

ASN The servant is likened to a seriously ill person who is shunned by others because of his horrible disease.

BSN Illness and pain stand by metonymy (or perhaps as metaphors) for sin and its effects, as vv. 11–12 make clear.

CTN The words “for something he had done” are supplied in the translation for clarification. The group now realizes he suffered because of his identification with them, not simply because he was a special target of divine anger.

DTN The preposition מן (*min*) has a causal sense (translated “because of”) here and in the following clause.

ETN *Heb* “the punishment of our peace [was] on him.” שלום (*shalom*, “peace”) is here a genitive of result, i.e., “punishment that resulted in our peace.”

FSN Continuing to utilize the imagery of physical illness, the group acknowledges that the servant’s willingness to carry their illnesses (v. 4) resulted in their being healed. Healing is a metaphor for forgiveness here.

GTN Elsewhere the Hiphil of פָּגַע (*paga*) means “to intercede verbally” (Jer 15:11; 36:25) or “to intervene militarily” (Isa 59:16), but neither nuance fits here. Apparently here the Hiphil is the causative of the normal Qal meaning, “encounter, meet, touch.” The Qal sometimes refers to a hostile encounter or attack; when used in this way the object is normally introduced by the preposition בְּ (*bet*, see Josh 2:16; Judg 8:21; 15:12, etc.). Here the causative Hiphil has a double object—the Lord makes “sin” attack “him” (note that the object attacked is introduced by the preposition אֶל). In their sin the group was like sheep who had wandered from God’s path. They were vulnerable to attack; the guilt of their sin was ready to attack and destroy them. But then the servant stepped in and took the full force of the attack.

HTN The translation assumes the Niphal is passive; another option is take the clause (note the subject + verb pattern) as concessive and the Niphal as reflexive, “though he humbled himself.”

ISN This verse emphasizes the servant’s silent submission. The comparison to a sheep does not necessarily suggest a sacrificial metaphor. Sheep were slaughtered for food as well as for sacrificial rituals, and טָבַח (*tevakh*) need not refer to sacrificial slaughter (see Gen 43:16; Prov 7:22; 9:2; Jer 50:27; note also the use of

he was despised, and we considered him insignificant.^A

4 But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain,^B even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done.^C

5 He was wounded because of^D our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well;^E because of his wounds we have been healed.^F

6 All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the LORD caused the sin of all of us to attack him.^G

7 He was treated harshly and afflicted,^H but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth.^I

8 He was led away after an unjust trial^J—but who even cared?^K

Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living,^L because of the rebellion of his own^M people he was wounded.

9 They intended to bury him with criminals,^N but he ended up in a rich man’s tomb,^O because^P he had committed no violent deeds, nor had he spoken deceitfully.

10 Though the LORD desired to crush him and make him ill, once restitution is made,^Q

the related verb in Exod 21:37 HT [22:1 ET]; Deut 28:31; 1 Sam 25:11).

JTN The precise meaning of this line is uncertain. The present translation assumes that מן (*min*) here has an instrumental sense (“by, through”) and understands עָצַר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט (*‘otsar umimmishpat*, “coercion and legal decision”) as a hendiadys meaning “coercive legal decision,” thus “an unjust trial.” Other interpretive options include: (1) “without [for this sense of מן, see BDB 578 s.v. 1.b] hindrance and proper judicial process,” i.e., “unfairly and with no one to defend him,” (2) “from [in the sense of “after,” see BDB 581 s.v. 4.b] arrest and judgment.”

KTN *Heb* “and his generation, who considers?” (NASB similar). Some understand “his generation” as a reference to descendants. In this case the question would suggest that he will have none. However, אָרַךְ (*‘et*) may be taken here as specifying a new subject (see BDB 85 s.v. 1.3 אָרַךְ). If “his generation” refers to the servant’s contemporary generation, one may then translate, “As for his contemporary generation, who took note?” The point would be that few were concerned about the harsh treatment he received.

LSN The “land of the living” is an idiom for the sphere where people live, in contrast to the underworld realm of the dead. See, for example, Ezek 32:23–27.

MTN The Hebrew text reads “my people,” a reading followed by most English versions, but this is problematic in a context where the first person plural predominates, and where God does not appear to speak again until v. 11b. Therefore, it

is preferable to read with the Qumran scroll 1QIsa^a עַמּוֹ (“his people”). In this case, the group speaking in these verses is identified as the servant’s people (compare פָּשְׁעֵנוּ [*p^asha’enu*, “our rebellious deeds”] in v. 5 with פָּשַׁע עַמּוֹ [*pe-sha’ ammi*, “the rebellion of his people”] in v. 8).

