

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

YHWH Describes His Servant:

**A Contrast of Wisdom and Exaltation,
Over Against Grotesque Suffering–
Who Will Bring Startling Understanding and Cleansing
to Both Israel and The Nations.**

It Is a Message That Is Hard to Believe–

But This "Arm of YHWH,"

a Despised and Rejected Sufferer,

Is An Offering for Israel's Sins.

YHWH Has Chosen to Crush Him,

As a Divine Sacrifice–

Yet, Even Though He Died Innocently,

He Lives Triumphantly,

and YHWH's Will Prospers Through Him!

52:13¹, ¹

1

52:13-53:12 has eighteen end-notes: (1) Rabbi Tovia Singer's Interpretation of the Suffering Servant; (2) Passages in the Hebrew Bible with the Hiphil Imperfect of שָׁכַל; (3) Philippians 2:5-11; (4) "Sprinkling of Blood" in the Hebrew Bible; (5) Mentions of "Nations" in the Book of Isaiah; (6) Occurrences of the Hiphil verb הֵאֱמִין, "He Believed / Placed Confidence In" in the Hebrew Bible; (7) Passages in the Hebrew Bible Mentioning YHWH's "Arm"; (8) Psalm 80, Hebrew Text with Tentative Translation; (9) Lamentations 3:1-14; (10) Occurrences of the Root רָכַא, Crush, in the Hebrew Bible; (11) Occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the noun מוֹסֵר, "Discipline / Correction / Punishment"; (12) Ezekiel 34:1-16; (13) Occurrences of the Hiphil Verb הִפְגִּיעַ, hiphgiya(in the Hebrew Bible; (14) Comparison of Hebrew Text of Isaiah 53:8-12 With Its English and Greek (Rahlfs) Translations; (15) 1 Peter 2:13-25, English Translation; (16) Occurrences of the Noun חָמָס, chamas, "Violence," "Wrong" in the Hebrew Bible; (17) Job's Vitriolic Attack on El / God, Job 16:7-17; (18) Occurrences of the Phrase אֲשֶׁר תַּחַת in the Hebrew Bible.

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

Slotki, the Jewish commentator in the Soncino Press series, entitles **52:13-53:12** “The servant’s martyrdom and ultimate triumph.” He states that “The servant is the ideal Israel or the faithful remnant. That he is not an individual is the opinion of all Jewish and most modern non-Jewish commentators.” (P. 260)

In so saying, Slotki overlooks the many “Jews for Jesus,” and the Jewish authors in the **New Testament** who proudly identify the suffering servant as Jesus Christ, as well as overlooking the many Christian students of and commentators on the **Book of Isaiah**, who hold that it is referring to the individual, Jesus Christ. For a much fuller statement of Slotki’s position, see the quotation from Rabbi Tovia Singer in our end-note 1. Singer holds that the passage is concerning the “messianic era” and “the end of days,” neither of which is mentioned in the text.

Motyer entitles **52:13-55:13** “The arm of the Lord: the triumph of the servant.” He insists that **chapters 54** and **55** are a “great double tail-piece” to the fourth song of the servant, delineating how the work of the servant is completed, both in Israel and among the nations. He adds that “As for the servant himself, the suffering which began to cast its shadow over the second song (**49:4**; compare **49:7**), and which formed the heart of the third song (**50:6**), is now explained as the wounding and bruising of one who bore the sins of others. And on the basis of this sin-bearing work, Zion is called into the covenant of peace (**54:10**) and the whole world into an everlasting covenant (**55:3**). Thus, the double task committed to the servant (**49:6**) has been accomplished...

“Now [in **52:13-53:12** , which Motyer entitles ‘Witnesses, divine and human, to the sin-bearing, dying, living and victorious servant’] we meet the arm of the Lord (**53:1**) who accomplishes peace with God (**53:5**; **54:10**), establishes people in righteousness (**53:11**; **54:17**) and summons the whole world to pardon (**55:6-7**) and pilgrimage (**55:12**).” (Pp. 422-23)

Motyer unequivocally identifies the servant with the individual, Jesus Christ—in stark contrast to Slotki’s view—but in agreement with numerous Christian students of the text, including Ortlund and Wolf / Stek.

And so, the question is raised, Who can this suffering servant be? Is it the “ideal Israel”? Or is it Jesus Christ (Who embodies the ‘ideal Israel’)? Or can it be referring to numerous individuals throughout history who willingly suffer for, and bear the guilts / sins of others, among whom Jesus Christ is found?

Motyer’s view of the connection between the fourth song of the servant and what he calls “a great double tail-piece” found in **chapters 54** and **55** is important. One thing that quickly becomes clear is that Isaiah **52:13-53:12** should not be studied in isolation from the preceding chapters (**40-52**) and the succeeding chapters as well (**54-55**).

But not only must we study this material in the light of its preceding and succeeding chapters, we must also pay close attention to the text, refusing to read into it Christian ideas formed from the **New Testament** description of Jesus and His self-sacrifice, and theological

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

ideas developed in medieval Christendom, such as Archbishop Anselm's "Orthodox Theory of the Atonement," found in his widely influential work, **Cur Deus Homo**.

But with this said, we also hold that Jesus Christ, in His rejection and crucifixion by the Jewish leaders of 1st century Israel, certainly fulfilled and embodied almost every word of this passage's description of the suffering servant, thereby forming a new covenant with those willing to accept it. We agree that the nation of Israel has indeed suffered at the hands of non-Jews over the centuries, many of them confessing Christians; but while this is true, and the nation of Israel has indeed been a "suffering servant," we think it is obvious from the text that this passage is describing the work of an individual Israelite on behalf of the nation of Israel, and the Gospels make it unmistakably clear that it was the Jewish officials in Jerusalem who, along with the Romans, were responsible for the excruciating death of Jesus.

Slotki states that **verses 13-15** contain the "Introduction and summary, contrasting the servant's past and present depths of humiliation with his future dignity and glory. The marvelous and unexpected transformation in his fortunes will change the amazement and horror of the nations into admiration and homage." (P. 260)

Westermann holds that "The fourth servant song is in two parts. What certain people say, **53:1-11a**, is set within the framework of something that God says, **52:13-15** and **53:11b-12**. Both parts speak of the servant in the third person. The utterance contained in the framework bears the stamp of an announcement, and its subject is the servant. The central portion is a report, the servant again being its subject. What links the two is the fact that both tell of the servant's humiliation and exaltation.

52:13 Announcement of the exaltation

14-15 The development of this

14 Earlier: Many were aghast at him (humiliation)

15 Now: kings and nations are astonished at his exaltation

53:1-11a Report on the servant's suffering and exaltation

1 Introduction: we never dreamt of what we have been told

2-9 Report on the servant's sufferings

2 he grew up parched and was insignificant

3 he was despised

4-6 *his* suffering had been caused by *our* guilt...

10-11a Report on the servant's deliverance

10a God turned to him (took pleasure in him)

10b God's intervention on the servant's behalf (He healed)

10c and 11a The consequence for the servant of the intervention (future tense)

53:11b-12 The Divine oracle (continuation of **52:13-15**)

11b My servant will procure righteousness, bear sins

12a I will give him a return for his work

12b because he gave up his life and accepted shame

12c thus he bore sins and became intercessor (Pp. 255-056)

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

We observe that Westermann's outline completely avoids mentioning the fourth song's insistence that it was YHWH Himself Who crushed the servant, and delighted in the servant's suffering—an affirmation that doesn't fit well with Westermann's theology—thus no mention.

Ortlund comments that “The fourth and final servant song...describes the Messiah... Isaiah finally explains how the Holy One can bless sinful people; all the promises of God will come true for them because the suffering and triumphant servant removes their guilt before God by his sacrifice.” (P. 1337)

But in fact, the fourth song does not use the word “Messiah,” and mentions nothing about the servant's distant coming in the future, but rather describes the servant's suffering using the perfect / past tense. The **Book of Isaiah** has already repeatedly stated that the way YHWH can bless sinful people is through His redemption, forgiveness and salvation that He has given them in the past, and that He continues to give them.

Oswalt observes that “The announcement of the means of salvation that comes after **52:12** is both surprising and not surprising. It is surprising in the sense that all the language about God's power to redeem and to defeat the enemies of His people tends to condition the reader to expect something in the way of overwhelming power and might. When instead we hear about suffering, humiliation, and loss it comes as a surprise. But for the reader who has been paying careful attention from **chapter 40** onward, the surprise is quickly replaced with a sense of recognition. The person being described here is the same as the servant described in **42:1-9**, **49:1-6**, and **50:4-9**. What is said about his work, his character, and his nature is what was initially described in those passages.” (P. 375)

While we oftentimes disagree with Oswalt, we agree emphatically with this comment. Go back and read these earlier passages concerning the work, character and nature of YHWH's servant. Yes, when we come to **52:13-53:12** in the light of those descriptions, we do have a “sense of recognition.” As Oswalt states, “Everything that is here: the worldwide consequences of his work after apparent failure, the lack of understanding, the willingness to undergo undeserved suffering, the certain success, all of these are present in embryo form in the earlier descriptions.” (P. 376)

Motyer likewise states that “By beginning this song with...Behold My servant...Isaiah brings to a rounded climax the revelation of the servant which began with...Behold My servant in **42:1**.” (P. 424)

Wolf-Stek comment that **52:13-53:12** is “the fourth and longest of the servant songs...It constitutes the central and most important unit in **chapters 40-66**...It is quoted more frequently in the **New Testament** than any other **Old Testament** passage and is often referred to as the ‘gospel in the **Old Testament**.’”

We think this is overstatement, since by our count, **Daniel 7** is quoted / referred to some 59 times in the **New Testament**, while **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** is quoted / referred to some 46 times. And to conclude that **52:13-53:12** is “the central and most important unit in

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

chapters 40-66" is a judgment call that can lead to the conclusion that once **52:13-53:12** is digested, there is little need to read further, since the most important things have already been said. But we do not think that is the case.

Oswalt comments that "The poem gives evidence of careful literary construction. It contains five stanzas of three verses each (**52:13-15; 53:1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12**). The first and last stanzas contain the commendation of the servant in the voice of God, while the middle three speak of the servant's humiliation and suffering, the first and second of which are in the voice of 'we,' those who caused his suffering. The central thought of the poem is focused on two great contrasts: the contrast between the servant's exaltation and his humiliation and suffering, and the contrast between what people thought about the servant and what was really the case...

"The theme of the poem is the startling and unexpected truth, which **chapters 7-12** have nevertheless prepared us to understand, that the power of God's arm is not the power to crush the enemy (sin), but the power, when the enemy has crushed the servant, to give back love and mercy." (Pp. 376-77)

Watts observes that "The scene [in **52:13-53:12**] is obtuse [slow to be understood] because of the very large number of personal pronouns which lack antecedents. The speakers are also not clear." (P. 226) That is certainly the case, and dogmatism in such circumstances is unwarranted.

North in like manner states that "No passage in the **Old Testament**, certainly none of comparable importance, presents more problems than this." (P. 226)

Watts goes on to distinguish between the servant—whom he identifies as the Persian emperor Darius—and the sufferer, whom he identifies as Zerubbabel, the leader of the returning exiles in rebuilding the temple. While we consider such identifications as rather bizarre, it demonstrates the possibility of very differing interpretations of this passage.

Watts states, "The sufferer does not speak because he is already dead. The historical background of this period [following the release of the Jewish exiles in Babylon, and their return to Jerusalem] is described at some length in **Ezra 3-6, Haggai**, and **Zechariah 1-8**. A remarkable feature of the accounts is the leadership of Zerubbabel in the early work on the temple and in the conflict with the territorial governor [Tattenai] and leaders of neighboring districts. But his name is totally missing in the accounts of the completion of that work...Perhaps he was a victim of a confrontation with the governor and was summarily executed while the governor thought that the building operation had no official sanction." (P. 228)

"Perhaps"—but that is a very slim basis on which to build the interpretation of this intriguing and important biblical passage! And again we note that neither Darius, nor Zerubbabel, or Tattenai are so much as mentioned in the text, and there is not one quotation of, or reference to, the **Books of Ezra** (or **Nehemiah**) or **Haggai** or **Zechariah**.

(continued...)

הַנְּהָ יִשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי

Look²–My servant³ will act wisely / successfully⁴, ²

¹(...continued)

North states “The passage has no obvious connection with either its preceding or following context. It contains five sections of almost equal length...Each of the first three songs is put into the mouth of a single speaker. Yahweh in the first, the servant in the second and third. Here the speaker in **52:13-15** and **53:11-12** must be Yahweh. Who the speakers (‘we’) are in **53:1-6** (? **9**) is not indicated and is one of the most vigorously debated questions arising out of the interpretation of the song...For the moment it is sufficient to say that the song consists of the words of a human speaker or speakers, set in a framework of pronouncements by Yahweh.” (P. 234)

North entitles **52:13-15** “The Future Exaltation of the Servant,” and comments that “Yahweh announces that ‘My servant’ (compare **42:1**) is to be greatly exalted. Many had been horrified at his repulsive appearance. To avoid being contaminated by him they will resort to purification rituals. Hers is a man and a situation quite outside the range of their experience hitherto, a man who compels their attention.” (P. 234)

²

Once again the Divine voice gives a “call to attention,” pointing to His great servant.
Compare:

Isaiah 42:1,

Look–My servant!
I will support him;
My chosen one--
My innermost-being was pleased.
I placed My Spirit upon him.
Justice for the nations he will bring forth!

(continued...)

²(...continued)

Isaiah 49:1-3,

- 1 Listen to me, coasts / regions!
And pay attention peoples from afar!
YHWH called me from (the) womb,
from my mother's belly He remembered / mentioned my name.
- 2 And He placed my mouth like a sharp sword;
in His hand's shadow He hid me.
And He placed me for a polished arrow;
in His quiver He hid (synonym) me.
- 3 And He said to me,
You (singular) (are) My servant, Israel;
in whom I will be glorified!

There is something happening in and through this servant that is of great importance for all of Israel to observe; it is also of critical importance for the nations of the earth to see and learn from. Compare **52:15**, where the dynamic impact of the story of the servant on kings and nations is depicted.

Knight comments, "*Behold*, says Deutero-Isaiah. That is to say, use your mental powers to delineate the substance of the extraordinary theological picture I am about to draw: My servant shall prosper, that is, will be effective. Man we know, is never effective to the point of complete success in anything he undertakes. Yet this verb here implies having the intelligence, insight, and capability to bring to a successful conclusion what one plans to do." Then, based on a comparison with **Daniel 12:1-3**,

- 1 And at that time he shall arise, Michael the great prince,
the one standing over your people's children.
And It will be a time of a tight place / distress which has not been / happened
from a nation's being until that time.
And at that time your people will be delivered / escape,
everyone that is found written in the scroll / book.
- 2 And many from those sleeping (in) ground's dust will awake,
these to long-lasting lives / life,
and these to the reproaches,
to long-lasting abhorrence.
- 3 And the ones having understanding [Knight's 'being successful, effective'] will shine like
the brightness of the extended sky;
and those causing the many to be righteous,
like the stars for long-lasting time and perpetuity!

The only connection between the two passages is the use of the hiphil plural participial phrase **הַמְּשַׁכְּלִים**, "the ones having understanding" or Knight's "the ones being successful,
(continued...)

²(...continued)

effective” in **Daniel 12:3** and the hiphil imperfect singular verb **יִשְׁכִּיל**, “he will have understanding,” or Knight’s “he will be successful, effective.” Although the passage in **Daniel** does not mention the “servant,” still Knight claims that the passage in **Daniel 12** is talking about the servant, and that what the servant will ultimately be successful at will be “in winning ‘many’ to righteousness and eternal life.” (Pp. 165-66)

While we deeply respect Knight’s scholarship, we think this is an example of “proof-texting,” that is not convincing. If **Daniel 12** were depicting YHWH’s servant, that would be another matter—but it is not. See our end-note 2 for all of the passages in the **Hebrew Bible** in which the imperfect hiphil verb **שָׁכַל** occurs. Because the verb is used in many differing situations, for example with those who observe the Mosaic Torah, Joshua, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, etc. we are not at all convinced that the use of this verb is in any way peculiar to the suffering servant.

Oswalt comments that “Here is the one through whom Israel’s covenant will be restored and through whom light will come to the nations...If what this passage says about this man’s capacity for taking away sin is true, then by all means we should fix every bit of our attention on him.” (P. 378)

Westermann states that “Quite obviously, the opening words [of **verse 13**] hark back to the designation of the servant in **42:1-4**. This began, ‘behold My servant, whom I uphold’; and **52:13** also begins, ‘behold my servant.’ There can be no doubt that this is deliberate. The two songs go together in that **42:1-4** show the origin of the servant’s work—his designation to his office by God— and **52:13-53:12**] its culmination—God proclaims the success of His servant’s way and work...The way to the servant’s exaltation...is one of profound humiliation. Here the last servant song takes up the central part of **50:4-9**.” (P. 258)

6 My back I gave to those striking,
and my cheeks to those pulling out (the beard of) my face.
I did not hide from insults and spit.

³

The Aramaic Targum of Jonathan interpolates “the Messiah,” but all the ancient versions follow the Masoretic Text with simply “My servant.”

For the occurrences of “my servant” in **Isaiah 40-55**, see:

41:8-9 (identified as Israel / Jacob);
42:1 (bearer of the Spirit; bringer of justice to the nations / to the earth),
42:19 (deaf and blind, yet sent by YHWH as His messenger);
43:10 (closely identified with YHWH’s witnesses)
44:1-2 (identified as Jacob),
44:21 (identified as Jacob / Israel);
45:4 (identified as Jacob / Israel);

(continued...)

³(...continued)

- 49:3** (identified as Israel, who brings YHWH glory);
49:5-6 (an individual who brings Jacob / Israel back to YHWH, and who becomes a light to the nations, though despised and abhorred);
52:13 (here; YHWH's servant who will act wisely / successfully, and will be exalted); the passage goes on in **52:14-53:12** to depict the servant as an individual who astonishes / sprinkles many nations and kings with his shockingly marred appearance; who is an individual despised and rejected, whom YHWH has used to carry Israel's griefs, sorrows, transgressions, iniquities, through whom YHWH brings healing to Israel, a silent sufferer, who is put to death, is buried along with the wicked though he was innocent, but who will prolong his days, causing YHWH's will to prosper, justifying many, making intercession for them)

YHWH's servant is both identified with Israel / Jacob and described as an individual who meets the deepest needs of Israel for forgiveness and mission in the world. It is a

prophetic enigma / puzzle, typical of all prophecy (see **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**) which begs for an answer—Who is this servant of YHWH?

Our answer is that it is certainly Israel / Jacob as Slotki insists, but it is also an individual in Israel who suffers, dies, and lives beyond death, all for the sake of Israel, as Christian commentators insist, identifying the suffering servant with Jesus Christ. Yes, but why the four “Songs of the Servant” in **Second Isaiah**?

Westermann states that “All attempts to account for them by reference to their immediate context fail.” (P. 20) Perhaps so—but here they are in **Second Isaiah, 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9** and **52:13-53:12**. Surely, we think, Second Isaiah had a reason for including these passages!

And we think that purpose is this: As the prophet announces the good news of their coming release from bondage in Babylon, he wants the exiles to know what YHWH expects of them when they have been given their freedom—and to this end he depicts the “Ideal Israel” as an individual. This the four Songs of the Servant do.

YHWH wants His servant to be filled with His Spirit, and to bring justice to the nations of the earth (**42:1-4**). His servant will not only bring Israel itself back to YHWH; he will become a light to the nations, enabling YHWH's salvation / deliverance to reach to the ends of the earth (**49:1-6**). YHWH wants His servant to be a learner, who listens carefully for the Divine word and obeys it—enduring harsh treatment and disgrace from those who oppose his teaching and mission with unflagging determination (**50:4-9**). YHWH wants His servant to be a suffering-servant, who, instead of returning evil for evil, bears griefs and sorrows, being wounded and crushed on behalf of his people, silently enduring suffering inflicted upon him, believing that all of the suffering is YHWH's will, being put death by YHWH, offering himself as a “sin-offering.” (**52:13-53:12**) What do you think?

יְרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד:

he will be high⁵ and lifted up,^{6, 3} and will be very⁷ exalted!⁸

⁴(...continued)

The hiphil imperfect verb יִשְׁכִּיל, **yaskiyl** has been translated in different ways: **King James**, “shall deal prudently”; **Tanakh , New Revised Standard, New Jerusalem**, “shall prosper.” **Rahfs**, στυγήσει, shall understand.” Other possibilities are: “will consider”; “will have insight”; “will give insight”; or “will cause others to prosper,” or just “shall prosper.”

Watts translates the line by “See! My servant succeeds!” He comments that “This optimistic assertion is typical of ones made in the Vision [of Isaiah] about the work of emperors chosen to do Yahweh’s work, from Tiglath-Pileser through Cyrus. It is especially true of the Persians. God chose unlikely men for the task, those not necessarily in line for the throne. This was true of Cyrus and Darius, and it will be true of Artaxerxes. They gained the seat of power and then each decreed that the temple in Jerusalem be built (**Ezra 1-6**). Thus the unlikely successor who has now established himself on the throne of the Persian Empire [Darius] is introduced in Jerusalem.” (P. 229) But where does the text mention a Persian emperor?

Ortlund says it means “succeed at his task.” (P. 1337) Oswalt notes that “The versions are unanimous in translating יִשְׁכִּיל, **yaskiyl** as “understand.” (P. 373) But he himself translates by “shall accomplish his purpose,” claiming that this is “the full sense of the context,” “to act with such wisdom that one’s efforts will be successful...He will both know and do the right things in order to accomplish the purpose for which he was called.” (P. 378) So also Westermann, p. 258.

The verb is closely related to “wisdom,” and means that the servant is an instrument of YHWH’s wisdom in what he does—whether in acting wisely, or in prospering because of wise decisions. The normal reaction to the story of the servant is to think that such a person is “crazy,” or “religiously obsessed” (a “fanatic”). But in fact, there is a Divine wisdom and lasting success in all his life and actions!

See our end-note 2 for passages from the **Hebrew Bible** where this imperfect hiphil verb occurs. A survey of all these passages shows that the verb is used for a wide range of persons, including those who keep the Mosaic teaching, Joshua, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, the poor and needy who witness YHWH’s saving actions, the “suffering servant,” the forgiven sinner, psalmists, Daniel, etc.

North comments that “It is a matter of observation that the man who acts prudently becomes prosperous. This is clearly the force of the word in **Joshua 1:8** and is recommended by the parallel verbs here.” (P. 234)

⁵(...continued)

This verb, **יָרָם**, **yarum**, “he will be high,” is omitted in the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**). Watts translates by “He rises up!” 1QIs^a prefixes the conjunction “and” to this verb.

Knight claims that “The servant here is actually described in terms of Divinity.” (P. 166) He holds that this verb, which he translates by “shall be exalted,” is used normally of God. But this is not the case. Here are the other passages from the **Hebrew Bible** where the verb

יָרָם, **yarum**, occurs:

Psalm 13:3b, “How long / until when will my enemy be exalted over me?”

Psalm 27:6a, “And now my head will be high above my enemies surrounding me.”

Psalm 61:3b, “into a rock—it is higher than I—lead me!”

Isaiah 30:18b, where it is used of YHWH “He will be high / exalted to show compassion to you.

Daniel 11:12,

And the crowd / multitude shall be lifted up;
and his heart will be exalted.
And he shall cause tens of thousands to fall,
and / but he will not be strong.

In four of the five occurrences the future verb is used of enemies, or of a “rock” (perhaps a metaphor for God), and only once clearly used for God. Knight’s statement is clearly mistaken.

6

Oswalt observes that the combination of the verbs **יָרָם** and **נָשָׂא**, “to be high” and “to be lifted up,” are “used in combination four times in this book (and no place else in the **Old Testament**). In the three other places (**6:1; 33:10; 57:15**) they describe God [YHWH]. Whom do they describe here?...The same point may be made concerning **נָבִיא**, ‘exalted.’ The section **2:6-22** speaks forcefully against every exaltation of the human; **verse 17** says that God will humble the exaltation of man, so that only God [YHWH] will be lifted up. Is it here, then, being said that the nation of Israel will be exalted to the place of God? Is it a prophet of Israel? In each case the answer must be no. This is the Messiah or no one. Paul’s great hymn in **Philippians 2:5-11** is almost certainly a reflection on this passage.” (Pp. 378-79) See our end-note 2 for this passage from **Philippians**.

Do you think Paul’s description of Jesus’ exaltation was influenced by, or based upon the servant-song of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**? We think it was. What do you think?

(continued...)

⁶(...continued)

But what about this niph'al imperfect / future verb, **וַיִּשָּׂא**, “and he will be lifted up”? It occurs elsewhere in the following passages:

Exodus 25:28, where the table for bread is to be lifted up on gold-plated poles;

2 Kings 20:17, where Hezekiah is told that the goods stored up will be “lifted up / carried away” into Babylon;

Isaiah 2:2, the mountain of YHWH’s house / temple will be lifted up above the hills; **Micah 4:1**, same;

Isaiah 2:13, cedars of Lebanon, high and lifted up (**וְהַרְמוֹם וְהַנְּשָׂאִים**, “the high ones and the lifted up ones”)

Isaiah 6:1, YHWH’s throne is **רָם וְנִשְׂאָה**, “high and lifted up.”

Isaiah 39:6, all belongs to Hezekiah’s household will be carried away to Babylon;

Isaiah 57:7b, it is said of the sexually immoral Israelites that “Upon a mountain high and lifted up you placed your bed”;

Isaiah 57:15, here the phrase **רָם וְנִשְׂאָה** is used of YHWH;

Jeremiah 51:9b, Babylon’s judgment “was lifted up as far as (the) clouds!”

Ezekiel 1:19, 21, the awesome Divine chariot’s wheels and living creatures were “lifted up”;

Psalms 24:7, a call for “the long-lasting gates” to be “lifted up.”

Daniel 11:12a, “And the crowd / multitude shall be lifted up...”

Out of these twelve passages, only one of them (**Isaiah 57:15**) uses this language in description of YHWH. Knight has far overstated the evidence in claiming that this is language “normally used for God.” We say it is sometimes used for God, but most often for other than God!

⁷

Where our Hebrew text spells **מְאֹד**, **me)odh**, “exceedingly,” 1QIs^a spells **מְאֹדָה**, **me)odhah**, perhaps for emphasis.

⁸

The three synonyms, “be high,” “be lifted up,” and “be very exalted” all emphasize that
(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

although the servant of YHWH faces rejection and suffering (see **Isaiah 50:6**, “I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard”) he is still destined for greatness and Divine “exaltation.” The words concerning the servant’s exaltation are very similar to those used in **Isaiah 6:1** (“I saw YHWH, high and lifted up”) and **57:15** (“the high and exalted one”) in description of YHWH’s Own exaltation. See also **Isaiah 33:10**, “Now I will arise, YHWH says. Now I will be raised up; Now I will be lifted up!”

Isaiah 42:4 has predicted that this servant “will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth,” and **49:3** tells of how YHWH promises to this servant that He (God) will be “glorified” or “beautified” through him. Here this Divine promise of victorious exaltation in spite of rejection, hatred and seeming failure is repeated.

Christian interpreters think naturally of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus from the dead, and His being exalted and made “very high” by His ascension and coronation at the right hand of God—see such passages as:

Acts 2:33, where Peter explains to the crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost,

Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God,
and having received from the Father the promise of the Set-apart Spirit,
He poured out this that you people (also) see and hear! Compare **Acts 3:13**.

Ephesians 1:20-23, where Paul explains that God’s great might

20 With which He worked in the Christ,
having raised Him out from dead people,
and having seated (Him) at His right hand in the heavenlies,
21 high above all rule and authority,
and power and lordship,
and every name being named,
not only in this age / world,
but rather also the the one to come;
22 and He subjected all things under His feet,
and gave Him (to be) Head over everything in the assembly,
23 which is His body,
the fullness of the one filling everything in every way.

Philippians 2:9-11, see end-note 2.

Jewish interpreters, quite differently, see the passage as noticeably not having any explicit mention of the messiah in it (although, see our end-note 1, where Singer holds that the servant is the future Jewish messiah), though Christian interpreters seek to read it in. Jewish interpreters emphasize that it is speaking in the past tense, as referring to the Jewish nation, or the “elite of the Jewish nation,” or the “remnant” of Israel, which had borne unspeakable injustices under Assyria and Babylonia, and which in coming centuries would suffer in similar

(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

ways under ancient Greece, ancient Rome, then under the Christians during the crusades, and especially under Nazi Germany, and still today as Muslim jihadists make Israel its target for suicide bombings and missile attacks.

It is argued that therefore the "servant" represents the nation of Israel, which would bear excessive iniquities, pogroms, blood libels, anti-judaism, anti-semitism; and which continues to suffer without cause (**Isaiah 52:4**) on behalf of others (**Isaiah 53:7,11–12**).

We have to confess, along with the Jewish interpreters, that the servant of YHWH is identified very specifically as "Jacob / Israel," again and again in Deutero-Isaiah—see

41:8-9,

8 And you, Israel, My servant,
Jacob, whom I chose,
descendant of Abraham,
one loving Me:
9 whom I strengthened from the earth's extremities,
and from its corners / sides I called you;
and I said to you,
You are My servant,
I chose you,
and I did not reject you!

44:1-2,

1 And now, listen, Jacob My servant,
and Israel whom I chose!
2 In this way YHWH spoke, your Maker,
and your Former from (the) womb:
He will help you (singular).
Do not be afraid My servant Jacob,
and Yeshurun [probably meaning 'Upright One,' meaning Israel]—I chose him!

44:21,

Remember these things, Jacob and Israel,
because you (singular) (are) My servant!
I formed you;
a servant for me, you (are), Israel;
you shall not forget Me!

45:4,

(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

For the sake of My servant Jacob,
and Israel, My chosen one.
And I called to you by your name—
I will give you a title, and you did not know Me.

48:20,

Go forth from Babylon, flee from (the) Chaldeans!
With a sound of a ringing-cry make this heard--
cause it to go forth to the earth's end--
say, YHWH redeemed / acted as Next-of-kin to His servant Jacob!

49:3,

And He said to me,
You (singular) (are) My servant, Israel;
in whom I will be glorified!

But while acknowledging that YHWH's servant is identified as Israel / Jacob, we observe that the servant of YHWH is also identified as an individual who is used by YHWH to fulfill His purposes for the nation of Jacob / Israel, and even beyond, to the ends of the earth. See:

49:5-6,

- 5 And now, YHWH spoke--
(the) One forming me from (the) womb for a servant to Him,
to turn back Jacob to Himself,
and Israel will be gathered to Him.
And I will be honored in YHWH's eyes;
and My God was my strength--
- 6 And He said, It was too trifling for you to be for Me
a servant to raise up Jacob's tribes,
and to return those preserved of Israel;
and I will give you (singular) for a light of nations,
to be My deliverance / salvation as far as the earth's end!

Here, in **52:13-53:12** the song is again about an individual, who is used by YHWH as a sin-bearing sacrifice for the nation of Israel's sins, and who receives an exaltation that elsewhere is only said of YHWH. It seems impossible that the Jewish leader Zerubbabel would be described in this way, although this is Watts' interpretation. Singer holds that the individual is the "faithful remnant" of the Jews. See end-note 1.

But when this former suffering and dying servant is described as being highly exalted it is understandable that confessing Christian students of **Isaiah** believe this song, along with
(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

the rest of the servant songs, should be seen as having been fulfilled in Jesus Christ / Messiah, Who is the embodiment of the nation of Israel, Whose life reenacts the history of Israel in so many ways, and Who was put to death by Israel's leaders.

The noun מָשִׁיחַ, “anointed one,” “messiah” is found only once in the **Book of Isaiah**, where it is YHWH's title given to the Persian ruler Cyrus, who would be instrumental in enabling the Jews to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem. See **Isaiah 45:1**,

In this way YHWH spoke to His Anointed One / Messiah, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I took strong hold of, to beat down nations before him,
and hips / belts of kings I will loosen,
to open before him doors,
and gates will not be shut.

But in **chapter 61:1-2** the Hebrew root verb from which the noun Messiah comes is used in the phrase מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי, “YHWH anointed me,” obviously a “messianic claim,” found on the mouth of an individual who says he has been called by YHWH to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, etc. This is the passage quoted by Jesus in His initial sermon in the Jewish synagogue in Nazareth, claiming that it was fulfilled in Him. See **Luke 4:16-21**,

- 16 And He (Jesus) came into Nazareth,
where He was being brought up,
and He entered according to His custom on the day of the sabbaths,
into the synagogue,
and He stood up to read.
- 17 And a scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him,
and unrolling the scroll,
He found the place where it had been written:
- 18 (The) Lord's Spirit (is) upon me;
because He anointed me to proclaim good news to poor people;
He sent me forth, to proclaim release to captives
and recovery of sight to blind people;
to send forth oppressed people in remission (of debts?);
- 19 to proclaim a year of (the) Lord's welcome / acceptance!
- 20 And rolling up the scroll
giving (it) to the assistant,
He sat down.
And the eyes of everyone in the gathering / synagogue were gazing at Him.
- 21 So then He began to say to them that,
Today this writing has been fulfilled in your ears.

(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

That is, according to the **Gospel of Luke**, this scripture from **Isaiah 61:1-2** was for Jesus descriptive of His mission. And throughout the **New Testament**, there are numerous passages that show how Jesus was understood to be the embodiment of the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53**.

Westermann comments on **52:13-15** that “Quite obviously, the opening words hark back to the designation of the servant in **42:1-4**. This began, ‘behold My servant, whom I uphold’; and **52:13** also begins, ‘behold My servant.’ There can be no doubt that this is deliberate. The two songs go together in that **42:1-4** show the origin of the servant’s work—his designation to his office by God—and **chapters 52-53** its culmination—God proclaims the success of His servant’s way and work...**52:13** hardly goes much beyond **42:4**, but **52:14-15** do add that the way to the servant’s exaltation (**verse 13b**) is one of profound humiliation. Here the last servant song takes up the central part of **50:4-9**.” (P. 258)

9

Ortlund notes on **52:14-15** that “As the servant was rejected by many (in His passion, Jesus was beaten into a shockingly inhuman mass of wounded flesh), so he will *sprinkle many nations* to make them clean (see the ministry of sprinkling in **Exodus 29:21**; **Leviticus 4:1-21**; **16:14-19**; **Hebrews 9:13-14, 19-22**; **10:19-22**; **12:22-24**; **1 Peter 1:2**). *Kings* (representing many nations *shall shut their mouths*, awed by his wretched humiliation and exalted glory (compare **Romans 15:21**). *That which has not been told them*, i.e., until revealed uniquely in the gospel.” (Pp. 1337-38)

Romans 15:21, Paul explains how he wants to proclaim the gospel where it has never been heard, and quotes **Isaiah 52:15b** verbatim:

Isaiah 52:15b^{Gk}

Those to whom it was not announced concerning him will see,
and those who did not hear will understand.

Romans 15:21,

But rather, just as it has been written,

Those to whom it was not announced concerning him will see,
and those who did not hear will understand.

Oswalt states concerning **verses 14-15** that “The basic thrust of these verses is clear enough: the nations will be shocked to speechlessness by what they see in God’s servant, something they had not been prepared for...The poem begins with the worldwide impact of the servant’s revelation.” (P. 379)

(continued...)

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עֲלֶיךָ רַבִּים

Just as many people¹⁰ were appalled¹¹ at you,¹²

⁹(...continued)

Alexander comments on these two verses that the exaltation of the servant “shall bear due proportion to his humiliation; the contempt of men shall be exchanged for wonder and respect. According to the common agreement of interpreters, **verse 14** is the protasis [the antecedent of a conditional statement, such as ‘it rains’ in the phrase ‘if it rains the game will be cancelled’], and **verse 15** is the apodosis [the main clause of a conditional statement, i.e., ‘the game will be cancelled’].” (P. 287)

¹⁰

Motyer comments that “So much of the enigma and dramatic intensity of the poem focuses in the ‘many’; they start back from the sufferer only to find, once the truth has been revealed, that in his suffering lies their highest benefit.” (P. 423) See the adjective “many” in this fourth servant song at **52:14, 15; 53:11, 12**. And note Motyer’s admission that the poem contains “enigma.”

Alexander comments that “*Many* does not mean *all*...There seems to be an antithesis between many individuals and many nations. As a single people had despised him, so the whole world should admire him.” (Pp. 287-88) But where does the phrase “the whole world” appear in the text? It does not.

¹¹

The verb שָׁמְמוּ, **shamemu** can mean “they were desolated”; but it also can mean, and probably means here, “they were appalled,” “they were awestruck,” “they shuddered.” The verb is sometimes used concerning the Divine destruction that has come upon people.

Alexander states that this verb “expresses a mixture of surprise, contempt, and aversion; it is frequently applied to extraordinary instances of suffering when viewed as Divine judgments.” (P. 287)

¹²

The preposition with 3rd person singular pronominal suffix עֲלֶיךָ, (**aleyka**, “at (or ‘over’) you (singular),” is spelled עֲלֵיכָה, (**aleykah** by 1QIs^a; it is changed to עֲלָיו, (**alayw**, “at (or ‘over’) him,” by 2 Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac translation and the Targum of Pseudo Jonathan. We think that this change to “over him” is obviously an easier reading, designed to alleviate a difficult original text. We can easily understand why later copyists would change the original text in this way, but cannot imagine them changing from “at him” to “at you.”

English translations vary between “at you” (**King James; JPS 1917; New American Standard; English Standard**) and “at him” (**Tanakh, New Revised Standard; New**

(continued...)

בֶּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ

so his disfigurement¹³ was beyond any person's appearance,¹⁴

וְתֵאֵרוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

and his countenance¹⁵ inhuman.¹⁶

¹²(...continued)

International and New Jerusalem). **Rahlfs** has ἐπὶ σέ, “upon / over you.”

The phrase “at (or ‘over’) you,” which we think is clearly the original reading, is in the singular, and it is difficult to know who is intended—does it mean the individual servant of YHWH? Probably not, for this “you” is being compared to the servant of YHWH. More probably it means the nation of Israel (that is also described in **Isaiah 40-55** as “YHWH’s servant.”

We think that the nation of Israel is here personified, and the statement means that just as observers have been appalled at the Divine judgments visited upon YHWH’s servant Israel, in the fall of northern Israel to Assyria, and in the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon, so now, those observing this individual servant of YHWH on behalf of Israel will be appalled at him, sensing that he too has suffered under Divine judgment, suffering terribly, just his nation of Israel has suffered.

Knight comments that “once the masses of humanity see this servant, they will be appalled at his marred mien [a person’s look or manner, indicating his character], even though God does not seem to be appalled at it [rather, is pleased with it].” (P. 166)

¹³

The noun מִשְׁחַת, **mishchath**, means, according to **Brown-Driver-Briggs** “disfigurement of face.” **Rahlfs** has ἀδοξήσει, ‘held in no esteem,’ “stood in ill repute.” 1QIs^a reads מִשְׁחַתִּי, **mishchathiy**, “I anointed.” A few Hebrew manuscripts מוֹשְׁחַת, **moshchath**, meaning “ritual corruption,” and the Babylonian linguistic tradition spells the noun מִשְׁחַת, **mushchath** (with a short-u rather than the long-u), with the same meaning, “ritual corruption.” Watts comments that “with so many possible roots, the Hebrew word is a teaser. The Masoretic Text’s pointing is probably as good as any.” (P. 225)

¹⁴

Slotki comments that the servant’s “sufferings had been so intense that their mark upon him made him lose the look of a human being.” (P. 260)

¹⁵

(continued...)

¹⁵(...continued)

Where our Hebrew text spells וְתֵאֵרָו, **wetho)aro**, “and his outline / form,” our “countenance,” with the letter o supplied by the Masoretes, 1QIs^a spells וְתוֹאָרָו, with the letter waw as part of the unpointed text.

¹⁶

Where our Hebrew text reads אָדָם, “human / man,” 1QIs^a has the definite article, הָאָדָם, “the human / man.”

The last two lines of **verse 14** are given varying translations:

King James, “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”;

Tanakh, “So marred was his appearance, unlike that of man, His form, beyond human semblance –”;

New Revised Standard, “so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals–”;

New International, “his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness–”;

New Jerusalem, “he was so inhumanly disfigured that he no longer looked like a man-“;

Rahifs, οὕτως ἀδοξήσει ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων τὸ εἶδός σου καὶ ἡ δόξα σου ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “in this way held in no esteem by people, the appearance of yours, and your glory from people.” NETS has “Just as many shall be astonished at you-- so shall your appearance be without glory from men, and your glory be absent from the men–”

Oswalt, “his appearance was a disfigurement from the human, and his form from that of humanity.”

Oswalt comments that “It is not being said that this person is more disfigured than any other person, but that he is so disfigured as to appear hardly human.” (P. 373) Motyer likewise states that “those who saw him stepped back in horror not only saying ‘Is this the servant?’ but ‘Is this human?’” (P. 425)

Wolf / Stek comment that the suffering servant’s “treatment was inhuman.” Compare:

Psalm 22:7^{Heb} / **6**^{Eng},

And I—a worm, and not a man;

a reproach of humanity, and despised (by) people!

(We think the psalmist is describing himself as a “suffering servant.”)

Whatever the exact meaning of these last two lines of **verse 52:14**, it is clear that the servant of YHWH is certainly not “good to look at” (as were Joseph, **Genesis 39:6**; David, **1 Samuel 16:18**, Absalom, **2 Samuel 14:25** and Adonijah, **1 Kings 1:6**). This “suffering

(continued...)

