Article

Isaiah 53:10: A Question of Sacrifice or Also an Attempt to Legitimize Authority?

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Abstract

This article analyses Isaiah 53:10 in the context of the so-called 'Fourth Servant Song', exploring whether its meaning is exclusively sacrificial or whether it also responds to a strategy of legitimizing authority in post-exilic Israel. Through a methodology that combines synchrony with diachronic reflection, the Neo-Babylonian and Persian historical background is reconstructed, identifying the social, political, and religious tensions that influenced the writing of the book of Isaiah. The study examines how the centrality of Jerusalem, the fracture between deportees and the indigenous population, and the struggle for the legitimization of religious authority are reflected in the text. The sacrificial vocabulary, especially the term אָשָׁם, and its metaphorical use in Isaiah 53:10, as well as the dynamics of guilt and benefit transfer, are analyzed in detail. The article concludes that the passage not only redefines sacrifice outside the cultic and priestly sphere, but also legitimizes a prophetic–scribal group as mediators of salvation, displacing the priestly monopoly and proposing the surrender of life as the theological core of atonement and restoration of the community.

Keywords: Isaiah 53:10; אָשָׁם ('asham); Servant of Yhwh; legitimisation of religious authority; חֵטְא נשא (to bear sin)

1. Introduction

Prophecy is not a religious phenomenon exclusive to Israel. However, from the 8th century BC onwards, biblical prophecy forged its distinctive seal. The free divine intervention in human history became its main distinguishing feature. It involved a conception of God that was different from that of the Ancient Middle East. The God of Israel speaks without being consulted because he loves his people and wants to communicate with them. Thus, God gives himself in what he says. Consequently, both the reception of the Word and its communication cannot take place without involvement and identification with the message received. In fact, in the historical drift of biblical prophecy, it can be observed that, gradually, "the life and sufferings of the prophets become part of their own message, who make their lives inseparable from their prophetic word" ([Trebolle Barrera 1996](#), p. 42). In this way, the prophet's body becomes a manuscript that refers to God.

An emblematic text is the so-called Fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12). It is a dense passage, theologically speaking, and at the same time unprecedented. It is one of the few passages in the Old Testament in which the death of a human being becomes salvific for others[1]. The surrender, interpreted in sacrificial terms, reaches its climax in Isa 53:10. This verse is fraught with semantic and syntactic problems, compounded by the difficulty of deciphering the meaning of the term אָשָׁם used to describe the Servant's atonement. In fact,

Isa 53:10 constitutes one of the classic *cruces interpretorum* that is difficult to solve due to the concatenation of problems. Given that many paths have been sufficiently trodden by research, I adopt another angle from which to approach the question with the intention of removing it from the place where it is stuck.

The thesis I take as my starting point is formulated as a question in the title of this essay: Isaiah 53:10, a sacrificial question or also an attempt to legitimize authority? To answer this question, I adopt as my methodology and hermeneutical horizon that of a "diachronic reflection on synchrony" (Conroy 1990, pp. 255–68). In applying this approach, I will take three steps. The first consists of reviewing the profound marks left on the book of Isaiah by the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, with the aim of better understanding the historical and theological challenges and issues behind the passage of Isa 52:13–53:12. The second step focuses on framing this pericope within the editorial process of Isaiah. Finally, I will analyze the sacrificial vocabulary used in Isa 53:10-12, particularly the term אָשָׁם.

2. Reconstruction of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Historical Context and Its Traces in Isaiah

The material that is strictly exilic and post-exilic in Isaiah's work is found in chapters 40–66. However, the section Isa 1–39 contains literary blocks from this period and even later ones. It is estimated that the editorial work lasted about five hundred years and was carried out by "literarily trained circles" that "presuppose an intense cultivation of tradition" (Berges 2011, p. 37). This group is credited with welding together the major parts of Isaiah and creating bridges to give the entire work a profound unity.

But the intervention of these groups went further. Many passages are a *mixtum compositum* (Werlitz 1999, p. 39). In other words, even the oldest texts were retouched from the perspective of exile and post-exile. In this sense, not only is the center of gravity of the whole of Isaiah shifted from the 8th to the 6th–5th centuries BC, but the crisis of exile is the hermeneutical horizon from which earlier traditions are reinterpreted.

For this reason, the historical and social context of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods is crucial to understanding the editorial interventions, as well as the shift and unity that these reinterpretations bring to the entire Isaian material. Of the main milestones of both periods, I select only those maps of tension whose traces are latently mapped in Isaiah and affect Isa 52:13–53:12[2].

2.1. First Map of Tension: Jerusalem and Mizpah

There are many limitations when it comes to reconstructing the socio-political and religious situation in the Neo-Babylonian period. However, comparing biblical data with archaeological data offers some interesting clues. The first is that the "empty land" is a myth or, at least, a magnified view of reality (Barstad 1996)[3]. The final assessment of scholars is that only a contingent of 25.000 men—not counting women and children—were deported (González Echegaray 2011, pp. 194–95). That is, a quarter of the population. Excavations confirm that Jerusalem suffered a harsh siege by Babylon[4]. The city probably remained in ruins until the Persian period and was subject to occasional looting (Ramís Darder 2012, pp. 70–71).

The settlements in the Benjamin region, the quantitative density of the seals found in the vicinity of Tell en-Naṣbeh, and the stratigraphy demonstrate a certain boom in the area and suggest that, in the Neo-Babylonian period, Mizpah assumed the administrative role of the region. Jerusalem, therefore, for all practical purposes, lost its status as capital. Added to this is the pottery found in Bethel, located 6 km from Mizpah and dated to the mid-6th century BC. Although the conclusions of this finding are not so conclusive, in

the opinion of some authors, this fact highlights a period of splendor for the sanctuary of Bethel, which could have acted as an "official sanctuary" (2Kgs 23) (Cocco 2007, pp. 55–76).

With the axis of power and worship transferred to these two cities, it is easier to understand why Isaiah so insistently defends the centrality of Jerusalem, and this emphasis becomes a programmatic choice that shapes the entire work, as it includes and seals the three major sections of the book. The city, personified as a woman and transformed into Yhwh's wife and mother of Israel, becomes the center of the world (Lack 1973, pp. 220–28). It is there that Yhwh's throne is located (Isa 6:1-5). God then resides in Zion (Isa 24:23; 62:8-9). Therefore, the Torah will come forth from there (Isa 2:3) and all peoples will make a pilgrimage to it (Isa 2:2-4; 66:18-23). In this way, any other center of instruction that rivals it is wiped off the map. The fact that the Torah emanates from Zion restores its role as global arbiter (Isa 2:2-4) and makes it a source of comfort (Isa 12:1-6) and nourishment for Israel (Isa 55:1-3; 66:10-13).

In addition to the major inclusions, Isaiah's work patiently weaves this idea together. For example, in Isa 4:5-6, it is implied that the temporary "tabernacle" (סֻכָּה) will become a permanent "dwelling place" (מָקוֹם). Then, the legitimacy of the temporary sanctuaries is cancelled. In Isa 45:13, Cyrus is explicitly commanded to rebuild only Jerusalem and no other enclaves. Episodes such as Isa 54 or Isa 60–62 reiterate that the salvation of the people of Israel inevitably passes through the city of David. However, in Ulrich Berges' opinion, the entire dramatic knot of Isaiah's plot revolves around the narrative section of Isaiah 36–39. Jerusalem is saved from Assyria (2Kgs 18:14-18). Sennacherib's defeat overshadows the exile, which, without being ignored in the work, is interpreted from the perspective of faith in Zion's permanence. The "cornerstone" is found in Jerusalem, and Israel's survival depends on trust in God (Isa 7:9; 36:4-5) (Berges 2011, pp. 71–82).

In my opinion, the Deutero-Isaian prologue (Isa 40:1-11) contributes an element that goes unnoticed. If we interpret the participle "messenger" (מְבַשֶּׂרֶת) as an apposition to "Jerusalem-Zion" (Isa 40:9), we find ourselves in a scenario like that of Isa 2:1-5 (García Fernández 2010, p. 129). Jerusalem must become a messenger announcing God's return to her for the cities of Judah. That is, this good news will emerge from Jerusalem and reach all regions of Israel. Now, the fact that the text encourages us to "fear not" (אַל־תִּירָאִי) for raising our voices can be considered a veiled hint of controversy. For why should Zion fear to announce this message of hope to the cities of Judah if not because they rival her? God's return to her (Isa 40:9-11) enthrones her as the only capital and puts her back at the center of worship and life.

The shift in the capital to Mizpah and of worship to Bethel could be the context that explains the emphasis in Isaiah's work on the centrality of Zion. This persisted in the late post-exilic period, as evidenced by the insistence on this point in the book of Ezra. Isaiah orchestrates a counter-discourse that acts as a counterweight to the religious and political marginalization suffered by Jerusalem after the Babylonian siege. In this way, the prophet delegitimizes any other place, since Zion clearly monopolizes the mediation of salvation.

2.2. Second Map of Tension: The Friction Between the Deportees and the People of the Land

Nabonidus' chronicle dates the transfer of power from Babylon to Persia to 539 BC[5]. There is heated debate about the veracity of the so-called Edict of Cyrus, encrypted in the book of Ezra 1:1-4 (Cocco 2007, pp. 83–88). However, the Cyrus Cylinder attests to the Persian policy of returning divine images and restoring cults in the conquered territories[6]. Aware of the panegyric and propagandistic function of the Cylinder, scholars recognize that the Persian people had a much more refined sense of ethics than the Mesopotamian populations (Isa 13:17). In fact, the two pillars of children's education—learning to ride horses and telling the truth—speak as much of their warrior character as of their morality

(González Echegaray 2011, p. 201). Therefore, although this benevolent practice was not exclusive to Israel, it is not foreign to the character and idiosyncrasies of this Iranian people.

The reconstruction of the temple began around 520 BC and lasted until 515 BC. However, there are doubts about this. The absence of archaeological remains in the temple grounds suggests, rather, modest remodeling. The importance of the Second Temple would not be so much architectural as ideological (Cocco 2007, pp. 117–28). It is most likely that during the first twenty years (539–520 BC) authority remained concentrated in the Mizpah/Bethel axis, but now in the hands of Persian administrators. The progressive recentralization of Jerusalem's role in the so-called province of Yehud did not take place without internal friction and opposition. In fact, Cyrus's supposed authorization to return to the land of Israel did not automatically resolve national conflicts (Berges 2011, pp. 40–41). On the contrary, the rift between those who remained in the Judean homeland and those who were deported emerged with greater virulence.

The tablet of Jeconiah testifies that the Babylonian deportation had been selective: royalty, aristocracy and officials (Ramís Darder 2012, pp. 71–72)[7]. The poorest population remained in Judah, further impoverished by military devastation (2Kgs 24:14). At the popular level, this fact points to the elites as being responsible for the debacle and, therefore, punished with exile (Isa 43:27). Unlike Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who openly blame these ruling classes (Jer 23:1-15; Ezek 34:1-10), Isaiah does not address the issue so directly. Nevertheless, there are traces of the urban, religious and courtly elite being blamed for structural corruption[8]. However, everyone has paid the price. For although the ruling elite has been deported, the population remaining in the land will suffer the harsh consequences of the brutal Babylonian siege. With the aim of winning the loyalty of this remnant, Babylon practiced a policy of land redistribution (2Kgs 25:12; Jer 30:10). This fact partly explains the hostility with which the returnees were subsequently received.

From Babylon's perspective, the outlook is different (Ramís Darder 2019, pp. 224–29). Exile is described as a "purifying furnace" (Isa 48:10). For the deportees, this implies acknowledging their guilt but also taking credit for having experienced the suffering of expatriation first-hand. Their pain becomes an element of legitimization. In fact, in Second Isaiah, it is those who return who rebuild Jerusalem (Isa 54:13-14). Moreover, in some texts there is an underlying criticism of those who remained in the country, who were not only unable to reverse the economic situation, but also failed to restore the temple in Jerusalem and may even have practiced other syncretic cults (Isa 57; 65).

Therefore, exile causes a social divide between two groups. This rupture will worsen in the first phase of post-exile when the first repatriates return. The line of fire in the debate on legitimacy revolves around who is to blame and who has suffered. It is not difficult to guess which ideology will prevail (Ramís Darder 2012, pp. 73–79). For, after the destruction of the Temple, the big question Israel asks itself is: *where is Yahweh?* Through the theme of glory, the prophet Ezekiel clearly answers: *with the exiles.* However, Isaiah dramatizes this by presenting God returning to Jerusalem and bringing the returnees with him (Isa 40:9-11; 52:7-10).

