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# Isaiah's Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity

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## Abstract

The so-called "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 52:15–53:12 takes on new meaning in each of his settings, from the exilic or early post-exilic community of Deutero-Isaiah, to the repurposing of this figure by the author of Daniel, mid-second century BCE during the persecutions of Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, through the numerous New Testament citations of and allusions to Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah's predictions concerning this servant, and on to several post-biblical Jewish understandings of this enigmatic figure. In showing how and why the servant receives such numerous readings, we demonstrate both how readers across the centuries and within different traditions understand Isaiah through their own circumstances, and why Jews and Christians should respect each other's readings rather than attempt to "prove" the truth of one tradition on the basis of a specific understanding of prophecy.

## Keywords

Isaiah, Book of; Jesus; Jewish-Christian Relations; Prophecy; Reception History; Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 may be interpreted in multiple ways; nevertheless, as the late scholar Brevard Childs observed: "The initial responsibility of an Old Testament commentary is initially and above all the attempt to hear Israel's own voice in the plain sense of the text."[1] This is what we shall do, first by reading Isa 52:13–53:12 as an oracle of comfort to the exilic (or early post-exilic) Judean community. We believe that Isaiah's "servant" initially referred to an individual living in Babylon, whose vicarious suffering explains why Israel deserves forgiveness for the grievous sins that caused its exile. Placed in the broader narrative of Isaiah 40–55, where the prophet speaks of "Israel my servant" (41:8; cf. 49:3) and "Jacob my servant" (44:1, 2), the figure can be seen as a symbol for the nation exiled and then restored. This servant, who remains otherwise unidentified, will gain central importance in the history of interpretation for both Jews and Christians.

1 Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 410.

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Whereas the New Testament sources understand Jesus to be Isaiah's servant, such readings should not preclude other interpretations. By exploring both the likely original meaning as well as later Jewish and Christian interpretations, we also take our cue from the Pontifical Biblical Commission's "The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible."[2] The Commission observes that christological interpretation of the "Old Testament" "is a retrospective perception whose point of departure is not in the text as such, but in the events of the New Testament proclaimed by the apostolic preaching" (no. 21) and that "The original task of the prophet was to help his contemporaries understand the events and the times they lived in from God's viewpoint" (no. 21). It also asserted, "Christians can and ought to admit that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Sacred Scriptures from the Second Temple period" (no. 22). In looking at Isaiah's "servant" through different lenses, readers will find a text overflowing with meaning, some of which, possibly, Christians and Jews can share.

## The So-called Suffering Servant: A Modern Construct

"Suffering servant," like many other terms used in contemporary scholarship, such as "the J source," "Hexateuch," "Deuteronomistic History," "wisdom literature," and "apocalyptic literature," is a modern construct. The term was introduced into biblical studies in 1892 by Bernhard L. Duhm (1847–1928); isolating four servant songs,[3] he claimed that Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; and 52:13–53:12 derived from a single post-exilic work, and that an editor, who found available space on the parchment, inserted them where space allowed into Isaiah 40–55.[4]

Challenges to Duhm's thesis abound: some scholars suggest that individual songs are longer;[5] others propose that they are from the same hand as the rest of Isaiah 40–55.[6] Noting that the four passages offer distinct perspectives, still others argue that they stem from different authors or from a single author writing at different times.[7] A few wonder if "suffering servant" is the best label, since several passages depict the figure's exaltation,[8] and the first two lack explicit descriptions of

2 Published in 2001, online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_en.html.

3 See discussion of Duhm's thesis (*Das Buch Jesaia* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1892]) by Kristen Joachimsen, *Identities in Transition: The Pursuit of Isa. 52:13–53:12*, SVT 142 (Leiden: Brill 2011), 15–26; Charles E. Shepherd, *Theological Interpretation at Isaiah 53: A Critical Comparison of Bernhard Duhm, Brevard Childs, and Alec Motyer*, LHB/OTS 598 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 9–78.

4 For details, see Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds., *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Fredrik Hägglund, *Isaiah 53 in the Light of Homecoming after Exile*, FAT$^2$ 31 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Joachimsen, *Identities in Transition*; Jeremy Schipper, *Disability and Isaiah's Suffering Servant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Shepherd, *Theological Interpretation at Isaiah 53*.

5 See the summary in Shalom Paul, *Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 18.

6 The extent to which the songs are contextually embedded is argued, e.g., in Christopher R. Seitz, "'You Are My Servant, You Are the Israel in Whom I Will Be Glorified': The Servant Songs and the Effect of Literary Context in Isaiah," *CTJ* 39 (2004): 117–34, and Hans M. Barstad, "The Future of the 'Servant Songs," *Language, Theology and the Bible: Essays in Honor of James Barr*, ed. Samuel E. Balentine and John Barton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 261–70.

7 See, e.g., H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on at Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah*, The Didsbury Lectures 1997 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 131.

8 Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 344, calls Isa 52:13–53:12, "The Servant: From Humiliation to Exaltation."

suffering. Barstad, among others, rejects Duhm's thesis entirely: "The scholarly myth of the 'servant songs' is long, long due for demolition";[9] Mettinger suggests that scholars "excise Duhm's theory from the arsenal of acceptable exegetical tools and instead relegate it to the curio shelf for obsolete hypotheses."[10] Following Mettinger, we focus specifically on Isa 52:13–53:12, which is the most relevant text within Christian tradition.

