is translated by μακροβιον, probably as adjective to σπερμα, but it might also be an adverb. The verse is translated to "If you (plural) give a sin offering, your (plural) soul will see offspring longliving(ly)."

10b–11a: LXX makes all verbs dependent on וְחֵפֶץ יהוה, "And the Lord desired ..." Instead of בְיָדוֹ יִצְלָח, LXX has ἀφελεῖν, "to take away," which it takes together with 11aα: "to take away from his soul's agony." LXX interprets יִרְאֶה as hiphil, and adds φῶς like 1QIs[ab], "to show him light." LXX translates יִשְׂבָּע by πλάσαι. As a result, LXX translates verses 10b–11 as "And the Lord desired to take away from his soul's agony, to show him light, and to form by understanding, to make righteous the righteous one, who serves many well." In this version, God wants to relieve the servant from his suffering and to vindicate him.

2.6 Structure

While there is disagreement about the structure of Isaiah 53, it is commonly agreed that Isaiah 53 starts and ends with speeches by God (Hägglund 2008, 46). Because of עַבְדִּי in verses 52:13a and 11aγ, God speaks from 52:13, and in 11aγ. God's first speech ends with 52:15, with the we-group speaking from 53:1. The first person singular אֲחַלֶּק in 12aα suggests God as speaker. Further, רַבִּים in verses 11aγ, 12aα, and 12bα refer back to רַבִּים in verses 14aα and 15aα, supporting the impression that God speaks in 11aγ–12. Whether God's second speech starts before 11aγ, is debated (Koole 1998, 262). Since JHWH is referred to in the third person in 10aα and 10b, God's second speech cannot start before 11aα. Thematically, verses 11aγ–12 correspond to verses 13–15 by relating the future glory of the servant to his suffering.

Further, Isaiah 53 is partitioned into four parts corresponding to the third party figuring besides the servant and God:

13–15	the many
1–9	we
10	you
11–12	the many

A striking structural element is given by the two pairs of repeated consecutive words in 10–11aα, וַיהוה חָפֵץ (10aα) in combination with וְחֵפֶץ יהוה (10b), and נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה in 10aβγ and 11aα. The first, וַיהוה חָפֵץ (10aα), and the last, נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה (11aα) frame the part of the text where "you" is the third party. This suggests that these word pairs function as partition markers or bridges.

That verse 10aα constitutes a bridge between verses 1–9 and 10aβ–b is substantiated by it being composed of references. On the one hand, וַיהוה חָפֵץ refers forward to וְחֵפֶץ יהוה (10b). On the other hand, דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי refers back to דָּכָא (5aβ), חֹלִי (3aβ), and חֳלָיֵנוּ (4aα). Likewise, verse 11aα seems to constitute a bridge between verses 10aβ–b and 11f, with נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה referring back to נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה in 10aβγ. This is substantiated by that both bridges

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correspond to each other not only by referring to two consecutive words in 10aβ–10b, but also, that for both bridges the reference is with two variations: The order of words is reversed from 10aα to 10b, and חפץ is used once as a noun and once as a verb. While נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה is repeated verbatim in 11aα, the two words are allotted to different stiches, and יִרְאֶה is used in two different meanings, with and without direct object (supporting that no object should be supplied in 11aα). Thus, the structure can be refined as follows:

13–15	the many
1–9	we
10aα	*bridge*
10aβ–10b	you
11aα	*bridge*
11aγ–12	the many

It is commonly acknowledged that the emphatic אָכֵן in the beginning of verse 4 marks a division of verses 1–9, with verses 1–3 and 4–9 reporting the we-group's previous and current assessment of the servant's suffering, respectively. The reversal of their opinion of him is emphasized by the reversed order of מַכְאֹב and חֳלִי in 4a relative to their order in 3aβ, and by the grammatical reversal of the two words: מַכְאֹב has a feminine ending in verse 3aβ, but a masculine ending in verse 4aβ, and חֳלִי is singular in verse 3aβ, but plural in verse 4aα.

Considering these two parts, verses 1–3 and 4–9, it can be observed that verses 1–3 refer to the two word pairs וְחֵפֶץ יהוה/יהוה חָפֵץ and נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה of the two bridges 10aα and 11aα. Also these references are with variation: זְרוֹעַ יהוה in verse 1b refers to וְחֵפֶץ יהוה (one word repeated), and נִרְאֵהוּ and מַרְאֶה in verse 2b refer to יִרְאֶה (two words refer to another word of the same root). The two references correspond to each other in that each reference refers from a physical aspect (מַרְאֶה, זְרוֹעַ) to a psychic aspect (נַפְשׁוֹ, חָפֵץ) of God and the servant, respectively.

Thus, it is likely that verses 1–3, like verses 10aα and 11aα, function as a bridge, in this case, between verses 13–15 and 4–9. This is supported by לִשְׁמֻעָתֵנוּ in verse 1a and נִרְאֵהוּ in verse 2b referring back to שָׁמְעוּ and רָאוּ in verse 15b, מֵאֶרֶץ in 2aβ referring forward to מֵאֶרֶץ in 8bα, תֹּאַר and מַרְאֶה in verse 2aγb referring back to מַרְאֵהוּ וְתֹאֲרוֹ in verse 14aβb, and חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ and חֳלִי, מַכְאֹבוֹת in verse 3 referring to חֲלָיֵנוּ, מַכְאֹבֵינוּ, and חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ in verse 4. Finally, the by repetition and the unusual regular plural doubly emphasized אִישִׁים אִישׁ in verse 3a refers both back to מֵאִישׁ in 14aβ and forward to אִישׁ in 6aβ. Also all these references are with variations:

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שמע	1a	ל + noun	15bβ	לא + verb
אֶרֶץ	2aβ	"ground" + adjective	8bα	"land" + substantive
ראה	2b	imperfect, cohortative, suffix	15bα	perfect, indicative, no suffix
מַרְאֶה, תֹּאַר	2aγb	no suffix, separated	14aβb	suffix, consecutive
אִישִׁים אִישׁ	3a	repetition, plural	14aβ	preposition
		"all men, a man"	6aβ	"each man"
מַכְאֹב	3aβ	female, no suffix	4aβ	male, suffix
חֳלִי	3aβ	singular, no suffix	4aα	plural, suffix
חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ	3bβ	negated	4bα	with predicative accusative

The first three pairs of references (שמע, ראה), (מַרְאֶה, תֹּאַר), and (חֳלִי, מַכְאֹב) correspond to each other in that the order of words is reversed in the second occurrence of the pair.

The three bridges separate Isaiah 53 into four main units, verses 13–15, 4–9, 10aβ–10b, and 11aγ–12. These units correspond thematically to each other by describing the consequence of the servant's suffering for the third party (and the servant).

That this might be the structure of Isaiah 53, is further substantiated by verses 11aγ–12 referring not only back to 52:13–15, but also to verses 4–9. Except for הוּא which is hard to vary, also these references are with variations:

עָוֹן	11b	plural, suffix	6bβ	singular, no suffix
הוּא	11b, 12bα		4aα, 5aα, 7aα	
סבל	11b	imperfect, no suffix	4aβ	perfect, suffix
מוֹת	12aγ	ל + singular, no suffix	9aβ	ב + plural (supporting MT), suffix
פשע	12aδ, 12bβ	פְּשָׁעִים + ל/אֶת	5aα, 8bβ	פֶּשַׁע + מִן
פגע	12bβ	imperfect, intransitive	6bα	perfect, transitive

בְּדַעְתּוֹ in verse 11aβ refers back to יָדוּעַ in verse 3. This suggests that from the structural viewpoint, verse 11aβ belongs to the bridge 11aα. This substantiates that בְּדַעְתּוֹ primarily belongs to יִשְׂבָּע, and should not be separated from it by inserting ו before בְּדַעְתּוֹ, as 1QIsᵃ does. The resulting meaning "he will be satisfied by his knowledge" substantiates as a parallel to יִרְאֶה in 11aα, that יִרְאֶה means "he will understand" and thus does not need to be supplied with an object.