The caesura marked by the imperative: "Come out of Babylon" (Isa 48:20) suggests that the first scene should be located there (Isa 40–48). The criticism of idol makers (Isa 44:9-20), the dispute over the interpretation of the Cyrus event (Isa 45:9-13), and the repeated accusations of blindness and deafness (Isa 42:18-25; 43:8; 48:1-8) reveal resistance. It is plausible to think that some wealthy merchants and elites integrated into the Persian administration were not keen on returning. This circumstance seems to be reflected in Isa 55:1, which repeats the imperative "come" (לְכוּ) three times. It is encouraged by the fact that the offer of salvation is free and abundant. Verse 3 goes even further, for those who listen are those who return, and only they are the legitimate heirs of the Davidic covenant

(García Fernández 2010, pp. 157–58)[9]. Second Isaiah clearly favors those who return as those invested with the outpouring of the spirit of Yhwh (Isa 42:1; 44:3; 61:1-2) and converted into witnesses (Isa 43:10) with the mission of comforting Jerusalem (Isa 40:1-2).

The second section, Isa 49–55, located in the territory of Israel, reveals a series of objections that could well reflect the hostility and mistrust with which the population of the land received the newcomers. Thus, for example, the demand for ritual purity before departure, evident in Isa 52:11-12, evokes the suspicion of contamination that hung over the deportees because they lived in a pagan land. In the text of Isa 49:14-21, Zion reproaches God for having been abandoned. Furthermore, the note in Isa 49:20—*this place is too small for me; make room for me* to dwell—could well reflect the readjustment of spaces due to the arrival of newcomers (Isa 54:1-3). The worsening treatment of the Servant—who, in the opinion of some exegetes, embodies the returning Jacob-Israel—is another indication that only a "confessing minority" (Isa 52:13–53:12) welcomes the deportees as bearers of God's consolation (Berges 2011, p. 106).

In a way, Isa 40–55 replicates the same pattern as Isa 1–39. The preaching of the prophet Isaiah to this sick Israel (Isa 1:1-9), instead of purification, causes greater hardening (Isa 6:8-10). Only a small remnant will accept the message (Isa 6:13; 7:3). Similarly, a deaf and blind Israel refuses the salvation brought by the Servant. Moreover, it provokes greater closed-mindedness to the point of eliminating him (Isa 53:7-9). Here too, only a small minority will confess and recognize God's saving action mediated by the figure of this deformed man. Although "the word of God does not return empty, without accomplishing what it was sent to do" (Isa 55:10-11), it makes its way with great difficulty.

In conclusion, the Neo-Babylonian period is marked by the collapse of the Davidic administration and a power vacuum that will be filled by new local actors who benefit from the agrarian redistribution practiced by Babylon (2Kgs 25:12). This sociological fracture will be the breeding ground for further conflicts between those who remained in Israel and the returnees. The debate is clarified in the theological sphere. While the indigenous population claims legitimate continuity of the land, the returnees invoke divine election.

2.3. Third Area of Tension: Legitimization of Authority

The new administrative structure imposed by the Persian Empire divided the territory into twenty satrapies. The province of Yehud, which belonged to Ebir-Nâhir (Beyond the River), enjoyed administrative autonomy[10]. The benevolence of the Persians may have rekindled hopes for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. However, as in the previous period, the government was run by imperial officials. Governors with the title of peḥāh were appointed by the court, but the lists of these governors are difficult to reconstruct due to the gaps found (Cocco 2007, pp. 134–37). The authority of the Jerusalemite priesthood was therefore restricted to the cultic sphere and coexisted with a civil authority that limited it. Hence the need for validation[11].

With the hope of restoring the monarchy dashed, it is plausible to think that the internal power struggles were transferred to the religious sphere. The inferences in the Mosaic traditions to legitimize differentiated roles in the distribution of powers (Deut 17–18) are possibly a reflection of Yehud in the early Persian period (520–400 BC). Given that the Jerusalem priesthood lacks recognition accepted by all of Israel, groups of sages and scribes struggle to legitimize themselves. Traces of this struggle can be found in the book of Isaiah.

Firstly, Isaiah's emphasis on Yhwh-King responds in a way to the crisis caused by the extinction of the Davidic dynasty[12]. Furthermore, in the book of Isaiah, this motif is used: to reinforce the centralism of Jerusalem[13]; to justify the opening of the religion of Yhwh to the nations; and to mitigate the political power of the empires that have besieged Israel[14]. Secondly, along with the relativization of imperial authority—since Yhwh is the

only King—the book of Isaiah tends to downplay the priestly function. This trace is especially noticeable in strategically placed passages in which the prophet transfers the purifying value of sacrifices to justice (Isa 1:11-17) and mercy (Isa 58:6-8). But not only that[15]. This shift in instances of legitimization creates a space in the book to reaffirm a prophetic or scribal group that claims leadership of restoration.

This mysterious and undefined contingent appears in the text through different nomenclatures. Perhaps the most characteristic is that of the "remnant" (שְׁאָר)[16]. A remnant linked to the "holy seed" of Isa 6:13 (קֹדֶשׁ זֶרַע) and to the symbolic name of Isaiah's son, Shear-Jashub (שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב, "a remnant shall return"; Isa 7:3). This idea passes from First Isaiah to Second Isaiah and is linked by the fine semantic thread of the term "seed" (זֶרַע) that connects the "holy seed" of Isa 6:13 with the offspring of the Servant (Isa 53:10). However, the terminology of the "remnant" (שְׁאָר) characteristic of Proto-Isaiah—and particularly present in Isa 7–11—disappears in the second and third Isaiah. In these two sections, another word comes to the fore: "servant" (עֶבֶד).

The use of the term "servant" (עֶבֶד) in Deutero-Isaiah is sometimes identified with Israel-Jacob[17] or with an individual character[18]. In other cases, it is not so clear whether it refers to an individual figure or the personification of a collective[19]. However, it is striking that, except in Isa 54:17, the term is never found in the plural (עֲבָדִים) in Second Isaiah. This is in contrast to Third Isaiah, where it is only found in the plural[20]. Since Isa 53:11 is the last time the term עֶבֶד appears in the singular, and there it refers to his descendants (זֶרַע), some authors deduce that, after the life of *the ebed Adonay* ended, his mission continued in his servants and consisted of rebuilding Zion through justice (García Fernández 2010, p. 282). Furthermore, both Isa 50:4-11 and Isa 54 connect the terminology of the servant with that of the "disciple" (לִמּוּד). The latter term and its semantic field occupy a prominent position in other parts of the book[21]. Finally, it is worth noting a confessional "we", particularly evident in the Fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12) and in the penitential prayer of Isaiah 59, which suggests the gradual and slow incorporation of others into that small remnant.

2.4. Concluding Assessment

We have seen that, although there are sections of the book of Isaiah that are clearly post-exilic, this perspective has a decisive influence on the editorial process and the final configuration of the book. Specifically, several situations inherited from Babylonian rule will cause friction among the population in the Persian period: (a) the shift in the axis of power to Mizpah; (b) the tension caused by the return of the deportees for the people who remained in the land; and (c) the struggle for the legitimization of religious authority, since the recovery of the Davidic monarchy is ruled out.

Firstly, the recentralization of Jerusalem in Isaiah possibly has as its backdrop the tension caused by the transfer of administrative and religious power to Mizpah and its surroundings. Furthermore, given that the Persian Empire did not re-establish the monarchy, this centrality of Zion is reinforced by the enthronement of Yahweh, King of the universe, also present in some psalms (Ps 29; 47; 93; 96–99), as well as in Haggai and Zechariah (Hag 2:6-8; Zech 2:11-16).

Secondly, given that we lack archaeological data, there is doubt as to whether the rebuilding of the Second Temple, as an emblem of a new beginning, is more conceptual than material. In some books, such as Isaiah and Ezra (Ezra 1–6), it is the returnees who are legitimized to carry out this undertaking. The insistence on this aspect raises the suspicion of a second source of tension between the deportees and the population that remained on the land (Ezra 4).

Finally, while the book of Ezra emphasizes the exclusivity of the priestly role in relation to the right to worship, the book of Isaiah represents another theological current.

According to F. Cocco, the increase in power of the priestly families in the 5th century BC, from the Persian period to the theocracy characteristic of Hellenism, took place through a gradual transition (Cocco 2007, p. 128). Once the social divide between the people of the land and the returning exiles had been overcome, the problem of legitimizing authority shifted between priestly families and lay groups of a prophetic and sapiential nature.

3. The Fourth Servant Song in the Editorial Process of Second Isaiah

Second Isaiah is clearly post-exilic. But Persian rule lasted for nearly two centuries, and although Isa 40–55 corresponds to an early period, throughout this phase internal tensions arose between the different factions of Israel seeking theological legitimacy. In this sense, the question of dating and the editorial process regains its importance, and we will devote this second point to this issue. First, we will address the integration of the section of Isa 52:13–55:13 into Isa 40–55, and second, I will discuss the editorial composition of Isa 52:13–53:12.

3.1. The Section of Isaiah 52:13–55:13, Between Continuity and Discontinuity

Most authors divide the second Isaiah into two large blocks: Isa 40–48 and Isa 49–55 (Melugin 1976, pp. 77–89; Spykerboer 1976, pp. 1–29; O'Connell 1994, pp. 150–61). The break that invites the exiles to leave Babylon (Isa 48:22) and the fact that Isa 40–48 predominantly uses the Jacob–Israel pairing, as opposed to the Jerusalem–Zion pairing typical of Isa 49–55, are the main reasons[22]. Although Isa 52:13–55:13 continues with the alternation between Servant and Zion characteristic of Isa 49–55[23]. It is thought that in an earlier stage of redaction, Isa 40–52* formed a single block, with Isa 52:7-12 constituting its conclusion[24]. In fact, Isa 52:9-12 is part of the collection of hymns that serve to close each section[25]. Furthermore, its close connection with the prologue (Isa 40:1-11) is a sign of inclusion and gives it the character of a final epilogue (Melugin 1976, p. 164; Mettinger 1983, pp. 22–23). Consequently, Isa 52:13–55:13* is considered to have been inserted at a later stage.

However, these three chapters do not form a single block. For example, Ulrich Berges attributes Isa 54–55 to a later development of the Deutero-Isaian text, which he calls the "second Jerusalem redaction" (*zweite Jerusalemer Redaktion*). But he excludes Isa 52:13–53:12, which he dates to the middle of the 5th century BC (Berges 1998, pp. 385–403). The multiple lexical and thematic connections with Is 52, the clear antagonism provoked by the exaltation of Zion (Is 54) in stark contrast to the humiliation of Babylon (Is 47)[26], as well as the epilogical nature of Is 55—which clearly ties in with the prologue (Is 40:1-11)—make the integration of Is 54–55 into the literary complex of Is 40–52* less artificial than that of the Fourth Servant Song[27]. However, about the latter, the editors made a strenuous effort to ensure that it did not clash with the immediate context[28].

Regarding Isa 52:13–53:12, scholars raise a further question: its relationship to the other three Songs. Today, the position of B. Duhm, who considers these passages to be foreign bodies in the text as a whole (Franco 1984, p. 221), has been marginalized. There is growing consensus among exegetes that the Servant Songs are neither isolated episodes nor do they belong to independent strata, but rather that they originated very close to the Servant-Jacob pericopes and were integrated into one of the phases of exilic or post-exilic writing exilic phase as the result of a process of rereading and developing the text with the aim of clarifying who this Servant-Jacob called by God to bring salvation is (Hermisson 1989, p. 311; Kratz 1991, p. 175). However, even among those who maintain a procedural structure between the four songs, they recognize that Isa 52:13–53:12 constitutes a conceptual development of the other three (Steck 1992, pp. 34–43). Not only because it narrates

the death and burial of the Servant, but also for reasons of language and style (Elliger 1933, p. 27; Hermisson 1989, p. 307).

In Jürgen Werlitz's opinion, the Fourth Song was not created to form part of the structure of Isa 40–55, but circulated independently (Werlitz 1999, p. 357). For R.P. Carroll, its insertion responds to the need to explain prophetic failure (Carroll 1979, p. 150). Along the same lines, Ulrich Berges argues that the passage mirrors the post-exilic experience. Inserted after the proclamation of God's reign (Isa 52:7-11), its function is to elaborate on the growing gap between the expectation of salvation and the disappointing reality (Berges 2015, pp. 225–26). That is, the returnees were not welcomed with joy but with hostility (Hägglund 2008, p. 128).

In my opinion, another consideration should be added to these. On a literary level, Isa 53:12–53:12 acts as a bridge between the promise of salvation and its fulfilment (Melugin 1976, p. 174; Koole 1997, pp. 347–48; Borghino 2005, p. 398). The consolation that is urgently called for in 40:1 creates a "dramatic tension" until it reaches its fulfilment in Isa 54–55 (Hermisson 1989, p. 290). In this sense, the Servant acts as a mediator. Zion's new condition of salvation is due to his action (Young 1972, p. 361; Motyer 1993, p. 444; Oswalt 1998, pp. 413–14). In fact, in parallel with and linked to the chronological progression of the Songs—calling (Isa 42:1-9); mission (Isa 49:1-12); beginning of resistance (Isa 50:4-11); and death (Isa 52:13–53:12)—there is an increase in violence and hostility towards him, culminating in his elimination. Therefore, the mission of being "the covenant of a people" and "the light of the nations" is not accomplished in a glorious way but through failure (Berges 2015, pp. 225–26).