כִּן יִזֶה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים

So he will sprinkle / startle^{17, 4} many nations;^{18, 5}

¹⁶(...continued)

servant” is not by any means a “Hollywood Jesus”!

The parallel statements, “the disfigurement of his appearance was beyond any person’s,” and “his countenance was inhuman” (which can be understood to mean “his outline or form beyond Adam’s children”) both emphasize how “ugly” and “nauseating” the appearance of the servant of YHWH was. **Compare 53:2.**

Oswalt states that “The point is that instead of the servant demonstrating that he was the gift of God through his obvious attractiveness, the very opposite was true. We are repelled by the face of self-giving and undefensiveness, and appalled by the visage of one who would prefer to lose than to win for the wrong reasons. Whatever attractiveness he might have for people will have to be from within, for it is certainly not on the surface.” (P. 380)

In **52:13** the servant of YHWH has been spoken of in the future tense, “my servant will be...” But now, in **verse 14**, the past tense is used in the description: “his appearance was.” This is not the only place where this strange variation in tense is met. See footnotes 8, 30, 36, 37, 45, 46, 47, 49, 51, 54, 73, 88, 98, 116 and 122 for these variations in tense.

We think that this is typical for biblical prophecy, which is oftentimes dream-like, visionary, “through a mirror darkly,” sometimes a “puzzle,” seldom exact and literal. See **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**.

¹⁷

Where the Hebrew text reads יִזֶה, **yazzeh**, “he will sprinkle,” or “he will startle,” the Greek translation reads θαυμάσονται, “they will wonder, marvel, be astonished.” On this basis, D. Winton Thomas proposes to change the Hebrew verb to a passive plural verb, but such suggestions are only speculative, and of little or no value in understanding the text.

The verb יִזֶה is translated “shall sprinkle” (**King James, New International, Aramaic Targum**); “shall startle” (**Tanakh, New Revised Standard, Oswalt**); **New Jerusalem** has “will be astonished.” **Slotki** has “startle,” and notes that it means “cause to spring or rise suddenly in admiration and reverence.” (P. 261)

The normal meaning of the verb is “sprinkle,” “spurt,” or “spatter.” But in the next line the parallel statement is that “kings shall shut their mouths (that is, in amazement) over him,”
(continued...)

¹⁷(...continued)

leading some translators to think יָזַח should be translated “shall be startled.”

North translates “shall guard against contagion by him,” taking the “sprinkling” to be indicative of a religious cleansing ritual designed to avoid defilement by the servant. He states that “It has already been said that ‘many were horrified at him,’ scared of being infected by him... And if what **verse 15** describes seems crude and heathenish, it describes the first reactions of the ‘many nations’ to the sight of one who seemed altogether revolting.” (P. 229)

He adds that “The object of such ritual sprinkling was to neutralize infection or contagion by the person or thing sprinkled (**Leviticus 14:7, 51; 16:19; Numbers 19:4**). Although these decontamination rituals are only described in the Priestly strata of the Pentateuch, they are widespread and ancient (compare Frazer, **Taboo and the Perils of the Soul**).” (P. 235)

Again, the Hebrew text may be understood in terms of the servant as YHWH’s “covenant with people” (**42:6**), and as covenant-mediator, the servant of YHWH “sprinkles” people with the “blood of the covenant.” Compare **Exodus 24:8**, where Moses sprinkles people with the “blood of the covenant” in forming YHWH God’s covenant with Israel.

For statements in the **Hebrew Bible** concerning the sprinkling of blood, see our end-note 3.

It is obvious from these passages that “sprinkling” played a significant role in Israel’s religion, and that this could well be the meaning here. But whether this passage should be translated by “sprinkle” or “startle” is a matter of choice by translators. We conclude that because of this uncertainty, the text is ambiguous, and can be understood in two very different senses.

Such a conclusion is frustrating to **Bible** students who want clear-cut, exact translations. But while it is true that much of the **Bible** can be fairly accurately translated and understood, there are also many individual passages that use ambiguous, difficult language, for which varying translations are given, and different interpretations are possible. It is foolish to be dogmatic in such a situation; and the serious **Bible** student must learn to live with ambiguity. And again we say, ambiguity and puzzling language are part and parcel of the prophetic message—whether we like it or not! What do you think?

Alexander does not think the text is ambiguous, and states that יָזַח, **yazzeh**, “is the technical term of the Mosaic law for *sprinkling* water, oil, or blood, a purifying rite...The explanation of this word by the majority of modern writers [in the nineteenth century] as denoting that he shall cause them to leap for joy...or rise from their seats with reverence...or start with astonishment...or be struck with cordial admiration...is in direct opposition to a perfectly uniform Hebrew usage...The real motive of the strange unanimity with which the true sense has been set aside, is the desire to obliterate this clear description, at the very outset, of
(continued...)

¹⁷(...continued)
the Servant of [YHWH] as an expiatory purifier.” (P. 288)

Do you agree with Alexander? Do you think the great majority of translators have the “real motive” to set aside the clear meaning of the text? We say the reason for differences in translation and interpretation is the nature of the prophetic message, with it characteristic of enigmatic, puzzling statements.

¹⁸

The work and influence of YHWH’s servant is on behalf of “the nations.” Where our Hebrew text spells גוֹיִם, **goyim**, 1QIsa spells גוֹאִים, with no difference in meaning.

Alexander holds that the phrase גוֹיִם רַבִּים, literally “nations, many,” “must be taken in its natural and proper sense, as denoting the Gentiles [i.e., the non-Jews].” (P. 289) For all of the mentions of “nations” in the **Book of Isaiah**, see our end-note 4.

Following His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His followers to go to all the nations, proclaiming good news, just as YHWH’s servant in Isaiah is commissioned to do. See:

Mark 16:25, (long ending)

And He said to them,
Going / having gone into the world—all (of it),
proclaim / preach the good news to all the creation!

Matthew 28:19

Going / having gone, therefore,
teach / make disciples of all the nations,
immersing them
into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Set-apart Spirit!

Luke 24:47

and to be proclaimed / preached in / upon His name,
repentance / turning around for forgiveness of sins,
in all the nations,
beginning from Jerusalem!

Acts 1:8,

but rather, you (plural) will receive power,
when the Set-apart Spirit comes / has come upon you;
and you will be My witnesses,
in both Jerusalem,

(continued...)

עֲלֵיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם

over him, kings will shut their mouth—¹⁹

¹⁸(...continued)

and in all the Judea,
and in Samaria,
and as far as the earth's end!

We think there can be no doubt that the worldwide mission that Jesus sends His disciples on is a fulfillment of Isaiah's teaching concerning the nations. What do you think?

Westermann comments that "The people who are so astonished at the Servant's exaltation and rendered dumb by it are called 'nations' and 'kings'...[God's] work which consists in the exaltation of the Servant is so stupendous that people hear of it with astonishment in far-distant places (nations) and exalted circles (kings). Deutero-Isaiah is thinking of the widespread publicity to be given to the work, but not of heathen spheres outside of Israel." (P. 259)

That is a strange conclusion to draw. Are we to think of Israel as made up of "nations and kings"? We think this language demands much more than only Israel—that the non-Jewish, "heathen" nations and kings are meant. What do you think?

¹⁹

Where our Hebrew text reads פִּיהֶם, **piyhem**, "their mouth," 1QIs^a spells פִּיהֶמָה, **piymemah**, probably just another way of spelling "their."

Slotki states that the kings shut their mouths "in amazement at the exaltation of the despised servant." (P. 261)

Wolf / Stek comment that "Even though they have not heard the prophetic word, kings will understand the mission of the servant when they see his humiliation and exaltation." (P. 1094)

See **Romans 15:21**, where the apostle Paul quotes this line as lying behind his determination to proclaim the good news to areas among the non-Jews where it had never been proclaimed before:

But rather, just as it has been written:

To those it was not announced / reported concerning him shall see,
and the ones who had not heard will understand.

(This is a verbatim quotation of these lines in the Greek translation of **Isaiah 53:15**.)

Motyer comments that "The thought of the servant's supreme exaltation (**verse 13**) is elaborated by this picture of earth's rulers [all the text says is 'kings'] silent before him...We must think, therefore, of the kings as overwhelmed by the servant, but the precise cause of

(continued...)

כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפֵּר לָהֶם רְאוּ

because that which²⁰ was not told to them,²¹ they saw;²²

¹⁹(...continued)

their silence is not explained...The enigma is maintained to the end of the stanza; somehow the unique exaltation (**verse 13**) and the unique suffering (**verse 14**) are the subject of a unique truth (**verse 15**).” (P. 426)

²⁰

Where our Hebrew text reads כִּי אֲשֶׁר , **kiy)asher**, “because that which,” 1QIs^a reads כִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר , **kiy)eth)asher**, interpolating the sign of the direct object before the relative particle.

²¹

Where our Hebrew text reads לֹא־סִפֵּר לָהֶם , **lo)-suppar lahem**, “was not told to them,” 1QIs^a has לֹא סוֹפֵר לְהִמָּה , an early way of supplying vowels prior to the work of the Masoretes. We will not continue footnoting the differences in spelling between this Hebrew manuscript from Qumran, except where the variants make a difference to the meaning. Such variants are common throughout the manuscript.

²²

Wolf-Stek comment that “Even though they have not heard the prophetic word, kings will understand the mission of the servant when they see his humiliation and exaltation.” (P. 1004)

They contrast this with **Isaiah 6:9-10**, where Isaiah is told that his mission of proclamation will only deafen ears and blind eyes. What Isaiah could not accomplish by his preaching, would be accomplished by the suffering of YHWH’s servant, which kings would see.

Slotki comments that “Such a miraculous and sudden transformation had never before been heard or seen.” (P. 261)

Westermann adds that “The event in question is literally ‘unheard of’—this has never taken place or been told of hitherto!...The Servant’s exaltation is a thing without precedent. It is epoch-making in its importance. That a man who was smitten, who was marred beyond human semblance, and who was despised in the eyes of God and men should be given such approval and significance, and be thus exalted, is in very truth something new and unheard of, going against tradition and all men’s settled ideas. **Verse 15b** also makes clear that the thing reported in this servant song is thought of as something absolutely unique. It cannot therefore be explained as arising out of anything that recurs, such as the cult of a dying and rising God [a view held by some Orientalists such as] Gressman, Duerr, Engnell, etc.” (Pp. 259-60)

It also goes against the view that the suffering servant is found in heroic figures such as Job, Joseph, Moses, Jeremiah, etc. etc., found in all nations throughout history, who willingly
(continued...)

וְאִשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ הַתְּבוּנָה:

and that which they did not hear, they considered diligently.²³

²²(...continued)

suffer on behalf of their people, oftentimes enduring imprisonment, torture, and death.

What do you think? Is Westermann overstating the case when he says the text makes the suffering of this servant “absolutely unique”? Or is it the case that whenever such a suffering servant emerges in history, those seeing and hearing are shocked because such willingness to suffer for others goes against their normal experiences and expectations?

Westermann states that “The reason for the horror is the disfigured appearance of the servant, of which two forceful descriptions are given—‘beyond human semblance,’ ‘beyond that of the sons of men’...Grievous suffering and, in particular, suffering that disfigures, can cut a man off from his fellows. The shuddering or horror which we today feel at the sight of a badly disfigured face still has here the full effect of cutting off or ostracizing one so ‘horribly’ marked. The psalms of lamentation and, in particular, Job, allow us to hear the pathetic cries of men cut off from their fellows because they had been disfigured by suffering. In fact, they are no longer regarded as genuine, normal human beings. They no longer belong.” (P. 259)

23

The highly exalted servant of YHWH, in spite of his appalling appearance, will have an impact on both “many nations” and “kings.” Kings will hear his story—the revelation of something that they have never heard or seen before. That story will have a dynamic influence on them.

Watts holds that this statement is being made concerning the Persian ruler, either Cyrus or Darius, or Artaxerxes (see footnote 69) but we are not convinced, thinking that Watts is reading his interpretation into the text rather than genuinely finding it there. Where is any Persian ruler mentioned in the text?

Oswalt observes that two different readings of **verse 15** are possible. The first is that “this verse compares the astonishment that greeted the servant’s humiliation with that which will greet his exaltation...The nations will be just as surprised at the greatness of his end as they were at the smallness of its beginning...What they have never heard of before is how one who took such a lowly place could ever sit on the very throne of God in the end.” (P. 380) But we ask, Where in this text is anything said about “sitting on the very throne of God in the end”? That is a Christian interpretation, looking at **Isaiah 53** through the lens of **New Testament** eschatology, but is hardly a comment on the text itself.

The second possible reading is to understand **verse 15** as meaning “The gentiles [non-Jews] will find the humiliation of the Deliverer shocking because they have never heard before that it is through the loss of all things that the Savior will conquer all things. This seems to be the sense in which Paul uses the passage in **Romans 15:21** (see footnotes 9 and 19). The

(continued...)

²³(...continued)

nations have not heard this amazing truth before, and Paul wants to be among those who tell them first. In the beginning they will be shocked at the depths to which the Savior falls (**53:1-3**), but in the end they will be overcome with gratitude that his sufferings were for them (**53:4-6**).” (*Ibid.*)

But both of these proposed readings are post-Isaian readings, and neither is contained in the text which does not contain the word “savior.”

North comments that “The heathen [his word, not **Second Isaiah’s**] cannot evade the challenge of this man and they will be obliged to pass some judgment upon him.” (P. 235)

Knight comments that “The servant’s task is to give the masses a wholly new view of life... But the startling new element...is that it will be enunciated by one whose ‘mien is inhumanly marred.’ Such a thing is so utterly new that it is ‘beyond all telling and quite unheard of.’” (P. 167)

²⁴

The division between chapters here is unfortunate. **52-13-53:12** should have been divided as a separate chapter. Of course, the original manuscripts of the **Hebrew Bible** had no such chapter or verse divisions—all of these were the later work of Christian biblical scholars. The breaks in the text of 1QIs^a occur at the end of **51:16**, the end of **52:12**, the end of **53:8**, the end of **54:10**, and the end of **54:17**.

The present divisions into chapters and verses of the **New Testament** first appeared in the fourth edition of Robert Stephanus’ **Greek New Testament**, published in Geneva, Switzerland in 1551; the division into chapters and verses of the **Hebrew Bible** followed shortly.

Alexander summarizes **chapter 53** as follows: Notwithstanding these and other prophecies of the Messiah, he is not recognized when he appears, **verse 1** [but the word Messiah does not occur in the entire passage **52:13-53:12!**]. He is not the object of desire and trust, for whom the great mass of the people have been waiting, **verse 2**. Nay, his low condition, and especially, his sufferings, make him rather an object of contempt, **verse 3**. But this humiliation and these sufferings are vicarious [performed or suffered by one person as a substitute for another, or to the benefit of another], not accidental or incurred by his own fault, **verses 4-6**. Hence, though personally innocent, he is perfectly unresisting, **verse 7**. Even they for whom he suffers may mistake his person and his office, **verse 8**. His case presents the two extremes of righteous punishment, and perfect innocence, **verse 9**. But the glorious fruit of these very sufferings will correct all errors, **verse 10**. He becomes a Savior only by becoming a substitute, **verse 11** [the word ‘Savior’ is not found in the text]. Even after the work of expiation is completed, and his glorious reward secured, the work of intercession will be still continued, **verse 12**.” (P. 289)

Motyer entitles **53:1-3** “Suffering observed and misunderstood.” (P. 426) He comments that “This second stanza links with the end of the first. There, the true understanding of
(continued...)

²⁴(...continued)

the servant is dumbfounding; here, it is communicated by Divine revelation, a message... revealed. Without such revelation, who could believe that this one, with his birth and early life, his unimpressive appearance, was the arm of the Lord? Does it not rather stand to reason that he was despised?" (Pp. 426-27)

But does the text say that the suffering servant was "the arm of the Lord," that is, identifying the servant with the Divine arm as Motyer does? We think this is mistaken, and that what the text means is that the arm of YHWH was at work in the suffering servant—the same Divine arm that has worked throughout history and continues to work in many different ways, in many different people. See our end-note 4.

Oswalt comments that **53:1** "appears to follow directly on from **52:13**. The nations will be shocked because they had never before heard of a deliverer who would willingly fall so low in order to deliver them, but what about those who had heard of this before? Who had believed it? Who could have believed that when the arm of the Lord was bared to deliver His people (**52:10**) it would look like this?" (P. 381) But where in the text is it said that the suffering servant is delivering the nations? The text says they will hear of what he has done, but his work is depicted as on behalf of Israel.

Seemingly, YHWH has been the speaker in **52:13-15**. Now, however, in **53:1** another voice is heard, this time in the plural. No real indication is given of whose voice it is. Is it the voice of the "kings" and of the "many nations" of **52:15**? Or, is it the voice of the Nation of Israel, for whom the prophet is the spokesman?

Slotki holds that the voice is that of the Babylonians: "The Babylonians, or their representative, having known the servant, i.e., exiled Israel idealized, in his humiliation and martyrdom, and now seeing his exaltation and new dignity, describe their impressions and feelings." (P. 261)

Oswalt states that "the 'we' is most likely Israel, who fails to recognize the 'arm of the Lord' when it is revealed to them...The prophet is probably identifying himself with his people and speaking for them...The two **New Testament** quotations of the passage understand it in this way: the people of God who have heard the news and seen the revelation have refused to believe it." (P. 381)

Westermann states, "The narrator is not the man himself who experienced deliverance [as in the **psalms** of thanksgiving]—this man's story is given in the third person; and...those who tell of the servant's anguish and deliverance have themselves been given salvation by what happened to and through the servant...The report is also a confession on the part of those who experienced salvation...(who) confess that his suffering had been caused by their guilt." (P. 257).

He goes on to add that **53:1** "is the key-note for the entire passage—that of an astonishment that is still unable to comprehend what has here come about." (P. 260)

(continued...)

מִי הֵאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעַתְנוּ

Who put confidence in / believed²⁵, ⁶ our report?²⁶

²⁴(...continued)

What do you think? Whose voice are we hearing in **53:1-11a**? We agree with Oswalt, thinking it is the voice of the prophet, speaking on behalf of his nation, Israel.

North entitles **53:1-3** “The Man of Sorrows.” He comments that “Unnamed speakers declare that what they have heard is something they would have thought to be incredible. He (the servant) had been like a sickly plant growing in a barren soil and there had been nothing attractive about him. Afflicted by sorrow and disease, he was shunned by men and himself avoided their society. They (the speakers) had taken the general estimate of him for granted and assumed that he was not worth their notice.” (P. 235)

²⁵

For the hiphil verb הֵאֱמִין, “he believed / placed confidence in,” see our endnote 5. North comments that this is a “rhetorical question, expecting the answer ‘No one!’” (P. 236)

²⁶

The noun שִׁמְעַתְנוּ, “our report,” or, possibly, “what we have heard.” Either translation, “what we have heard,” or “our report” shows that what has happened in and through the servant of YHWH becomes a “message” that will be heard by nations and kings.

Oswalt states that in most of the other occurrences of this phrase, it “describes a ‘heard’ thing, and thus may be translated ‘rumor’ or ‘report.’” (P. 374) The Greek translation is ἀκοή, “hearing / report / news.” Alexander observes that some understand the noun “actively, as meaning that which we have published in the hearing of others.” (P. 290)

North holds that it means “not ‘what we have reported’...In the Hebrew original it is an exclamation of those who hear the [report] and who say, ‘What we have heard is something we should have thought impossible, and yet it is true!’” (P. 236)

See **Romans 10:16**, where Paul quotes this line from **Isaiah 53:1**:

But rather, not all obeyed the good news.

For Isaiah says,

Lord, who believed our report?

The implication of this rhetorical question (and the following one) is that the message concerning the servant of YHWH meets with disbelief, with lack of confidence. Because its content is so unexpected, so radically “new” to its hearers, they do not accept it as true, and place no confidence in it.

Ortlund states that the first person plural *our* “refers to the believing remnant of Israel.” (P. 1338)

וַיִּזְרַע יְהוָה

And YHWH's arm,²⁷ 7

עַל-כִּי נִגְלָתָהּ:

to²⁸ whom was it revealed?²⁹

27

For YHWH's "arm," a phrase that is symbolic for YHWH's mighty acts in history, and now embodied / active in the suffering of YHWH's "servant," see our end-note 6, where all the passages from the **Hebrew Bible** mentioning YHWH's "arm" are quoted. It is obvious from these passages, that the Divine "arm" is active, not only as a promise in the future, but in the past as well; and not only through the suffering servant.

If Slotki's view is correct, that this is the voice of the Babylonians speaking, does it seem reasonable to suppose that the Babylonians would describe the "ideal Israel," or the "remnant" of Israel as the "arm of YHWH"? We think not.

Oswalt comments that "God had promised to do for Israel what she could not do for herself in restoring her to Himself. He has said that He would do so through His mighty 'arm'...and that that same 'arm' would be the means whereby the nations could also share in the reconciliation to God that Israel would enjoy. Now that 'arm' is being revealed, and the results have been utterly shocking...God has promised to deliver His people from their alienation from Him so that they can indeed become His servants to the world. Now He tells the means by which He proposes to effect that deliverance." (P. 382)

Yes, but some of these things are being read into this chapter, making the Divine action more specific than the text. And the fact is that the Divine arm has also been active in the past, in ways other than in the coming of the suffering servant. What do you think? If the suffering servant is a baring of YHWH's arm, does that mean that YHWH's arm is not active in others, at other times and places? We say, Of course not!

Knight comments that "One would have thought that Yahweh's arm would rend the heathen or tear asunder the hills, for 'arm' denotes power put forth in action. But when it was revealed, no one, neither heathen nor Israelite, could ever have imagined that this is what it would do." (P. 169)

28

Our Hebrew text has the preposition **עַל**, normally meaning "upon," but obviously here meaning "to." As becomes obvious in reading later Hebrew, Hebrew prepositions are oftentimes used with mixed meanings, being substituted for one another, as seems to be the

²⁸(...continued)

case here. Both 1QIs^a and 1QIs^b read the more normal אל, “to.”

The story concerning YHWH’s servant, is proclaimed in the world, causing the astonishment of kings and nations. In that servant, YHWH’s “arm,” or power has acted for the salvation of “the many.” But the story has met with disbelief in Israel—that is the implication of the first question at the end of **verse 1**. The implication of the second question is that those who have witnessed YHWH’s arm powerfully at work in his servant do not understand what is happening, and so do not receive the Divine revelation.

The verb used here in the phrase על-מי נגלתה, “upon / to whom was it revealed / made known?”, נגלה, **niglah**, becomes Motyer’s mantra, repeated over and over in his comments, with the implication that every word of the text is a Divine revelation. We do not doubt that in the life and mission of the suffering servant there is a Divine uncovering or “revelation” for all humanity to hear; but to expand this to every word in the **Bible**, as Motyer does, we think is terribly misleading, forcing those who accept his view to have to explain away problems, contradictions, human nationalistic opinions, etc. as somehow the “Word of God.”

Notice how Motyer, when he comes to **53:12** has to resort to a unique translation of the text, which he cannot fit into his dogmatic view as it is written. For us to say that not every word in the **Bible** is the “Word of God,” is not to deny that indeed, the **Bible** contains genuine uncovering / revelation of God—but not in the easy, simplistic way that Motyer views it. Rather, the Divine revelation through prophets, such as Isaiah’s great “vision” comes through visions and dreams, characterized by puzzling enigmas and obscurities, which means the reader must question, and search for the Divine revelation, as if solving a puzzle. The “word of God,” while easily seen in the Ten Commandments given through Moses, is not easily seen in the message of the prophets—but rather, is hidden, and must be searched for.

Here, Motyer comments that “the second question purposes to explain why [no one believed ‘our report’—Motyer explains why this is so]. There can be no belief without prior Divine revelation; on the basis of human observation alone...there is no discernment of who the servant really is.” (P. 427)

The implication is that until a Divine voice comes and explains what is happening, no one can discern. But the suffering servant is, according to Motyer (and in our view as well), the Divine “arm” at work—and that is at least a “sign” that points to YHWH. We are reminded of the constant signs that YHWH gave to Pharaoh in Egypt, and to Israel in its wilderness wanderings, accompanied by the Divine voice—but which were met with disbelief both by Pharaoh and oftentimes by Israel. Belief is not easy, and simply seeing a Divine sign or hearing a Divine voice will oftentimes not overcome unbelief. Belief has to be struggled for, since YHWH has given genuine freedom to His people.

We think this is what is involved here—there is the Divine sign of the suffering servant himself; and there is the Divine voice, constantly coming to Israel through Isaiah and the prophets—but Israel rebels against that revelation, refusing to believe, just as Isaiah has been

(continued...)

²⁹(...continued)

forewarned in his call to speak for YHWH (**Isaiah 6**).

Slotki states that the answer to the question raised in the first two lines of **verse 1** is “To none...No one of the nations knew hitherto the secret of the servant’s extraordinary powers of endurance and survival.” (P. 261) But does the text depict the servant’s “extraordinary powers of endurance and survival”? Does it not depict the servant being killed and buried, and then in spite of dying, experiencing life beyond death? Does Slotki mean that “ideal Israel” or the “remnant” died and was buried symbolically in its Babylonian captivity? And we think the answer to the question raised is not that “none of the nations knew,” but “Israel itself did not know.”

There are many passages in the **Jewish Bible** in which the “arm of YHWH” is used to refer to YHWH God’s powerful actions in human history, both in the destruction of his enemies, and in the powerful deliverance of his people, especially in the exodus of Israel from Egypt. For mentions of the Divine “arm” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 6.

Reading Motyer’s commentary we could be led to believe that Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant, is the exclusive “Arm of YHWH.” He quotes D. J. A. Clines as stating, “Where has God’s power ever been seen—but here?,” and adds Clines’ comment that “the poet is denying that God’s arm (power) has ever been revealed previously.” (**Isaiah 53**, p. 15). Motyer goes on to comment that “the ‘Arm of the Lord’ is not someone / something apart from the Lord [YHWH], but is the Lord [YHWH] Himself in all His power...Now it is not a matter of tracing events to an invisible cause but a matter of seeing a person, the servant, and recognizing that he is the Lord [YHWH] present in power...Now at last the arm has come, not simply a person behind and through whom the Lord’s [YHWH’s] power is at work, not just one signally (even uniquely) upheld by the Lord’s [YHWH’s] power, but ‘the Arm’ Himself, the Lord [YHWH] come to save.” (P. 427)

Motyer is interpreting **Isaiah 53** from his high Christology of Jesus Christ as God / YHWH. But no one, we think, could ever get this simply by studying **Isaiah**. As is seen in the many passages which mention the Divine arm, it is symbolic for the Divine power that has been at work in human history throughout the centuries, notably in YHWH’s servant Moses; a

Divine power that continues to work, notably in the suffering servant, as this passage teaches, but also in countless other ways.

We believe that for those who have eyes to see, the Divine arm is evident throughout the universes, and throughout human history—which is not “A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”—but a tale of wondrous, mind-boggling, terrifying, challenging, harshly testing, both beautiful and ugly, nauseous events--as the Divine “arm” continually creates and accomplishes its purposes, oftentimes contrary to human values--that call forth awe and wonder, fear and trembling, and attraction and love. Here, the astounding thing is that YHWH’s “arm” is present in the extreme weakness of this ugly person. The Divine “arm” is active in this servant, but the Divine revelation of that arm in the suffering servant meets with little or no reception.

(continued...)

²⁹(...continued)

The Greek translation of **Isaiah 53:1**, along with **Isaiah 6:10** is quoted verbatim in the passage **John 12:37-41**:

- 37 But then He, having done so many signs before them,
they were not believing in Him,
38 in order that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:
Lord, who believed our hearing / report?
And the arm of (the) Lord, to whom (was it) revealed?
39 For this reason they were not able to believe,
because again Isaiah said:
40 He has blinded their eyes,
and He hardened their heart,
so that they might not see with the eyes,
and understand with the heart,
and might turn,
and I will / would heal them.
41 These things Isaiah said,
because he saw His glorious radiance,
and he spoke concerning Him.

While John's quotation of **Isaiah 53:1** is verbatim, his quotation of **6:10** is not.

- 6:10 For the heart of this people was made fat / dull,
and with their ears they heard with difficulty,
and their eyes, they closed,
so that they would not see with the eyes,
and with their ears they might listen,
and with the heart they might understand,
and they might turn,
and I will / would heal them.

The most significant difference is that **Isaiah 6:10** places the responsibility for the failure to have open hearts, and hearing ears, and open eyes, on the people themselves, whereas **John** states it is something that God had done to them, making it impossible for the people to believe.

What do you think? Do you agree with **Isaiah** or with **John** in this matter of the hardening of hearts? Or can this be another instance of "both / and" instead of "either / or"? That is, do people themselves harden their hearts, but at the same time God causes or assists their hardening, in order to make belief versus unbelief a life-long test of human character? Is belief, in fact, a challenging struggle in the midst of life's awesome gifts and difficulties?

Wolf / Stek comment that the "message" or "report" mentioned here is "the good news
(continued...)"

²⁹(...continued)

about salvation, given by the prophets to Israel and the nations.” (P. 1094) See **Isaiah 52:7, 10:**

52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains (are the) feet of one announcing good news!
 One causing Peace! to be heard,
 one announcing good news of Good!
 One causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,
 one saying to Zion,
 Your God reigned!

52:10 YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,
 to (the) eyes of all the nations;
 and all ends of (the) earth will see
 our God’s salvation / deliverance!

³⁰

Slotki comments that **verses 2-3** give the “reason for the unbelief expressed in **verse 1**. The servant appeared so despicable.” (P. 261)

Westermann comments on **verse 2** that “When the psalms of lament and of praise speak of suffering, this is invariably restricted, only an incident in the life of a healthy man. Here, however, there is a difference. The thing described is an entire life-span with the stamp of suffering upon it. Hence at the beginning, ‘he grew up,’ and at the end, ‘he was buried.’” (P. 261)

He earlier stated that “As Begrich says, [the report about the servant’s suffering and exaltation’s] two main parts (**verses 2-9** and **verses 10-11a**) point to an individual psalm of thanksgiving (declarative psalm of praise), where the central portion is made up of the same parts as here, a report on the suffering and a report on the deliverance...”

“It has been altered in two ways. First, the narrator is not the man himself who experienced deliverance—this man’s story is given in the third person; and secondly, those who tell of the servant’s anguish and deliverance had themselves been given salvation by what happened to and through the servant...The report is also a confession on the part of those who experienced salvation...”

“In laments and declarative praise, the suffering brought to God’s notice always has limits set to it. Here, however, the drift involves an entire life-span: he grew up...he was buried. On the other hand, here there is point for point correspondence with the Church’s confession as it is given in the Apostle’s Creed—born, suffered, died and was buried [and lives again!]. This similarity in structure (the Creed, too, is the confession of men who had been given salvation) is far more important than quotations from **Isaiah 52-53** here and there in the **New Testament.**” (Pp. 256-57)

(continued...)

וַיֵּעַל כִּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו

And he grew up³¹ like a sapling / sucker^{32, 8} before him / Him,³³

³⁰(...continued)

Alexander observes that “The ׀ / *waw* [conjunction ‘and’] at the beginning of this verse is [‘conversive / consecutive’], determining the past tense of the future form...The common version of וַיֵּעַל as a future proper (*he shall grow up*) is utterly precluded by the [*waw conversive / consecutive*], and gratuitously violates the uniformity of the description, which presents the humiliation of [the suffering servant] as already past.” (P. 291)

We agree. The tense of the description of the suffering servant here is in the past tense. But this is not uniform, as Alexander holds, because some of the later statements will depict his suffering in the future tense. This is typical for Hebrew prophecy, which is not nearly as exact as commentators wish it was, but rather is oftentimes puzzling and seemingly contradictory in nature.

³¹

North claims that the verb וַיֵּעַל is literally “and he shot up.” This is because the metaphor is that of a sapling / sucker, sometimes called a “shoot.”

³²

“Like a sapling (or ‘sucker’)” is parallel with the next line, “like a root from dry ground.”

Translations vary: **King James**, “like a tender plant”; **Tanakh**, “like a tree crown”; **New Revised Standard**, “like a young plant”; **New International**, “like a tender shoot”; **New Jerusalem**, “like a sapling.” **Rahfs**, quite differently, has for this first line, ἀνηγγείλαμεν ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ ὡς παιδίον, “We announced before him like / as a child.” **NETS** mistakenly translates ἀνηγγείλαμεν by “He grew up.”

The noun יוֹנֵק apparently means “sapling” or “sucker,” or “sucking one” here, but elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**, where יוֹנֵק, **yoneq** occurs as a qal active participle, it has the meaning “suckling,” or “babe” (that is, at its mother’s breast). Whether “sapling” or “sucking baby,” it expresses the sense of weakness, of the servant’s utter dependence on YHWH. Because of the parallel in the next line, we think the translation “sapling” is best.

Oswalt states that “יוֹנֵק, **yoneq** refers to a ‘sucking one,’ both human and plant. The parallelism, as well as the weight of the manuscript evidence, favors plant imagery.” (P. 374)

Knight comments that “A pest in all our gardens is the sucker that grows from the root of our rosebush, for it does not present us with a flower. Such a sucker develops when the ground is uncultivated and hard and dry; it grows straight up with thorns on its whole length; it has ‘neither form nor charm, nor appearance to attract us to it.’ The good gardener cuts it out
(continued...)”

וְכִשְׂרָשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה

³²(...continued)

and throws it away. The word sucker has two meanings in Hebrew. First, it can mean what its parallel implies, a sapling growing straight up out of the ground. But it can also mean one who sucks at his mother's breast, a little child. [Rahlfs] makes the second translation [ὥς παιδίον, 'like a little child']...

“It is interesting that by means of the parallel with *root*, Deutero-Isaiah reveals that he is making direct reference to the words of **Isaiah 11:1**, spoken so long before his day: ‘There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (sucker) shall grow out of his roots.’ There the word for ‘sucker’ is *netser* [נֶצֶר], ‘sprout,’ ‘shoot’], which means the same as יוֹנֵק, **yoneq**, here. **Job 14:7** says ‘For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its יוֹנֵק will not cease.’ A tree stump can appear to be dead. Not a leaf or a branch seems to have survived the felling. Yet months later, after the long reign of a winter's death, a sucker may appear through the ground several feet from the dead stump, but obviously from a root that is still alive. From that small beginning a tree will grow once again...

“In this way Isaiah of old had foreseen how one would arise, not necessarily as a physical son of David, whose tree would eventually be cut down, but from David's roots in Jesse (**Isaiah 11:1**). He would thus be the outcome not of flesh and blood but of the Divine promise lying behind all that David was called upon to do and to be...

“Similarly, the Israel to whom Deutero-Isaiah is now speaking is a vine that has been cut down to the ground (compare **Psalms 80:8-16** [see our end-note 8 for this passage]) and is now lying dead on the dry soil of Mesopotamia. But the power of the word of God is stronger than the destruction of Jerusalem and the felling of the vine Israel, for the word of God endures forever (**40:8; Ezekiel 37**). So the servant grew up before Him, which can mean only something like ‘in the presence of Yahweh,’ ‘under the eye of God,’ ‘in conformity with the will and purpose of God.’” (Pp. 169-70)

In this way Knight wants to identify the suffering servant with the messiah, and there are these relationships between **Isaiah 11** and **53**. But we wonder why, if this is the case, the prophet would not have simply identified the servant with the messiah? Is this just another case of a Christian interpreter reading the messiah / Jesus Christ into **Isaiah 53**?

Isaiah 11:1 reads,

וַיֵּצֵא חֹטֶר מִגִּזְעֵי יֵשׁוּ

And a branch / twig will go forth from Jesse's stump;

וְנֶצֶר מִשְׂרָשָׁיו יִפְרֹחַ:

and a sprout / shoot from his roots will spring up.

Isaiah 53:2a reads,

(continued...)

and like a root from dry ground.³⁴

³²(...continued)

וַיַּעַל כִּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו

And he grew up like a sapling / sucker, before him / Him,

וְכַשְׁרֵשׁ מֵאֲרֵץ צְיָה

and like a root from dry ground.

And we ask, if Second Isaiah is wanting to identify the servant with what is said in **Isaiah 11:1**, why does he not use the noun **הַטֵּר** (branch / twig) and the noun **נֶצֶר** (sprout / shoot)? Why use instead the noun **יוֹנֵק** (sapling / sucker)? Why not say he comes from “Jesse’s stump,” instead of saying “a root from dry ground”?

³³

Oswalt states, “The most obvious antecedent of ‘him’ is the Lord [YHWH, **verse 1**].” (P. 374) If, as Slotki holds, this is the voice of the Babylonians speaking, is it reasonable that they would describe the “ideal Israel” or “remnant” of Israel as growing up before YHWH, using the Divine name of Israel’s God? We think not. This is Israelite language.

³⁴

Comparing the servant of YHWH to a “sapling / sucker out of dry ground” means that the servant has had to struggle for existence, that his life has been lived out in the midst of difficult circumstances, and perhaps also implies loneliness and solitude (compare **verse 3a**).

Wolf / Stek, commenting on **New International’s** translation “tender shoot,” states that this means “The Messiah [but again we note, the word Messiah does not occur in **Isaiah 53:13-53:12!**] would grow from the stump of Jesse” (p. 1094), taking “tender shoot” to mean the same thing as:

Isaiah 4:2,

On that day YHWH’s branch / Messiah will be for beauty / honor and for glory;
and the land’s fruit for exaltation and for beauty (synonym) for Israel’s escaped ones.

Isaiah 11:1,

And a branch will arise out of Jesse’s stump;
and a sprout from his roots will bear fruit!

It seems strange that the author of **Isaiah** would not use the same terms he used in depicting the Messiah in **4:2** and **11:1** here in **Isaiah 53**, if his intention was to identify the suffering servant with the Messiah. Nothing is said here about “the stump of Jesse,” or “branch,” but there is similarity in the depiction of the suffering servant as a “sapling” or “sucker.” We say to Wolf / Stek, Perhaps...but there is no clear indication in the text.

In **Isaiah 4:2** the “sprout / growth” is said to be beautiful and glorious, but here the
(continued...)

לֹא־תֵאֵר לוֹ וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה

He had no attractiveness,³⁵ and no splendor.³⁶

³⁴(...continued)

exact opposite is predicated of the suffering servant; the “root out of dry ground” is not a choice candidate for such adjectives!

Oswalt comments that “The literal translation ‘root’ for שֹׁרֵשׁ / **shoresh** is not a good parallel with ‘sprout,’ and it is also problematic because it is not the root that grows out of the ground.” (P. 374)

Slotki states that the servant “was like a stunted growth in arid soil...Some see in the phrase ‘dry ground’ an allusion to the exile.” (P. 261)

And again we note: the language is suggestive, but puzzling, and not only can be, but is taken in differing ways...exactly what we should expect from the prophetic message with its characteristic enigmas / riddles!

³⁵

Or, perhaps, “form.” The noun is תֵּאֵר, which means “outline,” or “form.” It is used of a woman’s “attractiveness” in **Genesis 29:17; Esther 2:7; 1 Samuel 25:3; Deuteronomy 21:11**; it is used of a man’s “attractiveness” in **Genesis 39:6; Judges 8:18; 1 Chronicles 17:17**.

Isaiah 52:14 has just stated that the servant’s “appearance” was disfigured beyond that of any other human being. And so, when **53:2** states literally that ‘he had no “attractiveness,” what is meant is no “attractive appearance,” no “good looks,” no “beauty” to cause us to want to accept or follow him.

Slotki thinks in terms of the “ideal Israel, captives in Babylon; Christian interpreters think in terms of Jesus from the despised village of Nazareth, with no claims to fame, and especially as described in His passion, with His face and body mangled from the brutal treatment of His captors.

³⁶

The noun הִדְהָר, **hadhar** means “ornament,” “splendor,” or “honor.” It probably implies “majesty,” or “dignity of bearing.” The servant who will cause kings to be “dumbstruck,” and cause YHWH to be “beautified” or ‘glorified” (see **Isaiah 49:3**), simply did not look like one who could ever accomplish such things.

The readers of **Isaiah 40-55** are informed that the “servant of YHWH,” through whom the Divine “arm” would be present to bring Divine justice and light to the nations, has not had the appearance that people expected. Instead, he was completely different. We would never
(continued...)

וְנִרְאָהוּ וְלֹא־מֵרָאה וְנִחְמַדְהוּ:

And we³⁷ saw him, and (there were) no good looks³⁸ (so that) we desired him.³⁹

³⁶(...continued)

have expected him!

³⁷

North asks, “Who are the speakers, the ‘we’ of **verses 1-6**? There are three possibilities:

- (1) the ‘many nations’ of **52:15**;
- (2) the Israelites;
- (3) the prophet speaking for his fellow countrymen...

“We expect the efficacy of the servant’s work to be confessed by all who were included within the scope of his mission, i.e. the Gentiles (**52:1-4**; **49:1-6**), otherwise they are left at the end as mere spectators, with nothing to say...If it is argued that the heathen could not possibly give expression to thoughts so deep that they have no parallel in the **Old Testament**, the same is equally true of the Jews. The interpretation of the servant’s sufferings must be the prophet’s, moved by the Holy Spirit. As such it is, in the universal setting of the passage, as appropriately voiced by Gentiles as Jews.” (P. 236)

And again we note: this is typical of the prophetic message, characterized by puzzling enigma. In it, a voice speaks. But whose voice is it? The text does not say (as Watts constantly does in his commentary!), but leaves it to the reader to decide whose voice it is.