## Isaiah 52:13–53:12: Debunking Common Assumptions

The first and penultimate verses (52:13; 53:11) of the fourth song mention *'abdi* ("my *'ebed"*). The noun *'ebed* "refers to a person who is subordinated to someone else."[11] The type and extent of subordination varies widely, and thus, depending on context the noun is translated "slave, servant, subject, official, vassal, or 'servant' or follower of a particular god."[12] The pronominal suffix *–î* ("my") in *'abdî* refers to God, and thus this servant is like Moses (Exod 4:10; Josh 1:2), Caleb (Num 14:24), Joshua (Josh 5:14), David (1 Sam 23:10), Job (Job 1:8), and others who are called God's servants. Similarly, nine individuals, including the minor prophet, are named Obadiah, "the servant of Yah(weh)," and one is called Abdiel, "the servant of God." That same title appears in the Greek New Testament in reference to Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:48, *doulē*), Paul (Rom 1:1, *doulos*), and Jesus (Phil 2:7). We choose to translate both the Greek and the Hebrew with "servant"; these individuals are not chattel slaves of the sort described in Exod 21:2–6 or Deut 15:17. Isa 52:13 and 53:11 convey the individual's close relationship with, and dependence on, God.

This central figure is never called the "Messiah," let alone identified as divine. Within Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40–55), where all four songs occur, only Cyrus is called YHWH's "messiah" (Hebrew: *māšîaḥ*), meaning "anointed" (45:1). Isaiah 40–55 lacks the notion of an ideal Davidic king, which is the primary basis of messianic speculation; Isa 55:3b–5 suggests rather that the covenant promising eternal kingship to David's household is about to be transferred to all Israel.[13] Thus, within Deutero-Isaiah, the servant is not a messianic figure.

Nor is it clear that the servant is killed,[14] despite claims that various verses depict his demise. Isaiah 53:7 notes that the servant is "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter," but this simile does not suggest an actual death. Verses 8–9, which speak of being "taken away," "cut off from the land of the living," "grave" and "tomb," *may* suggest that he was killed, but biblical poetry often uses such language to describe near-death experience or severe illness;[15] the same is true of the expression in v. 12, "poured out himself/emptied himself to death." Use of "death" imagery to represent grave danger is especially clear in Jonah 2, e.g., 2:6: "I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit [=*Sheol,* the underworld]."

Rather than dying, the servant is "exalted," "lifted up" and "very high" (52:13); 53:10b notes: "he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days," and 53:12 states, "I will allot him a portion

9 Barstad, "Future," 270.
10 Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983), 45.
11 H. Simian-Yofre, "דבע," *TDOT* 10.387.
12 Ibid.
13 See Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 117–19.
14 David Clines, *I, He, We, & They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53*, JSOTSup 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1976), 27–29; and R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, JSOTSup 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1978), 79–106, dispute the view that the servant is killed.
15 See, e.g., Ps 86:13. On this broader biblical motif, see Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 171–72, 183.

with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." These verses do not indicate the servant was resurrected: with very few exceptions, the Tanak neither suggests resurrection nor promotes a beatific afterlife.[16] While Ezekiel, perhaps a contemporary of our author, depicts exilic Israel as a valley "full of bones" (37:1) that miraculously become enfleshed, living bodies, that chapter points to national revival rather than individual resurrection. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is therefore better understood as suggesting a horrific experience from which the servant recovered.

Since he is not killed, the servant in his original context does not have a sacrificial role.[17] The sacrificial reading, likely following Christian influence, is reinforced by select translations, such as the NRSV's rendering of 53:10: "When you make his life an offering for sin."[18] The Hebrew for "offering for sin" is *'āšām*, which can, especially in Leviticus, refer to a sacrificial offering.[19] However, *'āšām* also means "guilt" as well as "compensation from guilt."[20] Neither this passage nor Isaiah 40–55 as a whole is permeated with Priestly language, and the texts do not use other sacrificial terms such as "altar" or "blood." Schipper shows that "comparisons between the servant and an unblemished animal that dies a sacrificial death work only if one ignores or downplays the repeated images of disease or sickness throughout Isaiah 53."[21]

## What Isaiah 52:13–53:12 Does Say

Isaiah describes a person suffering terrible physical disabilities: "marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals" (52:14); he had "no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (53:2); he was "despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering [KJV "man of sorrows"] and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces" (v. 3), "wounded" and "crushed" (v.

16 See Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

17 Scholars viewing the lamb as sacrificial victim include Walther Zimmerli, who reads the lamb in terms of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16; see his "Zur Vorgeschichte von Jes 53," in idem, *Studien zur attestamentlichen Theologie und Prophetie*, TB 51 (Munich: Kaiser, 1974), 213–21; similarly, Mettinger, *Farewell to the Servant Songs*, 41; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 351; and David L. Allen, "Substitutionary Atonement and Cultic Terminology in Isaiah 53," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 171–89. For the contrary view, see e.g., Hermann Spieckermann, "The Conception and Prehistory of Vicarious Suffering in the Old Testament," in Janowski and Stulmacher, *Suffering Servant*, 3; Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, 79–106; and Hägglund, *Isaiah 53,* 67–73. Joachimsen (*Identities in Transition,* 386–90), concludes that 53:10, the most relevant passage for the sacrificial interpretation, is "so corrupt that it is impossible to render a proper translation." North (*Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 147) notes that Isa 52:13–53:12 is "in places seriously corrupt"; for extensive variants see Eugene Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants*, SVT 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 434–36; 533–36.