3.2. Editorial Composition of Isa 52:13–53:12

In accordance with Masoretic tradition, the delimitation of the passage in the Fourth Song is not a matter of debate[29]. Moreover, for some exegetes, the well-constructed poetic framework of Isa 52:13–53:12 tips the balance in favor of considering it a redaction unit (Hermisson 1989, p. 334; Steck 1992, p. 22). For others, however, the Fourth Song does not constitute a homogeneous unit (Vermeylen 1994, pp. 334–35; Ruppert 1996, pp. 7–9). In fact, differences in vocabulary can be observed.

Thus, for example, while in the frames the servant is designated as עַבְדִּי, in the central part this nomenclature is absent. Similarly, in the frames an unnamed collective is referred to as "many" (רַבִּים). In contrast, in the center of the poem there is an undefined "we" (אֲנַחְנוּ)[30]. In Is 52:13-15 and Is 53:10-12, the subject is God[31]. In contrast, in the central part, a "we" confesses what has happened. Verbs in the future tense predominate in the frames. On the other side, Isaiah 53:1-9 is narrated in the past tense and responds to a kind of "creed" that summarizes how the servant was born, grew up and died (Westermann 1966, p. 213).

Another notable editorial feature is the attempt to link the poem with the surrounding context (Isa 52;1-12[32] and Isa 54:1-17[33]). This intervention is particularly noticeable at the ends. In this regard, the appearance of three significant words in the three pericopes is striking: זֶרַע (Isa 52:10; 53:10; 54:3); גוֹיִם (Isa 52:10.15; 54:3); שָׁלוֹם (Isa 52:7; 53:5; 54:10.13). Another argument put forward by exegetes is the repetition of terms or lexemes within the poem. Now, this is a literary device characteristic of this pericope (Raabe 1984, pp. 77–81). However, some duplications between the frames (Isa 52:13-15; 53:10-12) and the central part (Isa 53:1-9) are striking. For example, Isa 53:11-12 operates a kind of synthesis by combining the verbs נשא and סבל with the nouns עָוֹן and פֶּשַׁע, which appeared in Isa 53:4-5 with other verbal roots. Likewise, the reproduction of the words מַרְאֶה and תֹּאַר, referring to the disfigurement of the servant, artificially connects Isa 52:14 with Isa 53:2, giving it an editorial bias.

For all these reasons, those who argue that Isa 52:13–53:12 is not a homogeneous unit maintain that the original epicenter of the poem is found in Isa 53:1-9*. In a second stage, and as a re-reading of this core, the poem is expanded in its framework, forming an inclusion. This argument is supported by the wisdom vocabulary found particularly in Isa 53:10-12[34]. In fact, this last part is better integrated with the core of the poem, while the connection with Isa 52:13-15 is more artificial. Furthermore, the universalist horizon of the initial frame differs from the perspective of Isa 53:10-12.

For these reasons, Ulrich Berges elaborates on this last consideration. Although there are similarities between Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10-12 due to the repetition of certain terms and the fact that both the voice of God and that of the narrator are heard together, in Isa 53:10-12 the author addresses a "you" who are the recipients exhorted to recognized the life of the servant as atonement. In contrast, in Isa 52:13-15, the author addresses a "you" who are the recipients exhorted to recognize the life of the servant as atonement. In this sense, Isa 53:10-12 connects with the "we" (אֲנַחְנוּ) of Isa 53:1-6, implying that "we" (אֲנַחְנוּ) is part of that "many" (רַבִּים). In contrast, the "many" (רַבִּים) of Isa 52:13-15 includes foreign peoples. Moreover, unlike that "we" who come to knowledge through "hearing" (Isa 53:1.8), these kings come through "seeing." This discrepancy suggests a later diachronic evolution.

For this exegete, the original center gravitates towards Isa 53:1-10aα. The first rereading engenders Isa 53:10aβ-12. And a second one extends to Isa 52:13-15, with the aim of integrating with its immediate previous context. In fact, Isa 52:13-15 brings the Fourth Song into line with God's victorious return before the nations (Isa 52:7-12). Unlike the first three songs, whose editorial expansion is found at the end (Isa 42:5-9; 49:7-12; 52:10-11), and it is these additions that establish connections with the context, in the Fourth Song is extended at the beginning to facilitate its connection with Isa 52:7-12 and to include Isa 42:1 (Berges 2015, pp. 220–23).

3.3. Concluding Assessment

The complex of Isa 40–55 is not compact. Isa 52:13–55:13 belongs to a later stage of redaction and is integrated into the plot, respecting the alternation between Servant and Zion. Through a network of key terms and thematic axes, it welds cohesion with Isa 40–52 and, in particular, with Isa 52:1-12 and Isa 40:1-11. While chapters 54 and 55 show greater affinity with each other and with Isa 52:1-12, the pericope Isa 52:13–53:12 shows greater affinity with the other three Servant Songs. However, this passage is also integrated into the context through the repetition of words, three of which are very significant. Moreover, it acts as a bridge between the promise of consolation and its fulfilment. The central part of the poem (Isa 53:1-9*) possibly comes from ancient traditions about the prophet's suffering for remaining faithful. The composition grows editorially at the ends. The final framework (Is 53:10-12) constitutes the first extension. The initial framework (Isa 52:13-15) is a more recent extension based on the universalist vision that frames the book of Isaiah (Isa 2; 66).

The consequence for dating is obvious. The section of Isa 52:13–55:13 must be later than Isa 40–52*. The same applies to Isa 53:10-12 with respect to Isa 53:1-9. Therefore, we find ourselves in a late post-exilic period and could be talking about the second half of the 5th century BC or even the first half of the 4th century BC. At this stage, social tensions are skewed towards the conflict of the legitimization of religious authority. This drift culminates in the theocracy characteristic of the Greek period. Some signs that priestly power is not yet consolidated at this point—and is therefore disputed—are that the Book of Ruth challenges Ezra's reform, which advocates ethnic purity and prohibits mixed marriages. The Book of Isaiah also confronts other central points of Ezra's reform. While the prophet supports centralization in Zion, he does not support the legitimization of the priesthood,

which he compensates for with the theology of the "remnant", latent in Isa 52:13–53:12 through the confession of a "we".

Thus, in an early stage of composition, the core of Isa 53:1-9* could validate the hypothesis held by some exegetes that the alternation between Servant and Zion, typical of Isa 49–55, is an indication that the two characters are identified with each other[35]. Or, at least, in some of its stages of composition (Kratz 1991, pp. 144–47)[36]. For example, Jerusalem bears the sin of her children and is therefore disfigured and sick (Isa 1:1-10; Isa 52:14; 53:2-3). Abandoned, the punishment is unleashed upon her, which could well be a metaphor for the destruction of Babylon (Isa 53:6; 54:1-3). The theme of fruitful suffering as a legitimization of parenthood is also a thread that unites both figures (García Fernández 2010, pp. 279–82). However, the expansion of Isa 53:10-12* forces the passage towards another conclusion; the Servant and Jerusalem, although running parallel, are not identified.

Zion's mediation is made possible by the Servant's sacrifice. That is, the restoration of Jerusalem depends on an action performed by an enigmatic Servant. And this information places us on the horizon of the reconstruction and inauguration of the Second Temple, which, according to the book of Isaiah, is clearly the responsibility of the returning exiles. However, as in other pericopes, it would not be necessary to use vocabulary specific to the sacrificial system to vindicate this issue. And this element raises the suspicion that we are in a scenario other than that of imminent return and, therefore, in the context of struggle and confrontation between groups seeking to legitimize themselves in the face of the growing authority of a growing priestly class. For this reason, and from the perspective of a "diachronic reflection on synchrony", I will now analyze the use of the noun אָשָׁם (Isa 53:10) and the phrase נשׂא + חֵטְא (Isa 53:12).

4. Analysis of Sacrificial Vocabulary and Its Benefits

The noun אָשָׁם in Isa 53:10 draws attention to the sacrificial aspect of the passage. But it is not the only one. The phrase נשׂא + חֵטְא (Isa 53:12) also raises the question of whether the passage is alluding to the scapegoat of Leviticus 16. Although the poem intertwines them, the use of אָשָׁם introduces the problem of human atonement sacrifice, while חֵטְא + נשׂא confirms that we are dealing with a vicarious substitution. In the first two sections, I analyze each expression, and in the third section, I examine the semantic field of the benefits that are unleashed by this sacrificial action.

4.1. If He Lays Down His Life as אָשָׁם (Isa 53:10)

The problem of determining the meaning of אָשָׁם does not lie solely in the realm of interpretation. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that this noun is linked to the verb שׂים, whose verbal inflection is one of the classic *cruces interpretorum* that is difficult to resolve. Since identifying the subject of the verb תָּשִׂים is important, both for the interpretation of the text and for the question at hand, I will devote the first section to this issue. In the second section, I will address the question of the meaning of the term אָשָׁם in Is 53:10.

4.1.1. The Subject of the Verb תָּשִׂים

The central exegetical issue in this verse is not merely morphological but hermeneutical: the identification of the subject of the verb תָּשִׂים determines who initiates the act of atonement in the Fourth Servant Song. The imperfect qal form of שׂים (תָּשִׂים) is morphologically ambiguous and may be read either as a third person feminine singular or as a second person masculine singular[37]. This ambiguity has significant theological implications, since the subject—whether God, the Servant, or the community—bears agency in the expiatory process.

If understood as third person feminine singular, the subject could be נַפְשׁוֹ, which occasionally functions as a personal pronoun (North 1948, p. 122; Bonnard 1972, p. 268). However, this interpretation leaves the transitive verb שׂים without a direct object. Although אָשָׁם appears immediately after תָּשִׂים, it does not function as the verb's direct object if תָּשִׂים is taken as a third feminine singular form with נַפְשׁוֹ as subject. In that syntactical construction, אָשָׁם stands in apposition to נַפְשׁוֹ ("his life as an אָשָׁם"), and therefore the difficulty regarding the absence of a direct object remains.

Consequently, some scholars have proposed emending the verb to the third person masculine singular יָשִׂים (Penna 1958, p. 536; McKenzie 1968, p. 130), or reading תָּשִׂים as an archaic third masculine singular form with ־ת instead of ־י (Simian-Yofre 2005, pp. 239–40). Although this phenomenon is rare, it is attested in poetic or elevated diction (cf. Gesenius §47k; Job 22:28; Ps 22:29). Therefore, while the grammatical possibility cannot be excluded, the rarity of the form suggests that the ambiguity may be intentional and is part of the literary strategy of the text.

One option is that God is the subject of תָּשִׂים. Some scholars consider that the natural continuity of the verse requires that Yhwh remain the subject (Dahood 1982, p. 568)[38]. This choice is usually linked to another hermeneutical decision: to give the particle אִם a declarative value[39]. Consequently, it is God who offers the Servant's life as a sacrifice. In fact, in the Old Testament sacrificial system, God is the subject of the expiatory sacrifice (Massmann 2016, pp. 81–83). In Berges' opinion, this option is not viable for two reasons. The first is that if the Servant is the subject of the apodosis—"he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days"—it is plausible that he is also the subject of the protasis (Berges 2015, p. 215). Second, the divine discourse begins in Isa 53:11b (לָרַבִּים עַבְדִּי צַדִּיק יַצְדִּיק), while Isa 53:10 begins with: "but Yhwh" (וַיהֹוָה) and, therefore, it would be difficult for the passage to understand that Yhwh is the subject.

This exegete transfers God's expiatory initiative to the people (Berges 2015, p. 268). Although the form תָּשִׂים is not plural, textual criticism supports this possibility, since the LXX translation presents this lectio: ἐὰν δῶτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν. In this case, the particle אִם refers to a legal clause that requires not only a human subject, but also that the procedural sequence of the Song—confession of error (Isa 53:1-6) and description of the Servant's death (Isa 53:7-10aβ)—goes one step further: the moral implication of believers. For atonement is neither automatic nor mechanical[40]. If the servant's pain embodies the national guilt of exile, Israel must necessarily confess its rebellion. The only way for reconciliation to come to fruition is for that "we" to acknowledge its sin. From there, it will be able to appropriate and accept its surrender as אָשָׁם (Berges 2015, pp. 269–70[41]).