³⁸

North observes that “Beauty of form and appearance are both found in Joseph (**Genesis 39:6**), David was ‘a man of תִּצְרֵן [‘form’ **1 Samuel 16:18**]...likewise Adonijah [**1 Kings 1:6**]...That the servant was the very reverse of attractive is indicated by the negative.” (P. 237)

³⁹

Slotki’s translation has “that we should look upon him,” and Slotki takes that to mean “pay attention to him, [since] he seemed so insignificant and contemptible.” (P. 261)

Wolf / Stek comment on **verse 2** that “Christ [that is, the suffering servant of Christian faith] had nothing of the bearing or trappings of royalty.” (P. 1095)

There is a strange ambiguity of tenses in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**'s description of the servant. The portrayal is obviously a prediction of someone to come in the future tense (see **verses 10c, d, 11** and **12a, b**. But most of the statements (**verses 2-10b, 12c, d, e** describe the servant in the qal perfect, or “past tense,” as one who has already come. Thus the servant of YHWH is described as a figure in the past, in the present (see **verse 7**), and also in the future.

(continued...)

³⁹(...continued)

What do you make of this ambiguity of tenses? Is this servant of YHWH only one individual, appearing exclusively at one time in history, i.e., in the first century of the Christian era? Or has the servant of YHWH been embodied by others, at different times in history, for example in Job, or in Joseph, or in Moses, or in Jeremiah, or in the apostle Paul, or in Mahatma Gandhi, or in Joni Eareckson Tada, or in Martin Luther King Jr., or in multitudes of other humble people who have willingly suffered and died on behalf of others?

Here in the 21st century C.E., we think of the brave “Doctors Without Borders” such as Kent Brantly, who have gone to serve those suffering from Ebola in West Africa, and who have contracted the dread disease themselves, some of them dying. Are they not “suffering servants”?

Or could the suffering servant be the nation of Israel itself, that has suffered (not so silently) throughout the centuries, as many Jewish interpreters such as Singer claim? What about the brave single mothers / widows in Africa who have given their lives to care for children who have inherited AIDS?

And if you say, as we do, that there have been many different “suffering servants,” does that detract from Jesus of Nazareth’s being the embodiment of just such “suffering servants”?

Oswalt comments on **verse 3** that it “expands on the shocking demeanor of the servant that was first discussed in **52:14**...Instead of bursting on the scene like a mighty oak or a fruit tree in full bloom, he appears as a *sprout* or ‘sucker,’ the normally unwanted shoot that springs up from an exposed root of a tree. It is a matter of seconds for the gardener to snip it off. Or he is like a little plant struggling for life in unwatered ground. Far from forcing its way on all around it, its survival is in doubt.

“The Christian thinks inevitably of Jesus Christ: a baby born in the back-stable of a village inn. This would shake the Roman Empire? A man quietly coming to the great preacher of the day and asking to be baptized. This is the advent of the man who would be heralded as the Savior of the world? No, this is not what we think the arm of the Lord should look like...His

splendor is not on the surface, and those who have no inclination to look beyond the surface will never even see him, much less pay him any attention.” (Pp. 382-83)

And, we add, if such a one dares to question and challenge the religious establishment for its narrowness, he will be quickly and resolutely put to death! Indeed that is exactly what happened to Jesus the suffering servant.

That the servant of YHWH does not at all look like what those who saw him expected is emphasized. Indeed, his appearance was exactly the opposite of those expectations—so much so that those who saw him didn’t “desire” him, but rather cast him off—see especially **verse 3**, “He was despised and without companions; a person of sorrows, and acquainted with sickness. And, like people’s hiding their faces from him, he was despised, and we thought him a nobody.”

(continued...)

נְבוֹזָה וְחִרְלֵי אִישִׁים

³⁹(...continued)

Ortlund comments that “Unbelief in the servant was natural because he was an obscure, outwardly unimpressive person in a failed culture. ‘His generation’ was blind (**verse 8**).” (P. 1338)

Of course, understanding the servant to be Jesus Christ, it is not exactly the truth that His generation was blind—for from that generation came those who followed Him, and became the prime movers of a worldwide movement of faith in Him. We would say, “His generation as an official whole, with its High Priest and the religious establishment, with church-state combined, was blind.

North comments that “Here (in **verse 2**) and in what follows the sufferings and death of the servant are described as having already taken place (though see **verse 11**). This need not mean that he was already dead when the Song was written. The words of the ‘we’ are set in the frame-work of Divine pronouncements beginning ‘My servant shall prosper.’ It is in relation to an unspecified future that the sufferings are past. They may, or may not, have been past when the Song was written.” (P. 237)

Yes...”may or may not”...the prophetic message is characterized by puzzling enigmas, by obscurities, by lack of clarity—and we have to question and search for its Divine revelation.

⁴⁰

Knight comments on **verse 3** that “The portrait before us...is that of one whose rejection goes beyond even the humiliation and pain which the servant people of God have had to suffer in Babylonia [how does Knight know this?]. It is the portrait of one who is wholly abject, who has encountered evil in its ultimate form.

“Remember that for **Old Testament** man, even more than for us, communal life was a *sine qua non* [indispensable ingredient]. No man at any period can develop to be truly human unless he lives in society; in fact a man goes mad if he is completely shunned by his kind. Deutero-Isaiah therefore puts his finger on the point of the greatest sacrifice of all which the perfect servant has to make [the phrase ‘perfect servant’ is not found in the text]. He is to be utterly lonely. We esteemed him not; that is, ‘we took no account of him.’ We thought him an idiot in the Greek sense of the word; we regarded him as an isolated fanatic. In other words, the servant’s calling is to lead him to tread a completely lonely path, even as God Himself must pursue the path of redemption alone (**63:3**).” (P. 170)

But Knight may be overstating his case here. Jesus of Nazareth was certainly not “completely alone.” He had disciples who accompanied him throughout his public ministry, and there were those who stayed by his side to the end. He was rejected and shunned by official Judaism, but he was not “utterly lonely.”

He was despised,⁴¹ and without companions,⁴²

41

The niph'al participle נִבְזָה, "he was despised," is repeated in line 6. Oswalt holds that "despised" means "to consider something or someone to be worthless, unworthy of attention [referring to M. Goerg, **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** II, pp. 60-65]. The servant will not suffer a conscious and deliberate rejection so much as a hasty dismissal." (P. 383)

But the Hebrew uses the perfect tense throughout this verse, not the imperfect, as if the author is describing an individual he has known.

42

The phrase חָדַל אִישִׁים is literally, "lacking men," or "ceasing from men," meaning "isolated from the community." Slotki thinks it means "treated like an outcast." (P. 262) Oswalt suggests that "humans have ceased having any relations with the servant because they do not see him as having any significance for them." (P. 383)

Motyer comments that "The human eye saw a man among men, of human ancestry, with no special dignity, and as the object of scorn he was left 'lacking in' adherents." (P. 428)

But was this true of Jesus? The depiction in the Gospels is a man who attracted followers wherever he went, and who entered Jerusalem at the close of his life, surrounded by admirers. Jesus was not "lacking in adherents."

Westermann states, in his comment on **52:14**, that "Grievous suffering and, in particular, suffering that disfigures, can cut a man off from his fellows. The shuddering of horror which we today feel at the sight of a badly disfigured face still has...the full effect of cutting off or ostracizing one so 'horribly' marked. The psalms of lamentation and, in particular, **Job**, allow us to hear the pathetic cries of men cut off from their fellows because they had been disfigured by suffering. In fact, they are no longer regarded as genuine, normal human beings. They no longer belong." (P. 259)

Think today of the wasted and twisted body of a person dying of AIDS, or Ebola, and how society turns away from such a person, not wanting to even look at him or her, certainly not wanting to get anywhere near, or touch that person. Compare:

Psalm 22:7-8^{Heb} / **6-7**^{Eng},

7/6 And I—a worm, and not a man!
A reproach of humanity,
and despised (by) people!

8/7 Everyone seeing me mocks at me;
they open their lips wide,
they wag (their) head.

(Do you think **Psalm 22** is describing the or a "suffering servant"?)

(continued...)

אִישׁ מִכְּאֲבוֹת וַיְהִי עָלָיו

⁴²(...continued)

John 1:10-11, where it is said of “the Word”:

10 He was being in the world,
and the world through Him was made / became;
and the world did not know Him.

11 to the things of His Own He came,
and His Own (people) did not receive Him!

(We say, Yes, the Jewish nation as a whole, specifically its high priestly leadership. But many of the people of Israel accepted Jesus and followed him!)

a man of pains,^{43, 9} and known⁴⁴ (by) sickness.⁴⁵

43

Or “of sorrows.” The plural noun is **מְכַאֲבוֹת**, **mak)obhoth**, which means “pains,” whether physical or mental. Alexander states that “The phrase ‘man of sorrows’ seems to mean one whose afflictions are his chief characteristic.” (P. 293)

Westermann comments that “As here, in the **Psalms** [of lamentation], the pain is always accompanied by being despised and rejected.” (P. 262) Compare: **Psalms 22:7**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng} in the previous footnote.

The portrait of the truly adequate human being as always happy, always smiling, never burdened down with weaknesses and hurts, simply does not fit the servant of YHWH, who identifies with and shares in human weakness and the “pains” that accompany both physical and mental suffering. We are reminded of the haunting cries of the people of Jerusalem, heard in the **Book of Lamentations**, for example, **3:1-14**, which we translate in our end-note 7.

North comments that “Those who meet suffering in the right spirit are humbled or made gentle (not the same thing as humiliated) by it. Suffering is the great cathartic [providing psychological relief through the open expression of strong emotions].” (P. 238)

Motyer comments that “If **verse 3** stood alone we would be left to think that the servant was burdened with a morose [sullen, ill-tempered] temperament and a sickly body, but **verses 4** and **10** fill out the picture.” (P. 428)

The reader of Motyer’s commentary quickly assumes that in those verses, the picture changes to depict the servant as being at other times happy and healthy—but that is not the case. They simply tell the reader that the servant’s temperament and sickly body were the results of YHWH’s causing them, not changing the picture of the servant at all, other than claiming that they were our sorrow and sicknesses that the servant was bearing. Motyer is filling out his portrait of the suffering servant in the light of Jesus Christ and His depiction in the **Gospels**—he did not get this idea from **Isaiah 53!**

44

Where the Masoretic Hebrew text reads the qal passive participle **וַיִּדְוָה**, **wiydhua**(, “and known,” or “and acquainted (with),” 1QIs^a together with the Greek translation, the Syriac translation and the Latin Vulgate reads the qal active participle, **וַיִּדְעַ**, “and knowing.” 1QIs^b reads **וַיִּדְעַ**, “and he will know,” or “and he knows.”

45

In some forms of religion, there is the conviction that if people are living in right relationship with God, they will be healthy and happy, and never experience sickness, depression, loneliness or grief. But this caricature of what should happen in the life of YHWH’s servant doesn’t fit. Rather, just the opposite is true, according to **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. YHWH’s servant is a “person of pains,” who is “acquainted with sickness.” The same truth is

(continued...)

וּכְמִסְתָּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נִבְזָה

And like a hiding of faces from him,⁴⁶ he was despised,⁴⁷

וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ:

and we did not value him.⁴⁸

⁴⁵(...continued)

expressed in the **Book of Job**, and in the “Psalms of Individual Lament”—in which those who are in right relationship with YHWH still go through horrible suffering of all sorts.

Oswalt comments that “Not only does he lack any particularly attractive features to draw us to him, but he is full of his own problems. He is not one of the winners, he is one of the losers. It is axiomatic that losers cannot deliver other losers. He is a man of pain and sickness; what can he do for the rest of us? (P. 383)

46

The Hebrew of this line is somewhat strange—but still, the meaning seems fairly clear. We take it to mean people pretend that they don’t even see this unattractive servant of YHWH. When we don’t want to have anything to do with certain races or classes of people, or specific individuals, we conveniently overlook them, driving quickly through or avoiding their areas, hardly acknowledging their existence, even when we are in close contact. The servant of YHWH experiences just such rejection by his contemporaries.

Alexander understands the line differently, as meaning “like a hiding of the face from us, i.e. as if he hid his face from us in shame and sorrow.” (P. 293)

Where our Hebrew text has וּכְמִסְתָּר, “and like a hiding / act of hiding,” 1QIs^a has וּכְמִסְתִּיר, “and like one who causes to hide.” **Rahlf**s has “because his face had been turned away from.” The Syriac translation has “we turned our faces from him.” The Latin Vulgate has “his look as if it were hidden.” The Aramaic Targum has “when the presence of the Shekinah was withdrawn from us.”

Oswalt, who notes these various readings, states that the “Masoretic Text seems to be the best explanation of the divergent readings.” (P. 375) “Seems to be”...yes. But the fact is that the text is anything but crystal clear, and both was and can be taken in different senses. This is the nature of the prophetic message!

47

Where the Masoretic Hebrew text reads נִבְזָה, “he was despised,” 1QIs^a reads וּנְבִזָהוּ, “and we despised him.” The various translations support the Masoretic Text.

48

(continued...)

⁴⁸(...continued)

The phrase **וְלֹא חִשְׁבְּנָהוּ**, is literally “and we did not think of him,” or “did not account him (as amounting to anything),” or “we did not esteem, value him.” Perhaps the meaning is “we thought him a nobody.” Slotki says, “held him of no account.” (P. 262)

Oswalt states that “The point is that because he does not fit the stereotype of the arm of the Lord he will be treated as though he were ill; he will experience what the ill experience: avoidance...Thus the revelation of the arm of the Lord that will deliver the Lord’s people is met with shock, astonishment, distaste, dismissal, and avoidance. Such a one as this can hardly be the one who can set us free from that most pervasive of all human bondages: sin, and all its consequences. To a world blinded by selfishness and power, he does not even merit a second thought.” (Pp. 383-84)

And we ask, Who is speaking in this passage? Who is intended by “we did not value him”? In **53:1** “our” refers to those who told the story concerning the servant of YHWH. But here, “we” refers to a group who have witnessed YHWH’s servant, but have failed to see any value in him. Obviously, it means those to whom the servant came, those for whom he suffered—first, it will mean Israel; but then also it will mean “the many.”

Westermann comments that **verse 3** “is emphatic that the servant’s suffering isolated him in the community—this is also the case in the Psalms of lamentation—and that he was despised and held in loathing...He had lost all positive significance for the community.” (P. 262)

The statement, “we did not value him” is a confession of community failure; but that failure has now been replaced by a new realization concerning the true nature of the servant of YHWH, as is made clear in the following verses.

Slotki’s view that this is the voice of the Babylonians speaking, means that the Babylonians are now confessing their failure to have recognized Israel’s, their victim’s true identity.

This seems very improbable, just as does Watts’ claim that the victim was Zerubbabel! This is not a political statement, or a judgment concerning an assassination of a public figure—but a deeply religious confession—that does not fit at all in the mouth of the Babylonians or in the mouth of the supposed political opponents of Zerubbabel!

⁴⁹

North entitles **verses 4-6** “His Vicarious Sufferings.”

He comments that “The ‘we’ confess that they had been entirely wrong when they assumed that the sufferer mattered nothing to them. Nor was it that he had been the victim of some capricious or inscrutable whim of God (**2 Samuel 24:1**), or punished by God for his own sins. The sufferings he had borne were sufferings which should have been theirs as the penalty for their own wickedness...

(continued...)

⁴⁹(...continued)

“The impression we get is that they found themselves compelled to reflect upon the contrast between what the servant was and what he had suffered, and what they themselves were and deserved to suffer, until they were moved to repentance and confession. The servant had wrought in them a change of mind (μετάνοια) which they could never have achieved of themselves. This meant, for them, that ‘the Lord brought down on him the iniquity of us all’...The paradox presented by the servant, and by Christ in the **New Testament**, is that the man who did not deserve to suffer at all was the man who suffered most.” (P. 238)

Motyer entitles **verses 4-6** “Explanation: the servant’s vicarious [surrogate, substitute] suffering, our sin and the Lord’s will.” He states that **verses 4-6** form “the heart of the poem, the revelation without which (according to **verse 1**) the servant cannot be understood: his sufferings were properly ours. Our estimate that he suffered under the rod of God was marvelously true, though not in the sense intended. For his sufferings were caused by our sins and achieved our peace, through the personal, deliberate act of the Lord himself.” (P. 424)

Motyer takes the “us” in the text to be referring to all peoples and nations, especially to Christian believers—as his entire commentary on the suffering servant does. We believe that the section contains the words of the prophet, who is speaking for his nation, Israel, and the “us” refers to Israel. Of course, all of this is an interpretation from a Christian, post-resurrection of Jesus Christ standpoint—but it is not, we think, a valid commentary on what the text meant in the pre-Christian time of its origin. What do you think?

Ortlund, much more in accord with the text, comments on **verses 4-6** that “The servant bore the sins of other people; he was himself innocent. This paragraph is the heart of the passage.” (P. 1338) Oswalt entitles these verses “Punished for others.” (P. 384)

Alexander similarly states that in this verse, “the metaphor is that of a burden, and the meaning of the whole verse is, that they had misunderstood the very end for which Messiah was to come.” (P. 294) But this is to assume that the suffering servant is the Messiah, which the text never states; and it also makes the description future, while the text of **verses 1-9** uses exclusively perfect / past tense verbs, depicting the suffering servant as one the speaker has witnessed.

Slotki states that **verses 4-6** express the “recognition that the servant’s sufferings were not due to his secret sins. It is now frankly acknowledged that he was the victim who bore the dire penalties which the iniquities of others have incurred.” (P. 262) But if this is the voice of the Babylonians, as Slotki holds, this is quite a confession for them to make! And if it is the voice of the prophet, speaking for his nation of Israel, it is also quite a confession.

Oswalt comments that in these three verses, the “poem reports that although ‘we’ did not recognize it at first, the sufferings of the servant were not his own fault, as ‘we’ thought, but were in fact the result of ‘our’ sins, and resulted in ‘our’ healing...It is here and in **verses 10-12** that the issue of the substitutionary suffering of the servant, and thus his capacity to deliver his people, comes to the fore. He does not suffer merely as a result of the sins of the people, but in the place of the people. He suffers *for* them, and because of that, they do not need to

(continued...)

⁴⁹(...continued)

experience the results of their sins...

“H. M. Orlinsky and R. N. Whybray [and David Darnell say ‘Not so!’ The people of Israel had surely already suffered for their sins to the full measure in the destruction of their land and their captivity. Is this not the point of **Isaiah 40:2**? It affirms that Israel’s iniquity was forgiven, that she had paid double for her sins! And so, Israel has already suffered, and the servant cannot suffer for her. He can only participate with his people as they suffer.” (P. 385)

Isaiah 40:2,

Speak (plural imperative) to Jerusalem’s heart,
and cry out to her,
that her warfare is complete,
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
that she received from YHWH’s hand double (punishment)
for all her sins!

Oswalt claims that this only means that “Israel had suffered temporal results for its sins, but that did not mean that it was automatically restored to fellowship with God. For that to happen, for Israel to be enabled to be the servants of God, atonement was necessary, and that is what this stanza is all about.” (P. 385) This fails to take **Isaiah 40:2** seriously, claiming that in fact her iniquity / guilt had not been truly or fully “accepted / forgiven.” We are reminded of rabbinical exegesis in the **Babylonian Talmud**, in which biblical statements that do not agree with orthodox beliefs are made to say something different.

Where in the text is there anything said about “temporal results for sins” which can be paid for and forgiven, but still those forgiven are not restored to fellowship with God? As we have pointed out again and again, there are numerous passages in Second Isaiah that declare Israel’s forgiveness, salvation and redemption as having occurred before the coming of the suffering servant. Those passages also depict the intimate relationship of love between the redeemed / forgiven and YHWH. They also look forward to future salvation, which would certainly include the ministry of any future servant of YHWH, but that is not to deny what has already occurred, or to say that what they had experienced was only partial, temporary in nature, awaiting further completion.

What do you think? Is Oswalt trying to “put God in a box,” holding that He can only forgive in accordance with Oswalt’s theory of atonement / forgiveness? We think he is. We are reminded of Christians who insist that believers in pre-Christian Israel did not experience the intimacy with God that they now enjoy through Jesus Christ. But during my long life-time of Christian ministry, I have held numerous funerals, and rarely has there been a funeral in which the bereaved family did not request the reading of **Psalms 23**, coming out of the heart of pre-Christian Israel, expressing the deepest possible feelings of intimacy and companionship with God! Again, what do you think?

Surely⁵⁰ he, he carried⁵¹ our sicknesses,⁵²

50

Ortlund comments on the word **כִּדְבָר** “surely” that it “introduces the truth about the servant’s suffering. Acting as his people’s substitute, with no support or understanding from them, the servant took upon himself the bitter consequences of their sin: griefs, sorrows...The sufferings of the servant would show the consequences that sin brings to fallen humanity, though he himself would not sin (**Isaiah 53:9**). *Smitten by God, and afflicted*. God would be the ultimate source of the sufferings of this faithful servant.” (P. 1338)

But is this in truth what the passage says? We think the passage says that those speaking thought the servant had been smitten by God, and afflicted. And while that may have been the truth, as the passage later goes on to state (**verses 6b** and **10**), this verse does not say so. And notice again that the verse uses all perfect or past tense verbs. It seems that the author has seen the suffering servant, some time in the past.

Motyer comments on **verse 4** that “With neither cooperation nor understanding from us, the servant took on himself all that blights our lives. *Surely...* is a conjunction emphasizing the

unexpected. Whatever people may have thought about the sorrows and sufferings they saw, the truth was dramatically different.” (P. 430)

Oswalt translates **כִּדְבָר** by “But surely” and states that it “expresses both affirmation and contrast...In spite of all that ‘we’ have just said about the unlikely appearance and the tragic circumstances of this man, the fact is that it was all for us! The force of this awareness is shown throughout this verse and the following by the recurrence of the contrast between ‘him’ and ‘us.’ *He* suffered, but it was *we* who sinned...In this recurring emphasis the prophet conveys the perennial shock of those who are secure in their own ability to handle the affairs of their lives when they discover that what they understood to be the well-deserved misfortunes of another were really their own—when they discover that they need a Savior.” (Pp. 385-86)

Oswalt adds that “Part of the shock of this recognition is due to the typical ancient Near Eastern understanding of the source of suffering: if a person is suffering, it is because he or she has done something to deserve it (the **Book of Job** is the classic example in the **Old Testament**). Thus if a person is smitten, it is because he or she is a sinner [so Job’s three friends affirm over and over]. But this man [Isaiah’s suffering servant] has been stricken because *we* are sinners.” (P. 386)

And, we add, in the case of Job, it was not at all that he was suffering because of his sins; his sufferings were a matter of a Divine test—a harshly excruciating and expensive test that YHWH was allowing His counsel-member (the satan) to put Job through.

51

The qal perfect (past tense) verb **שָׂא** means “he lifted,” or “he carried,” or “he took.” It is also used to mean “he bore,” he carried”; and it is also oftentimes used with the meaning
(continued...)

⁵¹(...continued)

“he forgave,” i.e., took away guilt, iniquity, transgression. It is a synonym of the verb סבל used in the next phrase. Also notice the doubling of the personal pronoun in this phrase, נשא נשא, literally, “he, he bore / carried.”

Oswalt comments that “The servant takes [no, ‘took’] on himself the sin of Israel and of the world, and, like the scapegoat ([on the Day of Atonement] **Leviticus 16:22**) bears ([no, ‘bore’] נשא, **53:4**) those sins away from us.” (Pp. 377)

Leviticus 16:22,

And the goat carried upon it all their guilt / iniquity to a land of separation;
and he sends / will send the goat into the wilderness.

Emphasis is given to the plural pronoun “our” throughout **verses 4-6**, where it occurs five times. We take this to mean that the suffering servant was an individual in Israel’s midst, who was lifting / forgiving Israel’s infirmities, sorrows, transgressions, iniquities—all of them “ours,” from the standpoint of the prophet who is speaking for his nation, Israel.

It seems to us that the suffering servant must be understood as an individual Israelite who bore / lifted / forgave the nation of Israel’s problems of sickness and pain, of guilt and sin—not the nation of Israel itself. And if the perfect / past tense is meant seriously, it can mean that some unnamed, self-effacing, loving, forgiving high priest or prophet or some other individual Israelite is meant.

Alexander comments that “the metaphor is that of a burden, and the meaning of the whole verse is, that they had misunderstood the very end for which Messiah was to come.” (P. 294) But in fact there is no mention of the “Messiah” in the entire passage **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, and the description is not of someone who “was to come,” but someone the speaker has seen in the past who has accomplished this great task.

But if, as we believe, Jesus Christ saw His Own life’s mission depicted in **Isaiah 53**, it is understandable why He took upon Himself the task of healing sickness of every sort, relieving the pain and physical suffering of the people of Galilee where He lived and ministered, as well as the task of forgiving sin and guilt of notoriously sinful people—a twofold task such as is described here in **Isaiah 53**, and which lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry—and which has led the followers of Jesus across the centuries to devote themselves to health-care and the spiritual work of forgiveness. What do you think?

52

The root חלה means “to be sick,” “to be weak.” From this root comes this noun חלינו, “our sicknesses,” “our weaknesses,” and two other nouns which mean “sickness” or “disease.”

(continued...)

וּמִכְּאֲבוּנוֹ סִבְלָם

⁵²(...continued)

Knight comments that “The content of this line comes as a great shock. Normally man supposes that the only reason for suffering is penal. But Deutero-Isaiah has long since warned that a new thing is about to be revealed (compare **48:6b, 16**). He has declared that God has long been preparing His servant people, first to understand this new thing, and then once they have accepted it, to live it out in the world (**49:2; 51:16**). It is thus nether wise nor possible, as we are now in the position to recognize, to isolate the so-called ‘servant passages’ in the pages of **Deutero-Isaiah** from the rest of the text; for they contain the flowering of the slowly developing argument that runs through all of **Deutero-Isaiah’s** sixteen chapters.” (P. 170)

We agree. Do you? Have you been able to follow this “developing argument”? And we certainly agree that it is impossible to understand **Second Isaiah** if we do not take the so-called “servant songs” into serious consideration in our interpretation of the text—as Westermann does. But it is common among Christians to take **Isaiah 52:3-53:12** in isolation, without considering its place in the **Book / Vision of Isaiah**—leading, we think, to its misunderstanding.

and our pains⁵³—he⁵⁴ bore them.⁵⁵

53

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that this noun נִכְאָב means “pains,” whether physical or mental. See **Matthew 8:14-17** for the way this **New Testament** author sees Jesus as fulfilling the first two lines of **Isaiah 53:4**:

- 14 And the Jesus, having entered into the house of Peter,
saw his mother-in-law, having been thrown (into her bed), and feverous.
- 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her.
And she arose, and she was serving Him.
- 16 And then, evening having come,
they brought to Him many demon-possessed people,
and He was casting out the (unclean) spirits with a word.
And all the ones having it badly / being sick He healed.
- 17 So that what was spoken though Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying:
He took our weaknesses, and he carried our diseases.

Translations of these first two lines of **Isaiah 53:4** vary:

King James, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows”;

Tanakh, “Yet it was our sickness that he was bearing, Our suffering that he endured.”

New Revised Standard, “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases”;

New International, “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows”;

New Jerusalem, “Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying”;

Rahfs, οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυνᾶται, “This one bears / carries our missings-of-the-mark / sins, and suffers pain / is in agony concerning us.” (Notice how the Greek translation changes the tense from past to present.)

Wolf / Stek want to emphasize the “sin-nature” of this depiction, stating that “Diseases often result from sinful living and are ultimately the consequences of original (Adamic) sin.” (P. 1095) But there is no such theological explanation (‘consequences of original Adamic sin’—shades of Augustine and Calvin!) even remotely suggested in the text itself.

We agree with Oswald, who states that the use of נָשָׂא “is the language of the [Jewish] cult, especially from **Leviticus**. There the sacrificial animal carries (נָשָׂא, **nasa**) the sins of the offerers away, so that the offerer does not carry them anymore.” (P. 386) Only here, in **Isaiah** and in **Matthew**, we insist, the bearing and carrying has to do with physical pain and sickness.

Alexander likewise states that “the terms are evidently drawn from the Mosaic law of sacrifice, a prominent feature in which is the substitution of the victim for the actual offender, so that the former bears the sins of the latter, and the latter, in default of such an expiation, is said to bear his own sin.” (P. 294) And we wonder why Christian interpreters speak exclusively of sin and “expiation,” rather than of sickness and healing. Of course, sin and guilt will
(continued...)

וַאֲנַחְנוּ חִשְׁבָנָהוּ נִגְוֵעַ מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמְעַנָּה:

And we, we⁵⁶ considered him stricken,⁵⁷ struck by God,⁵⁸ and humiliated.⁵⁹

⁵³(...continued)

be dealt with in subsequent verses, but here the emphasis is on physical healing.

It is because of this verse's use of נִשָּׂא that Motyer states, "**Verse 4** demands the noun 'substitution.'" (P. 430) That is, the suffering servant is "bearing" for his people, taking their place, acting on their behalf.

Westermann comments that "The new thing of which they had never dreamt and which shattered an almost primeval iron law [that suffering as such indicated God's smiting and His wrath—the view held by Job's 'friends!'] was that the cause of the blows was now viewed in a different light...The thing that was new and revolutionary for the present speakers was the fact that in this case suffering which gave power to be a substitute and to atone was found residing in a quite ordinary, feeble and inconsiderable person whose suffering, disfiguring as it was, had brought him into contempt and abhorrence...

"These same people who, together with all the devout, had hitherto regarded the servant as one smitten by God now confess—and in so doing dissociate themselves from what all the devout believe—that they themselves had gone astray, and had each and all of them been intent only on his own way, whereas the despised sufferer took their iniquity upon himself, and procured healing and peace for them." (Pp. 263-64) Again, like some other Christian interpreters, Westermann makes no mention of the servant's bearing of sickness and pain—only iniquity.

⁵⁴

Several Hebrew manuscripts together with the Syriac translation and the Latin Vulgate interpolate the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun at this point, הוּא, "he." The pronoun is already implicitly present in the 3rd person singular verb—see the next footnote.

⁵⁵

The phrase סָבַל along with the preceding verb נִשָּׂא is in the qal perfect (past tense), meaning "he carried them" (implying a heavy load). It is closely related to the noun used in **Exodus** for the heavy burdens imposed upon the Israelite slaves by their Egyptian task-masters. It is a heavy burden that the servant of YHWH was called upon to bear or carry for others—he was not bearing his own burden, but that of others. The verb occurs again in the last line of **verse 11**, but there in the qal imperfect (future tense).

⁵⁶

Knight comments that "We, that is to say, humanity at large, had imagined that this servant was suffering from a natural illness, so that his suffering was something that God had sent him as a punishment for his sins...Yet this chapter primarily paints a portrait or offers a theological picture of the historical situation in which empirical Israel had found itself. The servant Israel was then meeting suffering which, while in part penal, was also just that ordinary
(continued...)

⁵⁶(...continued)

suffering that all men must necessarily meet with in this fallen world.” (P. 171) But does the text indicate that this is the voice of “humanity at large”? And is the suffering servant “empirical Israel” as a whole? We hold that the depiction is of an individual within Israel who suffers on behalf of the sins of Israel as a whole. What do you think?

57

Oswalt comments that the qal passive participle נִגְיַע, “stricken,” is “sometimes associated with the disease of leprosy (**Leviticus 13:3, 9, 20; 2 Kings 15:5**), and is probably on this basis that the **Babylonian Talmud** describes the Messiah as a leper (**Sanhedrin 98a**). But this is not always the case; in other places this term can describe any illness or misfortune that suddenly occurs.” (P. 386)

Motyer goes beyond Oswalt, stating that the root נִגַּע “is used sixty times in **Leviticus 13-14**, not of the disease of leprosy but of the infliction or ‘blow’ of it.” (P. 430) It is the noun נִגְיָה, which occurs in **Leviticus 13:4, 5, 5, 6, 6, 9, 12, 13, 17, 17, 20, 22, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 31, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 49, 50, 50, 51, 51, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 55, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59; 14:3, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 37, 39, 40, 43, 44, 48** and **54**.

North states that “The interpretation [that the servant suffered from leprosy] is as old as the early rabbis and Latin Vulgate (*leprosus*). It was strongly urged by Duhm [German commentary on Isaiah, 1892], who maintained that the servant was not judicially executed but died a natural death, from leprosy...Would the death of a leper, however morally perfect he may have been, have excited the consternation expressed in this passage?” (P. 239)

58

Wolf / Stek comment that the phrase “stricken (with a plague),” and “struck by God,” mean the servant had “a terrible disease.” (P. 1095) They refer to:

Genesis 12:17,

And YHWH struck Pharaoh—great strikings / strokes,
and his household,
over (the) matter of Saray, wife of Abram.

2 Kings 15:5a,

And YHWH struck the king (Azariah),
and he was subject to leprosy / severe skin disease,
until (the) day of his death.
And he lived in the house of the separatedness...

It has long been speculated that the suffering servant is depicted as suffering from severe skin disease / leprosy, that made people shun him and turn away from contact with him. But in fact, the text does not indicate exactly what the disease was that he bore. Wolf /
(continued...)

⁵⁸(...continued)

Stek add that “People (Israel in particular) thought the servant was suffering for his own sins.” (P. 1095) And again we note that these Christian interpreters say it is “sins” that the text is describing, not actual physical disease. And we wonder—are Christians obsessed with the “sin problem,” to the exclusion of the problem of human health?

59

The phrase is literally “stricken (qal passive participle from נָגַע, **naga**), smitten (hophal participle from נָכַח, **nakah**) by God and afflicted (or ‘humbled’; pual participle of עָנָה, **anah**). Compare 53:7, where this same root verb נָגַע, **naga**) occurs again.

Westermann points out that “For the ancient world, this attitude was the orthodox, correct, indeed the devout (attitude). Job’s friends, too, thought in exactly the same way about the blows which had fallen upon him. Like the speakers here, they could do no other, because in the ancient world’s way of thinking, suffering as such indicated God’s smiting and his wrath.” (Pp. 262-63) The **Book of Job** indicates that suffering can be a matter of Divine testing, of trial—not necessarily a result of sin, or “retribution”—as Job’s three friends insisted.

Oswalt states “So here the people had seen the servant afflicted with some hateful disease and had wondered to themselves what terrible thing he had done to deserve that. Now they know that it is they who deserved these fearful consequences.” (P. 386)

As we read this description of the suffering servant with its past tense verbs, it is difficult not to think in terms of someone seen and known in the time of writing this description. Alexander, however, rejects this, stating that “the preterite [a grammatical tense or verb form serving to denote events that took place or were completed in the past] is not used merely to signify the certainty of the event, but because this effect is considered as inseparable from the procuring cause which had been just before described in the historical or narrative form as an event already past.” (P. 296)

What do you think? Is the text describing the suffering servant’s life in the past tense “merely to signify the certainty of the event”? Or is it because the one speaking has witnessed just such a suffering servant of YHWH?

Do you think this is nothing more than a so-called “prophetic perfect,” a description of a suffering servant who will come in the distant future, perhaps half a millennium or more away, but describing it in the past tense as if it had already happened?

Or do you think the voice speaking has witnessed just such a thing—some devout servant of God (like Job, or Moses, or Joseph, or Jeremiah, or the psalmist of **Psalms 22**, etc.), bearing the consequences of the sins of his people through no fault of his own? Could this voice be similar to the voice that speaks in **Lamentations 5:7**?

Our fathers sinned, and are no longer (alive);
and we bore their guilts / iniquities.

But / and⁶¹ he was wounded / pierced⁶² because of our transgressions,⁶³

60

Ortland notes that **verse 5** contrasts with **verse 4b**. “The servant’s anguish was ‘our’ fault, not his own.” (P. 1338)

61

Verse 5 begins with the phrase **וַיְהִי**, literally “And he...” Oswalt describes this phrase as “the independent pronoun preceded by a [or ‘juxtaposing / contrasting’] *waw*, “‘but,’ emphasizes the contrast between him and us.” (P. 387)

Whether or not a *waw* is “coordinating” or “juxtaposing” is a judgment call by the translator, and is not made clear by the biblical text. Every *waw* can be changed from “and” to “but” at the translator’s whim, and this can dramatically change the meaning of a sentence. However, we suspect that here Oswalt is right, due to the context.

And again we note: the prophetic message is not “crystal clear,” “Face-to-face Divine revelation” (such as Moses experienced). It comes through visions and dreams, and is characterized by enigma, by puzzling elements, by obscurity—which means the reader or listener must make decisions, searching for the Divine word, which is not easily ascertained.

62

The polal participle **נִחַלֵּל** means either “wounded,” or “pierced.” North holds that it means “pierced through.” (P. 229) See the following passages where something similar occurs:

Isaiah 51:9,

Awake! Awake!

Dress (Yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!

Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,

(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!

Are You not She, the One cutting Rahab in pieces (feminine participle),

(the) One piercing (feminine participle) (the) Dragon?

Psalm 22:17^{Heb} / 16^{Eng},

Because dogs surrounded me,

a company of evil-doers encircled me;

like the lion my hands and my feet.

(The phrase **כְּאֵרִי**, “like the lion,” is translated into Greek by *ὥρυξαν*, “they dug,” perhaps implying dug a hole in, or pierced. Many Hebrew manuscripts and editions of the **Hebrew Bible** read **כְּאֵרִי**, a few manuscripts and editions read **כְּרִי**, apparently meaning “they dug,” which has been taken up by the Greek.)

Zechariah 12:10,

(continued...)

⁶²(...continued)

And I will pour out upon David's house,
and upon (the) one dwelling (in) Jerusalem,
a spirit of grace and supplications for favor.
And they will look to Me,
Whom they pierced,
and they will weep over him,
like a weeping over the unique son;
and they will weep bitterly over him,
like weeping bitterly over the first-born one.

Also see the following **New Testament** passage for mention of the piercing of Jesus' side:

John 19:34, which states concerning the death of Jesus,

But rather [instead of breaking his legs], one of the soldiers with his spear / lance
pierced the side,
and there came out immediately blood and water.

Oswalt comments that "We had thought God was punishing this man for his own sins and failures, but in fact he was *pierced through* as a result of our rebellion; he was crushed on account of our twistedness. The images have now shifted from illness to injury and have become more severe. While 'pierced through' is not always specifically said to result in death, it is typically so used in contexts with death (**Isaiah 22:2; 51:9; 66:16; Psalm 69:27**^{Heb} **26**^{Eng}). Delitzsch goes so far as to say that it is the strongest term for violent and excruciating death in the language." (P. 387)

North comments that "We need not doubt that the servant died a violent death, though how he died is not as explicit as we could have wished." (P. 239) No, the prophetic message is "not as explicit as we could have wished"—that its nature!

63

Knight comments that "Deutero-Isaiah now makes the remarkable statement that it is we, humanity at large, free as we are to choose the evil as well as the good, who have chosen to pierce the servant by our transgressions, that is, rebelliousness, and crush him by our iniquities...It is understandable why Deutero-Isaiah should mention rebelliousness, *pasha* [פָּשָׁע], as the first of all human sins. The man who, through pride, chooses to follow the dictates of his own ego and to disregard the word of God has thereby rebelled against God's loving offer to him of fellowship and peace...Quite possibly Deutero-Isaiah had in mind here, as the type of all human rebellion, the disloyalty of the bride Israel to the Lord and Husband Who has never ceased to exhibit His *chesedh* or 'steadfast loyal love' towards her, with the result that the pain she has caused Him in her folly has pierced Him to the heart (**43:24; 50:1-2** [neither of these passages says 'her folly has pierced Him to the heart'])..."

"For of course, as Deutero-Isaiah has already reported of God, you have made Me into
(continued...)"

מִדְּכָא מְעוֹנֹתֵינוּ

crushed,⁶⁴,¹⁰ because of our iniquities.⁶⁵

⁶³(...continued)

your servant at the cost of your sins, and you have ‘made Me [YHWH] suffer at the cost of your iniquities’ (43:24 [the text says Israel has burdened and wearied YHWH, but not ‘made Him suffer’].” (P. 171)

We agree with much of what Knight says, but think he is attempting to read too much into the passage with these references, which do not say what he says they do, attempting to depict God as the suffering servant, that is, “God in Israel.” What do you think?

⁶⁴

The pual participle מִדְּכָא means “crushed” or “broken,” “shattered.” For occurrences of the root כָּא in the **Hebrew Bible** see our end-note 8.

Oswalt states that Delitzsch (see the preceding footnote) also held that “‘crushed’ is stronger than that which English ‘bruised’ implies. It suggests at least breaking into pieces and in some cases even pulverizing.” (P. 387) Motyer comments that “*Crushed*...is used of people being trampled to death, the infliction and enduring of crushing agonies ending in death.” (P. 430) See **Lamentations 3:34**,

To crush beneath His feet
all earth’s prisoners,

Wolf / Stek from their Christian viewpoint think this may mean “crushed in spirit,” and comment that “the sins of the world weighed heavily on him.” (P. 1095). See:

Psalm 34:19^{Heb} / **18**^{Eng},

YHWH (is) near to (the) broken-hearted,
and those crushed in spirit He saves / delivers.

Isaiah 57:15,

Because in this way He spoke—One High and Lifted up,
Who dwells forever, and Set-apart (is) His name:
(In the) height, and (in the) set-apart (place) I will dwell,
and with a contrite / crushed person, and lowly of spirit,
to bring alive (the) spirit of lowly people,
and to bring alive (the) heart of contrite / crushed people!

Motyer comments that “**Verse 5** adds the adjective ‘penal.’” (P. 430)

In this way, Motyer brings the medieval doctrine of “penal substitution” into the text. We
(continued...)