Thematically, verses 10aβ–10b correspond to verses 13–15, 4–9, and 11aγ–12 by describing the consequence of the servant's suffering for the third party (and the servant). However, verses 10aβ–10b are rhetorically set apart from the remainder of Isaiah 53 by being a conditioned statement.

Thus, the overall structure is as follows:

A	13–15	The consequence of the suffering for the servant
B¹	1–3	*bridge*
C	4–9	The consequence of the suffering for the we-group
B²	10aα	*bridge*
D	10aβ–10b	The consequence of the suffering for the addressee

| B^3 | 11aαβ | *bridge* |
| $\mathrm{\bar{A}\bar{C}\bar{D}}$ | 11aγ–12 | The consequence of the suffering for the many and the servant |

This structure suggests a relationship between the we-group, the addressee of the poem, and the many. Verses 11aγ–12 structurally correspond to verses 13–15, 4–9, and 10aβ–10b. Also thematically, they summarize these verses, stating the consequences of the servant's suffering for the servant and the many. Thus, it seems likely that the many comprise the many nations in verses 13–15, the we-group in verses 4–9, and the addressee in verse 10aβ–10b.

| B^3 | 11aαβ | *bridge* |
| $\mathrm{\bar{A}\bar{C}\bar{D}}$ | 11aγ–12 | The consequence of the suffering for the many and the servant |

Chapter 3

The Ambiguous Identity of the Servant

Isaiah 53 frequently employs the rhetoric device of ambiguity. Section 3.1 lists the ambiguous expressions. The frequency of the rhetoric device of ambiguity suggests that it is employed intentionally, in order to create an ambiguous text. Specifically, verse 11aγ has several meanings which seem to contradict each other, with some stating that the servant is in need of reconciliation, while others state that the servant is righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. Since the ambiguity seems to be intended, this suggests that the identity of the servant is ambiguous. This is discussed in Section 3.2, suggesting that the servant seems to ambiguously designate both the servant Israel in need of reconciliation with God, and a righteous servant, who reconciles the servant Israel.

3.1 Ambiguities in Isaiah 53

יַשְׂכִּיל (13a): "he will succeed" and "he will understand." The former conforms with the parallel 52:13b, the latter conforms with 53:11aαβ.

מִשְׁחַת (14aβ): construct state of both מִשְׁחָה "disfigurement" and מִשְׁחַת "anointment." Both are meaningful descriptions of the servant Israel. As a defeated and exiled people, the servant is disfigured. Further, since שֶׁמֶן is missing, the servant Israel might be anointed with JHWH's spirit, like the speaker of Is 61:1:

> But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
> Israel whom I have chosen!
> Thus says JHWH [...]
> I will pour my spirit upon your descendants (Is 44:1–3)

לְפָנָיו (2aα): "on his own" and "before him [JHWH]." Both are meaningful descriptions of the servant Israel, who "grew up" during the forty years in the desert, isolated from other nations, and before the face of JHWH, which resided with Israel in the tabernacle (for example, Ex 27:21).

כְּמַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ (3bα): "[he] hiding his face from us" and "[us] hiding our faces from him." Both are meaningful. The disfigured servant is hiding his face in shame, the onlookers turn their faces from him in disgust.

מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ (5bα) "God's punishment for our peace," "God's punishment we deserved as retaliation," and "God's chastisement for our peace." As has been shown in Section 2.4.1, מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ can mean both "God's punishment for our peace" and "God's punishment we deserved as retaliation." The former is stronger, since peace most likely implies retaliation, while retaliation does not necessarily imply peace. Given the parallel "our healing," the former most likely is the primary meaning, thus, the latter is implied. Further, since מוּסַר also can designate a chastisement which gives the insight necessary for leading a righteous life, and being righteous implies to be in a right relationship with God, מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ can also mean "God's chastisement for our peace."

חַבְרָתוֹ (5bβ): "his slash," from חַבּוּרָה, and "his being allied," passive participle from חבר. The former conforms with the parallel מוּסַר, the latter might refer to the servant being made a בְּרִית עָם in Is 42:6.

מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים (8bα) occurs ten times apart from Isaiah 53. In Jer 11:19, it means "life" as opposed to death, as made clear in Jer 11:21 ("those who seek your life"). This is probably also the main meaning in Ps 52:5. In Ezk 32:22–32 (six occurrences), it means the nation or land of Israel, as opposed to Assyria, Elam, Meshech and Tubal, and Egypt. This is probably also the main meaning in Ps 27:13. Concerning Isaiah 53, both meanings describe the exiled community. They are obviously cut off from the land of Israel, and the exile is described as "death" in Ezk 37. Similarly, both meanings might be intended in Ezk 26:20.

עַל (9bα): "although" and "because." "Although" relates to 9aα, "because" to 9aβ.

אָשָׁם (10aβ): "liable by guilt" and "liability offering." The two meanings correspond to reconciliation by transfer of the burden of sin, discussed in Section 5.2, and reconciliation by atonement, discussed in Section 5.1.2.

דַּעַת (11aβ): "insight" and "sweat." These correspond to the two meanings of מוּסַר in 5bα. Insight is fostered by chastisement, and sweat caused by punishment. בְּדַעְתּוֹ can be taken with either verse 11aα or 11aγ. With verse 11aα, the resulting "he will be satisfied by his knowledge" parallels יִרְאֶה. בְּדַעְתּוֹ with verse 11aγ results in "by his knowledge, my righteous servant will show himself to be righteous to the many" or "by his sweat, a righteous will reconcile my servant before the many."

יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים (11aγ): See Section 3.2 below.

3.2 The Ambiguous Identity of the Servant

As shown in Section 2.4.1, יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים (11aγ) can have various meanings. Some of these interpretations seem to explicitly contradict each other, with some amounting to

the servant being in need of reconciliation, and others amounting to the servant being righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. Since the ambiguities in Isaiah 53 seem to be intended, it seems likely that also the various meanings of 11aγ are intended. The contradiction can be resolved if also the identity of the servant is ambiguous. The rhetoric device of ambiguity might indeed be frequently employed in order to emphasize that the identity of the servant is ambiguous.

The servant is Israel, "cut off from the land of the living" (8bα), thus most likely the exiled community. This conforms with עֶבֶד designating Jacob/Israel in Isaiah 40–55. The servant being the exiled Israel conforms also with the description given of the servant in Isaiah 53. Conforming with Is 52:14, as a defeated and exiled people, the servant Israel is disfigured, but also anointed with JHWH's spirit (Is 44:1–3). Conforming with Is 53:2, the servant Israel "grew up" during the forty years in the desert, isolated from other nations, and before the face of JHWH. As exiled, the community had no majesty, was despised, had comparatively few members (lacking men, 3aα), was humiliated, oppressed, had been besieged (under arrest, 8aα), was condemned, and punished by God by being led into exile. The exile is likened to being dead in Ezekiel 37, which conforms both with the references to the servant's grave and death in verse 9a, and with the servant being likened to being led to slaughter (טֶבַח), since טֶבַח conveys both death and God's punishment.

The servant Israel is depicted as sinner in Is 42:24, 43:22–28, 44,21f, and 50:1. The we-group identifies themselves as צֹאן, which is commonly used for Israel (Waschke 1989, 864f). The we-group confesses that they went astray (תָּעִינוּ, 6aα). In Jer 50:6, the straying flock designates the exiled community. Thus, the we-group seems to be the exiled community, and thereby identical with the servant Israel. This is substantiated by the we-group confessing that they are sinners.

This depiction of the servant Israel as sinful in Is 42:24, 43:22–28, 44,21f, and 50:1 seems to contradict the description of the servant in Isaiah 53:9b as without violence and deceit. Mettinger (1983, 42f) suggests that the description of Israel in Is 51:7a ("Listen to me, knowers of righteousness, a people with my law in their hearts"), shows that the servant Israel is "simul justus et peccator." Another interpretation might be that "without violence and deceit" describes the exiled community as submitting (Is 53:7aα) to those who defeated them and to the situation in exile instead of revolting against it. This interpretation conforms with the exiled community being described as without violence and deceit, while it on the other hand can be called sinful for disobeying JHWH.

