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The Servant of YHWH during the Babylonian Exile: An Extension of an Existing Israelite Mission, or a New Departure?

Sługa JHWH podczas wygnania babilońskiego: rozszerzenie istniejącej misji Izraela czy nowe wyjście?

Abstract: The question of how Israel looked outward historically is a long-standing one. Is there a genuine tradition of proselytism in the Old Testament? Although there are indications of Abraham's proselytism and his belief that the blessings of God would extend through him to all nations, the missionary dimension was almost non-existent through the centuries which followed. Israel was engaged in virtually continuous wars against its neighbours, both to consolidate its borders and ensure its survival, and consequently became focussed on itself. The emergence of the Servant of YHWH in the sixth century B.C. represents a drastic shift to an altogether more altruistic orientation. To appreciate the depth of the missionary or salvific undertaking of the Servant, the various dimensions of his identity, as unfolded in the texts of Isaiah, will be explored. His liberating mission was directed towards the people of Israel and to the gentiles, as is seen in the four Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah, where he is depicted as: a) Servant, the Executor of Social Justice (Isa 42:1–4); b) Servant, the Mediator between YHWH and His peoples (Isa 49:1–6), c) Servant, the Preacher of Liberation (Isa 50:4–9), d) Servant, the Promulgator of Salvation (Isa 52:13–53:12). The figure we encounter in the Servant Songs is really unique in the history of Israel, and stands out in striking contrast to all the other prominent figures we might consider in the nation's history. His liberating mission during the Babylonian exile is also unparalleled. There are therefore ample grounds for concluding that the Servant's mission to extend salvation to both Israel and the gentiles is not an extension of the existing Israelite mission, but is of an entirely new order.

Keywords: mission, identity, Servant of YHWH, Israel, Deutero-Isaiah, mediator, social justice, liberation, salvation, proselytism

Abstrakt: Autor artykułu ponawia pytanie o postawę Izraela wobec innych narodów i tradycję prozelityzmu w Starym Testamencie. Chociaż istnieją ślady prozelityzmu u Abrahama i jego wiary, że błogosławieństwa Boga rozciągną się dzięki niemu na

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wszystkie narody, wymiar misyjny w Izraelu właściwie nie istniał w kolejnych wiekach. Izrael – zaangażowany w ciągłe wojny ze swoimi sąsiadami, zarówno w celu umocnienia swoich granic, jak i zapewnienia sobie przetrwania – skupił się tylko na sobie. Pojawienie się Sługi JHWH w VI wieku p.n.e. stanowi przełom w kierunku bardziej altruistycznej orientacji. Aby docenić głębię misyjnego lub zbawczego przedsięwzięcia Sługi, zbadane zostaną różne wymiary jego tożsamości w tekstach Izajasza. Wyzwoleńcza misja Sługi, skierowana nie tylko do ludu Izraela, ale również do pogan, widoczna jest w czterech Pieśniach u Deutero-Izajasza, gdzie Sługa przedstawiony został jako: a) wykonawca sprawiedliwości społecznej (Iz 42,1–4); b) Pośrednik między JHWH a Jego narodami (Iz 49,1–6), c) Głosiciel Wyzwolenia (Iz 50,4–9), d) Głosiciel Zbawienia (Iz 52,13–53,12). Postać, którą spotykamy w Pieśniach Sługi, jest naprawdę wyjątkowa w historii Izraela i wyróżnia się znacząco na tle innych wybitnych postaci z historii tego narodu, a jego wyzwoleńcza misja podczas wygnania babilońskiego również nie znajduje odpowiednika. Istnieją zatem wystarczające podstawy, aby stwierdzić, że misja Sługi polegająca na rozszerzeniu zbawienia zarówno na Izrael, jak i na pogan, nie jest rozszerzeniem istniejącej misji Izraela, ale należy do zupełnie nowego porządku.

Słowa kluczowe: misja, tożsamość, Sługa JHWH, Izrael, Deutero-Izajasz, pośrednik, sprawiedliwość społeczna, wyzwolenie, zbawienie, prozelityzm

Introduction

Scholars of Isaiah are virtually unanimous in dividing the book into three segments, namely Proto-Isaiah (1–39), Deutero-Isaiah (40–55), and Trito-Isaiah (56–66), with these divisions being based mainly on thematic and stylistic grounds as well as on historical context. Within this division, commentators of various epochs have observed that Deutero-Isaiah (or Second Isaiah) stands out against the other two, as it comprises the four distinguished Servant Songs (42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12),[1] named after their protagonist "the Servant of YHWH" (*ʿeḇeḏ YHWH*).[2] The "Servant of YHWH" becomes the

[1] Study of Isaiah gained great impetus with Bernhard Duhm's commentary on these prophetic writings published in 1892. As well as dividing the entire book of Isaiah into three, Duhm argued that the Servant Songs were created later, originally written in the margins of the scroll or in spaces between sections. Cf. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892), 311–13. Although at first Duhm's interpretation had quite a following, it has held less credence in recent years.

[2] The root word *ʿbd* occurs in its substantive form around 800 times in the MT as a whole and 40 times in Isaiah alone. In the Proto-Isaiah (1–39), the substantive *ʿeḇeḏ* occurs nine times (14:2; 20:3; 22:20; 24:2; 36:9, 11; 37:5, 24, 35), in Deutero-Isaiah (40–55) – 21 times (41:8, 9; 42: 1, 19[bis]; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21[bis], 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5, 6, 7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; and 54:17) and in Trito-Isaiah (56–66) – ten times (56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13 [thrice], 14, 15; and 66:14). The expression *ʿeḇeḏ YHWH* is not found in any of the Servant Songs; rather,

"Suffering Servant" in the Fourth Servant Song on account of his exceptional call, mission, sufferings, death, and exaltation.