⁶⁴(...continued)

assume that he is referring to the Hebrew noun **מוֹסֵר**, which means “discipline, chastening, correction.” Sometimes, especially in older writings, what Motyer is referring to is called “*forensic theory*,” a theory of the atonement in Christian theology, developed within the Reformed tradition. It argues that Christ, by his own sacrificial choice, was punished (penalized) in the place of sinners (substitution), thus satisfying the demands of justice so God can justly forgive the sins--As if God’s grace and forgiveness is constrained by His Own law of justice to refuse to forgive sinners until their debt has been paid in full by a substitute. It is thus a specific understanding of substitutionary atonement.” (From **Wikipedia**, 12/19/14) The classical statement of this kind of theory is Archbishop Anselm’s **Cur Deus Homo**, published in 1098 C.E.

Such a doctrine reminds us of the three friends of Job, who insisted that God could not subject anyone to suffering apart from their theory of retribution. But the God Who reveals Himself in the **Book of Job** is not subject to any such human theories, and can cause or allow innocent people to suffer, completely apart from that doctrine.

We insist that the God of the **Bible** is free to forgive anyone, anywhere, anytime that He chooses, by any method He chooses. He is not subject to, or constrained by, some humanly drawn up doctrine of atonement. And that is why, according to the **Hebrew Bible**, there is free and full forgiveness, both with and without animal or human sacrifice, and it is why Jesus could and did forgive freely and fully before His death. His death was indeed for / on account of human sinfulness, but that doesn’t mean that God couldn’t or wouldn’t or didn’t forgive apart from His death. What do you think?

It is probably because such doctrines can be rooted in **Isaiah 53** in the way Motyer has done, that Christians are fascinated by it, and write so extensively in commentary on it. But we ask, where is the word “penal” found in the text? And if it is found in the noun **מוֹסֵר**, is that an adequate basis for such a theological theory?

Knight comments that “Deutero-Isaiah now emphatically declares that the suffering experienced by the servant was not caused by a stroke, nor by the living death of leprosy, nor by his being reduced to poverty and shame from ruin or misfortune as was Job...Rather the servant was voluntarily accepting the sufferings that had come upon him. At first glance it had looked indeed as if he were passively accepting his suffering in abject misery. In reality, however, his suffering was vicarious [acting as a substitute for others]. His suffering was actually intended to effect the will of God. God’s will, as Deutero-Isaiah has already told us [no, will tell us in chapter 54], is no less than that all men should possess the full life in a covenant of peace...See **Isaiah 54:10** [בְּרִית שְׁלוֹמִים, ‘covenant of My peace’], and so be healed of all their diseases [but **Isaiah 54** is not addressed to ‘all men’; it is addressed to Israel].” (Pp. 171-72)

65

The two synonyms used in **verse 5**, **פֶּשַׁעֲנֵנוּ**, **pesha(enu** and **עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ**, (**awonotheynu** (continued...)

⁶⁵(...continued)

“our transgressions” and “our iniquities (or ‘guilts’),” are both key words in the Hebrew vocabulary for human “sinfulness.” There could hardly be a more emphatic way of saying that the problem of Israel’s transgressions and iniquities / guilts has been dealt with decisively in this suffering but victorious servant of YHWH.

Oswalt comments that “The metaphors of **verses 4-5** are precisely those of **1:5-6**. As a result of its rebellion, the nation is desperately ill, a mass of open sores and un-bandaged wounds. What is to be done? Not more hypocritical worship (**1:10-15**)! No, what is needed is just and righteous living (**1:16-20**). But can that atone for the past, cleanse the wounds, destroy the infection? No, writing new words over the old ones will not blot out the old ones. Someone must come to wipe the slate clean. Someone must take the disease and give back health, must bear the blows and give back...well-being.” (Pp. 387-88)

But Oswalt is oblivious to the text of **Isaiah 1:16-20** due to his preconceptions. The solution to the problem of Israel’s sin as stated in **Isaiah 1:18** has nothing to do with the necessity of someone coming, i.e., a suffering servant, to bear Israel’s sickness—but states clearly that the solution is for Israel to enter into honest debate / dialogue with YHWH, the results of which will be that even though Israel’s sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool (**verse 18**). It is this great invitation to Israel that lies behind the many statements throughout the **Book of Isaiah** that assure Israel of its forgiveness, redemption and salvation, if it will only genuinely relate its life to YHWH. It is similar to the assurance given to Isaiah the prophet himself in **Isaiah 6:7**,

and your iniquity / guilt is / will be turned away,
and your sins are / will be covered over / atoned for!

It was only through that Divine gift of forgiveness that Isaiah was able to answer the call of YHWH to speak for Him, and become the great spokesperson / prophet for YHWH that he was. And this statement to Isaiah himself is very similar to the statement that YHWH made to Israel in the opening of Deutero-Isaiah’s message, **Isaiah 40:2**:

Speak (plural imperative) to Jerusalem’s heart,
and cry out to her,
that her warfare / service is complete,
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
that she received from YHWH’s hand double (punishment)
for all her sins!

This is not to deny that the suffering-servant of YHWH had or would in the future suffer for Israel’s guilts / iniquities, and bear them himself; but it is to say what the biblical text says, YHWH had already forgiven Israel. What do you think? If this view violates your theory of the “atonement,” what do you think should be changed? Your theory, or the **Bible**?

The noun מוֹסֵר means “discipline (of the moral nature),” “chastening,” or “correction,” sometimes “punishment.”

Oswalt states that “While מוֹסֵר does not always imply ‘punishment,’ it frequently does...Here the context demands this understanding. The child [Israel] has rebelled against the parent; not only has the relationship been disrupted, but justice is offended. There is no *shalom, well-being*, because things are out of order, unbalanced. Until punishment has been meted out, all the good intentions in the world cannot restore the broken order...”

“But when the parent’s authority has been recognized, when justice has been done, then both sides of the equation are balanced again, which is what *shalom* is all about. This is what the servant has done for us. This is not a matter of a raging tyrant who demands violence on someone to justify his fury. It is a God Who wants a whole relationship with His people, but is prevented from having it until incomplete justice is satisfied...In the servant He has found a way to gratify His love and satisfy His justice.” (P. 388)

In this way, Oswalt brings the Christian doctrine of atonement into the interpretation of **Isaiah 53**, a doctrine that began in 1089 C.E. with the publication of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury’s book, **Cur Deus Homo**, with its “satisfaction” theory of atonement.

As a long-time parent of children and grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren, I cannot imagine treating children in this manner, demanding absolute satisfaction of justice before loving and forgiving and accepting them; and I cannot imagine my punishing a substitute child for what wrongs my children have done, or for payment of their debts, no matter how perfect that substitute may be. I can easily find a way to avoid that, simply through my love and forgiveness for any wrongs they have done, or any debt that they have not repaid.

It would tear our family apart forever to demand that every loan I have made to a child or grandchild must be paid to the full before I am willing to have anything to do with them! Surely, we think, there is a better way to understand Jesus’ death and His atonement than this, turning God into an unforgiving Judge Who will not forgive until He has gotten His “pound of flesh”!

For an excellent source of various views on this subject, see the article “Penal Substitution” in **Wikipedia**, with criticisms of Anselm’s view. We think that in-depth study of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** can help to throw much light on this subject.

Because Christian commentators constantly use **Isaiah 53** as the biblical basis for this medieval theory of atonement, we are responding to it throughout these notes. We too believe in discipline of children; but we also believe in free and full forgiveness of debts and of evils done to us, as Jesus taught—see **Luke 6:27-36**, with no thought of repayment. And we

(continued...)

⁶⁶(...continued)

certainly believe in a God Who in love forgives His wayward children, without demanding His “justice being satisfied,” or His receiving His “pound of flesh”—even if there are biblical stories and statements that seem to depict Him as such.

What do you think? See our end-note 11 for occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible** of the noun מוֹסָר, where it becomes clear that by far the overwhelming usages of the word is for “discipline,” “correction,” certainly not “lethal punishment.”

67

The Masoretic pointing makes a plural of a familiar Hebrew noun שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ “our peaces,” “our wholenesses,” “our welfares.” Alexander observes that “Above thirty [Hebrew] manuscripts and as many editions have שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ in the plural; a form which does not occur elsewhere.” (P. 296)

1QIs^a is unpointed, but as we have observed, an early form of pointing is found in a number of places in the manuscript, and it would have been easy for the copyist to insert a ם / **yodh** here to indicate the noun was being read as a plural.

68

Translations of this third line of **verse 5** vary:

King James, “the chastisement of our peace was upon him”;

Tanakh, “He bore the chastisement that made us whole”;

New Revised Standard, “upon him was the punishment that made us whole”;

New International, “the punishment that brought us peace was upon him”;

New Jerusalem, “the punishment reconciling us fell on him”;

Rahlfs, παιδεία εἰρήνης ἡμῶν ἐπ’ αὐτόν, “training / discipline of our peace—upon him”...

Oswalt states that “What the servant does in bearing the undeserved results of his people’s sin brings about positive results for the people. He is not merely participating in their suffering, he is bearing it away for them so that they may not labor under its effects anymore. He took the punishment that made it possible for [Israel] to have well-being, and he has taken the infected welts so that [theirs] could be healed. No Judean prophet did that for sick, broken Israel; and sick, broken Israel did not do that for either itself or the world.” (P. 388)

This is a sharp rejection of the Jewish understanding of this text, and overlooks the historical fact that Israel has suffered tragically, again and again, bearing the hatred and rejection of others. A trip to the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem will make this historical fact dramatically real; and Christians do not do well in minimizing its shocking truth. What do you think?

Motyer comments that “‘the punishment of our peace’ means ‘our peace-punishment,’ the punishment necessary to secure or restore our peace with God.” (P. 430) But where does

(continued...)

⁶⁸(...continued)

the text say “peace with God”? It simply says “peace,” and that may well mean peace with one another, the end of warfare, of internecine fighting within Israel.

The fact is, who is intended by the “our” depends on whose voice is speaking. We understand it to be the voice of the prophet, speaking on behalf of his nation, the nation of Israel. Motyer, along with other Christian commentators, takes it to mean all humanity’s voice. Compare, for example, Alexander’s comment that “*All we* does not mean all the Jews or all the heathen, but all men without exception.” (P. 296)

Motyer says peace with God indicates “a rounded wholeness comprising personal fulfillment, harmonious society and a secure relationship with God...This work has now been done by his substitutionary, penal death. Where there was no peace (**Isaiah 48:22**) there will be, though the servant’s peace-making work (**53:5** [here]), a covenant of peace (**54:10**.” (Pp. 430-31)

Yes, the suffering servant’s work is peace-making. But Motyer wants to make this much more than just peace in the nation of Israel through this suffering-servant—he understands it as a universal peace through Jesus Christ. But God can make peace in other ways than through this suffering servant, as becomes clear from a number of passages in the **Bible**. See:

Numbers 25:12, YHWH promises Phineas “a covenant of peace.”

1 Kings 2:33, Solomon says David and his descendants will have peace from YHWH

עַד-עוֹלָם, “to long-lasting time,” oftentimes in translation ““forever.”

2 Chronicles 14:6-7, YHWH gave King Asa peace.

Isaiah 26:3,

An inclination / mind-set leaning (on You),

You will watch / guard (with / in) peace--
peace because in You it is trusting!

(Here peace is the result of leaning on, trusting in YHWH; not something a suffering servant enables.)

Isaiah 26:12,

YHWH, You will establish peace for us;
because also all our deeds

You accomplished / worked for us!

(Peace is established through YHWH’s work in “our deeds,” with no mention of a suffering servant.)

Isaiah 32:17-18,

(continued...)

וּבַחֲבֵרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ:

and with his wounds⁶⁹ we were healed.⁷⁰

⁶⁸(...continued)

- 17 And (the) product of the righteousness will be peace;
and (the) service of the righteousness--to be quiet,
and security until long-lasting time.
- 18 And My people will dwell in a dwelling of peace,
and in dwelling-places of confidences
and in places of rest, secure ones.
(Here peace is the result of righteousness; and nothing is said of that righteousness
being obtained through a suffering servant.)

Isaiah 52:7,

How beautiful upon the mountains (are the) feet of one announcing good news!
One causing Peace! to be heard,
one announcing good news of Good!
One causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,
one saying to Zion,
Your God reigned!
(That is, "peace" is being announced to the captives in Babylon because of God's reign,
with no mention of a suffering servant.)

Isaiah 57:18-19,

- 18 I saw his (back-sliding) ways, and I will heal him;
and I will lead him,
and I will have complete compassions for him and for his mourners,
- 19 creating fruit of lips--
peace, peace for the (ones) far away and for the (ones) near, said YHWH,
And I will heal him!"
(Here peace comes to both near and far through YHWH's healing forgiveness, with
nothing said concerning a suffering servant.)

⁶⁹

The noun **חֲבֵרָתוֹ**, **chabhuratho** means "his stripe," or "his blow." The only other
occurrence of this noun in **Isaiah** is at: **Isaiah 1:6,**

From sole of foot, and as far as a head,
there is no soundness in him--
bruise and blow and injury--fresh, raw one(s)--
(the pus) not pressed out, and not bandaged

(continued...)

כִּלְנוּ כִּצְאָן תְּעִינוּ

⁶⁹(...continued)

and not medicated with oil!

Compare also **Isaiah 50:6**, where the servant of YHWH says,

My back I gave to those striking,
and my cheeks to those pulling out (the beard of) my face.
I did not hide from insults and spit.

70

The phrase נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ, **nirpa)-lanu**, is literally “it was healed for us.” This fourth “Song of the Servant” does not go into any theological discussion of how it can be that the servant’s suffering can bring healing to others—it simply states emphatically that this is true. And it views that healing as having already occurred in the past.

Wolf / Stek comment that “healed” “here probably (is) equivalent to ‘forgiven.’” (P. 1095)
See: **Isaiah 6:10**,

Make fat this people’s heart; and make heavy its ears;
and its eyes, smear [over]--for fear that it should see with its eyes,
and with its ears should hear, and its heart / mind should understand--
and it will turn around--and He will heal it!

Jeremiah 30:17,

Because I will cause healing to arise for you,
and from your wounds, I will heal you--
(it is) a saying of YHWH--
Because “a banished one / outcast” they called you;
She is Zion; there is no one seeking her!

1 Peter 2:24,

Who (Christ) Himself bore / brought up our missings-of-the-mark / sins
in His body upon the wooden (post),
in order that having died to our missings-of-the-mark,
we might live to / for right-relationship / righteousness;
by Whose wound you (plural) were healed.

This last line of **1 Peter 2:24**, “by Whose wound you (plural) were healed” may be an adaptation of the last line of the Greek translation of **Isaiah 53:5**, “by the wound of his we were healed.”

All of us like the flock (of sheep or goats) went astray,^{71, 12}

71

Slotki comments that this is a description of sheep “without a shepherd. They forsook the leadership of God.” (P. 262) For a flock gone astray, compare: **Jeremiah 50:6**,

My people became a flock of those perishing;
their shepherds led them astray
turning them back (on the) mountains.
From mountain to hill they wandered;
they forgot their resting-place / fold.

Ezekiel 34:1-16, for this lengthy text, see our end-note 9.

Psalm 119:176, the last verse of this **Torah-Psalm**, which is sometimes taken for a “Pharisaic / legalistic **Psalm**,” closes with a very humble confession:

I wandered astray like a perishing sheep!
Seek Your servant!
Because Your commandments I did not forget.
(It is anything but a proud statement of ability to save oneself!)

These biblical passages reveal the background of these statements concerning sheep in **Isaiah 53**. See: **Matthew 9:36**,

But then having seen the crowds,
He (Jesus) had pity / compassion concerning them,
because they were distressed and rejected,
as if sheep not having a shepherd.

1 Peter 2:25a,

For you (plural) were like sheep being led astray.

Alexander comments that this [**Isaiah 53:6**] is “a comparison with scattered sheep, whose running off in different directions does not spring from selfishness, but from confusion, ignorance, and incapacity to choose the right path...The image meant to be presented is no doubt that of a shepherd laying down his life for the sheep.” (P. 297)

For this imagery of the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, see **John 10:11-18** and **1 Peter 2:24-25**.

We think this imagery should be taken up in theories of the atonement; the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep is not paying a debt, or acting as a substitute, but simply doing what is necessary to protect his flock.

Knight comments that “Deutero-Isaiah now connects the task of Israel with the historical
(continued...) ”

אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ

each one to his (own) way, we turned.⁷²

⁷¹(...continued)

picture of her that has been employed by the prophets before him, in fact, ever since the days of the shepherd king David...Yet the *all* of this verse must not be limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but should embrace within its sweep the *many*, 'the masses'...for this verse surely describes the manner in which humanity as such behaves...Man's common guilt is revealed as the innate [inborn, natural] desire in the individual human heart for each to turn *to his own way*, and thus to be wholly selfish and live a self-contained life." (P. 172)

We sense that Knight is struggling to make the suffering servant's self-sacrifice universal, not limited to Israel. Whether or not this is the case depends largely on who is the speaker in these verses—universal mankind, or a voice representing Israel.

He goes on to say that "Deutero-Isaiah has already explicitly stated at an earlier stage of his argument that God reveals Himself as Israel's Husband. Therefore, when Israel suffered, God suffered too. Thus the extraordinary inference can be made that it was 'God in Israel' Who became the Suffering Servant that Israel was elected to be...In His grace the Divine Husband accepted her deserved sufferings as if they were one with the vicarious sufferings He was undergoing in her. Thus, in His capacity as the Suffering Servant Himself and by means of His union with His wife Israel, God subsumed her justified and penal suffering into His Own vicarious bearing of the 'rebelliousness' and the iniquities (**verse 5**) of the many." (Pp. 172-73)

Do you get this from reading this chapter? We do not. Rather, we get the picture of God Who is pleased with the servant's suffering, Who is the cause of it—not the One Who is Himself enduring it.

⁷²

Ortlund comments that "like sheep" means "stupid and helpless." (P. 1338)

It is widely known that sheep are among the "dumbest of animals." A sheep-rancher in the Panhandle of Texas once told me that his sheep would wander all the way to the north pole if it wasn't for his barbed-wire fence! We understand this passage to be saying that all of Israel is just like that!

The problem of Israel is here depicted in terms of sheep that "wander astray," that "get off course." That is, the Israelites miss the purpose for which they were created and to which they have been called; they fail to follow the pathway that has been Divinely intended for their lives. This metaphor is basic for biblical understanding; it is taken up in the **New Testament** and applied universally.

Of course, modern people can laugh at such a statement, proudly denying that they are "lost," or "going astray." But it will not take much observation of our life-styles and practices, with our broken relationships, our ignorance of genuine ethics, our addictions, and foolish

(continued...)

וַיִּהְיֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ

And YHWH caused to interpose / fall^{73, 13} upon him

אֵת עֲוֹן כָּלֵנוּ:

the guilt / iniquity⁷⁴ of all of us.⁷⁵

⁷²(...continued)

waste of life and resources, to see that the biblical view is much more realistic than our own. What do you think?

For an example of modern “lostness,” see the character Holden Caulfield in **The Catcher in the Rye** by J.D. Salinger.

According to **Isaiah 30:21**, the word of YHWH speaks in the ears (should we say ‘consciences’?) of those who are going astray with the words, “This is the way—walk in it!” But the human heart refuses to place confidence in that Divine word of direction, insisting that its own “way” is superior. Thus, “each of us turns to his own way.” We do not want “Theonomy” (to be governed by God); instead, we want “autonomy” (to be governed by our own self). We assume that by so doing we can experience genuine freedom; but what we soon discover is that our own “way” leads to death rather than to life, to bondage rather than to freedom! What do you think?

⁷³

The hiphil verb הַפְּגִיעַ which we translate by “He caused to interpose,” is from the root פָּגַע, “to meet / encounter / reach,” but in the hiphil means “cause to light upon,” or “make entreaty,” or “interpose,” or even “to attack.”

Alexander insists that “פָּגַע” does not mean simply to come together, but always denotes some degree of violent collision, either physical, as when one body lights or strikes upon another, or moral, as when one person falls upon, i.e. attacks another...The common version (laid upon him) is objectionable only because it is too weak, and suggests the idea of a mild and inoffensive gesture, whereas that conveyed by the Hebrew word is necessarily a violent one, that is, that of causing to strike or fall.” (P. 297)

For an evaluation of Alexander’s claim concerning this hiphil verb, see our end-note 10. Our conclusion is that while the hiphil verb does often connote some violent action, it does not always do so, as Alexander claims. See **Jeremiah 36:25**, where it means “interposing” in order to prevent a violent action.

⁷⁴

Here another of the main synonyms for human “waywardness” and “going astray” is used: עֲוֹן, which means “iniquity,” or “guilt,” or sometimes “consequences of,” or “punishment for iniquity.” See **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, pp. 730-31. The vocabulary for human sinfulness is
(continued...)

⁷⁴(...continued)

almost exhausted in this fourth of Isaiah's "Songs of the Servant."

North states that "The 'we' confess that they had been entirely wrong when they assumed that the sufferer mattered nothing to them...The sufferings he had borne were sufferings which should have been theirs as the penalty for their own wickedness. They have nothing to say about the way in which this exchange (substitution is perhaps the wrong word for it) of penalties had been effected. It was not that they had been formally tried and sentenced, and their penalty transferred to the servant. The impression we get is that they found themselves compelled to reflect upon the contrast between what the servant was and what he had suffered, and what they themselves were and deserved to suffer, until they were moved to repentance and confession. The servant had wrought in them a change of mind...which they could never have achieved of themselves..." (P. 238)

75

Alexander comments on **verses 5-6** that "If vicarious suffering [suffering done by one person on behalf of another person] can be described in words, it is so described in these two verses; so that the attempts to explain them as denoting mere forbearance or participation in the punishment of others, may be fairly regarded as desperate expedients to make the passage applicable to the imaginary persecutions of the Prophets or the pious Jews, or the younger race during the Babylonish exile." (P. 298)

This sharp language is hardly appropriate, as if prophets in Israel did not suffer, and as if the Jewish people did not suffer because of their nation's guilts / sins! See **Lamentations 5:7**:

Our fathers missed-the-mark / sinned, and are no longer (alive);
and we bore their guilts / iniquities.

(This lament sounds very much like claiming the ones speaking in the **Book of Lamentations** identified themselves as "suffering servants.")

Jewish interpreters could just as well charge Alexander with a "desperate expedient" to make the passage applicable to Messiah Jesus alone, and not to any others!

That "our" guilt or iniquity was caused to light or fall upon the suffering servant is reminiscent of the Day of Atonement in Israel, when once each year, all of Israel's guilts / iniquities, transgressions and missings-of-the-mark / sins were symbolically placed upon the head of a "scapegoat" by Israel's High Priest, and then sent away into the wilderness, symbolizing Israel's complete forgiveness and cleansing by YHWH. See **Leviticus 16:21-22**:

- 21 And Aaron shall lay his two hands upon the live male goat's head;
and he shall confess over it all (the) children of Israel's guilts / iniquities,
and all their transgressions, for all their missings-of-the-mark;
and he shall place them upon the male goat's head;
and he shall send (it) forth by (the) hand of a man (standing) ready,
into the wilderness.
- 22 And the male goat shall carry upon it all their iniquities,

(continued...)

⁷⁵(...continued)

into a land of separation;
and he shall send forth / drive the male goat
into the wilderness.

Motyer comments that “Plainly, the vocabulary and ritual of the Day of Atonement (**Leviticus 16**) lies behind Isaiah’s thought in **chapter 53**. If he wished to use all this imagery of sin-bearing, returning again and again to words that cannot but recall it, and at the same time not intend that we should understand that the servant died as the beasts in the ritual died, he would have to say so very plainly indeed. The same consideration applies to the guilt offering imagery of **verse 10**, for in every aspect of the guilt offering (**Leviticus 5:14-6:7**) death is required.” (P. 438) We agree.

For a **New Testament** usage of the language of this passage in **Isaiah 53**, as an example for believers, specifically Christian slaves, to follow when undergoing mistreatment from their masters, see **1 Peter 2:21-25**:

- 21 For to this you (plural) were called;
because also Christ suffered on your behalf,
leaving behind for you an example,
so that you might follow in His footsteps,
- 22 Who did not do sin,
neither was deceit found in His mouth.
- 23 Who, being abused / reviled, did not return reviling / abuse;
suffering, He was not threatening / warning;
but then was handing Himself over to the One judging rightly;
- 24 Who brought / offered up our sins in His body upon the wooden post,
so that dying to / having no part in the sins,
we might live to / for righteousness;
by Whose bruise / wound you (plural) were healed.
- 25 For you were like sheep wandering astray / being misled,
but rather, now you returned / turned back
to the Shepherd and Overseer of your innermost-beings!

There are allusions to the suffering servant of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** throughout this passage in **1 Peter**, including **Isaiah 53:9, 7, 4, 5** and **11**. There can be little doubt that the author of **1 Peter** had this depiction of the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53** in mind as he wrote, urging slaves to be subject to their masters, enduring sorrows while suffering unjustly.

In fact, **1 Peter** is teaching Christian slaves to willingly become “suffering servants.” And we ask, How do household servants and slaves “bear the sins” of others? Are they different from Jesus Christ?

See also, **2 Corinthians 5:20-21**, where the apostle Paul states:

- 20 On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors,

(continued...)

⁷⁵(...continued)

as the God is urging / making appeal through us;
we ask / pray / beg on behalf of Christ,
Be reconciled / radically changed to the God!

- 21 The One not knowing sin,
on our behalf was made sin,
so that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

We think this last verse is based on **Isaiah 53:9-11**, and that Paul had in mind this chapter's depiction of the suffering servant willingly taking human sinfulness upon Himself for humanity's salvation. Later in **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**, he foolishly boasts of himself as having become a suffering-servant, detailing numerous occasions of suffering he endured as the ambassador of Christ.

⁷⁶

Slotki comments on **verses 7-9** that they depict "the gentle spirit and meek demeanor of the persecuted servant under undeserved harsh treatment." (P. 263)

North entitles these verses "His Ignominious Death," and comments that "The meek bearing of the servant had not saved him from harsh treatment. He had been summarily convicted and executed, and buried without ceremony in a felon's grave. His fate had excited no commiseration [sympathy, sorrow]; probably few had first-hand knowledge of it. Such grievous ignominy [public shame, disgrace], so utterly undeserved!...He suffered for the sins of peoples who deserved to be stricken themselves. This is the theme of **verses 4-6**, but the passage gives no clear indication who the speaker, or speakers, may be." (P. 240)

Oswalt comments that "This stanza of the poem takes up the sheep metaphor from the end of the previous stanza and uses it to underline the point being made throughout the entire poem: the contrast between the sinful people and innocent servant. When we are compared to sheep, it is their tendency to get themselves lost that is given prominence (**verse 6**). But when the servant is compared to sheep, it is their non-defensive, submissive nature that becomes the basis of comparison..."

"This stanza emphasizes three elements: the servant's submissiveness, his innocence, and the injustice of what has been done to him. Unlike other sufferers in the **Old Testament**, the majority of whom let it be known in no uncertain terms that they did not deserve what was happening to them (even when they did deserve it), this person submits without a demur [protest], and the reader is led to ask why. Can it be that the servant does not see himself as a helpless victim of circumstances beyond his control, but is participating voluntarily in something that he understands to be part of the larger purposes of God (compare **verse 10**)?" (P. 390)

Ortlund comments that in these verses "The servant dies in innocence." (P. 1338)

Motyer entitles these verses "The servant's final act: his voluntary death and the
(continued...)"

נִגַּשׁ וְהָיָא נִעְנָה

He was treated harshly,⁷⁷ and he, he was afflicted,⁷⁸

⁷⁶(...continued)

mystery of his burial.” (P. 432) He states that the emphasis of these verses is “the clear-headed, self-restraining voluntariness with which the servant approached and accepted what happened. The human eye (**verse 4**) saw him at the mercy of hostile, and even Divine, forces; the theologically instructed eye (**verse 6**) saw the hand of the Lord fulfilling the servant’s death, as a sin-bearing exercise...

“Now, however, we stand on a very sacred spot indeed, within the servant’s own consciousness, and we see him, not caught in a web of events, but masterfully deciding, accepting and submitting. As Clines puts it, ‘the servant...does nothing and says nothing, but lets everything happen to him’...The servant’s tongue and mind were alike disciplined to say an unequivocal ‘yes’ to injustice and to a death he did not deserve.” (P. 432)

Westermann observes that “Comparison of **verses 7-8** with **verses 4-6** reveals that the two passages speak of the servant’s suffering in very different terms. Reading **verses 4-6**, we think of an illness...On the other hand, there is nothing suggestive of illness in **verses 7-8**. Instead, everything points to suffering at the hands of others.” (P. 264)

Verses 7-8 are the verses that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading, which the Christian evangelist Phillip explained to him were fulfilled in Jesus—that’s the One Isaiah was talking about, said Phillip. See **Acts 8:26-40**. The evangelist Phillip, like Motyer, looks at **Isaiah 53** in the light of Jesus Christ. The difference is that Motyer is writing a commentary on **Isaiah**, not on the death of Jesus.

Knight comments on **verse 7** that ‘It had now become evident that Israel [the suffering servant is so identified by Knight], through her union with Him whose word endures forever, had been called to be ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’” (P. 174) Yes, a lamb slain; but where is anything said in the text concerning the **New Testament** phrase “from the foundation of the world” (see **Matthew 13:35; 25:34; Revelation 13:8; 17:8**)?

⁷⁷

The piel verb נִגַּשׁ means “he was pressed,” or “driven,” or “oppressed.” For occurrences of this verb in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

Exodus 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13, 14 (all referring to the oppression of the Jewish slaves in Egypt);

Deuteronomy 15:2, 3 (demanding payment of a loan);

1 Samuel 13:6 (the Israelites are oppressed by the Philistines);

1 Samuel 14:24 (the Israelite soldiers are hard-pressed in battle);

(continued...)

וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי׃

and he would / will not open his mouth;⁷⁹

⁷⁷(...continued)

2 Kings 23:35 (Pharaoh demands silver and gold from the Israelites);

Isaiah 3:5 (the people of Israel oppress one another),

Isaiah 3:12 (Israel's oppressors are children);

Isaiah 9:3^{Heb} / **4**^{Eng}, (the rod of the oppressor);

Isaiah 14:2, 4 (the Babylonian oppressors of Israel);

Isaiah 53:7 (here, the servant of YHWH is oppressed);

Isaiah 58:3 (on the day of their fasting, the Israelites oppress their workers);

Isaiah 60:17 (righteousness will become the "oppressor" of the Israelites);

Zechariah 9:8 (no oppressor will pass by Jerusalem again);

Zechariah 10:4 (Israelite "oppressors" in battle against enemies);

Job 3:18 (oppressors of prisoners);

Job 39:7 (the wild donkey does not obey the voice of the person "driving" it);

Daniel 11:20 (an oppressor sent into Jerusalem).

⁷⁸

Or, "and he was humiliated." The verb here is נִעְנָה, niph'al masculine singular participle; at the end of **verse 3** the verb is מִזְעִנָה, a masculine singular pual participle.

⁷⁹

What does it mean that the servant will not open his mouth? Does it mean he will not open his mouth "in self-defense," or "in lamentation," or "in protest"? Should we say "all of the above"? The remainder of the verse interprets its meaning by use of the simile of a sheep being led to slaughter that is silent before its slaughterers, and like a female sheep that is being sheared, but that does not bleat, that is, as Slotki comments, "he suffered in silence." (P. 263) Compare: **Jeremiah 11:19**,

But I—like a tame / gentle lamb led to slaughter;
and I did not know that they had devised plots against me:
Let us spoil / ruin a tree with its food / fruit;

(continued...)

כִּשְׂהָ לְטֹבֵחַ יִבָּלַל

like a sheep / lamb⁸⁰ to slaughter he will be brought,

⁷⁹(...continued)

and let us cut him off from (the) land of lives / (the) living;
and his name will not be remembered again!

Are not Jeremiah's enemies here depicted as conspiring against him, to make of him a "suffering servant," much like the description of the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53**? Compare also **Psalm 38:14**^{Heb} / **13**^{Eng}, where the psalmist who is being persecuted to the point of death states;

And I—like a deaf person,
I will not hear;
and like a mute person,
I will not open my mouth.

It is noteworthy that here in **Isaiah 53:7** the imperfect ("future") tense of the verb is used side by side with the perfect ("past") tense. It seems to be describing something that the author has observed in the past, and that he expects to occur again in the future. See footnote 81. Alexander notes this change of tense here in **verse 7**, stating that "The writer suddenly but naturally changes his position from that of historical retrospection, to that of actual participation in the passing scene, and, as if he saw the victim led to the slaughter, says 'he will not open his mouth.'" (P. 299)

Oswalt comments that "the servant does not fight against this fate; rather, he gives himself willingly to it. Thus he is not a victim caught in the great gears of a remorseless destiny, but a person of worth and dignity even in the most degrading of circumstances. One thinks of Jesus 'setting His face' to go to a Jerusalem where even the closest of His disciples understood that death awaited Him (**Luke 9:51**)."

⁸⁰

The Hebrew word is שֶׂה, "one of a flock, whether sheep or goat, and sometimes a one year old lamb or kid. E. J. Waschke in his article on this noun in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** states that "As a rule, שֶׂה refers to the individual animal within a small livestock herd...and can include both...'sheep' and...'goats'...The noun itself does not indicate whether its meaning is to be restricted to young animals...'lamb'...and 'kid' as presupposed by various sacrificial laws...Like צֹאן ['flock'], so שֶׂה refers to the sheep and goats that have been collected together into the kind of flock that throughout history has constituted the economic foundation of nomads and semi-nomads in the Near East." (Pp. 46-47) For this matter of sheep being led to slaughter, see:

Psalm 44:12^{Heb} / **11**^{Eng}, where Israel remembers how in earlier times God had given her victory, but now, Israel has become the victim:

(continued...)

וּכְרַחֵל לִפְנֵי גֹזְזֵיהּ נְאֻלְמָה

and like a female sheep⁸¹ before her shearers was silent,

וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיו:

he will not open his mouth.⁸²

⁸⁰(...continued)

You have given / made us like a flock (for) eating;
and among the nations You have scattered us!

Psalm 44:23^{Heb} / **22**^{Eng},

Because upon You / for Your sake we are being killed all the day;
we are considered / counted like a flock (for) slaughter!

John 1:29, where John the Baptist / Immerser is depicted:

On the next day he sees the Jesus coming towards him, and he says:

Look—the Lamb of the God--

the One taking up / taking away the sin of the world!

(We think there can be little doubt that John's depiction of Jesus is based on **Isaiah 53**;
compare **John 1:35**)

1 Peter 2:23,

Who, being abused / reviled, did not return reviling / abuse;
suffering, He was not threatening / warning;
but then was handing Himself over to the One judging rightly;

Revelation 5:6, where the author envisions a heavenly scene:

And I saw in (the) midst of the throne and of the four living creatures,
and in (the) midst of the elders / officials,
a little lamb standing, as having been slain;
having seven horns, and seven eyes,
which are the (seven) spirits of the God,
++ having been sent forth into all the earth.

⁸¹

The noun רַחֵל, **rachel**, means “ewe,” “female sheep.”

⁸²

The exact phrase is repeated twice in **verse 7**, “and he will not open his mouth.”

Compare the description of the servant of YHWH given in **Isaiah 42:2**,

(continued...)

⁸²(...continued)

He will not cry out,
and he will not lift up (his voice),
and he will not cause his voice to be heard in the street.

The humble quietness of the servant, combined with a refusal to cry out against his unjust treatment, or in lamentation, are distinctive marks of the servant of YHWH. Jeremiah was indeed like a lamb led to slaughter, but his writings are filled with lamentations and crying out aloud against what was happening to him. Jesus is depicted in the Garden of Gethsemane as crying out to God in the beginning of his passion—see **Hebrews 5:7-8**,

- 7 Who (Jesus) in the days of His flesh,
having offered both entreaties and supplications
to the One being able to save Him from death,
with loud outcry and tears,
and having been heard from / because of the reverence;
8 although being a Son,
learned from the things He suffered, the obedience.

When Jesus left the Garden of Gethsemane, where He had cried out to God, and was taken by force before the Jewish and Roman leaders who would put Him to death, there He was largely silent. But the **Gospels** depict Him as boldly confessing His identity to the Jewish high priest, and giving a response to the Roman governor Pilate's claim to authority: **Mark 14:60-62; 15:2-5; Matthew 27:11-14; John 18:33-38; 19:8-9; Luke 23:8-11.**

Then, while dying, it is reported that Jesus cried out to God the agonizing words of the sufferer in **Psalms 22:1**, "My God, My God—Why have You forsaken Me?" (**Mark 16:34; Matthew 27:46**)

What do you make of this? Does this mean that Jesus has not embodied the silent lamb-like role of the "suffering servant" who "did not open his mouth"? Does it eliminate Jeremiah? And we ask, Why is it that the Christian commentators on **Isaiah 53**, who claim that it is a literal, exact depiction of Jesus Christ, hardly mention these outcries of Jesus, and His failure to be totally silent before those leading Him to the slaughter?

Motyer comments on **verse 7** that "The servant offered no physical resistance to violence but 'humbled himself' (**7a**); he offered no verbal resistance but *did not open his mouth*. Animals go as uncomprehending to slaughter as to shearing; the servant who knew well, went to death with a calmness reflecting not an ignorant but submitted mind. What for them is the nature of the beast was for him a thought-out, voluntary course...

"The towering theological genius of Isaiah is nowhere more apparent than here. Substitutionary sacrifice lay at the heart of his own experience of God (**6:5-7** [where Isaiah's mouth was touched with a burning coal from the altar; but where there is no mention of any sacrifice made by Isaiah or a priest, no mention of blood, just a burning coal; it is a far stretch to call this 'substitutionary sacrifice']!...

(continued...)

⁸²(...continued)

“Of all people, he knew the efficacy of the altar and the sacrifices God had appointed [but has Motyer forgotten Isaiah’s depiction of YHWH’s total rejection of Israel’s temple worship in **chapter 1?**], yet (though he does not tell us how) somewhere between the profoundly real experience of **6:7** and the vision of the substitutionary role of the servant in **52:13-53:12** the awareness dawned that (as **Hebrews 10:4** puts it) the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.” (P. 432)

But notice that the Christian author of **Hebrews 10:4** denies the explicit statements of **Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22**, with their phrase וְנִסְלַח לָהֶם, “and it was forgiven to them,” claiming that following their animal sacrifices, the sins of those offering the sacrifices were Divinely forgiven. It denies the efficacy of the sacrificed goat on the Day of Atonement / Covering, and the work of the “scapegoat” that carried all of Israel’s guilts / iniquities, transgressions and sins away into the wilderness, as atonement / covering was made for all of Israel’s sins. See **Leviticus 16**.

The author of **Hebrews** (a converted Jewish rabbi in Alexandria, we believe) wants to emphasize the superiority of Jesus as High Priest; but in so doing goes to the extreme of denying what the **Hebrew Bible** clearly affirms!

Motyer goes on to state that “Within the horizons of the **Old Testament** this was daring in the extreme.” (P. 432)

He continues: “Our brothers and sisters in the **Old Testament** church, as we meet them in the **Psalms**, were people in actual enjoyment of the benefits of forgiveness [Yes indeed! Where in all of literature are there any more powerful statements of forgiveness than those of **Psalms 32, 51** and **103**, etc.?], peace with God and spiritual security [see **Psalms 23**, etc.]...

“There is no suggestion that, under the old covenant, they knew that they enjoyed these benefits only on the ground of a perfect sacrifice yet to come [but Motyer fails to mention that **Hebrews 11:39-40** holds that the people of faith of Israel’s history would only be made perfect by the work of Jesus Christ, implying that only after His work could they finally be completely forgiven]...In every essential their position was the same as ours: the Lord attached promises (of forgiveness, peace, acceptance etc.) to the sacrifices and they offered the sacrifices, resting in faith on the promises. It took a man of remarkable insight to see that something greater and better was needed.” (Pp. 432-33)

We are grateful to Motyer for this statement concerning forgiveness through sacrifice in the **Old Testament**, and his equating of the ancient Israelites with modern day Christians—a view which we have never before, to our memory, heard from Christian commentators—but which we insist is true to the teaching of the **Hebrew Bible**. However, we believe that thoughtful worshipers of YHWH believed that it was not the blood of bulls and goats that took away their sins—but YHWH Himself in His grace Who was forgiving them. The sacrifices and the blood were powerfully effective religious signs and symbols, but not magic, just as are Christian baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Those **Old Testament** believers did not worship the

(continued...)

53:8⁸³, ¹⁴ מֵעֶזְרָה וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לְקַח

From / by oppression and from / by justice / legal decision⁸⁴ he was taken,⁸⁵

⁸²(...continued)

animals, or the blood, but YHWH; just as thoughtful Christians do not believe baptismal water or the wine and bread of the communion table saves the sinner; only God's grace, which is symbolized by the death of Jesus Christ on the wooden post, and which are symbolized in Christian baptism and communion.

We believe the truth is that YHWH is free to forgive whomever and whenever and wherever and however He chooses; and that the methods of that forgiveness are many—whether simply pronouncing an individual forgiven without any sacrifices, as in the case of King David in **2 Samuel 11-12**, or through animal sacrifices, as in the Levitical sacrificial system, or through accepting YHWH's challenge to open debate as in **Isaiah 1:18**, or through a suffering servant, as here in **Isaiah 53**.

The Divine forgiveness is real, and cleansing, and imparts new life and hope. But to dogmatically affirm that “through this method, and this method only is forgiveness possible,” is to go far beyond human knowledge, and is nothing less than “putting God in a box,” whether it is a “substitutionary box,” or a “penal payment box.” It is, we think, a foolish thing for us humans to do. That there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ, we gladly affirm. But to go beyond that, and claim that apart from Jesus Christ there can be no Divine forgiveness, is to put God in our “Christian box”—which excludes that forgiveness taught throughout the **Hebrew Bible**. What do you think?