As sinful, the servant Israel is in need of reconciliation. Verse 11aγ states both that "a righteous reconciles my servant," and that "the righteous one, my servant, reconciles the many." The structure of Isaiah 53 suggests that the many comprise both the many nations, the we-group, and the addressee of the poem. Thus, the we-group, the servant Israel, is comprised by the many. Thus, the servant Israel is according to verse 11aγ reconciled by "a righteous" and "the righteous one, my servant." This suggests that "a

righteous" and "the righteous one, my servant" are identical. This is substantiated by the we-group declaring that they are reconciled by the servant being punished (5bα).

The righteous servant is likened to a שֶׂה, an individual animal of the flock צֹאן. Thus, he seems to be one of the exiled community, and accordingly, everything that can be said about them, can be said about him. In addition, he seems to be the we-group's ally (5bβ).

The ambiguous identity of the servant is further supported by the debated verses Is 49:5f. Also in these verses, the rhetoric device of ambiguity presents an ambiguous servant:

5aα   And now JHWH says,
  β   who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
  γ   to return   Jacob to him,
       by returning
  δ   such that Israel might be gathered to him,
6aα   he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
  β   to raise up   the tribes of Jacob
       by [me] raising up
  γ   and to return   the survivors of Israel;
            [me] returning

The servant Israel is formed by JHWH by returning Jacob to himself. The righteous servant is called as JHWH's means to return the servant Israel to him.

As a consequence of the we-group being Israel, and "the many" comprising Israel, it seems likely that "the many" of Is 53:11f are the many nations of Is 52:15. In turn, it seems likely that the poem is addressed to every nation.

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Chapter 4

Suffering in Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53 contains 37 descriptions of suffering, making suffering its dominant theme. The descriptions are the following:

- he was disfigured beyond resembling a human (14aβ, 14b)
- he was isolated (2aα, 3aα)
- he was undernourished ("like a root from dry earth, he had neither appearance nor majesty", 2aβγ)
- he was despised (נִבְזֶה 3aα, 3bβ; לֹא חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ 3bβ)
- he suffered pain (אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת 3aβ)
- he was sick (יְדוּעַ חֹלִי 3aβ; 10aα)
- he was ashamed (hiding his face from us, 3bα)
- we were sick (4aα)
- we were in pain (4aβ)
- he bore the burden of our sicknesses and our pains (מַכְאֹבֵינוּ סְבָלָם 4aα, חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא 4aβ)
- he was struck (4bβ, 8bβ)
- he was smitten by God (4bβ)
- he was humiliated (4bβ; assigned a grave among the wicked, 9aα (Koch 1989, 1152); counted among felons, 12aδ)
- *he* was pierced (5aα)
- he was crushed (5aβ, 10aα)
- he was punished (5bα)
- his slash (5bβ)
- he bore the burden of sin (6b, 11b, 12bα)
- he was oppressed (7aα)
- "he was led to slaughter" (7aβ)
- he was arrested (8aα)
- he was cut from the land of the living (8bα)

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– he died violently (9aβ)

– his soul was troubled (11aα)

– his soul was stripped to death (12aγ)

4.1   Inclusive or Exclusive Suffering

As shown in Section 3.2, the we-group most likely is the exiled Israel, and the many are the many nations. The servant ambiguously refers to either the exiled Israel, that is, the we-group, or to a righteous servant who is a member of the exiled community. This section studies the relation between the suffering of the righteous servant and the suffering of the we-group and the many.

Hooker (1998, 96) defines inclusive suffering as a suffering alongside others, and exclusive suffering as a suffering instead of others. However, while the terms inclusive and exclusive are opposites of each other without further options, the servant might suffer neither along with nor instead of others. For example, Sweeney (2016, 215) identifies the servant with all Israelites who have suffered in the period between the Assyrian invasion in the eighth century up to the early Persian period. In this interpretation, whether correct or not, the servant Jacob/Israel hardly suffers along with or instead of other nations.

In the following, *inclusive* suffering presumes that the others suffer, and that the servant suffers like them or closely similar to them. *Exclusive* suffering refers to the servant suffering distinctively different from the others, who may suffer in a different way, or not at all. Specifically, exclusive suffering does not imply that the servant suffers instead of the others.

Of all descriptions of suffering in Isaiah 53, two describe suffering of the we-group: "our sicknesses" and "our pains" (4a). Sickness and pain are also extensively suffered by the servant: He is a "man of pains" and "known by sicknesses" (3a). Thus, the servant suffers inclusively. This is substantiated by the we-group likened to a flock (צֹאן, 6aα), while the servant is likened to a שֶׂה (7aβ). Since the term שֶׂה is used for the individual animal within a צֹאן, the servant is likened to being one of them. Thus, he shares in their fate.

However, he not only shares the we-group's suffering, but he alone carries the burden of this suffering: "our sufferings *he* bore", and "our pains, he carried them" (4a). Thus, the servant seems to endure the suffering which he shares with the we-group more profoundly than the we-group does. Further, sicknesses and pains constitute only a small part of the suffering described in Isaiah 53. The vast majority of the descriptions refer to other types of suffering, and they refer only to the servant. His suffering is described in ways which by far exceed sickness and pain: he was led to slaughter, cut from the land of the living, died violently, his soul was stripped to death. "The nouns in this passage ('sorrows',

'sicknesses', 'wounds'), likewise the participles ('stricken', 'smitten', 'afflicted') [...] give a picture of a man subjected to every conceivable pain and indignity." (North 1964, 242)

4.1.1 Objections against the Servant Suffering Exclusively

Orlinsky (1977, 92) partitions Isaiah 53 into Is 52:13–15 and Is 53:1–12, and suggest that the former treats the servant Israel, and the latter the prophet Deuteroisaiah. Orlinsky (1977, 57) claims that the servant of Is 53:1–12 does not suffer in any extraordinary way. Rather, the prophet Deuteroisaiah suffers just like many other prophets. Orlinsky (1977, 60f) substantiates his claim by referring to Jer 11:19a,b as follows:

Concerning "like a sheep he was led to slaughter" (7aβ), Orlinsky (1977, 60) suggests that this merely asserts that the prophet unflinchingly endured a suffering which is typically endured by prophets. To substantiate that 7aβ describes an "occupational hazard" typical for prophets (57), Orlinsky (1977, 60) points to Jer 11:19a, "but I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter." However, Jer 11:19a uses a different word for lamb, כֶּבֶשׂ, and the metaphors are different. In Isaiah 53, the metaphor indeed is about the servant unflinchingly enduring the punishment. As made explicit by Jer 11:19bα, "And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes," Jeremiah 11:19a is about the prophet's naivety, his complete unawareness of his opponents' murderous conspiracy. Thus, Is 53:7 cannot be likened to Jer 11:19. Furthermore, while verse 7aβ emphasizes that the servant endures his suffering unflinchingly, this does not diminish the extend of the suffering described in Isaiah 53.

Concerning "he was cut from the land of the living" (8bβ), Orlinsky (1977, 60f) refers to Jer 11:19bβ "let us cut him off from the land of the living," which is uttered by Jeremiah's opponents planning to kill him. Orlinsky (1977, 61) concludes that since Jeremiah lived after this, Is 53:8bβ cannot mean that the servant died. However, Jer 11:19bβ does not state an event which has happened, but only the content of the opponents' plan: "they devised schemes, saying" (Jer 11:19bα). Since God kills everybody plotting to murder Jeremiah (Jer 11:21–23), the opponents can never execute their murderous plan, and consequently, Jeremiah lives despite the opponents planning to cut him off from the land of the living. In contrast, Is 53:8b does not describe someone merely planning to kill the servant, but states that the servant was actually cut from the land of the living. Therefore, it is impossible to conclude from Jer 11:19 that Is 53:8bβ does not mean that the servant died. And even if Orlinsky (1977, 61f) is correct in claiming that the servant did not die, this does not imply that the servant did not suffer profoundly.

