

**VICARIOUS SUFFERING IN OLD TESTAMENT WISDOM LITERATURE AND  
THE WISDOM TRADITION: A TRADITIO-HISTORICAL APPROACH**

**BY**

**THOMAS M. MUNENGWA**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR ANANDA GEYSER-FOUCHE**

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. The work of others that have been used in this dissertation has been acknowledged and referenced.

Signature of Student.....

Date.....

Signature of Supervisor .....

Date .....

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## Abbreviations

<i>BASOR</i>	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BCE</i>	Before the Common Era
<i>BDB</i>	Brown, F., Driver, S.R., and Briggs, C.A., <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , 5 <sup>th</sup> edition, 2000.
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , Elliger, K and Rudolph, W (eds.), Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Illustrator</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CE</i>	Common Era
<i>cf</i>	<i>confer</i> , refer to
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>1QIsa<sup>a</sup></i>	The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery, Vol. 1, 1950
<i>1QIsa<sup>b</sup></i>	The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University, 1955
<i>fem</i>	feminine
<i>GKC</i>	<i>Gesenius Hebrew Grammar</i> edited by E. Kautzsch (2 <sup>nd</sup> English Edition by A.E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>The Interpreters Bible, vols. 1-12</i> , Buttrick, George A , <i>et al</i> (eds.), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956.
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal of the Studies of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LHBOTS</i>	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuaginta</i> , Rahlfs, Alfred (ed.), Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982.
<i>masc.</i>	masculine
<i>ms</i>	manuscript
<i>mss</i>	manuscripts
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NASB</i>	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
<i>NCBC</i>	New Collegeville Bible Commentary
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>NJB</i>	<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i>
<i>NJBC</i>	The New Jerome Biblical Commentary edited by Brown Raymond, E.; Fitzmyer, Joseph A; Murphy, Roland E (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993).
<i>NRSV</i>	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>pers</i>	person
<i>pl</i>	plural
<i>ptc</i>	participle
<i>sg</i>	singular



SBJT	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
Suf	Suffix
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, 13 vols.</i> , Botterweck, G.J., Ringgren H., Fabry, H-J (eds.), translated by David E. Green, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975-
v	verse
w	verses
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTS	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplementary Series</i>
Vul	Vulgate

## List of Signs

§ Section/paragraph

## Books of the Bible

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deut
Deut-Isa	Deutero-Isaiah (Second Isaiah, that is, Isa 40-55)
Jos	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Sam	1 & 2 Samuel
Kgs	1 & 2 Kings
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Hos	Hosea
Am	Amos
Hag	Haggai
Jon	Jonah
Zep	Zephaniah
Job	Job
Prov	Prov
Psa	Psalms
Qoh	Qoheleth
Song	Song of Songs
Sir	Ben Sira
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Est	Esther

## Abstract

Suffering in general and the suffering of the innocent in particular are issues that have bedeviled humanity from time immemorial. The Old Testament grapples with this problem in various ways. One of the ways finds expression in what has been called the concept of vicarious suffering. The pre-history and relationship of this concept with other concepts and traditions in the Old Testament have been studied and a variety of proposals have been made. This present work aimed at studying the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering and Old Testament wisdom literature and traditions, from the perspective of the traditio-historical approach. Four hypotheses guided the study. The first was that the concept of vicarious suffering is present in the Old Testament. The second was that this concept is expressed in a unique way in Isa 52:13-53:12. The third was that the concept of vicarious suffering is an outcome of the reflection on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in the Old Testament. The fourth and last hypothesis stated that wisdom literature contributed to the origin, formulation and expression of the concept of vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12. The study determined that the idea of vicarious suffering is present in the Old Testament and is indeed expressed in a unique way in Isa 52:13-53:12. The study also determined that this concept is not only formulated and expressed through a considerable number of words and phrases found in Old Testament wisdom literature but also that the idea is informed by the concerns and assumptions found in Old Testament wisdom literature. In the light of this, the study ends by recommending openness to the sovereignty of God or the fear of the Lord, in the face of suffering of any kind.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

It has been stated that suffering is part of human experience (Magnate 1997:9), emanating from and constituting part and parcel of human nature (Sorreleder 2015:17-22).<sup>1</sup> It is an experience that transcends, race, colour, creed, space and time. It has also been the rallying point of human compassion and assistance at different levels and for different reasons, of course (Gantt 2003:91). It is, therefore, not surprising that efforts at making sense of this suffering have been at the heart of the human quest for meaning. The Old Testament bears witness to this quest from the very beginning,<sup>2</sup> in various contexts, traditions and literary forms. Also found therein is a description and understanding of the suffering that has been called vicarious.

As it shall become clear in the course of this study, the concept of vicarious suffering finds unique expression in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in the Old Testament (Spieckermann 2004:1-15; Barry 2010; contra.Orlinsky 1969:246-251; Whybray 1978:29-31). In this text an innocent person, the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 52:13, 53:9, 11-12), suffers because of the guilt of and for the benefit of the others (Isaiah 53:4-8, 11). This suffering of the innocent because of the guilt of others and for the benefit of these 'others' has been called vicarious suffering.<sup>3</sup> It is the overall thesis of this study that central to or rather the framework within which this concept of vicarious suffering is composed and expressed is the suffering of an innocent person or persons and the presumption of the teaching of just retribution. This framework and presumption together with the problem

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<sup>1</sup> This would include the suffering that is brought about by some human beings on other human beings, for various reasons as well as a suffering that is pathological and remedial (Akthar 2014:xiii).

<sup>2</sup> In one sense the story of the fall (Gen 3:1-24) can be understood as an effort to explore the origins and meaning of suffering in narrative form (Simundson 1992:220).

<sup>3</sup> This suffering can either be substitutionary, that is, in place of the guilty or representative, that is, alongside the guilty. This distinction does not make any conceptual difference to the understanding and use of the concept of vicarious suffering in this study. For a detailed discussion on vicarious suffering in terms of substitution or representation see Hooker 1998:94-99.

of suffering in general are major themes or issues that are discussed and explored in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition(s).<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Background to the Study

The problem of the suffering of the innocent was one of the issues explored in various ways in Ancient Near East wisdom literature. From Ancient Egypt, we are told of a dispute between a man and his *Ba*, that is, 'soul' (Pritchard 1969:407-407; Allen 2010) and the protest of the Eloquent Peasant (Pritchard 1969:407-410). From Mesopotamia we have the story of the so-called Sumerian Job (Pritchard 1969:595-596).<sup>5</sup> Ancient Israel was no exception as the Old Testament testifies.

The issue of the problem of suffering, in general, and the problem of the suffering of the innocent, in particular, receives attention in various places in the Old Testament (Job; Qoh. 7:15-16, 8:14; 9:1-3; Psa 37; 42; 73; 88; Jer 12:1-3; cf. Humbert 1918). From the early parts of the Old Testament the suffering of the innocent is referred to in different ways, in different contexts and in different literary forms. There is the murder of the innocent Abel (Gen 4). There is the suffering of the innocent Joseph in the Joseph cycle of stories (Gen 37-50). There is the suffering of Moses for the people of Israel in the Exodus, Wilderness and Sinai traditions. There is the suffering of the countless prophets of God; Elijah and Jeremiah, to mention a few. There is the heart-rending plea of the Psalmist (cf. Psalm 37; 73 and 88) and of Job in the book of Job. Then there is the suffering of the anonymous servant in Isa 50:4-9 and Isa 52:13-53:12. However, the discussion and exposition of the theme of innocent suffering is one of the characteristic themes in what is referred to as the wisdom literature and tradition by Old Testament scholars (Crenshaw 2010:41-60; Clifford 1997:13).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Old Testament wisdom literature, a Biblical expression of the wisdom tradition exhibits a persistent concern on the theme of suffering in tandem with its anthropological concerns that are universal (Magnate 1997:21).

<sup>5</sup> In this story, a wise, righteous devotee complains to his/her god about suffering at the hands of the wicked, his/her neglect by this god and appeals to this god for help. The document ends with a narration of the restoration of the sufferer to health and joy. The many resemblances of this story to the story of Job in the Old Testament have led scholars to call this story, 'The Sumerian Job' (Arnold & Beyer 2002:175).

<sup>6</sup> On the caution concerning the use of the term wisdom tradition see Sneed 2011:50-54.

In the context of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition, the theme of the suffering of the innocent becomes an existential and theological problem in the light of Israel's belief in one, loving, just and all-powerful God, the creator and sustainer of the universe and in the light of the teaching contained in the doctrine of just retribution.<sup>7</sup>

It has been pointed out that Old Testament wisdom tradition finds expression in what is formally known as wisdom literature, namely the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, for the short canon, and the books of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon for the longer canon (Crenshaw 2010:5-6). The tradition is, however, not confined to these books. It can also be discerned in other parts of the Old Testament. Passages that have been cited include Isaiah 1; Psalms 1; 19; 37; 73; 112; 119; 127; 128; 133 and the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 (von Rad 1965:281-300; Kselman & Barré 1993:525).

The word tradition refers to particular customs, thinking, beliefs, worldviews that are held and practiced for generations, by a group or community. Owing to its origins in the Latin language, the word tradition may refer to the process of transmission from generation to generation (*traditio*) and/or to the content of what is transmitted (*traditum*), for example, customs and worldviews. Traditions are often expressed and transmitted in verbal form, oral or written (Di Vito 1999:90-92). In the Old Testament a number of traditions pertaining to ancient Israel's history, faith and understanding of the world are found. One of these traditions is what has come to be known as wisdom tradition, a tradition that was also found among ancient Israel's neighbours (Crenshaw 2010:41-60).

The word wisdom has been used to refer to 'a movement' of teachers, certain ancient literature, including some books of the Old Testament, and for a particular worldview (von Rad 1972:15-23; Murphy 1992:920; Crenshaw 2010:23-32). Distinct themes, vocabulary, stories, and literary forms common to this worldview and 'movement', and their transmission have been seen

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<sup>7</sup> The teaching of just retribution or divine retribution taught that God is just and is concerned with human behaviour (cf. Psa 73:1). God rewards good behaviour with prosperity and success and punishes bad behaviour with suffering and failure. This is understood as either built-in in the nature of actions themselves (Prov 1:18-19; 11:3-11; 26:27; Isa 50:1b; cf. Koch 1983:57-87;) or a result of the direct intervention of God (Prov 16:4, 17:5, 15) or both (cf. Murphy, 1992:922-923) or even that of the community (Prov 11:26; cf. Schellenberg 2015:124). While the doctrine of just retribution was not unique to ancient Israel, it made the problem of suffering an acute one because of Israel's belief in an omnipotent, omniscient and just God (cf. Job 8:3-7).

as constituting a tradition, namely wisdom tradition (Sneed 2011:50-54;<sup>8</sup> contra, Weeks 2010:107-126). Characteristic of the wisdom tradition is a collection of proverbial sayings and exhortations (Prov 10-22), sustained reflection on what is wisdom (Prov 1-9; Job 28), its necessity for a prosperous and happy life and indeed its limits, on the one hand, and its understanding of reality and Israel's faith that is silent on elements common in other Israelite traditions, like the traditions of election and the Exodus, on the other hand. Themes characteristic of this tradition include reflection on suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent (cf. Job; Psa 73)<sup>9</sup> and insistence on the fear of the Lord as the basis and end of wisdom's endeavours (Prov 1:7a; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Qoh 5:6; 12:13; Psa 111:10).

It has also being pointed out that besides concerns about the suffering of the innocent, another theme characteristic of the wisdom tradition is the search for cosmic order, especially order in the life of a society, and order in the life of an individual (Clifford 1997:8-10; Perdue 2008:12; Schellenberg 2015:122-126). In almost all the wisdom books of the Old Testament, there is an affirmation that God created the world as a system, methodically arranged. There are a set of principles that govern the system. These principles can be discerned in both nature and human societies. The principles and the system as a whole express the will of God. Living within and according to the principles of this order lies the fulfilment and happiness of human beings. In other words, success or the lack of it, in life, is understood in terms of reward or punishment, meted out relative to how one has lived according to this order.

Wisdom, which was there when God created the world (Prov 8:22-31; Job 28:25-28) can be used to discern and communicate this order and the principles therein (Wis 9). Wisdom can also be used to exhort humans to live in accordance with the principles of this order to ensure their happiness and avoid catastrophe (Prov 8:32-36). The concern with the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature is informed by this understanding of order. This is because innocence and suffering are not bed-fellows. Innocent suffering distorts the perceived moral order.

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<sup>8</sup> While Sneed does not disagree with the use of the expression wisdom tradition, he disagrees with making this tradition particular and distinct. For him "the same authors who composed wisdom literature are also responsible for the composition and/or preservation of the other type of literature," in the Old Testament (Sneed 2011:54).

<sup>9</sup> On the debate surrounding the classification of the book of Job as wisdom literature see Dell (2013:14-19).

The search for order, moral order in this case, was discerned within the framework of the teaching of just retribution. Simply put, this teaching stated that the wicked suffer and the innocent prosper. In other words, the wicked incur divine punishment but the righteous enjoy divine rewards. Many sections of the book of Proverbs subscribe to this teaching (Prov. 3:23-26, 5:21-23, 10:6-32, 11:3-11, 17:15). However, experience showed that this teaching could not always be proved to be consistent. Faced with this dilemma, there are various trajectories in further reflections on this theme. In the book of Job, the character Job pleads his innocence and decries the apparent lack of order as discerned within the framework of the teaching of just retribution (Job 27:1-12) but he finally opens up to the mystery of human experience, especially human suffering. At the end of the book of Job the search for order explores a 'new' dimension, that of the fear of the LORD or the sovereignty of the LORD (Job 42:1-6, cf. 28:28). The author of the book of Qoheleth further explores the notion of the fear of the LORD within the context of wisdom's search for order. Within the context of his exposition of order in terms of a time set for everything (Qoh 3:1-8), Qoheleth goes on to say, "...Human beings cannot comprehend the work of God from beginning to end." (Qoh 3:11; cf. Qoh 8:16-17). "...God sees to it that human beings fear him." (Qoh 3:14b).<sup>10</sup>

The fear of the Lord is an attitude that is promoted in all the books of wisdom literature in the Old Testament, constituting yet another theme characteristic of the wisdom tradition.<sup>11</sup> The fear of the LORD is seen as the beginning and the end of wisdom's endeavours. In the book of Proverbs, the fear of the LORD is said to be, among other things, the beginning of all wisdom (Prov 1:7, 9:10), hating evil (Prov 8:13), and the knowledge of God (Prov 2:5; 30:3). For Job, this fear is understood in terms of turning away from evil (Job 28:28). In Qoheleth this fear has to do with piety as a result of acknowledging the sovereignty of God (Qoh. 3:14, 12:13). This attitude and disposition is a result of the understanding of the potential and limits of human wisdom, on the one hand, and the understanding of the mystery and sovereignty of God, on the other. Human wisdom's search for order and human wisdom's understanding of the teaching of just

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<sup>10</sup> Qoh 3:14b, cf. 5:6, 7:18, 8:12-13, 12:13.

<sup>11</sup> This attitude was not confined to wisdom tradition nor does it only find expression in wisdom literature and texts. In wisdom literature this attitude is insisted on in the face of the mystery of human life and that of the origins and usefulness of wisdom see below.



retribution is urged by experience in the natural and moral order to open up to the sovereignty of God, that is, the fear of God in its various dimensions.

Though Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is found in the prophetic corpus of Isa 40-55, it has already been observed that many of the key words in the description of the suffering of the servant cannot be found anywhere else in Isa 40-55. Stuhlmüller (1993:341) points out that a total of 46 words found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 appear nowhere else in Isa 40-55. Preliminary research has shown that a good number of the terms are found in Wisdom Literature and in passages in the rest of the Old Testament that bear the 'marks' of the Wisdom tradition. These include: words that describe the suffering and appearance of the servant (מְרֹאָה 'appearance', מְכָאֵב 'pain' 'sickness', נָגַע 'to strike', דָּכָא 'to crush', חַבּוּרָה 'wound'); words that describe the recognition of the 'we' (חָמַד 'to desire', חָשַׁב 'to think, consider', וּמְרִמָּה 'deceit'); and words that give the reasons for the suffering of the servant (פְּשָׁע 'transgression', מוֹסָר 'chastisement', רָפָא 'to heal').

There are also other words and expressions that do appear in Isa 40-55 but which are commonly associated with the wisdom outlook. These include: שָׂכַל 'to act wisely'; רָאָה 'to see, perceive'; בִּיַן 'to discern, understand'; and יָדַע 'to know'. There is also the issue of the understanding of sin and its removal. In Prov 16:6 faithfulness and truth are said to atone for sin. Furthermore, in wisdom literature and tradition, wisdom and knowledge are said to make people righteous (cf. Isa 53:11).<sup>12</sup>

The above observations, together with the stylistic and rhetorical features of the text, and the characteristic concern of the wisdom tradition with the suffering of the innocent, the search for order and the fear of the LORD, has prompted the search for the relation of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isaiah 52:13-52:12.

Indeed, the understanding and description of the suffering of the innocent servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 have fascinated and continue to fascinate readers of the Old Testament. This has led to efforts at: (a) characterizing or categorizing this understanding and description (Hägglund 2008:11-14) and (b) investigating into the origins and/or influences of this understanding and description (Spieckermann 2004:1-15). With respect to the former, the word

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<sup>12</sup> In Isa 53:11 we are told that the servant makes many righteous by his knowledge (cf. Ward 1978:128-129; RSV)

vicarious has been used by many English speaking scholars to characterize and categorize this understanding and description.<sup>13</sup> With respect to the latter, the roots of this idea have been traced back to the priestly traditions of atonement and the prophetic tradition of intercession by some (Young 1950; Zimmerli 1969; Spieckermann 2004), while others include the representative roles contained in the kingship and prophetic traditions (Reventlow 1998:34-37).

Spieckermann (2004:1-15) situates the prehistory of this concept in the prophetic tradition of intercession beginning in the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. He, however, concedes that:

*Despite the precision of these findings, it is still not possible to reconstruct a self-contained prehistory of the idea of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 53. The prehistory sheds some light on the idea, but not enough to remove the mystery or uniqueness from chapter 53. This lack of predictability provides the best evidence that Isaiah 53 is trying to say something new (Spieckermann 2004: 1).*

Spieckermann also admits that besides intercession for the many there are other themes in the text like the sinlessness of the Servant and his acceptance of his fate that are more difficult to explain, and which should be taken into consideration in the research into the Old Testament roots of the concept of vicarious suffering. As pointed out above, the vocabulary and form of this text, the theme of the suffering of the innocent, in this case the sinless servant, and the theme of the servant's acceptance of his demise, in other words, his openness to the sovereignty of God, among other things, makes it worthwhile to investigate the relation of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Since this study investigated the possible relation or resemblance of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept or idea of vicarious suffering, the approach that was adopted in this study is the traditio-historical approach. This approach focuses on investigating the motifs and themes, linguistic conventions, imagery, structure of thought, convictions and conceptions, among other things, that are found in a text and the tradition to which these maybe traced among

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<sup>13</sup> John D. Barry (2010:107-132) provides the views of several scholars concerning the use of the term vicarious for the description of the suffering of the servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in response to the negative proposal of Harry Orlinsky (1969) and Norman Whybray (1978).

the traditions found in the Old Testament (Simian-Yofre 2002:114-117; cf. Soulen 1981:200-201; Morgan & Barton 1988:93-128). This approach is discussed in detail in chapter Two.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Despite some dissenting voices, the majority of Old Testament scholars are of the view that the concept of vicarious suffering is present in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> This concept has been traced back to either the practice of atonement and/or the practice of prophetic intercession (Young, 1950; Zimmerli, 1969, Spieckermann, 2004). Whereas Old Testament wisdom tradition's contribution to the discussion on the suffering of the innocent and its contribution to the final form of the Old Testament is widely acknowledged (Murphy, 1981:27-28; Crenshaw, 2010:33-34), its contribution or the lack of it, to the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. This study is an attempt to fill this gap.

### **1.4 Aim**

This study seeks to investigate the relation of the concept of vicarious suffering to Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

### **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- Present and discuss the approach adopted for this study;
- Establish the meaning of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament context;
- Discuss what constitutes wisdom literature and tradition;
- Discuss the theme of innocent suffering in wisdom literature and tradition;
- Establish the constitution, structure and *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12;
- Determine the relationship between the vocabulary, motifs, themes, thought patterns, imagery and linguistic conventions in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and that of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

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<sup>14</sup> These include Koch, 1983; Spieckermann, 2004; Häggglund, 2008; Barry, 2010 and; Ejeh, 2012. Those who have argued against the presence of the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament include Orłinsky, 1969; Whybray, 1978 and Hooker, 1998.