18 Also Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, FOTL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 215. His forced argument (209–10) for finding the motif of blood atonement here depends on a disputed meaning of the Hebrew *yazzeh* in 52:15; Joachimsen, *Identities in Transition,* 374–76, concludes that the text is "obscure."

19 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB (New Haven: Yale, 1991), 339–78, translates "reparation offering."

20 See e.g. *HALOT* s.v. *'*āšām, and D. Kellerman, "אשם," *TDOT* 1.429–37.

21 Jeremy Schipper ("Interpreting the Lamb Imagery in Isaiah 53," *JBL* 132 [2013]: 315–25 [325]) helpfully summarizes arguments for and against reading Isaiah 53 in sacrificial terms.

5), "oppressed" and "afflicted" (v. 7), "crush[ed] …with pain" (v. 10). The servant is severely disabled and shunned.[22]

Next, the servant suffers unjustly; Isa 53:8 describes his affliction as "a perversion of justice"; 53:9 claims that "he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." However, his suffering has vicarious effects: he was "stricken because of the transgression of my people," namely Israel (53:8); he was wounded/pierced[23] (Hebrew *ḥālal*; Greek *traumatizō* [whence "trauma"]) from (Hebrew *min*; Greek *dia*, "on account of") our transgressions, crushed from our iniquities… upon him was the punishment that made us [Israel] whole, and by his bruises we are healed" (53:5a); "The righteous one, my [YHWH's] servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities" (53:11). His disabilities, caused by Israel's sin, allow Israel to be forgiven. Other descriptions include the servant's silencing gentiles (52:15) and making many righteous (53:11).

Some scholars understand the song's "us" and "our" as referring not to Israel but to the nations.[24] In this reading, the people "made whole" are gentiles who witness the servant's (i.e., Israel's) exilic suffering and glorious return. Redemption or healing occurs when these nations recognize the power of Israel's God. This interpretation is unlikely since the song elsewhere refers to the nations in the third person, as in 52:15: "so he shall startle many nations."

Other scholars suggest that because such vicarious punishment is rare in the Hebrew Bible,[25] the servant is being punished *alongside* guilty Israel, rather than vicariously *for* their sins. Although the Tanak does occasionally record vicarious punishment, such as "visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exod 34:7; contrast Ezek 18:2–4), nowhere else does it depict an individual punished for many.[26] But biblical authors can be innovative, and the author(s) of Isaiah 40–55 were especially innovative.

These author(s), for example, depict YHWH several times as a woman. Isa 49:14–15a reads:

> But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
>
> my Lord has forgotten me."
>
> Can a woman forget her nursing child,
>
> or show no compassion for the child of her womb?[27]

22 Schipper, *Disability and Isaiah's Suffering Servant,* properly emphasizes the servant's disability. For the artistic reception, see Martin O'Kane, "Picturing the 'Man of Sorrows': The Passion-Filled Afterlives of a Biblical Icon," *Religion and the Arts* 9 (2005): 62–100.

23 Alternatively, "profaned"; the Hebrew root *ḥ-l-l* is homonymic, meaning "to pierce" (and thus, "to wound") or "to profane."

24 See the summary in Joachimsen, *Identities in Transition,* 160–62.

25 See the scholars mentioned in Hägglund, *Isaiah 53,* 12; note especially Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, 29–76.

26 For precedents, see Spieckermann, "Conception and Prehistory," 1–15.

27 For a fuller discussion of Yhwh as a woman in Isa 40–66, see Mayer I. Gruber, "The Motherhood of God in Second Isaiah," in his *The Motherhood of God and Oher Essays* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 3–15 (on 42:14; 4:10; 49:15; 66:13) and Hanne Løland, *Silent or Salient Gender? The Interpretation of Gendered God-Language in the Hebrew Bible, Exemplified in Isaiah 42, 46 and 49*, FAT² 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

This novel description of YHWH, like the depiction of the servant vicariously suffering, is best understood within the context of an exilic (or early post-exilic) author writing a message of forgiveness, comfort, and assurance. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 suggests that the great sins that caused the exile require expiation, and the servant, who suffers for all, facilitates this atonement, just as the death of David and Bathsheba's son vicariously atones for their adultery (2 Sam 12:13–14). The prophet's idea that Israel "has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isa 40:2) serves a similar function: Isaiah is explaining to the guilty that they have been sufficiently punished.

## The Servant's Identity

"Countless theories have been advanced about the historical identity of the servant";[28] these broadly divide into those who see him as an individual and those who conclude that he represents the community. Isaiah 40–55 several times calls the community of Israel YHWH's servant. For example, Isa 44:1–2 reads:

> But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
>
> Israel whom I have chosen!....
>
> Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
>
> Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

In contrast, Isa 49:3, reads: "And he [YHWH] said to me [the prophet], 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."[29] Context suggests that "my servant" in 52:13–53:12 refers to an individual: 53:6b reads: "the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Interpreted collectively, the verse would mean that the servant Israel is being punished for the sins of Israel ("all of us")!