That the servant does not suffer in an extraordinary way, might further be argued based on the description of his suffering resembling descriptions of suffering in individual complaint psalms, for example Psalm 22. However, there is a fundamental difference between Isaiah 53 and individual complaint psalms. The individual complain psalms explain

suffering as the "devastating consequence of the absence of YHWH" (Lindström 1994, 96). As soon as JHWH abandons a person, the person becomes defenseless and is immediately attacked by evil forces (95f). Contrary to this, Isaiah 53 depicts a crisis not caused by the absence of JHWH, but a crisis which is caused by JHWH and willed by JHWH. The only suffering in the Old Testament which potentially can be compared to that of the servant is the suffering endured by Job, who certainly suffers in an extraordinary way. But even he is not crushed by God ("O that it would please God to crush me (וִידַכְּאֵנִי)," Job 6:9). Also, God is not actively inflicting Job's suffering, but tolerating Satan's infliction. In Isaiah 53, it is God who actively makes the servant suffer, thus the servant's suffering surpasses even Job's suffering.

4.1.2   The Servant's Exclusion

That the servant suffers exclusively, is further supported by Isaiah 53 throughout the text emphatically isolating the servant from the others (the we-group and the many). This is done in several ways:

He is explicitly stated to be isolated (2aα) and deserted (3aα).

He is set apart from the others by emphatic הוא opposed to אֲנַחְנוּ (4), and opposed to "our diseases" (4aα), "our felonies" (5aα), "their sins" (11b), and "the offence of many" (12b). Several manuscripts, the Syriac translation, and the Vulgate also have an extra הוא in contrast to "our pains" (4aβ).

Isaiah 53 gives only few characteristics of the servant and the others. These few characteristics are thus emphasized. The servant's righteousness is emphasized by describing him as without violence nor deceit (9b), and by the use of מִן in two different meanings in verse 8, which highlights the unexpectedness of sentencing the servant to punishment. The others, on the contrary, are described using only one characteristic, namely their sinfulness:

- our felonies (5aα)
- our sins (5aβ)
- we all went astray (6aα): "This [...] is a straying from God" (Koole 1998, 297), where "תעה [...] ein schuldhaftes Abirren vom rechten Weg impliziert. Das Verb meint in theologischer Verwendung durchweg ein sündiges, bewusst gewähltes Verhalten, das dem Willen JHWHs widerspricht" (Berges 2015, 255)
- each of us turned to his own way (6aβ): "פנה [...] implies an intentional breaking away from Yahweh" (Koole 1998, 297). דַּרְכּוֹ is the opposite of דֶּרֶךְ יהוה, "the conduct required by God,"[1] thus going on one's own way implies not conducting oneself according to God's requirements.
- the sin of us all (6bβ)

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1. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "דֶּרֶךְ 5.b"

– the felony of my people (8bβ)
– their sins (11b)
– the felons (12aδ, 12bβ)
– the offence of many (12bα)

The contrast between the servant and the we-group is further emphasized by the contrasting attributes in verse 5b (our peace versus God's punishment on him, his slash versus our healing) and in verse 8bβ (the felony of my people versus his strike), and by the sheep metaphor: While the servant is compared to sheep in a positive characteristic, submissiveness (7aα), the we-group is compared to sheep in a negative characteristic, their tendency to stray their own way and get lost (6aα) (Oswalt 1997, 390f).

Finally, apart from the sheep metaphor in verse 6, Isaiah 53 contains four verbs in first person plural. All of them have the servant as object, thus explicitly excluding him from the we-group: וְנִרְאֵהוּ, that we should look at him (2b), וְנֶחְמְדֵהוּ, that we should desire him (2b), חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ, we valued/evaluated him (3bβ, 4bα). Likewise, the servant is excluded from the many in verse 14aα, since they are appalled at him.

4.2   Conclusion

While the servant shares in the suffering of the we-group and thus suffers inclusively, the servant's suffering by far exceeds the others' suffering in quality and in the types of suffering endured. Thus, he suffers exclusively. Isaiah 53 emphasizes the servant's exclusive suffering, both by the quantity of expressions describing it, and by emphatically isolating the servant from the others.

Chapter 5

The Consequence of the Servant's Suffering

This chapter studies the relation between the servant's suffering and reconciliation of the we-group and the many with God.

The relationship with God of both the we-group and the many was broken due to their felonies (פְּשָׁעֵנוּ (5aα), פֶּשַׁע עַמִּי (8aβ) פֹּשְׁעִים (12aδ, 12bβ)). Because of the servant's punishment, the we-group is reconciled with God: God's punishment for *our peace with God* was on him, by (instrumental בּ) his slash *we were healed* (5b). Also the many are reconciled by God's righteous servant enduring the burden of their sin (11aγb).

5.1 Common Interpretations of the Servant's Reconciling Ministry

The interpretations reviewed in Chapter 1 suggest that the servant achieves reconciliation either by his message fostering contrition or faith, or by the his suffering being atoning.

5.1.1 Reconciliation by Message

Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b) interpret the righteous servant as the prophet Deuteroisaiah, who by his message fosters contrition or faith, and thus returns Israel to JHWH. They seem to interpret reconciliation as comprising two stages. As a prerequisite for reconciliation, the servant dies as compensation for Israel's guilt, while Israel ultimately is reconciled by its contrition or faith.

Concerning the first stage, Janowski (1993, 19) interprets Israel as guilty to a degree which made it impossible for Israel to compensate for its obligation. In order to have a future, Israel had to be released from its obligation. It is released by the servant dying as "Schuldtilgung" (אָשָׁם). Similarly, Hermisson (2017b, 398) interprets the death of the

servant as "vollgültige Sühneleistung" (אָשָׁם), a merit which fully compensates for the guilt of the servant's people. "Hier aber geht es nicht um die Aufhebung der Schuldfolgen, sondern um ihre Übertragung auf einen Unschuldigen, so, dass die Täter schuld- und straffrei werden" (Hermisson 2017b, 369).

Concerning the second stage, Janowski (1993, 13,20) suggests that the servant's death together with the message of Is 52:13–53:1 causes Israel to understand the meaning of the servant's death, and by this, its own situation of being guilty. *Only* the confessing, contrite Israel is reconciled with God (20). Similarly, Hermisson (2017b, 424) suggests that the servant's resurrection causes Israel to believe in the servant's message of JHWH's plan for salvation. Since their guilt was their unbelief in his message, and they now believe it, they are reconciled with God.

However, this second stage seems inconsistent with the interpretation of אָשָׁם as "Schuldtilgung," or "vollgültige Sühneleistung für die Schuld," which frees the others from their guilt and punishment. If they are freed from their guilt and punishment, then they are reconciled with God. Further, proposing reconciliation by contrition or faith seems contrary to Is 53:5, which explicitly states that peace and healing are effected by the servant's punishment, not by his message, nor by the others' contrition, confession, or faith. While the we-group's insight into their being guilty and their confession are reported in Isaiah 53, these are not what reconciles them. Rather, these are their reaction to being reconciled by the servant's suffering (see Section 5.2), or their reaction to being chastised (see Section 5.3). Finally, Isaiah 53 does not mention any message of the servant. "What we heard" (1a) is not necessarily a message by the servant. Hermisson (2017b, 355) interprets the content of "what we heard" as the two speeches by JHWH which frame Isaiah 53. However, because of עַבְדִּי in both parts of this frame, they can hardly be proclaimed by the servant. Hermisson (2017b, 418) interprets "each to his own way we turned" (6a) as the we-group not paying heed to the prophet's message. However, דַּרְכּוֹ is the opposite of דֶּרֶךְ יהוה, "the conduct required by God,"[1] which refers to God's will in general, not to a specific revelation.