## **1.6 Relevance of the Research**

This study will contribute to the on-going research on the nature, background and development of the idea of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament, by investigating the relationship between vicarious suffering and Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition. The study will also propose the possibility of approaching the phenomenon of the suffering of the innocent from the wisdom perspectives and assumptions or worldview.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

Much has been written on the concept of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (cf. Barry, 2010:107-109),<sup>15</sup> but not much, if anything at all on the concept of vicarious suffering with respect to Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition. Below is a brief survey on the literature on: (a) the traditio-historical approach; (b) the use of the adjective vicarious in describing the type of the suffering of the servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12; (c) the origins or prehistory of the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament, and; (d) the concerns of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

### **1.7.1 Literature on the traditio-historical approach**

Traditio-historical approach is given different names by different authors (cf. Knight, 2006:2). These include: tradition criticism (Simian-Yofre 2002:114-117) and; traditio-historical criticism (Di Vito 1999:90-104; Boda 1999:1; Knight 2009:97-116). The name traditio-historical approach has been adopted in this study because this study shall be conducted from the perspective of tradition criticism with its aims and assumptions.

In an essay on the historical critical methodology, Simian-Yofre (2002:114-117) identifies tradition criticism as the last step or moment of the historical critical methodology. For him this is neither the study of the final redaction nor the study of the oral transmission of the text. It is an investigation into the motifs and themes, linguistic conventions, thought patterns/structures, imagery and acquired knowledge that is expressed in common concepts and conventions. It aims

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<sup>15</sup> The scholarly interest in this passage is partly driven by the uniqueness of the passage and partly by its use by Christians in their understanding and description of the Jesus event (cf. Acts 8:26-40).

at discovering all the above aspects that may have influenced the author and that help in understanding the message of the author (Simian-Yofre 2002:114).

The scholar who has written considerably on this approach is Douglas A, Knight.<sup>16</sup> Knight (2006:1-15) stresses the importance of tradition in any culture, and as the framework within which the world is experienced and understood by members of a community. He further distinguishes verbal from material tradition. He maintains the position that oral tradition played a role in the composition of Biblical texts. He divides verbal tradition into *tradio* (process of transmission) and *tradio* (content of the tradition; cf. Knight 1992:633-634). Aspects related to each of these two categories are outlined and discussed. With respect to *tradio* (process of transmission), nine aspects are outlined and discussed. These are: interpretation and actualization; agglomeration and fusion; traditionists, circles and schools; geographical location; political, social, psychological, religious/cultic factors; transmittal means: oral or written; memory; transition from oral to written form and; compositional and redactional techniques. With respect to *tradio* (content), twelve aspects are outlined and discussed. These are: expressions of Faith and community life; changes in size; changes in meaning; changes in language; form and Gattung; plot; motif; theme; concept; problem; notion and; streams of tradition. In tradition history all these aspects are investigated. With regards to the procedures and scope of tradition history Knight points out the lack of precise terminology, and lack of uniformity as far as the procedures and scope of tradition history is concerned (Knight 2006:17). Knight (2006:21-22) argues for limiting the scope of this approach to the pre-literary stages of the tradition, but is open to the possibility of using the approach on written traditions that show signs of adaptation and development. The contribution, understanding and use of this approach by Knight and other scholars will be utilized and discussed further in chapter Two.<sup>17</sup>

This criticism or approach has been used by several scholars in the study of various traditions of the Old Testament. Boda (1999) used this approach in the study of Nehemiah 9. The aim of the study was to search for the one who was responsible for this text, on the one hand, and to find out how tradition was used in the composition of the work, on the other hand.

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<sup>16</sup> His writings on this topic include: an essay in ABD V1 (1992:633-636); a monography, entitled 'Rediscovering the traditions of Israel' (2006) and; book section in a monography edited by Lemon & Kent (2009:97-116).

<sup>17</sup> The other scholars include: Wellhausen (1957); Gunkel (1965); Tucker (1971); Di Vito (1999); Simian-Yofre (2002)

Boda (1999:1) argued that traditio-historical criticism was the most suitable method to use in order to accomplish this task. Traditio-historical criticism made it possible for him to discover, not only who was responsible for Nehemiah 9 and how tradition was used, but also how the content in Nehemiah 9 relates to other traditions in Israel (Boda 1999:2). Boda also pointed out that this approach is prone to subjectivity in the process of coming up with motifs, themes and concepts in a text. He suggested the use of lexical data as a means of mitigating this short coming. Knight (2009) also used traditio-historical criticism in the study of the development of the covenant code.

With regards to the identification of wisdom vocabulary, motifs, themes as well wisdom influence in other parts of the Old Testament, Murphy (1967:104) proposed taking into consideration the fact that wisdom was a movement, form of instruction and a form of language. He also highlights variations in each of three main divisions of wisdom. Therefore, language alone or a theme on its own does not necessarily constitute wisdom. Crenshaw (1969:129-133) accepts the proposals of Murphy and goes further to suggest a method for determining wisdom influence on other texts of the Old Testament. He proposes that a definition of what constitutes wisdom should be provided, “that wisdom influence be proved on stylistic or ideological peculiarity found primarily in wisdom literature”, that differences in nuances be explained, and that the negative view towards wisdom in the Old Testament be kept in mind together with the history of the wisdom movement, literature and tradition (s).

### **1.7.2 Vicarious Suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

There has been much debate concerning the vocabulary to use in describing the nature and meaning of the suffering of the servant in Isaiah 52:13-52:12. In the English language the word vicarious is often used and in the German language the term *stellvertretung* is often used.<sup>18</sup>

Not all scholars agree on the use of the English term ‘vicarious’ for the suffering described in Isa 52:13-53:12. Some say that the suffering of the servant is vicarious (cf. Spieckermann 2004; Barry

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<sup>18</sup> While there is no equivalent term in English for the German *stellvertretung*, it has been translated with “place-taking” (Bailey 1998:223) or with “vicariousness” (Spieckermann 2004:1). For a detailed discussion on the use of *stellvertretung* see Daniel P. Bailey (1998:223-250).

2010; Egeh 2012), others say it is non-vicarious (cf. Orlinsky 1969; Whybray 1978; Hooker 1998) and others still, say it is ambiguous (cf. Chisholm 1991:305-430; Hägguland, 2008:12).

The history of the interpretation of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 within the Christian tradition shows that the term vicarious was used to describe the suffering of the servant in this text. The suffering of the servant was seen as taking the place of or substituting that of the 'we' in the passage. This, of course, has been challenged successively by Harry Orlinsky (1969:246-251) and by Norman Whybray (1978:29-76). For Orlinsky and Whybray (cf. Kaufmann, 1977:129-131; Hooker, 1998:95-99), the servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 suffers together with the 'we' but he does not suffer in place of them. Hence, for them, there is no vicarious suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.<sup>19</sup> Rather, in the words of M. Hooker (1998:98), what we have is "representative suffering rather than vicarious suffering: inclusive place-taking rather than exclusive place-taking". The contributions of these scholars and others will be discussed further in Chapter Two and in Chapter Three.

To date many commentators on this passage, however, continue to use the term because they are convinced that it best describes what is happening in the text (Barry, 2010:107-115). However, the challenge posed by Orlinsky, Whybray and others have shown that the term is ambiguous.<sup>20</sup> Fredrik Hägguland (2008:20), conscious of the ambiguity of the term 'vicarious' and any other term that may be used in the description of the nature and meaning of the suffering of the servant, has pointed out that while the term 'vicarious' is appropriate for this, it requires further definition, especially in the light of the use of the term in the Christian tradition.<sup>21</sup>

In Isa 52:13-53:12 there is a description of the suffering of an innocent person because of the guilt of the community and for the benefit of the community. It will be shown in chapter 3 that the term vicarious is not only appropriate but best captures all these elements. Vicarious

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<sup>19</sup> Arguing from his understanding of vicariousness as substitution, the notion of the covenant, and the absence of the concept anywhere else in the Old Testament, Harry Orlinsky concludes that vicariousness is absent in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Orlinsky 1969:250). For a critique of the position of Harry Orlinsky and Norman Whybray see John D. Barry (2010:107-132).

<sup>20</sup> The English term vicarious comes from the Latin *vicarius*. The meaning of the Latin *vicarius* included 'taking the place of', substitution, and even representation (Simpson 1987).

<sup>21</sup> For Hägguland (2008:20) vicarious suffering means a suffering on behalf of others. It is a suffering that is substitutionary.

suffering in this study is to be understood as the suffering of an innocent person because of the guilt of others and for their benefit.

### **1.7.3 The Origins of the concept of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

Another issue that has attracted attention is the possible background of the concept of vicarious suffering. In the view of W. Zimmerli (1969:236-244) the language of carrying iniquity in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 was influenced by the traditions of atonement in the priestly traditions (Lev 10:17; 16:22) and the symbolic carrying of the nation's punishment described in Ezekiel 4:4-8. Hermann Spieckermann (2004) built on the thesis of W. Zimmerli with respect to the prophetic contribution to the concept and not the priestly language of atonement. After a study of texts from Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel,<sup>22</sup> Spieckermann concludes that, "...the decisive preliminary theological work for the concept of vicarious suffering was accomplished in the seventh and early sixth centuries." (Spieckermann 2004:1).

The trend of situating the background to the concept of vicarious suffering in the prophetic role of intercession is also reflected in the study of Henning Graf Reventlow (1998). Like Spieckermann, Reventlow does not think that the cultic traditions contributed to the concept of vicarious suffering in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. While agreeing with the notion that the metaphors and poetic expressions in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 cannot be traced back to any institutional tradition in Israel's history, Reventlow admits that it is possible to look for parallels in the Old Testament that prepared for this understanding and expression. The motifs of the suffering of the righteous, and the participation of kings and prophets in the destiny of the people, leads Reventlow to see these parallels in the royal psalms of lament, the laments of the prophets and prophetic intercession (Reventlow 1998:34-37).

Fredrik Hägglund (2008) also sees the prophetic text of Ezekiel 4:4-8 as a text that expresses vicarious suffering. He does not go as far as saying that the concept of vicarious suffering may be traced back to prophetic traditions. He thinks that Ezekiel 4:4-8 is the most helpful in the interpretation of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Hägglund 2008:94).

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<sup>22</sup> Amos 7:1-8; Jer 7:16, 18:18-23; Ezek 4:4-8, 9:8-10, 18:1ff.



In this study an investigation into the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering and Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition will be undertaken.

#### **1.7.4 Literature on wisdom literature and tradition**

Old Testament wisdom literature is a witness to and a reflexion of what has been called wisdom tradition. This tradition has been proposed as one of the traditions that inform and that we find expressed in Old Testament texts. Below is a brief summary of some of the literature on wisdom literature and tradition.

The majority of scholars agree that wisdom is one of the traditions found in the Old Testament (von Rad 1972:15-50; Morgan 1981:25; Murphy 1996:111-131; Crenshaw 2010:41-60). Some, however, warn against such a generalization (Weeks 2010:106-126; Sneed 2011; Brown 2014:3). For many, this tradition finds expression in what scholars have called wisdom literature, that is, the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon. Others see the expression as well as the influence of wisdom tradition in other parts of the Old Testament besides wisdom literature (Morgan 1981).<sup>23</sup>

Characteristic literary forms and themes of this tradition have been highlighted and discussed (Murphy 1981:3-12; Crenshaw 2010:31-33). Some of the forms that have been highlighted include proverbs (Westermann 1995:109-110), instructions, and dialogues (Murphy 1992:921). Among the characteristic themes of this tradition, the themes of creation or cosmic order (Perdue 1994; 2008), the suffering of the innocent, and the fear of the Lord (Penchansky, 2012:2-3), have been identified. Vocabulary characteristic of the wisdom tradition has also been isolated (Shupak 1993).

The contribution and influence of the wisdom tradition to other parts of the Old Testament has also received scholarly attention (Sheppard 1980:120-158; Crenshaw 2010:33-34). This includes the influence of wisdom tradition in the Joseph cycle of stories (von Rad 1965:281-300), the succession narrative (Whybray 1968) and prophetic literature (Crenshaw 2010:33). Sound criteria for determining wisdom influence have also been called for (Crenshaw 1969:129-142; Murphy 1981:27-28; Crenshaw 2010:32-34). Crenshaw (2010:32-33), in

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<sup>23</sup> See also a collection of articles dedicated to this debate in Sneed (2015).

particular, has highlighted the danger of relying on vocabulary alone when identifying the influence of wisdom tradition in the Old Testament in general.

To the best of our knowledge, literature on the relationship, influence or contribution or relationship of the wisdom tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering is scarce. In discussing wisdom and scepticism, Roland Murphy (1992:926), makes this passing remark: “Suffering thus could be viewed as a step taken by the Lord in the conversion of a sinner (hence there could be no understanding, but only astonishment, at the suffering of the servant in Isaiah 53)”. It is the possibility of this astonishment and the constant search for understanding, typical of the wisdom tradition that makes it worth our while to search for the relationship of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

## **1.8 Methodology**

This section outlines how this study will be carried out. This includes outlining the various steps of the research and the reasons for taking such steps, the approach to exegesis that will be adopted and the hermeneutics that will inform the exegesis.

The first task will involve presenting and discussing the approach adopted for this study, namely the traditio-historical approach. This is will be presented in Chapter Two. The second task will involve establishing the meaning of the concept of vicarious suffering within the context of the Old Testament. This will be necessary in the light of the various understanding and uses of the concept in other contexts. This will be done in Chapter Three. The third task entails describing Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition and the theme of suffering found in the wisdom books. This will be carried out in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Six will establish the constitution, structure and Gattung of Isa 52:13-53:12. This will be followed by the determination of the relationship between the vocabulary, motifs and assumptions in Isa 52:13-53:12 and those found in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

### **1.8.1 Exegesis**

The following are the exegetical steps that will be undertaken in this study:

- Delimitation of the text – establishing the beginning and the end of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

- Text and Translation
- The constitution or unity of the text – establishing the homogeneity of the text or lack of it (composite).
- Formal analysis of the text – phonetic, syntactic, semantic and stylistic analysis of the text.
- Traditio-historical analysis – identifying the motifs, themes, linguistic patterns in the text, how the concept of vicarious suffering is expressed through these themes and linguistic patterns and how the concept and its linguistic formulation are related to wisdom tradition themes, forms and expressions.

### **1.8.2 Hermeneutics**

The traditio-historical approach is the hermeneutical approach to exegesis that will be used in this study. This is a moment or step in the Historical Critical Method. This approach will be described and discussed in chapter Two.

### **1.9 Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses are that:

- The concept of vicarious suffering is present in the Old Testament;
- The full expression of the concept of vicarious suffering is found in Isa 52:13-53:12;
- The concept of vicarious suffering is an outcome of the reflections on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in the Old Testament;
- There is a relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering and the assumptions found in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

### **1.10 Orthography**

With regards to orthography, the adjusted Harvard system of referencing is used in this study. The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS: 1990) is the Hebrew Bible edition that is used for the analysis of the relevant texts, and Alfred Rahlfs edition of the Septuagint (LXX: 1982) is used for texts outside the Hebrew Old Testament.

## Chapter Two

### Traditio-historical approach

#### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the roots, background or ‘tradition’ stream<sup>24</sup> of the concept or notion of vicarious suffering. In particular, its aim is to investigate the relation, if any, of the wisdom literature and tradition to the theological concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament. It is essentially an investigation into the possibility of the theological contribution of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering. It is, at least, a study of the relationship between the formulation of the concept of vicarious suffering and the conception, expression and fathoming of the problem of the suffering of the innocent in Wisdom literature and tradition. In other words, it is an investigation into the use of tradition(s) concerning innocent suffering found in wisdom literature and tradition in the formulation of the theological concept of vicarious suffering. This investigation will entail the consideration of vocabulary, expressions, formulae, motifs, themes, concepts and convictions that make up the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

Indeed the concept of vicarious suffering finds its unique and fullest expression in Isa 52:13-53:12 but the presumption in this study is that it derives elements and expressions and its formulation from the theological traditions in other parts of the Old Testament.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the traditio-historical approach has been chosen as the most appropriate approach for this investigation since some of its aims and foci coincide with the aim and focus of this present study. The aims and foci of traditio-historical approach have been many and varied (cf. Knight 2006:18-20). Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the salient features, relevancy, strengths and shortcomings of this approach for this current study.

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<sup>24</sup> Traditional stream is the environment, context, roots, background of a tradition, elements that make up a tradition or those responsible for the ‘origins’ and transmission of a tradition (cf. Knight 2006:19).

<sup>25</sup> Several roots have been suggested by scholars (cf. Reventlow 1998:28-37; Spieckerman 2004:10-15). No study has specifically focussed on the possible relationship of wisdom literature or tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering. Indeed, apart from pointing out that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a wisdom text (cf. McKenzie 1968; Seitz 2001:459), to the best knowledge of this study there is no study that focusses on the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and wisdom literature and tradition.

## 2.2 Terminology

It is important to clarify the meaning and use of the terms tradition and traditio-historical approach as they are understood and used in this study.

### 2.2.1 Tradition

The English word tradition is derived from the Latin noun *traditio* which, in turn, is related to the Latin verb *tradere*. *Tradere* meant to hand over something for the purpose of keeping it safe (cf. Simpson 2000; Giddens 2003:39). The Latin verb was mainly used within the context of Roman law, with respect to the laws of inheritance. The one to whom some inheritance was handed over was obliged to take good care of it and to ensure its survival. Giddens (2003:39-40) traces back the use of the word in English to the time of the Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE, where it was assessed negatively and associated with dogma and ignorance.

To date the word tradition continues to express the Latin meaning of handing over and custodianship. Therefore, it is used to refer to customs, practices, material objects, beliefs and worldviews that are held by a community and passed on from one generation to another (cf. Pearsall & Trumble 2002; Di Vito 1999:91). Tradition does not only provide links with the past (cf. Knight 2006:1) but it also provides the basis on which and from which the present and the future are encountered and made sense of. Traditions are expressed and transmitted or handed down in various ways. One of the most common and important ways is in verbal form. This involves the use of words, phrases, formulae, motifs, themes and stories to capture, express and transmit knowledge, customs and worldviews. In essence, these traditions are verbal traditions, unlike material traditions like forms of dress, implements, food and so forth.<sup>26</sup>

Verbal traditions may be oral or written. In traditio-historical study of the Biblical texts the focus is on verbal traditions. This is “oral and written tradition that narrates, instructs, regulates, informs, interprets, and is constitutive for faith and community life.”(Knight 2006:1). Verbal tradition is often assessed from two perspectives that are at once distinct and intimately connected. These are: the process of the transmission of the tradition (*traditio*) and; the content

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<sup>26</sup> Knight (2006:1) distinguishes tradition in terms of verbal tradition and practical tradition.

of the tradition at various stages of its development (*traditum*).<sup>27</sup> Verbal tradition is also assessed from the perspective of the religious and theological background of the text (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:114-115). Several scholars have used this approach to study the religious and theological traditions in the Bible and how these traditions are expressed and 'modified' wherever they are found in the Bible. In other words, it has been used to assess how biblical authors have used religious and theological traditions in the bible and/or elements that make up or belong to a tradition, to express their message (cf. Morgan & Barton 1988:97; Boda 1999:1-2).

In the light of the two distinctions, some would study the transmission of the tradition (*traditio*) using what may be called 'transmission' criticism, mainly confined to the oral stage of the tradition and would study the various stages of the development of the tradition in its written form under redaction criticism. Others would argue for limiting this approach to the study of how texts make use of traditions in the bible or the Ancient Near East.<sup>28</sup> A distinction is also made between a tradition and elements, when considered together, that make up a tradition. These elements include words, phrases, motifs, themes, images, concepts, convictions and presuppositions (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:115). In this study the traditio-historical approach shall be used to find out if and how tradition(s) from wisdom literature and tradition are reflected in the concept of vicarious suffering, in terms of vocabulary, expressions, motifs, themes, images, concepts, convictions and presuppositions.

### **2.2.2 Traditio-historical Approach**

Traditio-historical approach is one of the terms used to translate the German *Traditionsgeschichte* and/or *Überlieferungsgeschichte* (cf. Tucker 1971:19).<sup>29</sup> These German terms are technical terms that are used to refer to the way(s) of studying aspects, as well as the

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<sup>27</sup> Knight (2006:1-15) outlines and discusses in detail aspects associated with the process of transmission of traditions (*traditio*), the content of traditions (*traditum*) and the custodians of the tradition (*tradents*). Any of these aspects can be a subject of tradition analysis or at least contribute to it, see 1.7.1. In the light of the nature and aim of this present study a number of the aspects of *traditum* shall be considered.

<sup>28</sup> For these different emphasis and foci see Simian-Yofre 2002:114.