This same argument serves to maintain that the Servant is not reduced to a mere passive object either. In fact, in the sacrificial system of the OT, human consent is essential. And, therefore, the concomitance of the two freedoms is required: human and divine (Massmann 2016, pp. 81–83). The overall dynamic of the Fourth Song gives continuous signs that the Servant is an active subject[42]. But, in addition, on two occasions the poem suggests that God's decision and that of the Servant converge. First, in Isa 53:4-6. For "bearing and enduring" the sickness (נשא and סבל) of v. 4 corresponds to the divine action of "laying upon him" the guilt (פגע) of v. 6.

v.4　סְבָלָם וּמַכְאֹבֵינוּ נָשָׂא הוּא חֳלָיֵנוּ אָכֵן

v.6　כֻּלָּנוּ עֲוֹן אֵת הִפְגִּיעַ־בּוֹ וַיהֹוָה

Second, in Isa 53:10. In fact, to indicate that Yhwh wants to "crush" (דכא) and "make him sick" (חלה/חלל), two verbs are used that had appeared in the passive form in Isa 53:5[43].

v.5　וְהוּא מְחֹלָל מִפְּשָׁעֵינוּ מְדֻכָּא מֵעֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ

v.10　וַיהֹוָה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי

While in Isa 53:5 the syntax allows us to interpret that it is sin that crushes and makes the Servant sick (García Fernández 2010, p. 265), in Is 53:10 the subject of crushing and making sick is clearly God. However, this expression does not have a sadistic connotation (Niccacci 2005, p. 22). For an action to be salvific, God must will it. That is, he must accept the historical modality in which it occurs. Through the inclusion of Isa 53:10, this necessary confluence is achieved in a single verse: God wills it, but YHWH's will is in the hands of the Servant (וְחֵפֶץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח) and can only prosper if he agrees to lay down his life as an offering (נַפְשׁוֹ אָשָׁם אִם־תָּשִׂים). To interpret it this way, we must give the particle אִם the usual conditional value it normally has (Goldingay and Payne 2006, p. 318; Blenkinsopp 2016, p. 3)[44]

וַיהוָה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי
אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ
יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֵפֶץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח

Weighing up all the options and their arguments, I am inclined to interpret the Servant as the implicit subject of the form תָּשִׂים. God subjects the fulfilment of his plan to his free and voluntary acceptance. However, I do not rule out that the syntactic ambivalence is intentional and that, through this device, the need for the freedoms of the three actors involved in salvation to converge is conveyed. In other words, with this hermeneutical dilemma, the passage seeks to bring together in a single action the will of God, the decision of the Servant, and the conversion of the community. For this action to fully produce the salvific effect, the concurrence of the three actors is required.

In conclusion, rather than being a mere grammatical irregularity, the ambiguity of תָּשִׂים serves to theologically convey the convergence of the three freedoms involved in the salvific process—divine initiative, the voluntary acceptance of the Servant, and the responsive participation of the community.

4.1.2. Meaning of the Term אָשָׁם in Isa 53:10

The noun אָשָׁם had a generic meaning of "compensation" or "reparation". In fact, in the texts considered to be the oldest (Gen 26:10; 1Sam 6:3-4), the notion of restitution prevails (Knierim 1978, p. 382). That is, an obligation or debt incurred through fault or damage. To bear it means to take responsibility. However, in priestly legislation, the term acquires a technical meaning of "sacrifice of reparation" (Lev 5:6; 7:19, 25; 7:5; 14:21; 19:21; Num 5:7; 6:12; Ezek 40:39; 42:13; 44:29). Thus, the use of אָשָׁם is not originally linked to the terminology of sacrifice, although in post-exilic priestly codification it becomes a technical term[45].

Scholars estimate that in between 70% and 90% of cases, this word appears in the Hebrew Bible in texts influenced by worship and by priestly exilic and post-exilic theology. However, this percentage does not prevent אָשָׁם from appearing in later texts without reference to worship. In fact, in some wisdom passages, the non-expiatory-sacrificial nuance is obvious (Prov 14:9). The "satisfaction of guilt" can have a ritual dimension (Isa 19:21), as well as a civil one, even in more recent texts.

However, the case of Isa 53:10 is a much-debated issue. While Janowski appeals to the original meaning of אָשָׁם as an argument to demonstrate its non-cultic character in Isaiah's poem (Janowski 1997, p. 89), Milgrom questions whether its use in ancient pre-exilic texts such as 1Sam 6 is restricted to the civil sphere (Milgrom 1976, 14). Moreover, he argues that אָשָׁם belongs to the pre-exilic P lexicon until the verb שׁוּב displaces it to indicate repentance (Milgrom 1991, 377). Blenkinsopp, in turn, responds to another argument by Janowski, who maintains that the composition of the rules in Leviticus and Numbers is later than that of Isaiah 53 (Janowski 2004, pp. 68–69): "One objection which may be fairly quickly set aside is the contention that the cultic laws catalogued in Leviticus and Numbers are

later than Isaiah 53 (…) in their essential features, they go back long before any date that could be reasonably assigned to their final redaction" (Blenkinsopp 2016, p. 9).

The majority position is to interpret אָשָׁם as "sin offering". The disagreement lies in whether to give the term a literal meaning or, on the contrary, a symbolic-metaphorical one. The latter is understood as the use of cultic terms in non-ritual contexts (Janowski 2010, p. 64). Or, in other words, that forms of atonement performed outside of worship are accepted (Lyonnet and Sabourin 1998, p. 166). For this reason, I agree with those who interpret the term אָשָׁם here in a metaphorical sense, since there is a lack of textual elements that would allow for a full correspondence between Isa 53:10 and Lev 5:14-26 (Henning-Hess 1997, p. 624).

The first is that the verb that usually accompanies אָשָׁם is not used. That is, "to present" (קרב). Instead, Is 53:10 reports "to place" (שׂים). This is an unusual verb in this context, which in relation to a sacrifice only appears in Gn 22:9. The second major absence is blood. This is a central element around which the expiatory sacrifice revolves (Pulcinelli 2007, pp. 135–37)[46]. Thirdly, in the sacrificial system of Leviticus, atonement is only possible for transgressions committed by mistake (Lev 5:14-19)[47]. This requirement is shared by the sacrifice-אָשָׁם and the sacrifice-חַטָּאת (Gerstenberger 1996, p. 58). Finally, it is the guilty party who makes the sacrificial offering (Henning-Hess 1997, p. 625). Meanwhile, the text of Isaiah explicitly states that the Servant is innocent (Isa 53:7-11)[48]. For these reasons, the offering of the Servant described with the term אָשָׁם cannot be understood in the technical sense of a cultic sacrifice without this conclusion detracting from the sacrificial and real surrender and the salvific effects it brings about.

In my opinion, the meaning of the term אָשָׁם in Isaiah 53:10 is slowly shaped by the passage itself. The syntactic parallelism between the three phrases that refer to the term נַפְשׁוֹ allows us to establish semantic parallelism. For in the three sentences in which נַפְשׁוֹ appears, the idea of surrender is modulated and associated with a future promise.

יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֵפֶץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח	v.10 אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ
he will see offspring, prolong his days and the will of Yhwh in his hand will prosper	If he sets his soul as an offering
יִרְאֶה יִשְׂבָּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ	v.11a מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ
he shall see and be satisfied in his wisdom	By the labour of his soul
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ	v.12a לָכֵן אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ בָרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל
because he gave his soul to death	I will assign him many, and he will divide the spoils with the mighty

While in Isa 53:10 the gift of life is covered by sacrificial terminology (אָשָׁם), in Isa 53:11 it is described as "hard labour" (עָמָל) (Isa 49:4) and in Isa 53:12 as "stripping oneself/pouring oneself out before death" (לְמָוֶת הֶעֱרָה)[49]. With this device, the text itself decodes the meaning of אָשָׁם (García Fernández 2010, p. 263). In previous sections, we have indicated that Isaiah supports a trend, both sapiential and prophetic, that criticizes the sacrificial system and ritualistic logic for the contradictions inherent in its experience (Massmann 2016, p. 72). However, prophecy attacks not so much the fact that worship is an external act and involves rituality, but rather that this becomes a substitute for internal conversion, which is essential for reconciliation (Grottanelli 2001, p. 59; Daly 2009, pp. 33–34).

However, Isa 1:10-20 and Isa 53:10-12 reinforce this criticism and offer an alternative in line with Ps 40: "You did not want sacrifices or offerings, but you opened my ears (לִי כָּרִיתָ אָזְנָיִם), you did not ask for burnt offerings or victims, so I said: Here I am, I come (בָאתִי הִנֵּה). It is written in the scroll of the book to do your will (רְצוֹנְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת)" (Ps 40:7-9)[50]. That is, obedience as sacrifice. Then, while sacrifice as such cannot be used as a substitute for conversion, fidelity to God can be an act of worship comparable to sacrifice. In fact, after expressing God's weariness with this empty form of worship, Isa 1:16-17 gives justice

a purifying value equivalent to that of sacrifices. Similarly, Isa 53:10 could be considered to place the generous "surrender" of life at the theological core of atonement, taking worship out of its natural habitat in the Temple and anticipating what Rom 12:1 expresses centuries later: total oblation as the only reasonable form of worship.

4.1.3. Concluding Assessment

Going back to the etymology or original use of אָשָׁם is, on the one hand, a necessary step in understanding the notion of a word, but it is not decisive in establishing its meaning in Isa 53:10. This is because a term can acquire very different nuances over the centuries. On the other hand, although the dating of a text is indicative and in a high percentage of texts אָשָׁם has the meaning of sacrifice, it is not decisive in establishing that it has this meaning in Isa 53:10, as it could be an exception.

In my opinion, the most compelling argument for giving it a sacrificial meaning comes from the confluence of elements that the poem provides to the reader, as we will see later. Moreover, through the repetition of the phrase נַפְשׁוֹ in parallel constructions, both syntactically and semantically, the pericope itself shapes and enriches the nuances it wants to give to אָשָׁם.

The textual lapses that mark notable differences between the ritual described in Lev 5 and the development of Isa 53 could well be explained by the fact that the Old Testament sacrificial system was not yet fully established, nor were the biblical texts editorially fixed. The continuity, and above all the discontinuity, between the two passages is too striking not to be intentional.

Therefore, I maintain that at the time Isa 53:10-12 was written, the main framework of the practice of אָשָׁם was already sufficiently established to be recognizable, even though nuances were later refined or changes were made over time. Moreover, I believe that this technique is precisely the resource used by the editor to take אָשָׁם out of its proper cultic-ritual sphere and launch it into other, equally legitimate existential spaces. In this way, he breathes new life into it, since he recovers the essential theological core of all sacrifice: the offering of life to God. Without this fundamental element, rite becomes an empty and mechanical act.

4.2. *The Expression* נשׂא + חֵטְא *and Other Sacrificial Allusions*

Some scholars observe in Isaiah 53 clear allusions to worship, both linguistic and conceptual, and particularly to the book of Leviticus (Ha 2009, p. 44). The term אָשָׁם present in Isa 53:10 refers to one of the sacrifices of atonement whose particularity is retribution (Lev 5). On the other hand, the expression in Isa 53:12 "to bear sin" (חֵטְא + נשׂא) alludes to the celebration of Yom Kippur (Lev 16) and introduces the thorny issue of vicarious substitution. I address both issues in two sections

4.2.1. The Sacrificial Background of Yom Kippur in Isaiah 53

The ritual of the Feast of Atonement par excellence involved casting lots to determine which of the two goats would be offered as a sacrifice——חַטָּאתand whose blood would be used to purify the sanctuary—and which would be destined to bear the guilt of Israel. The high priest laid his hands on the head of the latter, called ⊙azazel (עֲזָאזֵל), while confessing the sins (cf. Lev 16:21), after which the animal was driven into the wilderness[51]. The most compelling, though not conclusive, evidence is the use of two phrases like the one used in Lev 16:22: "to bear the guilt" (עָוֹן + נשׂא) and which, moreover, appear at the end of Isa 53:11-12, forming a chiastic inclusion. I am referring to "bearing the sin" (חֵטְא + נשׂא; Isa 53:12) and "bearing the guilt" (עָוֹן + סבל; Isa 53:11).

v.11b	לָרַבִּים עַבְדִּי צַדִּיק יַצְדִּיק
	my righteous servant will justify many
	יִסְבֹּל הוּא וַעֲוֹנֹתָם
	for he will bear their guilt
v.12.a	שָׁלָל יְחַלֵּק וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים בָרַבִּים אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ לָכֵן
	I will assign him many, and he will divide the spoils with the mighty
	נַפְשׁוֹ לַמָּוֶת הֶעֱרָה אֲשֶׁר תַּחַת
	because he gave his soul to death
v.12b	נָשָׂא רַבִּים חֵטְא וְהוּא
	for he bore the sin of many
	יַפְגִּיעַ וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים
	he will intercede for the transgressors

The expression "bear the guilt" (עָוֹן + נשׂא) found in Lev 16:22 does contemplate the possibility of assuming the sins of others both in a generic sense[52] and in a technical-cultural sense[53]. The phrase "bear the sin" (חֵטְא + נשׂא) in Isa 53:12 is found on eight other occasions[54]. But according to Hägglund, never in the sense of substitution (Hägglund 2008, p. 84). Finally, "bearing guilt" (עָוֹן + סבל)[55]. Apart from Isa 53:11, appears only in Lam 5:7 and in the context of intergenerational controversy. Therefore, some think it plausible that Isa 52:13–53:12 seeks to enter into the debate on the inheritance of collective guilt (Berges 2015, pp. 273–74).