Janowski (2009) has to some degree reformulated his interpretation. In accordance with his earlier works, he regards Israel as guilty to a degree which made it impossible for Israel to compensate for its obligation. Thus, Israel had to be released from its obligation in order to have a future (58). This happens by the servant dying as "Schuldtilgung" (אָשָׁם) (54f). The message of Is 52:13–53:1 causes Israel to reflect and to understand that the servant suffered not because of his, but because of their deeds (55f). Janowski (2009, 56) calls this insight of being guilty "the beginning of transformation," followed by the ambiguous "Die Wirklichkeit der Stellvertretung erschließt sich den Wir aber nicht einfach durch Reflexion oder durch Entschluß, sondern durch das im Bekenntnis von Jes 53,4 ergriffene Wort, das JHWH nach Jes 52,13-15 über den Erfolg seines Knechts spricht."

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1. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "דֶּרֶךְ 5.b"

This can mean that by confessing, the we-group understands the reality of substitution, but can also mean that the we-group gets access to the reality of substitution by their confession. The latter seems to be what is intended by Janowski, first, because "get access to" is the primary meaning of "erschließen,"[2] and second, "by their confession" conforms better with the latter than with the former. Thus, insight and confession are necessary requirements for being substituted, and by that, the necessary requirements for being reconciled.

Janowski (2009) follows this up with statements which are new with respect to his earlier works: The suffering and death of the servant constitute a "*Stellvertretung für die Sünder*" (57, his emphasis). This substitutionary suffering is interpreted as salvation, "*der von JHWH bestimmte Weg zum Heil*" (57, his emphasis). The message of the servant is his testimony for God's will to be the savior of the world (57).

Altogether, the conception of reconciliation seems to be the same as in Janowski's earlier works, having the same inconsistency. The servant dies as a substitute, assuming the consequences of the others' deeds. However, this is only a prerequisite to reconciliation, for which insight and confession of guilt seem to be decisive.

5.1.2 Reconciliation by Atonement

The servant's suffering has been interpreted as cultic expiation, both as the servant acting as scapegoat, as liability offering, or as cultmetaphorical compensation.

The Servant as Scapegoat

Mettinger (1983, 41) suggests that the exiled community achieves reconciliation by acting as Israel's scapegoat. He substantiates this as follows: אֶרֶץ הַיִּים should be interpreted as the opposite of desert, thus, Isaiah 53:8 describes the servant as being driven into the desert, just like the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. Further, the scapegoat's carrying away of the sins is expressed by נשא עון, which Mettinger (1983, 41), following Zimmerli (1969, 236–244), finds alluded to by the expressions נשא הלי (Is 53:4), סבל מכאב (Is 53:4), סבל עון (Is 53:11), and נשא חטא (Is 53:12).

Mettinger's arguments are not convincing. First, it is the sinful servant Israel who in Isaiah 53 is in need of reconciliation. The exiled can hardly act as their own scapegoat. For the interpretation of אֶרֶץ הַיִּים as the opposite of desert, Mettinger (1983, 41) refers to Gerleman (1980, 41), who in turn states without further argumentation that in the Old Testament, אֶרֶץ הַיִּים is not opposed to death, but to an uninhabited place, specifically the desert. Gerleman (1980, 42) also states: "Häufig ist offenbar Israels Land gemeint." As shown on page 44, אֶרֶץ הַיִּים is never opposed to the desert, but either to the land of

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2. *Duden*, s.v. "erschließen," accessed December 12, 2017, https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/erschlieszen

Israel, or to death. Thus, it cannot be concluded from 53:8 that Israel is driven into the desert like the scapegoat. Further, as shown in Section 2.2.1, סבל עון and נשׂא חטא in Isaiah 53 express enduring the consequences of sin. They cannot be equated to the cultic elimination of sin expressed by נשׂא עון.

However, Isaiah 53 does allude to the Day of Atonement as follows:

- in Is 53:8, the servant is taken (לֻקַּח) and subsequently cut (נִגְזַר) from the land of the living (מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים)

  - לקח qal is used for the priest taking the animals to be used as sin offering and burnt offering for Israel (Lev 16:5), and for taking the two goats in order to present them to JHWH (Lev 16:7).
  - the scapegoat is sent to "a land of cut off" (אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה, Lev 16:22)

- while the goats in Lev 16 are designated by שָׂעִיר, a שֶׂה, which the servant is likened to in Is 53:7, can be a goat
- the priest sprinkles (נזה hiphil) the blood of both his and Israel's sin offering four times (Lev 16:14–19)
- Israel's פֶּשַׁע and עָוֹן are confessed by the high priest over the head of the scapegoat (Lev 16:21).
- the servant is humiliated (מְעֻנֶּה, pual, Is 53:4aβ). On the Day of Atonement, to be humiliated (ענה pual, Lev 16:29) and humiliating oneself (ענה piel, Lev 16:29, 31, 23:27, 32) is required.

The Servant as Liability Offering

Sweeney (2016, 209f, 213) interprets the servant's suffering as atoning sacrifice based on

- interpreting יַזֶּה (15aα) as cultic "he will sprinkle"
- interpreting אָשָׁם (10aβ) as cultic "guilt offering"
- the servant being led to slaughter like sheep (שֶׂה, 7aβ)

As shown in Section 2.2.2, it is unlikely that יַזֶּה means "he will sprinkle." The sheep's slaughter in 53:7 most likely is profane rather than atoning, since 53:7 does not use expressions for cultic slaughter, זבח and שׁחט, but טבח, which denotes secular slaughter (see Section 2.2.2). That the slaughter is secular rather than atoning, is substantiated by the parallel comparison "like a sheep before its shearers", since shearing is profane, not sacrificial treatment of sheep (Berges 2015, 260). Deuteronomy 17:1 emphasizes that the servant, disfigured and sick, is disqualified as a sacrificial animal: "You must not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep (שֶׂה, which the servant is likened to in 7aβ) that has a defect, anything seriously wrong; for that is abhorrent to the Lord your God." Further, in the Old Testament, human blood cannot atone. Finally, the focus of Isaiah 53 is on the servant's suffering. Sacrificial animals die, but they are not made suffer.

However, there are several allusions to the liability offering, especially the expression אָשָׁם, and also נזה hiphil. Furthermore, the servant is described as without deceit and violence. While he is physically disfigured and sick, and thus disqualified as liability offering, it can be argued that he is morally blameless, and thus metaphorically qualified.

The Servant as Cultmetaphorical Compensation

Berges (2015, 269) interprets אָשָׁם, and thereby the servant, based on 1.Sam 5f, as a "cultmetaphorical" compensation. Just as the Philistines in 1.Sam 5f sent a representation of their suffering as אָשָׁם, so the Israelites can set a representation of their suffering (being exiled and disregarded), that is, their suffering and disregarded representative, as theirs.

Berges' interpretation requires that the servant is the Israelites' representative. Isaiah 53 does not state that the servant is their representative. Since he is despised, deserted, and not valued by them, this seems unlikely. If he is not their representative, then Berges' interpretation of אָשָׁם as the representation of the we-group's suffering is impossible.

But even if he is their representative, Berges neglects that while the Philistines send a representation of their suffering, this representation is a compensation, a valuable gift, "five gold tumors and five gold mice" (1Sam 6:4). The focus of the אָשָׁם is on the value, making it a punishment for the Philistines to send it. On the contrary, it is not a punishment for the Israelites to send someone whom they do not value. It is not possible to set a disregarded person as an אָשָׁם, since this denies the aspects of compensation and punishment of the אָשָׁם.

5.2 Reconciliation by Transfer of the Burden of Sin

Isaiah 53 states that the we-group is guilty of felonies (5aα, 8bβ), and sins (5aβ, 6bβ). The righteous servant, on the contrary, is innocent (9b, 11aγ). Nevertheless, the servant is sentenced (8aα), and the servant is punished by and according to the will of God (5bα, 6b, 10aα). The we-group, on the contrary, is never stated to be sentenced or punished. For each instances of their felonies and sins, it is the servant who is punished because of them (5aα, 5aβ, 6b, 8b), while Isaiah 53 never states that the we-group is punished. The punishment of the servant is the punishment the we-group deserves for its sin, "the burden of the sin of us all" (6bβ). The consequence of the servant's punishment is the same as if the we-group was punished: They are reconciled with God (5b). Verse 5b emphasizes that they are reconciled with God because of the servant being punished.