<sup>29</sup>It was within German scholarship and German linguistic context that this approach and the technical language associated with it was developed (cf. Knight 2006:22-23).

historical development of a tradition in the Bible (cf. Davids 1992:832; Knight 2006:17, 23).<sup>30</sup> The English translations are an effort to capture this sense. The English translations include: tradition history (cf. Rast 1972; Knight 1992:633-638); tradition-historical criticism (cf. Di Vito 1999:90-104); traditio-historical study (cf. de Groof 1992:224-225). In many cases the English terms are used interchangeably without much difference in meaning.<sup>31</sup> In this study traditio-historical approach shall be adopted. The origins, development, 'relationship' with other methods of studying the Bible, debates on the area of focus or subject matter (oral or written stages or thematic development), steps of traditio-historical approach and the different ways in which this 'approach' has been used by scholars, has led to the adoption of the phrase traditio-historical approach. Approach has been chosen among other possibilities, like traditio-historical method or traditio-historical criticism, in the light of the above.

In this study the word approach is used to refer to the perspective or point of view from which this study will be carried out. The history of the use of traditio-historical approach has shown that it would be best described as an approach rather than a method or criticism. By method is meant a group of systematic procedures that are employed in studying a text. These procedures should, in principle, not only be systematic but should also be repeatable, controllable and 'teachable' (cf. Di Vito 1999:90; Pontifical Biblical Commission 1995:11; Gadamer 1975). Traditio-historical 'approach' does not propose systematic steps for studying the traditions in the bible but provides a perspective or mode or at best 'general' or 'loose' procedures for studying these traditions based on particular presuppositions pertaining to the nature and characteristics of traditions.

Criticism usually refers to the careful evaluation and judgement of various elements in a text. As it shall become clear below, traditio-historical approach, as it is used in this study, is

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<sup>30</sup> Knight (2006:23) notes that the two German terms were, in most cases, used interchangeably. However, he goes on to say that a few German scholars distinguish between the two. *Überlieferungsgeschichte* is used to refer to the study of the pre-history of the tradition while *Traditionsgeschichte* is used to refer to the study of the history of the elements of the content of the tradition, for example, notions, motifs, themes, problems. Knight proposes to use *Traditionsgeschichte* to refer to the pre-history of a text unit. In this study while the German terms will not be used nor distinguished, the elements constituting the notion of vicarious suffering will be studied in an effort to establish its relation to wisdom literature and tradition.

<sup>31</sup> Di Vito 1999 uses the term Tradition-historical criticism interchangeably with tradition criticism. Knight (1992; 2009) uses tradition history together with traditio-historical criticism.

more of an investigation into the possible relationship of wisdom tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament. This will be done by looking at the common vocabulary, expressions, motifs, themes, formulations, concepts, and convictions that are found in Wisdom literature and in Isa 52:13-53:12. The presupposition here is that authors of texts (oral or written) think, speak and write influenced by and using the phrases, formulae, motifs, themes, concepts and convictions, which they have acquired in various ways from their culture and experience (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:114). These are elements that are said to constitute verbal tradition.

Tradition history has also been called an approach by a number of scholars. While comparing traditio-historical approach to other methods of studying the Bible, Di Vito calls it “an approach to the biblical text that formulates goals for synthesizing the manifold conclusions arrived at through “other” methods” (Di Vito 1999:90). John Barton (1996) also calls it traditio-historical approach. For Barton traditio-historical approach uses “conclusions attainable through source and form criticism in the interests of reconstructing history: either the political history of Israel or the history of its theological traditions” (Barton 1996:10). He says this in the process of explaining why he does not include traditio-historical approach among the methods he discusses in his book *Reading the Old Testament*. Hägglund (2008) uses the term traditio-historical approach, in part two of his study of Isa 52:13-53:12 with the aim of “determining the patterns of thought which are presupposed by and incorporated into the text” (Hägglund 2008:8, 37-45).

This approach is historical because it determines and describes the origins or background and development of a tradition or elements that make up a tradition through time. In the case of this study the focus will be on the origins/background and development of the problem of the suffering of the innocent within the context of wisdom literature and tradition. The emphasis shall be placed on investigating how the problem of the suffering of the innocent was expressed and teased out culminating in the concept or notion of vicarious suffering as it is conceived and expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12. Hence, it is not historical in the sense of tracing the historical context that gave rise to the concept nor determining the historicity of the events described in Isa 52:13-53:12. It is also historical in the sense that it is an investigation of how the text or author used vocabulary, formulae and motifs (elements of tradition) found in other historical and textual contexts, that is, in wisdom literature and tradition.



## 2.3 History of the use of the Approach

Traditio-historical approach is, therefore, one way of analysing the history and meaning of biblical texts (cf. Tucker 1971:19). This approach is usually traced back to Herman Gunkel as the originator of the approach, and to subsequent scholars like Albrecht Alt, Gerard von Rad, Martin Noth, Sigmund Mowinckel and Ivan Engnell who made use of the approach and added to its focus and further development.<sup>32</sup> These scholars are also associated with the origins and development of the form-critical study of the bible (cf. Di Vito 1999; Boda 1999:1-2; Knight 2006:2). Therefore, traditio-historical approach is intimately related to form criticism. It arose out of form criticism and yet is distinct from it (cf. Tucker 1971:19).

In his source-critical studies Julius Wellhausen (1957) proposed that the history of the Pentateuch begins with the written sources that were finally compiled to form the present Pentateuch. He also concluded that for historical purposes, these stories cannot give us information beyond the time of their authors or composers, that is, beyond the time of King David in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This was challenged by Herman Gunkel (1965). Gunkel argued that the present written material in the Pentateuch has an oral pre-history, in which the material was passed down from one generation to another in oral form and in real life situations. This was possible because of the importance of the material to the religious and social life of the community. Gunkel not only went on to show that it is possible to go back to the original form of these oral materials, their life setting and purpose but also proposed the means to do so in what came to be known as form criticism. He was convinced that in the process of transmission of oral tradition, traditions remain relatively static or change in response to the needs of the community and those responsible for the origin and transmission of the traditions, the 'traditionists'. In the process, however, they leave traces of their development, constituting what he called tradition history. Even though, Gunkel did not pursue the tracing of the history of traditions, he had opened up an area of inquiry which was taken up by Gerard von Rad and Martin Noth. In a sense, then, Herman Gunkel can be called the "pioneer" of the traditio-historical

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<sup>32</sup> Before Gunkel, however, the importance of tradition in the formation of the Old Testament was highlighted by several scholars, especially by the French scholar Richard Simon (1638-1712) in his book *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, 1678. Knight (2006:37) identifies him as the precursor of the traditio-historical approach and dedicates a section of his book to outline and describe the contribution of Richard Simon (Knight 2006:37-44).

approach (cf. Di Vito 1999:95). But the development of the focus, procedures and the use of this approach came after him.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, traditio-historical approach's origins can be assessed from a positive and negative dimension. In a negative sense, it arose as a reaction to the conclusions of source-critical studies, exemplified in the studies of Julius Wellhausen (1957:318-319) who concluded that the writing stage of the Pentateuch is the initial stage of the Pentateuchal tradition and that there is no way of knowing the history of Ancient Israel beyond the time of the composition of the first source that was used to compile the present Pentateuch (cf. Di Vito 1999:91; Knight 2006:2). Traditio-historical approach presupposes and makes use of findings of source criticism, apart from the negative judgment on the existence and the historical value of traditions handed down in oral form.

In a positive sense, traditio-historical approach also arose out of the realization that, on the one hand, much of what we have in the Bible, mostly in the Old Testament, goes back to traditions that were handed down from one generation to the other, either in oral or written form, and on the other hand that Biblical writers made use of traditions in the bible in the composition their texts (Soulén 1981:200-201). These traditions include stories, religious and theological views that are expressed through common vocabulary, expressions, motifs, themes, concepts and convictions. In this process of handing down, the material could be transmitted 'faithfully' without any changes to content or structure but in the majority of cases, traditions were adapted and reinterpreted in response to new situations, needs and contexts. Therefore, a tradition may remain static or may expand in its scope and content with time and use (cf. Knight 1992:634). There is also a presupposition that authors and compilers of texts make use of expressions, imagery and concepts available to them in their culture and literary tradition, in composing and compiling texts (Simian-Yofre 2002:114).

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history and use of this approach, focussing on the main contributors to the development and diverse use of this approach see Knight 2006.

## 2.4 Focus and 'method' of traditio-historical approach

The focus or subject matter and 'method' of traditio-historical approach have been varied. This is to be expected in the light of the variegated and ubiquitous nature of verbal traditions, their two-pronged characteristics of transmission (process) and content (message), the assumptions and aims of scholars which are as many as there are scholars and the assumptions and aims of traditio-historical approach which not only make use of conclusions arrived at by the use of other methods but are also wide-ranging as the nature of the subject matter of verbal traditions. This lack of a precise focus has, therefore, led some to focus on the oral stage of transmission,<sup>34</sup> others on the written stage (cf. Hayes & Holladay 1988:93). Some have also focussed on how a tradition "fits within the broad intellectual currents that characterized the life of ancient Israel like the deuteronomistic and wisdom movements" (Di Vito 1999:92). Others still have focussed on how biblical authors have made use of or how texts reflect traditions or elements of traditions in other parts of the Old Testament to communicate their message.<sup>35</sup>

It has already been pointed out above that in this approach a distinction is often made between the process (*traditio*), that is, the stages through which the tradition went through and the factors that influenced its preservation and transmission, as well as the content (*traditum*) that make up the tradition at its various stages of growth.

While these two (*traditio* and *traditum*) are intimately related, it is possible to focus on one of them or on both depending on the subject matter and aim of the study. With respect to the former, that is, *traditio*, the focus may include aspects like the stages, the factors that ensured the preservation, reinterpretation of traditions, the people responsible (traditionists/*tradents*),

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<sup>34</sup> Gunkel studied the process through which tradition was transmitted through oral means. Gerard von Rad and Martin Noth studied the message of oral traditions with the aim of reconstructing the history of traditions, in terms of origins, traditionists and geographical location. The same is true of the Scandinavian School, Ivan Engnell and Sigmund Mowinckel being some of their representatives.

<sup>35</sup> Tucker (1971:19), in the light of the different ways traditio-historical approach has been understood and used, proposes to talk of the broad understanding and use of the approach and the narrow understanding and use of the approach. For the broad understanding he says, "...is an attempt to bring together the results of both source critical and form critical work and provide a complete history of Old Testament literature through its preliterary as well as literary stages." For the narrow understanding he says "...the term refers only to the history of the *preliterary* development of a body of literature, or to the history of a specific theme or motif." It is in the latter, that is, narrow sense, that traditio-historical approach is understood and used in this study. It will not be focusing on the oral stages behind the text nor on the redaction of the text but on the use of traditions in the text, in an effort to discover the contribution of wisdom tradition(s) to the concept of vicarious suffering.

contexts and geographical location and the means (oral, written, memory) through which the tradition was transmitted (cf. Knight 2006:5-9).

With respect to the latter (*traditum*), traditio-historical approach analyses changes in the content and meaning or message of the tradition and the motifs, themes, ideas and convictions that make up the tradition. It also investigates the possible cultural background reflected in a text (cf. Soulen 1981:201; Simian-Yofre 2002:114) or what Knight (2006:19) has called “tradition streams”.<sup>36</sup> By cultural background is meant the religious, theological, historical and social customs, ideas, conventions and convictions reflected in a text and which the author made use of to convey the message s/he intended. These conventions and convictions are expressed through vocabulary, phrases, expressions, motifs, themes, imagery, perceptions and concepts/ideas that are found in other texts in the Old Testament and/or even in other texts of the Ancient Near East. These common or similar customs, ideas, conventions and convictions reflect a tradition, that is, they reflect somewhat common practices or understanding of and an approach to reality and events, which were handed down from one generation to another. A tradition or practice or understanding may form part of and contribute to a wider tradition or understanding. For example, the understanding that the wicked suffer and that the righteous prosper belong to and is based on the general conviction on divine retribution found in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East texts. Another example is the identification of the wicked with fools and the righteous with the wise in wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Prov 10:1ff).

As far as the focus of the approach is concerned we may conclude by saying that there are those who confine traditio-historical approach to the oral stage of the transmission of traditions (cf. Di Vito 1999; Knight 2006). There are also those who are interested in using the traditio-historical approach to the study of how written texts make use of traditions or elements of a tradition in formulating and communicating their message (cf. Boda 1999; Simian-Yofre 2002).

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<sup>36</sup> In his exposition of the scope or subject matter of traditio-historical approach Knight lists and describes eight possible areas of focus of this approach. The sixth and the seventh areas are listed as (a) the history of occurrences of specific notions, motifs and themes, and; (b) tradition streams in which he includes “the milieu, background, heritage, or roots of the specific traditionists...” (Knight 2006:18-19). These two areas will be the focus of this present study.

In the light of the above, traditio-historical analysis can assist in recovering the meaning of a tradition at accessible stages of its growth during both the oral and the written stage. With respect to the written stage this analysis can also assist in discovering the tradition or traditions expressed in a text, that is, the religious and theological concepts and convictions that the author or compiler used to express their message, as well as the relation with other traditions.

## 2.5 General Procedures and Techniques

With particular reference to procedures, techniques and method, traditio-historical approach does not have agreed upon procedures and criteria that tradition historians have used and continue to use (cf. Di Vito 1999:93-94, 97; Knight 2006:19-20). In addition to the reasons given above for the variety in the focus of the approach, one may add the fact of the different literary types that one finds in the Old Testament. All these call for different techniques and procedures. Therefore, techniques and procedures of traditio-historical approach have been identified with those of source, form, redaction criticism, on the one hand, and with procedures that express in a concise and systematic way the conclusions of these methods, on the other hand (cf. Di Vito 1999:91, 92-93).<sup>37</sup> It has also been concerned with the appropriate and useful techniques and procedures for identifying traditions and how traditions or elements of traditions have been used in a text.<sup>38</sup> Knight (2006:21-24) has argued for limiting the focus of traditio-historical approach to the pre-literary stage of a tradition. Like Di Vito (1999) and Simian-Yofre (2002), he proposes textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism and Gattung criticism as providing the starting point of traditio-historical analysis. He goes on to propose two main stages in this approach,

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<sup>37</sup> For Di Vito (1999:92), while textual, source and redaction criticism provide useful results that are used in traditio-historical analysis, it is “form criticism that provides the indispensable means of tradition criticism”. This implies that not only the results but also the procedures of form criticism are included in the procedures of traditio-historical approach (cf. Tucker 1971:19). Di Vito goes further by stating that the results of form-critical inquiry into the life-setting of a tradition provide the starting point of traditio-historical analysis. This life-setting provides information about those responsible for the origins and development of the tradition. For him the second stage in this approach is that of determining the geographical location and historical factors associated with this location and its influence in the shaping of a tradition. The third stage is that of investigating the processes related to the creation and transmission of texts, this includes investigating practices of oral composition and transmission as well as ancient scribal practices.

<sup>38</sup> Simian-Yofre (2002:116) proposes ways of identifying a tradition, its context and location, its relation with the text under study in terms of similarities, differences, development and reinterpretation.

namely, critical analysis and historical synthesis of a tradition. In the former the identification and description of the stages of development of a tradition is done. In the latter, the successive historical periods of development of a tradition before commitment to writing are made (cf. Knight 2006:24).

As it has been indicated above there are those who confine traditio-historical approach to the oral stage of the transmission of traditions (cf. Di Vito 1999; Knight 2006). There also those who are interested in using the traditio-historical approach to the study of how written texts make use of traditions or elements of a tradition in formulating and communicating their message (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002). In both cases the starting point is the extant written text and the conclusions arrived at through text, source, form and Gattung criticisms of a text. The following description of techniques and procedures is a summary of the common elements among the various techniques and procedures that have been used and associated with this approach by various scholars. This summary is not in any way exhaustive but a general indication of how traditio-historical approach has been used, and the basis from which the techniques and procedures adopted in this study have been developed.

Traditional critical approach makes use of the conclusions arrived at in other investigative methods of the Old Testament, namely, textual criticism, source criticism, form and Gattung criticisms, and redaction criticism. These provide the information on which traditio-historical approach uses for its inquiry. These, however are not part of traditio-historical approach.<sup>39</sup> The first step or stage in traditio-historical approach is the identification of a tradition or traditions. This is done through noting and analysing common technical vocabulary, formulations (phrases, expressions), cultural, religious or theological presumptions or pre-understandings and other common elements in texts from different literary contexts in the Old Testament.<sup>40</sup> At this stage questions may be asked in an effort to identify a tradition or traditions. Again these questions

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<sup>39</sup> For the literature on scholars who support and who disagree with this view see Di Vito 1999:91, 102

<sup>40</sup> It is important that the texts compared are not taken from the same book or literary complex of the Old Testament. This is where the results of source and/or redaction criticism become critical. These help in making decisions whether the texts come from the same source or author. If the texts come from the same source or author it may simply indicate the source's or author's preference of vocabulary or formulations and creativity and not a tradition. If, however, the texts come from different sources and authors it may indeed indicate a tradition or elements of a tradition used by different generations.

emanate from the focus and aim of the study. The following are some of the questions that may be asked. Is there technical or special vocabulary, formulations, presumptions in different texts? Are these structured and used in the same way? What do the differences and similarities indicate? What other elements are common to these texts. Does the totality of the formulations and other elements convey the same message? If not, what are the possible factors at play?<sup>41</sup>

The second step or stage is to ask questions pertaining to the possible cultural or religious context(s), place(s) of origin and relation of the tradition with other traditions in the Old Testament. Here again the questions asked depend on the focus and aim of the study. In cases where the aim is to study how traditions were made use of in a text, questions relating to the relation of the tradition with other traditions in the Old Testament take precedent over questions about the possible places of origin of the tradition. Questions include: Does the text reflect elements found in other traditions? Which are the possible traditions? Is it possible to identify the traditionists and their interests?

The third and in most cases final stage is that of investigating how the text makes use of tradition(s) or elements constitutive of a tradition. In what ways does the text conform or 'depart' from the tradition(s) or the way elements constitutive of a tradition are used? Does the text add new elements to the tradition or the way the tradition has been expressed? Does the text add another perspective to or even question the tradition? Finally, what does this tell us about the totality of the view of the traditionists concerning that tradition or elements constitutive of a tradition?

## **2.6 Traditio-historical Approach and the study of Isa 52:13-53:12**

This approach has been used widely in the study of both the Old and New Testaments. It has been considered to be one of the important, if not the most important, stage in the historical critical study of the Old Testament, by scholars like Ivan Engnell and Sigmund Mowinckel (the so-called Scandinavian School). Morgan and John Barton (1988) are also known to have claimed

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<sup>41</sup> Simian-Yofre (2002:116) lists some of the questions that may be asked in the process of identifying a tradition. These include: "Are there similar formulations in different texts? Is there the same structure of formulation? Is there common content? Does the content transmit the same message? Is there the same logical thought? Are there variations that can be explained in every case in the formulations?"

that “Hebrew Biblical scholarship is primarily traditio-historical in orientation” (Morgan & Barton 1988:101). It is considered to be the final stage in the historical critical method, after textual, source, form and redaction criticisms (cf. Simian-Yofre, 2002:114; Knight 2006:24).

With respect to the study of Isa 52:13-53:12 traditio-historical approach with its various foci and scope has been brought to bear on this text by many scholars, especially those who were interested in the biblical and cultural roots or background of the text (cf. Spieckerman 2004:1-15) and those interested in the debate surrounding the presence or absence of the concept of vicarious suffering in the text and in the Old Testament in general (cf. Whybray 1978).<sup>42</sup> In these studies scholars have either explicitly stated their use of the traditio-historical approach (Hägglund 2008)<sup>43</sup> or implicitly employed the procedures usually associated with this approach or simply included this approach in the form critical study of the text (cf. Whybray 1978; Reventlow 1995).

This study shall also use this approach as it has been used by others, however with some modifications necessitated by the aim and nature of this study. The subject matter of the following sections shall be the description of this approach as it is used in this study, its relevance, strengths and weaknesses.

### **2.6.1 The Focus and Procedures in this study**

In the light of the various possible foci and procedures associated with the history of the use of this approach it is in order to outline and describe the focus and procedures followed in this present study, respectively.

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<sup>42</sup> In his monograph Whybray (1978:25) states that the purpose of his study is to support the positions that the sufferings of the Servant in this text did not lead to death and that the sufferings were not vicarious. He presents his study in three sections. The first section, part 1 is entitled ‘Was the Servant’s Suffering Vicarious? In this part Whybray studies the vocabulary and expressions that are traditionally associated with the concept in order to find out whether the text expresses this concept or not. This procedure is normally associated with traditio-historical analysis as described above.

<sup>43</sup> Hägglund (2008:8) actually claims that he uses the traditio-historical approach in part 2 of his study. By this he means text and translation, the structure and form, Exclusion and Embrace, the phrase in the Old Testament, the terms of embrace that are not used and reconciliation in Isaiah 40-55. He discusses these in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively.



### **2.6.1.1 The focus**

The focus of this study will be on the final written text. It is however not focussed on the various stages of the redaction of the written text. The question as to whether there was an oral form or oral stages behind the final text will also not be pursued.