Thus, "my servant" in 52:13 and 53:11 cannot refer to the collective Israel. It is possible that an author used "servant" in different places with different referents, or that "my servant" in 52:13–53:12, where it refers to an individual, may be by a different author than the surrounding material.[30] Evidence internal to 52:13–53:12 should be the primary determinant for identifying the servant, and this evidence suggests that this figure was an individual.[31]

We cannot identify the servant. Tryggve Mettinger typified the list of candidates, including Isaiah himself, Moses (b. Sot. 14a), Jeremiah (Saadia Gaon and Ibn Ezra, cf. Jer 10:18–24; 11:19), Hezekiah, the Davidic king in exile or Zerubabbel, the people Israel (b. Sanh. 98a; Numbers Rab. 13.2), the righteous in every generation (b. Ber. 5a), Cyrus, the messiah (b. Sanh. 98b; Ruth Rab. 5.6; cf. Isa 45:1), the faithful remnant mentioned by Isa 10:20–22 (David Kimchi), the high priest

28 Hayes, "Isaiah," 396.

29 Although all the ancient versions read "my servant," many scholars, committed to seeing the servant as an individual, suggest that this term is secondary; see North, *Suffering Servant*, 118, and the dissent in Barstad, "Future of the 'Servant Songs,'" 267–68.

30 See, e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 257.

31 North, *Suffering Servant*, 42, suggests the servant represents "An Unknown Individual."

Onias, and others, as "resemble[ing] the contents of a successful big-game hunt on the exegetical savannah."[32]

In sum, Isaiah 52:13–53:12 most likely originally referred to one of the prophet's exilic contemporaries, whom he viewed as vicariously atoning for the guilt-ridden exilic (or early post-exilic) community. We know neither this individual's name nor anything about him beyond what this passage says.

## The Septuagint and Daniel

The Septuagint renders *'abdî*, "my servant," using *pais*. The translator could have used *doulos*, the standard Greek term for "slave"; *pais* means "slave" (cf. Gen 9:25 in relation to Canaan), but it can also mean "servant," "child" or even "son."

Breytenbach argues that the Septuagint's translation of Isa 53:12's *pāgaʿ* (in the hiphil, the causative mode) and indicating "intercession" or "intervention" by Greek *paradidonai* in the passive, meaning "handed over" (and, depending on context, "betrayed"), underlies Paul's formula in Rom 4:25 that Jesus "was handed over to death for our trespasses."[33]

Daniel 12:3 says, in reference to the author's own community, "the knowledgeable (Hebrew: *maskilîm*) will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead *the many* to *righteousness* will be like the stars forever and ever" (emphasis added), that is, they will be resurrected. Daniel 12 thus repurposes Isa 53:11b, "The righteous one, my *servant*, shall make *many righteous*" (emphasis added); the appearance of these two terms secures the allusion. Isaiah 53:11b also likely underlies Dan 11:33: "The wise among the people shall give understanding to *many*; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder" (emphasis added), and additional verses in Daniel may also allude to the fourth song in describing their own setting of persecution.[34] Thereby, the author understands the servant to represent a collective and as

32 Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs,* 45. For a helpful summary of Christian scholars' identifications of the slave, see Kenneth D. Litwack, "The Use of Quotations from Isaiah 52.13–53.12 in the New Testament," *JETS* 26 (1983): 385–94. Examples include Morna Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959), 46 (Israel); H.H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), 52–53 (a future individual, but moving toward a collective); F. F. Bruce, *This Is That* (London: Paternoster, 1968), 88–89 (a messianic Davidic king); and Walther Zimmerli, *The Servant of God* (Naperville: Allenson, 1957), 28 (a prophet). For more on reception history, see Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah*, SBLDS 161 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

33 Cilliers Breytenbach, "The Septuagint Version of Isaiah 53 and the Early Christian Formula, 'He Was Delivered for Our Trespasses,'" *NovT* 51 (2009): 339–51. See also Ben Witherington III, "Isaiah 5:1–12 (Septuagint)," in Amy-Jill Levine et al., eds., *The Historical Jesus in Context*, Princeton Readings in Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 400–404.

34 H. L. Ginsburg, "The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant," *VT* 3 (1953): 402–403 first emphasized Daniel's reuse of the song. For discussion, see Martin Hengel with Daniel P. Bailey, "The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period," in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, eds., *Suffering Servant*, 90–98. See also Carol A. Newson with Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 352, 364. Hengel and Bailey's suggestion ("The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period," 85–90) that the servant is reflected in Zechariah 12 and 13 is not compelling; see, e.g., the critique by Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, 260–61.

In the book of Daniel, Isaiah's suffering servant represents righteous individuals who resisted the decrees of Antiochus IV. Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes Persecutes the Israelites" (1 Macc. 1:65–67). Plate 150, from *Bibel in Bildern*. Leipzig (Georg Wigand), 1853–1860. Photo Credit: Alfredo Dagli Orti /Art Resource, NY.

referring to the near future:[35] Isaiah's servant represents righteous individuals who resisted the decrees of Antiochus IV. Daniel does not, however, reuse all the elements of Isa 52:13–53:12; for example, nowhere is vicarious punishment explicitly mentioned.

Claims that Isa 53:11 underlies references in Wis 2:12, "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions…" are generous; whereas Wisdom shares occasional terms with the song, it offers no consistent treatment.[36] Other Second Temple authors, including the central figure in the *Hodayot* or Thanksgiving Psalms from the Dead Sea Scrolls corpus show some interest in our song, and it is possible that the Teacher of Righteousness self-identified with the despised but vindicated "servant."[37] However, no Dead Sea Scroll, based on Isa 52:13–53:12, refers to a "pierced messiah."[38] Rather, "the Qumran community did not develop the concept of a servant-messiah who would vicariously suffer for the many and save them."[39]

## The Servant in the New Testament

The servant songs thus did not receive substantial attention in early Judaism until they were adopted and adapted by either Jesus and/or his early followers. Isaiah's servant underlies Christian claims that Jesus suffered and died for the sins of humanity and that his suffering, death, and resurrection

35 Daniel, like the New Testament authors, understands the verbs in Isaiah 53 as prophetic perfects, future actions so assured they may be referred to in the past; see Waltke O'Connor, *IBHS*, 490, §30.5.1, examples 38 and 39.