The siege and the subsequent surrender of Jerusalem to the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II in 597 B.C. paved the way for the initial phase of deportation of the Judahites to Babylon. The ultimate destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the eventual deportation to Babylon, and the gruelling exile of the people of Israel until the downfall of the Babylonian empire in 539 B.C. provide the immediate historical setting for the Servant Songs. Against the background of these historical events, this article attempts to delve into the missionary face of Israel in two respects: Firstly, the initial glimpses into Israel's missionary mindset as seen in the Sacred Scripture and in the rabbinic literature. Secondly, setting off a new missionary hallmark by the Servant of YHWH during the exilic period. We will see the contrast between the rather non-missionary nature of Israel and the altruistic Servant of YHWH, acting for all, as expressed through all four Servant Songs. It is this matchless identity of the Servant that makes him equal to his unique missionary task.

Initial Traces of the Missionary Mindset of Israel

The fleeting glimpses that we are offered of Israel's missionary mindset begin with Abraham, and become very tenuous in the succeeding centuries. Abraham's polytheistic family background and his becoming the first ardent convert to and adherent of monotheistic faith[3] in clearly attested to in Scripture (Josh 24:2;

it is a theological formulation. It is *ʿaḇdî* that recurs in 42:1; 49:3, 6; 52:13; and 53:11. Among the multiple possible meanings of *ʿeḇeḏ* – namely servant, slave, officer, and worshiper of the word – the meaning to be preferred through the contextual analysis is "Servant." Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, "*ʿeḇeḏ*," in *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Clarendon, 2000), 714. Underscoring this servile dimension, the title *ʿeḇeḏ YHWH* ("Servant of YHWH") is used 22 times to designate a person/persons who had an extraordinary upbringing and exceptional relationship with YHWH. It is used to refer to Moses, to Joshua [bis], to David [bis] and finally to Israel in Isa 42:19. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel are called *ʿăḇāḏeyḵā* ("your servants") in Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27; Also cf. Gen 26:24; Ps 105:6, and 42. Moses is designated more than forty times with the title of YHWH's "servant." Subsequently, down through the centuries the prophets are frequently referred to as "my/your/his servant(s) or prophet(s)." Cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 93.

3 The concepts of proselyte and proselytism are directly connected to the Greek verbal form *proserchomai*, "I approach." In the Septuagint the substantive *prosēlytos* 'proselyte' often

Jdt 5:7). The undisputed biblical texts do not provide the same confidence about Abraham's role as the quintessential proselytizer. Gen 12:5 is among possible texts revealing Abraham's proselytism: "Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the souls (*hannepeš*) whom they had made (*ʿāsû*) in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan." The translation of *hannepeš* as 'souls' (rather than 'persons') is well supported by the Septuagint (*psychē*) and the Vulgate (*animas*). As regards the translation of *ʿāsû* as *ktáomai* in the Septuagint and as *fecerant* in the Vulgate, theological opinion varies. Here, the connotation of *ʿāsû* as 'made' seems to be more appropriate to the context than 'acquired', as Abraham was not merely gathering the people from Haran, but was rather forming a group of people on his journey to the Promised Land.[4] Usually in the texts that bear the stamp of the Priestly Editor, *hannepeš* is interpreted as 'persons' in the context of the purchase of slaves and thereby *ʿāśâ* is translated as 'acquiring', a translation which lends no support to Abraham's missionary conduct. Such support for Abraham's proselytism is found however when *hannepeš* is translated as 'souls'. It can be taken to refer to the conversion of Abraham's household, and even of the natives of Haran. In fact, the article *ha* + substantive in *hannepeš* indicates the totality of the people.[5]

Targums also support the conjecture about proselytism in the Abrahamic tradition:

Tg. Onq. 12:5: "And Abram took his wife Sarai, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had acquired, *and the souls whom they had subjected to the Law in Haran* (*wyt npšt' dšʿbydw lawryta bḥrn*)."[6]

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occurs as the translation of *gēr*. The Hebrew verb *gûr* means 'to sojourn'; *gēr* accordingly means a 'resident alien' or 'stranger' who has come to settle in the land and is distinguished from *nôḵrî* or *ḇən nēḵār*, which means a 'temporary resident' who is only passing through the country. According to the rigid Pharisaic-Palestinian point of view, proselytism is that process whereby a gentile sojourner is converted to Judaism by being circumcised, baptized, and offering a sacrifice in the temple. Cf. W. E. Nunnally, "Proselyte," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1089; cfr. David C. Carlson, "Proselyte," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1784.

4 Cf. Thomas Edward McComiskey, "*ʿāśâ*," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 701.

5 Cf. Emmanuele Testa, *Genesi: Introduzione – storia dei Patriarchi*, La Sacra Bibbia 2 (Torino: Marietti, 1974), 293.

6 Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (Denver, CO: Ktav, 1982), 78–79.