The subject matter to be investigated through this approach is the aspects of tradition and their use in the text. In other words, it is a study about what the text is saying concerning the suffering of the servant by studying the vocabulary and expressions, religious conceptions, cultural and theological presuppositions in relation to their use in other parts of the Old Testament, especially with relation to their use in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

### **2.6.1.2 Procedures**

In this study traditio-historical approach is used both in the arrangement and sequence of chapters and in investigations pertaining to the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and in Wisdom literature and tradition. As far as the arrangement of chapters is concerned, the following chapter, that is chapter 3 shall investigate the meaning and occurrence of the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament. This is followed by: a chapter on the content and main/common characteristics of Wisdom literature and tradition; a chapter on wisdom literature and innocent suffering; a chapter on the constitution, structure and *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12; a chapter on vicarious suffering and wisdom literature and lastly; a chapter on the summary of findings and conclusions.

Pertaining to the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and in Wisdom literature and tradition, the general procedures outlined above will be followed in this study, namely, building on the findings of textual, form and *Gattung* analysis; studying words and expressions; studying the religio-cultural context and; the use of all these in the text. The first stage shall involve text critical analysis, formal analysis and *Gattung* considerations of Isa 52:13-53:12. These preliminaries help to come up with the textual unit, its form and structure and the genre to which it belongs. This is necessary information for setting the stage for traditio-historical investigation (cf. Di Vito 1999:91; Knight 2006:24). This is the concern of chapter six. This study shall then proceed by studying words and expressions, the

religio-cultural context of these and their use in the text. The traditio-historical investigation shall be limited to how the text makes use of religious and cultural presuppositions, especially that which we find in the wisdom tradition, context and literature in the Old Testament. This shall be done through the analysis of words, expressions, formulae, motifs, themes, images in the text (Isa 52:13-53:12) and their occurrences, use and context in wisdom literature and tradition. Concluding remarks shall be drawn as to the relationship between the text and wisdom literature and tradition, on one hand, and the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering and wisdom literature and tradition, on the other hand.

Words and expressions are those elements in a language that are put together to communicate a message or meaning. While words and expressions can be used by any speaker of or writer in a language according to their competence<sup>44</sup> in the language and their intention, there are words and expressions that are usually associated with a speaker or writer, a group, a discipline and in this case, a tradition. There are words and expressions that are a favourite stock of the prophet Amos, of Job and of Qoheleth, for example. They are words and expressions that are a favourite of the anonymous prophet, Second Isaiah. In the same vein there are words and expressions that occur with considerable frequency within texts and books that have been put under the rubric wisdom literature and tradition. The same is true of expressions, formulae, motifs and images. These shall be used as indicators for investigating the kind of text or possible literary context of Isa 52:13-53:12.

Comparing the occurrences of vocabulary and expressions in the wisdom books and the Hebrew Old Testament as a whole is one of the indicators that may be used to identify a wisdom text and/or wisdom motifs and themes. There a total of 39 books of the Hebrew Old Testament, that is, the shorter Christian canon. Three of these books, namely, Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth belong to the wisdom corpus. Words and expressions are found with different frequencies within wisdom corpus and the remaining sections of the Hebrew Old Testament. With respect to the total number of books in the Hebrew Old Testament, the wisdom corpus constitutes 7.7% and the remaining books constitute 92.3%. Guided by this statistical observation, the occurrences of

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<sup>44</sup> By competence in a language is meant knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar and conventional use of these and other elements in a language (see Barton 1996: 8-19).

a word or expression in the wisdom corpus, with the frequency of 7.7% or above of the total number of occurrences in the Hebrew Old Testament shall be considered as an indication that the word or expression is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary and use. Furthermore, if, for example, a word occurs 50 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and 10 of these occurrences are found in the wisdom books and the remaining 40 in the rest of the Old Testament, then, using the statistical instrument of arithmetic mean or average, the word or expression occurs  $10/3 = 3.3$  occurrences on average per book in the wisdom corpus and  $40/36 = 1.1$  occurrences on average in the rest of the Hebrew Old Testament. This would indicate that the word is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary and use. Both the minimum percentage of 7.7% or above and the arithmetic mean or average will be used to determine whether a word or expression used in Isa 52:13-53:12 is a possible candidate for the wisdom literature repertoire. The occurrences in Isa 40-55 shall also be considered to determine whether a word or expression is typically Deutero-Isaianic.

Ultimately, these shall be used as indicators for identifying not only a wisdom 'text' nor the formulation of the concept of vicarious suffering or what the text is saying about the suffering of the servant, but also the religio-cultural pre-understanding underlying this concept and its expression<sup>45</sup> and the possible relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering and wisdom literature and tradition. The presumption here is that words, formulae, motifs, themes, images that appear frequently in a book or in a number of books that have been grouped into categories, according to various criteria, can be used to identify traditions and their use by different authors and in different texts. Besides the statistical indicators other indicators shall be used for determining the relationship of the concept of vicarious suffering and wisdom literature and tradition. These are: theme of the text; vocabulary and expressions used; the religious conception within which the notion is conceptualized and expressed; and the religio-cultural presuppositions reflected in the text. The final determination of whether a word or expression is typically wisdom takes into consideration the statistical evidence, the religious presuppositions within which the text is composed. The concern raised long back by Murphy (1967:103-104), and

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<sup>45</sup> The theological pre-understanding shall include the teaching of just retribution and the problem of the suffering of the innocent.

reiterated by Crenshaw (1969:130, 133) that wisdom language alone nor one of its “*topoi*” alone do not constitute wisdom has been taken into consideration by combining these criteria and others in determining the relationship of wisdom literature and tradition to vicarious suffering as expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

Therefore, Hebrew lexicons, theological dictionaries and concordances shall be used in this study and approach. Hebrew lexicons help to unravel the contexts, fundamental meaning and use of words in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> Theological dictionaries help in the study of the theological significance of words and expressions, as well as their gradual development in meaning and use in different contexts.<sup>47</sup> Concordances assist in the study of the occurrences of words, expressions, formulae and their contexts in Isa 40-55, Wisdom literature and texts and in the Old Testament at large.<sup>48</sup>

## **2.7 Relevance of the Approach to this study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the possible relation of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12. It is basically concerned with the background or roots of this concept or traditions that the text or the author of the text uses to formulate this concept. This is at one and the same time a historical and inter-textual inquiry.<sup>49</sup> The traditio-historical approach has been chosen for this study because it provides the means for studying aspects of tradition and the use of tradition(s) in texts (cf. Soulen 1981:201; Boda 1999:1-2; Simian-Yofre 2002:114-115; Knight 2006:17). The relevance of this approach is apparent in that its aims coincide with that of this study. Notwithstanding its relevance, it has its shortcomings. Traditio-historical approach belongs to moments of studying texts that have been collectively called historical critical methodology, because of their emphasis on historical questions (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:79-118). Questions have been asked about the usefulness of the historical critical methodology, for studying the Old Testament in general and especially for studying Isa 52:13-53:12 (cf. Melugin 1998:57; Hägglund 2008:8). These questions are important

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<sup>46</sup> The main Hebrew dictionaries consulted were BDB (2000) and Koehler & Baumgartner (1998).

<sup>47</sup> The main Hebrew theological dictionary used in this study was TDOT, 13 vols.

<sup>48</sup> Two main Hebrew concordances were consulted, that is, Lowinsky (1993) and Even-Shoshan (1997).

<sup>49</sup> The term inter-textual is meant to express the use of tradition or elements pertaining to a tradition as they are used in texts belonging to different textual contexts.

in that they help in bringing to the fore the shortcomings of this approach and the need for mitigations which are outlined and discussed below.

## **2.8 Strengths and Weaknesses of this approach**

Like any approach or method to the study of the Old Testament, traditio-historical approach has its attendant strengths and weaknesses. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach in general and with specific reference to this present study shall be highlighted in this section. Mitigations to the weaknesses with respect to this present study shall also be proposed.

### **2.8.1 Strengths**

The strengths, benefits and usefulness of the traditio-historical approach, in general, have been outlined by Simian-Yofre (2002:117) and Knight (2006:25).<sup>50</sup> It raises awareness of the contribution of both the community and authors in the compilation of the Old Testament. This is so because of the understanding of the approach that the Old Testament reflects the ideas and experiences of the community that were handed down from one generation to the other, as well as that of the author. Traditio-historical approach recognises the use of traditions or elements that make up a tradition or belong to a particular 'stream' of approach to reality and life experiences in Old Testament texts. Traditio-historical approach also recognizes the stability as well as the adaptation and reinterpretation of traditions in different historical and literary contexts. All these characteristics of this approach make it amenable and relevant to the present study. Studying the traditions or elements of traditions reflected in Isa 52:13-53:12 is one way of investigating the relationship of wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in this text.

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<sup>50</sup> Knight (2006:25) lists six of what he calls yields of this approach. By yields he means "the benefits of this approach to both the scholar and the layperson". The following is a summary of his contribution. It raises awareness of the contribution of the scribal authors and community experiences to the Old Testament texts. It takes into consideration the complexity of the origins and development of the traditions in the Old Testament "in terms of location, time, participants, intentions, functions, reuse and reinterpretations. It opens up the possibility of seeing the relations between a text and its message to theological "streams". It also helps in acquiring knowledge about the history of Israel's faith. It is the possibility of studying the relationship of a text and its message to other theological streams that this approach offers, among other benefits, which have led to the use of this approach in this present study.

### 2.8.2 Weaknesses

This approach, from its very inception, has given witness to the lack of precision in so far as terminology, focus or scope, procedures and methodology are concerned, as already pointed out above. This of course brings into question the usefulness of this approach and the attendant validity of the findings emanating from its use. Without sounding banal, this charge can be brought to any of the approaches that have been used in the study of the Old Testament.<sup>51</sup> Many of them have varied in terminology, scope and procedures and have led to different conclusions or findings. This is to be expected in the area of human 'sciences' or studies (cf. Di Vito 1999:90). Unlike in the physical sciences the nature of human studies, especially literature has the effect of demanding a certain level of flexibility in the light of the questions that different readers bring in their interaction with and interpretation of texts. Indeed the history of the use of this approach bears witness to different conceptions (cf. Knight 2006:24). Furthermore, since traditio-historical approach provides a perspective and means for studying different aspects of tradition, flexibility is to be expected. The validity of interpretations should be measured according to the usefulness, clarity, consistency and coherency in the use of chosen terminology, procedures and methodology. In this study the understanding, use and procedures of traditio-historical approach have been outlined and described. These shall be employed consistently and coherently.

The element of subjectivity remains a big challenge in using the traditio-historical approach, especially when the focus is on the elements related to the content of the tradition (cf. Boda 1999:2). Subjectivity is present in different measures and at different levels of any study or research. Various ways of mitigating the effects of subjectivity to the validity of research findings continues to be part of the research process both in human sciences and physical sciences. The focus on language, that is, vocabulary and formulations, taken within their context of course, have been generally accepted as one way of mitigating the negative effects of subjectivity when using the traditio-historical approach (cf. Nasuti 1988; Boda 1999; Yofre-Simian 2002). The same is true with respect to the hypothetical nature of this approach (cf. Hayes & Holladay 1988:98-99; Knight 2002:24).

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<sup>51</sup> Barton (1996:4-5) argues that there is no such thing as the correct method in studying the Old Testament but every method has something useful in relation to the aim of the study.

Vicarious suffering may be categorized as a concept, a notion, a problem or a theme. As has already been pointed out in other studies, the notion of vicarious suffering is not found in any other texts in the Old Testament. In fact, it is only found in Isa 52:13-53:12. It is not found in other literary contexts in the bible, so as to constitute a tradition, that is, something handed down from one generation to the other.<sup>52</sup> The question can then be asked that if vicarious suffering is not a tradition, how useful and relevant is the traditio-historical approach for studying this concept, notion or problem? It helps in identifying the elements that make up the concept, notion and problem. It helps in describing how the elements are formulated or put together to express the concept, notion or problem. It is also useful for identifying these expressions elsewhere in the Bible as well as assessing their use and the possible stream of tradition within which these are usually used in the bible. Therefore, this approach will help to accomplish the two aims of this study, namely: to identify the presence, use and meaning of the concept, notion or problem of vicarious suffering or at least the elements that constitute this concept in the Old Testament and; to assess the contribution of one of the streams of tradition in the Old Testament, that is, wisdom tradition as it is expressed in wisdom literature.<sup>53</sup>

## **2.9 Summary and Concluding remarks**

In this chapter the approach that was used in this study has been presented. The presentation began with the terminology that has been used for this approach, its history, foci (scope) and procedures. The presentation concluded by describing how this approach will be used in this study, its relevance, strengths, and weaknesses and proposed mitigations. This approach has been chosen among other possibilities because of the questions that it asks of texts, questions

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<sup>52</sup> The presumption here is that the occurrence of a story or theme in different literary context is a reliable indication that the story or theme was passed down from one generation to another, and not just a creation of an author (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:115).

<sup>53</sup> Knight (2006:6) includes what he calls “traditionists, circles, schools” on the list of the aspects of traditio. Among other things, this is the group(s) responsible for the generation, preservation and transmission of given traditions. Traditio-historical approach can be used to identify these traditionists on the basis that there are linguistic and thematic clues pointing to the various traditionists, circles and schools in ancient Israel. Traditio-historical approach shall be used to determine the relation between vicarious suffering and the wisdom school and tradition, which finds expression in wisdom literature. There also has been a growing discomfort among Biblical scholars concerning the meaning and use of the expressions wisdom literature and wisdom tradition (cf. Sneed 2015: 1-8). These expressions are maintained in this study and used in the scholarly ‘traditional’ sense, which will be further explained and defended in the following chapter.

that coincide with the questions that are at the centre of this study, namely, questions surrounding the relation between the concept of vicarious suffering, as it is expressed in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and wisdom literature and tradition. This will be the subject matter of the following chapters, beginning with a discussion surrounding the issue of vicarious suffering, its meaning and presence (occurrence) in the Old Testament.



## Chapter Three

### The concept of vicarious suffering

#### 3.1 Introduction

Suffering is a phenomenon of human experience. It is part of human life (Magnante 1997:9). It is unavoidable and one can even venture to say necessary.<sup>54</sup> In every society, epoch, religion and human discipline there has been and continue to be repeated efforts at describing and making sense of human suffering. As well as accepting suffering as part and parcel of the human condition, there have been incessant efforts at responding to the natural human question, why? Why do humans suffer? What is the purpose, if any, of suffering?<sup>55</sup> In theological circles suffering has also been extended to God, in the concept of 'divine suffering'. In this understanding God is said to suffer in solidarity with human beings.<sup>56</sup>

It is not an exaggeration to say that one of the themes of the Old Testament is that of making sense of human suffering, in general (cf. Gen 2-3; Villiers 2009:4-17), the suffering of Israel (Isa 50:1; Psa 44) and the suffering of the innocent, in particular (Jer 12:1-5; Job). In these religious texts, the issue of suffering is approached from the perspective of Israel's faith in God, the creator of the universe and the creator of the nation of Israel, and from the perspective of the 'relationships' among the Israelites and other nations, on the one hand, and their relationship with God, on the other.

The concept of vicarious suffering has been used to describe some form(s) of suffering we find in the Old Testament. The use of this concept has however, been a source of much debate and controversy. In this chapter the meaning of the concept of vicarious suffering and its 'appropriateness' and usefulness as a heuristic term in the study of the contribution of the

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<sup>54</sup> Suffering has been traditionally seen not only as part and parcel of human experience, but as a unique human capacity. While the former is generally accepted, the latter has recently been challenged in the light of scientific evidence suggesting the contrary. For further discussions on this issue, together with the issue of redemption as uniquely human see Sollereeder 2015: 17-22.

<sup>55</sup> Liderbach (1992) addresses this question and provides endeavours by past philosophers and religious thinkers in proposing possible answers to this question and concludes by creating what he calls 'a myth' in an effort to help people to face suffering with some form of understanding and purposeful optimism.

<sup>56</sup> For more on the concept of divine suffering, its origins, meaning and appropriateness see Herdt (2001) and .

wisdom literature and tradition to this particular understanding of suffering shall be discussed. However, before doing that, it is also important to briefly look at the issue of suffering in general.

## **3.2 Suffering**

The issue of suffering has been at the heart of the human quest for meaning. This theme has been treated in various ways and for various reasons. For the purpose of establishing a common ground for the following study, the etymology of the word ‘suffering’; the contemporary account concerning the cause(s) and meaning of suffering and; suffering in the Old Testament shall be examined. A working definition of suffering shall also be proposed.

### **3.2.1 Etymological considerations**

The English word ‘suffering’ is often traced back to Middle English.<sup>57</sup> It is said to have originated from the Latin *suffero, sufferre, sustuli/sublatus – sub* (from below) and *ferre* (to bear), through Anglo-Norman French *suffrir* – to suffer (Pearsall & Trumble 2002). The basic etymological nuance is that of carrying a burden. A burden is something that causes either physical or emotional discomfort or both. It is something that one suffers.

The word ‘suffering’ may be construed as either an abstract noun, like in the expression, ‘the suffering of God’, or a qualifying term, as in the expression, ‘the suffering servant’. Suffering is also used as a qualifying term for the mental state of a person or group of persons, as in the expressions: ‘the suffering people of God’ or ‘the suffering servant.’

### **3.2.2 “Standard Account of Suffering”**

Contemporary discussions on the issue of suffering may be summarized under three headings: efforts at describing what suffering is; efforts at categorizing different types of suffering; and efforts at outlining and describing different ‘cures’ for suffering. These discussions continue to take place from the perspectives of different disciplines.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The dating of this period is debated. One view dates the period between 1100 and 1500, after the Norman invasion and before the arrival of the printing press in Britain (1476).

<sup>58</sup> There is numerous literature on this topic, including the following: Magnate (1997); Laato & de Moor (2003); Morgan & Peterson (2008) and; Becking & Human (2009) (Biblical perspective); Bowker (1990) (World Religions perspective); Cassell (1991) and; Chapman & Gavrin (1999) (Medical perspective); Malpas & Norelle (2012) (Philosophical perspective) and; Akhtar (2014) (Psychological perspective).

The concept of suffering has proved to be elusive to a concise and common definition. Each discipline seems to define it from its own perspective (cf. Becking 2009:183-185). It has been defined as: “a negative basic feeling or emotion that involves a subjective character of unpleasantness, aversion, harm or threat of harm to body or mind,” (Hudson 2012:171) or as: “... the state of severe distress associated with the events that threaten the intactness of a person.” (Cassell 1991:33). Common to these definitions is the fact that suffering is understood in terms of emotional anguish, that suffering is personal<sup>59</sup> and that suffering involves perceived harm and/or threat. In the light of these submissions, the following definition is proposed for this study: *Suffering is a personal emotional anguish arising from various sources perceived to be harmful and life threatening.*

Sources or causes of this emotional anguish are seen as many and various. While pain is considered to be one of the main sources (cf. Chapman & Gavrin 1999), it is generally said that this emotional agony is, ultimately, a result of the failure to understand, as well as refusal to accept what one is going through (cf. Cassell 1991:32-33). Events and experiences are not seen as fitting into the perceived scheme of things or desires of the sufferer. Hence, suffering is an issue of the mind.

Numerous ways for coping with suffering have been proposed from various perspectives and traditions. These include attempts at providing a rational explanation to the problem as in the various strands of theodicy; accepting what one is going through; controlling and, where necessary, annihilating desire as in the case of Buddhism; distinguishing between a suffering that is part and parcel of human existence; and a suffering that is pathological and remediable (cf. Akhtar 2014:xiii).

### **3.2.3 Suffering in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament does not provide a systematic treatment of the issue of suffering. However, beginning with Genesis 3, we find the issue of suffering scattered throughout the Old Testament. One comes across verses, chapters, and even entire books concerned with issues of suffering, either suffering in general or the suffering of the innocent, and even both. In all these, one

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<sup>59</sup> This does not preclude the fact that there are experiences that are generally accepted as causing human suffering, like death and torture (Cassell 1991:44).

witnesses, on the one hand, a variety of interpretations and understanding of the nature, origin/source and cause(s) of suffering,<sup>60</sup> and on the other hand, complaints/lamentations or the *carpe diem*<sup>61</sup> attitude, as part of the process of grappling with and ‘explaining’ the issue of suffering.<sup>62</sup>

Numerous terms and expressions are used to describe this phenomenon. These include נָשָׂא (to bear), סָבַל (to carry), עָנָה (III; to be afflicted) and its cognates (cf. Psa 107:17, Psalm 116:10, 119:67, Is 53:4), עָצַב (pain, toil) and its cognates (cf. Gen 3:16, 17), עָמַל (pain, toil) and its cognates (cf. Qoh 1:3, 2:18, 5:17, Job 3:10, 4:8), נָגַה (to suffer) and its cognates (cf. Job 19:2, Lam 1:12), כָּאֵב (pain, sorrow) and its cognates (cf. Exod 3:7, Job 2:13, Qoh 1:18, Psa 32:10, Isa 53:3,4), כָּעַס (sorrow, vexation) and its cognates, and רָע (misfortune, suffering, cf. Job 2:10), to mention a few. Basically, the words and expressions can be divided into two groups; those that express the idea of carrying, bearing, like נָשָׂא and סָבַל, and those that express the idea of pain, toil or sorrow. The latter seems to be in the majority.