The absence of technical terminology and the fact that the ritual proper to Yom Kippur is not followed divides authors on the connection between Isa 52:13–53:12 and Lev 16[56]. Added to the difficulty of demonstrating the dependence between the two texts is the diachronic problem given the theological compendium nature of Lev 16[57]. However, what tips the balance in favor of the connection is not isolated expressions but the sum of "coincidences". Thus, for example, the Servant is compared to a sheep (שֶׂה) or a ewe (רָחֵל) "led" (יוּבָל) to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). Furthermore, in Is 52:15, the root "to sprinkle" (נזה) is used. Both aspects would evoke the goat for sacrifice-חַטָּאת. Meanwhile, because he bears sin, the Servant is marginalized and set apart (Is 53:2-5). This would liken him to the lamb-ⱺazazel (עֲזָאזֵל).

Kyesang Ha's conclusions go much further. After an exhaustive analysis of the lexicon, he maintains that the poem symmetrically places technically cultic terms and clauses to sketch the figure of a Servant who is at once victim, offering, and priest (Ha 2009, pp. 308–19). A first, non-coincidental pattern runs through the poem and threads together the idea of the Servant as victim and offering: victim (מִשְׁחַת; Isa 52:14)–lamb (שֶׂה and רָחֵל; Isa 53:7)–offering (אָשָׁם; Isa 53:10). A second thread is composed of the triptych of priestly verbs referred to in mirror image and in the *hifil* conjugation, whose sequence is as follows: (a) ritual sprinkling and purification (יַזֶּה; Isa 52:15); (b) justification as a forensic-priestly ruling after atonement (יַצְדִּיק; Isa 53:11); (c) intercession as a mediating function (יַפְגִּיעַ; Isa 53:12). Therefore, the Servant sprinkles, justifies, and intercedes as a priest and, at the same time, although disfigured, is an acceptable lamb who lays down his life as an offering (De Andrado 2021, p. 927).

In conclusion, although the repetition of terms is an indication of intertextuality, it cannot become the sole criterion for determining dependence. The midrashic procedures of Jewish exegesis developed later but already present in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, give rise to a much richer and more varied form of rereading based not only on lexical repetition but also on typologies and the confluence and combination of other aspects (del Agua Pérez 2023, pp. 27–75).

In the case of Isaiah 53, a series of words, motifs and elements converge that tip the balance towards thinking that the text, placing itself in a line of continuity-discontinuity with Leviticus, interprets the death of the Servant in terms of a scapegoat. Furthermore, the pericope "de-ritualizes" sacrifice, since a sacrificial act in life can have the same salvific effect as one performed on the altar. But, in addition, the fact that the Servant is both victim and priest displaces the authority of the priesthood in relation to the expiatory action. Recon-

ciliation with God no longer depends on the manipulation of blood, a sphere monopolized by the priesthood, but on the surrender of life and the recognition of the community.

4.2.2. Substitute Atonement and the Problem of Personal Responsibility

The expression חָטָא + נשׂא magnetizes the discussion on vicarious substitution. However, its counterpart "bear the guilt" (עָוֹן + סבל), present only in Lam 5:7, opens a hermeneutical gap that must be crossed to correct the entrenched image of an angry God who is appeased by human sacrifice, even if the victim is innocent. This understanding of sacrifice, moreover, never existed in Israel. Placing the passage in its historical context and, specifically, identifying the problem to which it responds, avoids falling into a theological Gordian knot that is difficult to tackle and resolve.

For this reason, I believe that both expressions must be understood within the context of the problem posed by the exile and caused by the fact that, in the destruction of Babylon, the righteous had paid for the sins of the sinners. That is, the suffering of the righteous. The problem takes on new nuances with the passage of time. I am referring to the transfer of collective guilt, since subsequent generations were born in Babylon because of the guilt of their fathers. Thus, the saying, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"—quoted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 31:19; Ezek 18:2.30-31; cf. also Deut 30:15-20)—raises the question of personal responsibility[58].

In a way, Isa 52:13–53:12 addresses the issue in a particular way, since the theme of vicarious substitution is absorbed by a dynamic present in Isa 53:4-5 and Isa 53:10-12. I am referring to the transfer of good and evil. Now, does the transfer of evil entail the substitution of the transgressor and, therefore, nullify their responsibility? Or, on the contrary, is sin non-transferable and the mediator cannot bear the guilt of others? Solidarity with the guilty is the basis on which biblical redemption is founded (García Fernández 2010, p. 285).

In my opinion, the Fourth Song of the Servant skillfully avoids falling into a substitution that eliminates personal responsibility and, moreover, mechanically unleashes a benefit. By bearing the sin, the Servant is deformed. But this disfigurement becomes, in turn, a mirror of the deformity of the community itself, in which it can see itself. The fact that his face is hidden (Isa 53:3) is an indication of the Servant's disfigurement and contains an element of denunciation. This is corroborated by the fact that the passage ends with a confession of guilt (Isa 53:4-5).

However, the fact that sin is personal and, therefore, the responsibility of the transgressor is irreplaceable, does not mean that it is non-transferable. The deep solidarity among the members of the people of Israel implies not turning a blind eye to one's brother. And, therefore, the duty to help carry the burden does not mean automatically replacing or exonerating the guilty party but rather inviting them to take responsibility for their mistake. In this way, the text nuances its understanding of personal responsibility without losing sight of the body and the profound solidarity among its members (García Fernández 2010, pp. 284–87).

4.3. The Promises and Benefits Linked to the Sacrifice of the Servant

Several studies have noted that the promises and benefits that follow the Servant's sacrifice (Isa 53:10–12) not only describe his personal restoration, but also employ language traditionally associated with the restoration of Israel after the Exile. Expressions such as "seeing offspring," "prolonging days," "the will of Yhwh prospering in his hand," and "dividing the spoils" resonate with national expectations of renewal, victory, and peace. In the present study, these formulations are examined primarily from the perspective of their legitimating function, in which mediatorial authority is transferred to the figure of

the Servant. Nevertheless, this theological dimension is not understood in opposition to the restoration of the people, but rather as its foundation: the vindication of the Servant constitutes the means by which a new stage is inaugurated for the community.

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, atonement directly or indirectly entailed a series of favors: the cancellation of a debt, the repair of damage, the expiation of guilt, among others. These effects were measured and codified using specific terminology. Except for "justification" (יַצְדִּיק) and "intercession" (יַפְגִּיעַ), the benefits obtained in Isa 53:10-12 are not, however, those provided for the אָשָׁם sacrifice or for Yom Kippur.

This absence is significant, supporting the metaphorical and non-technical understanding of אָשָׁם and the phrase חֵטְא + נשׂא and, furthermore, allowing us to once again outline the interpretative nuances and hermeneutical-theological horizon of the text. But before addressing this question, it is appropriate to extend the reflection on vicarious substitution from the perspective of the transfer of good and evil, since Isa 53:10-12 links, through a causal relationship, the sacrificial action of the Servant with its benefits.

4.3.1. The Transfer of Good for Evil

The final framework in Isa 53:10-12 is synthetic and compilatory in nature. This way of closing the text is yet another indication of its editorial character. Thus, it draws on the dynamics brought in especially from Isa 53:4-5. Proof of this is the repetition and new combination of the lexicon[59]. But above all, it is the theological development that it carries out based on an idea sketched out in Isa 53:4-5. While Isa 53:4a and Isa 53:5a speak only of the transfer of evil, Isa 53:5b culminates by indicating that this transfer of evil corresponds to a transfer of good: "his wounds have healed us" (Beauchamp 1989, pp. 328–30). The poem channels its vision of atonement and vicarious substitution through this play of transfers. The end of the poem delves into this question, not only because this exchange is found in the five phrases, but also because it establishes a causal-consequential relationship between the Servant's sacrifice and the unfolding of its benefits.

v.10	נַפְשׁוֹ אָשָׁם אִם־תָּשִׂים if he sets his soul as an offering	יִצְלַח בְּיָדוֹ יְהוָה וְחֵפֶץ יָמִים יַאֲרִיךְ זֶרַע יִרְאֶה he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Yhwh in his hand will prosper
v.11a	נַפְשׁוֹ מֵעֲמַל by the labor of his soul	בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִשְׂבָּע יִרְאֶה he shall see and be satisfied in his wisdom
v.11b	לָרַבִּים עַבְדִּי צַדִּיק יַצְדִּיק he will justify my righteous servant to many	יִסְבֹּל הוּא וַעֲוֹנֹתָם for he will bear their sins
v.12.a	שָׁלָל יְחַלֵּק וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים בָּרַבִּים אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ לָכֵן I will assign him many, and he will divide the spoils with the mighty	נַפְשׁוֹ לַמָּוֶת הֶעֱרָה אֲשֶׁר תַּחַת because he gave his soul to death
v.12b	נָשָׂא רַבִּים חֵטְא וְהוּא for he bore the sin of many	יַפְגִּיעַ וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים He will intercede for the transgressors

In my opinion, Isa 53:10-12 is a theological development of Is 53:4-5, since by "bearing sin" (חֵטְא + נשׂא) and "bearing guilt" (עָוֹן + סבל) the Servant is enabled to "justify" (יַצְדִּיק) and "reconcile" (יַפְגִּיעַ). The identification between the offeror and the victim envisaged in Lev 16 reaches such a point here that the Servant is deformed by bearing the sins of others. In fact, this solidarity makes him a victim. And the victim is the only one capable of mediating forgiveness (Bovati 1997, pp. 115–16). Pushing the possibilities offered by the lexicon to the limit, the poem continually points to the intrinsic unity between these two moments[60].

For this reason, it is not simply a transfer but rather an empowerment. Becoming supportive enables the Servant to intercede. And the insistence on accrediting the Servant as an intercessor for bearing sin raises once again the suspicion that we are dealing with the legitimization of a prophetic figure in the face of the priestly authority that was responsible for performing sacrifices. In doing so, the text conceals a kind of criticism, for what enables one to intercede is not having been invested as a priest by an act of consecration, but the surrender of one's life. In other words, by accepting to bear the sickness of others, the Servant becomes a victim until he is disfigured by his profound solidarity. In conclusion, Isa 53:11-12 summarizes the core of the poem and deepens it by moving it forward in a certain direction.

4.3.2. The "Reward" Received by the Servant

The benefits of having borne the sin redound to the community and are to have been justified (יַצְדִּיק) and reconciled (יַפְגִּיעַ) with God. However, in the three phrases in which נַפְשׁוֹ appears, the recipient of the promise is the Servant. In addition to this fact, the lexicon used to describe him is striking, as it does not come from the sacrificial semantic field. Just as the parallelism between these phrases allowed us to refine the meaning of אָשָׁם in correlation with the words that express surrender (עָמָל and לִמְוֶת הֶעֱרָה), we can think that the three promises are connected: "he will see offspring, he will prolong his days, and the will of Yhwh will prosper in his hand" (v. 10b); "he will see and be satisfied with his wisdom" (v. 11a); "I will assign him many and he will divide the spoil with the mighty" (v. 12a).

In my opinion, the focus of these promises revolves around "offspring." Now, Isa 53:10 uses the noun זֶרַע and not the usual term: "sons" (בָּנִים) (Gen 50:23; Ps 128:6; Job 42:16). This is a word of particular importance. In the overall context of the book, it refers to the promise of the restoration of all Israel from a "holy seed" (קֹדֶשׁ זֶרַע; Isa 6:13; cf. Ezra 9:10). In the immediate context, because of the connection it establishes with Isa 54:3 and indirectly with the whole of chapter 54, which indicates that it is not just any progeny but a qualified one[61].

This relationship between Isa 53:10 and Isa 54:3 through the noun זֶרַע leads us to believe that the promise consists of the granting of offspring. The truth is that the text does not state that he will be 'given' offspring, but rather that he will "see" them (זֶרַע יִרְאֶה)[62]. And, in turn, this phrase is parallel to "he will prolong his days" (יָמִים יַאֲרִיךְ). Therefore, seeing one's own posterity reflects not so much fertility as a full life blessed with longevity (Gen 48:11). In other biblical passages, the promise to "lengthen days" is linked to the fulfilment of the commandments[63]. And, therefore, to obedience. This connects well with the benefits associated with עָמָל in Isa 53:11: "he will see and be satisfied with his wisdom" (בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִשְׂבַּע יִרְאֶה). A wisdom recognized by God at the beginning of the poem (שׂכל; Isa 52:13) that clearly connects with the fact that God's will shall succeed (צלח) if he lays down his life as אָשָׁם (Isa 53:10).