Tg. Neof. 12:5: "And Abraham took Sarai his wife and Lot, his brother's son, and all their wealth which they had acquired *and the souls they had converted* (*wyt npšth dy gyyrw*)."[7]

The early rabbinic literature portrays Abraham as a zealous missionary who ardently proclaimed his monotheistic faith.[8] His preaching was solidly founded on the charitable activities of serving food, assisting the pagans in their daily life, thereby bringing them closer to the Jewish people, religion, and to the God of Israel. Palestinian Tannaitic Midrash *Sifre on Deuteronomy* supplements references to this proactive missionary tradition with its interpretation of Gen 12:5 and Deut 6:5. In Gen 12:5, "Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired (*ʿāsû*) in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan." According to this Midrash, the "making" (*ʿāśâ*) of people may mean the purchase of slaves or the conversion of Abraham's household, which would be interpreted as proselytism. Secondly, we get a typical midrashic interpretation of "and love your God" (*wəʾāhaḇtā ʾēṯ YHWH*) found in Deut 6:5, in the words "and you make your God beloved" (*wəʾihaḇtā ʾēṯ YHWH*). It's a commandment intending God to be loved by all, a phrase normally used to include non-Jews.[9]

Further, the presence of certain non-Israelite characters like Rahab, Ruth, and Tamar interwoven in the religious history of Israel is an unassailable fact that confronts us with the definite indication of proselytism. Isa 56:3 makes a clear reference to the proselytism in the Old Testament: "Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.'"

For all the above, Israel's missionary consciousness not only in Deutero-Isaiah but also in the whole of Old Testament is highly debatable. The biblical scholarship is rather unanimous in refuting any idea of missionary activity on

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7 Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 86; Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti 1: An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis: Including Full Rabbinic Parallels*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 2000), 86.

8 Cf. James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*, 2 vols. (Lovanii: Peeters, 1989), 69.

9 Moshe Lavee, "Converting the Missionary Image of Abraham: Rabbinic Traditions Migrating from the Land of Israel to Babylon," in *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, ed. Martin Goodman, Geurt Hendrik van Kooten, and Jacques van Ruiten, Themes in Biblical Narrative 13 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 204–6.

the part of the people of Israel in its comparatively long history.[10] First of all, monotheistic belief was not deeply rooted in the religious consciousness of Israel in the pre-exilic period. After the association with the Canaanite polytheistic belief in the pre-exilic period, Israel's religiosity developed from a monolatrous phase to the monotheistic and apocalyptic creed during the Babylonian captivity.[11] Obviously, in this context the proclamation of an unknown God is a hazardous task.

Secondly, the neighbouring nations were viewed by Israel as its political and religious rivals who would pose constant threats geographical conquests and religious adulterations which frequently sought to insinuate their way into Israel's worship. As a result, a distant possibility to include eunuchs, bastards, Ammonites, and Moabites among the people of Israel is written off in Deut 23:1–3. Deepening the chasm between Israel and the ethnic groups of Ammonites and Moabites, Tobiah the Ammonite was expelled from the chamber of the house of God (Neh 13:1–9; cf. Ezra 44:7–9). Moreover, the process of proselytism seems to be inactive in the context of the alarming concerns raised against the rising number of pagan wives of the Israelites. Intermarriage with non-Israelites was condemned as it led the people of God into idolatry (Deut 7:1–5; Ezra 9:2, 10:1–43; Neh 10:30; 13:23–27). So, Israel's proselytism among the nations can doubtless be contested.

Nonetheless, the Israelites maintain their altruistic attitude, at least within themselves, by becoming aware of their chosenness. This chosenness entails a dimension of service. Israel has to take care of its downtrodden and the subjugated like orphans, widows, the poor, and strangers. At this juncture the reader confronts the question whether Israel was able to convert this altruism into proselytism. This proselytic approach, more conjectured than certain for want

[10] Cf. David Jacobus Bosch, *Die Heidenmission in der Zukunftsschau Jesu: Eine Untersuchung zur Eschatologie der synoptischen Evangelien* (Zürich: Zwingli, 1959), 19; Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 20; Hans-Werner Gensichen, *Glaube für die Welt: Theologische Aspekte der Mission* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971), 57, 62; Ludwig Rütti, *Zur Theologie der Mission: Kritische Analysen und neue Orientierungen* (München: Kaiser, 1972), 98; Hans Walter Huppenbauer, "Missionarische Dimension des Gottesvolkes im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für Mission* 3 (1977), 38; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 142.

[11] Cf. Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religions of Ancient Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 115.

of convincing evidence in the long history of Israel, builds up its momentum through the Servant of YHWH during the exilic period in Babylon.

Missionary Orientation in Deutero-Isaiah

The much desired liberation of the people of Israel from almost sixty years of excruciating Babylonian captivity fashioned in them the idea of God as their liberator. The experiential knowledge of God opened the way to cognitive knowledge of God. At the same time a crisis of identity in the religious consciousness of Israel brought about through their association with the pagan religions stimulated them to uphold a vertical concept of God as the Creator. Thus, the God of Israel is the only true God of history and the whole world. As a consequence, all the nations and cultures are seen to fall under the providential care of the God of Israel. Israel can no longer regard its history in isolation from the history of the nations.[12]

The Book of Isaiah, particularly Deutero-Isaiah, describes the orientation of the pagan nations towards YHWH and Jerusalem. The nations will together proceed to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the God of Jacob (Isa 2:3) with precious gifts (18:7). A highway will be made to connect Egypt and Assyria with Jerusalem, whereby Egypt will be blessed as YHWH's people, Assyria as the work of his hands, and Israel as his heritage (19:23–25). All the nations will be prepared to witness the glory of YHWH (40:3–5). All the ends of the earth are called upon to turn to the only God to be saved by him (45:22).[13] The nations wait for YHWH to show his arm, which administers righteousness and salvation (51:5). Finally, the march of the nations towards YHWH will culminate in the messianic banquet upon the mountain of the Lord. At this banquet, YHWH will remove the shroud that has cast over all the nations, He will wipe away the tears from all faces, he will take away the disgrace of his people and ultimately he will swallow up death forever (25:6–8).