Suffering in the Old Testament then is mostly understood in terms of pain, sorrow, affliction and anguish. This anguish or pain emanates from different and numerous experiences, like sickness, loss (of loved ones, property, land), guilt, and frustration with the absence of God (cf. Simundson 1992:219). The pain or affliction may also be physical pain and/or emotional pain. The physical pain includes pain brought about by childbirth as in the case of Gen 3:16 or manual labour as in the cases of Adam and the Israelite slaves in Egypt (cf. Gen 3:17; Exod 3:7). It also includes pain brought about by sickness (cf. Job) and the effects of war and hunger. Mental or emotional pain is witnessed in cases of loss of loved ones as in the cases of Jacob (Gen 37:33-35), David (2Sam 12:15-19; 18:33) and Job (1:20-22), and in the loss of land and independence, that is, the exile (cf. Psalm 137 and the book of Lamentations).

Furthermore, even though there is no systematic treatment of suffering in the Old Testament, suffering is viewed from various dimensions. There is the issue of the origin or source

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<sup>60</sup> Gen 2-3 is a good example of a text on the aetiology of suffering (cf. Simundson 1992: 220) and the solidarity aspect of suffering (Humbert 1918:117).

<sup>61</sup> This is a Latin expression for enjoying the moment or making the most out of what one is going through (Simpson 1987; cf. Qoh 2:24).

<sup>62</sup> Good examples of the complaints include the books of Job and Lamentations and the prime example of ‘the enjoy the moment’ attitude would be the book of Qoheleth.

of suffering. This issue is viewed from two perspectives: (a) that suffering is inherent in the nature of creation, and (b) that suffering is a result of the transgression of God's law or the moral order established by God, that is, sin.

In line with the first perspective, human suffering is considered to be part and parcel of being human (Gen 2-3; Qoh 1:12-18; Job 7:1-3). Indeed for Qoheleth, this may be traced back to creation itself. It is said:

*What is crooked cannot be made straight,  
And what is lacking cannot be supplied (Qoh 1:15).<sup>63</sup>*

In other words, it all went wrong at the very beginning. The story of Adam and Eve at one and the same time, attempts to account for this, as well as attempts to exonerate God. While God created everything out of his good will and found it very good (cf. Gen 1:31), suffering which is the lot of human beings was not willed by God but is a consequence of the disobedience of the first human beings (cf. Gen 3; Wis 2:23-24). The effects of this disobedience were built into the very nature of being human (cf. Gen 3:16-17). According to the Old Testament account these effects also disrupted the peaceful co-existence and relationships among the various members of creation. While human beings and animals were given fruits and vegetation for food in Gen 1:29-31, they are permitted to kill and eat animal flesh after the flood of Noah (Gen 9:1-7). However, the prophets envision a time of renewal, a time of a new beginning when peaceful co-existence and cordial relationships among the various members of creation will be re-established (cf. Isa 11:6-9). There will be no war (cf. Isa 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-4). Everyone, from the least to the greatest will know God (Jer 31:31-34). In the meantime, however, suffering is to be taken as part of nature. As part of nature, human beings simply have to accept it and find ways to cope with it. For Qoheleth one has to learn to enjoy and appreciate every moment (5:17-19).

The second dimension, that human suffering is caused by sin, is dominant in the Old Testament. Suffering is interpreted and understood in terms of retributive justice.<sup>64</sup> In terms of

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<sup>63</sup> In several other passages Qoheleth conceives life in terms of עָמַל 'toil' (1:3; 2:18, 5:17). Qoheleth uses this root no less than 34 times out of the 70 times that it appears in the Old Testament.

<sup>64</sup> The dominance of this dimension is most apparent in texts written up to the time of the exile (Simundson 1992:220). In texts written during and after the exile, this dimension receives persistent challenges from various

this, actions have consequences. Good actions or good behaviour lead to reward, witnessed in prosperity, peace and a good life, while bad actions or bad behaviour lead to punishment witnessed in suffering in all its dimensions.<sup>65</sup> Retribution is either built-in within the moral order (Prov 10-11; cf. Koch 1983; Adams 2008:1-5; Schellenberg 2015:124) or it is seen in terms of the direct intervention of God. The latter is emphasized in the book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (cf. Deut 30:15-20, Judg 2:6-23), in much of the Prophetic literature, in the book of Job and the Wisdom of Solomon. God is just and has the power and will to execute justice (cf. Gen 18:12-25; Ezek 18: 1-32; 33:10-20; Wis 12:12-18).<sup>66</sup>

Retributive justice has a corporate or collective as well as a personal or individual aspect. One may say that before the prophet Ezekiel,<sup>67</sup> actions performed were understood to have consequences that affected the person and his family and the community at large (cf. Exod 20:5; 34:6-7; Num 16:16-35). Noah's uprightness saved his family (Gen 6:5-9:29). Abraham's election by or covenant with God was extended to all his descendants (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14). This communal or collective understanding was the basis of Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33). In this understanding the innocent were not necessarily spared. The defeat in war, famine, pestilence, roaming wild beasts and sickness that are understood as punishment, do not make a distinction between the guilty and the innocent (cf. Deut 28:15-69; Lev 26).

With Ezekiel and the experience of the Babylonian exile, the personal dimension of retributive justice receives more emphasis. Only the guilty suffer the consequences of their

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quarters such that one could not take its dominance for granted. Three questions could have been central to the challenge. Was Israel's God indeed omnipotent and just? Were the Israelites not more righteous than their Babylonian masters? Was the length and severity of the suffering endured leading up to and during the exile proportional? This experience and this questioning generated other alternatives which, however, did not completely reject the issue of retributive justice. Maybe, it would be more plausible to call them refinements of the teaching of just retribution. For one thing the 'alternatives' actually proceed from the presupposition of retribution. Furthermore, one still finds this teaching in the writings of Philo and in the New Testament. A good example is the story of the cure of the man born blind in John 9:1-3. The teaching of just retribution and the act-consequence connection will be discussed further in chapter five.

<sup>65</sup> Bergant (1984:10-11) traces the theory of retribution to wisdom thinking, practical wisdom that is.

<sup>66</sup> The book of the Wisdom of Solomon goes further to insist that God's almighty power is made manifest in his saving justice and mercy (11:21-26; 12:16).

<sup>67</sup> As it will be shown later on, just retribution with respect to the life of individuals was the major concern expressed in wisdom literature and tradition(s), even much more so than this development in the preaching of the prophet Ezekiel.

actions (Ezek 3:17-21; 14:12-23; 18:1-32; 33:1-20). God is just and he treats individuals justly, according to their behaviour, that is. Suffering, therefore, is understood to be a result of just punishment for sins. Not even the prayer of the righteous can save the guilty (Ezek 14:14, 20) as was the case with Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33).

The emphasis on the personal or individual aspect of retributive justice had the effect of accentuating and bringing into the open the problem of the suffering of the innocent, or the problem of 'undeserved' suffering, on the one hand, and the problem of the prosperity of the wicked, on the other (cf. Jer 12:1-5; Job 5; Psa 37; Psa 73). Before this, the teaching of just retribution was understood in the corporate sense. The consequence of sin, that is, suffering in all its manifestations swept both the guilty and innocent members of the community. With the exception of Deut 7:10; 24:16, there was no consistent and systemic discussion of the connection between an individual's behaviour and that individual's fate or fortune.<sup>68</sup> Ezekiel's explicit connection between the two, echoed in Jer 31:29-30, that guilty persons directly suffer the consequences of their sins (Ezek 14:12-23 and Ezek 18:1-32) exposed the weakness of, not only Ezekiel's proposal but the teaching of just retribution on which the proposal of Ezekiel was based.

In the second part of the book of Isaiah, that is, Isa 40-55, often referred to as Second or Deutero-Isaiah, one witnesses another dimension to the Old Testament's interpretation and understanding of, as well as the Old Testament's grappling with the issue of suffering. What one reads in Isa 40-55 is not the rejection of the teaching of retribution but an invitation to go beyond this teaching. While suffering brought about by the exile is seen as a result of Israel's sin (Isa 40:1-2; 43:22-28; 50:1), it is emphatically interpreted as part of God's work in the world, part of his plan from of old (cf. Isa 43:9-10). Furthermore, suffering of the servants of God, be it Israel as a whole, or some members of the community,<sup>69</sup> could be interpreted and understood, not

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<sup>68</sup> Within the context of explaining the election of Israel, and exhorting her to keep God's covenant, in Deut 7:10 Moses goes on to warn them that God is faithful to those who love him and keep his commandments but punishes in their own person (אֶל-פְּנֵיהֶם) those hate him. This assessment indicates a move towards individual responsibility from communal or co-operate responsibility as expressed in Exod 34:7; Deut 5:9; Jos 7:24 but legislated against in Deut 24:16; 2Kgs 14:6. In Ezek 14 and 18 this move is made explicit. Both parents and their children suffer for their own sins.

<sup>69</sup> The identity of the servant in some passages in Isa 40-55 is clear but in some passages it is ambiguous referring either to Israel as a nation or some individuals within and even without the nation of Israel. This issue will be discussed further below in chapter six.

only in terms of retribution or as part of God's plan in the world but also as beneficial to the community and the world at large (Isa 49:4-6).

Suffering of the innocent or undeserved suffering, from the point of view of the teaching of just retribution, is interpreted and understood as suffering in place and on behalf of others, what has been called vicarious, suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12. While this understanding emanates from the teaching of just retribution, it stretches this teaching to such an extent as to go against it. An innocent person suffers and yet the suffering is meant to fulfil the requirements of just retribution. Only that in this case, the suffering is for and on behalf of others. Furthermore, it combines both the individual and collective dimensions to the issue of just retribution. There is an individual suffering (this would of course, depend on one's understanding of the identity of the servant – either as an individual or a group). The cause of the suffering and its effects are understood collectively (Isa 53:4-7; cf. Gen 18:16-33; Jer 5:1; but also see Ezek 14:13-23).

The themes of just retribution and innocent suffering are topical in what has been called the wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Penchansky 2012:3; Crenshaw 1982:19).<sup>70</sup> While wisdom texts and tradition are found in various parts of the Old Testament, the category wisdom literature is used to refer to the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, for the shorter canon, and Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon for the longer canon.<sup>71</sup> In this literature the teaching of just retribution is upheld (Prov 13:6; 26:25; Sir 16:1-21 and Wis 3:1-12), critiqued in the light of experience and faith (cf. Job), doubted and in some sense even abandoned in the light of the certainty and indiscriminatory nature of death (Qoh 8:14; 9:2-3). This has led some (cf. Bergant 1984:10-11) to propose that the teaching of just retribution emanated from wisdom thinking.

Within the framework of just retribution, the suffering of the innocent is grappled with and 'explained' or better still 'made sense of' in various ways in wisdom literature and tradition. These include the beliefs that: none is just before God; suffering is disciplinary (Proverbs and Job); ultimate justice is meted out at death (Ben Sira) or in the afterlife (Wisdom of Solomon) or; it is

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<sup>70</sup> This theme will be explored in detail in chapter five of this study.

<sup>71</sup> Wisdom literature is a category of books in the Old Testament which have some common characteristics and some differences, of course. The common characteristics together with scholarly consensus have led to the inclusion of Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth, Sira, Wisdom of Solomon and some Psalms under this category. This scholarly consensus and the legitimacy and appropriateness of this category will be discussed in the following chapter, chapter Four.



simply presented as a mystery (Job and Qoheleth). These aspects and more are to be found in Isa 52:13-53:12, a passage that grapples with the suffering of the innocent servant in terms of suffering for others. The nature of the suffering of the servant has been described as vicarious suffering. This is the subject of the discussion in the rest of this chapter.

### **3.3 Vicarious suffering**

In the English language vicarious suffering has been used to describe and categorize the nature of suffering that we witness in Isa 52:13-53:12. While this use is common among many commentators, it has been critiqued from various angles. The bone of contention seems to rest on the different understanding or rather the different emphases on the meaning and use of the word vicarious as well as on the argument that the term is foreign to the Old Testament (cf. Hooker 2010). The positive effect of this critique has been the recommendation that the phrase should be clarified when it is used to describe the nature of suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 (cf. Hägglund 2008:12). In this section, the meaning and use of the term vicarious, the presence or absence of this meaning and use in the Old Testament, especially with respect to innocent suffering shall be looked at.

#### **3.3.1 The Meaning and use of Vicarious**

Etymologically the word is derived from the Latin *vicarius*, which had the basic meaning of taking the place of a person or a thing, that is, substituting a person or a thing.<sup>72</sup> In Latin the word was used both as an adjective and a substantive. As an adjective it described the taking the place of a person or thing. As a substantive it referred to someone who takes another's place, that is, a substitute or deputy. Interestingly, a slave who was owned by a slave, that is, another slave's *peculium*<sup>73</sup> was sometimes called a vicarius.

The meaning and use of this word has expanded since it entered the English language in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century it had the basic meaning of substitution. To this basic meaning was gradually added the nuances of 'on behalf of others', experienced second hand, for

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<sup>72</sup> A related word is *vicis*, a genitive form of a word whose nominative form is not found in extant Latin literature. *Vicis* has been translated with change, interchange, alternation, and as an adverb '*in vicem*' – in place of, instead of (Cassell 1991).

<sup>73</sup> *Peculium*, in Roman society, referred to property a slave could own independent of the master.

example, through empathy<sup>74</sup>, and experienced in another part of the body which is not normally associated with that function. To date the word is used in various discourses with this expanded meaning; taking the place of another or empathy or experienced in another organ.

In the English language taking the place of another can further be qualified. It can either be inclusive or exclusive. In the inclusive sense, the one who takes the place of another does so without removing the other from that place. In the case of experience, inclusive “place-taking” denotes partaking or sharing in the experience that the other is experiencing.<sup>75</sup> Other words that have been used for this include “shared” place-taking (cf. Whybray 1978:30), “representative” place-taking (cf. Hooker 1998:98), and “in place *with us*” (cf. Gathercode 2015:19). While this inclusive sense includes the notion of empathy, that is, feeling with and for another, it goes beyond it.

In the exclusive sense, taking the place of another means that a person does not have to experience what they would have experienced, because another person has experienced it for them. Substitution is a word that is often used to denote this nuance of “place-taking”. In the light of the discussion above one can conclude that the meaning and use of the word vicarious in the English language to date captures both nuances of inclusive and exclusive ‘place-taking’.

When the word vicarious is used to describe suffering, in the phrase ‘vicarious suffering’, it connotes a concept, a notion, an idea in the realm of suffering. The meaning of this idea is captured in the adjective vicarious. In the light of the expanded use of the adjective highlighted above, vicarious suffering may refer to a suffering that is experienced by a person in place of another, what has been called “place-taking”. This “place-taking” can either be inclusive or exclusive. Hence, vicarious suffering may refer to the suffering a person ‘shares’ with another or with others, in one form or another, and for one reason or another. Empathetic suffering is a good example of this meaning of vicarious suffering. Vicarious suffering may also refer to the suffering that a person endures with the effect that others do not have to suffer the same. In this study, therefore, vicarious suffering is a suffering that is experienced in place of another,

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<sup>74</sup> For a discussion on the origins and meaning of the word empathy, and the relation between vicarious and empathetic pain from the perspective of philosophy of science see De Vignemont & Jacob (2012:295-296).

<sup>75</sup> Acknowledgment and credit is given to Daniel P. Bailey (1998:223, 228) for the term “place-taking” which he uses to translate the German *Stellvertretung*. *Stellvertretung* is used in the German language, in the discussions on the nature of the suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12.

what we have called “place-taking”. This “place-taking” can either be inclusive or exclusive, shared or substitutionary. Vicarious suffering is, therefore, suffering in place of others.<sup>76</sup>

### 3.3.2. Vicarious Suffering in the Old Testament

There has been debate concerning the presence of the idea of vicarious suffering, that is, suffering in place of others, in the Old Testament. There are those who contend that the idea is not only missing in the Old Testament but that it is also foreign to Old Testament thought (cf. Orlinsky 1969; Whybray 1978; Hooker 1998). These scholars limit the meaning of vicarious suffering to the idea of substitutionary suffering or what we have called exclusive “place-taking” as far as suffering is concerned. There are also those who contend that the idea is present in the Old Testament, but its fullest expression is confined to one particular passage, that is, Isa 52:13-53:12 (cf. Spieckermann 2004; Barry 2010; Eje 2012).<sup>77</sup> Even though its fullest expression is confined to Isa 52:13-53:12, it has been argued that its roots and background can be detected in various parts of the Old Testament (cf. Zimmerli 1969; Reventlow 1998:34-37; Spieckermann 2004).

The idea of taking the place of another, but not necessarily suffering in place of another, is scattered throughout the Old Testament. It is important for us to browse through the Old Testament and see the words, contexts and concepts where this idea is expressed. A number of words and expressions are used to convey the idea of taking the place of another. These words and expressions are used in various contexts and situations. These include the words תַּחַת, and בְּעַד. Of these two the word תַּחַת is more frequently used. The word תַּחַת appears at least 506 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:1227-1229). It is used as a substantive or preposition. As the former, it is used to refer to something that is underneath, the under part (cf. Exod 24:4). As the latter it indicates position – underneath (Gen 18:4) or taking the place of

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<sup>76</sup>This broad and expanded meaning is being proposed here because these are the nuances carried by the word in the English language. This is also important for this study whose main aim is to investigate the possible relationship of wisdom literature and tradition to this concept. It is assumed that the more open the definition is to all the possibilities, the better the chances of detecting such relationship, if any.

<sup>77</sup> This concept of vicarious suffering is not explored further beyond this text, a phenomenon that remains perplexing. However, the same concept seems to be expressed in the second book of Maccabees, where the righteous who suffer are said to suffer for or in payment of the sins of the nation (2 Macc 6-7; cf. 4 Macc.; Neusner & Green 1996:603-604).

another (Num 3:12; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:1026). It occurs 187 times with the latter meaning and use.

The word תָּחַת is used in various contexts and situations with the meaning of taking the place of another or something (cf. BDB 2000:1066). In the story of the near 'sacrifice' of Isaac it is used to describe the exchange that took place with the ram (Gen 22:13). It is used in the legal context to express just or equitable judgment, in the famous "...life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot..." (Exod 21:23-24).<sup>78</sup> It is used to talk about succession: 'royal' succession (1Kgs 1:30, 3:7; 1Chron 29:23; 2Chron 26:1); 'military' succession (2Sam 17:25) as well as; 'priestly' succession (1Kgs 2:35, Jer 29:26). Notably, it is used to talk about human life in exchange of another human life (1Kgs 20:39, 42, 2Kgs 10:24, Isa 43:3-4). It is also used in God's declaration or 'setting apart' (לָקַח) of the Levites. They are 'set apart' to take the place of all the first-borns of Israel (Num 3:12, 41, 45, 8:16, 18). There is, however, no evidence of the use of the word in the context of a human being suffering in place of another.<sup>79</sup>

Besides the word תָּחַת and other related words, there are a number of practices that we find in the Old Testament where the idea of taking the place of another is expressed or at least implied. In the rituals of sin and guilt offerings, and the use of blood in many of the animal sacrifices, the idea of the sacrificial animal and its blood taking the place of the offerer is implied. In the Levitical system, this is expressed in a number of ways (Lev 4:1-6:7, 24-30; 7:1-10; Num 15:22-26). One of the ways is in the prescription concerning the sacrificial victim. With regard to the sin offering, the תְּשֻׁאָה, the sacrificial victim is determined by the 'office' or role of the offerer. For the priest a bull is prescribed. While for a prince, a ram is prescribed. For the other members of the community a number of options are prescribed depending on the economic capability of the individual. The options include a goat or sheep, doves or pigeons.<sup>80</sup> This differentiation indicates that the sacrificial victim is understood as taking the place of the offerer.

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<sup>78</sup> This is a law of recompense (*lex talionis*) rather than revenge. It guarded against minimal or excessive compensatory judgments at court.

<sup>79</sup> There is a saying, however, in Prov 21:18 that states: כֶּפֶר לְצַדִּיק רְשָׁע וְתַחַת יִשְׂרָיִם בּוֹגֵד : 'The wicked are a ransom for the righteous, and in place of the just the faithless'. This saying is best interpreted as saying that the wicked rather than the just suffer the evils of this world (cf. McCreesh 1993:459).

<sup>80</sup> It is to be noted, however, that in Num 15:22-26, a bull is prescribed for the whole community.