Although Isa 53:11 repeats the *yiqtol* יִרְאֶה present in Isa 53:10, in this verse it lacks a direct object. For this reason, there is a tendency to amend the text[64]. However, in Deutero-Isaiah, the root ראה is sometimes found without this complement (Isa 41:5.23; 49:7.18; 53:11; 66:14). More striking is the fact that יִרְאֶה appears three times in Gen 22: once with a direct object (הַשֶּׂה; Gen 22:6) and twice without one (Gen 22:14), since we had found another "anomaly" that is only found in these two pericopes. I am referring to the use of the verb שׂים (Gen 22:9; Isa 53:10), instead of קרב, to present the offering. Well, in Gen 22:14 Abraham names "that place" (הַמָּקוֹם)—which he defines as a "mountain" (הר)—with the name "Yhwh will provide" (יְרְאֶה יְהוָה). In my opinion, this coincidence does not constitute sufficient exegetical evidence to speak of intertextuality or literary dependence. However, the fact that the Akedah tradition connects the characters of the Servant and Isaac is already

an indication of the relationship that later Judaism intuited in its process of rereading and in the application of its exegetical procedures between the two figures (De Andrado 2013).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the terms "place" (הַמָּקוֹם) and "mountain" (הַר), which appear in Gen 22:14, are associated with the Temple in Jerusalem. Mount Moriah was identified by the Chronicler as the Temple Mount (2Chr 3:1). Therefore, at the end of the 4th century BC, there is already an earlier tradition that refers to the location of the Temple as "the place that God had indicated". This latter expression is then used to refer to other sacrifices (Deut 12:13.14.18; 14:23.25; 16:2.6.11; 17:8.10; 18:6; Neh 1:9). For this reason, some authors consider Gen 22 to be an etiological account of the founding of a sanctuary, the final draft of which dates from before the end of the 4th century BC (Ramís Darder 2012, p. 144).

The purpose of expiatory sacrifices was the purification of sacred space (Massmann 2016, p. 26). In fact, the book of Ezra mentions the enormous number of sacrifices that were offered at the inauguration of the Second Temple (Ezra 6:17). The critical attitude of the Book of Isaiah towards this type of practice raises the suspicion that, by using אָשָׁם outside the cultic sphere, the prophet is trying to indicate that only a sacrifice of obedience can restart the new era of the Second Temple[65].

As I have already indicated, beyond intertextuality or mutual literary dependence, this shared historical horizon would explain why Gen 22 and Is 53 are the only two episodes in the entire Old Testament in which God asks for or accepts a human sacrifice as an expression or consequence of fidelity to Yahweh. Added to this particularity is the fact that the 4th century BC re-reading of Gen 22 links Mount Moriah with Jerusalem. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to hypothesize that the non-priestly lay group—which appears throughout Isaiah's work—indirectly refers to the figure of Abraham to assert its authority.

After analyzing the technical terms, the clauses of sin burden, the priestly verbs and the dynamics of the poem, Ha's conclusion is that Isa 52:13–53:12 requires this passage to be read from the perspective of the Temple (Ha 2009). De Andrado is of the same opinion and concludes that the Fourth Song transfers the sanctuary to the person of the Servant as a solution to its destruction and the impossibility of offering God a sacrifice in a sacred place (De Andrado 2021, pp. 928–31). Although I recognize that this idea could have gained ground in the early post-exilic context, I disagree with this opinion because at the time Isa 52:13–53:12 was composed, the Second Temple had already been rebuilt. Moreover, this idea is taken up in some much later texts (Dan 3:38-39). Consequently, it has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of the Second Temple. In my opinion, the connection is literary and is made through the word זֶרַע, since it will be the Servant's descendants (Isa 53:10) who will rebuild the sanctuary (Isa 54:11-14)[66].

The third promise is embedded between the chiasm that forms Isa 53:11b and Isa 53:12b: "I will assign him many and he will divide the spoil with the mighty". The root חלק is repeated twice. In the first phrase, it is syntactically possible to interpret the prepositional complement בָרַבִּים as the direct object (Job 39:17) (Tremolada 1997, pp. 91, 97). Consequently, the Servant will have no reward other than the children for whom he has interceded. Moreover, his reward consists of the very ability to intercede and justify. This engenders a kind of father–son relationship distinct from that of the flesh[67]. If this line of interpretation is chosen, the second phrase is interpreted as meaning that the justified children are the "salary" (שָׁלָל) that the servant has earned through his obedience and suffering (Jer 31:15-17)[68].

On the other hand, based on the meaning of the noun חֵלֶק, other exegetes advocate understanding the "sharing of the spoils" in the second phrase as "occupying a place among equals" (Beuken 1990, p. 233) and interpret the first as Yhwh granting the Servant "a share

among the many," thus nullifying his exclusion and "ensuring his reintegration into the whole people of God" (Berges 2015, pp. 274–75). The former could be alluding to the problems caused by the redistribution of land (Neh 2:20)[69]. The latter, once again, would be in line with the legitimization of this Servant of Yahweh who claims his share of the inheritance (חֵלֶק).

The promise of land is normally expressed with verbs such as "to give" (נתן), "to possess" (ירשׁ) and "to inherit" (נחל). Meanwhile, חלק is more appropriate for the internal distribution of land that has already been conquered (Josh 14; 1Sam 30:24). In this regard, it should be noted that the passage on the jubilee year (Lev 25:8-22) is inserted not only as the culmination of the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26) (De León Azcárate 2006, p. 292), but also coincides with the beginning of the Jubilee on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur (Lev 25:8-9) (Kim 2010). In this way, the Jubilee year is lived within the framework of a conversion to God which, ultimately, refers to a conversion to brotherhood. The claim to the "inheritance" in a metaphorical sense could hide criticism of a group that has appropriated it. And once again, suspicion looms over an indirect allusion to the priestly institution that did not receive a share of the land because its 'portion' was the Lord. But perhaps they have appropriated this inheritance, and the question that arises is whether other groups are entitled to 'take part' in this sacred sphere.

4.3.3. Concluding Assessment

The editorial nature of Isa 53:10-12 is evident not only in the repetition and new combination of the lexicon present in the central part of the poem, but also in the theological deepening of the transfer of evil and good already present in Isa 53:5. Isa 53:10-12 does not merely endorse this five times, but establishes a causal-consequential link. Thus, what legitimizes the Servant in his role as intercessor is that he has become a victim and offered his life as a sacrifice. Therefore, his accreditation does not depend on priestly investiture. And this element constitutes yet another indication that reinforces our hypothesis.

Secondly, it is striking that the text insists on the benefits that the offering of his life brings to the Servant and that, moreover, these are described with a non-sacrificial lexicon closer to a wisdom vocabulary that reformulates the two great promises made to Abraham: that of offspring and that of the land. Although both aspects appear very elaborate. In Isa 53:10, "seeing offspring" is correlated with a promise of longevity. And the classic gift of land is modulated here under the semantic field of "dividing" the inheritance, typical of the distribution upon entering the promised land. In this context, the Levites do not receive any land because their "portion" is the Lord. And, although Isa 53:12 is an enigmatic verse, it could be turning the tables. That is, that this "portion" received by the tribe of Levi, which is sacred, is also called to be shared.

Finally, it is important to note the repeated use of the *yiqtol* (יִרְאֶה) that appears in Isa 53:10–11, which echoes the theological and linguistic horizon of the Akedah tradition in Genesis 22. Several exegetes consider Genesis 22 to be an etiological narrative—likely dating from the 4th century BCE—intended to justify the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. In this context, the Servant recapitulates the obedience of Abraham: just as Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac inaugurated a sacred space, so too the Servant's obedient self-offering inaugurates a new era. Moreover, the editorial development that links Isa 53 to Isa 54 reinforces this perspective: the "stones" with which the new sanctuary is built (Isa 54:11–12) are the children—disciples and servants—brought forth through the Servant's obedience, indicating that his sacrifice provides the foundation for a renewed community.

Thus, the vindication of the Servant should not be understood merely as individual rehabilitation. Rather, it functions as the theological mechanism by which a new stage

in Israel's history is inaugurated. The "holy seed" (קֹדֶשׁ זֶרַע) in Isa 6:13 already antici-
pates the notion of a remnant through whom national restoration will take place; in Isa
53:10, the promise of offspring (זֶרַע) identifies the Servant as the bearer of that restorative
lineage. His obedience becomes the catalyst that transfers sacred authority and initiates
a process of communal reconstruction reminiscent of the post-exilic hopes embedded in
Deutero-Isaiah.

In this way, the motifs of prosperity, offspring, wisdom, victory, and peace cannot
be reduced to a purely individual dimension. They participate in the collective hope of
national restoration and reveal that the vindication of the Servant and the restoration of
the people are inseparable realities. The exaltation of the mediating figure opens the way
for the reconstitution of Israel; in the Fourth Servant Song, personal vindication becomes
the instrument through which national vindication is articulated.

5. Conclusions

With the aim of summarizing the most important consequences and helping to follow
the argumentative progression of the essay, I have offered conclusive assessments through-
out the analysis. For this reason, in this section I gather the conclusions that, in my opinion,
are most relevant.

First, we have established that, in terms of its composition, the section Isa 52:13–55:13
does not belong to the early post-exile period. Given that Isa 53:10-12 is still a later editorial
addition, it must therefore be placed in the late post-exilic period, that is, at the end of the
second half of the 5th century BCE or even at the beginning of the 4th century BCE. This
was a period characterized by the slow but progressive growth of priestly power, which
led to the autocracy of the Hellenistic period and which, until then, was questioned and
debated, as shown in other books and biblical passages.

Secondly, the fact that Isa 53:10-12 belongs to this context does not in itself mean that
the passage must echo the controversy caused by the Esdrian reform. However, the peri-
cope seems to enter into the controversy, using sacrificial vocabulary such as אָשָׁם and the
phrase נשא + חֵטְא outside the context of worship. However, the allusion to certain passages
in Leviticus cannot be measured by the isolated use of technical vocabulary, but rather by
the confluence of a set of elements that suggest that there are too many "coincidences" to
be accidental. Above all, the network of connections between them is striking.

For this reason, and thirdly, more significant than the continuity is the discontinuity
that Isa 53:10-12 establishes about the cultic practices detailed in Leviticus. This disconti-
nuity seems to be intentional and presupposes the consolidation, at least in broad terms,
of the Old Testament sacrificial system. This observation does not mean that the texts were
already forged or that we are talking about intertextuality. The same observation applies
to the episode in Gen 22.

Fourth, in my opinion, this device of establishing continuity and inferring discontinu-
ity is intentional and succeeds in removing sacrifices from the sphere of worship and from
the priestly monopoly. A sacrificial act in life can have a salvific effect like that which takes
place on the altar. This is something that relates to the theology of Isaiah. In the person
of the Servant, the figures of victim–offering and priest converge. What legitimizes him to
officiate this act of worship is the gift of life and the fact that he bears the sins of others. A
service that, moreover, is recognized by the community.

Finally, Isa 53:10-12 creates a fracture, while at the same time healing it. The fracture it
causes is that, without this development, the core of the initial poem (Isa 53:1-9) allowed the
Servant to be identified with Jerusalem. However, with this extension, the reconstruction
of Jerusalem depends on the Servant's sacrifice. Through the term "offspring," Isa 53:10-12
connects with Isa 54, but it also adds a new idea to the final composition: the beginning

of the new era inaugurated by the Second Temple is due to a sacrifice of obedience like that of Abraham. The fact that the Chronicler identifies Mount Moriah with the site of the Temple in Jerusalem suggests that Genesis 22 is an etiological account or, at least, that this tradition was read from this perspective in the 5th century.

For all these reasons, and others scattered throughout this paper, the balance of arguments inclines me to answer affirmatively the initial question of this research.

Notes

1. Other biblical texts in which fidelity to God, to the covenant, or to certain principles leads to death are: Gen 22; 2 Kgs 3:27; Jer 26:20-23; Dan 3 and 6; 2Macc 6–7; Wis 2:12-20. However, none of them develops the expiatory aspect of the death of the righteous.

2. As a methodological model, I draw inspiration from the dissertation by F. Cocco, *Sulla cattedra di Mosè* (Cocco 2007), who, like me, wonders whether there is an underlying attempt to legitimize authority in Num 11* and Num 16*. In this first section, I take up his comparison of archaeological and epigraphic data and apply the consequences and results he draws from his study to the book of Isaiah.

3. This idea appears repeatedly in Scripture. Cf. 2 Kgs 25:12; Jer 25:11; 44:22; Ezek 5:3-4; 1 Chr 36:21.

4. At the level of destruction of the so-called Area G of the City of David, 51 charred bullae have been found because of the Babylonian fire (Cocco 2007, pp. 35–37).