Significantly, this ingathering of gentiles, will be brought about by YHWH, not by Israel. So, "if there is a 'missionary' in the Old Testament, it is God himself who will, as his eschatological deed *par excellence*, bring the nations

12 Cf. David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 18.

13 David F. Payne considers the gestures of the nations as a limited missionary message indicating proselytism. Cf. David F. Payne, "The Meaning of Mission in Isaiah 40–55," in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, ed. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 6.

to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant people."[14], "The mode of this ingathering is attraction (the nations come to Israel), not active outreach (Israel's going to the nations)."[15] None of the fundamental missionary concepts of a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, and those to whom one is sent are applicable to Israel in the march of the nations towards YHWH.

Another contra-indicator of a missionary spirit of the people of Israel in Deutero-Isaiah is the Israel-centeredness of the text in spite of the much extolled Old Testament universalism it seems to convey (45:14). That being the case, the prevailing attitude among the Israelites towards other nations is one of condemnation and exclusion. This attitude was reinforced by the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. Even though Isaiah himself did not directly recount this episode, it was the most excruciating event in the whole trauma, even more so than the agonising exilic experience, in that it represented symbolically the apparent defeat of YHWH's kingship and his loss of control over the forces of chaos.[16]

As a result, in Deutero-Isaiah the Servant's primary concern is the restoration of Jerusalem, and Israel's return to the holy city. The language of Deutero-Isaiah is polemical and rhetorical, setting itself up in opposition to the theology and worldview of the Assyro-Babylonian culture.[17] In the eschatological future, in the wake of the appearance of Messiah, the gentile nations (representing all the evils committed against YHWH and his people), will be conquered and thereafter Israel will be restored. It is hard to reconcile such a retributive attitude with a missionary perspective, one in which Israel is seen as inviting the pagan nations to the shore of salvation. The Babylonian Talmud witnesses a substantial alteration in the interpretation of the verb *ʿāśâ* ("to do") in Gen 12:5 where Abram took his wife Sarai, brother's son Lot, possessions and the persons whom they had acquired (*ʿāsú*) in Haran. What is intended here is the spiritual making (*ʿāśâ*) of a person by the teaching of Torah within the framework of Judaism and not the conversions of non-Jews into Judaism. From this it may rightly be concluded that the missionary dimension of Judaism developed

[14] Bosch, *Transforming Mission Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 19.

[15] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 253.

[16] U. Berges, "Zion and the Kingship of Yhwh in Isaiah 40–55," in *'Enlarge the Site of Your Tent': The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah: The Isaiah Workshop – De Jesaja Werkplaats*, ed. Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen and Annemarieke van der Woude, Oudtestamentische studiën 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 102, https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004187290.i-254.

[17] Eugene H. Merrill, "Isaiah 40–55 as Anti-Babylonian Polemic," *Grace Theological Journals* 8, no. 1 (1987), 3–18.

through the Palestinian Talmud contributed to the scholarly construction of the allegedly missionary nature of Judaism during the final phase of the Second Temple period.[18]

However, the Servant is notably distinct from Israel as he is numbered among the transgressors and bears the sin of the "many" in procuring "salvation" for all. He undergoes fierce suffering exclusively for the pagans (52:13–15) and through this vicarious suffering he procures the salvation of Israel and of all (53:1–6).

The identity of the Servant expounded in the Servant Songs

In the Servant Songs the personal identity of the Servant in the four Servant Songs is inextricably interwoven with his liberating mission culminating in his volitional self-immolating to YHWH. However, as the purpose of this article is not to discuss all the possible and sometimes mutually exclusive assumptions about the identity of the Servant, we will limit the discussion to two essential aspects of the Servant, namely his intimacy with God, and the ways in which his conduct contrasts with that of Israel. In fact, the greatness of the Servant determines the authenticity of his mission. An effervescent movement is evident in the thematic development between the poems.

Servant in his unswerving intimacy with YHWH

Biblical scholars have used the technical term "Servant of YHWH" (*ʿeḇeḏ YHWH*) for a long time to designate the "Servant" mentioned in four Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah: 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; and 52:13–53:12. In Deutero-Isaiah the word *ʿeḇeḏ* is repeated 21 times; this does not include the two verbal forms of *heʿĕḇaḏtîḵā* ("I have caused you to serve") in 43:23 and *heʿĕḇaḏtanî*

[18] As against the Palestinian Talmud (PT) which presents active proselytising in a positive light, the Babylonian Talmud (BT) is noted for refuting the missionary openness of Israel. Therefore, stirring dissonances among them are obvious: the gentile oriented mission in the PT becomes an internal activity in the BT. The heightened concentration on the preaching of Torah in the PT gives way to polemics against the gentiles in BT. It is through the instrumentality of non-Jews that Hannaiah, Mishael and Azariah (identified by the rabbis with Babylonian theonyms as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were sent to the furnace (Dan 3:19–30). Cf. Lavee, "Converting the Missionary Image of Abraham," 203–22.