In the case of the blood ritual, the blood is said to take the place of the life of the offerer (Lev 17:11).<sup>81</sup>

Another important practice where the idea of taking the place of another is expressed is the ‘practice of redemption’ (פדה). There is redemption with regards to the consecration of firstborn males to God. It was stipulated that every first born male, of humans and beasts alike, was to be dedicated to or set apart for the Lord (Exod 13:1-2, 11-16; 22:29b-30 [28b-29]; 34:19-20, Deut 15:19-23; cf. Durham 1976:174-180; Childs 1976:194-195). They were to be sacrificed to the Lord (Exod 13:15b). However, the firstborn male of donkeys was to be either redeemed by a lamb or to have its neck broken (Exod 13:13a). Similarly, the firstborn males of humans were to be redeemed (Exod 13:13b). The redemption, in the case of firstborn male donkeys by the lamb, means that the lamb takes the place of the donkey.<sup>82</sup> This is also what is meant by redemption in the case of firstborn sons of human beings, even though the text is silent on the ‘animal’ that takes the place of, that is, redeems firstborn sons of human beings.

Redemption has also been seen as one of the nuances in the use of the root כפר (atonement). It has been argued that this word has two basic nuances; atonement through ritual purification (cf. Lev 15:30, 16:18-20; Num 19:13, 20) and atonement through redemption (Exod 21:30; 30:12; Num 35:31-34; cf. Milgrom 1991:1082). In its use in the redemptive sense, there is the notion of “place-taking” – vicariousness. There is redemption concerning people who find themselves in enslaving and life threatening situations. In the covenant code, for example, there is a legislation that says that an owner of a known vicious bull that gores a person to death is to be put to death together with the bull. However, the legislation also gives the possibility of redemption on the part of the owner. They may pay something in place of their life (Exod 21:30).

The above discussion has shown that the notion of “place-taking”, that is, vicariousness is present in the Old Testament in various contexts. It has also been noted that a number of words are used to express this idea. That being the case, the question that comes to mind is whether in all these instances and uses, there is the notion of suffering for another (defined in

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<sup>81</sup> The “place-taking” in the Levitical sacrificial system has, of course, been interpreted in various ways, in terms of identification or representation or substitution (cf. Gathercode 2015). In this study, this place-taking expresses the idea of vicariousness as it has been defined above.

<sup>82</sup> For the use of פדה with the meaning of taking the place of someone or something or replacement, in the texts highlighted above see Cazelles 2001:483-490.

this study as vicarious suffering). Precisely, are there instances where human beings suffer in place of other human beings?<sup>83</sup>

There are a number of instances where humans take the place of another. In the law of recompense, a life taken (murdered), was to be compensated (replaced) by the taking of the life of the offender (Exod 21:23). The Levites, take the place of the whole community in the service of God at the sanctuary (Num 3:12). This is to be understood as service. The issue of suffering associated with this service, if any, is not mentioned. In Exod 32:31-35, Moses offers to suffer the consequences of the sin of the apostasy of Israel. His offer is categorically denied by God. In response God says, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book." (Exod 32:33b).

In the Deuteronomic history there are two instances (1Kgs 20:35-43; 2Kgs 10:24) where a person(s) is mandated to guard a captive or captives, a prisoner of war in the hypothetical case of 1Kgs 20:39 and of the ministers of Baal in the case of 2Kgs 10:24. They are to guard these with their very lives. In the case of an escape they were to pay with their lives. This threat is not carried out in the case of 2Kgs 10:24, because no minister of Baal escaped. In 1Kgs 20:35-43 it is used to predict the death of Ahab.<sup>84</sup> His death is seen as a consequence of his disobedience or failure to put Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, to death. This goes to show that in the minds of those who told the story of the history of Israel, a human life could be exchanged for another in the form of punishment by death.

In Isa 52:13-53:12 there is a person who suffers sickness, pain, and probably even death because of the sins of others (Isa 53:4-6, 8-9, 12aγ). This person has been traditionally given the title suffering servant. While the suffering of the servant is not doubted nor questioned, the

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<sup>83</sup> It has already been noted that in the sacrificial system, especially with respect to sin and guilt offering, including the sacrificial rites of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), the sacrificial victim takes the place of the offerer. It suffers death in place of the offerer. For a contrary view, that of identification rather than substitution, see the Tubingen school, clearly represented in the writings of Harmut Gese (1981) and Bernd Janowski (2004). For further discussions on the contribution of this school also see Daniel Bailey (1998:236-250) and Simon Gathercode (2015:39-45).

<sup>84</sup> The context of the text in 1Kgs 20:35-43 is the victory of Ahab over Ben hadad and the Syrians (1Kgs 20:1-34). Ben-hadad surrenders to Ahab and pleads for clemency, and Ahab spares his life. One of the sons of the prophets, moved by the spirit of the Lord, disguised himself, presumably as one of Ahab's soldiers, and waited for Ahab. As Ahab was passing by the prophet told him that he, the prophet, was asked to guard a prisoner of war, under the pain of death. The prisoner, however, escaped. To this Ahab said the sentence stands. At these words the prophet removed the bandage he had used to disguise himself and accuses Ahab for sparing the life of Ben-hadad. Ahab and his people were to pay for this with their own lives.

nature of this suffering has generated much debate. Is the suffering of the servant a suffering 'in place of' others? Is it vicarious suffering?

Up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE, in the Christian tradition, at least, the suffering of the servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 was interpreted in terms of vicarious suffering by the majority of Christian commentators (cf. Westermann 1969:268). By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE, however, a number of commentators began questioning the idea of vicariousness within the context of the Old Testament.<sup>85</sup> Two scholars who are often referred to, with respect to their challenge to the continual use of the concept of vicarious suffering for Isa 52:13-53:12, and the Old Testament in general, are Harry Orlinsky and Norman Whybray.

Arguing from his understanding of the nature of the Old Testament covenant and his understanding of the meaning of the word vicarious, Harry Orlinsky (1969) concluded that the suffering of the servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 is not vicarious. For him, theological and scholarly guilds in postbiblical times and not the author of Isa 52:13-53:12 have made the discovery of vicariousness in this passage (Orlinsky 1969:246 and note 28, 265). The word vicarious, for him, conveys the idea of substitution. To suffer vicariously means that a person suffers for another in such a way that the other need not suffer. It means that one suffers instead of another who deserved to suffer. Furthermore, the nature of the covenant in the Old Testament does not allow an innocent human being to suffer in place of the guilty. It is the guilty that suffer the consequences of their sin (cf. Exod 32:31-35; Orlinsky 1969:246-247).

The concerns that Orlinsky raised are legitimate, if and only if we confine the meaning of vicarious to the nuance of substitution. As it has been proposed above, the use of this word has broadened in the English language. Substitution remains one of its meanings but not the only one. Vicariousness also means experiencing together with others, what is known as empathy. It means taking the place of another, in the broadest sense of the word. With regard to the issue of the covenant, indeed under the covenantal stipulation it is the guilty that suffer the consequences of their sin. But in the light of the communal or corporate dimension of the covenant, the consequences of the sins of the fathers were visited upon their children to the third and fourth generations (Exod 34:6-8). Experience also proved otherwise, such that the

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<sup>85</sup> See Williams 2003:53-54.

suffering of the innocent person became a perennial problem, especially among the sages. Vicarious suffering should be seen not only in terms of a restricted individual understanding of the covenant but also in its communal understanding and in the way the covenant was experienced and lived out.

Vicarious suffering, for Norman Whybray, means suffering in place of others, with the result that the ones who deserve to suffer no longer suffer (Whybray 1978:25). It is substitutionary suffering. For Whybray this creates exegetical and theological problems. He demonstrates that by doing an exegesis of the words and phrases that have been traditionally used to support a vicarious meaning of the passage.<sup>86</sup> He concludes that none of these words and expressions is used in a vicarious sense, that is, substitutionary sense in the Old Testament (Whybray 1975:75; cf. William 2003:56-71). Furthermore, theologically, for him, it would mean that those who deserved to be punished were not punished, and that God accepted the suffering of the servant in place of others. This he finds unacceptable and contrary to Old Testament covenantal theology (Whybray 1978:63). Hence, for him there are no words or phrases in Isa 52:13-53:12 that carry a substitutionary meaning. He says that what we have in this text is “shared and not vicarious suffering” (Whybray 1978:30, 59).

Whybray concedes, however, that the servant suffers more intensely than the ‘we’ and was more innocent compared to them (Whybray 1978:30). Indeed from the point of view of the ‘we’, they, the ‘we’, did not consider themselves as sharing in this intense suffering but considered themselves or their sins to be, on the one hand, the cause of this intense suffering, and on the other, to have been spared of it because of the servant (Isa 53:4-6). Hence, the insights, ‘our sufferings he carried, our wounds he carried’ (Isa 53:4a) and ‘the punishment for our peace was upon him’ (Isa 53:5b $\alpha$ ), can best be interpreted in terms of vicariousness, in its broad meaning of place taking. Furthermore, the phrase ‘yet we considered him stricken, struck by God and afflicted’ (Isa 53:4b), would mean that the ‘we’ did not consider themselves as sharing in the suffering of the servant.

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<sup>86</sup> These include: ועונתם הוא יסבל (53:11b), והוא חטא רבים נשא (Isa 53:12c), נשא ב עון (35 times in the Old Testament), as well as statements in Isa 53:4a, 5, 6b, 8b, 11a.



The proposal of Chisholm (1991:331) is worth noting. He proposes that the language of Isa 52:13-53:12 is open to a vicarious interpretation, but it does not demand such an interpretation. In other words, the language is at best ambiguous (cf. Hägglund 2008:12). The language of carrying the wounds, sickness and iniquities of the 'we' (53:4a, 11b, 12b $\alpha$ ); of being wounded and crushed for their transgressions, guilt and well-being (53:5, 8b $\beta$ ); of the Lord laying the guilt/punishment of the 'we' on him (53:6b); and the language of making his life an  $\text{דָּשָׁן}$  (53:10a $\beta$ ), is indeed open to a 'place-taking', vicarious interpretation in the sense we have adopted above. The servant suffered in place of the 'we' in the broad sense of the word.

It is also important to note that this text gives a new insight, a new understanding of the suffering of the innocent in the Old Testament.<sup>87</sup> Indeed this is a new insight, such that investigating the use and meaning of the words and phrases used to convey this insight from other parts of Old Testament will of course yield a negative result, as shown by the conclusions of Whybray. Therefore, it will be necessary to investigate its possible roots, background and the possible contributions of the various traditions to its formulation.<sup>88</sup> This is what this study aims to do, focusing on the relation of the wisdom literature and tradition to this concept of vicarious suffering.

### 3.4 Summary and Concluding remarks

In this chapter an attempt was made to establish the meaning of vicarious suffering, and the presence of this concept in the Old Testament. Firstly the phenomenon of suffering in general, and its expressions in the Old Testament in particular, was addressed. It was observed that suffering is part and parcel of the human experience. Etymologically, the English word is derived from the Latin *sufferre* which means to carry a burden. It was also established that according to the contemporary 'standard account', suffering is personal and it involves a perception of harm

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<sup>87</sup> Some of the phrases are used in a unique way in this passage, for example, the phrase  $\text{נָשָׂא חַטָּאת}$  (to bear sin). The phrase appears 9 times in the Old Testament, but it is used with the sense of bearing the sins of others only in Isa 53:12b $\alpha$  (cf. Whybray 1978:31).

<sup>88</sup> For other responses to the challenge posed by Harry Orlinsky and Norman Whybray see Hägglund 2008:11-12 and Barry 2010:107-132. For other views on the nature of the suffering in Isa 52:13-53:13 see Hooker 1998:96-98 and Janowski 2004:48-74. In the assessment of Morna Hooker (1998), the suffering of the servant is representative rather than vicarious. By vicarious she means substitutionary. In the assessment of Bernd Janowski (2004), the suffering of the servant is both substitutionary and representative.

and threat, and that while pain is often associated with suffering, it does not necessarily cause suffering. Ultimately suffering is a result of the failure to understand and accept what one is going through. This led to the definition of suffering as ‘personal emotional anguish arising from various sources perceived to be harmful and life threatening.’

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, it was observed that there is no systematic treatment of the subject of suffering but that the issue is discussed at various stages and in various contexts. Suffering is understood in terms of carrying a burden and in terms of pain (physical, emotional, and spiritual pain). It was also noted that according to the Old Testament account, the origin or source of suffering is viewed from basically two perspectives; that suffering is inherent in creation and that it is a consequence of the transgression of God’s law. It was also stated that the latter perspective led to what has been called the teaching of just retribution. It was noted that emphasis on retributive justice compounded the problem of the suffering of the innocent. This problem of the suffering of the innocent is one of the hallmark themes of the wisdom literature and tradition as well as a theme in the oracles of the anonymous exilic prophet responsible for the oracles in Isaiah 40-55. In Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the suffering of the innocent servant is interpreted in terms of suffering because of others, in place of others and for the benefit of others. This has been called vicarious suffering.

Secondly, the meaning and use of the concept of vicarious suffering and its presence or absence in the Old Testament were also studied. It became clear that the meaning and use of the Latin *vicarius* has expanded since it entered the English language. It now encompasses the meaning of taking the place of another as well as empathy. In English, taking the place of another can be, inclusive or exclusive ‘place-taking’. Hence, vicarious suffering is a suffering that is experienced in place of another (inclusive or exclusive). As to the presence of this concept in the Old Testament, the debate that continues among students of the Old Testament, and the Bible in general were highlighted. Some words, and practices in the Old Testament that express what has been defined as vicarious suffering, were examined. At the end it was concluded that while the idea of taking the place of another in various contexts and situations is quite common, suffering in place of another human being is uniquely expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

Having established the sense in which vicarious suffering will be used in this study, as well as the unique occurrence of this concept in Isa 52:13-53:12, the thrust of the following chapter will be the study of what constitutes wisdom literature and tradition. This shall provide the background information needed for the further investigation into the relationship of the notion of vicarious suffering and wisdom literature and tradition.

## Chapter Four

### Wisdom literature and Tradition

#### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter two the definition, aim, method and appropriateness of the traditio-historical approach for this study was discussed. In the previous chapter, chapter three, the meaning and occurrence of the concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament has been discussed. The aim of this chapter is to provide a modest but relatively adequate summary of the complex issues surrounding the Old Testament literary corpus that has been labelled ‘wisdom literature’ by scholarly practice and ‘relative’ consensus.<sup>89</sup> This summary should provide adequate and appropriate information for the further assessment of the relationship between vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and wisdom literature and tradition.

#### 4.2 Wisdom literature and tradition<sup>90</sup>

Wisdom literature is considered to be one of the groups of writings in the Old Testament that grew out of a tradition or movement with a particular worldview, concerns/themes and assumptions.<sup>91</sup> What has come down to us as wisdom literature is a vestige of an approach to

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<sup>89</sup> It will become clear as this chapter progresses that the origins, definition, meaning and scope of the phrases wisdom literature and wisdom tradition have not always been clear, and remain problematic inspite of the scholarly use of the phrases. This is one of the reasons for using the adjective ‘relative’ to describe the scholarly consensus of the use of the phrases wisdom literature and wisdom tradition.

<sup>90</sup> This subheading is a replica of the title of this chapter. This title has been chosen in the light of the on-going debate, or rather critique on the scholarly convention or ‘tradition’ concerning the legitimacy and usefulness of the category ‘wisdom literature’, on the one hand, and the existence of a wisdom tradition and movement in Ancient Israel, on the other (cf. Sneed 2011; 2015; Weeks 2016). Taking cognizance of the scholarly use and understanding of wisdom literature, and its heuristic advantages and disadvantages, as well as the fact that traditions are part and parcel of any society from which literature is produced and preserved, and that literature is representative rather than exhaustive of traditions, wisdom literature and tradition has been adopted as a fitting title for this chapter. An interesting example with respect to the latter is the absence of pure riddles (cf. Judg 24) in the wisdom books of the Old Testament. The presumption that the wise in ancient Israel made use of riddles as a mode of expression (Crenshaw 2010:31) is supported by Prov 1:6b where it reads: דְּבַר־יִחְכְּמִים וְהַיְדוּתָם ‘words of the wise and their riddles’.

<sup>91</sup> This study takes cognizance of the on-going debates and discussions surrounding the use, meaning and limits of wisdom literature, and the existence of a wisdom movement and/or tradition in Israel. In the assessment of this study wisdom literature and tradition are still useful and appropriate heuristic terms, inspite of their limitations, which will be acknowledged in the course of this study. For more on this debate see the collection of essays in Sneed (2015).

reality or worldview shared by Ancient Israelites in different ways (cf. Murphy 1981:3; Schellenberg 2015:117-121). This worldview with its concerns and assumptions has been given a tag 'wisdom' in Old Testament studies because of associations with the various uses and meanings of the Hebrew word *חָכְמָה* 'wisdom',<sup>92</sup> among other common features and characteristics. In order to accomplish the aim of this chapter an overview of wisdom, wisdom literature and tradition in the Old Testament and in Old Testament studies shall be outlined and discussed. Emphasis shall be placed on the characteristic assumptions, vocabulary, themes and theological outlook(s) found in this literature. This will provide the basis of investigating the clues to the possible relationship between the concerns of wisdom literature and those of Isa 52:13-53:12, on the one hand, and the possible relationship between wisdom literature and vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12, on the other.

#### **4.2.1 The use and meaning of the term wisdom in the Old Testament**

The English word wisdom has been used to translate the Hebrew *חָכְמָה* (*hokmāh*) and its related synonyms. In Old Testament wisdom studies, wisdom is used to refer to: the state of being wise;<sup>93</sup> to a literary genre, for example, wisdom sayings;<sup>94</sup> to a certain understanding of and approach to reality common among Ancient Israelites and; to a movement and tradition (cf. Murphy 1981:3; Clifford 1997:1-2; Schellenberg 2015:117-121). It is also used to designate the books and texts in the Old Testament where more or less similar characteristics are expressed in various ways. In other words, the word wisdom is used to sum up assumptions,<sup>95</sup> a search for and proposals of the right attitude and optimum ways of conducting oneself in order to live a successful and prosperous life, including of course an on-going critique of the assumptions and proposals, exemplified in the books of Job and Qoheleth. Different types of wisdom are also often discerned, namely: nature wisdom, practical wisdom and theological wisdom (cf. Magnante

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<sup>92</sup> The root appears more than 400 times in the Old Testament. More than three quarters of this appearance is found in the five books that have been grouped under the category wisdom literature (cf. Murphy 1993:447). In fact the noun form appears 42 times in Proverbs, 18 times in Job, 28 times in Qoheleth. As σοφία, the Greek word for wisdom, it appears 60 times in Sirach and 30 times in Wisdom of Solomon (cf. Clifford 1997:2).

<sup>93</sup> This is the usual meaning of the verb in the qal conjugation (cf. Müller 1980:370).

<sup>94</sup> This includes proverbs, didactic sayings and experiential sayings. For more information on wisdom as a generic category see Murphy (1981:4-6).

<sup>95</sup> This is an assumption of how the natural and human worlds came to be and how the natural and human worlds are supposed to work and how imitating this order brings about happiness, righteousness and prosperity.

1997:19-22). More will be said about this in the next subheading, for now the meaning and use of the word in the Old Testament will be considered.

The Hebrew noun *חָכְמָה* and its verbal and adjectival forms<sup>96</sup> have been a source of much interest and perplexity from the biblical times down to our day. Furthermore, like any word in any language there is evidence that the meaning and use of this word developed through time, notably from a nonspecific use in early books and texts of the Old Testament to a specific and theological use in later biblical books and texts (cf. Müller 1980:373-385; Westermann 1995:108-110).

The semantic range of this root *חכ* has to do with knowledge, understanding and the skill and competence at doing something (cf. Müller 1980:370-372). In several passages *חָכְמָה* is used in synonymous parallelism with a number of words that have to do with knowledge and insight. These include: *דַּעַת* (knowledge) and its cognates;<sup>97</sup> *בִּינָה* (understanding) and its cognates<sup>98</sup>, and; *צַדִּיק* (just, righteous) and its cognates (Prov 9:9). The root *שכל* in its various forms<sup>99</sup> appear a few times together with *חָכְמָה*<sup>100</sup> but it appears many times together with the synonyms and antonyms of *חָכְמָה* to warrant its translation into English with ‘wisdom, understanding, insight and knowledge’.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> As a noun it appears 153 times in the Old Testament. As a verb it appears 27 times. As an adjective it appears 138 times (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:367-369). But Crenshaw (2010:34 note 1) reckons that the noun appears 147 times, the verb 26 times, and the adjective 135 times. For the number of times it appears in the wisdom books see note 92 above.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31; Prov 1:2, 7; 18:15; 9:10; 21:11; Qoh 1:16, 17; 2:21, 26; 8:16; 9:10; Isa 33:6; 47:10, and also the noun *מִדְעָה* (cf. 2Chron 1:10-12; Dan 1:17).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31; 36:1; Deut 4:6; 1Kgs 7:14; Isa 11:2; Ezek 28:4; 2Chron 2:11-12; Prov 1:2, 5; 4:5, 7; 9:10; 23:23; Job 28:12, 20; 32:29. The cognates include the verb *בִּין* ‘to understand, be prudent, wise’ and the noun *תְּבוּנָה*, ‘understanding/prudence’ (cf. Gen 41: 39; 1Kgs 3:12; Isa 10:13; Prov 10:23; 21:30; 24:3).