5. This is a terracotta tablet preserved in the British Museum (London) and catalogued under the code BM 35382. Cf. also ANET pp. 307–11.

6. The Cyrus Cylinder is also preserved in the British Museum (London) and its catalogue number is BM 90920.

7. This is a clay tablet written in cuneiform script dated between 595 and 570 BC. It was found near the Ishtar Gate in Babylon during Robert Koldewey's excavations (1899–1917). It is currently in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin (VAT 16378). This tablet confirms the biblical account describing how, after his capture by Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiachin remained in captivity but received royal treatment and a daily allowance even after his partial release in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34).

8. With regard to the aristocracy and the upper classes, a series of denunciations accuses them of "devouring" and "crushing" the poor (Isa 1:21-23; 3:12-15; 5:8-23). Drunken priests and prophets are also castigated and ridiculed (Isa 28:7-13; 30–31). Finally, royalty is not immune to criticism. This is especially true of Ahaz, who seeks geopolitical support instead of trusting in God (Isa 7–8). In contrast to this monarch stands the figure of Hezekiah. This king temporarily saves the city (Isa 36–37), but his ostentatious display of wealth before the Babylonian embassy earns him the announcement of future deportation (Isa 39:1-8).

9. This fact reveals a third social divide: those who remain in Babylon and do not return. Jean Louis Ska sees an attempt to overcome this tension in the successive patriarchs who claim descent from Abraham. Isaac would represent those who have never left the land. Jacob would represent those who go into exile but are later repatriated. Joseph would represent those who never return but nevertheless contribute from afar to helping their brothers (Ska 2021, pp. 27–44).

10. Contrary to the opinion of Albrecht Alt, who subordinates Yehud to Samaria, according to F. Cocco, the epigraphy—specifically, the bullae and seals of Yehud—attest to the existence of an autonomous province with its own administration (Cocco 2007, pp. 92–94).

11. This is proven by one of the papyri from Elephantine, an Egyptian city where a Jewish community from the diaspora had settled. The community requests religious authorization from both Jerusalem and the satrap (Cocco 2007, pp. 137–40).

12. In this regard, it is striking that the Davidic child of Isa 9:5-6, although he makes the reign of Yhwh visible, does not receive the title of king (מֶלֶךְ) (Berges 2011, p. 64).

[13] Thus, in the inaugural vision in which Isaiah receives his calling, it is explicitly stated that the "king-Yahweh Sebaot" is seated on the throne. A throne that is in Jerusalem. This idea reappears at the end of large sections or at their climax, such as the so-called Apocalypse of Isaiah (Isa 24:23) and in the liturgical confession of Isa 33:22. The second Isaiah, in a way, describes a latent process of enthronement that goes from the announcement of God's arrival in Jerusalem (Isa 40:9-11) to the explicit formulation of "you God reigns" (Isa 52:7-11). Finally, the third Isaiah closes the book by describing a kind of consummate theocracy in which Yahweh rules and enlightens (Isa 60:19-20), turning Jerusalem into a royal diadem or tiara (Isa 62:3).

[14] Thus, for example, although it is true that Isa 45:1-7 echoes the panegyric elaborated in the Cyrus Cylinder, on the other hand, it reminds us that this monarch is only an instrument of Yhwh. In this way, his figure is relativized, and the balance is re-established. That is, the figure of Cyrus is subordinated to the divine plan. For the true King is Yahweh, and it is He who governs the peoples and, above all, directs history. This is a very comforting element for a population that has always been subject to the interference of the strongest (Berges 2011, pp. 90–93).

[15] For example, in Isaiah's vocational account, it is striking that a "non-priest" is elevated to the "holy of holies" where Yahweh's throne is located and that, moreover, he is purified directly by God and not by an expiatory rite (Berges 2011, p. 61). At the end of the book, it is equally groundbreaking that the peoples bring the Israelites of the diaspora as an offering and that God chooses "priests and Levites" from among them (Isa 66:21), thus breaking the Jerusalemite priestly monopoly (Berges 2011, pp. 129–30).

[16] Cf. Isa 1:9; 4:2-3; 6:13; 7:3; 10:20, 21, 22; 11:11-16; 14:22; 15:9; 17:3; 28:5; 37:4, 31, 32.

[17] Cf. Isa 41:8-9; 43:10; 44:1-2; 45:4; 48:20.

[18] Cf. Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-9; 50:4-11; 52:13–53:12.

[19] On the relationship between the servant and the servants, (cf. Blenkinsopp 1983, pp. 18–19; Beuken 1990, pp. 67–68, 85; Jeppesen 1990, pp. 118–29; Blenkinsopp 1997, pp. 155–75; Hermisson 1998, pp. 241–66; Borghino 2005, pp. 323–26). Berges, studying the position of the lexeme עֲבָדִים in the book of Psalms, concludes that the use of the term shows a certain affinity with Isaiah, as it seems to refer to a group that considered itself the successor to David's promises (Berges 2000, pp. 153–78).

[20] Cf. Isa 56:6; 63:17; 65:8.9.13.14.15; 66:14.

[21] Thus, the prophet Isaiah "binds" the testimony and "seals" the Torah in his disciples (Isa 8:16-18). A sealed Torah that in Isa 30:8 becomes a book. A chapter where the enigmatic figure of a teacher reappears, speaking from behind to point the way (Isa 30:20-21) (García Fernández 2015, pp. 93–104). Berges sees here the identification of the book's editors as the heirs who guard and carry the prophetic Torah. A kind of "remembrancers" (Isa 62:6) who sustain prayer (Isa 63:7-64:11) and prolong the function of the Servant (Berges 2011, pp. 35–41).

[22] Other reasons are: (a) themes that only appear in Isa 40–48, such as the manufacture of idols (Isa 40:19-20; 41:6-7; 44:9–20) or Cyrus (Isa 44:24–45:25); (b) the Servant-Zion alternation characteristic of Isa 49–55; (c) the root נחם, which appears for the first time in 40:1 and does not reappear until Isa 49–55 (Isa 49:13; 51:3[x2], 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11). (Cf. Hessler 1988, pp. 17–19; Koole 1997, pp. 14–16; Goldingay and Payne 2006, pp. 17–21; Jüngling 2006, pp. 435–37).

[23] Cf. Servant (49:1-13)–Zion (49:14–50:3)–Servant (50:4-11)–Zion (51:1–52:12)–Servant (52:13–53:12)–Zion (54:1–17). Cf. Sawyer 1989, pp. 89–107; Willey 1995, pp. 280–96.

[24] Thus, for example, Ulrich Berges considers that Isa 40:1–52:12* corresponds to what he calls the "first Jerusalemite redaction" (*erste Jerusalemer Redaktion*). The result of a third redaction stage of the text, which he places after 521 BC (Berges 1998, pp. 385–403).

[25] These hymns are: Isa 42:10-13; 44:23; 45:8; 48:20-21; 49:13; 52:9-12.

[26] Although the name does not appear in Isa 54, most authors agree that the woman personifies Jerusalem (Borghino 2005, p. 33).

[27] In fact, some consider that Isa 52:7-12 and Isa 54:1-17 were originally joined together (Duhm 1914, p. 378; Torrey 1928, pp. 423–24; Mowinckel 1931, p. 110).

[28] Firstly, its insertion respects the Servant-Zion sequence characteristic of Isa 49–55. Secondly, through numerous lexical connections, the pericope connects with both Isa 52:1-12 and Isa 54:1-17 (García Fernández 2010, pp. 235–37).

[29] Although some exegetes consider Isa 52:13-15 to form a separate unit (Orlinsky 1977, pp. 17–23; Snaith 1977, pp. 168–69).

[30] However, the first-person singular suffix of the noun עַמִּי in Isa 53:8 indicates a change of interlocutor from Isa 53:7 onwards, since up to Isa 53:6 there had been a confession of "we" (Tremolada 1997, pp. 89–90).

[31] However, the second person masculine singular suffix of the preposition עָלֶיךָ (Isa 52:14) implies a change of speaker and, therefore, someone other than Yhwh. To overcome this difficulty, some authors amend the text (Westermann 1966, p. 204; Kutsch 1967, p. 16; Driver 1968, p. 91). Or, based on the attestation of the Syr. and the Tg., they propose a third person masculine singular suffix, as recommended by the critical apparatus of the *BHS*.

[32] Repeated lexemes and roots: יהוה (Isa 52:3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 53:1, 6, 10); עמי (Isa 52:5, 6; 53:8); לקח (Is 52:5; 53,8); הנה (Isa 52,6: 13); אלהים (Isa 52:7, 10, 12; 53:4); שלום (Isa 52:7; 53,5); זרע (Isa 52:10; 53:11); גוים (Isa 52:10, 15); ארץ (Isa 52:10; 53:2, 8); מסר (Isa 52:2; 53:5); שמע (Isa 52:7, 15); נשא (Isa 52:8, 11, 13; 53:4, 12); ראה (Isa 52:8, 10, 15; 53:2, 10, 11).

[33] Repeated lexemes and roots: עבד (Isa 52,13; 53,11; 54,17); זרע (Isa 53,10; 54,3); גוים (Isa 52,15; 54,3); שלום (Isa 53,5; 54,10, 13); צדק (Isa 53,11; 54,14, 17); חלק (Is 53,12; 54,17); צלח (Isa 53,10; 54,17); ענה (Isa 53,4, 7; 54,11); שמם (Isa 52,14; 54,1, 3); שחת (Isa 52,14; 54,16); ארך (Isa 53,10; 54,2); פנים + סתר (Isa 53,3; 54,8); רב (Isa 52,14, 1; 53,11, 12; 54,1, 13).

34   For example, the promise of longevity, "to lengthen days" (יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים), appears in Deuteronomistic literature (Deut 30:20) and wisdom literature (Prov 3:2) and in clearly post-exilic contexts such as 1Chr 29:28. The expression "the desire of God" (יְהוָה חֵפֶץ) is unusual and, strikingly, is found in Third Isaiah (Isa 56:4; 62:4). Similarly, "prosper in one's hands" (בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח) is a recurring Hebraism in Chronicles (1 Chr 29:23; 2 Chr 7:11; 26:5; 31:21). The term "wisdom" (דַּעַת) is another trace of sapiential language (Prov 9:10). The same is true of "work" (עָמָל), which is particularly present in Qohelet (up to 35 times), but also in the Psalms (Ps 7:15; 10:7, 14; 25:18; 73:5, 16; 90:10; etc.) and in Job (Job 3:10, 20; 4:8; 5:6-7; 7:3; 11:16; etc.). Satiety is part of the repertoire of promises of blessing in prophetic and wisdom literature (Isa 58:11; 66:11; Jer 31:14; 50:19; Joel 2:19.26; Ps 16:11; 15:15; 22:27; 37:19; 63:6; 145:16; 141:14). Here it is linked to the divine promise made to the Servant in Isa 50:7 that he will not be disappointed (Berges 2015, 272).

35   According to A. Borghino, among those who maintain a relationship between the servant and Zion, three groups can be distinguished (Borghino 2005, pp. 396–97): (a) those who identify them (Wilshire 1975, pp. 356–67; 1990, pp. 231–55); (b) those who see a parallel development of the two figures (Sawyer 1989, pp. 89–107; Jeppesen 1993, pp. 109–25; Willey 1995, pp. 280–96; Stratton 1997, pp. 219–37; Berges 2001, pp. 66, 70); (c) those who consider both characters to be interchangeable (Korpel 1996, pp. 153–67).

36   Steck argues that in the second, third and fourth stages of redaction, the Servant of the Fourth Song is identified with Zion (cf. Steck 1992, pp. 158, 161–67).

37   1QIsaa confirms the MT. 4QIsad reads תשׂם, which could indicate a passive verb (תֻּשָׂם) as it appears in the Syriac version. In fact, this is the option adopted by the critical apparatus of the *BHS*. The LXX, which had already shown a very different variant in the previous phrase (βούλεται καθαρίσαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς), will again present a different *lectio* in the second sentence of Is 53:10: ἐὰν δῶτε περὶ ἁμαρτίας ἡ ψυχὴ ὑμῶν. Thus, it reads the verb in the 2nd person plural (δῶτε). The Vulgate, on the other hand, translates it as 3rd person masculine singular (*si posuerit pro peccato animam suam*).

38   Supported by 1QIsaa, Dahood analyses the verb as 3rd person singular with God as the subject. On the other hand, although he accepts Dahood's proposal, James Battenfield maintains that the subject is the Servant. In his opinion, the 1QIsa(a)manuscript supports the fact that mem-ם is not final and that yod-י would have been added later and, consequently, the subject would be the Servant (Battenfield 1982, p. 485). On the contrary, in Berges' view, the space at the beginning of the section of the 1QIsaa manuscript confirms that the author is addressing the listeners and not God (Berges 2015, pp. 215–16).