("you have caused me to serve") in 43:24.[19] The Servant Songs depict an accelerative attitude in the unveiling of the liberative mission initiated and realized in and through the figure of the Servant. A gradual growth in the narration of the personal traits of the Servant is unfolded from the First to the Fourth Servant Song. The Servant in the Fourth Servant Song appears to be a crucial connecting and, at the same time, disconnecting element among the various servants described in the Deutero-Isaiah because it is the culmination and the response to all the other songs. What is proposed here, then, is that the Servant is eulogized in deliberate contrast to Cyrus in 42:1–4, and in 52:13–53:12 is identical with the one who soliloquizes in 49:1–6 and 50:4–9.[20]

The agonising yet trusting surrender of the Servant into the hands of YHWH is the core of the Servant Songs. The term "Servant of YHWH" connotes the *genetivus relationis* (a generative relationship) in all the four Servant Songs through expressions such as, "my Servant" (*ʿaḇdî*) in 42:1; 49:3; 52:13; 53:11; "to [be] his Servant" (*ləʿeḇeḏ lô*) in 49:5 and "to [be] my Servant (*lî ʿeḇeḏ*) in 49:6 and "disciple" (*limmûḏ*) in 50:4. Even though the term *ʿeḇeḏ* designates a bond fostered by dependence and servitude,[21] a relation of the weaker to the stronger partner in a covenant,[22] it need not necessarily be a relationship of slavery as "this term is not primarily a title of subordination but a designation of one who belongs pre-eminently to God the Father and who serves at his pleasure."[23] Moreover, along the lines of the same Semitic motif, in the Ugaritic legend the hero is named with the epithet "servant of god" (*ʿbd il*) along with the "son of El."[24]

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19 Among the 21 references to the Servant, ten are clearly to the people of Israel: 41:8, 9; 43:8, 10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; and 49:7. In two additional instances, both in 42:19 and 44:26, the references are to Israel in exile. In 52:13 and 54:17, the references seem to be to Israel. Thus, a total of 14 instances of *ʿeḇeḏ* are to be associated with Israel. In seven passages the *ʿeḇeḏ* refers to the prophet himself: 42:1; 44:26; 49:3, 5, 6; 50:10; and 53:11. Cf. Harry M. Orlinsky and Norman H. Snaith, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 94.

20 Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 356.

21 Cf. Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL – LV*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 48–49.

22 Cf. Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 97.

23 Kaiser, "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," 87.

24 Cf. Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour*, 49.

Servant in contrast to Israel

As the Servant is addressed twenty times in the singular and only in the singular in all the Servant Songs,[25] it is inappropriate to conflate him with a group of people or Israel. In the First Servant Song (42:1–4), for example, the distinction between the Servant and the people of Israel captivates our attention as verses 1–4 describe the Servant in the third person singular and in v. 9 the addressees are referred to as *'eṯḵem* ("you"), in the plural form. This means that the Servant who is mentioned in the third person masculine singular of *hû'* ("he") is different to the exiles who are the addressees in the second person plural. Likewise, the Servant bears the consequences of the transgression of the people of Israel and he is thereby conspicuously distinct from Israel in 53:8: "for he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken" (*kî nigzar mē'ereṣ ḥayyîm mippeša' 'ammî nega' lāmô*). The preposition + pronoun *lāmô*[26] and the pronoun affixed to the verb *nigzar* juxtaposed with

[25] In the whole of Deutero-Isaiah, the Servant is addressed twenty times in the singular with the exception of 54:17 where the "servants" are mentioned. In the twenty singular usages, 'servant' refers to the prophet in 44:26, to Jacob/Israel twelve times (41:8, 9; 42:192; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 212; 45:4; 48:20; and 49:3) and seven times to the Messiah (42:1; 49:5, 6, 7; 50:10; 52:13; and 53:11). Cf. Kaiser, "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," 93. Harry M. Orlinsky, however, mentions of 21 references to the Servant in the Deutero-Isaiah where 43:8 seems to be misquoted. According to him, ten are clearly to the people Israel: 41:8, 9; 43:8, 10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; and 49:7. In two additional instances, both in 42:19 and 44:26, the references are to Israel in exile. In 52:13 and 54:17, the references seem to be to Israel. Thus, a total of fourteen instances of *'eḇeḏ* is to be associated with Israel. In seven passages the *'eḇeḏ* refers to the prophet himself: 42:1; 44:26; 49:3, 5, 6; 50:10; and 53:11. Cf. Orlinsky and Snaith, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," 94; cf. Michael J. Wilkins, "Isaiah 53 and the Message of Salvation in the Gospels," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 110–11.

[26] Wilhelm Gesenius proposes a different interpretation modifying the Hebrew text in the light of the Septuagint so it becomes *niga' lammāweṯ* as per *ēchthē eis thanaton* of the Septuagint with the meaning "he had been led to death." Cf. Emil Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed., trans. Arther E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 301. In the attempt to identify the Servant with Israel, leading Jewish commentators like Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimchi etc. prefer to translate the *lāmô* in 53:8 as a plural "them" (*lāhem*) and not "him." Eventually, the translation becomes as "for the sin of my people, they were stricken." Cf. Samuel R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer, *Translations*, vol. 2 of *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, trans. Samuel R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer, The Library of Biblical Studies (New York: Ktav, 1969), 39, 48, 52. However, it seems to evince a grammatical error as the verb *niga'* is singular which cannot be governed

ʿammî imply that the Servant is neither included in the people of Israel nor is he a part of them.[27]