Similarly, Isaiah 53 states that the many are felons (12aδ, 12bβ), guilty of sins (11b) and and offences (12bα). Isaiah 53 never states that the many are sentenced or punished. That it is the servant who carries the burden of their sins (11b, 12bα), is emphasized by הוא in both verses. Again, the consequence of the servant's punishment is the same as if

the many were punished. They are reconciled with God (11aγ). Verse 11aγ emphasizes that the many are reconciled by the servant.

The simplest explanation for the punishment of the servant would be that he himself is guilty and thus justly punished. However, the servant is explicitly stated to be innocent, and he is emphatically isolated from the others with respect to his righteousness in contrast to their sinfulness. While Isaiah 53 explicitly states that he shares in their sicknesses and pains, Isaiah 53 does not give him a share in their offences, felonies, and sins. The servant is innocent.

Verse 5a ("*he* was pierced because of our felonies, crushed because of our sins") might indicate that the servant suffered as the victim of the we-group's felonies. However, this does not explain why the servant suffers according to God's will, and why the others are reconciled by his suffering.

Another explanation would be that the servant is the victim of a miscarriage of justice. Again, this does not explain why the innocent servant is punished in accordance with the will of God.

The only scenario in which the innocent servant can justly assume the guilt of the others' sin and endure the punishment that they deserve, is that the servant is *forensically liable* for their sin. This explains that the punishment the servant endures, is the punishment deserved by the we-group. This explains why he has to carry the burden of the many's sin. Having someone who is forensically liable for them and who is punished instead of them, explains that the others are justly neither sentenced nor punished, and nevertheless reconciled with God as if they themselves had been punished.

That the servant is liable for the others is substantiated by verse 10, which guarantees the addressee of the poem that JHWH's will succeeds if the addressee appoints the servant as liable for his guilt. According to 10aα, the will of JHWH comprises crushing the servant. According to 5aβ, the servant is crushed because of the sins of the we-group. Thus, verse 10aβ guarantees to the addressee that if the appoints the servant to be liable for him, then the servant will be crushed for the addressee's sin. The addressee, in turn, is released from punishment. Thus, the servant will see the addressee as his offspring and prolong the addressee's days (10aγ).

5.2.1   Objections Against Transfer of the Burden of Sin

Whybray (1978, 60f) argues that verse 6b "certainly does not itself imply that their punishment was transferred to him". While verse 6b itself actually implies just that (see Section 2.4.1), in any case verse 6b has to be read in the context of Isaiah 53: The innocence of the servant, him being sentenced and punished according to God's will, and that while Isaiah 53 does not state that the others are punished or had their sin expiated in any other way, they nevertheless are reconciled with God as if they had been punished,

or expiation had happened. Isaiah 53:6b describes a transfer of punishment from the we-group to the servant.

Concerning סבל עון (11b), Whybray (1978, 29f) refers to the only other occurrence in Lam 5:7 and points out that there is "no question here of vicarious suffering: there is cause and effect, but not substitution", with the cause and effect being the common fate of sin, guilt, and punishment belonging together and binding together ancestors and descendants, who themselves confess to be sinners (Lam 5:16). However, the descendants themselves being sinners distinguishes them from the servant, who is righteous. His bearing of the burden of the many's sins can therefore not be denied to be substitutionary on the basis of Lamentations 5.

While Hägglund (2008, 67) agrees that "YHWH is the cause of the suffering of an innocent servant, of a suffering that the 'we' have deserved," he argues that this not necessarily implies that the we-group is "freed from their guilt. Rather, they have escaped their own suffering. Nothing is said about atoning suffering" (56). Hägglund is correct that Isaiah 53 does not describe the servant's suffering as atoning, and that the servant's suffering does not necessarily imply that the we-group is freed from their guilt. However, the suffering endured by the servant is a specific suffering. It is the suffering that the we-group deserves because of their sin (5bα, 6b). Thus, the we-group does not simply "escape their own suffering". Rather, the punishment they deserve is transferred to the servant. This must include a transfer of their guilt, first, because sin, the guilt incurred by sin, and the punishment for the guilt form a unity which cannot be broken up, and second, because the servant cannot be punished according to the will of God if he is not guilty. Since he himself is innocent, the guilt he is punished for is the guilt that is transferred to him from the others. Finally, Isaiah 53 states that the others are reconciled with God. This could not be if they still were guilty. Thus, the others are freed from their guilt.

Isaiah 40:1f

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Tell the heart of Jerusalem [. . .] that her sin (עָוֹן) is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins (חַטֹּאת)." (Is 40:1f)

Referring to Is 40:1f, it is argued that the servant cannot vicariously suffer Israel's punishment, since Is 40:1f states that "Israel had already experienced that punishment [. . .] and had thereby fully expiated her sinfulness (40.1-2)" (Orlinsky 1977, 58). However, it can be questioned whether Is 40:1f has this implication for Isaiah 53. The one who in Is 40:2 is said to have suffered double for all her sins is Jerusalem, not Israel. Isaiah 40–55 addresses the exiled community, who are called to return to the land of Israel. Isaiah 40:1 calls the people in exile to comfort (second person plural) Jerusalem. Thus, the "my people" of Jerusalem (Is 40:1f) and of Is 53:8 are most likely different groups. This is substantiated by "my" in Is 40:2 referring to God, which "my" probably does not in

Is 53:8. The people of Jerusalem are the people left there by the Babylonians, while those of Is 53:8 are the Israelites in Babylonian exile. Thus, it cannot be concluded from Is 40:1f that the we-group in Isaiah 53 has endured the punishment it deserved.

Isaiah 43:25 and 44:22

In both verses, God tells Jacob/Israel that he himself annihilates their felonies and offences. Thus, it can be argued that the suffering of the servant cannot reconcile, since the others' sins are already expiated by God. However, both verses do not explain how Israel's sins are annihilated. Isaiah 53 gives this explanation.

Ezekiel 14

Ezekiel 14:12-20 might give the impression that not even the most righteous person can save additional persons. However, this passage counters Gen 18:23–19:16 and Jer 5:1, where God concedes to saving cities because of the mere presence of righteous persons. Ezekiel 14 declares that God is not making any such concessions anymore. Even if these three men were *in it [the land]* (בְּתוֹכָה, Ezk 14:14,16,18,20), nobody else would be saved.

The passage excludes the possibility of a righteous person saving someone else *along with* himself by his mere presence. It does not exclude the possibility of saving someone by suffering their punishment *instead of* them.

Ezekiel 18

Ezekiel 18:1–20 might give the impression that guilt cannot be transferred, not even from a father to his son or the other way round. However, in Ezk 18:1–20, God is answering the Israelites' accusation that he is making them suffer for their ancestors' sins (Ezk 18:2). God declares that this accusation is unjustified: He will neither punish a son for his father's sin nor the other way round (Ezk 18:3f). God rejects that he would transfer the punishment from one person to another just because they are related. This does not exclude transfer of guilt and punishment from a person to another if the other person is liable for the first.

The passage substantiates that transfer of punishment from one person to another was possible in Old Testament thought. If such transfer was unthinkable for them, the Israelites could not suspect God of transferring their ancestors' punishment to them.

5.3   Reconciliation by Chastisement and Insight

As shown in Section 2.3, Isaiah 53 contains a significant number of expressions related to knowledge of God and keeping his commandments.

Verse 5bα can be interpreted as "God's chastisement for our peace was on him." When the source of chastisement is JHWH, chastisement is redemptive by restoring the chastised to proper conduct (Branson 1982, 695). The exile may be interpreted as chastisement from God. Consequently, the chastised servant is the servant Israel.

That the servant Israel learns from this chastisement, is substantiated by the proclamation that the servant will understand (13a, 11aαβ). The expressions used convey experiencing God through his actions, an experience which leads both to appropriate faith in and fear of JHWH, and to analyzing one's own conduct, resulting in adapting one's conduct to JHWH's requirements.