36 See Daniel P. Bailey, "Suffering Servant," in John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds., *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1257–58 (1257).

37 See, e.g., John J. Collins, "A Messiah Before Jesus," in idem and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Christian Beginnings and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 21–23.

38 Contra Israel Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); see the counter-claims by John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), esp. 164–70; idem, "The Suffering Servant at Qumran?" *BRev* 9/6 (1993): 25–27, 63, and Torleif Elgvin, "Eschatology and Messianism in the Gabriel Inscription," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting from the First to the Seventh Century* 1 (2014): 5–24.

39 James H. Charlesworth, "Suffering Servant," *EDSS* 2.901.

Christians have interpreted the servant in Isaiah as Jesus. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573–1610), Flagellation of Christ, detail. Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy. Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali/Art Resource, NY.

were predicted by Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3–4, "I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"). Paul's proclamation that Jesus "was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25) follows from Isa 53:12, just as the Synoptic passion predictions, with their notices that "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders… and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31 and parr.), take their cue from the servant, who suffers, is rejected, is (understood to be) killed and is (understood to be) resurrected.

Because neither the fourth song nor the other three are always explicitly named by the New Testament authors, debates abound over what constitutes an allusion. Morna Hooker stated that Rom 4:25 ("who was handed over [*paradidomi*] to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification") is the "one clear echo of Isaiah 53 in Paul,"[40] whereas Ben Witherington III titles his first chapter of *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertetxuality, and Hermeneutics* "Isaianic Fingerprints Everywhere."[41] Richard Hays finds Romans to be "salted with numerous quotations of and allusions to Isaiah 40–55, including several passages that seem to echo the Suffering Servant motif of Isaiah 53 (e.g., Rom. 4:24–25, 5:15–19, 10:16, 15:21)," even as he notes that Paul "never mentions the prophetic typology that would supremely integrate his interpretation of Christ and Israel."[42] It may be that all the instances in which the New Testament describes Jesus as having been "handed over/betrayed" (*paradidomi*) stem from Isa 53 LXX; it may not. Dale Allison summarizes how "[t]he Synoptic passion narratives otherwise implicitly equate Jesus with Isaiah's suffering servant; see Mark 14:24

40 Morna D. Hooker, "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?" in William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*: *Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 101.

41 Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

42 Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 63.

(blood poured out for many [cf. Isa 53:12]); 14:61; 15:5 (silence before accusers [cf. Isa 53:7]); 14:65; 15:19 (slapping, spitting [cf. Isa LXX 50:6]); 15:5, 39 (amazement of Gentile ruler [cf. Isa 52:15]); 15:6–15 (criminal saved/innocent killed [cf. Isa 53:6, 12]); 15:27 (association with criminals in death [cf. Isa 53:12]); Matt 27:57 (burial by a rich man [cf. Isa LXX 53:9]); Luke 22:37 (fate shared with transgressors [cf. Isa LXX 53:12]); John 19:1 (scourging [cf. Isa LXX 50:6]),"[43] and this list can be supplemented with other allusions of greater or lesser certainty. Conversely, Hays states, "it is very difficult to make a case that Isaiah's Suffering Servant texts play any significant role in Mark's account of Jesus' death—at least at the level of Mark's text-production."[44]

We shall spare our readers additional discussion and lists. It is sufficient to observe that one can easily find connections between Jesus and the servant. The extent to which Jesus deliberately sought to fulfill imagery associated with the servant, and to which his followers told his story according to the template the servant establishes, will remain debated.

## *Explicit Citations of Isa 52:13–53:12 in the New Testament*

Despite numerous likely allusions, the New Testament offers only seven explicit citations of Isa 52:13–53:12 (Matt 8:17; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:32-33; Rom 10:16; 15:21; and 1 Pet 2:22). These uses indicate that Isaiah's text served more than simply to explain Jesus' crucifixion.

Matthew mentions Isaiah several times (3:3; 4:14; 12:17; 13:14; 15:7); the single appeal to 52:13–53:12 appears in the context of a healing. After noting that Jesus "cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick" (8:16), Matthew adds, "This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Matt 8:17 citing Isa 53:4, following the Hebrew reading of "our infirmities" or "our weaknesses" [*ḥŏlāyēnû*; Matthew: *astheneias hēmōn*] rather than the LXX, which reads *tas hamartias hēmōn pherei*, "he bore our sins."

Luke cites our text in connection with Jesus's arrest. Jesus tells his disciples, "…the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one" and then quotes Isa 53:12, "For I tell you, this Scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed, what is written about me is being fulfilled'" (Luke 22:36). The prediction is fulfilled not only in Luke 23:32–33, when Jesus is crucified between two evil-doers (*kakourgoi*, but also at Jesus's arrest, when he is "counted" among sword-carrying and so rebellious disciples.[45]

John focuses on the theme of unbelief. Following the notice that the crowds did not believe in Jesus despite his many signs (12:37), John cites Isa 53:1, "This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" The following verse (12:40) paraphrases Isa 6:10 (cf. Matt 13:15 and parr.; Acts 28:27) on how the people will look but not see. John's focus is on the crowds' failure to see how their own Scriptures point to Jesus.

43 Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 414 n. 98.

44 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 87.