Likewise as is probably shown by 42:1–4 and more explicitly by 49:1–9; 50:1–4 and 53:4–6, the Servant has a task with regard to Israel.[28] In 49:5–6 his task is to "bring back" Jacob to YHWH and to "gather" Israel to him (v. 5a) or again to raise up Jacob and to bring back Israel to him (v. 6a). If we relate the two texts to one another, then 44:21–22 says implicitly what 49:5–6 will say later unambiguously when it states that the Servant is supposed to "bring back" Jacob/Israel to YHWH ("*šûḇ*" polel, 49:5a; hiphil, 49:6a) by calling them to "turn back" to YHWH ("*šûḇ*" qal, 44:22). Again in 53:4–6, the speaker ("we") refers to the things which the Servant ("he") has done for us.[29] Further, to make the contrast still clearer, "in 40:27, Israel laments that Yahweh disregards their cause' (*mišpāṭ*). However, in 49:4 the Servant knows that his *mišpāṭ* will be vindicated by Yahweh."[30]

As we move from the First Servant Song to the Fourth Servant Song encountering the personal traits of the obedient Servant, an energetic and multifaceted character emerges that is quite remote from the disobedient people of Israel.[31] Accordingly, the journey from the First Servant Song (42:1–4) to the last of the songs (52:13–53:12) underscores an emphatic transition from the concept of the "liberation of Israel" from slavery in Babylon to that of the "salvation of Israel" from sin. The Servant is involved in the liberation of Israel in 42:6–7; 49:5–6, 8–9 and "salvation" in the Fourth Servant Song. An absolute, innocent and

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by a plural subject. Secondly, *lāmô* is not only a plural form, but it is also used as a singular pronoun as in Gen 9:26, 27 where "Canaan shall be a servant to him." Further, also in Isa 44:15, it is used as a singular pronoun when the translation becomes "he makes an idol and bows down to it." Cf. Kaiser, "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," 103. The meaning preferred here is in the singular.

27 Cf. Kaiser, 90.

28 Cf. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (Lund: Gleerup, 1983), 34; Kaiser, "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," 89, 91; John N. Oswalt, *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 144.

29 Cf. Roger Norman Whybray, *The Second Isaiah* (London: T & T Clark, 1995), 70.

30 R. Reed Lessing, "Isaiah's Servants in Chapters 40–55: Clearing up the Confusion," *Concordia Journal* 37 (2011), 132.

31 The deuteronomistic conception of Israel as a guilty people remains a pervading concept in Deutero-Isaiah too, especially in 42:18–25 and 48:1–11. The people have failed to listen to the words of YHWH, and they opposed God with blindness and misunderstanding as in 42:24 and 48:8. Cf. Antje Labahn, "The Delay of Salvation within Deutero--Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 24, no. 85 (1999), 76–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929902408504; Lessing, "Isaiah's Servants in Chapters 40–55," 132.

unblemished Servant who carries the iniquities of the "many" in 53:11, 12 and, in another clausal formation, in 43:4, does so in exchange for his life, cannot be equated with any of the groups or individuals who had been part of the history of Israel till the 5th century B.C.[32]

Evidently, from the emancipatory point of view, the suffering of the people in exile is not expiatory as they are punished for their own sins (40:2; 43:27–28; 50:1); but the agonising suffering of the unique Servant in Isa 53:5 brings about healing and "salvation" as he suffers for the sins of others (53:4–6).[33] The contraposition of "he" (*hû'*) with "we" (*ănaḥnû*) is perceptible.[34] Hence, the Servant stands out in contrast to Israel, which according to Deutero-Isaiah, has thoroughly deserved its punishment. If the Servant of the Songs were a personification of the nation, Deutero-Isaiah's whole message would appear inconsistent.[35]

The endless search for the identity of the Servant limited exclusively to the horizons of the Old Testament, is always an abortive endeavour. The Servant is clearly depicted as an absolutely docile, spotless individual who confides himself to YHWH for the "salvation of Israel."

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[32] However, there are some imposing traits to elucidate Zion along with the Servant through the links between chapter 53 and chapters 52 and 54. a) The reversal of Zion's status announced in chapter 52 is applicable in the reversal of the Servant's status in 53:5. b) Both the Servant and Zion will have "offspring" (53:10b and 54:3). c) The *ṣaddîq* Servant in 53:11 is paralleled by the Zion which is vindicated of its *ṣəḏāqāh* in 54:14, 17 and both of them undergo the humiliation: *ʿăniyyāh* in 54:11 and *məʿunneh* in 53:4. Both Zion and the Servant are "taken": *luqqāḥ* in 53:8 and *luqqaḥ* in 52:5. Cf. John W. Olley, "'The Many': How Is Isa 53,12a to Be Understood?," *Biblica* 68, no. 3 (1987), 350–51; cf. Kaiser, "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord'," 91.

[33] Cf. Lessing, "Isaiah's Servants in Chapters 40–55," 132.

[34] The Kabbalah also upholds the vicariousness in the suffering of the Servant in Isa 53:5. Zohar III, 217b–218b explains the vicarious suffering of a single member for the whole community: "ma quando i giusti sono stati colpiti da malattie o piaghe, questo è avvenuto per espiare per il mondo, poiché in tal modo vengono espiate tutte le mancanze della generazione. Donde sappiamo questo?– Dall'insieme delle membra del corpo. Quando tutte le membra del corpo sono oppresse e assalite da una grave malattia, un membro deve soffrire perché tutte siano guarite. Quale?– il braccio. Se il braccio soffre e si pratica su di esso un salasso, questo significa la guarigione per tutte le membra del corpo. Similmente, anche gli abitanti del mondo sono membra gli uni degli altri e quando il Santo, Egli è lodato, vuole guarire il mondo, permette che soffra un giusto fra loro mediante malattie e piaghe e produce attraverso di lui la guarigione di ogni altro membro" (Johann Maier, *La Cabbala: Introduzione, testi classici, spiegazione* [Bologna: Dehoniane, 2008], 353).