⁸³

Knight comments on **verse 8** that “At this point scholars for centuries have felt it necessary to make countless emendations in the Hebrew text. Indeed, **verses 8-12** are in places quite obscure...The [Greek translation, our **Rahlfs**] varies from the Hebrew in a number of places. The [Aramaic] Targum, containing the Jewish exposition of the chapter emanating from [medieval times]...yet set down in writing only about the seventh century C.E., deliberately takes the essential scandal out of these verses and renders them quite innocuous. It does so in evident reaction against the contemporary Christian interpretation...Even at those points where the Hebrew is obviously not as it was left to us by Deutero-Isaiah, we should make every endeavor to translate the text as it stands.” (P. 174)

See our end-note 14, where the Hebrew Text is compared with English and Greek translations, and where we conclude Knight is correct in stating that these five verses are “in places quite obscure,” that is “unclear,” “uncertain.” And we think it is irresponsible to build dogmatic theories / doctrines on the basis of such uncertain statements.

⁸⁴

North translates this opening phrase of **verse 8** by “After arrest and sentence,” and comments that “The picture is not entirely clear. This is due to the uncertain meaning of עֶזְרָה and the wide variety of meanings (‘away from,’ ‘by reason of,’ ‘without’) of the preposition מִן. (continued...)”

⁸⁴(...continued)

Three translations are possible:

- (1) 'From imprisonment (custody, arrest) and from judgment (judicial sentence)';
- (2) 'By reason of an oppressive sentence (literally 'oppression and sentence)';
- (3) 'Without hindrance and without sentence,' i.e. no one attempted to secure a fair trial for him... (See the next footnote.)

"Everything in the chapter points to his having died a violent death. It is, of course, just possible that he was a leper condemned on a capital charge." (P. 241)

Motyer comments that the Hebrew noun מִשְׁפֹּט "is an extraordinarily versatile word [that] offers four appropriate meanings:

- (1) a person's right (**Deuteronomy 18:3; 21:17**);
- (2) the practice of law or due process (**Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 1:17**);
- (3) legal enactment or sentence (**Exodus 21:1, 31**);
- (4) bringing a lawsuit (**Numbers 27:5**).

"Do we, therefore, say 'from justice' (from the court of law, due trial and sentencing) or 'without justice' (ignoring rights, without a proper trial)? (Pp. 433-34)

Slotki says that here the word מִשְׁפֹּט, **mishpot**, means "justice miscarried." (P. 263)
See the next footnote.

And again we are reminded of the nature of the prophetic message—characterized by puzzling enigmas, including obscure language.

⁸⁵

This first line of **verse 8** is difficult to read in Hebrew. Because of peculiarities of the Hebrew language, it can be read, "He was taken away from coercion and legal sentence," that is, he was delivered out of their reach. But it is much more probable, due to the context in which the line occurs, that the Hebrew "from" means "as a result of. Translations of this line vary:

King James, "He was taken from prison and from judgment";

Tanakh, "By oppressive judgment he was taken away";

New Revised Standard, "By a perversion of justice he was taken away";

New International, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away";

New Jerusalem, "Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken";

Rahlfs, ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἢ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἦρθη, "In the humiliation, the judgment / justice of his was taken away."

(continued...)

וְאֵת־דֹרֹוֹ מִי יִשְׁתַּח

and his generation, who shall talk / sing about?⁸⁶

⁸⁵(...continued)

Motyer comments that “We have either ‘from restraint’ (from having been arrested and imprisoned) or ‘without restraint’ (all ordinary restraints and protections removed).” (P. 433)

Westermann states that “In whatever way [this phrase] is taken, the words speak of violent action by others against the servant within the context of a court of law.” (P. 265)

North translates the last verb in **verse 8**, נִגְזַר, literally, “he was cut off,” by “he was forcibly removed,” and comments that “The implication is that the final tragedy occurred so swiftly that few were aware that it had happened.” (P. 241) But does this verb imply “so swiftly that few were aware that it had happened”? We doubt that it does.

Knight comments that “The Hebrew text behind the first line may mean ‘after arrest and sentencing he was taken away (unjustly)’; yet one essential emphasis comes home from this line, no matter how we translate it. That is the fact that the servant is pictured as suffering unjustly... We are made to see a man dying before our eyes, knowing that no one is caring either for him or what he stands for.” (P. 174)

⁸⁶

This second line of **verse 8** is also difficult, and translations vary greatly:

King James, “and who shall declare his generation?”

Tanakh, “Who could describe his abode?”

New Revised Standard, “Who could have imagined his future?”

New International, “And who can speak of his descendants?”

New Jerusalem, “Which of his contemporaries was concerned”;

Rahfs, τῆν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγήσεται, “the generation of his, who shall declare?”

The noun דֹר usually means “generation,” “period of time,” “descendant(s),” “dwelling,” or even “future age(s).” G. R. Driver suggests “fate.”

The implication of the question is, we think, that no one of his contemporaries even considers the possibility that there is any future awaiting this servant of YHWH. The assumption is that “of course” there can be no historical continuity for this poor sufferer! Any continuity for those surrounding him (his “family” or “contemporaries”), along with any influence on succeeding generations, is totally impossible because of his being cut off by his oppressors! So the world may think—but that is not what YHWH God thinks!

Ortlund, interpreting the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53** as Jesus Christ, thinks that this line means “Those who condemned Jesus did not understand what they were doing.” (P. 1338) See:

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

Luke 23:34a, a saying attributed to Jesus while dying, but not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts:

But then the Jesus was saying,
 Father, forgive them,
for they did not know what they are doing.

Acts 3:14-18, the apostle Peter explains to the people in Solomon's Porch of the Jewish temple how a crippled beggar had been healed:

14 But then you (plural) denied the set-apart one and righteous one,
 and you asked (for) a man, a murderer, to be given to you.

15 But then the founder / leader / prince of life you (plural) killed,
 whom the God raised out of dead people,
 Whose witnesses we are.

16 And upon the faith of his name,
 this one whom you are seeing and you knew,
his name strengthened,
 and the faith which (is) through him,
it gave to him this wholeness,
 before all of you.

17 And now, brothers,
 I knew that you acted according to ignorance,
 just as your leaders also did.

18 But then the God,
 the things He proclaimed before through (the) mouth of all the prophets,
His Christ was to suffer,
 He fulfilled in this way.

(No doubt the apostle Peter had in mind **Isaiah 53** when he said these words concerning the prophets foretelling the Christ's suffering.)

1 Corinthians 2:8, where Paul claims he is imparting a secret, hidden knowledge in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, (quoting **Isaiah 64:4**):

which none of the rulers of this age knew—
 for if they had known,
they would not have nailed the Lord of the glorious radiance to a wooden post!

Wolf / Stek think this second line of **verse 8** means the suffering servant would die without descendants, and comment that "to die without descendants was considered a tragedy." (P. 1095)

Slotki takes the word "generation" to mean the suffering servant's "contemporaries who tolerated or perpetrated the cruelties." (P. 263)

(continued...)

כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

Because / that he was cut off from (the) land of life / living ones,⁸⁷

⁸⁶(...continued)

Westermann states that “We can only say that the exact meaning of אֶרֶץ חַיִּים is uncertain, but that the general sense is perfectly clear—no one was concerned about him.” (P. 265)

Again we note the uncertainties in translation and the ambiguities present in the text—exactly what we should expect in the prophetic message that has come through dream and vision, not through direct, Face-to-face revelation!

⁸⁷

We understand the phrase נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים, “he was cut off from (the) land of (the) living people,” to mean that the suffering servant was put to death, that he died. This certainly seems to be depicting the death of an individual; if it is understood of the death of the “ideal Israel,” or the “remnant” of Israel, it can only be meant in a symbolic way, not of literal “dying.” Israel’s remnant was never “cut off from the land of the living” as a whole.

Slotki comments that the suffering servant’s “existence as a nation [i.e., Israel] was destroyed by the Babylonians.” (P. 263) This is hardly the case, however, as the nation of Israel continued to live, albeit it is captivity / disperson. It never actually “died.”

For this statement concerning the suffering servant’s being “cut off from the land of the living,” compare:

Psalm 88:5-7^{Heb} / **4-6**^{Eng},

- 5/4 I was considered / counted with those going down (to a) pit / cistern;
I was like a (strong) man (with) no help.
- 6/5 With the dead people, free--
like those slain (in battle), lying (in) a grave,
whom You no longer remembered,
and they were cut off from Your hand!
- 7/6 You placed me in a pit / cistern of lowest parts,
in dark places, in depths!
(Truly, **Psalm 88** is a psalm of one suffering, a “suffering servant”?)

Lamentations 3:54,

Water flowed over my head.
I said I am cut off!

Motyer, p. 434, notes that the verb גָּזַר, sometimes means “to decide” (**Esther 2:1**; **Job 22:28**), but much more often is used in a violent sense, for example:

(continued...)

מִפְּשָׁעֵי עַמִּי נִגַּע לָמוֹ:

from / by my people's⁸⁸ transgression⁸⁹ a stroke / plague to them.⁹⁰

⁸⁷(...continued)

1 Kings 3:25-26, of cutting a child in two;

2 Kings 6:4, of felling a tree;

2 Chronicles 26:21, 'cutting off' a leper from the Lord's house;

Psalm 88:5^{Heb} / **6**^{Eng}, separation from the Lord after death of those who die under His displeasure;

Psalm 136:13, dividing the Red Sea;

Isaiah 9:20^{Heb} / **19**^{Eng}, of people "slicing meat" from one another's arms.

Westermann comments that "It was the death of the guiltless, that is to say, it was a violent death not due to guilt incurred by himself, and it was a death which the servant suffered because of the sins of those who now report it." (P. 266)

⁸⁸

Where the Massoretic Hebrew text reads עַמִּי, "my people," 1QIs^a reads עַמּוֹ, "his people." North states that "All the [ancient] versions agree with the Masoretic text ['my people'], but to whom does the pronoun refer? There is no reason to suppose that the Prophet is interjecting a reference to himself. Nor can we assume that Yahweh is now speaking. He is unambiguously the speaker in **verses 11-12**, but in **10** He is twice named in the third person ...A simple solution is to point עַמִּי (construct plural) instead of עַמִּי...The meaning will then be 'for the transgression of peoples who deserved to be stricken.'" (Pp. 230-31)

⁸⁹

In **verses 1-6** the language has been that of a group of people, using the first person plural, "we," and "our" and "us." But here in **verse 8** the language changes to the first person singular, "my / My people." Who is the "I" speaking here? Is it YHWH? Or is it an individual (the author of the text) from among the people of Israel, speaking on behalf of Israel? We cannot answer the question definitely, considering either answer possible, but thinking the last possibility is the best.

As Motyer states, "The possessive pronoun in *my people* indicates that a new speaker has appeared...Reference to 'my people' (**51:4, 16; 52:4-6**) suggest that it is the Lord Who speaks here. However, as in **45:8** and **51:9**, it could equally be Isaiah associating himself with his people as in **6:5**." (P. 435)

⁹⁰

The phrase at the end of **verse 8** is נִגַּע לָמוֹ, which may mean "a plague is his / theirs," or perhaps "a stroke to him / them." The **Gesenius-Kautsch-Cowley Hebrew Grammar**, 103f, footnote 3, holds that while the pronominal suffix לָמוֹ is most often used for the plural "them," it still sometimes is used for the singular "him." We think it has the singular
(continued...)

⁹⁰(...continued)

meaning here, in **Isaiah 53:8**, but this grammar thinks the text should be changed to read with the Greek, ἤχθη εἰς θάνατον, “he was led to death.”

The root נגַע, **naga**(, in the form of a pual participle, נִגְעָה, **nagua**(, “plagued,” has already occurred in **verse 4**. While we may not be able to certainly identify who it is that is speaking, what the voice says is obvious. It is Israel, the people of YHWH, who have put the suffering servant to death. As Slotki comments, “The suffering that should have been inflicted upon the wicked members of the community was borne by the innocent servant [that is, in Slotki’s view, the ‘righteous remnant’].” (P. 263)

⁹¹

Ortlund comments on **verse 9** that “The numerous parallels between the description of the servant in this verse and the death of Jesus have led Christians through the ages to see this as fulfilled by the events surrounding Jesus’ death. Although the servant was condemned as a criminal (‘with the wicked’), he was buried in an expensive garden tomb belonging to a rich man. Likewise the servant is presented as someone who was completely innocent, both in deed (having *done no violence*) and in word (*there was no deceit in his mouth*). The servant is thus described as a person of total moral purity, the true substitute for sinners (compare **verse 7**). See **Matthew 27:57-60** for the fulfillment of this prophecy.” (P. 1339)

- 57 But then evening having come,
 a rich / wealthy person from Arimathea came,
 by the name Joseph,
 who also himself was taught by the Jesus.
- 58 This one, having come to the Pilate,
 requested the body of the Jesus.
 Then the Pilate commanded (it) to be given.
- 59 And having taken the body,
 the Joseph wrapped it (in) a clean linen cloth.
- 60 And he placed it in the new tomb of his,
 which he hewed in the rock.
 And having rolled a great stone to / in the door of the tomb,
 he departed.

(Parallels are found in **Mark 15:42-47** [110 words in Greek]; **Luke 23:50-56** [99 words in Greek]; **John 19:38-42** [110 words in Greek] whereas **Matthew 27:57-61** has only 77 words. Where **Matthew** has Joseph “was taught by Jesus,” **John** similarly has Joseph “was being a disciple of the Jesus, but hiddenly, through fear of the Jews.” Both **Mark** and **Luke** have instead, Joseph “was awaiting the Kingdom of the God.”)

Wolf / Stek comment on **verse 9** that “The manner of [the suffering servant’s] death would indicate that, as far as those who condemned him were concerned, he was to be buried with executed criminals [but where is anything said about ‘executed criminals in this text?

(continued...)

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קְבֹרוֹ

And he / He placed⁹² with wicked people⁹³ his grave,⁹⁴

וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמוֹתָיו

and with a wealthy person in his deaths—⁹⁵, ¹⁵

⁹¹(...continued)

They have taken this from the **New Testament's** description of Jesus' death]...[It is] not as a burial with honor." (P. 1095)

Alexander states that "Malefactors were either left unburied, or disgraced by a promiscuous interment in an unclean place; a usage explicitly asserted by Josephus and Maimonides. As the Messiah was left to die like a criminal, he might have expected to be buried like one." (P. 302)

This is a good comment on the burial of Jesus Christ, but the suffering servant is not identified as the Messiah in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, and neither Josephus or especially Maimonides are authorities on burial customs in the time of the Isaianic text.

North comments that "It was usual for a man to be buried 'with his fathers,' and to be denied such a burial was a calamity." (P. 241)

⁹²

Where the Massoretic Hebrew text reads וַיִּתֵּן, "and He / he assigned (or 'gave')," 1QIs^a reads וַיִּתְּנוּ, "and they assigned (or 'gave'); D. Winton Thomas thinks that the text should be repointed to read וַיִּתֵּן, **wayyuttan**, "and it was assigned (or 'given')." **Rahfs** has "and I [the Lord?] will give..." Slotki notes that "the subject [is] indefinite." (P. 263)

⁹³

Slotki says the phrase "with the wicked" means that "On account of his sufferings he was deemed to be a sinner and, therefore, classed with them. Consequently it was thought that he would share their fate and find his grave in the Babylonian exile; but his destiny was to survive (**verses 10-12**)." (P. 263)

⁹⁴

Slotki comments that the phrase "his grave" is "a metaphorical allusion to the exile." (P. 263) This is because Slotki views the suffering servant as "Israel's remnant." But the text itself says nothing about the Babylonian exile.

⁹⁵

The Masoretic Hebrew text reads בְּמוֹתָיו, "in his deaths," perhaps meaning that there was more than one suffering servant that was put to death. Or can the plural be suggestive of the intensity of his suffering, i.e., "he died a thousand deaths"? Or, because the Hebrew word
(continued...)

⁹⁵(...continued)

for life is plural, חַיִּים, the author has made the word for death also into a plural? 1QIs^a reads בְּרִמְתוֹ, “his high places,” which makes little sense (North calls it “unintelligible,” p. 231), unless we are to think in terms of the death of the servant being in reality his “highest achievement.”

Knight mentions that “Some interpret his grave as ‘his burial mound,’ or as ‘his house of death.’ In the Akkadian language of Deutero-Isaiah’s day, the phrase ‘to ascend one’s mountain’ had become a euphemism for the verb ‘to die,’ the thing that all men wish to avoid; the same idiom appears as well in the Ras Shamra [Ugarit] texts of the western coast of Syria.” (P. 175) The Greek translation has “for (or, ‘because of,’ or ‘in exchange for’) the death of his.”

Knight states that “curiously enough the word *death* here is in the plural. It may be so used to emphasize the horrible nature of his end—but that is only hypothetical. On the other hand, if we continue to recognize that the basis of the thought of this chapter is the existential experience of Israel, then the plural word ‘deaths’ might be understood to refer to the individuals who comprise the corporate body of the people of God. This is a likelier interpretation, since Deutero-Isaiah’s mentor, the song of Moses [**Deuteronomy 32**], also makes use of this oscillation between the singular and the plural with reference to Israel (compare **Deuteronomy 32:6, 21**); and as we have already seen, this is a feature of Deutero-Isaiah’s own thought (**51:1-3**). In this way Israel is accepted as both a corporate entity and a collection of separate persons at one and the same time.” (P. 175)

The implication of the parallel between “wicked people” and “wealthy person” may be that the “wealthy person” is an idolater, one who makes riches his “God.” Slotki thinks that “It may perhaps refer to the wealthy Judeans in Babylon who had abandoned their religion.” (P. 263) But North states that “עֲשִׂיר, ‘rich,’ is not a natural parallel to ‘wicked.’ [However,] Nyberg insists that the words are synonyms and quotes the prophets’ denunciations of the rich. It may be so, but the ungodly rich were buried sumptuously enough.” (P. 231)

The further implication of the location of the servant’s burial is that he is cast off in death, considered a common criminal to be buried without any semblance of honor, far from the “orthodox, pure believers,” and far from his own family burial place (compare **1 Kings 13:22**, where the man of God from Judah is told his body will not come to the grave of his fathers because of his disobedience).

Westermann comments that “Shame was part and parcel of the servant’s suffering. Shame also attaches to his death. He was buried with malefactors and miscreants [criminals, wrongdoers—is this what ‘wealthy’ means for Westermann?]. This is the verse that makes two things clear. First, the report has an individual, one single man, in view. And at the same time it shows perfectly plainly that the one about whom the report is made had actually died and been buried—that is to say, from the narrator’s point of view, the servant’s death is a thing of the past. And since his burial involved a further act of contempt and putting to shame, this puts it beyond doubt that, right up to the last moment, up to the grave itself, the servant’s life

(continued...)

⁹⁵(...continued)

gave absolutely no indication at all of the supremely positive significance which was later attached to it.” (P. 266)

Wolf / Stek comment that “The parallelism [between wicked people and wealthy person]...makes clear that Isaiah here associates the rich with the wicked, as do many **Old Testament** writers—because they acquired their wealth by wicked means and / or trusted in their wealth rather than in God...According to the **Gospels (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42)** the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea gave Jesus an honorable burial by placing his body in his own tomb. But this was undoubtedly an act of love growing out of his awareness that he had been forgiven much (see **Luke 7:47** [which, however, has nothing to do with Joseph of Arimathea, but rather with a sinful woman who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment]). Thus the fulfillment fitted but also transcended the prophecy.” (P. 1095)

Motyer struggles with this, stating that “The verse begins (literally) ‘One assigned his grave / his grave was assigned with wicked ones and with a rich one in his deaths.’ Thus two intriguing problems arise: why change from plural (‘wicked ones’) to singular (‘rich one’) and why the plural ‘deaths’?...”

“He [Isaiah] seems to be saying that in the burial of the servant, wicked people and a rich man were somehow involved [Motyer explains the plural ‘deaths’ as simply a peculiarity of Hebrew, where many times a plural noun is meant as a singular, for example, with ‘bloods’ and ‘lives,’ and here signifying emphasis, i.e., a ‘violent death’]...”

“In summary: since the servant was condemned as a criminal, the natural expectation was that he would be brought to a criminal’s grave, but, on the contrary, following a superb / real / violent death he was found ‘with a rich man.’” (Pp. 435-46)

These Christian commentators are certain that **Isaiah 53** is a prophetic, literal description of Jesus Christ some six or seven centuries in the future, and so attempt to justify all of its details to fit the burial of Jesus—when in fact while fitting partially, they do not exactly fit, and these commentators are led to feel justified in changing the translation in the light of the **New Testament** story.

There is nothing in the **New Testament** to indicate that Joseph of Arimathea was a sinful person who had been forgiven much. Of course, he could have been, but that is only speculation, since there is no report of such a thing. We think that Jesus Christ truly fulfills the picture painted here in **Isaiah 53** of a “suffering servant” who is put to death on account of the sins / guilts / crimes of Israel—but not in terms of an exact fulfillment of every detail.

Knight comments that “In ancient times...it could be taken for granted that if a man unaccountably grew rich, then he must be wicked, that is to say he had gained his wealth by bribery and corruption. Such an idea may be suggested here in that the Hebrew word for ‘rich’ is merely ‘wicked’ written backwards.” (P. 175) This is true, if the ^ו *yodh* in the adjective “rich” is not considered.

(continued...)

⁹⁵(...continued)

עֲשִׂיר = “rich.” עֲשֵׂר, “be or become rich.”

רָשָׁע = “wicked.”

Perhaps...but this is only speculation.

Westermann holds that “**Verses 7-9** correspond to ‘suffered, died and buried.’ The use of these four verbs [we find more than four: treated harshly, brought to slaughter, be silent, not open mouth, taken away, cut off, did no violence] to describe a human life results in a structure corresponding to that of the (Christian) Creed, and this itself makes it perfectly certain that the servant song thinks of the servant as an individual.” (P. 264; compare p. 257)

Oswalt comments that “He whom **verse 11** calls the quintessential Righteous One is to be buried among the wicked rich. He is not even allowed to be buried among persons whose choices in life might approximate his own, persons who have chosen the good of others over their own comfort, gain, and power. This is the final insult in a life full of insults.” (P. 397)

Wolf / Stek note that the apostle Peter “quotes these lines as he encourages believers to endure unjust suffering.” (P. 1095) That is quite true. And it is to be observed that **1 Peter 2:13-25**, a section dealing with “submission to authority,” understands the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53** as a guide to Christian ethics: see **1 Peter 2:13-25**, as quoted in our end-note 11.

1 Peter is calling on Christian servants / slaves to willingly become “suffering servants / slaves” themselves! That is, Peter is not expounding **Isaiah 53** in a Christological, doctrinal manner, trying to prove that Jesus is indeed the “suffering servant predicted by prophecy,” but rather is using Jesus, the suffering servant as an ethical example for Christians to follow in their relationship to the government at all levels, and especially as an example for the lowest class people in first-century society—the household servants / slaves, whom Peter thinks have been called by God to “suffering service”!

And we ask, How do lowly household servants and slaves “bear the sins” of others? Is this Peter’s way of calling upon Christians to “take up their cross, and follow Jesus”? And in what way are they “bearing the sins of others”?

What do you think? Do you see any relationship between this teaching in **1 Peter** and the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. concerning “non-violent resistance”?

Knight states that “Whatever the individual words mean, however, the main idea of the phrase is apparent. The servant now *accepts violence*—and this word pictures rude excess and vicious spleen [bad temper, spite]—so that he is brought down both to death and then to burial... Ezekiel...too regarded the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of Israel into exile as the death and burial of the people of God (**Ezekiel 37:11-12**).” (Pp. 175-76)

(continued...)

עַל לֹא-חַמְסַ עֲשָׂה

upon / on account of⁹⁶ he did no violence / wrong,⁹⁷ ¹⁶

וְלֹא מִרְמָה בְּפִיו:

and no deceit / treachery (was) in his mouth.⁹⁸

53:10⁹⁹

⁹⁵(...continued)

Yes...but there is a great difference, we think, between Jerusalem's / Israel's going into exile, a symbolical death, as a punishment for their sins, and the death of the servant here in **Isaiah 53**, who is depicted as innocent of any sin, but taking upon himself the punishment that Israel deserved. What do you think?

⁹⁶

This is a somewhat unusual use of the preposition עַל, "upon," which would normally indicate the reason for which, i.e., "because." If the normal meaning is understood here, the statement means that it was precisely the fact of his innocence that led to his being treated as a common criminal. See **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, pp. 752-59, for the numerous different meanings this preposition can have, including: "upon," "on the ground of," "according to," "on account of," "on behalf of," "concerning," "beside," "in addition to," "together with," "beyond," "above," "over," "by," "on to," "towards," "to," and "against." At III.c. (p. 758) they give the definition "although" for this passage. These various possible meanings of the Hebrew preposition make dogmatic certainty concerning the meaning of many passages impossible, and the interpreter must reckon with a variety of possible meanings for such a preposition. See **Job 16:17**, with Driver's comment. And add to this the fact that in the later Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible, prepositions are used interchangeably, making it very difficult to determine what the author means by them.

⁹⁷

The noun חַמְסַ means "violence," "wrong"—including physical violence, along with injurious language, harsh treatment, and in general, the rude wickedness of noisy, wild, ruthless people. For occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 16.

⁹⁸

Motyer comments on these last two lines of **verse 9** that "Together *violence* and *deceit* embrace the total guiltlessness of the servant; in neither outward behavior nor inner person, in neither deed nor word, could a charge be justly leveled." (P. 437)

⁹⁹

Slotki comments on **verses 10-12** that "The servant's patiently borne suffering for other people's sins will culminate in the spiritual uplift of many and in his own physical or spiritual rejuvenation. He will enjoy a glorious future, offspring, long life, prosperity and influence." (P. 264)

(continued...)

⁹⁹(...continued)

North entitles these verses “His Resurrection and Reward.” He comments that “There is much that is perplexing in this final paragraph [Yes! This is the nature of the prophetic message, as indicated in **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:8-12!**] It is clear that the servant is to live again and be fully rehabilitated and rewarded...The Song was composed before the doctrine of resurrection from the dead became general. Consequently, some features in the description read like anti-climax, notwithstanding that the speaker in the last two verses is Yahweh. The situation is similar to that in **Job 42:7-17**, where also Yahweh is the final Disposer...The servant is to see his children enjoying long life; he is to see light and to have fullness of ‘knowledge.’ Having been himself ‘righteous’ he is to bring ‘righteousness’ to many, the many being awarded to him as ‘spoils.’” (P. 242)

Oswalt comments on these verses that “Above all, the question has been, What is the meaning of this innocent man’s submissive suffering in the place of sinners? Why is he doing it, and how can he do it? Is it all an accident of history? To these questions and others this stanza give the answers. Above everything else it makes it clear that this person’s tragic story was not an accident of history, a good person in the wrong time and in the wrong place...This suffering was not one aspect of this person’s ministry. His purpose in living and dying was that through him (not through his message) persons might have their sins atoned for and come to know the righteousness of God...As a result of this, this twisted, forgotten, broken man will one day wear the victor’s wreath, and all the other victors will throw theirs down at his feet.” (P. 400)

But we ask, where in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** is the “ministry” of the suffering servant mentioned? Where is anything said concerning “the victor’s wreath,” or especially, anything said about the other victors throwing their crowns at his feet? This is simply Oswalt’s reading his Christian theology into this ancient Jewish text, which says nothing of these things, but in fact says the opposite of the other victors throwing their crowns at his feet—the text states that he shares the spoils of battle with others.

Ortlund comments on these verses that “The servant was crushed but victorious,” and he comments on **verse 10** that “A Divine purpose underlay the human oppression of the servant.” (P. 1339)

The **New Testament** emphasizes that Jesus Christ, who saw himself depicted in the imagery of this passage as “suffering servant,” was fulfilling a Divine purpose:

Luke 24:26, where Jesus is depicted as asking the two men He accompanied on the way to Emmaus:

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things,
and to enter into His glorious radiance?

Acts 2:23, where Peter says to all the Jews gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost:

(continued...)

וַיִּהְיֶה חֶפְזָא דְכַּאֵל

And / but¹⁰⁰ YHWH took delight¹⁰¹ to crush him,¹⁰², ¹⁷

⁹⁹(...continued)

This one [Jesus] by the determined will and foreknowledge of the God,
given up through (the) hand of lawless people,
having fastened (to a wooden post), you (plural) killed.

Acts 4:27-28, the believers in Jesus Christ pray, saying,

- 27 For they gathered in truth in this city,
upon / against the set-apart child / servant,
Jesus, Whom You anointed,
both Herod and Pontius Pilate,
together with non-Jews and people of Israel,
28 to do whatever Your hand,
and Your will,
determined before to happen.

¹⁰⁰

Oswalt states that **verse 10** “opens with a disjunctive *waw* that expresses a contrast with the previous verses.” (P. 400) This is a technical matter in Hebrew grammar, where the same conjunction *waw* which normally “coordinates” similar ideas, “and,” is used to “juxtapose” contrasting ideas, “but” or “yet.” We agree with Oswalt, that here the *waw* is disjunctive, juxtaposing related but contrasting ideas.

Oswalt continues, asking “How could these tragic miscarriages of justice have happened? Perhaps the Preacher [that is, Qoheleth, the female author of **Ecclesiastes**] would have said, ‘It is just part of the meaninglessness of this life under the sun’ (**Ecclesiastes 4:1-3**, etc.). But Isaiah says, ‘Not at all! God wanted this to happen! It is no accident—it is His will!’ ...

“But in some ways that is the worst answer of all. God wanted to crush (compare **verse 5**) this man? God wanted to visit terrible pain (compare **verse 4**) on him? Surely not. The faithful God of the **Bible** would certainly not visit bad things on innocent people, would He? Yes, He would if some greater good would be served (compare **Job** [where Job’s terrifying sufferings are a matter of YHWH’s testing Job’s character]). Is it possible there is some greater good that all the terrible things the servant has endured will procure? What could possibly be worth all that? It would certainly have to be something of monumental proportions.

“As it happens, what God wants to come out of the servant’s suffering is of monumental proportions. He wants human beings to be able to offer this man up on the altar of their sins so that he can be ‘a full and sufficient sacrifice’ (**Book of Common Prayer**, Ritual for Communion) for them, satisfying all the unpaid debts of their behavior, debts they could never hope to pay, but debts that if left unpaid would stand forever between them and a just God...

(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

Let this be done and God's purpose in the servant's life is fulfilled. But let it not be done, and all the suffering of **verses 1-10** is fruitless." (Pp. 400-401)

But where in the text is anything said about "the altar of their sins," or "the satisfaction of unpaid debts"? Where does the text say that Israel or humanity owes debts to God that could never hope to be paid? The text says nothing of these things—but they are derived as Oswalt admits from the Anglican **Book of Common Prayer**, which is deeply dependent on the Roman Catholic Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose "satisfaction theory of the atonement" contained in his **Cur Deus Homo** has had deep influence not only on Roman Catholicism, but also on the Anglican Church and on many Protestant Denominations, as this theory was adopted and adapted in subsequent centuries following the Reformation.

And we note that over against this view of human sinfulness being a debt that humanity could never pay, stands the opening announcement of **Isaiah 40:1-2** that Israel has been forgiven, and that she has paid "double" for all her sins. What do you think?

101

The verb **יִצְחַק**, **chaphets** means "He delighted in," "He had pleasure in," that is, in crushing His servant. It sounds like a terrible thing to say of YHWH, that he was delighted or took pleasure in crushing His servant—but that is exactly what this text says, and we are reminded of the depiction of YHWH's testing Job through agonizing suffering.

Motyer comments, we think rightly so, that "the heart of God is revealed in His delight, even at such a cost, in finding and providing a guilt offering." (P. 438) And we say, as we write these notes in the Christmas season, this is no "Santa Claus" God, Who always comes bearing nice gifts for His people, Who is never a fearsome threat to His people. Rather, this is a God to be feared, to stand in awe of, to tremble before—a God Who tests His servants to the maximum, oftentimes to the point of crushing them to death, as in the case of this "suffering servant" in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**—or in Jesus Christ, as he embodied to the maximum this depiction of the suffering servant—all in order to fulfill the Divine purposes for Israel and humanity.

Do you—can you—believe in such a God as this—the God Who created and is creating the universes of black holes and "big bangs," the God of exploding stars, the God Who created the jungles with their deadly snakes and ravenous wild animals living by the law of "survival of the fittest / most adaptable," the God of human history with all its wicked, murderous dictators, with all its wars and genocides and plagues and earthquakes and tsunamis and hurricanes and tornadoes, Whose service is infinitely costly and demanding, with its symbol a dying suffering servant nailed in excruciating pain to a wooden post—but Who is nonetheless the God Who loves us, Who comes to meet our needs in the beautiful, fascinating Christmas story? Can you imagine such a God, so different from the God you were taught to believe in in Sunday School? But this is in fact the biblical God, the true and only God, before Whom we tremble in fear and amazement, but at the same time, to Whom we come in worship and love, and Who is working out eternal purposes for good through His suffering servant(s) for all humanity.

(continued...)

הַחֲלִי

He made (him) sick.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹(...continued)

As we expected from Westermann, having carefully followed his teaching in his commentaries on the **Book of Genesis** and the **Psalms**, he rejects this statement in **verse 10a** as “corrupt,” and changes it to read “but Yahweh took pleasure in His humiliated one.” He comments that “Two things are said here: first, that in spite of all appearance Yahweh had all along been ranged on the suffering servant’s side; and secondly, that after the latter’s death He gave His turning towards him practical effect—He intervened on his behalf. He revived him...or healed him.” (Pp. 266-67)

But this is to radically change what the text clearly states—that YHWH took delight in crushing the suffering servant, that it was YHWH Himself Who made his servant’s innermost-being / life a “guilt / iniquity offering.” We think commentators should translate and comment on what the text says, not change the text to their liking, and then comment on what they think the text should have said. When we take the liberty to change the text to our liking, the text loses its authority, and we can no longer be taught by it. That is true of any text—how much more so of the biblical text!

102

The piel infinitive verb **דָּכָאוּ** means “to crush him.” The piel verb is always used symbolically in its many occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**, never literally. See our end-note 8.

103

Where the Massoretic Hebrew text reads **הַחֲלִי**, “he caused sickness,” 1QIs^a reads **וַיַּחֲלֵהוּ**, “and he profaned him.” Translations of the first two lines vary:

King James, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief”;

Tanakh, “But the LORD chose to crush him by disease”;

New Revised Standard, “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain”;

New International, “Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer”;

New Jerusalem, “It was Yahweh’s good pleasure to crush him with pain”...

Rahlfs, καὶ κύριος βούλεται καθαρῖσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς, “And (the) Lord is pleased to cleanse him from the plague / stroke” [quite different from, in fact, just the opposite of the Hebrew text.]

Westermann, “Yet Yahweh took pleasure in him [who was crushed].” [We think this translation is a desperate attempt to avoid what the original text says contrary to Westermann’s theology, which is much more in accord with the Greek translation. We insist that there is no end to the changes that can be made to an ancient text if the translator is allowed to make changes like this!]

According to the Hebrew text, the “sickness” mentioned in **verses 3** and **4** has not “just happened” to the servant of YHWH. Instead, YHWH Himself has made the servant sick! He
(continued...)

¹⁰³(...continued)

is responsible for His servant's crushing / bruising sickness and suffering!

North points out that "the nouns in this passage ('sorrows,' 'sicknesses,' 'wounds'), likewise the participles ('stricken,' 'smitten,' 'afflicted') are more or less synonyms. Together they give a picture of a man subjected to every conceivable pain and indignity [and all of that pain and indignity put on him by YHWH!]. Yet, North continues, "although we speak of 'The suffering servant,'" this word 'suffering' is not used..." (P. 242)

The precise word may not be used, but as an overall description for what the passage is describing, it is certainly appropriate! YHWH causes His servant to suffer!

Do you believe in such a God as this, who deliberately (and with pleasure) crushes His servant, Who makes His servant sick? Is not the God of the **Bible** the great "Healer"? Compare the same problem that is met in **Isaiah 45:7**, where YHWH describes himself as the One

forming light and creating darkness,
making peace and creating evil—
I, YHWH, the One doing all these things!

It is a shocking, terrifying thing to say about YHWH—but in fact, if YHWH and His righteous purpose for long-time good are involved even in the creation of evil, and the sending of sickness and suffering, we can believe that out of the evil, and out of the sickness and suffering, YHWH's testing of His people, and His eternal purpose for good will emerge victorious. What do you think?

Do such biblical statements upset your "Santa Claus" view of God as the jolly, gentle Father, always giving gifts to His people, hearing their every prayer, never allowing them to suffer, never allowing them to have sleepless night after night, and day after day on beds of pain?

We repeat ourself—If that is the case, then renew your view of God and of reality! The God of the **Bible** is the God Who created the jungle, with its law of survival of the fittest, where fierce lions slaughter innocent lambs to feed to their cubs; He is the God of the earthquake, tornado, tsunami and thunderstorm, all of which take human life in great numbers with no apology. He is the God of the universes, of the "black hole" and "big bang," of the exploding stars; the God of the hippopotamus and the crocodile. He is the God Who sometimes confronts His people like a great Bear, tearing them apart with plagues and disasters, with cancer and ebola and AIDS; He is the God of the **Book of Job**, Who puts His innocent, righteous servant through agonizing suffering and loss (see our end-note 13); He is the God Who oftentimes seems to be indifferent to His people's agonizing pleas. He is the God of Jesus Christ, Who sent His beloved Son to confront the hard-hearted Jewish and Roman officials, allowing them to put Him to death by crucifixion—but Who is nonetheless the God of love, with long-range, eternal purposes of good for His people through just such suffering and rigorous testing of His servants.

(continued...)

אִם-תִּשִׂים אֶשְׂמֹךְ נִפְשׁוֹ

If / when¹⁰⁴ You will place / make¹⁰⁵ his innermost-being / life a guilt-offering,¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³(...continued)

Is this the kind of God you were taught about in Sunday School? Can you believe in such a God as this, Who is pleased to crush His servant, to make him sick? Can you trust such a God?

No wonder that Westermann joins with the Greek translator in “turning the meaning on its head” (Watts, p. 226), making it mean something nice, something polite, “He is pleased to cleanse him from the plague / stroke.” Is that what you do with such statements in the **Bible**? Do you want to get rid of all the biblical depictions of terrifying judgment coming on disobedient people, especially depictions such as these in **Isaiah 53**, where the judgment of destruction comes on His righteous servant? Do you want to change everything that doesn't fit your image of God?

104

The hypothetical particle **אִם**, normally means “if”; but apparently it is used in the much rarer sense here, “when.” See **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, p. 50 (1, b, 4).

105

The qal imperfect, 2nd person singular verb **תִּשִׂים** can mean “You will put,” or “You will place,” or “You will set.” We have observed how the description of the servant of YHWH is largely given in the perfect or “past” tense, as if the servant was an actual person in the time of Isaiah, whose history could be told by the author. But here the description is given in the imperfect or “future” tense, implying that the dramatic events surrounding the life of the servant have not yet occurred. What do you make of this changing of tense from past to future? Is the text describing something that has already happened in the past, and that will also happen in the future?

106

The noun **אֶשְׂמֹךְ** means either “offence” or “guilt.” But a meaning derived from this original meaning is that of “trespass / guilt offering,” an offering that was given in compensation for offenses against God or human beings.

Knight holds that “Death therefore meant for Deutero-Isaiah life that had been poured out in death. Now, since this concept arose from within the cult [Israel's sacrificial worship], Deutero-Isaiah saw it as the symbol of sacrificial death...It is a guilt offering...[that] the Lord accepts as a substitute for the individual person presenting it...This offerer, as sinner, ought to die, for he has been adjudged as having committed a breach of faith (**Leviticus 5:15**)...Yet, paradoxically, by grace once again, God accepts the ram [the guilt offering] in the place of the [sinners] who have sacrificed it.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁶(...continued)

“But here at **53:10** a new element appears, one not to be found in the Law of Moses. Here the offering of the [guilt-offering] is not for the salvation of the offerer: what we find instead is that God is making this innocent and obedient servant into the [guilt-offering] himself, so that it is the [obedient servant], as the ram without blemish, who pours out his own blood, or life, even unto death.” (Pp. 176-77) Yes, and it is not for minor, inadvertent mistakes in worship, but rather for transgressions, sins, true “guilts.”

Ortlund comments that “The servant’s sacrificial death compensated for human sin by setting sinners free from their guilt before God.” (P. 1339) See:

Leviticus 5:15-16,

- 15 A person who shall faithlessly commit treachery
and sin inadvertently from YHWH’s set-apart things;
and he shall bring his guilt-offering to the YHWH,
a completely healthy ram from the flock
with its estimate in silver sheqels,
in the sheqel of the set-apart (place),
for a guilt-offering.
- 16 And that in which he sinned from the set-apart things he shall restore,
and he shall add one-fifth to it;
and he shall give it to the priest;
and the priest shall cover over on his behalf,
with the ram of the guilt-offering;
and it will be forgiven to him.

Leviticus 5:20-26^{Heb} / 6:1-7^{Eng}

- 20/1 And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying:
21/2 An innermost-being / person who sins, and acts faithlessly--
a faithless act against the YHWH;
and he lies / deceives against his neighbor in a deposit,
or in a pledge (with) a hand(shake),
or in theft / robbery,
or he oppressed his neighbor;
22/3 or he found (something) lost
and he lies / deceives concerning it;
and he swears upon a falsehood--
concerning one from everything which a human may do,
to the sin against them.
23/4 And it will happen when / if he sins and is guilty--
and he shall return that which he stole,
or that which he (got by) oppression / extortion,
or the deposit which was entrusted to him,
or that which was lost, which he found;

(continued...)