As the Masoretic verse partition indicates by making "by his knowledge" (בְּדַעְתּוֹ) its own stich (11aβ), "by his knowledge" can not only be taken together with 11aα, but also with 11aγ. This is explicitly done in 1QIsᵃ by inserting ו before בְּדַעְתּוֹ. Verse 11aβγ can be interpreted as "by his knowledge, my righteous servant will prove himself righteous before the many." דַּעַת means an acquaintance with God which constitutes itself in righteous conduct. Because of the lesson learned by God's chastisement, the servant Israel can lead a righteous life. By leading a righteous life, he both is righteous and appears righteous before the many. By leading a righteous life, that is, adhering to the conduct required by God, he also is in peace with God.

Leading a righteous life comprises insight. However, this insight is not only insight into one's own situation, as Janowski (1993, 20) interprets, but rather appropriate fear of JHWH. Such insight does not mainly aim at contrition, but at adapting one's conduct to JHWH's requirements. It is righteous conduct, not contrition, which constitutes a righteous life. Similarly, experiencing God leads to faith (Is 41:20), but it also leads to analyzing and adapting one's conduct. The aim of chastisement is not contrition of faith, but adaption of conduct to the requirements (Sæbø 1971, 739). Contrary to the suggestions by Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b), being righteous comprises not only contrition and faith in God, but also corresponding conduct (Johnson 1989, 921).

It seems that Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b) do not fully acknowledge the ambiguity of Isaiah 53 concerning the identity of the servant and the corresponding means of reconciliation. The righteous servant suffers the consequences of the others' sin, which frees the others from their guilt and punishment. Contrary to the suggestion of Janowski (1993) and Hermisson (2017b), it is not primarily this suffering which leads to insight. It is primarily the chastisement of the servant Israel in exile which leads to insight and correspondingly adapted conduct.

5.4   Conclusion

Isaiah 53 is ambiguous concerning how peace with God is achieved. It states both reconciliation by chastisement and insight, and by transfer of the burden of sin, and clearly

alludes to various means of cultic expiation of sin.

Concerning chastisement and insight, Isaiah 53 states that the servant Israel is chastised and thus restored to the conduct required by God. However, a main concern in Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 40–55 is Israel's sin. Conducting a righteous life does not expiate sin (Johnson 1989, 921). Thus, while adhering to the conduct required by God maintains peace with God, sin still has to be dealt with.

Concerning transfer of the burden of sin, Isaiah 53 states that the we-group's and the others' burden of sin, that is, the guilt incurred by it and the punishment for it, is transferred to the righteous servant. The others are thus freed from their guilt, and thereby reconciled with God. The others' burden of sin is transferred to the servant by God, thus, the transfer must be justified. For this transfer to be justified, the servant must be forensically liable for the others.

Concerning cultic expiation, Isaiah 53 alludes to both the Day of Atonement and to the liability offering. However, the servant is not decisively depicted as a liability offering or the scapegoat. Further, for an offering or the scapegoat to be atoning, sin has to be confessed before the animal is slaughtered or sent away, respectively. In Isaiah 53, the confession in verses 5f probably occurs after the servant has been taken away. In addition, Isaiah 53 lacks the central term for atonement, כפר, and does not mention the atoning blood. Against this, it might be argued that if כפר was used in Isaiah 53, or if blood was mentioned, then the cultic aspects of the text would be so dominant that the forensic aspects might disappear in comparison.

That Isaiah 53 regards reconciliation by forensic transfer of the burden of sin rather than by cultic atonement, is substantiated by cultic atonement not being a theme in Isaiah 40–55, whereas God's judgment and punishment is a common theme in these chapters:

– 41:1, God summons the nations to assemble for a court trial
– 41:21, JHWH's call to present evidence in favour of the idols, which are subsequently judged to be a delusion (41:29)
– 42:24f, JHWH's punishment for Israel's sin
– 43:9–12, JHWH's call to the nations to witness for the idols, and to his servant to witness for him
– 43:26–28, God's call to Israel to go to trial against him, his judgment over their ancestors and interpreters and resulting punishment
– 44:8f, JHWH's call to Israel to be his witness, and judgment over the idols and their witnesses
– 45:20f, God summons the nations to assemble for a court trial and to present the idols' case
– 50:1, JHWH's punishment of sin
– 50:8f, the servant's declaration that no adversary can contend with him and condemn

him

Overall, concerning the problem of sin, reconciliation by transfer of the burden of sin seems to be more decisively stated than reconciliation by atonement. Nevertheless, both the Day of Atonement and the liability offering are clearly alluded to. This may suggest that reconciliation by transfer of the burden of sin happens within a framework of cultic atonement, and thus is atoning. The burden of sin is not only transferred, but by this transfer, the others' sin seems to be completely annihilated (Is 43:25, 44:22). Consequently, the others are completely reconciled.

Chapter 6

Vicarious Substitution in the Old Testament

Transfer of punishment is traditionally designated by *vicarious suffering*. Both opponents and proponents of the understanding of the righteous servant's suffering as vicarious remark that vicarious suffering is without parallel in the Old Testament, for example Orlinsky (1977, 54) and Spieckermann (2004, 1).

Spieckermann (2001, 126) argues that whereas vicarious substitution in the sense of representation is a common and widespread concept in the Old Testament, "ist die Stellvertretung im Sinne der Substitution sehr selten belegt. Freilich gewinnt sie erst in diesem Verständnis theologische Prägnanz. Unter dem Aspekt der Substitution rückt die stellvertretende Lebenshingabe eines Menschen zum Heil anderer ins Zentrum theologischer Reflexion. Dieser Gedanke ist nur in einem alttestamentlichen Text, dem vierten Gottesknechtslied in Jes 52,13–53,12, realisiert worden."

Spieckermann narrows the concept of vicarious substitution down to vicarious suffering by arguing that only vicarious dying is theologically relevant. Consequently, Spieckermann does not find this concept in any other text than Isaiah 53.

However, even if vicarious suffering is the only theologically relevant instance of vicarious substitution, the concept of vicarious suffering might still be inspired by the more general concept of vicarious substitution, with vicarious suffering as a specific application of the concept of vicarious substitution. The concept of vicarious substitution is found in several texts in the Old Testament.

The Sacrificial Animal

The sacrificial animal substitutes for the sinner and dies instead of him (Janowski 1982, 220).

The Levirate

If a husband has failed to continue his name by not fathering a son before he dies, the dead husband's brother is obliged to father a son in his dead brother's name (Deut 25:5f). Ruth 4:5f also illustrates that it is possible to transfer this obligation.

Gen 38:6–26   Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her; raise up offspring for your brother." (Gen 38:8)

Deut 25:5–10   When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. (Deut 25:5f)

Ruth 4:3–16   Then Boaz said, "The day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to raise up the dead man's name on his inheritance." At this, the next-of-kin said, "I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it." (Ruth 4:5f)

The Levites as the Firstborns' Substitutes

The Levites are appointed by God to be the firstborns' substitutes:

Num 3:12   I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites *as substitutes for* all the firstborn that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine.

Num 3:41   But you shall accept the Levites for me — I am the Lord — *as substitutes for* all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites *as substitutes for* all the firstborn among the livestock of the Israelites.

Num 3:45   Accept the Levites *as substitutes for* all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites *as substitutes for* their livestock; and the Levites shall be mine. I am the Lord.

Num 8:14,16   Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the other Israelites, and the Levites shall be mine. For they are unreservedly given to me from among the Israelites; I have taken them for myself, *in place of* all that open the womb,

Num 8:18   but I have taken the Levites *in place of* all the firstborn among the Israelites.

Spieckermann (2001, 136) accepts the conclusion by Körting (1999, 183) that "die Idee der Substitution [. . .] in bezug auf Num 8,10 nicht haltbar. Die Leviten werden Jhwh als תנופה der Gemeinde übergeben. Die Gemeinde gibt etwas von sich weg, jedoch nicht sich selbst." This argument neglects that while the congregation indeed gives of itself, it was supposed to give its *firstborns*: "for all the firstborn are mine; when I killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both human and animal; they shall be mine. I am the Lord" (Num 3:13). However, God accepts the Levites as the firstborns' substitutes.