45 Christopher R. Hutson ("Enough for What? Playacting Isaiah 53 in Luke 22:35–38," *ResQ* 55 [2013]: 35–51 [43]), proposes that Jesus is engaging in an "impromptu, late-nite performance" in arranging to have his disciples carry swords.

Acts 8:32–33 quotes Isa 53:7–8 in a narrative concerning an Ethiopian chamberlain, a eunuch, who is reading Isaiah: "Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.'" The chamberlain asks Philip, "About whom…does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" and Philip responds with instructions about Jesus. Acts indicates, once again, that the identity of Isaiah's servant is not self-evident. Luke's focus on the servant's humiliation may be of specific relevance to the eunuch,[46] given Isaiah's prediction, "For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a hand and a name…" (Isa 56:4–5).

Paul, concerned with fellow *Ioudaioi* who have not responded to his message, cites in Rom 10:16 the same verse John quoted: "But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?'" Like John, Paul deploys Isaiah to show that the failure of the majority of Jews to accept the message of Jesus had been predicted. In the same epistle, Paul also uses the song to support his own mission. In Rom 15:21, Paul speaks of proclaiming the "good news" in places where the message has not yet gone, "as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand"; the underlying text is Isa 52:15b: "for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate."

In another substantial citation, 1 Pet 2:21–25 (and cf. Heb 9:28) runs the plotline of Isa 52:15–53:12:

> …. Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example… He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.…

This passage focuses less on Jesus' salvific death than on the example he provides by silently suffering. The author's concern is that *slaves* accept the abusive treatment of their masters, because Jesus, the "slave of God," so suffered.

Christian readers consistently identified the servant as Jesus, the one who suffered and died, but they did not limit themselves to this focus. They understood Jesus's healings in light of the servant; they used Isa 52:15–53:12 to explain why most Jews did not accept their gospel; they read their own mission into the text; they cited the text for instructions to slaves. They also indicated that Isaiah's servant *required* interpretation: he could not be identified apart from Christian instruction, because his identity is not self-evident.

## The Church Fathers

Allusions to Isaiah's servant abound in early Christian writing: the Church Fathers pursue a variety of themes. In some cases, such as *1 Clem* 16.1–14 (ca. 90), the servant serves to encourage humility among Jesus's followers; in other instances, such as in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 5.2, Isa 53:3, 7 is understood to prove both that Jesus is Lord and that his blood redeems from sin. Justin Martyr

46 See Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 225–26.

quotes Isa 52:15–53:12 in his *First Apology* (ca. 151–55); e.g., *1 Apol*. 50 cites Isa 52:13–53:8, 12), and especially in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (ca. 160)[47] to show how Jesus improves upon Jewish ritual. For example, after quoting all of Isa 52:10–54:6 (LXX) in *Dial.* 13.2–5 (cf. 40.1)—thereby belying the hypothesis that 52:15–53:12 forms a natural unit—Justin contrasts Jewish ritual immersion with cleansing in the blood of Christ, the "lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7). Discussion then turns more polemical when Justin concludes that the Jews deliberately tortured this innocent lamb (*Dial*. 72.1), whom Isaiah proclaims "sinless" because "he committed no iniquity" (Isa 53:9). To Trypho's resistance to the idea of a crucified Messiah, Justin cites, *inter alia,* Isa 53:3 on the "man of suffering." As for Isaiah's question, "Who has believed what we have heard?" (53:10), Justin answers: the gentile church (*Dial*. 89:3; 118:3). Finally, in *1 Apol.* 50.2, he changes the LXX of Isa 53:12 from "because of their wickedness he was delivered" to "he will make propitiation for the wicked."[48] As Bingham puts it, "These connections may be seen as incredible by those outside the community, but they form the warp and woof of Christian faith."[49]

Conversely, while the Fathers were insisting on Jesus as the only possible reading of Isaiah's servant, post-biblical Jews, perhaps following Daniel's reading, promulgated the communal interpretation. Origen records, "Now I remember that, on one occasion, at a disputation held with certain Jews, who were considered wise men, I quoted these prophecies, to which my Jewish opponent replied that these predictions bore reference to the whole people, regarded as one individual, and as being in a state of dispersion and suffering, in order that many proselytes might be gained among them, on account of the dispersion of the Jews among numerous heathen nations" (*Cels.* 1.55). This Jewish view was only one of several options available in the early Common Era.

## Early Postbiblical Jewish Interpretation

Targum Jonathan, the Aramaic translation of the prophets, underwent several editions in the second and the fourth centuries CE,[50] though it preserves earlier traditions. Its translation of Isa 52:13–53:12, likely composed some point before the Bar-Kochba revolt (132–135), reads the Hebrew of 52:13, "Behold, my servant," as "Behold, my servant, *the Messiah*."[51] This figure then serves as an intercessor for Israel.[52]

Early rabbinic texts generally understood the servant as an individual rather than as collective Israel.[53] For example, b. Sanh. 98b, records: "The Messiah, what is his name? The Rabbis say, 'the scholar with leprosy, as it is said, surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted.'" The passage follows a discussion in which the

47 The following discussion draws substantially from D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Justin and Isaiah 53," *VC* 53 (2000): 248–61. See also Daniel Bailey, "Our Suffering and Crucified Messiah (*Dial.* 111.2): Justin Martyr's Allusions to Isaiah 53 in his Dialogue with Trypho, with Special Reference to the New Edition of M. Marcovich," in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, *Suffering Servant*, 324–417.