יִרְאֶה זֶרַע

he will see seed / descendant(s) / offspring,¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶(...continued)

- 24/5 or from everything which he swore falsely concerning it;
and he shall restore it in full (literally “with its head”)
and a fifth he shall add to it;
to whomever it belongs, he shall give / pay it,
on (the) day of his guilt-offering.
- 25/6 And his guilt-offering he shall bring to the YHWH,
a ram without blemish / perfect from the flock,
with your estimate / or its equivalent (?) for a guilt-offering
to the priest.
- 26/7 And the priest shall cover over / atone for him before YHWH,
and it will be forgiven to him,
concerning one from everything which he shall make a guilt-offering for.
(See commentaries on **Leviticus** for understanding this text!)

Ortlund adds that “The **Septuagint** [Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible**, plus other writings with Greek originals, forming the ‘Apocrypha’] translates ‘offering for guilt’ as ‘offering for sin,’ which explains why Paul could say that Christ’s death ‘for our sins’ was ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ (**1 Corinthians 15:3**).” (*Ibid.*)

We think that Paul, believing with other Christians that Jesus was the fulfillment of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**’s “suffering servant,” could make that claim whatever the technical words for offering were.

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that “The Messianic servant offers himself as an **אֲשַׁמַּן** in compensation for the sins of the people, interposing for them as their substitute.” (P. 80)

But that is not exactly what the text says. Rather, it states that YHWH makes the servant, with no mention of the Messiah, into such an offering! The offering is not only something which the servant offers up to YHWH on behalf of the people; it is at the same time something which YHWH Himself offers for the goings- astray of His people.

North holds that the right sense is given by the marginal readings in some English versions, “when his soul (i.e. he) shall make an offering.” (P. 232)

¹⁰⁷

Slotki comments that the phrase **יִרְאֶה זֶרַע**, is “he will see seed,” i.e., “have children and grand-children.” (P. 264) In fact, the noun **זֶרַע** “seed” occurs numerous times in the **Hebrew Bible**, always in the sense of physical descendants. This is the only occurrence of the phrase “see seed” in the **Hebrew Bible**.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁷(...continued)

North translates by “he shall see his children enjoying long life,” which he states is literally “he shall see seed (which...) shall lengthen days.” He adds that “An equally valid translation is ‘he shall see (his) children, he shall live many days’...

“What is meant by ‘seed’? If the servant is Israel it must mean future generations of Israelites. But if the servant is an individual, does it mean that the servant will, after his restoration, beget children, as Job did (**Job 42:13-17**)? Or are we to think of ‘spiritual children,’ as Timothy and Onesimus were ‘children’ of Paul (**1 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 10**)?” (P. 243)

Alexander states that this is a promise of numerous offspring, “which of course, [is] applicable only in a figurative spiritual sense.” (P. 304) We understand why Alexander says this, with his assumption that the servant is Jesus Christ. But without this assumption, the statement can easily be taken in a physical sense.

Ortlund says that this means “Those who strayed like sheep (**Isaiah 53:6**) return as children.” (P. 1339) That is, Ortlund, along with many others, takes the phrase **יִרְאֶה זֶרַע**, “he will see seed / descendant(s)” to mean “spiritual descendants,” and this is what those who believe that **Isaiah 53** is describing Jesus Christ are forced to conclude, since Jesus as depicted in the canonical **Gospels** had neither wife nor children, that is, physical descendants—but Jesus has had millions upon millions of spiritual descendants throughout planet earth in the last two millennia.

Motyer, like Ortlund, states that “Those who become the servant’s beneficiaries through the reparation-offering become his children (his offspring / ‘seed’)...We stray as sheep (**verse 6**), we return as children.” (P. 440) Oswalt holds that *seed* (and *length of days*) “may be only metaphorical here...Far from being cursed by God, this man will be the means of the Lord’s promises of reconciliation coming true.” (P. 403)

We think this idea of sheep returning as children is an invention by Christian interpreters, in order to make the depiction of the suffering servant fit Jesus Christ. Christian interpreters oftentimes hold that Isaiah’s depiction of the suffering servant (oftentimes capitalizing, Suffering Servant), is a marvelously exact depiction of the suffering, death, and burial of Jesus Christ...except for here, where the text must be understood as metaphorical or figurative. What do you think?

Knight comments that “The purposes of God cannot be checkmated by death, especially when God foreordains that death. For when a seed falls into the ground and dies, that is not the end. He shall see his offspring, or as the Hebrew has it, his seed, in days to come.” (P. 177)

יִאֲרֶיךָ יָמִים

he will prolong days,¹⁰⁸

108

In the second line of **verse 8** the implication of the question asked is that there simply could be no future, no continuity for this suffering, rejected servant of YHWH. But now, in this fourth line of **verse 10**, it is affirmed that the servant of YHWH will indeed have a future! In spite of his death (see **verses 7-9**, “he was cut off from the land of the living”), “he will prolong his days.” That is, for this servant of YHWH, the age-old enemy of humanity, death, has somehow been conquered. The text does not speak of “resurrection” from the dead, but certainly speaks of “life beyond death.” Where our Hebrew text has:

he will see seed / descendant(s),
he will prolong days

the Greek translation has:

the innermost being of yours (plural!) will see long-lived seed / descendant(s)

That is, the Greek translator understood the promise as being that of long-lived descendants, which the Israelites would see in the future.

Ortlund comments that “Death is not the servant’s end; he will receive everlasting life. Although resurrection is not explicit here, it is the natural inference (hence **1 Corinthians 15:4** can speak of the resurrection as being ‘in accordance with the Scriptures.’” (P. 1339) Like Ortlund, Wolf / Stek comment that “Christ would live forever.” (P. 1095) But the text says nothing about “everlasting life,” or “living forever.”

A reading of all the passages in the **Hebrew Bible** where the phrase יִאֲרֶיךָ יָמִים “prolong days” occurs demonstrates that the phrase means prolonging one’s life on this earth, with never an intimation of resurrection or eternal life.

Motyer admits this, stating that the phrase “is always used (with the possible exception of **Psalms 23:6** [which doesn’t have this phrase!]) with reference to the prolongation of earthly life. Its use here, referring to one who died, is unparalleled.” (P. 440)

North states that “There were one or two precedents for [restoration to life after death in the **Old Testament**]... **1 Kings 17:22** [Elijah raising the dead son of a widow back to life]; **2 Kings 4:35** [Elisha raising the dead son of a Shunammite woman back to life]; **2 Kings 13:21** [a dead man thrown into Elisha’s grave returns to life].” (P. 241)

וְחַפְצֵי יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח:

and YHWH's delight will prosper / be successful in his hand!¹⁰⁹

109

In that Divinely given future, that “life beyond death,” the servant of YHWH continues to fulfill the “pleasure” of YHWH—see the earlier statement in **verse 10** that YHWH “was *pleased* to crush him.”

Motyer comments that “a life terminated on earth continues in reality and effectiveness. This is no half-life in Sheol, but magisterial executive authority as *the will / pleasure of the Lord will prosper / flourish in his hand*, i.e. by his personal agency.” (P. 440) But where in the text is there anything like “magisterial [judge-like] executive authority”?

Ortlund comments that “The servant becomes the executor of God’s will and plan.” (P. 1339) Motyer likewise states that “He who was crushed under the will of the Lord lives as the executor of that will.” (P. 440)

But such comments are misleading, easily understood as implying that YHWH has died, and now His Survivor, Jesus, must see that His “will” is carried through. Surely this is not what is meant—but is reading **Isaiah 53** in the light of the **New Testament**, especially in the light of **Hebrews 9:15-28** with its teaching concerning covenants and death. **Isaiah 53:10** teaches that the suffering servant continues on in his work following his death, carrying forward the will of YHWH—but it says nothing about “covenant” or “executor (of a will).”

Slotki holds that the phrase “purpose of the Lord” means the “universal recognition of [the Lord’s] sovereignty and commandments.” (P. 264) But we see nothing in the text concerning “sovereignty of the Lord,” or “commandments.” Rather, the servant carries forward the very same “Divine desire” or “purpose” which meant his own crushing and death on behalf of others.

Motyer comments on **verse 10** as a whole that “in the present verse the death of the servant satisfied both the needs of sinful people before God and the ‘needs’ / requirements of God in relation to His broken law and offended holiness.” (P. 439)

But does the text say anything about God’s “needs” or “requirements”? Does it say anything about God’s offended holiness? All of this is being read into the text by Motyer, in the light of the theory of atonement held by both Roman Catholic theologians since Archbishop Anselm’s **Cur Deus Homo** of 1098, which has been adopted by Anglicans and developed in slightly differing ways among Christian theologians over the centuries, but in all of which the death of Jesus is viewed as a “satisfaction” of God’s law and holiness.

Knight comments that “As the gentiles had declared with astonishment at **53:1**, the arm of the Lord was now being revealed in a new way no one could have imagined. So what we learn now is that the arm of the Lord was being revealed in the arm of the servant, and that it was being effective before the eyes of the nations in the form of an *asham* [guilt-offering]. This was no less than a substitution for them in their rebellion, in the self-offering of the

(continued...)

53:11 מַעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יֵרְאֶה

From / by (the) trouble / labor / toil of his innermost-being / life he will see,¹¹⁰

יִשְׂבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ

he will be satisfied¹¹¹ in his knowledge.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

servant. Thus the Lord's action and the servant's action were in some mysterious way, quite evidently one." (P. 177)

110

The Qumran **Isaiah** scrolls 1QIs^a and 1QIs^b both interpolate the noun לֹא,)or, "light," at this point in the text, as does **Rahlfs**, δειξαί αὐτῷ φῶς, "He will show to him light." English translations of the first two lines of **verse 11** vary:

King James, "He shall see of the travail of his soul";

Tanakh, "Out of his anguish he shall see it";

New Revised Standard, "Out of his anguish he shall see light"

New International, "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of *life*"

New Jerusalem, "After the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light";

Rahlfs, ἀπὸ τοῦ πόνου τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ δειξαί αὐτῷ φῶς, "From the pain / labor of his innermost-being, to show him light."

North, "After his sorrowful labors he shall see *light*"

We take this to mean that instead of the darkness of the grave / underworld, with its inability to see, YHWH's suffering servant will see—and we think the interpolation of "light" by the Dead Sea **Isaiah** scrolls, the Greek, and some English translations, is appropriate, although an interpolation into the original Hebrew text.

North says to compare **Job 33:30**, where the "light of life" is contrasted with "the pit"; **Psalms 56:13**^{Heb} / **14**^{Eng}, where the psalmist contrasts "the light of life" with "death" from which Yahweh has delivered him."

111

We think this means that the servant's life-work, including such a terrifying self-sacrifice and death, when looked at from the later standpoint of "life after death," will be deeply satisfying to the servant. His life's work will not have been either self-serving or in vain; rather, it will be clearly seen that his life and suffering and death have all been highly successful, having been used to accomplish the Divine pleasure and purpose.

Knight comments that "Right in the midst of his personal torment, Deutero-Isaiah claims, the servant will see the meaning of what he is doing; he will be certain that his self-offering will be effective for the salvation of mankind. This is because, as we have already been told, his self-offering is not his own, but is that of God Almighty working in him. And, as

(continued...)

¹¹¹(...continued)

Deutero-Isaiah shows us later in his last chapter, our **chapter 55**, ‘My word does not return to Me empty, but prospers, *tsalah* (compare **53:10**) *in the thing for which I sent it.*’

What do you think? If we interpret the suffering servant as having been manifested in untold numbers of individuals across the centuries—in such individuals as Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Jeremiah, and Jesus Christ, and Paul, and Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., etc. etc.—do you suppose that any of these individuals were disappointed at the close of their lives, thinking their life’s efforts had been wasted? We think not—but believe that the life of one who suffers in behalf of righteousness and justice and self-giving service to others, is the truly “good life,” the life that is rewarded by a deep, genuine feeling of accomplishment.

As Ortlund comments, “The outcome of the servant’s sufferings is not regret, but the satisfaction of obvious accomplishment.” (P. 1339)

¹¹²

Motyer comments that if the suffering servant “had not known exactly what was needed and known how to do it, nothing would have been achieved.” (P. 441)

An alternative understanding of the phrase בְּדַעְתּוֹ, “by his knowledge,” is “by knowing him / by knowledge of him,” that is, by knowing the suffering servant and what he has done, people will be made righteous. Compare the apocryphal **Wisdom of Solomon 15:3**:

For to understand You—
complete righteousness;
and to know You—
the strong root of immortality.

That is, the **Wisdom of Solomon** proclaims that righteousness comes from understanding God, very similarly to what **Isaiah 53:11** says, when understood in this alternative way. It means that when people come to understand / know what the suffering-servant of YHWH has done, they understand / know what it is they must do to be truly “righteous.” True righteousness is a matter of willingly choosing to suffer on behalf of others. Those who follow in the footsteps of the suffering servant will be “righteous.” Also compare the **Gospel of John 17:3**’s statement attributed to Jesus:

But then this is the eternal life,
that they should know You, the only true God,
and (the) One You sent forth, Jesus Christ.

Motyer takes this to mean righteousness is something the suffering servant “extends to others: he will justify many / will provide righteousness for the many.” (P. 441) That is, righteousness is something that is given by Jesus Christ to sinful humanity; it is not something

(continued...)

יְצַדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים

My servant will make righteous a righteous person¹¹³ for the many.

¹¹²(...continued)

sinful humanity can do (i.e., choosing to willingly suffer for others) that will make them righteous.

However, Motyer admits that “the construction [that is, the way he understands this statement, is unique in the **Old Testament**.” (*Ibid.*)

He adds that “In a context where the servant’s personal righteousness receives such emphasis, the phrase ‘to provide righteousness for the many’ can mean only that there are those (‘the many’) whom he clothes in his righteousness, sharing with them his own perfect acceptability before God. In **51:1** the remnant were characterized as ‘seeking after righteousness’; the servant is the end of their quest. **51:5** announced that ‘My righteousness is near’ and here are the hidden depths of that promise...

“This is not a new idea. The purpose of the burnt offering (**Leviticus 1:3**), for example, was that the offerer ‘might be accepted’ (compare **Leviticus 19:5; 22:19-21, 29; 23:11**). In other words, the more negative aspect of the sacrifices, the bearing and removal of sin, was accompanied by a positive aspect, the according of an accepted status before God. This too is brought to perfection in the servant: perfect substitution, perfect sin-bearing, brings a perfect righteousness before God...**Isaiah 53:11** is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned.” (P. 442)

As we have emphasized before, Motyer (along with other Christian commentators) is reading his reformed theology, rooted ultimately in the Roman Catholic Archbishop Anselm’s **Cur Deus Homo**, with its “satisfaction theory” of God’s justice and holiness into the text of **Isaiah**. Undoubtedly, the passage can be read in this way—but it is not, despite what Motyer claims, the “only meaning” of this statement to be understood, as is manifest by the many different ways it has been understood.. Furthermore, we believe, it was not its original meaning. North comments, “that it must be ‘knowledge of God’ (**Isaiah 11:2; 58:2; Job 21:14; Jeremiah 22:16**) may be taken for granted.” (P. 244)

113

The phrase בְּדַעְתּוֹ is ambiguous, and can be read with either what precedes it, or with what follows it: either “he will be satisfied by his knowledge,” or “by his knowledge my righteous one will make many righteous.”

We are taking the phrase in the second sense, to mean that the knowledge of what YHWH’s servant has accomplished will be the means for making the many righteous. But it may well mean that by (personal) knowledge of the servant, people who gain such knowledge will be led into a life of righteousness.

(continued...)

וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:

And their guilts / iniquities he will bear.^{114, 18}

¹¹³(...continued)

Wolf / Stek state that this means “His [the suffering servant’s] true knowledge of the true God.” (P. 1096)

Slotki comments that this means “The servant will live to use his knowledge of God to justify His ways to man.” (P. 264) We doubt that this is its meaning.

Oswalt asks, “What can all this mean?” He then answers, stating, “It means exactly what has been talked about throughout the **book**, but particularly from **chapter 49** on. This man, *My servant*, is the Anointed of God to restore sinful Israel to Himself, just as Cyrus was the anointed [we ask, why capitalize the first ‘anointed’ and not capitalize the second?] to restore Israel to her land. In contrast to Cyrus, this man’s servanthood is redemptive.” (P. 404)

But we ask, Is not restoration of a nation to its land “redemptive”? Compare the **Book of Ruth**, with its story of Boaz as a “redeemer,” restoring Naomi’s family inheritance in Bethlehem to her and her family.

Knight states that the verb to know is used here “for the intimate knowledge of love between husband and wife, of love between the members of the covenant for Him Who bestowed it...It is now God Who is speaking. He says, Knowing Me (in this ultimate manner), he who is in a completely right relationship with Me (this is all one word), that is, My servant, *will now make many to be accounted righteous...*[which] means to help another to attain a new quality of life. How will he do it? *He shall bear their iniquities.*” (P. 178)

114

See **verse 6** for the noun עֹן, “guilt,” and **verse 4** for its use of the verb סָבַל, **sabhal**, “to bear a heavy load.” The load of guilts / iniquities has become too heavy for the many to carry any longer; the servant of YHWH recognizes this, and willingly takes that load upon himself. For all of the occurrences of the verb סָבַל, **sabhal**, “to bear a heavy load” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 18. Especially, see **Lamentations 5:7**:

Our fathers missed-the-mark / sinned, and are no longer (alive);
and we bore their guilts / iniquities.

(That is, in terms of **Isaiah 53**, the later Israelites bore / carried the earlier Israelites guilts / iniquities, and thus were “suffering servants.”)

The last half of **verse 11** is given varying translations:

King James, “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

Tanakh, “[He shall enjoy it to the full] through his devotion. My righteous servant makes the many righteous, it is their punishment that he bears”;

New Revised Standard, “[he shall find satisfaction] through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”

New International, “by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”

New Jerusalem, “By his knowledge, the upright one, my servant will justify many by taking their guilt on himself.”

Rahfs, καὶ πλάσαι τῇ συνέσει δικαιοῦσαι δίκαιον εἶ δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς καὶ τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν αὐτὸς ἀνοίσει, “and to form by the understanding to make righteous a righteous person, serving well many people; and their missings-of-the-mark / sins he will take up / bear.”

English Standard Version, “by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” [That is, it is not a matter of making many to be truly righteous, but rather, a matter of causing them “to be accounted as righteous,” truly a “theological translation,” reading Reformed theology into **Isaiah 53**.]

How do you think the last half of this verse should be translated? And if you pick and choose your translation, on what basis do you do so? Do you think that if you “like” a translation, that means that it is the truth? That is what people all too often do when reading the **Bible**.

Oswalt comments that the translation should be “He makes many righteous, *bearing their iniquities*.” “The reason the servant has the power to make people righteous before God is that he himself bears their iniquities...This is not symbolic. Somehow this servant has actually suffered the condemnation of all the sins ever committed, and by virtue of that fact, he is able to declare all those who will accept his offering as righteous, delivered, before God.” (P. 405)

But, we ask, Where in this text is anything said about “all the sins ever committed”? And, where is anything said about “all those who will accept his offering”? And, how does Oswalt make “righteous” and “delivered” synonyms? This is again, reading Christian theology into the ancient, pre-Christian text.

Westermann comments that “The Divine utterance with which the poem ends (**verses 11b and 12**) is an oracle attesting the truth of the statement made in their confession by the people whose attitude had changed: ‘he bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors.’ (P. 258) But we ask, Is this “the people” speaking, or God? Would the people say “I will give him a portion with the many”? We think not.

Westermann adds that “The usual translation is ‘as a righteous one My servant will procure righteousness for many.’ But the Hebrew rules out such an arrangement of the words. Mowinckel’s explanation is better... ‘My servant will stand as righteous before the many because he bore their sins.’ The words then express God’s justification of the servant

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

previously condemned in shame, and His declaring of him as righteous. God rehabilitates the servant and restores his honor.” (Pp. 267-68)

¹¹⁵

Ortlund comments on **verse 12** that “The sacrificial death of the servant explains his subsequent glory and the eternal blessings of those who believe in him.” (P. 1339)

But where in this verse is anything said about the servant’s “glory,” or anything about “the eternal blessings of those who believe in him”? All of this is being read into the text, which states that the servant will be given a portion with the many, and that he will divide spoil with mighty people.

Christian interpreters like Ortlund, commenting on this passage in the light of Jesus Christ, do not like what the passage says, and make it say something quite different. As Motyer states, “Surely no one can work through this great poem [52:13-53:12] and not come to the traditional rendering of this verse with a sense of anticlimax! When all comes to all, is [the suffering servant] worth no more than to take his portion along with the great and to share his spoils with the mighty?” (P. 442) Or, Motyer might as well say, “This is not what we expect the text to say, and therefore we will find some way around it!”

English translations vary somewhat in the first half of **verse 12**, especially **Tanakh**:

King James, “Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong”;

Tanakh, “Assuredly, I will give him the many as his portion, He shall receive the multitude as his spoil.”

New Revised Standard, “Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong...”

New International, “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong...”

New Jerusalem, “Hence I shall give him a portion with the many, and he will share the booty with the mighty...”

Rahfs, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν μεριεῖ σκῦλα, “because of this, he will inherit many, and with the strong ones he will divide spoils.”

Alexander, “Therefore I will divide to him among the many, and with the strong shall he divide the spoil...”

North, “Therefore I will give him the many as his victory award, and he shall distribute countless spoil...”

Motyer is greatly dissatisfied with these English translations (other than **Tanakh**), calling them the “traditional rendering,” and suggests the more suitable translation (which will confirm his Christian view): “I will allocate to him the many, and the strong he will allocate / apportion as spoil.” (He mentions as supporters of this translation North, Ridderbos, and Mulienburg; we

(continued...)

¹¹⁵(...continued)

add, the modern Jewish translation, **Tanakh**, which makes the verse fit with its interpretation of the suffering servant as Israel and the glories that await Israel in the future.)

Motyer comments that “the servant [according to this ‘more suitable translation’] has received as his own all those (‘the many’) whom he died to save, and that he really is King of all kings...The ‘many’ are the whole company of the redeemed; the ‘kings’ [see **Isaiah 52:14-15**] fall silent because they are in the presence of the stronger than the strong, they are spoil at his disposal...Total supremacy is, however, his by right of conquest. He is not ‘given’ the strong as those captured by some other power and then placed under his charge; he takes them by his own superior power and disposes of them according to his own pleasure.” (Pp. 442-43)

North comments on **verse 12**, quoting the phrase “‘The strife is o’er, the battle done.’ Now follows, in traditional **Old Testament** language, the division of the spoils of victory. But does this final verse descend to the level of the conventional, with the servant taking his share with other ‘great’ and ‘mighty’ ones (so, English Versions)?” (P. 245) Here North is saying something similar to Motyer, criticizing the text as being too “conventional,” that is, not making the suffering servant into a more exceptional hero and conqueror, failing to describe him as, in Motyer’s words, “King of all kings.” And North, like Motyer, searches through the language of the verse to end up with the verse saying the servant receives the many as his “victory award,” and distributes “countless spoil,” language much more suitable to his beliefs, with nothing in the verse concerning sharing in the victory with others. We say that when others follow the life-style of YHWH’s “servant,” being willing to serve others, even being willing to die on their behalf, they too share in his victory and its results over evil.

There can be little doubt that both Motyer, North and the Jewish translators of **Tanakh** are reading in their “superiority” theologies into this ancient text, disappointed with what the text actually says—which is that the suffering servant will take his place as one among many others, sharing the fruits that have resulted from his suffering for his people with others who likewise suffer on behalf of sinful people.

What do you think when you see commentators on the biblical text who are willing to change the text in order to support their theological conclusions? Motyer is a Christian “fundamentalist,” with a belief in the inspiration of every word in the **Bible**. But here, when the biblical text says something that does not fit his beliefs, he is willing to change the text.

Having grown up with that same belief in the **Bible**, I have personally seen time and again how those who hold it are unwilling to apply it evenly, and are willing to change or de-emphasize texts that do not fit their “creedal” beliefs.

I remember my debate professor in a Christian college, who warned us students that anyone who preached on **Romans 2** or **Romans 14** was to be suspected of being “unsound” theologically, since those two passages are “too liberal.” That is, Paul’s teaching in these two chapters didn’t fit in with his narrow theology.

(continued...)

¹¹⁵(...continued)

Westermann comments on these concluding words of **Isaiah 53** that they “are of the utmost importance,” and that in them “vicarious suffering is mentioned no less than five places” (quoting Volz). We count only four actual mentions of vicarious suffering in **verses 11-12**:

1. יִסְבֵּל הוּא יְעֹנְתֶם, “their guilts / iniquities he, he will bear.”
2. הָעֵרָה לְמֹות נַפְשׁוֹ, literally, “he made naked to the death his innermost-being.”
3. וְהוּא חָטָא רַבִּים נִשָּׂא, literally, “and he, missing-of-the-mark / sin of many he bore / lifted / carried / took.”
4. לַפְּשָׁעִים יַפְנוֹעַ, “for the transgressors he makes entreaty / interposes.”

Evidently Volz (and Westermann) meant the following phrase as a fifth mention of vicarious suffering:

5. אֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה, “with transgressors he was numbered.” Perhaps...but it is not clear that this is meant as “vicarious suffering.”

Westermann states that “These pointers to the sacrificial character of the servant’s sufferings and death are to be understood along the lines of the prophets’ criticisms of the cult [that is, of the Levitical sacrificial system with the temple and its altar]. Since the suffering and death of the servant is absolutely once for all in its character, the same holds true of the expiatory sacrifice which he offered—because it is a once for all act, it takes the place of the recurrent expiatory sacrifice, and so abolishes this.” (P. 268)

But while the text depicts the servant’s “vicarious suffering,” there is no explicit criticism of the Israelite cult (unless we hold that **Leviticus** teaches there is no forgiveness apart from animal sacrifices), and Westermann is introducing the phrase “once for all” (which never occurs in the Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible**, the “Septuagint”) into the text on the basis of occurrences of the phrase in four passages in the **New Testament**:

Romans 6:10,

For that He died,
to / for the missing-of-the-mark He died once-for-all;
but then that He lives,
He lives to / for the God.

Hebrews 7:27, speaking of Jesus the great High Priest of Christians:

Who does not have need / necessity every day,
just like the high-priests [of Israel],
first on behalf of their own missings-of-the-mark / sins to offer up sacrifices,
(continued...)

לִּינְךָ אֶחָד־לְךָ בְּרַבִּים

Therefore¹¹⁶ |¹¹⁷ will divide to him / cause him to inherit with the many,¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵(...continued)

then (on behalf) of those of the people.
For this He did once-for-all,
having offered up Himself.

Hebrews 9:12,

and not through blood of male goats and calves / young bulls,
but then through His Own blood,
He entered once-for-all into the set-apart places / sanctuary / temple,
having found eternal redemption.

Hebrews 10:10,

in / by which will we are having become set-apart people,
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once-for-all.

What do you think? Do you read “once-for-all” in the text of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**? We do not, but see this phrase as having come from by Paul and the author of **Hebrews** looking back at the suffering servant passage in **Isaiah** through the lens of Jesus Christ.

Knight comments on **verse 12**: “So the servant finally receives his reward...The reward is shown to comprise [consist of] sharing one’s innate satisfaction with ‘the masses of humanity’ (rather than with *the great*). It is God Who will share out [divide] this satisfaction between the servant and humanity. Nor does the servant grasp at his share, but, taking his cue from God, he continues to *divide the spoil with the strong*...All this...comes to pass (1) *because he poured out his soul to death*...and (2) because he *was numbered*, ‘identified,’ with the transgressors...that is, with those who defy God’s covenant of love.” (P. 179)

Knight reads much more than this into the text, making it the scene of God’s final victory celebration, “when God finally wins the war against the powers of evil,” a matter of “eschatological joy.”

¹¹⁶

Oswalt comments that “In this context *Therefore* [לִּינְךָ] brings to mind **Philippians 2:9**.” (P. 405)

Therefore also the God raised Him high,
and gave to Him the name,
the one above every name.

We agree that looking at **Isaiah 53** through the lens of **New Testament** Christology, this is a good comment. But there is nothing in the text about giving the suffering servant “a
(continued...)

¹¹⁶(...continued)
name above every name.”

Alexander observes that the Greek translation “makes the many and the strong the very spoil to be divided.” (P. 306)

Because of this he himself will inherit many,
and with / of the strong ones he will divide spoil.
(Brenton translates, “he shall divide the spoils of the mighty.” NETS also has “and he shall divide the spoils of the strong.”)

Alexander comments that “The simple meaning of the first clause is that he shall be triumphant, not that others shall be sharers in his victory, but that he shall be as gloriously successful in his enterprise as other victors ever were in theirs...Instead of making **ב** and **אֶת** denote comparison, we understand them to denote locality, and to describe him as obtaining spoil not *with* but *among* the many and the strong, and thus securing as the fruits of victory not only their possessions, but themselves.” (**Ibid.**) We say, No—that is not its “simple meaning,” but in fact a change of, and a denial of its clear meaning.

Oswalt holds that “The picture is of a victory parade with the servant, of all people, marching in the role of conqueror, bringing home the spoils of conquest.” (**Ibid.**)

But we ask, Where is there anything said in this text about a “victory parade”? Where is there anything said about the suffering servant “marching in the role of conqueror”? Where is there anything said about “bringing home the spoils of conquest”?, as if the suffering servant was a Roman emperor staging a massive “victory parade” such as Josephus describes in **The Jewish War**, Book VII. It is embarrassing to find serious Christian commentaries on the **Book of Isaiah** reading all sorts of Christian ideas into the ancient text that simply are not there, as if this is the meaning of the text in accordance with **Revelation 19:11-21**.

117

Evidently **Isaiah 52:13-15** is a Divine speech, calling attention to YHWH’s servant and his mission in the world. **Isaiah 53:1-11b** has been the speech of an unnamed first person plural, a “we”—we think probably the prophet speaking on behalf of Israel. Now, in **verses 11c-12**, once again we hear the Divine voice of the Judge, who pronounces the verdict upon the willing sacrifice of His servant, whom He has crushed and sickened on behalf of Israel’s guilt and missing-of-the-mark / sin. This is the Divine plan to deal with the problem of humanity’s sinfulness. God will send His servant to the sinful, the rebellious, to take up their guilt upon himself, and by willingly giving himself up to death on their behalf, to make them “righteous.”

118

Translations of the first line of **verse 12**, **לְיָיִן אֶחָלֵק-לוֹ בְּרַבִּים**, literally “Therefore I will divide to him among the many,” vary:

King James, “Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great”;

(continued...)

וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יַחַלֵּק שָׁלֵל

and with strong ones he will divide / cause to inherit spoil (of victory).¹¹⁹

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לְמוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ

Because¹²⁰ he bared¹²¹ his innermost-being / life to the death;¹²²

¹¹⁸(...continued)

Tanakh, “Assuredly, I will give him the many as his portion”;

New Revised Standard, “Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great”;

New International, “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great”;

New Jerusalem, “Hence I shall give him a portion with the many”;

Rahifs, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς, “For this reason he will inherit many...”

Both **Tanakh** and the Greek translation take the verse to mean the suffering servant will become superior to the many, receiving them as his portion, or inheriting them. But the other translations do not depict the suffering servant as being made superior to the many, but rather as sharing with them.

¹¹⁹**Tanakh** translates the second line of **verse 12** by “He shall receive the multitude as his spoil,” but our other translations are all similar to **New Revised Standard’s**, “and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

This line especially is difficult to translate, due to a certain “abbreviation” in the language concerning “dividing” the spoils of victory. We think that probably the lines mean that YHWH divides the “spoils of victory” (that is, what has been won through the Divine victory accomplished by the servant’s suffering and death on behalf of the many) with the servant, but also with “the many,” and with “the strong ones.” YHWH has planned a Divine victory through His servant, the results of which will be shared with others.

Ortlund comments that “The imagery is that of a conqueror sharing his victory with his allies” (p. 1339), and Wolf / Stek likewise comment that “God will reward His servant as if he was a king sharing in the spoils of victory [with other strong ones like himself?].”

But where in the entirety of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** is anything said about the suffering servant having “allies”? Rather, he is depicted as being all alone, without any allies!

Slotki states that the phrase “divide the spoils” means “conquer his enemies.” (P. 264) The phrase indeed implies that the suffering servant is victorious, but this phrase has to do with what is done with the spoils of victory, not with a prediction of his conquering his enemies.

¹²⁰

Oswalt notes that “The somewhat unusual causal element here, תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר, means literally “instead of that.” We doubt that this is the case. See our end-note 18. Knight thinks
(continued...)

וְאֵת־פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה

and with those rebelling / transgressing he was numbered.¹²³

¹²⁰(...continued)

the phrase “means something like ‘in reward for.’” (P. 179)

¹²¹

The hiphil verb **הִעֲרָה** means either “he made naked,” or “he poured out.” YHWH’s servant did not attempt to defend himself, or protect his life. Instead, he was willing to accomplish the pleasure of YHWH, regardless of the personal cost or consequences involved for himself.

¹²²

See **verses 7-9**, where the servant of YHWH is depicted as actually being put to death and being buried. Here again the tense of the verbs is in the perfect (or “past”) tense, picturing the servant as already having died.

¹²³

Or, “was numbered with the transgressors.” The niphil verb used here, **נִמְנָה**, means “he was counted,” or “he was numbered,” or “he was considered.” The servant of YHWH willingly allowed himself to be considered or counted among the “transgressors,” or “rebels.” The next two lines expand on this thought.

Ortlund comments that “The servant is identified with rebels (compare **Luke 22:37**).” (P. 1339)

Luke 22:37, following His last supper with His disciples, Jesus tells them that whereas they have not needed them before, now they are to take money-bags, knapsacks, and to buy swords,

For I say to you (plural),

that this that has been written is necessary to be finished in me,

that, And he was counted with lawless people.

For also, that (teaching) concerning me has an end.

Here Jesus is depicted as quoting the Greek text of **Isaiah 53:12**:

and with lawless people he was counted

(with a different, but synonymous preposition, *meta* instead of *en*, and with a genitive plural noun *ἀνόμων*, without the definite article, instead of the dative plural noun with the definite article *τοῖς ἀνόμοις*. There is no difference in meaning; ancient Greek manuscripts commonly have such variants.)

In this way **Luke** depicts Jesus as seeing Isaiah’s depiction of the suffering servant as his own depiction, and believing it was a Divine necessity for him to fulfill it to the letter. If, as

(continued...)

וְהוּא חָטְאֵי רַבִּים נָשָׂא

and he, he bore / lifted up¹²⁴ (the) sin¹²⁵ of many people,¹²⁶

¹²³(...continued)

Jewish students think, the suffering servant of Isaiah is a depiction of Israel or Israel's righteous remnant, then Jesus saw himself as an embodiment of righteous Israel, living out its Divinely depicted destiny. Compare the following passages from the **New Testament**:

Matthew 11:18-19,

- 18 For John [the Immerser] came, neither eating nor drinking,
and they say, He has a demon!
19 The son of the person came, eating and drinking,
and they say, Look—a man, a glutton and a drunkard
a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!
And the wisdom is justified from / by her works!

Luke 15:1-2,

- 1 Ἦσαν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐγγίζοντες πάντες οἱ τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ
ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ.
But then all the tax-collectors and the sinners were drawing near to him,
to hear him.
2 καὶ διεγόγγυζον οἱ τε Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες ὅτι
οὗτος ἁμαρτωλοὺς προσδέχεται καὶ συνεσθίει αὐτοῖς.
And both the Pharisees and the religious experts were grumbling, saying that
This man receives / welcomes sinners, and eats with them!
(Followed by the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boy)

¹²⁴

For previous use of this verb נָשָׂא, “he carried,” see **53:4**, with its footnote.

Alexander comments that “the only way in which a holy God can take away sin is by bearing it: in other words, He can forgive it only by providing an atonement for it. This alone enables Him to be supremely just, and yet a justifier, not of the innocent, but of the guilty.” (P. 308)

We say, what a proud, egotistical comment! As if Alexander knows all about a holy God, and what He can and cannot do. Once again, such a comment is not based on the text of **Isaiah**, but is based on theological theories of the atonement, beginning with Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, which dare to state what are the “only” possibilities for a holy and righteous God in forgiveness of sin and elimination of guilt. We are reminded of the three friends of Job, who were certain that the only possibilities for God in allowing suffering were according to their doctrine of retribution, in which the righteous are blessed with long life and

(continued...)

וּלְפֹשְׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ:

and for the rebels / transgressors¹²⁷ he will make entreaty / interpose.¹²⁸

¹²⁴(...continued)

health, and the ungodly are caused to suffer, concluding that Job must have been a terrible sinner.

Please, we say to the theologians, let's quit pretending that we know so much about the infinite God. Let's repent of our pride, and confess our ignorance; let's be a good deal more humble, and admit how little we really know, and quit reading our theological conclusions into the biblical text, attempting to put God into our doctrinal "box"! Instead of making Paul the final authority on the nature of God, let's respect his confession in **1 Corinthians 13:8-12** concerning the limitation of his knowledge!

¹²⁵

The noun **חַטָּא** means "a sin," "a missing of the goal or way," "a going wrong." The same thing is true of the **New Testament** noun **ἁμαρτία**, "missing-of-the-mark," or "sin." The basic metaphor behind these two biblical words has to do with the "way" that has been Divinely marked out for humanity to follow, and which humanity "misses" or from which it "turns aside" to walk in some other way. Here, we think, the basic "missing-of-the-mark" is that of failing to walk in the way of the suffering servant.

Oswalt notes that whereas the Masoretic Text has "sin" in the singular, "the manuscript evidence overwhelmingly favors the plural: all the ancient versions and all the Qumran copies ...No reason is evident why the Masoretic Text would have dropped the final *yodh*, but the smallness of the letter makes it possible that it was simply overlooked." (P. 399)

¹²⁶

Westermann comments that "The really miraculous thing about the servant's path in life, his suffering and his death, is this. The suffering which overtakes an ordinary man without priestly status, a man buffeted and despised, makes it possible for him to take the sins of others upon himself, and so to avert from them the consequences of these, punishment." (P. 269)

¹²⁷

Where our Hebrew text reads **לְפֹשְׁעִים**, "for the ones rebelling / transgressing," both 1QIs^a and 1QIs^b read **לְפֹשְׁעֵיהֶם**, "for their rebellions / transgressions." **Rahlfs** has **καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη**, "and in / with the lawless people he was counted / considered."

Rahlfs translates the fourth and fifth lines of **verse 12** by literally, **καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη**, "and he, sins of many he took up / bore, and because of the sins of theirs he was handed over / betrayed."

¹²⁸

(continued...)

¹²⁸(...continued)

Knight comments that “Finally, he made intercession for the transgressors, or more exactly, ‘he interposed himself for the rebels’”, using the past tense. He adds that “Long before, Moses had offered himself to God for that purpose (**Exodus 32:32**).” (P. 180)

Ortlund, quoting the **English Standard Version’s** present tense, “and makes intercession for the transgressors,” comments that “This is the servant’s priestly work on behalf of those he represents, securing their acceptance before God.” (P. 1339)

But the Hebrew text has **יִפְגַּע**, the hiphil imperfect or “future” tense, meaning the intercession / making entreaty / interposing will be accomplished following his death and return to life on behalf of the transgressors.

Westermann comments that the line *he interceded for the transgressors* “does not mean, as some editors imagine, that he made prayers of intercession for them, but that with his life, his suffering and his death, he took their place and underwent their punishment in their stead.” (P. 269)

But here again, Westermann changes the text to his liking, replacing the imperfect tense with the past tense.

With this final statement, the great “Songs of the Servant” of **Second Isaiah** come to an end. And how grateful we are for these songs, which serve to depict the kind of “servant” YHWH wants His forgiven people to become! We repeat ourselves:

YHWH wants His servant to be filled with His Spirit, and to bring justice to the nations of the earth (**42:1-4**).

YHWH wants His servant to not only bring Israel itself back to YHWH, but to become a light to the nations, enabling YHWH’s salvation / deliverance to reach to the ends of the earth (**49:1-6**).

YHWH wants His servant to be a learner, who listens carefully for the Divine word and obeys it—enduring harsh treatment and disgrace from those who oppose his teaching and mission with unflagging determination (**50:4-9**).

YHWH wants His servant to be a suffering-servant, who, instead of returning evil for evil, bears griefs and sorrows, being wounded and crushed on behalf of his people, silently enduring suffering inflicted upon him, believing that all of the suffering is YHWH’s will and purpose for his life. He wants His servant to even be willing to be put death by YHWH, offering himself as a “sin-offering.” (**52:13-53:12**)

This is the kind of servant through whom YHWH will win the victory over human sinfulness! And, we believe, this is the kind of servant Jesus Christ was, and continues to be through his faithful followers who take up their crosses and follow him!

1. **Rabbi Tovia Singer's Interpretation of the Suffering Servant**

“Despite strong objections from conservative Christian apologists, the prevailing rabbinic interpretation of **Isaiah 53** ascribes the “servant” to the nation of Israel who silently endured unimaginable suffering at the hands of its gentile oppressors. The speakers, in this most-debated chapter, are the stunned kings of nations who will bear witness to the messianic age and the final vindication of the Jewish people following their long and bitter exile. “Who would have believed our report?,” the astonished and contrite world leaders wonder aloud in dazed bewilderment (**53:1**).¹

“The stimulus for the world’s baffled response contained in this famed cluster of chapters at the end of the **Book of Isaiah** is the unexpected salvation of Israel. The redemption of God’s people is the central theme in the preceding verse (**52:12**) where the “you” signifies the Jewish people who are sheltered and delivered by God. Moreover, the “afflicted barren woman” in the following chapter is protected and saved by God, and is also universally recognized as the nation of Israel.² (**54:1**).