NTN *Heb* “one as-signed his grave with criminals.” The subject of the singular is impersonal; English typically uses “they” in such constructions.

OTN This line reads literally, “and with the rich in his death.” בְּמֹתָיו (*b^amotayv*) combines a preposition, a plural form of the noun מוֹת (*mot*), and a third masculine singular suffix. The plural of the noun is problematic and the מ may be the result of virtual dittography. The form should probably be emended to בְּמֹתוֹ (*bamato*, singular noun). The relationship between this line and the preceding one is uncertain. The parallelism appears to be synonymous (note “his grave” and “in his death”), but “criminals” and “the rich” hardly make a compatible pair in this context, for they would not be buried in the same kind of tomb. Some emend עָשִׂיר (*‘ashir*, “rich”) to אָשַׁרַע (*‘ase ra’*, “doers of evil”) but the absence of the *ayin* (ו) is not readily explained in this graphic environment. Others suggest an emendation to שְׁעִירִים (*s^a‘irim*, “he-goats, demons”), but the meaning in this case is not entirely transparent and the proposal assumes that the form suffered from both transposition and the inexplicable loss of a final *mem*. Still others relate עָשִׂיר (*‘ashir*) to an alleged Arabic cognate meaning “mob.” See HALOT 896 s.v. עָשִׂיר. Perhaps the parallelism is antithetical, rather than synonymous. In this case, the point is made that the servant’s burial in a rich man’s tomb, in contrast to a criminal’s burial, was appropriate, for he had done nothing wrong.

PTN If the second line is antithetical, then עַל (*‘al*) is probably causal here, explaining why the servant was buried in a rich man’s tomb, rather than that of criminal. If the first two lines are synonymous, then בְּ is probably concessive: “even though....”

QTN The meaning of this line is uncertain. It reads literally, “if you/she makes, a reparation offering, his life.” The verb תַּשִּׁים (*tasim*) could be second masculine singular, in which case it would have to be addressed to the servant or to God. However, the servant is only addressed once

in this servant song (see 52:14a), and God either speaks or is spoken about in this servant song; he is never addressed. Furthermore, the idea of God himself making a reparation offering is odd. If the verb is taken as third feminine singular, then the feminine noun נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) at the end of the line is the likely subject. In this case one can take the suffixed form of the noun as equivalent to a pronoun and translate, “if he [literally, “his life”] makes a reparation offering.”

SN What constitutes the servant’s reparation offering? Some might think his suffering, but the preceding context views this as past, while the verb here is imperfect in form. The offering appears to be something the servant does after his suffering has been completed. Perhaps the background of the language can be found in the Levitical code, where a healed leper would offer a reparation offering as part of the ritual to achieve ceremonial cleanliness (see Lev 14). The servant was pictured earlier in the song as being severely ill. This illness (a metaphor for the effects of the people’s sin) separated him from God. However, here we discover the separation is not final; once reparation is made, so to speak, he will again experience the Lord’s favor.

ASN The idiomatic and stereotypical language emphasizes the servant’s restoration to divine favor. Having numerous descendants and living a long life are standard signs of divine blessing. See Job 42:13–16.

BTN *Heb* “he will be satisfied by his knowledge,” i.e., “when he knows.” The preposition is understood as temporal and the suffix as a subjective genitive. Some take בָּדָעְתוֹ (*b^ada’to*, “by his knowledge”) with what follows and translate “by knowledge of him,” understanding the preposition as instrumental and the suffix as objective.

CSN The song ends as it began (cf. 52:13–15), with the Lord announcing the servant’s vindication and exaltation.

DTN *Heb* “he will acquit, a righteous one, my servant, many.” צַדִּיק (*tsaddiq*) may refer to the servant, but more likely it is dittographic (note the preceding verb יָצַדְתִּי, *yatsdiq*). The precise meaning of the verb (the Hiphil of צָדַק, *tsadaq*) is debated. Elsewhere the Hiphil is used at least six times in the sense of “make righteous” in a legal sense, i.e., “pronounce

innocent, acquit” (see Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1; 1 Kgs 8:32 = 2 Chr 6:23; Prov 17:15; Isa 5:23). It can also mean “render justice” (as a royal function, see 2 Sam 15:4; Ps 82:3), “concede” (Job 27:5), “vindicate” (Isa 50:8), and “lead to righteousness” (by teaching and example, Dan 12:3). The preceding context and the next line suggest a legal sense here. Because of his willingness to carry the people’s sins, the servant is able to “acquit” them.