<sup>99</sup> *שכל* appears as a noun *שָׁכַל* 16 times. In the verbal form it appears 61 times, once in the qal and the piel conjugations, 1Sam 18:30 and Gen 48:14. In the latter passage it has this rare meaning ‘to lay crosswise’ (see below) and in the former it has the meaning ‘to prosper’. The rest of the verbal appearances (59 times) are in the hiphil conjugation and have various shades of meaning that have to do with wisdom, understanding and prosperity.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Deut 32:29; 2Chron 2:11; Prov 16:23; Dan 1:4, 17. The synonymity of *שכל* to *חכ* and *בין* comes out clearly in Deut 32:29. The three words *חכ*, *שכל* and *בין* are used together to express Israel’s lack of wisdom and its consequences. The passage is part of the so-called song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43) that celebrates the greatness of God, the rebellious nature of Israel and its consequences, and the willingness of God to intervene on behalf of his people. Deut 32:29 bemoans the failure of the people of Israel to understand (*יִשְׁכִּילוּ*) the present and perceive (*יִבִּינּוּ*) things to come because they are not wise (*חֲכָמִים*).

<sup>101</sup> cf. Isa 41:20; 44:18; 1Chron 22:12; Prov 16:22; 21:11-12; 23:9; Psa 94:8; Dan 9:22; 11:33; 12:10.

The opposite of *הַכְּמָה* is expressed in its use in antithetic parallelism with words that have to do with foolishness or a foolish person. The most common among them are: *כְּסִיל* (stupid fellow/fool) and its cognates;<sup>102</sup> *אָוִיל* (foolishness)<sup>103</sup> and; *סָכַל* (folly/fooliness), and its cognates.<sup>104</sup>

The knowledge that *הַכְּמָה* expresses is wide and comprehensive. *הַכְּמָה* is used to express the knowledge of God, that is, the knowledge that belongs to and is associated with God. This is a knowledge that is a special property or attribute of God. It is a knowledge that is *sui generis*. Its source is not known. It cannot be fathomed. It cannot be taught (cf. Isa 40:13-14). Instead this knowledge was with God when he created the world (cf. Prov 3:19-20; Wis 7:22-26). Hence, God alone knows where wisdom can be found (cf. Job 28:28). In this sense God is understood to be the source of the knowledge bestowed by wisdom (Job 11:6). This is a knowledge that is revealed (cf. Job 4:12-16; 42:1-6) and a knowledge that is called ‘fear of God’.<sup>105</sup> This is the knowledge that bestows the skill of administration to kings (1Kgs 3:28; 5:9; Wis 1:1-2), the skills of artisans (Exod 31:3), diviners and magicians (Isa 3:3), and the knowledge that is observed in animals (Prov 6:6; Job 39:17). This is a knowledge that God has hidden and Kings have to search for (Prov 25:2).<sup>106</sup> This is the knowledge that brings to naught the so-called human wisdom or knowledge (Job 12:13-25) and a knowledge that guarantees uprightness and immortality (Wis 1:15; 3:4).

*הַכְּמָה* is also used to express the knowledge of various ‘life-skills’. It is used to describe the knowledge and skills of artisans especially those who work within the religious sphere (Exod 31:3; 1Kgs 7:13-14).<sup>107</sup> It is used to describe tactical skills (1Kgs 2:6, 9; Prov 21:22), judicial skills (Deut 16:19; 1Kgs 3:12, 28), skills at doing trade and commerce (Ezek 28:3-4; Eccl 2:19), skills of living a

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<sup>102</sup> cf. Prov 1:22; 18:2; Qoh. 2:16; 6:8; 7:4-5, 25. The cognates include *כָּסַל* ‘stupidity/foolly’ (Qoh. 7:25).

<sup>103</sup> cf. Prov 1:7; 10:14; 11:29; 12:15; 14:3; 17:28.

<sup>104</sup> These are *סָכַל* ‘to be foolish’ (Isa 44:25) and *סָכְלוּת* ‘folly’ (Qoh. 2:3, 12, 13; 10:1). It is also important to note that the two words *שָׁכַל* and *סָכַל* are sometimes confused. A good example is found in Isa 44:25 where the piel form of *שָׁכַל* is used in the MT in a context that calls for the use of *סָכַל* in light of the preceeding colon in which God is said to confound the wise. The next colon should then read and ‘makes foolish (*סָכַל*) their knowledge’, instead of ‘makes wise (*שָׁכַל*) their knowledge’ as it reads in the MT. Thus the BHS proposes emendation from *שָׁכַל* to *סָכַל*.

<sup>105</sup> Prov 1:7; 2:5; 9:10; 30:3, Job 28:28; Qoh 3:14; 7:18; Sir 21:11.

<sup>106</sup> It is to be noted, however, that in this passage (Prov 25:2) the word *דָּבָר* is used instead of *הַכְּמָה* but the idea and implication can be said to be the same taking into consideration the wide semantic range of *דָּבָר*.

<sup>107</sup> In both these texts the noun *הַכְּמָה* and its synonyms *תְּבוּנָה* and *דַּעַת* are used to describe the occupational skills of Bezalel (cf. Exod 35:30-35) and Hiram, at fashioning the furnishings of the desert, portable Tabernacle and the first Temple, respectively.

successful and prosperous life through commendable (Prov 3:13-18) and even devious means<sup>108</sup> and skills at probing the complexities and perplexities of life (Qoh. 1:12). It is also a name given to the means through which life-skills<sup>109</sup> were imparted to members of Ancient Israelite society, like sayings, instructions, stories (Qoh. 12:9-10) and even divination (Isa 44:25).

In summary of the foregoing it can be said that חֵכְמָה in the Old Testament is used to denote knowledge and the skills emanating from this knowledge. This knowledge is about how the world is purported to work and about how to successfully navigate in it. It is also about how to make this world a 'better' place, in the sense of making it habitable and beautiful through artisanal skills. It will become clear below that חֵכְמָה is not used in the same way with respect to the view of how the world works or how to successfully navigate in it. It is the knowledge of the wise counsel of elders, knowledge of what experience teaches and knowledgeable or informed judgment (cf. Perdue 2008:9-13).

As far as the source or sources of חֵכְמָה is concerned there seems to be three broad views in the Old Testament. The first states that wisdom is a gift, as indicated above. This view is best expressed in the request of Solomon for wisdom and God's response to this request (cf. 1Kgs 3:4-15; cf. Wis 7:7). It is also expressed in those texts that reflect on what wisdom is and where it comes from (Prov 3:13-19; Wis 9:1-6; Sir 1:1<sup>110</sup>). This would also be one interpretation of the biblical expression יִרְאַת יְהוָה in the expression 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Psa 111:10; cf. Prov 9:10; Sir 1:12).<sup>111</sup> Psa 111:1-10 is a Psalm of praise. The Psalmist is praising God for the gift of creation, and the gift of the deliverance of his people. Within this context, the

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<sup>108</sup> For the use of the word in somewhat criminal context see 2 Sam 13:3. In 1Kings 2:6 and 9, the word is used by David in the context of political tactics that do not preclude the shedding of blood. In Jer 4:22 God complains through Jeremiah that his people are wise (*hakamim*) in doing evil.

<sup>109</sup> Under life-skills may be included attitudes and behaviour; trade/career/occupation; interpersonal relationships; cohesion of family and community and; coping with the vicissitudes of life.

<sup>110</sup> Ben Sirach begins by stating that all wisdom comes from the Lord and remains with him forever. Thus wisdom is given from the Lord and does not leave his side!

<sup>111</sup> The expression יִרְאַת יְהוָה 'the fear of the Lord,' is understood and explained in a number of ways in the Old Testament. These include: it is the beginning of wisdom (Psa 111:10; Job 28:28); it is humility (Prov 15:33b); it is instruction and wisdom (Prov 15:33a); it is the knowledge of the holy one (Prov 9:10; 30:3); it is the knowledge of God (Prov 2:5); it is simply 'knowledge' (Prov 1:7, 29); it is about ethical behaviour (Job 28:28; Prov 3:7; 8:13; 10:27; Eccl 12:13f); it prolongs life (Prov 10:27; 14:27); it ensures life and security (Prov 19:23); it is the reward for riches, honour and life (Prov 22:4); it is kindness (Job 6:14); it is against sin (Prov 23:17); it is faithfulness and truth (Prov 16:6).



fear of the Lord should also be understood as a gift which makes those who live by it *שְׂכֵל טוֹב* 'of good prudence'.

The second states and implies that *חָכְמָה* has to be acquired and learnt. In Prov 4:5-7, the father instructs his children to get wisdom at any cost. This wisdom consists of the teaching of the elders (4:4). Indeed the underlying presupposition of the sayings and exhortations in the book of Proverbs is that wisdom can be taught and learnt, hence the exhortation, 'the beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom' (Prov 4:7). The teaching and learning takes into consideration the observation of and reflection on the natural and moral world,<sup>112</sup> instructions from elders and the 'personified' wisdom. In later books and texts of the Old Testament *חָכְמָה* is personified and becomes the source of this knowledge and life-skills. Related to this, wisdom is also presented as a female personality endowed with the ability to attract young men away from the disastrous entanglements of lady folly, in order to instruct and to show them the optimum ways of living a successful and happy life (cf. Prov 1:20-23; 3:16-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-6).

The third seems to indicate that wisdom is beyond the reach of human beings, it remains a mystery. In the book of Qoheleth this is the general impression that one gets. For Qoheleth, while there are some advantages of wisdom over folly (2:12-13), it is not only doubtful whether there is any ultimate difference since both the wise and the unwise come to the same end (2:14-17), but it is doubtful whether one can actually be wise or acquire wisdom (8:16-17; cf. 1:12-18; 3:11-12). This is echoed in Job 28:12-28. Here, however, the emphasis is on the whereabouts of wisdom. The conclusion reached is that only God knows and hence, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Job 28:27-28).

It is not, therefore, easy to provide a precise meaning and use of the word *חָכְמָה* and its cognates in the Old Testament. Its meaning and use changed through time from a non-specific use to abstract and theological use giving the word a wide and comprehensive semantic field. The difficulties in defining the use and meaning of *חָכְמָה*, the difficulties in identifying the location/place of *חָכְמָה*, and the difficulty in acquiring it, is aptly expressed in the book of Job as stated above: "But *חָכְמָה*, where shall it be found and where is the location of *בִּינָה* (understanding)?" (Job 28:12). Notwithstanding, the word *חָכְמָה* is used for knowledge, skills of

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<sup>112</sup> In Prov 6:6 the lazy person is exhorted to observe the ants in order to be wise.

various kinds (proverbial, natural, practical and theological), and an enigmatic persona who facilitates for such knowledge and skills aimed at living a prosperous life here on earth, and a guarantee of immortality. Though wisdom can be taught and learnt it ultimately lies in the ‘fear of the Lord’.

#### 4.2.2 The use and meaning of wisdom חָכְמָה in Old Testament Studies

The foregoing discussion has shown how the Hebrew noun חָכְמָה (wisdom) and its cognates are used in various ways and contexts in the Old Testament. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the history of Old Testament studies the word wisdom has proved to be elusive as far as precision in its use, meaning and appropriateness is concerned. Indeed as far back as Gerard von Rad, this illusiveness as well as appropriateness has been a case of major concern (cf. von Rad 1972:7).

It has been used to refer to the Hebrew word חָכְמָה, to its cognates as well as its synonyms as pointed out above, and its use to express the quest for knowledge, insight, understanding, and skills of various kinds has also been generally acknowledged and accepted (cf. Crenshaw 2010:4).<sup>113</sup> However, in the light of its use and meaning in the Old Testament, Old Testament scholars have gone further to use the word ‘wisdom’ as a tag, a descriptor, a collective term and even as a concept. As already pointed above, this use of ‘wisdom’ as a general term has not gone unchallenged among students of the Old Testament (cf. Kynes 2015:11-38).<sup>114</sup> It has, however, been accepted by many as a convenient descriptor for material in the Old Testament and texts

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<sup>113</sup> According to Crenshaw (2010:4) wisdom “is the reasoned search for specific ways to ensure personal well-being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vixing anomalies, and to transmit this hard-earned knowledge so that successive generations will embody it.” This definition aptly captures the wisdom quest in its practical use and sense but leaves out the theological use and meaning in the Old Testament. As we have seen above wisdom is also presented as a lady and a hypostasis in the Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition (Prov 1:20-30; 8:1-31; Wis 7:22-26).

<sup>114</sup> This was the topic of discussion in a 2015 collection of articles under the title *Was there a wisdom tradition: New prospects in Israelite wisdom studies* edited by Mark R. Sneed and published by the Society of Biblical Literature. The majority of the essays in this collection questioned not only the precision and appropriateness of using ‘wisdom’ as a descriptor but also the once prevailing scholarly consensus concerning wisdom literature and tradition as something distinct in the Old Testament (cf. Sneed 2015:1-2). In this volume Kynes (2015:11-38) presents the case of wisdom using medical metaphors. Wisdom is presented as a patient and Kynes (2015:11) provides a diagnosis of the case of wisdom. Wisdom as a category “is plagued by definitional deficiency, amorphous social location and hemorrhaging influence, among other maladies.”. He goes on to propose a remedy or what he calls “significant changes in lifestyle”. This includes “exercising more hermeneutical restraint, cutting back on its exclusive claims to define the texts it includes and their historical origins and adding more intertextual connections to its interpretive diet” (Kynes 2015:12).

of the Ancient Near East that show common traits that can be grouped under the term wisdom (cf. Crenshaw 2010:1-19; PENCHANSKY 2012:1ff). Despite the definitional handicap, it remains a useful term and category for some of the literature in the Old Testament, as long as users admit its shortcomings and strengths. These include: the lack of a precise definition of what constitutes wisdom literature; the fact that wisdom literature is a scholarly construct based on common features among the accepted books of wisdom; the lack of tangible and convincing evidence of a wisdom movement or tradition in ancient Israel (cf. Weeks 2010:144; Kynes 2015:30-32).

Basically, 'wisdom' has been used in three distinct but complementary ways. It has been used to describe a certain quest for knowledge. It has been used to describe a particular approach to reality or a worldview (cf. Schellenberg 2015:119-120). It has been used as a category for a group of writings in which the above traits are exhibited in varying degrees. Each use will be briefly described in the following paragraphs.

It has been used to describe that quest for optimum ways of living life as an individual and in society, sometimes called practical wisdom (cf. Magnante 1997:20; Crenshaw 2010:4). It is a quest that makes sense of the vicissitudes of life and different ways of passing this knowledge to other generations in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East in general. This quest is said to summarize that aim or goal of what is expressed in the sayings and instructions we find in books of Proverbs, Sirach and Wisdom, in the dialogue between Job and his friends (Job 3-31) and in the reflections of Qoheleth. This would mean that anything and everything in the Old Testament that expresses this quest would fall under the rubric 'wisdom' (cf. Crenshaw 2010:4-8).<sup>115</sup> One example would be the quest to make sense of the suffering of the innocent. As will be shown below, this theme is common in what is has been called wisdom literature and tradition.<sup>116</sup>

It has been used to refer to an approach to or understanding of reality (cf. von Rad 1972:8; Murphy 1981:3; 1996:112-115; Crenshaw 2010:11; Weeks 2014:3; Sneed 2015:1-2).<sup>117</sup> This

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<sup>115</sup> Crenshaw 2010:27-29 opines that the ultimate goal of this quest is the truth.

<sup>116</sup> This particular quest will be a subject of further discussion in the next chapter as it has a bearing on the topic of vicarious suffering.

<sup>117</sup> There are those who limit this understanding or approach to reality to the sages and the wisdom movement, like Crenshaw (2010:11, 22-25) and those who are of the view that this approach was not limited to a particular group but was one of the approaches within the cultural milieu of ancient Israel (cf. Murphy 1981:3). In view of the sharing of worldviews in any culture, this study takes the latter view.

understanding of reality or worldview<sup>118</sup> is said to be characterized by: a conviction that God created the world as an ordered natural and moral system;<sup>119</sup> taking tradition<sup>120</sup> and experience as reliable sources of knowledge; placing more emphasis on individual rather than communal concerns; universal rather than national (Israelite) interests – notably no interests in the Exodus, the covenant and election nor Israelite patriarchs and major figures like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and even David. This approach to reality is also characterised by the openness to the uncertainties and ambiguities of life.

In all the wisdom books of the Old Testament, there is an affirmation that God created the world as a system that is methodically arranged and determined or timed (cf. Qoh. 3:11). There is a set of principles that govern the system (cf. Clifford 1997:3, 9).<sup>121</sup> These principles can

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<sup>118</sup> For the meaning the word ‘worldview’ and its different facets in a culture see Smart (1983:7-8; cf. Sneed 2015b:41; Schellenberg 2015:119-120). In the light of the different understanding of the term worldview as well as its philosophical connotations it is better to speak of an approach to reality or assumptions or presuppositions (cf. Murphy 1978:3; Schellenberg 2015:119-120, 138).

<sup>119</sup> Murphy (1978:35-36) argues that this is one of the agreed thesis among Old Testament scholars, that Ancient Near East ‘wisdom’ in general or Old Testament ‘wisdom’ was about cosmic order, the search for it, and living according to it (cf. Dell 2013:16). Murphy, however, questions the appropriateness of ‘order’ in characterizing the wisdom quest in the Old Testament, in the light of the acceptance of ambiguities and a certain admittance that God is not a God of ‘order’, at least from a human point of view (cf. Murphy 1993:449). In an unpublished PhD thesis with Stellenbosch University, Byeong-Cheol Park (2010) researched on the theme of the search for order in wisdom literature in relation to the aspect of mystery that is also reflected in the same corpus. He argues that “the concept of ‘wisdom’ is both the search for order and the maintainance of mystery.” For him both the search for order and mystery co-exist in wisdom literature and he gives Prov 16, Job 28, and Sira 24 as prime examples of this co-existence with varying emphases (Park 2010:i). This will be the position of this study. Wisdom in the Old Testament is both about the search for order in this life, and an openness to the sovereignty of God.

<sup>120</sup> Tradition here is meant the tried and tested observations, practices and assumptions that were handed down from one generation to another. One of the traditions that is characteristic of this worldview and that becomes a source of much debate among the sages as they try to make sense of tradition and experience to the contrary is the teaching of just retribution.

<sup>121</sup> This is sometimes referred to as cosmic order. Cosmic order is an understanding of the universe as a system. God is believed to have planted order in the natural and human worlds. According to Clifford (1997:9) there were basically two ways of understanding cosmic order in the Ancient Near East. Firstly, cosmic order was understood in terms of divine will and plan. In this understanding obedience to the divine will and plan constituted righteousness. In line with this, prosperity or the lack of it was viewed as divine reward or punishment respectively. Human choice was therefore vital in this understanding of cosmic order. The second view of cosmic order was more or less deterministic. Cosmic order was perceived in terms of fortune and fate. These were said to be determined at birth and by and large went beyond divine will and plan, as well as human choice. Ancient Israelite belief in an all-powerful and all wise God tended to understand cosmic order in terms of divine will and plan. In the Ancient Egyptian context there was the principle of Ma’at, which represented justice, truth and order. This principle was also personified as a goddess of order, truth and justice. It is also said that in Ancient Sumer there was a myth of tablets of destiny guarded by the gods (cf. Crenshaw 2010:7). In late Wisdom texts of the Old Testament wisdom assumes a separate existence, in the words of Old Testament scholars, wisdom becomes personified, notably as a female persona. A

be discerned in both nature and human societies. The principles and the system as a whole express the will of God. It is, therefore, the responsibility of human beings to search for these principles (cf. Prov 25:2). According to this premise, living within and according to the principles of this order lies the fulfilment and happiness of human beings, and living outside or contrary to this order lie the demise of human beings. It also distinguishes between the wise and foolish. In line with this, success or the lack of it in life is understood in terms of reward or punishment, that is, the teaching of just or divine retribution. This was seen as constituting part of the natural and moral order (cf. Schellenberg 2015:121-126).

Wisdom, which was there when God created the world (Prov 8:22-31; Job 28:25-28; Sir 1:1-8, Wis 1:1-10) can be used to discern and communicate this order and the principles therein (Wis 1-9). Wisdom can also be used to exhort humans to live in accordance with the principles of this order to ensure their happiness and avoid catastrophe (Prov 8:32-36). This is the basis on which the proverbial sayings and instructions of the book of Proverbs is grounded. This is also the view that the books of Job and Qoheleth question.<sup>122</sup> The absurdity surrounding the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature is informed by this understanding of order, moral order to be specific. This is because innocence and suffering were not considered bed-fellows. Innocent suffering distorts the perceived moral order. This is one of the reasons why Murphy (1993:449) questions the legitimacy and usefulness of using 'cosmic order' to characterize Old Testament wisdom quest.