“The well-worn claim frequently advanced by Christian apologists who argue that the noted Jewish commentator, Rashi (1040–1105 C.E.), was the first to identify the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53** with the nation of Israel is inaccurate and misleading. In fact, Origen, a prominent and influential church father, conC.E.ded in the year 248 C.E.—eight centuries before Rashi was born – that the consensus among the Jews in his time was that **Isaiah 53** “bore reference to the whole [Jewish] people, regarded as one individual, and as being in a state of dispersion and suffering, in order that many proselytes might be gained, on account of the dispersion of the Jews among numerous heathen nations.”³

“The broad consensus among Jewish, and even some Christian commentators, that the “servant” in **Isaiah 52-53** refers to the nation of Israel is understandable. **Isaiah 53**, which is the fourth of four renowned Servant Songs, is umbilically connected to its preceding chapters. The “servant” in each of the three previous Servant Songs is plainly and repeatedly identified as the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 41:8-9

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.”

Isaiah 44:1

But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!

Isaiah 44:21

Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

Isaiah 45:4

For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I called you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.

Isaiah 48:20

Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, “The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!”

Isaiah 49:3

And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

“According to this widespread rabbinic opinion, **Isaiah 53** contains a deeply moving narrative which world leaders will cry aloud in the messianic age. The humbled kings of nations (**52:15**) will confess that Jewish suffering occurred as a direct result of “our own iniquity,” (**53:5**) e.g., depraved Jew-hatred, rather than, as they previously thought, the stubborn blindness of the Jews.

“The stunned reaction of the world’s nations to the unexpected vindication and redemption of the Jewish nation in the messianic age is a recurring theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.⁴ Israel’s neighbors will be amazed when their age-old assessment of the Jew is finally proven wrong. Throughout Israel’s long and bitter exile, the nations mistakenly attributed the miserable predicament of the Jew to his stubborn rejection of the world’s religions. In the End of Days, however, the gentiles will discover what was until then unimaginable – the unwavering Jew was, in fact, all this time faithful to the one true God. On the other hand, “We despised and held him of no account” (**53:3**). [The fact is, neither the phrase ‘in the messianic age’ nor the phrase “in the end of days’ is to be found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Singer is reading them into the text.]

“In essence, the final and complete redemption of the Jews, to which the stunned nations will bear witness, contradicts everything Israel’s gentile neighbors had ever previously anticipated, heard, or considered (**52:15**). “Who would have believed our report?” the kings will ask with their mouths wide open in amazement (**53:1**). The curtain of blindness is finally lifted when the ‘holy Arm of the Lord before the eyes of all the nations, all the ends of the earth will witness the salvation of His people’ (**52:10**).

“The unanticipated vindication of the Jews in the End of Days, however, will raise nagging, introspective questions for Israel’s neighbors: How then can we explain the Jews’ long-enduring suffering at our own hands? After all, the age-old reasons we contrived to explain away Israel’s agony are clearly no longer valid. Who is to blame for Israel’s miserable existence in exile? In short, why did the servant of God seem to suffer without measure or cause?

“Therefore, **Isaiah 53:8** concludes with their stunning confession, “for the transgressions of my people [the gentile nations] they [the Jews] were stricken.” The fact that the servant is spoken of in the third person, plural (*lamo*) illustrates beyond doubt that the servant is a nation rather than a single individual.

“The rabbinic interpretation of **Isaiah 53** fits in seamlessly with its surrounding chapters which all clearly depict the nation of Israel as “despised, afflicted” (**54:6-11**), and oppressed “without cause” (**52:4**) at the hands of the gentile nations.

“According to the most ancient rabbinic commentaries, the identification of Israel as God’s servant is evident throughout the four Servant Songs.⁵ As such, rabbinic sources from the Talmudic period identify the servant of **Isaiah 53** in the plain sense as the Jewish people, consistent with the previous three Servant Songs.

“For example, commenting on **Isaiah 53** the **Talmud** states:

Rava said in the name of Rav Sachorah who said it in the name of Rav Huna: Whomever the Holy One, blessed is He, desires, He crushes with afflictions as it is stated “And the one whom Hashem desires He crushed with sickness (**Isaiah 53:10**). Now, one might have thought that this applies even if he does not accept [the afflictions] with love. Scripture therefore states in the continuation of the verse “if his soul acknowledges his guilt” (**ibid.**)... And if he accepts [the afflictions with love] what is his reward? He will see offspring and live long days. Moreover, he will retain his studies, as it is stated “and the desire of Hashem will succeed in his hand” (**ibid.**). (**Talmud Berachos 5a**)

“The ancient **Midrash Rabba** on **Numbers 23** likewise attests that **Isaiah 53** refers to the nation of Israel:

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey” (**Song of Songs 5:1**): because the Israelites poured out their soul to die in captivity, as it is said, “Because he poured out his soul to die. (**Midrash Rabba Isaiah 53:12**)

“Interestingly, the traditional Church did not completely satisfy the Christian mind with their stock interpretation of **Isaiah 53**. There is, therefore, a consensus among many modern, liberal Christian commentators which is in accord with this prevailing rabbinic exegesis on this most debated chapter. For example, the commentary of the 11th century Rashi and the 20th century Christian **Oxford New English Bible**⁶ are strikingly similar. Both clearly identify the “suffering servant” in **Isaiah 53** as the nation of Israel, who suffered as a humiliated individual at the hands of the gentile nations.

“Conservative Christians, on the other hand, strongly argue against the Jewish interpretation of **Isaiah 53** for a number of expected reasons. Historically, the Church has relentlessly used **Isaiah 53** as its most important proof-text in order to demonstrate the veracity of the **Gospels**. They argue that this chapter proves that Jesus’ death was explicitly prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, the author of the **Book of Acts** claims that Philip converted an Ethiopian eunuch using **Isaiah 53,7** and the author of **Luke**,⁸ **John**⁹ and **I Peter**¹⁰ associate **Isaiah 53** with Jesus as well. While evangelicals routinely claim that Jesus is alluded to in several hundred verses throughout the **Hebrew Bible**, there is only a handful of passages in **Tanach** that the Church insists irrefutably identify Jesus alone as the messiah; **Isaiah 53** is chief among these polemical texts.

“Consequently, since time immemorial, missionaries fervently used **Isaiah 53** to proclaim that the Hebrew prophet Isaiah predicted the advent of Christianity centuries before the birth of Jesus. Accordingly, the traditional Church recoils at the rabbinic interpretation of the fourth Servant Song. Such a monumental concession would require Christendom to abandon one of its most cherished polemical chapters used to defend its own teachings, and a vital part of its textual arsenal used against its elder rival, Judaism.

“Besides, the systemic suffering of the Jews plays no essential role in Christian theology. The suffering of Jesus, on the other hand, is the cornerstone of Church doctrine. In fact, widespread Christian teachings throughout history concluded that the suffering of the Jews illustrates the wrongness of their beliefs, while the suffering of Jesus and his followers illustrates the truth and veracity of the Cross. As a result, conservative Christians are unyielding in their rejection of the Jewish interpretation of **Isaiah 53**.

“Liberal Christian scholars, on the other hand, are frequently in accord with the classic rabbinic commentaries on **Isaiah 53**. Unlike their conservative coreligionists, liberal Christians do not use or depend on Church dogma or creedal statements to interpret the **Bible**. In other words, liberal Christian **Bible** commentators tend to interpret scripture without any preconceived notion of the correctness of Church teaching. Instead, they apply the same modern hermeneutics used to understand any ancient writings to their interpretation of the **Bible**. Given that **Isaiah’s** first three Servant Songs clearly identify Israel as God’s servant, and the surrounding chapters of **Isaiah 53** clearly speak of Israel as a suffering and humiliated individual, liberal Christian scholarship frequently ascribes the servant in Isaiah’s fourth Servant Song to the nation of Israel.¹¹

“According to rabbinic thought when Isaiah speaks of the “servant,” the prophet is not speaking of all the Jewish people. Rather, the “servant” in these uplifting prophetic hymns refers to the righteous remnant of Israel – the most pious of the nation. The faithful members of Israel who willingly suffer for Heaven’s sake are identified in **Tanach** as God’s servant. These are the devout that call upon the name of the Lord (**43:7**), who bear witness to His unity (**43:11**), and are therefore charged to restore the rest of Jacob (**49:5**).

‘You are my witnesses declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen.’ (**Isaiah 43:10**)

“In essence, God’s “servant” are the cherished few – the faithful who walk in the footsteps of Abraham, whom the Almighty called “My friend.”

‘But you, O Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you, descendants of Abraham My friend’ (**Isaiah 41:8**)

“Simply put, the Servant Songs address only the believers of Israel who emulate the first patriarch of the Jewish people. As Abraham endured trials and adversity in his walk with God, so too would His servant, the righteous remnant of Israel, endure ordeals and affliction in its sacred path (**Isaiah 49:3; 51:21; 54:11; Psalm 44:11-15**).

“The Hebrew prophet Zephaniah vividly describes in two seminal verses the cherished remnant of Israel in the following manner:

‘And I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall take refuge in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.’ (**Zephaniah 3:12-13**)

“In rabbinic thought, all of God’s faithful, gentiles included (**Zechariah 13:8-9**), endure suffering on behalf of God (**Isaiah 40:2; Zechariah 1:15**). Thus, Jewish leaders of the past, such as Moses¹² and Jeremiah,¹³ Rabbi Akiva,¹⁴ as well as future eschatological figures, such as the

messiah ben Joseph and the messiah ben David, are held up in rabbinic literature as individuals who exemplify the “servant” who willingly suffers on behalf of Heaven.”

Footnotes:

¹Midrash Rabbah (Numbers XXIII.2), Zohar (Genesis & Leviticus), Talmud (Brochos 5a), Rashi, Joseph Kara, Ibn Ezra, Joseph Kimchi, David Kimchi, Nachmanadies, Abarbinbanel, et all

²Ibn Ezra on Isaiah 53

³Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Chadwick, Henry; Cambridge Press, book 1, chapter 55, page 50

⁴Isaiah 41:11; Micah 7:15-16; Jeremiah 16:19-20;

⁵Isaiah 41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1; 44:21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3;

⁶The New English Bible, Oxford Study Edition, page 788-789. See also the Revised Standard Bible, Oxford Study Edition, page 889.

⁷Acts 8:28-34

⁸Luke 22:37

⁹John 12:38

¹⁰1 Peter 2:22

¹¹The Christian New English Bible, Oxford Study Edition, annotation on Isaiah 52:13-53:12 explains: “The “fourth Servant Song, the Suffering Servant, Israel, the servant of God, has suffered as a humiliated individual. However, the servant endured without complaint because it was vicarious suffering (suffering for others). 52:13-15: Nations and kings will be surprised to see the servant exalted. 53:1: The crowds, pagan nations, among whom the servant (Israel) lived, speak here (through verse 9), saying that the significance of Israel’s humiliation and exaltation is hard to believe (page 788-789). See also the Revised Standard Bible, Oxford Study Edition, page 889.

Walter Brueggemann Ph.D., *Isaiah 40 – 66* (Louisville: Kentucky, 1998), p. 143, states: “There is no doubt that Isaiah 53 is to be understood in the context of the Isaiah tradition. Insofar as the servant is Israel – a common assumption of Jewish interpretation – we see that the theme of humiliation and exaltation serves the Isaiah rendering of Israel, for Israel in this literature is exactly the humiliated (exiled) people who by the powerful intervention of Yahweh is about to become the exalted (re-stored) people of Zion. Thus the drama is the drama of Israel and more specifically of Jerusalem, the characteristic subject of this poetry. Second, although it is clear that this poetry does not have Jesus in any first instance on its horizon, it is equally clear that the church, from the outset, has found the poetry a poignant and generative way to consider Jesus, wherein humiliation equals crucifixion and exaltation equals resurrection and ascension.

¹²Talmud, Sotah 14a and the Sifri on Deuteronomy 355 applies Isaiah 53:12 to Moses

¹³Rabbi Sadyah Gaon (tenth century), Oxford Ms. (Poc 32)

¹⁴Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim V.I.

2. Passages in the Hebrew Bible with the Hiphil Imperfect of שָׁכַל

Deuteronomy 29:8^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}

And you people shall keep (the) words of this covenant,
and you shall do them,
in order that you will cause wisdom / success (in) everything that you shall do.

Deuteronomy 32:29,

I wish they were wise--would understand / be successful in this--
they would discern their later time / end!

Joshua 1:7-8,

- 7 Only be strong, and be exceedingly stout,
to keep (and) to do
according to all the teaching which Moses My servant commanded!
You shall not turn aside from it--(to the) right and / or (to the) left,
in order that you will be wise / successful in every (place) where you go!
- 8 This book of the teaching shall not depart from your mouth;
and you shall meditate on it by day and by night,
in order that you may keep to do according to all that is written in it!
Because then you will be cause your way to be wise / successful,
and then you will be wise / successful!

1 Samuel 18:5,

And David went forth in every (place) where Saul sent him;
he was wise / successful.
And Saul placed him over the men of war;
and he did well in (the) eyes of all the people,
and also in (the) eyes of Saul's servants.

1 Kings 2:3, where David, about to die, tells Solomon his son:

And you shall keep / guard YHWH your God's charge (to keep),
to walk in His ways,
to keep / guard His statutes, His commands, and His legal decisions and His testimonies,
as what is written in Moses' teaching--
in order that you will be wise / successful (in) all that you will do,
and (in) every place where you will turn.

2 Kings 18:7, where it is said of King Hezekiah,

And YHWH was with him,
in every (place) where he went forth, he would be wise / successful.

And he rebelled against (the) King of Assyria and would not serve him.

Isaiah 41:20, where it is said of the poor and needy who witness YHWH's saving actions:

In order that they will see and will know
and will consider and be wise / successful together,
that YHWH's hand did this,
and (the) Set-apart One of Israel created it!

Isaiah 52:13,

Look—My servant will act wisely / successfully,

Psalms 32:8, where it is promised to the forgiven sinner,

I will make you wise,
and I will teach you the way which you should go;
I will advise (you)--
My eye [will be] upon you!

Psalms 94:8,

Discern, stupid ones among the people!
And fools—how long (until) you will be wise / successful?

Psalms 101:2, where it is the psalmist's desire,

I would be successful / wise in a way of wholesome people.
How long (until) You will come to me?
I would walk in (the) wholeness of my heart,
in (the) midst of my household.

Proverbs 16:23,

(The) heart / mind of a wise person will cause his mouth to be wise / successful;
and upon his lips he will add / increase learning / teaching.

Proverbs 17:8,

A stone of honor / grace—the bribe in the eyes of its owner / *baal*;
to everyone to whom it / he turns, it gives wisdom / success.

Daniel 9:25,

And you will know, and you will be successful / prosperous, from a word's going forth to
return and rebuild Jerusalem,
until a messiah, a prince—
seven periods of seven, and sixty-two periods of seven.

You will return, and a city-square will be built, and a moat,
and / even in distress / trouble of the times.

We observe that the prediction / promise of being wise / successful / Knight's "effective" is made to, or predicated of a broad range of people in these passages:

to those who keep the Mosaic **Torah** / teaching;

to Joshua as he leads Israel's conquest of the Land of Canaan;

of David as the leader of Saul's troops (a statement of his success);

to Solomon, as he takes over the Israelite throne from David;

of Hezekiah, King of Judah (a statement of his success);

to the poor and needy who witness YHWH's saving actions;

of the "suffering servant";

to the forgiven sinner;

of stupid, foolish people, where it is expected;

of the psalmist who wants to walk in God's way, for whom it is a hope;

to the mouth of the wise, whose words will be wise / successful;

of the bribe (a precious stone) which imparts wisdom and success;

to Daniel, a promise of wise success.

3. **Philippians 2:5-11**

5 Think within yourselves (in) this (way),
which (was) also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being / existing in God's form,
did not consider it robbery / something to be grasped / held onto,
the being equal to God,
7 but rather, emptied Himself,
taking a servant's / slave's form,
being / becoming in (the) likeness of people.
And being found in outward appearance as a person,
8 He humbled Himself,
being / becoming obedient to the point of dying
dying / death then on a wooden post.
9 Wherefore also the God highly exalted Him,
and gave to Him the name,
the one above every name,
10 in order that in the name of Jesus, every knee might bow,
of heavenly things, and earthly things, and things beneath the earth;
11 and every tongue might confess out,
that Jesus Christ (is) Lord,
for (the) glorious radiance of God-Father!

4. **“Sprinkling of Blood” in the Hebrew Bible**

Leviticus 14:7, on the day a person with severe skin disease (leprosy?) is declared clean, one of two birds brought to the priest will be killed—

And he shall sprinkle (the bird’s blood) upon the one being cleansed seven times,
and it will cleanse him.

And he shall send forth the live bird over the field’s surface.

(Reminiscent of the sacrifice of one goat on the Day of Atonement, while letting the other “scape-goat” depart into the wilderness, bearing all the sins of Israel, signifying total forgiveness. Here the bird that flies away is symbolic of the disease having departed from the healed person.)

Numbers 8:7, included in the ritual of cleansing for the Levites is:

And in this way you (singular) shall do to them, to cleanse them:

Sprinkle upon them water of the sin offering;
and they shall cause a razor to pass over upon all their body;
and they shall wash their clothes, and cleanse themselves.

Numbers 19:16-19^{Heb} / **15-18**^{Eng},

16/15 And everyone who shall touch someone slain (by the) sword upon the field’s surface
or (touch) a dead person,
or (touch) a human bone,
or (touch) a grave,
he shall be unclean (for) seven days.

17/16 And they shall take for the unclean person, some ashes of the burned sin-offering,
and he shall place upon it fresh water into a vessel;

18/17 And a clean person shall take (a bunch of) hyssop, and he shall dip (it) into the water;
and he shall sprinkle (it) upon the (person’s) tent,
and upon all the vessels (in the tent),
and upon the innermost-beings / people who were there (in the tent),
and upon the one touching the bone, or the one slain,
or the dead, or the grave.

19/18 And the clean person shall sprinkle over the unclean person on the third day,
and on the seventh day’
and he shall cleanse him on the seventh day.
And he shall wash his clothes,
and he shall wash in the water.
And he will be clean in the evening.

5. **Mention of “Nations” in the Book of Isaiah**

Isaiah 2:2,

And it will happen in (the) future / latter part / end of the days,
(the) mountain of YHWH’s house / temple (will be) established on top / at head of
the mountains,
and it will be lifted up from (the) hills,
and all the nations will flow to it / Him.

Isaiah 2:4,

And He will judge between the nations;
and He will decide / reprove / rebuke for many peoples.
And they will beat their swords into pieces,
and their spears into pruning knives.
Nation will not lift up a sword to a nation,
and they will not again learn war!

Isaiah 5:26,

And He will lift up a signal for the nations from afar,
and He will whistle for it from the earth’s end / extremity.
And look—speedily, quickly it will come!

Isaiah 10:7,

And he—not in this way does he think;
and his heart—not in this way does he plan.
But to exterminate (is) in his heart,
and to cut off nations—not a few!

Isaiah 11:10,

And it will happen on that day--
Jesse’s root, who will stand as a sign for the peoples,
nations will come, seeking him,
and his resting--place will be glorious!

Isaiah 11:12,

And He will lift up a signal / sign for the nations,
and He will gather Israel’s thrust out / banished ones,
and scattered ones of Judah He will gather,
from the land’s / earth’s four wings / extremities!

Isaiah 13:4,

A voice / sound of a crowd in the mountains–
likeness of a great people;
a voice / sound of an uproar–
kingdoms of nations gathering together!
YHWH of Armies
is mustering an army for war,

Isaiah 14:6,

One who attacks people with wrath,
attack without pause;
one who rules nations with anger--
persecution without restraint.

Isaiah 14:9,

Sheol below was excited over you,
to greet your coming,
awakening dead spirits for you,
all powerful bosses on earth.
It raised from their thrones
all [who were] kings of nations.

Isaiah 14:12,

How you have fallen from the heavens,
"Shining-One," "Son of the Dawn!"
You have been cut down to the earth,
(the) one who causes nations to fall prostrate!

Isaiah 14:18,

All the kings of the nations, all of them
lie gloriously in death, each in his house / burial-vault.

Isaiah 14:26,

This—the counsel which was counseled upon all the earth,
and this—the hand, the one stretched out over all the nations.

Isaiah 16:8,

Because fields of Heshbon grew feeble;
Sibmah's vineyard(s), rulers of nations struck down its branches / tendrils.
As far as Yaezer they touched / struck;
they wandered (into the) wilderness;
its shoots were forsaken,
they crossed over (the) sea.

Isaiah 23:3,

And on many waters,
seed of Shichar,
harvest of (the) Nile,
(was) your income.
And you were merchant of nations!

Isaiah 25:3,

For this reason a people of strength will honor You;
a city of nations of terror-striking (people) will fear / revere You!

Isaiah 25:7,

And He will swallow up on this mountain
the appearances of the shroud
that shrouds over all the peoples,
and the mourning-veil
that is woven over all the nations.

Isaiah 29:7,

And it will be like the dream, a vision (of the) night--
a crowd of all the nations,
those fighting against Ariel,
and all those fighting her and her stronghold,
and the ones constraining her.

Isaiah 29:8,

And it will be just like when the hungry one dreams,
and look—he is eating.
And he awakes, and his innermost-being / appetite is empty.
And just like the one thirsty dreams,
and look—he is drinking.
And he awakes, and look—(he is) weary,
and his innermost-being / appetite is longing (for water).
In this way it will be (for the) crowd of all the nations,
the ones fighting against Mount Zion!

Isaiah 30:28,

And His Spirit like an overflowing wadi up to (the) neck;
He will divide to sift nations in a sieve of emptiness—
and a halter that leads astray upon (the) jaws of peoples.

Isaiah 33:3,

Because of (the) voice of a crowd, peoples fled;
because of Your rising, nations were scattered.

Isaiah 34:1,

Draw near, O nations, to listen!
And peoples, pay attention!
The earth will hear, and its fullness;
(the) world, and all its offspring.

Isaiah 34:2,

Because wrath belongs to YHWH against all the nations,
and rage against all their army.
He devoted them to destruction,
He gave them for the slaughter.

Isaiah 36:18,

so that Hezekiah will not allure you (plural) saying,
YHWH will deliver us.
Did (the) Gods of the nations deliver a man with his land
from (the) King of Assyria's hand?

Isaiah 37:12,

Did (the) Gods of the nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them—
Gozan, and Charan, and Retseph,
and children of Eden who were in Telassar?

Isaiah 40:15,

Look—nations (are) like a drop from a bucket,
and like dust (on) balances were considered.
Look—He lifts up coast-lands like the fine dust!

Isaiah 40:17,

All the nations (are) like nothing before Him;
they were considered by Him less than a ceasing and formlessness!

Isaiah 41:2,

Who stirred up right-relationship from (the) east?
He proclaims it / it meets him at his foot / step;
He gives nations before him,
and kings He / he beats down.

He makes like dust (by) his sword
like chaff driven about (by) his bow.

Isaiah 42:1,

Look—My servant!
I will support him;
My chosen one--
My innermost-being was pleased.
I placed My Spirit upon him.
Justice for the nations he will bring forth!

Isaiah 42:6,

I YHWH, I called you (singular) in right-relationship;
and I took strong hold by your hand, and I guarded you,
and I gave you for a covenant of a people,
for a light of nations--

Isaiah 43:9,

All the nations were gathered together,
and peoples were assembled.
Who among them will declare this,
and cause first / former things to be heard?
Let them give witnesses, and let them be justified;
and they will hear, and they will speak true-faithfulness!

Isaiah 45:1,

In this way YHWH spoke to His anointed one, to Cyrus,
whom I have taken hold of by his right hand,
to beat down nations before him;
and the loins of kings I will open (i.e., disarm),
to open before him doors,
and gates—they will not be shut:

Isaiah 45:20,

Gather together and come,
draw near together, escapees (from) the nations!
They did not know, the ones bearing their wooden idol,
and making intercession to a God (Who) will not save.

Isaiah 49:6,

And He said, It was too trifling for you to be for Me
a servant to raise up Jacob's tribes,
and to return those preserved of Israel;

and I will give you (singular) for a light of nations,
to be My deliverance / salvation as far as the earth's end!

Isaiah 49:22,

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look—I will lift up My hand to (the) nations,
and to peoples I will raise My signal;
and they will bring your sons in (their) embrace,
and your daughters they will carry upon their shoulder.

Isaiah 52:10,

YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,
to (the) eyes of all the nations;
and all ends of (the) earth will see
our God's salvation / deliverance!

Isaiah 52:15,

So he will startle many nations;
over him, kings will shut their mouth—
because that which was not told to them, they saw;
and that which they did not hear, they considered diligently.

Isaiah 54:3,

Because (to the) right and (to the) left;
you will spread out;
and your descendants will possess nations!
And desolated cities they will inhabit!

Isaiah 60:3,

And nations will walk / come to your light,
and kings to (the) brightness of your dawning.

Isaiah 60:5,

Then you (feminine singular) will see and you will shine;
and your heart will fear / be in awe and expand,
because (the) abundance of the sea will be turned over to you;
wealth of nations will come to you!

Isaiah 60:11,

And your gates will be open continually,
by day and night they will not be closed--

(in order) to bring to you (the) wealth of nations;
and their kings driven / led in procession.

Isaiah 60:12,

Because the nation and the kingdom
that will not serve you will perish;
and the nations will be utterly dried up!

Isaiah 60:16,

And you will nurse / suck (the) milk of nations,
and (the) breast of kings you will nurse / suck.
And you will know that I (am) YHWH your Savior,
and your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin,
Mighty One of Jacob!

Isaiah 61:6,

And you (plural) will be called Priests of YHWH;
Ministers of our God, it will be said to you.
Wealth of nations you shall eat,
and in their abundance you shall boast.

Isaiah 61:9,

And their descendant(s) will be known among the nations,
and their offspring in (the) midst of the peoples.
Everyone seeing them will recognize them,
because they are descendant(s) YHWH blessed!

Isaiah 61:11,

Because like the earth brings forth its growth,
and like a garden causes to sprout what is sown in it,
in this way my Lord YHWH will cause right-relationship to sprout,
and praise before all the nations!

Isaiah 62:2,

And nations will see your right-relationship,
and all kings your glory;
and a name will be called for you, a new name
which YHWH's mouth will designate.

Isaiah 64:1^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng}

Like kindling a fire of brushwood,
water will swell / boil (by the) fire--
to make known Your name to Your adversaries,
from Your presence nations will quake!

Isaiah 66:12,

Because in this way YHWH spoke:
Look at Me
—reaching out to her like a river of peace,
and like an overflowing wadi, honor of nations.
And you people will nurse,
you will be carried on (the) hip,
and upon knees you will be played with.

Isaiah 66:18,

And I...their deeds and their thoughts...
she / it (feminine) is coming to gather all the nations and the tongues;
and they will come, and they will see My glorious radiance.

Isaiah 66:19 (twice),

And I will place among them a sign;
and I will send from them survivors to the nations
Tarshish, Pul and Lud, drawers of (the) bow,
Tubhal and Greece, the Islands that are far off,
who did not hear My report,
and did not see My glorious radiance;
and they will declare My glorious radiance
among the nations.

Isaiah 66:20,

And they will bring all your brothers from all the nations,
the gift to the YHWH,
on the horses and in the chariot(s)
and on the litters and on the mules and on the dromedary camels,
to My set-apart mountain, Jerusalem—said YHWH—
just as Israel's children will bring the gift(s) in a clean vessel
(to the) house of YHWH.

6. **Occurrences of the Hiphil verb וַיִּשְׁמַע, “He Believed / Placed Confidence In”
in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 15:6, where it is said of the elderly, childless Abram, who has been promised descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky,

And he (Abram) believed in the YHWH,
and He considered it for him a right relationship.
(Believing, or placing confidence in a Divine promise, is a right relationship to YHWH.)

Genesis 45:26, where it is said of the elderly Jacob,

And they (Jacob’s sons, returning from Egypt) declared to him saying,
Joseph is still alive!
And that he (is) ruling over all Egypt-land!
And his heart grew numb,
because he did not believe them.
(It is a matter of not believing, or placing confidence in a report.)

Exodus 4:1,

And Moses answered, and he said,
And behold—they will not believe me;
and they will not listen to my voice.
Because they will say,
YHWH did not appear to you!
(When Moses tells the elders / officials of Israel what YHWH has said to him, they will not put confidence in / believe what he is telling them.)

Exodus 4:5, YHWH enables Moses’ staff to turn into a serpent,

in order that they will believe / have confidence that YHWH God of your fathers appeared
to you,
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob.

Exodus 4:8-9, God gives Moses another sign, his hand becoming leprous and being restored,
saying:

- 8 And it will happen, if they will not believe / place confidence to / in you,
and will not listen to (the) voice of the first sign;
and they will believe / place confidence (in) the other sign.
- 9 And it will happen if they will not believe / place confidence also to / in these two signs,
and will not listen to your voice—
and you shall take some water of the Nile,
and you shall pour (it out on) the dry ground.
And the waters will become to blood on the dry ground.
(Here it is not disbelief / lack of confidence in a verbal message, but disbelief in “the voice

of signs—shocking, unusual things—miracles / wonders--that ought to rouse their attention and belief.)

Exodus 4:31, when Aaron told the elders / officials of Israel the words that YHWH had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in their sight,

And the people believed / had confidence;
and they heard that YHWH had visited Israel's children,
and that He saw their affliction / poverty.
And they bowed and they worshiped / prostrated themselves.

Exodus 14:31,

And Israel saw the great hand / power with which YHWH did / acted in Egypt / against (the) Egyptians;
and the people feared / revered YHWH.
And they believed / had confidence in the YHWH,
and In Moses His servant.
(Moses is a servant of YHWH, who suffered much, and in whom the Divine hand was working.)

Exodus 19:9a,

And YHWH spoke to Moses,
Look—I am coming to you in a cloud of the clouds (synonym),
in order that the people will hear when I am speaking with you;
and also, they will believe / place confidence in you to long-lasting-time.

Numbers 14:11,

And YHWH spoke to Moses,
How long will this people spurn Me?
And how long will they not believe / place confidence in Me?
with / in all the signs which I did in its midst?
(A powerful statement of human freedom; YHWH will not force His people to believe!)

Numbers 20:12,

And YHWH spoke to Moses and to Aaron,
Because / on account of you (plural) did not believe in me,
to cause Me to be set-apart to / in Israel's children's eyes,
Therefore you will not cause this assembly / congregation to enter into the land which I gave to them.
(Belief / placing of confidence in YHWH is a struggle, even for the greatest leaders of Israel!)

Deuteronomy 1:32, YHWH has constantly guided and provided for Israel in the wilderness,

And / but in this matter,
you people are not believing / placing confidence in the YHWH your God!
(Long-time experience of Divine providence does not guarantee continued belief!)

Deuteronomy 9:23,

And when YHWH sent you (plural) forth from Kadesh Barnea,
saying Go up, and possess / inherit the land which I gave to you—
and you rebelled against YHWH your God's mouth / voice;
and you did not believe / place confidence in Him,
and you did not listen to / in His voice!
(It is one thing to believe when God is providing for you; it is another thing to believe when He gives you difficult, dangerous assignments!)

Deuteronomy 28:66, the Divine curses that will befall a disobedient Israel include:

And your lives will be hanging for you, in front (of you);
and you will be afraid, (by) night and by day;
and you will not believe / place confidence in your life.
(Loss of faith in YHWH will result in loss of faith in yourself!)

Judges 11:20, King Sihon did not trust Israel to travel through his land.

1 Samuel 27:12, the Philistine King Achish trusted David when David was lying to him.

1 Kings 10:7, the Queen of Sheba did not believe the reports concerning Solomon's words and wisdom.

2 Kings 17:14, the generation that went into exile were like their fathers who did not believe the message of the prophets.

Isaiah 7:9b, Isaiah's famous statement to Judah's King Ahaz:

אִם לֹא תֵאֱמִינוּ

If you (plural) will not believe / have confidence

כִּי לֹא תֵאֱמָנוּ

because you will not be confirmed / established!

Translations vary:

King James, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

Tanakh, "If you will not believe, for you cannot be trusted."

New Revised Standard, "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all." **New International**, same.

New Jerusalem, "If you will not take your stand on me you will not stand firm."

Rahlfs, καὶ ἐὰν μὴ πιστεύσητε οὐδὲ μὴ συνῆτε, "and if you (plural) will not believe, neither will you understand." This Greek translation was used by Augustine as a

“proof-text” for his epistemology—holding that not only must we believe many things that we cannot understand, but also that belief is a necessary condition of understanding. However, the Greek translator was not a Greek philosopher, and this is a very questionable use of the Bible!

Isaiah 28:16,

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look—He founded in Zion a stone,
a stone of testing, a precious cornerstone, a foundation of a foundation--
the one believing / trusting will not be in haste!

Isaiah 43:10,

You (plural) (are) My witnesses--
a saying of YHWH--
and My servant whom I chose,
so that you (plural) will know and will believe to / in Me;
and you will understand that I (am) He.
Before Me no God was formed;
and after Me, there will not be!

Isaiah 53:1,

Who believed / put confidence in our report?
And YHWH's arm, to whom was it revealed?

Jeremiah 12:6, where Jeremiah is told not to believe his own brothers, who are betraying him.

Jeremiah 40:14, Gedaliah does not believe the report that an assassin is coming to kill him.

Jonah 3:5, as a result of Jonah's preaching in the streets of Nineveh,

And Nineveh's men believed / placed confidence in God;
and the proclaimed a fast / going without food,
and they dressed in sack-cloth,
from their great people and as far as their least people.

Micah 7:5, where Micah warns against believing / putting trust in anyone.

Habakkuk 1:5,

Look among the nations, and observe--
and be greatly astonished.
Because I am working a work in your (plural) days--
you will / would not believe if it was told!

Psalms 27:13,

Unless I believed / had confidence
to look on YHWH's goodness in a land of those living—

Psalm 78:22,

Because they did not believe / have confidence in God,
and they did not trust in His deliverance / salvation.

Psalm 78:32,

In all this, they missed-the-mark / sinned still,
and they did not believe in His wonders.

Psalm 106:12, following their going through the Sea of Reeds on dry land, the Israelites:

And they believed / put their confidence in His words;
they sing His praise.

Psalm 106:24, but later, when told to go in and conquer the land of Canaan, the Israelites:

And they rejected a land of delight;
They did not believe / place confidence in His word.

Psalm 116:10,

I trusted / believed, because I will say,
I, I was bowed down / afflicted exceedingly;

Psalm 119:66,

Goodness of taste and knowledge, teach me;
for in your commands I believed / placed confidence.

Job 4:18, where Job says concerning Eloah / God:

Look—He does not believe / put trust in His slaves,
and against His messengers / angels He charges error.

Job 9:16, where Job again says of Eloah / God:

If I summoned (Him into court), and He should answer me,
I would not believe / be confident that He would hear my voice--

Job 15:15, where Eliphaz says concerning El / God:

Look—in His set-apart ones, He will not believe / not have confidence;
and (the) heavens were not pure in His eyes.

Job 15:22, where Eliphaz says of the wicked person:

He does not believe / has no confidence (in) returning from darkness;
and he is marked out for a sword.

Job 15:31, where Eliphaz admonishes the wicked person:

One led astray shall not believe / put confidence in his emptiness,
because emptiness will be his recompense.

Job 24:22, where Job says of Eloah / God:

And He drew mighty men by His strength;
He will arise;
and He will not believe / have confidence in the living.

Job 29:24, where Job is speaking of his earlier life, before his suffering, of his manner of dealing with others;

I would laugh at them—
they would not believe / have confidence;
and my face's light
they would not cause to fall.

Job 39:12, where YHWH asks Job concerning the wild ox:

Will you believe / have confidence in him,
that he will bring back your seed,
and (to) your threshing-floor he will gather (it)?

Job 39:24, where YHWH is describing the war-horse:

With shaking and raging
he swallows ground;
and he will not trust / believe (anything)—
except a trumpet's blast.

Proverbs 14:15,

A simple-minded person will believe / place confidence in / to every word;
and a shrewd person will (seek to) understand his footstep.

Proverbs 26:25, speaking of a person who hates:

When he is gracious with his voice, do not believe / place confidence in him;
for seven abominations (are) in his heart!

Lamentations 4:12,

Kings of earth did not believe / have confidence,
and all those inhabiting (the) earth,
that an adversary and an enemy would enter Jerusalem's gates.

2 Chronicles 9:6, the queen of Sheba did not believe / have confidence in the reports she heard of Solomon's wisdom until she came and saw for herself.

2 Chronicles 20:20,

And they arose early in the morning, and they went out to Tekoa Wilderness;
and when they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood,
and he said, Listen to me Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem!
Believe / place confidence in the YHWH your God, and you will be established!
Believe / place confidence in His prophets, and you will prosper / succeed!

2 Chronicles 32:15, Sennacherib tells the people of Jerusalem not to believe / have confidence in Hezekiah's words.

7. **Passages in the Hebrew Bible Mentioning YHWH's "Arm"**

Exodus 6:6,

Therefore say to Israel's children,
I, YHWH—
and I will bring you forth from beneath your burdens (in) Egypt;
and I will deliver you from their slavery;
and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

Exodus 15:16,

It will fall upon them—terror and dread,
at Your arm's greatness.
They will be silent like the stone,
until Your people will pass over,
until Your people will pass over, O YHWH,
until it will pass over, a people whom You acquired!

Deuteronomy 4:34,

Or has a God attempted to come to take to Himself a nation from a(nother) nation's midst,
with tests / trials, with signs and with wonders / portents, and with war,
and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terrors,
like all that YHWH your God did for you people in Egypt, in your eyes?

Deuteronomy 5:15,

And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt-land,
and YHWH your God brought you forth from there
with a strong hand and an outstretched arm—
for that reason YHWH your God commanded you to observe (the) day of the rest.

Deuteronomy 7:19,

the great tests which your eyes saw
and the signs and the wonders
and the strong hand and the out-stretched arm
with which YHWH your God brought you forth—
in this way YHWH your God will do
to all the peoples before whom you are afraid.

Deuteronomy 9:29,

And they are Your people, and Your inheritance,
whom You brought forth by Your great strength
and by Your outstretched arm!

Deuteronomy 11:2,

And you will know today--
because not your children, who did not know, and who did not see--
YHWH your God's discipline, His greatness,
His strong hand and His outstretched arm;

Deuteronomy 26:8,

And YHWH brought us forth from Egypt
by a strong hand and by an outstretched arm
and by great terror
and by signs and by wonders.

1 Kings 8:42, Solomon mentions in prayer people from foreign countries--

Because they will hear (of) Your name, the great one,
and (of) Your hand, the strong one,
and (of) Your arm, the one stretched out.
And he will come, and he will pray towards this house / temple. **2 Chronicles 6:32,**
similar;

2 Kings 17:36, a priest comes to the foreign people who have been brought to Samaria, to teach them how they must live in the new land of Israel, according to the law of the God of the land:

But (it is) YHWH, Who brought you people up from Egypt-land,
with great strength and with an outstretched arm--
Him you shall fear / revere!
And to Him you shall prostrate yourselves,
and to Him you shall offer sacrifice!

Isaiah 30:30,

And YHWH will cause to be heard His voice's splendor / majesty,
and He will cause to be seen His arm's descent,
with storming anger, and a flame of devouring fire--
a driving storm and rain-storm and hail-stone(s).

Isaiah 33:2,

O YHWH, show favor to us!
For You we waited.
Be their arm for the mornings,
surely our salvation / deliverance in a time of distress!

Isaiah 40:10-11,

- 10 Look—my Lord YHWH with strength will come--
and His arm reigning for Him!
Look—His reward (is) with Him,
and His recompense (is) before Him!
- 11 Like one shepherding his flock, He will shepherd;
with His arm He will gather together lambs;
and in His grasp He will carry (them);
He will lead those giving milk (to their lambs).

Isaiah 48:14,

Gather together, all of you people, and listen!
Who among them declared these things?
YHWH loved him.
He will do / accomplish His desire on Babylon,
and His arm (on the) Chaldeans.

Isaiah 51:5 (twice),

My right-relationship (is) near;
My salvation / deliverance went forth.
And My arm will judge peoples!
For Me coastlands wait,
and for My arm they hope.

Isaiah 51:9,

Awake! Awake!
Dress (Yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!
Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,
(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!
Are You not She,
the One Who cut Rahab in pieces (feminine participle),
Who pierced (feminine participle) (the) Dragon?

Isaiah 52:10,

YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,
to (the) eyes of all the nations;
and all ends of (the) earth will see
our God's salvation / deliverance!

Isaiah 53:1,

Who put confidence in our report?
And YHWH's arm,
to whom was it revealed?

Isaiah 59:16,

And he saw that there is no man
and He was appalled,
because there is no one entreating.
And His arm saved / delivered for Him,
and His right-relationship, it supported Him.

Isaiah 62:8,

YHWH swore by His right hand,
and by (the) arm of His strength,
I will not give your grain again (as) food for your enemies,
and foreigners will not drink you new wine which you toiled for!

Isaiah 63:5,

And I looked, and there was no one helping;
and I was appalled, and there was no one supporting.
And My arm saved / delivered for Me,
and My rage, it supported Me.

Isaiah 63:12,

(Where is the) One leading by Moses' right hand with an arm of His beauty,
dividing waters from before them,
to make for Himself an everlasting name?