[35] Cf. Whybray, *The Second Isaiah*, 70.

The mission of the Servant unfolded in the Servant Songs

The mission of the Servant emerges as a natural consequence of his unique identity. The Servant is assigned to bring forth justice to the nations (42:1–4), to bring back Jacob and gather Israel to YHWH, as the light of the nations to bring "salvation" to the ends of the earth (49:1–6), to give a comforting word to the weary (50:4–9) and to deliver "salvation" to "all of us" (*kullānû*) (52:13–53:12). Even though each Servant Song has a specific theme, these are frequently interconnected.

Servant, the Executor of Social Justice (Isa 42:1–4)

The primary mission undertaken by the Servant towards the exiles is to establish justice. The term *mišpāṭ* is used in the Bible to denote various meanings such as justice, judgment and law.[36] My attempt, here, is to search out the most suitable meaning to refer to the judicial activity of the Servant (42:1–4). The verb *yāṣā* used in the Hiphil form with the substantive *mišpāṭ* literally means "cause to go out" or "bring forth." What the Servant destined to bring forth, not merely pronounce, is justice which in turn is the consequence of a right judgement.

Justice has a negative and a positive aspect. In other words, the same word *mišpāṭ* may mean a promise to a favoured individual or nation where justice is delivered in the form of equity, or it could take the form of a well-deserved judgement.[37] Execution of negative justice means judgment or justice in a forensic sense, whereas in its positive sense it means defending the causes of the poor, the orphaned, the widowed and the strangers.[38] In keeping with the magnanimous nature of the Servant, who is a person for others, the positive sense of justice is more appropriate to the context than the more negative "judgement."[39]

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[36] William L. Holladay, "*mišpāṭ*," in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 221.

[37] Cf. Payne, "The Meaning of Mission in Isaiah 40–55," 7.

[38] Gene R. Smillie, "Isaiah 42:1–4 in Its Rhetorical Context," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 645 (2005), 50–65.

[39] Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1969), 95; Antti Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40–55* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992), 77; Roger Norman Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 71.

To substantiate such an interpretation, the verb *yāḥal* ("to wait") in 42:4 and elsewhere in the Old Testament has a positive meaning, expressing hope. W. A. M. Beuken believes that *mišpāṭ* in v. 1 orients one to something that has yet to be realized whereas *mišpāṭ* in v. 4 conveys the more exalted meaning of "compassionate justice."[40]

In the narrative context, for John D. W. Watts, the Servant is a messenger of the heavenly court who is entrusted with the mission of pronouncing YHWH's "verdict" on idols by restoring the city of Jerusalem.[41] Roger N. Whybray, who identifies the prophet with the Servant, visualises his mission as the proclamation of the universal rule of God through which Israel is saved and all nations submit to YHWH.[42] In the eschatological dimension, we see both kingly and prophetic traits blended in the Servant, who is loaded with the responsibility of administering "justice" (*mišpāṭ*) to the nations in 42:1, 3, 4; 49:4; 50:8, since administering justice is the exclusive function of the kings and the prophets in the OT.[43] Furthermore, we learn that the Servant is endowed with the spirit of YHWH, which echoes the royal anointing of a Davidic ruler (42:11; 32:1–5, 15–17). Installing "justice" (*mišpāṭ*) and "righteousness" (*ṣəḏāqāh*) also imply a royal function (9:6; 11:4–5; 16:5).[44] As the Servant Songs mention the agonising existence of the Servant in the past tense and the fullness of the mission entrusted to him by YHWH in the future tense, all the evidence points to him as being a future messianic figure with both kingly and prophetic roles.[45]

Servant, the Mediator between YHWH and His peoples (Isa 49:1–6)

The identity of the Servant which is hidden from the sight of the nations in the initial verses of the pericope (49:1–6) is unveiled in verses 5 and 6. He is, here, destined "to bring back" (*šûḇ*) or "raise up" (*qûm*) the tribes of Jacob and

40 W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpāṭ: The First Servant Song and Its Context," *Vetus Testamentum* 22, no. 1 (1972), 4.

41 John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, World Biblical Commentary 25 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 660.

42 Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, 72.

43 Cf. Ulrika Lindblad, "A Note on the Nameless Servant in Isaiah XLII 1–4," *Vetus Testamentum* 43, no. 1 (1993), 116, https://doi.org/10.1163/156853393X00340.

44 Cf. Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "An Intertextual Reading of 'A Crushed Reed' and 'A Dim Wick' in Isaiah 42.3," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 24 (83 1999), 121, https://doi.org/10.1177/030908929902408308.

45 Cf. Oswalt, *The Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, 92.

"to gather" (*'āsap*) or "restore" (*nāṣîr*) Israel to YHWH. The second mission entrusted to the Servant is to restore justice in the world and, the third, to be the "light of the nations" in 49:6.

The third mission seems to the symbolic culmination of all the missionary commitment of the Servant, for here he is not merely destined to give light; rather, to be the "light of the nations" (*phōs ethnōn*). In Isaiah, the imagery of light, which is a familiar feature of life, is used as a metaphor for salvation. It accentuates the royal and messianic traits of the Servant.[46] Manifesting the intriguing heights and depths of his character, the Servant himself becomes a source of light to liberate Israel from slavery to Babylon and the nations from slavery to idols. Ultimately, the Servant is called upon to impart salvation to the ends of the earth.