SN Some (e.g., H. M. Orlinsky, “The So-called ‘Suffering Servant’ in Isaiah 53,22,” VTsup 14 [1967]: 3–133) object to this legal interpretation of the language, arguing that it would be unjust for the righteous to suffer for the wicked and for the wicked to be declared innocent. However, such a surprising development is consistent with the ironic nature of this song. It does seem unfair for the innocent to die for the guilty. But what is God to do when all have sinned and wandered off like stray sheep (cf. v. 6)? Covenant law demands punishment, but punishment in this case would mean annihilation of what God has created. God’s justice, as demanded by the law, must be satisfied. To satisfy his justice, he does something seemingly unjust. He punishes his sinless servant, the only one who has not strayed off! In the progress of biblical revelation, we discover that the sinless revelation is really God in the flesh, who offers himself because he is committed to the world he has created. If his justice can only be satisfied if he himself

he will see descendants and enjoy long life,^A and the LORD’s purpose will be accomplished through him.

11 Having suffered, he will reflect on his work, he will be satisfied when he understands what he has done.^B

“My servant^C will acquit many,^D for he carried their sins.^E

12 So I will assign him a portion with the multitudes,^F he will divide the spoils of victory with the powerful,^G because he willingly submitted^H to death and was numbered with the rebels, when he lifted up the sin of many and intervened^I on behalf of the rebels.”

Zion Will Be Secure

54 “Shout for joy, O barren one who has not given birth! Give a joyful shout and cry out, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one are more numerous than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD.

2 Make your tent larger, stretch your tent curtains farther out!^I Spare no effort, lengthen your ropes, and pound your stakes deep.^K

3 For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your children will conquer^L nations and will resettle desolate cities.

4 Don’t be afraid, for you will not be put to shame. Don’t be intimidated,^M for you will not be humiliated.

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endures the punishment, then so be it. What appears to be an act of injustice is really love satisfying the demands of justice!

ETN The circumstantial clause (note the vav [ו] + object + subject + verb pattern) is understood as causal here. The prefixed verb form is either a preterite or an imperfect used in a customary manner.

FTN Scholars have debated the precise meaning of the term רַבִּים (*rabbim*) that occurs five times in this passage (Isa 52:14, 15; 53:11, 12 [2x]). Its two broad categories of translation are “much”/“many” and “great” (HALOT 1171–72 s.v. רַב). Unlike other Hebrew terms for might or strength, this term is linked with numbers or abundance. In all sixteen uses outside of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (articular and plural) it signifies an inclusive meaning: “the majority” or “the multitude” (J. Jeremias, *TDNT* 6:536–37). This term occurs in parallelism with אֲטֻמִּים (*‘atsumim*), which normally signifies “numerous” or “large” or “powerful” (through large numbers). Like רַבִּים (*rabbim*), it refers to greatness in numbers (cf. Deut 4:38; 7:1; 9:1; 11:23). It emphasizes the multitudes with whom the Servant will share the spoil of his victory. As J. Olley wrote: “Yahweh has won the victory and vindicates his Servant, giving to him many subservient people, together with their spoils. These numerous peoples in turn receive blessing, sharing in the “peace” resulting from Yahweh’s victory and the Servant’s suffering” (John W. Olley, “The Many: How Is Isa 53,12a to Be Understood,” *Bib* 68 [1987]: 330–56).

GSN The servant is compared here to a warrior who will be richly rewarded for his effort and success in battle.

HTN *Heb* “because he laid bare his life”; traditionally, ASV “because he (+ hath KJV) poured out his soul (life NIV) unto death.”

ITN The Hiphil of פָּגַע (*paga*) can mean “cause to attack” (v. 6), “urge, plead verbally” (Jer 15:11; 36:25), or “intervene militarily” (Isa 59:16). Perhaps the third nuance fits best here, for military imagery is employed in the first two lines of the verse.

JTN *Heb* “the curtains of your dwelling places let them stretch out.”

KTN *Heb* “your stakes strengthen.”

LTN Or “take possession of”; NAB “shall dispossess.”

MTN Or “embarrassed”; NASB “humiliated...disgraced.”