48 Ibid., 259

49 Ibid., 251.

50 Paul V. M. Fletcher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 174–5, 181–82.

51 Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 103.

52 See Jostein Ådna, "The Servant of Isaiah 53 as Triumphant and Interceding Messiah: The Reception of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in the Targum of Isaiah with Special Attention to the Concept of the Messiah," in Janowksi and Stuhlmacher, *Suffering Servant*, 189–224.

53 S. R. Driver and A. Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters,* 2 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1969 [1876]), 1.6–7; 2.7–9.

prophet Elijah informs Rabbi Joshua ben Levi that the Messiah "sits bandaging his leprous sores one at a time, unlike the rest of the sufferers, who bandage them all at once. Why? Because he might be needed at any time and would not want to be delayed."

Explicating Ruth 2:14, "Come here and eat of the bread and dip your morsel in vinegar," the midrash *Ruth Rabbah* also interprets Isa 53:5 messianically:

> He is speaking of the king Messiah: "Come hither," draw near to the throne; "and eat of thy bread," that is the bread of the kingdom; "and dip thy morsel in vinegar," this refers to chastisements, as it is said, "But he was wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities."[54]

Other Talmudic texts, difficult to date, understand the servant to be anyone whom God deems to so punish (b. Ber. 5a), or Moses (b. Sot. 14a).[55]

Finally, one remarkable midrash does apply the image of the suffering servant to the Messiah: Pesiqta Rabbati, whose core is likely from the fifth-sixth centuries, although it incorporates much older traditions; its traditions concerning the Messiah likely date as early as the third century.[56] In what looks like a response to Christian claims, it records the willing, vicarious suffering, though not the death, of the Messiah ben Ephraim. Pesiq. Rab. 36:4 reads,

> [The Holy One, blessed be He,] began to talk about the terms with him
> [Messiah Ephraim], saying to him: In the future the sins of those that have been hidden with you will bring you under an iron yoke. They will make you like a calf whose eyes grow dim; and they will choke your spirit with [your] yoke; and because of their sins your tongue will stick to the roof of your mouth (Ps 22:16). Are you willing [to endure] this?
> The Messiah said in [God's] Presence: Will this suffering [last] for many years?
> The Holy One said to him: By your life and the life of My head! I have decreed for you a week [seven years]. If your soul is saddened, I will immediately banish them [the sinful souls hidden with you under the Throne of God].
> [The Messiah] said in His presence: Master of the universe, I will take this upon myself with a joyful soul and a glad heart, provided that not one [person] in Israel perish; not only those who are alive should be saved in my days, but also those who are dead, who have died since [the days] of the first human being up until now should be saved [at the time of salvation] in my days {ed. pr.: but also the aborted ones}; [including] those whom You thought to create, but who were not yet created. Such [are the things] I desire, and for this I am ready to take [all this] upon myself….

Strikingly, the section does not cite Isa 53; it is instead a midrash on Isa 60:1, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you," one of the haftarot (prophetic texts) of comfort read in the weeks following the ninth of Ab, the day on which Jews mourn the destruction of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem. But the Messiah Ephraim who suffers in this Jewish text is not Jesus, the suffering is not crucifixion on a wooden cross, and this messiah does not die.

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54 Driver and Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters,* 1.6–7, 2.7, 9.

55 Driver and Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters,* 8.

56 The description of this midrash and its discussion of messianism is based on Rivka Ulmer, "The Contours of the Messiah in *Pesiqta Rabbati*," *HTR* 106 (2013), 115–44.

For Rabbi Solomon son of Isaac (Rashi), the servant in Isaiah represented the Jews' persecution and the promise of reward for their fidelity during the First Crusade. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photo Credit: HIP / Art Resource.

## Later Jewish Interpretation

Most medieval Jewish interpreters understand the servant as representing all Israel.[57] For the era's most significant Jewish biblical commentator, the French Rabbi Solomon son of Isaac (Rashi—1040–1105), whose commentary likely reflects the First Crusade's devastation of the Rhineland Jewish communities in 1096–99, the servant both explained their persecution and promised them a reward for their fidelity. As Rembaum states, "It is precisely because the idea of an innocent human sacrifice affording universal atonement and reconciliation of humanity with God became so prominent in early twelfth-century France that Rashi was moved to incorporate it into his Isaiah 53 exegesis."[58]

Rashi's commentaries became standard within Jewish communities, and most writers followed him in understanding the servant as Israel punished in exile and to be restored to the land. Many of these commentators are polemical; Abraham ibn Ezra (1089—ca. 1167), for example, notes, "This *parashah* [pericope] is an extremely difficult one. Our opponents say that it refers to their God…this, however, is not possible….,"[59] because a dead person cannot "see his offspring" (Isa 53:10). Emphasis on the collective interpretation also responded to anti-Jewish Christian claims that Israel's exile is a sign of divine abandonment. Jews counterclaimed that Israel's diminished status actually reflected its role as the God's chosen servant.[60]

57 See Joel E. Rembaum, "The Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition regarding Isaiah 53," *HTR* 75 (1982): 289–311; Elliott Horowitz, "Isaiah's Suffering Servant and the Jews: From the Nineteenth Century to the Ninth," in *New Perspectives in Jewish-Christian Relations in Honor of David Berger*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 429–36.

58 Rembaum, "Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition," 299; he compares Rashi's reading with that of Anselm's "Satisfaction theory," which proposes that by dying, Jesus both honors God and provides the restitution or "satisfies" God's demand for justice that human sin compromised.