Jeremiah 21:5, YHWH warns the people of Jerusalem,

And I, I will fight against you people,
with a stretched out hand, and with a strong arm,
and with anger and with fury, and with great wrath!

Jeremiah 27:5, the envoys of foreign kings are to go and tell their masters this message from YHWH:

I, I made the earth,
(and) the human being,
and the animal(s)—those upon the earth's surface,
with My great strength,
and with My stretched out arm.
And I will give it to whomever is upright in My eyes!

Jeremiah 32:17, Jeremiah prays:

Ah, my Lord YHWH!
Look—You made the heavens and the earth,
by Your great strength, and by Your outstretched arm!
There is nothing too wonderful / marvelous for You!

Ezekiel 20:33-34, Ezekiel is told to say to the house of Israel:

- 33 As I live--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--
if not (a Divine oath) with a strong hand,
and with a stretched-out arm,
and with wrath poured out,
I will reign (as King) over you people!
- 34 And I will send you people forth from the peoples,
and I will gather you from the lands where you were scattered,
by a strong hand, and by an out-stretched arm,
and with wrath poured out!

Psalms 44:3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}, those praying tell God,

You, Your hand dispossessed nations,
and You planted them;
You do evil / hurt to peoples,
and You sent them forth.

Rahifs:

Your hand utterly destroyed nations,
and You planted them;
You did evil / mistreated / harmed peoples,
and You cast them out.

Psalm 71:18,

And also until old age and white hair, O God,
You will not forsake me;
until I declare Your arm to a generation,
to everyone Your greatness will come.

Psalm 77:16^{Heb} / 15^{Eng},

You redeemed Your people with an arm--
children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

Psalm 79:11, the captive Israelites are praying for themselves:

Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You!
According to Your arm's greatness,
leave a remnant of (the) children of death!

Psalm 89:11^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}, in a hymn of praise to YHWH--

You crushed Rahab like one fatally wounded;
with (the) arm of Your strength You scattered Your enemies!

Psalm 89:14^{Heb} / 13^{Eng},

To You (belongs) an arm with strength / might;
Your hand will be strong,
Your right hand will be high / exalted!

Psalm 89:22^{Heb} / 21^{Eng}, speaking of David--

who—My hand will be established with him;
also My arm will strengthen him.

Psalm 98:1,

Sing to the YHWH a new song!
Because / for He did wondrous things!
His right hand and His set-apart arm wrought salvation / deliverance for Him!

Psalm 136:12, recalling YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt—He brought them forth

with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm,
because His steadfast love (is) to long-lasting-time!

Job 40:9, YHWH asks Job,

and if You have an arm like the El / God,
and with a voice like His will you thunder?

Passages in the New Testament Mentioning the Divine “Arm”

Luke 1:51, Mary, in her “Magnificat” states concerning God her Savior, that:

He did / worked strength with His arm,
He scattered proud people in their heart's understanding.

John 12:38 (quoting **Isaiah 53:1**),

In order that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:
Lord, who believed in the message of ours?
And the arm of (the) Lord, to whom was it uncovered / revealed?

Acts 13:17, Paul spoke in a Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, saying:

The God of this people Israel chose our father,
and lifted up / raised high the people during their temporary residence in Egypt-land,
and with a high / uplifted arm led them out of it (Egypt-land).

It is to be noticed that nowhere in the **New Testament** is Jesus Christ described as “the Arm of the Lord.”

8. Psalm 80, Hebrew Text with Tentative Translation

80:1^{Heb} / Title Eng

לְמִנְצַח אֶל־שִׁשְׁנִים

To / for the director, to (the tune of) Lilies

עֲדוֹת לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר:

A testimony to / for Asaph, a song with accompaniment

80:2^{Heb} / 1^{Eng}

רְעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל | הַאֲזִינָה

O Shepherd of Israel, Give ear / Listen!

נִהַג כְּצֹאן יוֹסֵף

(You) Who drives / leads Joseph like the flock,

יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה:

(You) Who sits (enthroned on) the cherubim, Shine forth!

80:3^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}

לְפָנַי אֶפְרַיִם | וּבְנֵימִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Menasseh,

עוֹרְרָה אֶת־גְּבוּרֹתֶיךָ

Rouse up / incite / awaken Your strength / might,

וּלְכֵה לִישׁעָתָה לָנוּ:

and Go (forth) for salvation / deliverance for us!

80:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}

אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ

O God, Cause us to return / Restore us!

וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ

And let Your face shine (upon us)!

וְנִשְׁעָה:

And we will be saved / delivered!

80:5^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}

יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת

O YHWH, God of Armies,

עַד־מַתִּי עֲשַׁנְתָּ בְּתַפְלַת עַמֶּךָ:

How long You fumed at Your people's prayer!

80:6^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}

הֲאִכַלְתֶּם לֶחֶם דִּמְעָה

Did You fed them (the) bread / food of tears?

וַתִּשְׁקְמוּ בְּדִמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ:

And You caused them to drink with tears (by) measure!

80:7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}

תְּשִׂימֵנוּ מִדּוֹן לְשִׁכְנֵינוּ

You place / make us (an object of) contention to our neighbors;

וְאֵיבֵינוּ יִלְעָגוּ-לָמוֹ:

and our enemies mock / laugh within themselves.

80:8^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}

אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ

O God of Armies, Cause us to return / restore us!

וְהָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ

And let Your face shine (upon us)!

וְנִשְׁעָה:

And we will be saved / delivered!

80:9^{Heb} / 8^{Eng}

גִּפְּן מִמִּצְרַיִם תִּסְיַע

A vine from Egypt, You will remove,

תִּגְרֹשׁ גּוֹיִם

You will drive out nations,

וַתִּטְעֵהָ:

and You planted it.

80:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}

פָּנִית לִפְנֵיהָ

You cleared out before it,

וַתִּשְׂרֹשׁ שְׂרָשֶׁיהָ

and it sent down its roots,

וַתִּמְלֵא אֶרֶץ:

and it filled (the) land.

80:11^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}

כַּסּוּ הַרִים צֵלָהּ

Its shadow covered mountains,

וְעִנְפֶיהָ אֲרָזֵי־אֵל:

and its branches, cedars of God.

80:12^{Heb} / 11^{Eng}

תִּשְׁלַח קִצְרֶיהָ עַד־יָם

It sends out its branches (synonym) as far as (the) sea,

וְאֶל־נָהָר יוֹנְקוֹתֶיהָ:

and to a river its shoots.

80:13^{Heb} / 12^{Eng}

לְמַה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדְרֶיהָ

For what reason did You break down its walls,

וְאֹרֹתָ כָּל־עֹבְרֵי דַרְךָ:

and they pick it(s) fruit), all those passing by (its) road.?

80:14^{Heb} / 13^{Eng}

יִכְרַסְמֶנָה חֲזִיר מִיעַר

A boar / pig from a forest tears / ravages it,

וְזִיז שְׂרֵי יַרְעֵנָה:

and moving things / beasts of (the) field pasture (on) it.

80:15^{Heb} / 14^{Eng}

אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב־נָא

God of Armies, please return / change (Your) mind!

הִבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה

Observe from heaven, and see!

וּפְקֹד גִּפְּן זֹאת:

And visit / pay attention to this vineyard,

80:16^{Heb} / 15^{Eng}

וְכִנָּה אֲשֶׁר־נִטְעָה יְמִינְךָ

and (the) stock which Your right hand planted,

וְעַל־בֶּן אֲמַצְתָּה לְךָ:

and upon / for (the) son You made strong for Yourself!

80:17^{Heb} / 16^{Eng}

שָׂרְפָה בְּאֵשׁ כְּסוּחָה

(It was) burned with the fire—they cut it down.

מִנְעֵרַת פְּנֵיךָ יֵאָבְדוּ:

Let them perish from (the) rebuke of Your face!

80:18^{Heb} / 17^{Eng}

תְּהִי־יָדְךָ עַל־אִישׁ יְמִינְךָ

Let Your hand be upon (the) man of Your right-hand,

עַל־בֶּן־אָדָם אֲמַצְתָּ לָּךְ:

upon (the) son of Adam / a human, You made strong for Yourself.

80:19^{Heb} / 18^{Eng}

וְלֹא־נִסּוּג מִמֶּךָ

And we will not move away / backslide from You!

תְּחַיֵּנוּ וּבִשְׁמֶךָ נִקְרָא:

Renew our life, and on Your name we will call.

80:20^{Heb} / 19^{Eng}

יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ

YHWH, God of Armies, cause us to return / restore us!

הָאָר פְּנֶיךָ

Let the light of Your face shine (upon us),

וְנִוְשָׁעָה:

and we will be saved / delivered!

9. **Lamentations 3:1-14**

- 1 I—the (strong) man
he saw affliction / poverty with His (YHWH's) wrath's rod.
- 2 He drove me,
and He leads (into) darkness and not light.
- 3 Surely He turned against me;
He turns (synonym) His hand all the day!
- 4 He wore out my flesh and my skin;
He shattered my bones!
- 5 He built (siege-works) against me,
and surrounded (me) with poison and hardship / weariness.
- 6 He caused me to dwell in dark places,
like dead people (for) long-lasting time!
- 7 He built a wall around me, and I will not / cannot go forth;
He made heavy my bronze (fetter);
- 8 Even when I cry out and call for help,
He shut out my prayer.
- 9 He built a wall around my way with cut-stone;
my pathway He twisted.
- 10 He (is) a bear lying in wait for me,
a lion in hiding-places.
- 11 My ways, He is turning aside;
and He tore me apart.
He made me into a desolation.
- 12 He bent His bow,
and He set me up like the target for the arrow! (Compare **Job 7:20; 16:12**)
- 13 He brought / shot into my kidneys
His quiver's arrows.
- 14 I became laughter / someone to laugh at for all my people;
their taunt-song all the day-long.

10. **Occurrences of the Root כָּרַס, Crush, in the Hebrew Bible**

Isaiah 3:15,

What to you people—you will crush / you crush My people?
And faces of poor people you will grind / you grind?
(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH of Armies!

Isaiah 19:10,

And her buttocks will be crushed;
everyone working for pay, (will be) sad of innermost-being.

Isaiah 53:5,

And he was wounded because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities.
Discipline for our wholeness (was) upon him,
and with his wounds we were healed.

Isaiah 53:10,

And YHWH was pleased to crush him
—He made him sick.
When You will place his innermost being a sin-offering,
he will see descendant(s);
he will extend (his) days;
and YHWH's pleasure will prosper in his hand.

Isaiah 57:15,

Because in this way He spoke—One High and Lifted up,
Who dwells forever, and Set-apart (is) His name:
(In the) height, and (in the) set-apart (place) I will dwell,
and with a contrite / crushed person, and lowly of spirit,
to bring alive (the) spirit of lowly people,
and to bring alive (the) heart of contrite / crushed people!

Jeremiah 44:10,

They were not crushed / humbled until this day;
and they did not fear / revere;
and they did not walk in My torah / teaching and in My statutes,
which I gave before them,
and before their fathers.

Psalms 72:4,

May he make just decisions for humble people;
may he bring salvation to the children of needy people;
and may he crush anyone oppressing!

Psalm 89:11^{Heb} / 12^{Eng}

You, You crushed Rahab, like a pierced / dead body;
with Your arm's strength, You scattered Your enemies.

Psalm 94:5,

Your people, YHWH, they crushed;
and Your heritage, they humble.

Psalm 143:3,

Because an enemy pursued my innermost-being / life;
he crushed my life to the earth.
He caused me to sit in dark places, like those long dead.

Job 4:19, where Eliphaz says concerning mortal man's inability to be just:

Surely those who inhabit houses of clay,
whose foundation(s)–(are) in the dust,
they will be crushed before / more quickly than a moth!

Job 5:4, where Eliphaz says concerning the fool, implying that Job is such a person:

His children will be far from safety;
and they will be crushed in the (city-)gate,
and there is no one delivering (them).

Job 6:9, where Job in answer to Eliphaz tells how he longs for death:

and (would that) Eloah would be willing and would crush me,
He would loose His hand and would cut me off!

Job 19:2, where Job responds to Bildad:

How long will you (plural) cause my innermost-being grief?
And will you crush me with words?

Job 22:9, where Eliphaz charges Job:

You sent widows away empty,
and arms of orphans you crush!

Job 34:25, where Elihu claims that El / God does to evil people:

Therefore He recognizes their works,
and He overturns (them in the) night,
and they are crushed.

Proverbs 22:22,

You (singular) shall not rob a poor person, because he is poor;
and you shall not crush a poor person (synonym) in the gate / court!

Lamentations 3:34, where the lamenter claims it was not YHWH's purpose

to crush beneath His feet
all earth's prisoners...

11.

**Occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the noun מוֹסֵר,
“Discipline / Correction / Punishment”**

Deuteronomy 11:2-6, where the “discipline” of YHWH is to be seen in the history of Israel, as He sought to correct and discipline His people through His powerful deeds during the exodus, including the destruction of Pharaoh’s army, destroying them and their horses and chariots, drowning them in the Red Sea, and His punishments visited upon the Israelites when they rebelled in the wilderness, including causing the earth to swallow up Dathan and his associates when they questioned the authority of Moses. Here the definition “punishment” might be fitting.

Isaiah 26:16,

YHWH, in the tight place / distress, they attended to / visited You;
they poured out a whisper (of prayer when) Your discipline was to / on them.
(That is, when His people were being corrected / disciplined / punished, they prayed to YHWH—evidently for relief.)

Isaiah 53:5, the suffering servant’s wounding and crushing are said to be the discipline / chastisement / punishment that rightfully belonged to those speaking in this passage.

Jeremiah 2:30a,

For the emptiness / vanity I struck your sons / children;
discipline they did not take!
(That is, what YHWH intended as discipline / correction was not received.)

Jeremiah 5:3,

O YHWH! Your eyes, are they not (looking) for true faithfulness?
You struck them, and they were not sick.
You brought them to an end—they refused to take discipline / correction.
They made their faces harder than a rock.
They refused to turn around / repent!

Jeremiah 7:28,

And you (singular) shall say this to them:
(You are) the nation that did not listen to YHWH its God’s voice!
And you did not accept discipline!
The true faithfulness perished,
and it was cut off from their mouth!

Jeremiah 10:8,

And at once they were stupid and were foolish;
correction / discipline of impermanence—it is wood!

Jeremiah 17:23,

And they did not listen, and they did not bend their ear;
and they hardened their neck, so as not to listen;
and so as to not take correction.

Jeremiah 30:14,

All your lovers forgot you!
They do not seek for you!
Because an enemy's blow struck you--
cruel discipline over / for (the) multitude of your iniquity!
Your sins were many / mighty!

Jeremiah 32:33,

And they turned (their) back to Me, and not (their) faces;
and (I sought) to teach them to rise early and to teach--
and they are not listening, to receive discipline / correction!

Jeremiah 35:13,

In this way spoke YHWH of Armies, God of Israel:
Going--and you shall say to a man of Judah and to inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Did you (plural) not accept discipline,
to listen to My words? (It is) a saying of YHWH.

Ezekiel 5:15,

And you will be a reproach and a taunt, correction / discipline / correction and a horror to
the nations that are around you,
when I do judgments in anger and in in rage and in reproofs of rage against you--
I, YHWH, spoke!

Hosea 5:2,

And she slaughtered those swerving aside--they made (their slaughter) deep.
And I--Discipline for all of them!

Zephaniah 3:2,

She did not listen to a voice;
she did not take / accept discipline / correction by the YHWH;
not to her God, she did not draw near!

Zephaniah 3:7,

I said, Surely you (2nd person feminine singular, Jerusalem) will fear / reverence Me,
you will take / receive discipline / correction, and your dwelling-place will not be
cut off.
Everything which I visited upon her--

(but) surely they got up early / hurried,
they spoiled / ruined all their deeds!

Psalm 50:17,

I said, Surely you (2nd person feminine singular, Jerusalem) will fear / reverence Me,
you will take / receive discipline / correction, and your dwelling-place will not be
cut off.

Everything which I visited upon her—
(but) surely they got up early / hurried,
they spoiled / ruined all their deeds!

Job 5:17, where Eliphaz says to Job:

Look—blessed, a man whom Eloah reproves;
and Shaddai's discipline / correction you shall not reject!

Job 12:18, where Job replies to Zophar:

Discipline / correction of kings He loosens;
and He binds a waist-cloth on their hips;

Job 20:3, where Zophar speaks:

Correction of my insult I will hear;
and a spirit from my understanding will answer me.

Job 36:10, where the young man Elihu speaks about El / Supreme God:

And He uncovered their ear to the correction;
and He said that They will / should return from wickedness.

Proverbs 1:2-3, Solomon's proverbs are given for the purpose:

- 2 in order to know wisdom and discipline;
to discern sayings of understanding;
- 3 to take in discipline / correction imparting prudence,
right-relationship, and justice, and upright ways;

(The noun מוֹסֵר, means "discipline," "chastening," "correction." It is not something that is learned by rote, or by simple memorization. Rather, it is something that has to be learned by extended experience, accompanied by a teacher's reproofs and chastening. Amazingly, the **Book of Proverbs** has the power to do just this--showing us what we look like, and sound like, and act like, in such personal areas of life as our sexuality, table manners, the way we gossip or slander, or the way we deal with our finances, teaching the responsive student strong ethics--righteousness, justice, uprightness, etc.)

Proverbs 1:7,

Trembling awe before / Fear of YHWH--beginning of knowledge!
Wisdom and discipline--foolish people despise!

Proverbs 1:8,

Hear, my son, your father's discipline / correction;
and you shall not forsake your mother's **torah** / teaching!

Proverbs 3:11,

YHWH's discipline / correction, my son, you shall not reject / refuse;
and you shall not abhor / dislike greatly His rebuke.

Proverbs 4:1,

Listen, sons--(to the) discipline / correction of a father;
and give attention--to know understanding!

Proverbs 4:13,

Take firm hold on the discipline / correction, you shall not let go);
watch / guard her--because she (is) your life / lives!

Proverbs 5:12, the foolish son who has refused a father's discipline will say at the end of his life,

and you will say, How I hated discipline / correction!
And my heart spurned reproof!

Proverbs 5:23,

He will die in / by there not being discipline / correction!
And in / by (the) greatness of his foolishness, he will err / go astray.

Proverbs 6:23,

Because a lamp--commandment;
and torah / teaching--discipline / correction--light;
and way of life / lives--reproofs / arguments of discipline / correction--

Proverbs 7:22-23, a depiction of a young man who goes into a prostitute:

22 going after her suddenly like a bull goes to (the) slaughter,
and like an **ekhes** to (the) discipline / correction of a fool--

(The phrase **וְכַעֲבֹדֶס**, "and like an **ekhes**," is given varying translations in English: "or as a fool" (**King James**); "like a fool" (**Tanakh**); "like a stag" (**New Revised Standard**); "like a deer" (**New International**); "like an ox" (**New Jerusalem, Murphy and Waltke**). **Brown-Driver-Briggs** gives the definition "anklet" or "bangle" (which means an ornamental circle

23 or bracelet)
until an arrow pierces through his liver,
like a bird hurries into a trap--
and he /it did not know it (was) for his innermost-being / life!

Proverbs 8:10, Lady Wisdom's call includes:

Take My discipline / correction, and not silver / money,
and knowledge more than chosen gold!

Proverbs 8:33,

listen / hear discipline / correction, and be wise;
and you (plural) shall not let loose / remove restraint!

Proverbs 10:17,

Way to lives / life—one keeping / guarding discipline / correction;
and one forsaking / leaving argument / reproof causes going astray.

Proverbs 12:1,

One loving discipline / correction—one loving knowledge!
And one hating reproof / argument—a brute!

Proverbs 13:1,

A wise son—correction / instruction of a father;
and a scorner will not listen to / hear a rebuke.

Proverbs 13:18,

Poverty and dishonor—one letting go of discipline;
And one keeping discipline will be honored.

Proverbs 13:24,

One withholding his rod / staff / club—one hating his son;
and one loving him—discipline / correction awakened him early.

Proverbs 15:5,

A foolish person spurns his father's discipline / correction;
and one keeping / guarding reproof / argument will be crafty.

Proverbs 15:10,

Bad / evil discipline / correction for one forsaking a way;
one hating reproof / argument will die.

Proverbs 15:32,

One letting go of / neglecting discipline / correction—rejecting his innermost-being;
and one listening (to) reproof / argument is getting / buying heart / mind!

Proverbs 15:33,

Reverence for / fear of YHWH—discipline / correction of wisdom;
and before honor / abundance—humility.

Proverbs 16:22,

A spring / fountain of life / lives—prudence / insight / intelligence of its owner / master / *baal*;
and discipline / correction of foolish people—foolishness / folly.

Proverbs 19:20,

Listen to / hear advice / counsel, and gather discipline / correction,
so that you will be wise in your future.

Proverbs 19:27,

Cease, my son, to hear / listen to discipline / correction—
to go astray from words of knowledge!

Proverbs 22:15,

Foolishness—bound up in (the) heart / mind of a youth;
a rod of discipline / correction will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:12,

Cause to enter (in)to the discipline / correction, your heart / mind!
And your ear, to words of knowledge!

Proverbs 23:13,

You (singular) shall not withhold from a youth discipline / correction;
if you strike him with the rod, he will not die!

Proverbs 23:23,

Purchase true faithfulness, and do not sell (it)
--wisdom, and discipline / correction, and understanding!

Proverbs 24:32, said by a person watching the field of a lazy person:

And I, I observed; I will place (it in) my heart;
I saw, I took (in) discipline / correction.

12.

Ezekiel 34:1-16

1 And YHWH's word was to me, saying:
2 Son of a human, prophesy concerning Israel's shepherds;
prophesy! And you shall say to them, to the shepherds,
In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Woe! Shepherds of Israel--
who were shepherding them--
Is it not the flock the shepherds were shepherding?
3 You (plural) eat the fat,
and you clothe yourself with the wool;
you sacrifice the fat one--
you do not shepherd / tend to the flock!
4 Those made weak / sick, you did not strengthen,
and the one being weak / sick you did not heal;
and the one having been broken, you did not bind up;
and the one going astray you did not return;
and the one perishing you did not seek.
And with force you ruled them,
and with harshness / severity.
5 And they were scattered from lack of a shepherd;
and they became food / prey to every wild animal of the field;
and they were scattered.
6 My flock goes astray on all the mounains,
and upon every high hill;
and over all the land's surfaces My flock was scattered,
and there is no one seeking,
and there is no one searching.
7 Therefore, shepherds, hear YHWH's word:
8 As I live--
(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH,
if I will not,
because of My flock's becoming booty / spoil,
and My flock became for food to every wild animal of the field,
from there being no one shepherding--
and My shepherds did not seek My flock,
and the shepherds shepherded themselves,
and My flock they did not shepherd--
9 therefore the shepherds--hear YHWH's word!
In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look at Me! To the shepherds.
And I will seek My flock from their hand;
and I will stop them from shepherding My flock!
And they will not again shepherd, the ones shepherding them.
And I will deliver My flock from their mouth;
and they will not be food for them!
11 Because in this was my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look at Me--(it is) !!

And I will seek My flock,
and I will search for them--
12 like a shepherd's searching (for) his herd,
on a day of his being in (the) midst of his scattered flock!
In this way I will search (for) My flock;
and I will deliver them from all the places where they were scattered,
in a day of cloud(s) and heavy clouds.
13 And I will cause them to go forth from the peoples;
and I will gather them from the lands;
and I cause them to enter into their ground;
and I will shepherd them to / upon Israel's mountains,
by the (water-) channels,
and in all the land's dwelling-places!
14 In good pasture(s) I will shepherd them,
and on Israel's high mountains will be their dwelling / pasture.
There they will sleep in a good dwelling / pasture,
and fat / rich pasture they will graze,
to / on Israel's mountains.
15 I, I will shepherd My flock;
and I, I will cause them to sleep--
(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!
16 The one perishing I will seek,
and the one banished / driven out I will return;
and I will bind up the one broken;
and the sick / weak one I will strengthen;
and the fat one and the strong one I will exterminate!
I will shepherd it (My flock) with justice!
(It is this imagery of the flock that is in the background of **Isaiah 53.**)

13. Occurrences of the Hiphil Verb הִפְגִּיעַ, hiphgiya(in the Hebrew Bible

Isaiah 53:6,

All of us like the flock (of sheep or goats) went astray,,
each one to his (own) way, we turned.

And YHWH caused to interpose / fall, upon him
the guilt / iniquity of all of us.

(This interposition that fell upon the suffering servant was indeed violent in nature, but it meant relief and forgiveness for those on whose behalf he interposed.)

Isaiah 53:12,

Therefore I will assign a portion to him with the many,
and with mighty people he will divide spoil.

Because, he poured out his innermost being to death,
and he was counted with (the) rebels.

And he bore (the) missing-of-the-mark of many,
and for the rebellious he interposed

(Again, the suffering servant's interposition meant violence done to him, but the bringing of salvation / deliverance for the rebellious.)

Isaiah 59:16,

And He saw that there is no man
and He was appalled,
because there is no one entreating / interposing.

And His arm saved / delivered for Him,
and His right-relationship, it supported Him.

(It may be that violent action is intended here, i.e., fighting against evil.)

Jeremiah 15:11,

YHWH said, Have I not freed you for good?
Have I not interposed for you in a time of evil,
and in a time of distress with the enemy?

(This probably means a violent action on the part of YHWH, on Israel's behalf.)

Jeremiah 36:25,

And also Elnathan and Delayahu and Gemaryahu interposed with the king,
so as not to burn the scroll.

(This is not a violent action, but an entreaty to stop the violent action of burning the scroll.)

Job 36:32,

*Upon (His) hands He covered with light;
*and He commanded concerning it with a mark.

King James, “With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it *not to shine* by the *cloud* that cometh betwixt. (or, that interposes)

Tanakh, “Lightning fills His hands; He orders it to hit the mark.”

New Revised Standard, “He covers his hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark.” **New International** and **New Jerusalem**, similar.

(If “strike the mark” is correct, with lightning as the subject, this is indeed a violent action; but the text may mean just “light,” and what is meant by the hiphil participle **בְּמִפְגֵּיעַ** is uncertain.)

14.

Comparison of Hebrew Text of Isaiah 53:8-12

With Its English and Greek (Rahlfs) Translations

8

מֵעֶצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לְקַח

From / out of / by oppression and from / out of / by justice / legal decision he was taken;

וְאֶת־דֹּרוֹ מִי יְשׁוּחָהּ

and his generation, who shall talk / sing about?

כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

Because / that he was cut off from (the) land of life / living ones,

מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לָמוֹ:

from / out of / by my people's transgression a stroke / plague / mark to them.

Translations vary:

King James, "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Tanakh, "By oppressive judgment he was taken away, Who could describe his abode? For he was cut off from the land of the living Through the sin of my people, who deserved the punishment."

New American Standard, "By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people."

New International, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished."

New Jerusalem, "Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken. Which of his contemporaries was concerned at his having been cut off from the land of the living, at his having been struck dead for his people's rebellion?"

Rahlfs, ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἢ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἦρθη τὴν γενεὰν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγήσεται ὅτι αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἢ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνομιῶν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ἦχθη εἰς θάνατον, "In the humiliation the judgment / justice of his was taken away; the generation of his, who shall relate fully? Because / that his life is being taken up / away from the earth; from / on account of the acts of lawlessness of the people of mine he was led to death." (Notice the use of the present tense at the beginning of the last sentence.)

9

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קְבֹרוֹ

And he / He gave / placed with wicked people his grave,

וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמֹתוֹ

and with a wealthy person in his death—

עַל לֹא־חָמַס עָשָׂה

upon / on account of he did no violence / wrong,

וְלֹא מִרְמָה בְּפִיו:

and no deceit / treachery (was) in his mouth.

The first line is translated variously, from “And he made his grave...” to “And his grave was set among...” to “They made his grave...” to “He was assigned a grave with...” to “He was given a grave with...”

Rahlfs translates **verse 9** by:

καὶ δώσω τοὺς πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῆς ταφῆς αὐτοῦ

And I will give the wicked people instead of / for his burial,

καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἀντὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ

and the wealthy people instead of / for his death.

ὅτι ἀνομίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν

Because he did not do lawlessness,

οὐδὲ εὐρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ,

neither was guile / deceit found in his mouth.”

10 וַיְהִי־וְהָיָה חֶפְצֵךְ יְהוָה בְּכַאוֹ

And / but YHWH took delight to crush him,

הַחֲלִי

He made him sick.

אִם־תָּשִׂים אֱשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ

If You will place / make his innermost-being / life a guilt-offering,

יִרְאֶה זֶרַע

he will see seed / descendant(s),

יִאָרְכֶיךָ יָמִים

he will prolong days,

וְחֶפְצֵךְ יְהוָה בִּידּוֹ יִצְלַח:

and YHWH's delight will prosper / be successful in his hand!

Translations vary:

King James, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

Tanakh, “But the LORD chose to crush him by disease, That, if he made himself an offering for guilt, He might see offspring and have long life, And that through him the LORD's purpose might prosper.”

New Revised Standard, “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.”

Rahlfs, καὶ κύριος βούλεται καθαρῖσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς ἐὰν δῶτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν ὄψεται σπέρμα μακρόβιον καὶ βούλεται κύριος ἀφελῆιν, “And Lord wishes / desires to cleanse him of the plague. If you (2nd person plural) should give the life / self of yours (plural) on account of / on behalf of wing, it / he will see long-

lived seed / descendants, and Lord wishes / determines to take away (see the next verse for the object of this verb, which is “from the pain of his life / self”).

- 11 מֵעֵמֶל נַפְשׁוֹ יֵרְאֶה
From / out of / by (the) trouble / labor / toil of his innermost-being / life he will see,
יִשְׂבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ
he will be satisfied in his knowledge.
יְצַדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים
My servant will make righteous a righteous person for the many.
וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל:
And their guilts / iniquities he will bear.

Translations vary:

- King James**, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”
- Tanakh**, “Out of his anguish he shall see it; He shall enjoy it to the full through his devotion. “My righteous servant makes the many righteous, It is their punishment that he bears;” (indicating the beginning of a Divine voice speaking in the second half);
- New Revised Standard**, “Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”
- New International**, “After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”
- New Jerusalem**, “After the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light and be content. By his knowledge, the upright one, my servant will justify many by taking their guilt on himself.”
- Rahfs**, ἀπὸ τοῦ πόνου τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι αὐτῷ φῶς καὶ πλάσαι τῇ συνέσει δικαιοῶσαι δίκαιον εἶ δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς καὶ τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν αὐτὸς ἀνοίσει, “From the labor / toil / pain of his life / self to show to him light, and to form / mold / create in / by the understanding to justify / pronounce righteous a righteous person, well serving many people. And their sins he himself will bear / carry.

- 12 לְכֵן אֶחְלַק-לוֹ בְּרַבִּים
Therefore I will divide to him / cause him to inherit with the many,
וְאֶת-עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל
and with strong ones he will divide / cause to inherit spoil (of victory).
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לְמוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ
Because he bared his innermost-being / life to the death;
וְאֶת-פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה
and with those rebelling / transgressing he was numbered.

וְהוּא חָטְאֵי רַבִּים נָשָׂא

and he, he bore / lifted up (the) sin of many people,

וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יַפְגִּיעַ:

and for the rebels / transgressors he made entreaty / interposed.

Translations vary:

King James, “Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Tanakh, “Assuredly, I will give him the many as his portion, He shall receive the multitude as his spoil. For he exposed himself to death And was numbered among the sinners, Whereas he bore the guilt of the many And made intercession for sinners.”

New Revised Standard, “Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

New Jerusalem, “Hence I shall give him a portion with the many, and he will share the booty with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and for being counted as one of the rebellious, whereas he was bearing the sin of many and interceding for the rebellious.”

Rahlfs, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν μεριεῖ σκῦλα ἀνθ' ὧν παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἢ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη καὶ αὐτὸς ἀμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν καὶ διὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη, “Because of this he will inherit many people; and with the strong ones he will divide spoils (of victory), in return for which / because his innermost being / life was handed over / betrayed to death, and with / among the lawless people he was considered. And he himself took up (the) sins of many people, and because of their sins he was handed over / betrayed.”

What do you think? Do you agree with Knight that these five verses are at various places “obscure,” that is “unclear,” “uncertain”? We do. And we think it is irresponsible to build dogmatic theories / doctrines on the basis of such uncertain statements.

15. **1 Peter 2:13-25, English Translation**

- 13 Be subject to every human institution / creation
on account of the Lord / for the Lord's sake--
whether to a king as having authority / being over (you),
- 14 whether to leaders / governors as being sent by him (the king),
for punishment of evil-doers,
and then praise of those doing good.
- 15 Because in this way it is the will of the God:
(by) doing good,
to put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.
- 16 As free people,
and not as having freedom as a cover-up of evil,
but rather as slave / servants of God!
- 17 Honor everyone;
love the brotherhood;
fear / revere the God,
honor the king.
- 18 The household servants / slave, being obedient with all fear / awe to the masters / owners,
not only to the good and kind ones,
but rather also to the unscrupulous / dishonest ones.
- 19 For this (is) grace / graciousness / wins a favorable response from God,
if because of consciousness of God,
some endures pains / sorrows, suffering unjustly.
- 20 For what manner of fame / glory is it,
missing-the-mark / sinning and being beaten you endure?
But rather, is doing good, and suffering, you endure,
this is grace / graciousness / wins a favorable response from God.
- 21 For it is for this (very thing) you (plural) were called--
because also Christ suffered on your behalf,
leaving behind an example,
so that you should follow in his footsteps:
- 22 Who did no missing-of-the-mark / sin,
neither was deceit found in his mouth;
- 23 Who, being reviled, was not reviling in return;
suffering, he was not threatening,
but then he was entrusting himself to the One judging rightly;

- 24 Who himself took up our missings-of-the-mark
in his body upon the wooden (post);
in order that having died to the missings-of-the-mark / sins,
we might live for right-relationship / righteousness;
by whose wound / bruise you (plural) were healed!
- 25 For you were like sheep being led astray;
but rather, now you turned back / returned
to / upon the shepherd and overseer of your innermost-beings!

16. Occurrences of the Noun **חַמָּס**, **chamas**, “Violence,” “Wrong” in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 6:11, 13 (stated reason for the coming of the flood in Noah’s day; that same kind of violence has been inflicted on the servant of YHWH);

Genesis 16:5; 49:5 (Simeon and Levi have used “weapons of violence” in their attack on helpless Shechem);

Exodus 23:1 (a false witness whose testimony causes violence to be done); **Deuteronomy 19:16** (similar);

Judges 9:24 (Abimelech’s violent murder of the 70 sons of Gideon);

2 Samuel 22:3 (YHWH has saved David from violence, i.e., from a violent death), **49** (similar);

Isaiah 53:9 (the servant of YHWH is not guilty of violence);

Isaiah 59:6 (in description of the wicked);

Isaiah 60:18 (violence will no longer be heard of when YHWH’s salvation comes);

Jeremiah 6:7 (violence and destruction are heard of in Jerusalem, leading to her destruction); **20:8** (similar);

Jeremiah 51:35 (Jerusalem wants the violence done to her by Babylon to be visited upon Babylon), **46**, similar;

Ezekiel 7:11, 23 (Jerusalem is filled with violence, that is why “the end” has come upon her);

Ezekiel 8:17 (Judah has filled her land with violence); **12:19** (similar);

Ezekiel 28:16 (Tyre was filled with violence);

Ezekiel 45:9 (YHWH calls upon the princes of Israel to put away violence);

Joel 4:19^{Heb} / 3:19^{Eng} (Egypt will become a waste because of the violence done to Israel);

Amos 3:10 (the Philistines hoard up violence in their citadels);

Amos 6:3 (those at ease in the mountain of Samaria are bringing on “the seat of violence”);

Obadiah 1:10 (Edom has done violence to his brother Judah);

Jonah 3:8 (the king of Nineveh orders his people to put away their violence);

Micah 6:12 (the wealthy people of Jerusalem are full of violence);

Habakkuk 1:2, 3 (Habakkuk sees violence all around him in the nation),

Habbakuk 1:9 (the invading Chaldeans come for violence);

Habakkuk 2:8 (the proud conqueror of other nations will suffer because of the violence he has done), **17, 17** (similar);

Zephaniah 1:9 (people in Jerusalem fill the temple with violence);

Malachi 2:16 (YHWH hates the person who covers his garment with violence);

Psalm 7:17^{Heb} / 16^{Eng} (his violence done to others will return upon the head of the impenitent);

Psalm 11:5 (YHWH hates the person who loves violence);

Psalm 18:49^{Heb} / 48^{Eng}, same as **2 Samuel 22:3**);

Psalm 25:19 (enemies hate with hatred of violence);

Psalm 27:12 (false witnesses breathe out violence); **35:11** (similar);

Psalm 55:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng} (violence is in the city);

Psalm 58:3^{Heb} / 2^{Eng} (wicked rulers have violence in their hands);

Psalm 72:14 (a good king rescues the poor from violence);

Psalm 73:6 (wicked people are covered with a garment of violence);

Psalm 74:20 (dark places of the land are filled with habitations of violence);

Psalm 140:2, 5, 12^{Heb} (verses 1, 4, 11^{Eng} (“people of violence”));

Job 16:17 (Job insists that he has no violence in his hands);

Job 19:7 (Job cries out “Violence!”, but gets no answer);

Proverbs 3:31 (Do not envy a man of violence);

Proverbs 4:17 (wicked people drink the wine of violence);

Proverbs 10:6 (the mouth of the wicked conceals violence), **11** (similar);

Proverbs 13:2 (a treacherous person desires violence);

Proverbs 16:29 (a man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a bad way);

Proverbs 26:6 (a fool “drinks violence”);

1 Chronicles 12:18^{Heb} / 17^{Eng} (there is no violence in David's hands).

17. **Job's Vitriolic Attack on El / Supreme God, Job 16:7-17**

7 Surely now He wearied me;
You ravaged all my testimony / company.
8 And you seized me--it was for a witness;
and my leanness rose up against me;
in my face it will testify.
9 His anger tore, and He bore a grudge against me;
He ground His teeth against me.
My Adversary sharpens His eyes at me.
10 They opened wide their mouths against me;
with insult they struck my cheek;
as one they massed themselves against me.
11 El / Supreme God delivers me up to an unjust one,
and into (the) hands of wicked people.
12 I was at ease, and He shattered me;
and He took strong hold by my neck,
and He dashed me to pieces;
and He set me up for Himself for a target.
13 His archers surround me;
He slashes open my kidneys,
and will have no mercy;
He pours out my gall to the earth.,
14 He breaks through me--a breaking upon a breaking's surface;
He runs against me like a mighty man.
15 Sack-cloth I sewed upon my skin,
and I thrust (?) my dignity in the dust.
16 My face was reddened from weeping,
and upon my eye-lids a shadow of death--
17 upon no wrong in my hands,
and my prayer--pure.

Remember that in **Job 42:7** YHWH affirms that Job has said what is right! Do you believe God really treats His people in such terrifying ways?

18.

Occurrences of the Phrase אָשֶׁר תַּחַת in the Hebrew Bible

Numbers 25:13,

And it will be for him and for his seed / descendants after him a long-lasting covenant of
priesthood;
because he was jealous for his God,
and he covered over / atoned for / on behalf of Israel's children.

Deuteronomy 21:14, speaking of a captured woman whom an Israeli

And it will happen--if you were not pleased with her,
and you will send her away to wherever she desires;
and you may definitely not sell her for the money!
You will not deal tyrannically with her--
in return for the fact that you oppressed her!"

Deuteronomy 28:47, the curses that will come upon Israel will be a sign:

because you did not serve YHWH your God
with gladness and with goodness of heart--
from (the) greatness of everything (He did for you).

Deuteronomy 28:62,

And you (plural) shall be left remaining with a few men,
instead of their being like the heavens' stars for multitude--
because you did not listen to YHWH your God's voice.

1 Samuel 26:21,

And Saul said, I sinned!
Return, my son David!
Because I will not do evil to you again!
On account of my innermost-being / life was precious in your eyes this very day.
Look--I acted foolishly, and I went astray exceedingly!

2 Kings 22:17, Huldah the prophetess tells Josiah that disaster is coming upon Judah,

on account of they forsook Me,
and they offered sacrifice to other Gods,
in order to provoke Me with every deed of their hand(s).
And My wrath will be kindled against this place,
and it will not be quenched! **2 Chronicles 34:25,** similar.

Isaiah 53:12,

Therefore I will divide to him / cause him to inherit with the many,
and with strong ones he will divide / cause to inherit spoil (of victory).
Because he bared his innermost-being / life to the death;
and with those rebelling / transgressing he was numbered.
and he, he bore / lifted up (the) sin of many people,
and for the rebels / transgressors he made entreaty / interposed.

Jeremiah 29:19, Judah will be sent into exile among the nations,

because you (plural) did not listen to My words,
(it is) a saying of YHWH,
which I sent you you–(by) My servants the prophets,
arising early and sending.
And you did not listen! (It is) a saying of YHWH.

Jeremiah 50:7, speaking about Israel as a nation of lost sheep,

Everyone finding them devoured them.
And their enemies said, We are not guilty,
on account of they sinned against YHWH, a habitation of righteousness,
and YHWH (was) their fathers' hope.

Ezekiel 36:34,

And the land that was made desolate will be worked / cultivated,
instead of when it was a desolation in the eyes of all passing through.

2 Chronicles 21:12,

And a letter came to him [Jehoram] from Elijah the prophet, saying:
In this way YHWH, God of David your father spoke:
Because you did not walk in Jehoshaphat your father's ways,
and in Asa, King of Judah's ways...