As the Servant is aware of his vocation, and the fact that he has been chosen by YHWH from his mother's womb, he surrenders himself willingly to the mission. As his roots are in Israel he begins the mission in the house of Israel and from there it is extended to the rest of the peoples.

Servant, the Preacher of Liberation (Isa 50:4–9)

The sonorous evolution of the identity and the mission of the Servant as a suffering redeemer is once again conspicuous in the Third Servant Song (Isa 50:4–9). The Servant's firm faith and absolute obedience to YHWH in the face of persecution stands in contrast to the rebellious and disobeying people of Israel. His optimism of not being humiliated by the unjust and the fabricated allegations of the scourgers is very high in this song. The simultaneous feeling of soothing evoked by YHWH and the violent assaults mounted by the fellow human beings on the Servant are the hallmarks of this Servant Song. What the Servant receives from YHWH in 50:4 is the "word" (*dāḇār*) to support the weary.

The rhetoric of Isaiah is ostensibly oriented to Israel in 50:4–9 on the basis of two motifs: the invitation to repentance by the exposition of YHWH's power, concern and compassionate love and also the subsequent return to Jerusalem

[46] Ronald E. Clements, "Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D.W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 94–99.

once the punishment has passed.[47] The exhortation is radical as it intends the return to YHWH and to the 'remnant', the fellow Israelites who were left over in Jerusalem at the time of the massive deportation of the abled ones to Babylon.

Servant, the Promulgator of Salvation (Isa 52:13–53:12)

The Servant procured the salvation of Israel and of the gentiles in the Third Servant Song (49:1–6) through his harrowing suffering. This culminates in the Fourth Servant Song (52:13–53:12) where in serving the "we" with the salvation, the Servant offers himself as a ransom. The pivotal term applied here signifies the redemptive activity of the Servant, *šālôm*, has a wide range of meanings including "completeness, welfare, peace"[48] and extending to "salvation" which is a state of fulfilment by God's presence.[49]

The word *šālôm* entails more than a sense of well-being. The deeper meaning of the phrase, "the chastisement of our 'salvation' was on him" in Isa 53:5b can be explored by paraphrasing it as "because of our sins, God was not at peace with us."[50] If He is to be at peace with us, there must be chastisement. The well-deserved punishment of "all of us" (*kullānû*) fell on the Servant. However, this brutal suffering and death of the Servant is not justifiable for an unproportioned restoration of the mere well-being or the material prosperity implied by the term "peace." Therefore, we must go beyond the preliminary concepts of the term *šālôm* in the pericope.

"Salvation" is the final and future outcome of all the previous missionary involvement of the Servant and, therefore, is procured through the Servant's experience which is described in present and past tenses.[51] The rather extensive treatment of the vulnerability and mortal suffering that inevitably leads the

47 Cf. Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 150.

48 Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, "*šālôm*," in *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Clarendon, 2000), 1022.

49 Cf. G. Lloyd Carr, "*šālôm*," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 931.

50 Edward J. Young, *Chapters 40–66*, vol. 3 of *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 349.

51 David L. Allen views the sin of the people as not temporal and thereby the punishment imposed upon the people and the Servant (as he suffers together with them) as not temporal but spiritual or eternal. Cf. David L. Allen, "Substitutionary Atonement and Cultic Terminology in Isaiah 53," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering*

Servant to his death and eventually to the sepulchre is recounted in the accomplished perfect forms. However, the verbs used to refer to the activities of the Servant subsequent to his death are in the future tense. Yoking together the past with the future, the "we" (*ănaḥnû*) speaks at least rhetorically "at a point in time after the Servant's suffering (described as already accomplished) but before the Servant's full vindication and exaltation (viewed as still future)."[52] Among the variant readings, the Septuagint tradition uses verbs that describe the Servant as brutally tortured in the past, and to indicate that he will be glorified – in the future, and continues with "to bear" (*pherei*) our sins, and becomes susceptible "to suffer" (*odynatai*) for us, in the present in 53:4.

Conclusion

The context of the Servant Songs, as is the case with all Old Testament prophecy, is the historical present to be realized in the historical future. The self-immolation of the Servant embraces the past, present and future. The outstanding person of the Servant of YHWH envisages the diverse motives of his missionary involvement in the four Servant Songs.

We encounter a specially commissioned Servant who becomes instrumental in the execution of justice (Isa 42:1–4), with a liberating mission to bring back Jacob/Israel to Jerusalem and become the "light of the nations" (Isa 49:1–6). The Servant endures continuous afflictions in the illumined awareness of the presence of YHWH in comforting the weary with his word in the Third Servant Song (50:4–9). Finally, the Servant's liberating mission reaches its zenith in bringing "salvation" (*šālôm*) to all the nations, both Israel and the gentiles, through his vicarious suffering, death and exaltation (Isa 52:13–53:12). The themes progress sequentially from the First to the Fourth Servant Song. There are four outstanding acts of the Servant in offering himself, for the liberation of the people of Israel and the gentiles, comprising the empirical as well as soteriological facets.

As the unique Servant outlined in the Servant Songs stands out in contrast to Israel and all other prominent figures in the history of Israel, so is his liberating mission during the Babylonian exile also unique. From this we conclude

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Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 175.

52 Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "Forgiveness and Salvation in Isaiah 53," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 191.

that the Servant's mission extended to bringing "salvation" to both Israel and the gentiles, which was not an extension of an existing Israelite mission but an entirely new one.

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