59 Driver and Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters,* 2.43. See Uriel Simon, "Ibn Ezra between Medievalism and Modernism: The Case of Isaiah XL–LXVI," *Studia in Veteris Testamenti* 36 (1985): 268–70.

60 Rembaum, "Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition." The summary of Driver-Neubauer in Michael L. Brown, "Jewish Interpretations of Isaiah 53," in Bock and Glaser, eds., *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, 61–83, is also helpful. See also Leora Batnitzky, "On the Suffering of God's Chosen: Christian Views in Jewish Terms," in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), 203–20.

Nevertheless, personal, and even messianic interpretations of Isa 52:13–53:12 continued, albeit weakly, in the Middle Ages;[61] they are found, e.g., in Karaite (non-rabbinic) commentary, including in the most important Karaite commentator, Yefet son of Eli (tenth century Iraq and Israel),[62] who, citing the early Karaite Benjamin ben Moses Nahawandi, claims this passage "is being said about the messiah."[63]

Modern Jewish interpreters, following Rashi, usually understand the servant as Israel, or at least as a non-Messianic figure.[64] Yet most Jews today, unless they have encountered Christian missionaries or studied the "man of sorrows" in art history, are unlikely to be familiar with Isa 52:15–53:12, since it is absent from Jewish liturgy. Perhaps the verses dropped out of Jewish liturgical readings under Christian pressure; perhaps they were never included. In contrast, Christians who follow a lectionary will hear of Isaiah's servant frequently, both implicitly and, twice, explicitly: according to the *Revised Common Lectionary*, Isa 53:4–12 is read on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost in Cycle B; Isa 52:13–53:12 is proclaimed annually on Good Friday.

## Reading the Suffering Servant as Christians and Jews Together

Isaiah 52:15–53:12 has yielded numerous readings, some prompted by Hebrew and Greek nuances, some polemical and others pastoral. This diversity of interpretations warns us against reading the text in only one way or at the expense of someone else. Perhaps Jews, who have denied that Jesus is Isaiah's servant, can come to appreciate how Christians, reading typologically, adopted this interpretation.[65] Perhaps Christians might come to appreciate that we Jews have our own understandings.

Perhaps Jews and Christians can unite in endorsing new readings of Isaiah. In 1978, Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., rector of the Universidad de Centroamericana (UCA) in El Salvador, argued that the traditional reading of the Slave as a "prefiguration" of Jesus' passion "should [not] close our eyes" to their power as "a real description of ... the vast majority of humanity" today. For him, the

61 See Yedida Eisenstat, "Isaiah (Book and Person), C. Medieval Judaism," *EBR* 13.314–15, and esp. Raphael Loewe, "Prolegomenon" to *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*, vol. 2 (New York: Ktav, 1969), 1–38; Heinz A. Fischel, "Die Deuterojesaianischen Gottesknechtlieder in der Juedischen Auslegung," *HUCA* 18 (1943–1944), 53–76 (and charts on 74–76). For newer bibliography see David Mishkan, "The Emerging Jewish Views of the Messiahship of Jesus and their Bearing on the Question of his Resurrection," *HTS* 71 (2015), 1–7 (esp. 3), at http://hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/2881/html. Elliott Horowitz ("Isaiah's Suffering Servant and the Jews: From the Nineteenth Century to the Ninth," in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter, BRLJ 33 [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 419–36) advances the Driver-Neaubauer collection.

62 Driver and Neubauer, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters,* 2.19 and Joseph Alobaidi, *The Messiah in Isaiah 53: The Commentaries of Saadia Gaon, Salmon be Yeruham and Yefet be Eli on Is 52:13–53:12, Edition and Translation* (Bern: Peer Lang, 1998), 26.

63 Alobaidi, *Messiah in Isaiah*, 170. See also Stefan Schreiner, "Isaiah 53 in the Sefer Hizzuk Emunah ('Faith Strengthened') of Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham of Troki," in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, *Suffering Servant*, 418–61.

64 So, e.g., Paul, *Isaiah 40–55*, 18, and Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 215, and in more popular Jewish literature, e.g. Allan S. Maller, "Isaiah's Suffering Servant: A New View," *JBQ* 37 (2009): 243–49. Mordecai Schreiber ("The Real 'Suffering Servant': Decoding a Controversial Passage in the Bible," *JBQ* 37 [2009]: 35–44, identifies the servant with Jeremiah.

65 For an example of Jewish apologetic that denies the legitimacy of Christian readings, see Marshall Roth, "Isaiah 53, The Suffering Servant," on the Aish website (http://www.aish.com/sp/ph/Isaiah_53_The_Suffering_Servant.html).

Suffering Servant today "is anyone who discharges the mission described in the songs—anyone unjustly crucified for the sins of human beings, whose suffering produces a kind of 'expiation' through its demand for a 'public' and 'historical' return to righteousness and justice."[66] Mary Francis Reis, VHM, similarly asks "Where is the Suffering Servant to be found today? In Flint, Michigan? In African American teens fearing to be shot by the police? In refugees in search of home? In immigrants living in fear of deportation? In the homeless and the hungry?"[67] These are questions that Isaiah prompts, and that we can all, whatever our religious affiliation, share.

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66 https://www.scu.edu/ic/media–publications/explore-journal/spring-2015-stories/voice-of-the-suffering-servant-cry-of-the-crucified-people.html.

67 http://www.visitationmonasteryminneapolis.org/2016/03/good-friday-reflection-by-s-mary-frances-reis/.