39   Dahood proposes dividing the expression אם-תשׂים in another way: מת שׂם. In this way, the text would state, "surely, Yhwh, the Awesome One established the life of the servant as אשׂם" (Dahood 1982, p. 562). He then interprets the particle אם as a divine title.

40   According to Cortese, the ritual emphasis characteristic of the priestly tradition never eliminated the need for repentance. Unlike other religions, Israel never attributed magical efficacy to sacrifice (Cortese 1982, p. 148).

41   Berges adds another reason. The alternation of voices—typical of songs that combine the divine voice with a commentary by the author—disrupts the order here. Whereas in Isa 52:13-15 the divine voice is followed by a commentary by the author, in Isa 53:10-12 the narrator speaks first and then God. This fact creates a certain symmetry between Isa 53:10 and its counterpart Isa 52:14. For while in the latter the narrator addresses the servant (*many will be astonished at you*), in Isa 53:10 he addresses the people (*if you place*) (Berges 2015, p. 268).

42   In contrast to the first chain of verbs or adjectives with a passive meaning (Isa 53:2-3)—*despised and rejected by* men—the active verbs in Isa 53:4 make it clear that the servant freely bears and endures the pain. In Isa 53:7-9, the second long chain of passive verbs—*oppressed, led to the slaughter, taken, torn from the land of the* living—culminates in an unprecedented action formulated in the active voice: *he laid his grave* (Isa 53:9). The servant's silence at the trial (he *did not open his mouth;* Isa 53:7) also attests to his active militancy. But the phrase that best resolves this apparent tension is: *he was oppressed, but he submitted* (Isa 53:7) (García Fernández 2010, pp. 257–59).

43   The form *hifil* הֶחֱלִי, derived from חלא or חלה, means 'to be sick'. 1QIsaa reads ויחללהו from the root חלל I "to profane" or חלל II "to penetrate", surely by assimilation from v. 5 and therefore considered a *lectio facilitante* (cf. Barthélemy 1986, p. 401). The LXX, Vg, Aq and Sym understand it as a noun (חֳלִי). The Syr, however, reads an infinitive (neḥlīhī) in parallel with דַּכְּאוֹ.

44   The other options are to give it a temporal nuance (Childs 2000, p. 418), a causal nuance (Oswalt 2005, p. 94), or a declarative nuance (Dahood 1982, p. 562)..

45   The ritual prescribed in Lev 5:14-26 for אָשָׁם does not differ substantially from that stipulated in Lev 4:1–5:13 for the "sin offering" (חַטָּאת), except for the presentation of the animal to the Lord and the laying on of hands (Cortese 1982, p. 144). In Cardellini's opinion, the added value with respect to the חַטָּאת sacrifice is the notion of reparation for damage, since it included restitution of 20% (Cardellini 2001, p. 484). In fact, it is the only sacrifice that can be commuted for money (Milgrom 1991, p. 327). According to R. de Vaux, the close unity between sacrifice-חַטָּאת and sacrifice-אָשָׁם leads to a certain identification. The sacrifice-חַטָּאת would have developed later and in the final phase of the priestly redaction would have supplanted the sacrifice-אָשָׁם (De Vaux 1964, pp. 88–89).

46   This is certainly implied in the text. For life is contained in the blood, and what is referred to as אָשָׁם is the nefeš (נֶפֶשׁ). Even so, some exegetes argue that for the OT, human blood does not have a purifying effect (Fohrer 1981, p. 41).

47   In contrast, Lev 5:20-26 presents intentional crimes.

[48] Nevertheless, Pulcellini affirms that in the Old Testament there is the figure of the prophet who intercedes for the people through his suffering. In his opinion, the text goes one step further: from the already existing "representative vicariousness" to "substitutive vicariousness" (Pulcinelli 2007, p. 138).

[49] The verb ערה in *hifil* means 'to uncover, to strip bare', and in *piel* and *nifal,* in addition to the above meaning, it can have the nuance of 'to spill'. Here it could be understood in a figurative sense, in that "to strip oneself before death" implies a kind of surrender to it, as expressed by the metaphor of 'spilling oneself' (2Sam 14:14).

[50] An expression reminiscent of the third song of the Servant: "The Lord has opened my ear (אֹזֶן לִי פָּתַח) and I did not resist or turn back" (Isa 50:5).

[51] Scholars debate whether there is a substantial difference between placing one hand on the sacrificed lamb and placing both hands on it, as is required for the scapegoat-עֲזָאזֵל. For some, the former would indicate representation or substitution between the offeror and the victim. The gesture performed with both hands would imply the transfer of sins (Deiana 1994, pp. 72, 184). However, in the opinion of other exegetes, the transfer of guilt occurs in the confession of sins (Gese 1989, pp. 116–17).

[52] Be it one's own responsibility (cf. Lev 20:17.19; 20:20; 24:15; Num 5:31; 14:34; 30:16; Isa 1:4; Jer 26:15; Ezek 14:10; 18:20; 23:35.49; 33:10); as well as that of others (cf. Exod 28:38; Lev 10:17; 16:22; Num 18:1.23; 2 Sam 14:9; Ezek 4:4.5-6).

[53] Cf. Exod 28:38; Lev 5:1.17; 7:18; 10:17; 16:22; 17:16; 19:8; 22:9.16; Num 18:1.23; 1 Sam 6:3-5; 2 Kgs 12:16-17. In relation to the latter, some passages are striking in which the priests, Aaron and his sons, are the ones who must bear the sin of others (Exod 28:38; Lev 10:17; Num 18:1). In contrast, in Lev 22:16, the priestly caste's mismanagement causes the Israelites to eat sacred meat. With their wrongdoing, they "burden" the people with a guilt classified as אָשָׁם (cf. Lev 5:1.5-7. 17).

[54] Cf. Lev 19:17; 20:20; 22:9; 24:15; Num 9:13; 18:22.32; Ezek 23:49.

[55] With regard to the formulation of the phrase "bear the guilt" (סבל + עָוֹן), what is striking is the verb in *yiqtol* (יִסְבֹּל), and not in *qatal*, as would be expected given the clear parallelism with the sentence where "bear" (נָשָׂא) appears. It seems that this device is used to imply that the Servant's intercessory action is prolonged over time (Niccacci 2005, p. 20; Feldmeier and Spieckermann 2011, p. 375). This would explain the intensification of the poem, which is not reduced to mere confession, but is motivated by a particular interest in others believing and adhering as a necessary condition for participating in the salvific effects of this action (Isa 53:1, 8).

[56] While De Andrado defends it (De Andrado 2021, pp. 915–35), Jeremy Schipper and Janowski downplay it (Janowski 2004; Schipper 2011; 2013, pp. 315–25).

[57] Their continuous reiterations show that the editorial work did not achieve a completely coherent synthesis (Hartenstein 2005, pp. 124–25; De Vaux 1964, p. 86). Moreover, the authors consider the part about the scapegoat sent into the wilderness to be a late addition (Deiana 1994, p. 181; Eberhart 2011, p. 31). The Israelite sacrificial system reached its unified form after the exile thanks to the priestly tradition, but its development was gradual, and the sources come from different historical moments and theological currents (Cortese 1982, pp. 338–53).

[58] Blaming their parents for the present situation, the current generation possibly shielded themselves and sought to slip away and postpone their own conversion (García Fernández 2024, p. 276).

[59] In Isa 53:10, the roots דכא and חלה present in Isa 53:5 is repeated and combined with the words עָוֹן and פֶּשַׁע, which reappear in Isa 53:11-12. The first is the direct object of 'to bear' (נשׂא). This verb and 'to endure' (סבל) have as their direct object in Isa 53:4-5 nouns from the semantic field of illness (חֳלִי and מַכְאֹב).

[60] Perhaps the most notable is that the expression חֵטְא/עָוֹן + נשׂא has both the meaning of "bearing the consequences of the crime" and "forgiving" (Bovati 1997, pp. 127–28). With this device, the text may wish to point out that bearing sin and intercede are not two separate or unrelated actions. For other similar examples within the poem, cf. García Fernández 2010, pp. 267–68.

[61] This "offspring" (זֶרַע) is referred to by various names. The most important are: "disciples of the Lord" (יְהוָה לִמּוּדֵי; Isa 54:13) and "servants of the Lord" (יְהוָה עַבְדֵי; Isa 54:17). With regard to the latter, it is noteworthy that from Is 53:11 onwards, the term servant-עֶבֶד no longer appears in the singular, but always in the plural (Isa 54:17; 59:21; 61:9; 65:9.23; 66:22), linking this group to the Servant of Yhwh. The nomenclature of "disciples" (Isa 54:13) also associates the Servant with this group (Isa 50:4-5).

[62] This raises serious doubts about whether the Servant dies or whether this promise is made to him and not to the community (Berges 2015, p. 270).

[63] Cf. Exod 20:12; Deut 4:40; 5:16; 6:2; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7; 25:15; 30:18; 32:47; 2Kgs 3:14.

[64] The LXX (φῶς), 1QIsaab and 4QIsad add the noun אוֹר as a direct complement, but not Aq., Sym., Theo., the Vg. and the Syr. If this variant is accepted, the MT would be the result of a haplography. In our opinion, this option is a *lectio facilitante* (Barthélemy 1986, pp. 403–07; Koole 1997, pp. 328–29; Adams 2006, p. 187).

[65] Moreover, the emphasis in Isa 1:11, 15 is not only on sacrificial practice but also on "quantity" (Isa 1:11: רֹב־זִבְחֵיכֶם; Is 1:15: תְפִלָּה כִּי־תַרְבּוּ).

[66] In this regard, the play on words used in Isa 54:12-13 is interesting. That is, "stones" (אֲבָנִים) and "sons" (בָּנִים). The second is contained in the first ([Borghino 2005](), pp. 285–86). Thus, Isa 54:12-13 implies that these sons-בָּנִים enter as stones-אֲבָנִים into the construction of Jerusalem as mother. In a way, the dynamic of Isa 54 recalls the promise of David, whose covenant is alluded to in Isa 55:1-5. In the emblematic text of 2Sam 7, the monarch expresses his desire to build a Temple for the Lord. To which Yahweh responds that it will not be David who builds him a house (בַּיִת) in the sense of a Temple, but rather He will build David a house in the sense of descendants. In a way, the pericope of 2Sam 7 stitches together and connects the idea of temple-descendants, as also happens in Isa 54:12-13. This idea is revisited with different emphases in other places in Isaiah. For example, in Isa 66:1 God himself asks: "What temple can you build for me, or what place for my rest?" He then answers himself: "I will look with favor on the humble and contrite in spirit, who tremble at my word" (Isa 66:2). As we have already said, this insistence indicates that the reconstruction of the Temple was not so much material as ideological, and within the theologies that developed around this question, Isaiah assigns this prerogative to a qualified group.

[67] The fact that both the righteous and the sinners suffered in the destruction of Jerusalem and the debacle of exile possibly threw the retributive theory into crisis and accentuated the enigma of the suffering of the righteous. Some post-exilic texts delve theologically into the idea of fruitful pain (Ps 125). Thus, for example, Rachel is promised a reward for her fatigue. It is as if, through her suffering, the matriarch brought about the return of the deportees (Jer 31:15-17). This is echoed in the Jerusalem of Isa 54 and in Isa 40:9-11, which uses the vocabulary of wages and reward.

[68] Furthermore, the idea of a reward for people is not foreign to either the Fourth Song or Deutero-Isaiah. In fact, it refers to Isa 53:10, where the Servant is assured of offspring, and to other texts such as Isa 40:10, where the "wages" (שָׂכָר) and "reward" (פְּעֻלָּה) are the exiles (Isa 62:11; Jer 31:16); or to Isa 49:24-25, where the "spoils" (מַלְקוֹחַ) are a metaphor for the people; or to Isa 49:8, where the "desolate inheritances" (שֹׁמְמוֹת נְחָלוֹת) represent Israel (54:3). The text of Isa 54:17 concludes by promising peace and security as "the inheritance of the servants of Yhwh" (יְהוָה עַבְדֵי נַחֲלַת) to whom "the righteousness of the Lord" (מֵאִתִּי וְצִדְקָתָם) is given.

[69] Repeated lexemes and roots: עבד (Isa 52:13; 53:11; 54:17); זרע (Isa 53:10; 54:3); גוים (Is 52:15; 54:3); שלום (Isa 53:5; 54:10, 13); צדק (Isa 53:11; 54:14, 17); חלק (IsA 53:12; 54:17); צלח (Isa 53:10; 54:17); ענה (Isa 53:4, 7; 54:11); שמם (Isa 52:14; 54:1, 3); שחת (Isa 52:14; 54:16); ארך (Isa 53:10; 54:2); פנים + סתר (Isa 53:3; 54:8); רב (Isa 52:14, 1; 53:11, 12; 54:1, 13).

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