Judah's Appeal to be Vicariously Punished

The maybe closest parallel to Isaiah 53 is found in Gen 44. Benjamin has allegedly stolen Joseph's silver cup, and Joseph has sentenced him to become his slave. Judah appeals to Joseph to let him endure the punishment instead of Benjamin: "Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord *in place of* the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers." (Gen 44:33) "Juda bittet, anstelle Benjamins die Strafe der Versklavung tragen zu dürfen" (von Rad 1967, 345). Doing so, Judah does not only intend to save Benjamin, but also his father, who would die if Benjamin stays in Egypt (Gen 44:31). It can be argued that Judah offers to vicariously endure Benjamin's punishment in order to save his father's life.

6.1   Conclusion

Vicarious suffering might be inspired by applying the more general concept of vicarious substitution to suffering. Vicarious substitution is found in several Old Testament texts. Since "sin was a dominant concern [. . .] forgiveness of sin formed a vital doctrine in Israelite faith" (Cover 1992, 31, 39), and both having and keeping one's firstborn was of vital importance in a culture where people depended on having sons, vicarious substitution in the forms of the sacrificial animal, the levirate, and the Levites substituting for the firstborns, was a vital, well-established, and familiar concept. That it can be applied to being vicariously punished, is demonstrated by Judah requesting to vicariously endure Benjamin's punishment.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

This thesis studies the relation between the servant's suffering and the others' reconciliation as it is presented in Isaiah 53. Current interpretations of Isaiah 53 present two suggestions for this relation. Reconciliation is suggested to be by the servant's message fostering contrition or faith, or by his suffering being atoning.

The interpretation of the servant fostering contrition or faith seems strongly dependent on identifying the servant as a prophet. This is substantiated by that those who interpret the servant's suffering to be atoning, do not identify the servant with a prophet, but with Israel.

The identification of the servant depends on what is assumed to be the original context of Isaiah 53. If the context of Isaiah 53 is Isaiah 40–55, this leads to identifying the servant with Israel, since the servant is identified by Jacob/Israel both in the majority of instances within these chapters, and at the first occurrence of the title "servant." Identifying the servant with a prophet necessitates a different original context of Isaiah 53. Commonly, this different context is suggested to be the four servant songs. Answering the question of the original context of Isaiah 53 requires a detailed study of both language, structure, and content of Isaiah 40–55, which could not be undertaken here. Nevertheless, the arguments for excising the servant songs do not seem to be compelling. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that Isaiah 40–55 is the context of Isaiah 53. Consequently, the servant is assumed to be Israel, in particular, the exiled community.

However, the study of the text of Isaiah 53 shows that the rhetoric device of ambiguity is employed frequently. The frequency of the rhetoric device of ambiguity suggests that it is employed intentionally, in order to create an ambiguous text. Specifically, verse 11aγ has several meanings which seem to contradict each other, with some stating that the servant is in need of reconciliation, while others state that the servant is righteous, and thus not in need of reconciliation. Since the ambiguity seems to be intended, this suggests that the identity of the servant is ambiguous. On the one hand, the servant Israel, depicted as sinful in Isaiah 42:24, 43:22–28, 44, 21f, and 50:1, in need of reconciliation with God. On the other hand, a righteous servant, who reconciles the many. The righteous servant

is indicated to be a member of the exiled community, and at the same time, their ally.

The structure of Isaiah 53 suggests that the many comprise the many nations, the we-group, and the addressee of the poem. The we-group uses a designation commonly used for Israel. This indicates that the we-group is Israel. Thus, Israel is comprised by the many who are reconciled by the servant. This is substantiated by the we-group stating that they are reconciled by the servant. As a consequence, the addressee of the poem must be every nation.

Isaiah 53 is also ambiguous concerning how peace with God is achieved. It states both reconciliation by chastisement and insight, and by transfer of the burden of sin, and clearly alludes to various means of cultic expiation of sin.

Concerning chastisement and insight, Isaiah 53 depicts the servant Israel as suffering in exile. This suffering is "God's chastisement for our peace" (Is 53:5bα), fostering insight into the conduct required by God, and adhering to it. By adhering to it, the servant is righteous and proves himself righteous to the nations, as is expressed by one meaning of Is 11aβγ, "By his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant, will prove himself to be righteous to the many."

However, a main concern in Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 40–55 is Israel's sin. Conducting a righteous life does not deal with the consequence of sin. Sin has to be atoned for, and if it is not atoned for, the consequences of sin must be endured.

Concerning transfer of the burden of sin, Isaiah 53 states that the we-group's and the many's burden of sin, that is, the guilt incurred by sin and the punishment for this guilt, is transferred to the righteous servant. His suffering is "God's punishment for our peace" (Is 53:5bα). "By his sweat, a righteous one will reconcile my servant before the many" (11aβγ). At the same time, "by his sweat, the righteous one, my servant, will reconcile the many" (11aβγ).

Such a transfer of the burden of sin amounts to vicarious suffering. The concept of vicarious suffering might be inspired by the concept of vicarious substitution. This concept is found in the Old Testament in relation to existential issues such as atonement and having sons. It is applied to vicarious punishment by Judah offering to substitute for Benjamin.

Concerning cultic expiation of sin, Isaiah 53 clearly alludes to both the Day of Atonement and to the liability offering. However, the servant is not decisively depicted as either one of them. Further, cultic atonement is not a theme in Isaiah 40–55, whereas God's judgment and punishment is a common theme in these chapters. Thus, Isaiah 53 seems to regard reconciliation by forensic transfer of the burden of sin rather than by cultic atonement. However, the allusions to cultic atonement suggest that the forensic reconciliation of transfer of the burden of sin happens within a framework of cultic atonement, and thus is atoning. The burden of sin is not only transferred, but by this transfer, the others' sin is completely annihilated. The others are completely reconciled.

Isaiah 53 presents two servants, Israel and a righteous servant, by frequent use of the rhetoric device of ambiguity. By the same device, Isaiah 53 presents reconciliation by chastisement, by transfer of the burden of sin, and within a cultic framework. As shown for Is 49:5f, the servant is presented ambiguously as Israel and a servant distinct from Israel also in these verses. Studying the motivation for the ambiguous way of presentation in Isaiah 53 therefore most likely requires a study of ambiguity in Isaiah 40–55, which could not be undertaken here.

This thesis has emphasized the many ambiguities of Isaiah 53. These pose an impossible challenge to any attempt to translate the text without listing all potential meanings of the ambiguous expressions. The common choice of translation can in some cases be doubted, for example for verse 11aγ. Of the many possible translations, NRSV chooses "the righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous." However, if only one translation of 11aγ has to be chosen, then a more adequate choice might be "a righteous one will make my servant righteous before the many." Both translations conform with the parallel verse 11b, "and their sins' burden *he* will carry." The translation "a righteous one with make my servant righteous" has the advantage of being the straight-forward translation of the Hebrew sentence, and it is the translation which conforms best with the context of Isaiah 40–55, where the servant is identified with Israel. The translation chosen by NRSV makes Isaiah 53 tend strongly towards an interpretation of the servant as a righteous individual.

The thesis has also taken an uncommon point of view on some of the textcritical issues of Isaiah 53. Probably the most controversial of these is that יִרְאֶה in verse 11aα should not be supplied with an object, whereas most modern bible translations and the commentaries by Hermisson (2017b) and Berges (2015) add "light" as object to it. Against this addition, it can be argued that יִרְאֶה together with other expressions in Isaiah 53 alludes to Is 41:20, where ראה is used without direct object. It can further be argued that the references in Isaiah 53 in general are varied. The variation of a verb being using in its transitive and intransitive form is employed also for פנע. Finally, the parallel יִשְׂבָּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ, "he will be satisfied by his knowledge," substantiates that יִרְאֶה here means "he will understand" and is used intransitively.

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