The other hypothesis of wisdom scholars is that individual experiences form part of the source of knowledge or wisdom in wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Schellenberg 2015:126-130). The wisdom sayings in the book of Proverbs, Sir and Wisdom of Solomon are directed to individuals. The book of Job is centred on the fate and demise of the individual Job. This is also true of the discourses in the book of Qoheleth. They emanate from the personal observations and reflections of Qoheleth. The underlying view is that the life and experience of an individual

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deliberate attempt to reflect on the nature, meaning and scope of wisdom also deepens (cf. Prov 8:1-3; 9: Sir 1:1ff; Wis 1-9).

<sup>122</sup> The book of Job can be said to question the view of a moral order and the principle of just retribution. The book of Qoheleth questions the possibility and ability of human beings to search for this order and acquire wisdom (Qoh 3:9-11; 8:17), and teach wisdom to others (Qoh 7:23-25; cf. Job 11:12). Qoheleth even questions the advantages of the wise over the foolish in the light of their common end, death (Qoh 2:14-16).

is important in the dynamics of the natural and moral order. This is not to say that this understanding of wisdom disregards communal life and experience, or even revelation. Communal life and experience are presupposed and are a function of the well-being or lack thereof of the individuals that are members of the community. Revelation seems also to be taken for granted but not emphasized (cf. Job 4:12-16) and individual mediators of revelation are not mentioned at all, as in the case of prophetic literature and tradition (cf. Schellenberg 2015:126-130).

The emphasis on individual experience is linked to the universalistic view of wisdom. Human beings and human experience are presumed to be universal. Thus, the lessons learnt from the experience of Israelites and non-Israelites alike are opportunities for learning and growing in wisdom. The book of Proverbs incorporates advice and sayings from Agur, the Massaite (Prov 30:1-6) and Lemuel, a non-Israelite king (Prov 31:1-9). According to the prologue of the book of Job, the main protagonist, Job is from Uz, a location in Arabia or Edom. The books of Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon are heavily influenced by and respond to Hellenistic ideas and culture in the light of Jewish faith (cf. Reese 1970:1-89; Wright 1993:522; Adams 2008:156-158).<sup>123</sup>

It is also the view of some scholars that the wisdom approach to life is also characterized by its accommodation of both an optimistic view and pessimistic view towards life (cf. Murphy 1993:448; Penchansky 2012). In line with the optimistic view, there is a sense that life experiences repeat themselves and hence can be understood, and facilitate for predications. Experiences and attitudes that lead to prosperity (long life, progeny, good name, and riches) can be taught and learnt. Experiences that militate against prosperity can be successfully avoided. However, there is also a view that life is full of ambiguities and surprises (cf. Job and Qoheleth); that instructions and sayings are not always valid in every situation and context. For example,

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<sup>123</sup> The individualistic and universalistic view may partly answer the question about the obvious but enigmatic silence of wisdom with regard to Ancient Israel's national traditions, which include the Exodus and Sinaitic traditions, the issues of covenant and election, the royal and messianic traditions in the early wisdom books, namely, Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth. Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon make use of this traditions in the light of their aim to promote Israelite faith and traditions. This silence with respect to national and salvation history, in the earlier books, resulted in the neglect, if not denigration of wisdom books, in the history of the study of the Old Testament. This became acute after the Second World War when Old Testament scholars were interested in the unifying theology of the Old Testament (cf. Kynes 2015:11-18).

some sayings in the book of Proverbs create a tension if read side by side (Prov. 1:7 and 4:5-7; cf. Clifford 1997:1-3; Penchansky 2012:6-7).

Wisdom's approach to reality was also assessed in contradistinction to the approach of some groups in Ancient Israelite society, notably the priests and the prophets (cf. Sneed 2015a:1-2). The wisdom approach was said to belong to the sages or wisemen (cf. Jer 18:18; Crenshaw 2010:24-25). The distinguishing approach of the Sages was their reliance on experience and reason as sources of knowledge, rather than mediated revelation as in the case of the prophets, and rather than the law and the cult as in the case of the priests.<sup>124</sup> While there may be some merits to this distinction, it also remains valid that the wisdom approach would have been shared in varying degrees by various members of Israelite society (cf. Murphy 1981:3).<sup>125</sup> This is no wonder why this approach is scattered throughout the Old Testament in various ways and contexts. It is the view of this study that it remains legitimate to talk about a wisdom approach to reality in the sense pointed above but with a caveat and expansion. The caveat is that this approach was shared by members of Israelite society in varying degrees as pointed out by Murphy (1981:3; cf. Sneed 2011:59-60). The expansion is that this approach to reality never remained static. It expanded in its scope and depth in response to new experiences; new contexts; and new circumstances (cf. Adams 2008). One example of this expansion is its appearance in prophetic contexts, which is the major hypothesis of this study. Another example of this expansion is the identification of wisdom with the law and Israelite history in the books of Sira and Wisdom of Solomon. This has led some scholars to speak of wisdom traditions rather than tradition, in the light of these expansions and varieties (cf. Collins 1997:279).

The word 'wisdom' has also been used to refer to a group of writings in the Old Testament where the word and its cognates frequently appear and where the quest for knowledge, instructions and the approach the reality pointed out above take a centre stage, namely the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, and its Greek form *sophia* in the books of Sirach and

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<sup>124</sup> For a brief summary of this proposal see Sneed 2015:1-2, and the article of Will Kynes (2015) in that edition. Schellenberg (2015), however, argues that direct revelation was not frowned upon but was part of the epistemological source of the sages (cf. Job 4 and 38-41). For Schellenberg the difference was the non-reliance on particular individuals as unique or chosen spokespersons of God, like in the prophetic tradition.

<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, in the light of the 'wisdom texts' from Qumran one may also speak of diverse wisdom traditions (cf. Goff 2010:325). Sneed (2011:59-60) is also inclined not to speak of a distinct wisdom worldview.

Wisdom of Solomon. This would include some texts scattered throughout the Old Testament. This use of the tag 'wisdom' has become a scholarly convention and consensus.<sup>126</sup> This use and designation has in one sense been influenced by the arrangement of the books in the Hebrew and Christian bibles. In the tripartite division of the Hebrew (MT), we have the Torah, the Nebi'im and the Ketubim. The books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth are among the books that are part of the Ketubim. In the Christian Old Testament the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, including Sira and Wisdom of the longer canon are grouped together after the historical books and before the books of the Prophets.

Ecclesiastical practice of grouping these books together has been traced back to Jerome in his *Prologue to the Books of Solomon* (cf. Clifford 1997:1). The consistent use of the term 'Wisdom Literature', however, is said to go back no earlier than the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Weeks 2016:4-5).<sup>127</sup> Since then, the collection has been traditionally referred to as Wisdom literature.

This Ecclesiastical usage and scholarly practice categorize the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth for the shorter Old Testament canon, and the books of Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon in the longer canon, under the category wisdom literature. Basing on the vocabulary, themes and genre found in these books, this designation has also been used in the categorization of other texts in different sections of the Old Testament, like some of the Psalms, for example, Psa 1, 34, 37, 39, 49, 73 and 104 (cf. Kselman & Barré 1993:525; Clifford 1997:1; Crenshaw 2010).<sup>128</sup> However, this usage and practice has received sporadic questioning in the past (cf. von Rad 1972:7-8) and has recently come under much scrutiny in the light of the imprecise meaning of the term 'wisdom' and in the light of much material that is in each of the books which receives

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<sup>126</sup> For a critique of this scholarly convention see Kynes (2015:11-38).

<sup>127</sup> For more on the history of the use of the term wisdom literature see Kynes (2015:13-14). Kynes gives a list of the scholars who trace the use of the term to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE, who include Crenshaw (1976: 3) but argues for an earlier date towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE (cf. Whybray 1995:1)

<sup>128</sup> Crenshaw (2010) includes these five books and accepted only a limited number of Psalms. For the debate concerning the legitimacy, possibility, difficulty and criteria for identifying wisdom Psalms see Saur (2015:181-204) and Forti (2015:205-220). For Saur (2015:181-204) the issues treated in what has been referred to as wisdom Psalms traditionally were issues discussed by the Jewish communities in general and not privy to a special group of sages. Forti on her part sees the category of wisdom Psalms in a positive light but questions the fluidity of the methodology used in identifying wisdom Psalms. Using linguistic, lexical, thematic and other criteria, she concludes that Psa 39 and 104 can legitimately be called wisdom Psalms.



consideration outside of what the traditional designation may permit, as well as the limitation this designation may impose on possible alternative readings and interpretation of these books (cf. Dell 2013:15; Kynes 2015:11-38; Weeks 2016:3-4). This criticism has some merits, in that the objections raised are well founded with respect to interpretive reasons. But an alternative is yet to be provided. This would be an alternative that satisfies both the criticism against the traditional categorization, as well as proves to be sufficient enough to accommodate the elements that paved the way for the traditional designation,<sup>129</sup> and the convenience associated with the traditional usage. Alternatives have tended to be either too specific or too broad (cf. Weeks 2010). Therefore, Weeks (1999:27; 2010:144) and others (cf. Goff 2010:334-335; Kynes 2015:31) propose the continuation of the use of the phrase Wisdom literature, as long as the shortcomings and strengths are kept in mind.<sup>130</sup>

#### **4.3 Wisdom tradition<sup>131</sup>**

Associated with wisdom literature has been what has been called wisdom tradition. This has been proposed as a separate and one of the distinguishable traditions in Ancient Israel, among the Prophetic and Priestly traditions (cf. Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26; Morgan 1984:189-197; Crenshaw 2010:24, 41-60).<sup>132</sup> In the light of the discussion on tradition in chapter two, wisdom tradition has content (*traditum*) and locale and traditors (*traditio*). By wisdom tradition is meant an approach to life and teachings associated with wisdom (*traditum*). Typical of this tradition is its reference to life experience as the source of and guide to knowledge, wisdom and contentment. This approach to reality is expressed in various ways through sayings, dialogues and discourses. Characteristic of this tradition is its openness to and its accommodation of criticism and new ideas.

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<sup>129</sup> These would include the use of the word *hokma* and its synonyms found frequently in these books, certain themes and genres (cf. Murphy 1981:3).

<sup>130</sup> Wisdom has also been used as a generic category for sayings that teach, instruct and express knowledge gained from elders and from experiences. These have been categorized as wisdom sayings (cf. Murphy 1981:184).

<sup>131</sup> The word tradition is used collectively here, taking into consideration the varieties and development in the approach to reality exhibited through time in the history of wisdom in Ancient Israel.

<sup>132</sup> In Ezek 7:26 the counsel (*'etsah*) of elders is mentioned alongside the visions of the prophet and law of the priest. While *'etsah* is ascribed to the elders, it makes sense to suppose that these elders were wisemen in the light of Ezek 27:8-9 the words wisemen and elders are used interchangeably and in the light of Jer 18:18 where the role of the wisemen is that of counsel (*'etsah*).

In a negative sense, wisdom tradition is also characterized by minimal to no reference to pillars of Israelite faith, like the exodus, election, the cult, and the Zion as well as Davidic traditions.<sup>133</sup> Wisdom literature is the extant expression of the wisdom tradition in Ancient Israel. Our knowledge of the scope of this tradition, however, is not limited to the five books mentioned above. Wisdom themes and ideas are also expressed in several texts of the Old Testament (cf. Morgan 1984:193-195).

It was once held that the absence of the theme of salvation history meant that wisdom tradition promoted a secular worldview and ignored the religious worldview. This is no longer the position of the majority of wisdom scholars. Israelite wisdom tradition would have been religious through and through, as there was no distinction between the religious and the secular in Ancient Israel (cf. von Rad 1972:62; Morgan 1984:192; Murphy 1996:113-115).<sup>134</sup> There is, however, a plausible argument for the redactional additions of a religious flavour in places where this was assumed but not explicit. A case in point would be the recommendations to fear the Lord in some sections of Proverbs and Qoheleth.<sup>135</sup>

A theme that appears in all wisdom books and is important for this present study is the teaching of just retribution and the collateral associated with it, the suffering of the innocent. This theme has also been described as the act-consequence connection or nexus (cf. Koch

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<sup>133</sup> This proposal of a distinct wisdom tradition in ancient Israel has been questioned as pointed out above. Sneed (2011:50-71) wrote an article whose purpose was to clarify the use and understanding of the term 'wisdom tradition'. Sneed does not completely reject the use of the term wisdom tradition but the claim of its distinctiveness or uniqueness as maintained in the work of Crenshaw (2010:24-33) and others. According to Sneed "the same authors who composed wisdom literature are also responsible for the composition and/or preservation of the other types of literature," in the Old Testament (Sneed 2011:53-54, 58). In a collection of articles with the title *Was there a wisdom tradition?: New prospects in Israelite wisdom studies* prompted by Sneed's question of the conventional use of wisdom tradition, there is a wide spectrum of positions with regards to the legitimacy and appropriateness of the use of the term wisdom tradition (Sneed 2015). There are those who question the meaning and use of the term (Stuart Weeks, Mark Sneed, Markus Saur, Raik Heckl, William Kynes and Nili Shupak); and those who stir the middle path (Katharine Dell, Douglas Miller and Annette Schellenberg). Finally there are those who accept its use but with qualification of some sort. Notably, there is only one scholar who maintains the conventional use, namely Tova Forti (2015:205-220; cf. Sneed 2015:3). This study adopts the middle view. Wisdom tradition is used not as distinct or unique but as an approach to reality that was held by ancient Israelites in varying degrees and emphases.

<sup>134</sup> This none distinction is aptly captured in the often quoted words of Von Rad, "The experiences of the world were for her always divine experiences as well, and the experiences of God were for her experiences of the world" (von Rad 1972:62).

<sup>135</sup> For a discussion on the Yahwistic redaction theory with reference to the book of Proverbs see Adams (2008:77-82).

1983:57-87; Murphy 1993:449; Adams 2008:1-4; Schellenberg 2015:124-126). While this theme is also present throughout the Old Testament, it is in wisdom literature that it is applied to individual life and experience. This theme shall be treated in detail below. Suffice to say, at present, that this theme is not only found in all the books of wisdom literature and some Old Testament texts but also that the theme is treated in different ways in relation to the the contexts and aims of these texts. There is a positive affirmation of the teaching of just retribution (Proverbs), a critique of it in the light of the individual experiences to the contrary (Job and Qoheleth) and a postponement of its fulfilment in the afterlife (Wisdom of Solomon).

#### **4.4 Custodians of wisdom literature and tradition**

Wisdom literature has been seen by many scholars as a literary product or tradition of sages or wise people in Ancient Israel. This group is thought to have had a particular world view and approach to life somehow distinct from the other groups, like the prophets and priests in Ancient Israel (cf. Crenshaw 2010:24-26). This view of associating the origins of wisdom literature with a distinct group or distinct movement in Ancient Israel has also come under much criticism for various reasons (cf. Sneed 2011:54, 62-64).<sup>136</sup> Topmost among these being the lack of evidence for such a distinct group and the ubiquitous presence of wisemen and wisewomen among the prophets, priests and other intellectual personalities in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East world in general. It is now thought that wisdom was at the heart of the training of Hebrew scribes, who came from different backgrounds, that included the royal court and scribal schools (cf. Carr 2005; Carr 2011:407; cf. Kynes 2015:22). Clifford goes as far as stating that it is “likely that wisdom thinking was in the main stream of biblical literary production from whence its style and ideas radiated throughout biblical writings” (Clifford 1997:1).

Wisdom literature does not provide direct evidence of the place(s) of origin, maintenance and development of wisdom tradition. Each book and text bears minimal traces of its origins. There are inconclusive clues in some passages (cf. Job 15:17-18). But in view of the purpose of

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<sup>136</sup> Sneed (2011) argues that Old Testament literature was composed and preserved by scribal scholars from all walks of life, who, however, were trained as scribes using wisdom genres. Kynes (2015:20-21) criticises Sneed’s proposal of genre as well as scribal setting. In Kynes’ view this will make ‘anything’ and ‘everything’ in the Old Testament wisdom.

wisdom and its traditions and evidence from wisdom texts of the Ancient Near East, the places of origin and dissemination of this tradition have been identified with the family, clan, the court and later scribal schools (cf. Murphy 1993:448; Crenshaw 2010:13-16, 24-25). The clan provided the first socialization into its values and traditions, through its primary organ, the family. Parents and elders taught family and clan values to their offspring for purposes of maintaining order and community survival (cf. Crenshaw 2010:4-5). Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to isolate wisdom sayings that go back to this group. With the establishment of the monarchy, came the need for trained bureaucrats, diplomats and professional scribes (cf. Morgan 1984:191-192). After the demise of the monarchy scribal schools would have continued the writing tradition of not only wisdom genres but the other genres that are in the Old Testament (cf. Clifford 1997:4; Carr 2011).

#### **4.5 Literary Forms**

In terms of literary form or genre, the phrase wisdom literature has further been construed differently either as a generic category (cf. Kynes 2015:11-12) or simply as a literary mode (cf. Sneed 2011:50-71; 2015b:41-42) or even a loose literary category (cf. Murphy 1983:3). Others simply doubt whether it is a genre in any meaningful sense (cf. Weeks 2010:85). In the light of the foregoing discussion it is advisable to follow the proposition of Murphy (1983:3) and/or Sneed (2011:50-71). Wisdom literature is a group of texts which have many common features that allow these books to be grouped together but also some differences that would make it difficult to call wisdom literature a genre in formal critical terms of structure, content and purpose. This loose grouping of books has several common literary forms and subgenres which scholars have used to support this grouping of literature.

The main forms that have been identified are sayings, dialogue or disputation and reflections (cf. Murphy 1981; Clifford 1997:9; Crenshaw 2010:31-33).<sup>137</sup> These broad forms have

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<sup>137</sup> For a detailed identification and exposition of the forms found in wisdom literature see Murphy (1981). In this volume of the series, *The forms of the Old Testament literature*, Murphy outlines the literary forms found in the books of Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and Esther. He also provides a glossary of the forms and their definitions at the end of the book.

been classified into different sub-groups or subgenres.<sup>138</sup> Sayings are of different types like proverbs, experiential and didactic sayings, admonitions and exhortations (cf. Murphy 1981:4-6). Didactic sayings, admonitions and exhortations have also been called instructions because of the teachings that are expressed in order to impart and instil certain values.<sup>139</sup> They are usually accompanied by motives and warnings. While these forms are typical in Proverbs, they are also found in Job, Qoheleth, Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon. Dialogue or disputation is another typical form of wisdom literature. It is the main form found in the book of Job but the structure of the book of Qoheleth have led some to suggest some form of dialogue between Qoheleth with some other interlocutor or simply dialogue with traditional wisdom teaching. Another form is a reflection. Reflection entails the pondering upon and evaluation of a teaching, tradition or observation, usually but not always accompanied with a recommendation. The reflections may take various forms and thus usually have a loose structure. Some make use of rhetorical questions, for example and others do not (Murphy 1981:181). This is found mainly in the book of Qoheleth but they are examples of the form in some of the wisdom books, for example reflection on wisdom in Job 28:12-28. It is important to keep note of these three main literary types that are used in wisdom literature.

#### **4.6 Summary and Concluding remarks**

The Hebrew word *חָכְמָה* (wisdom) is used in various ways and contexts to express the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them for the achievement of prosperity. Despite human endeavours, ultimately, the source of this knowledge and the ability to apply it rests with the Lord. The Scholarly ‘consensus’ among Old Testament scholars is to use the word wisdom to refer to an approach to or understanding of reality characterized by: individual rather than communal concerns, universal rather than national concerns; an openness to the certainties and

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<sup>138</sup> Crenshaw (2010:31-33) highlights and describes eight literary forms: proverb, riddle, allegory, hymn, dialogue, autobiographical narrative, catalogues or noun lists, didactic narrative (poetry and prose). Many of these fit one way or another into the three broad categories proposed here.

<sup>139</sup> The theory is that sayings were originally succinct, usually a line or two, and figurative expressions of conclusions arrived at from sustained observations and experience of the natural and human worlds over a period of time (cf. Prov 10-31). In the wake of the desire to impart knowledge, the form of the sayings was gradually altered to accommodate this function. The simple sayings became longer some of them with motives and warnings attached to them giving rise to instructive or didactic poems (cf. Prov. 1-9). For detailed description of this development see Westermann (1995:108-110) and Crenshaw (2010:31).

ambiguities of life; reflection on what constitutes wisdom, where it may be found, how and if it may be acquired as well as its benefits. It is usually associated with a movement or tradition that promoted, preserved and, disseminated this approach and understanding of reality. This movement was not limited to a particular group, locality or social class. Israelites from different walks of life shared in varying degrees this approach and understanding. However, the literary expression of this approach or tradition is usually associated with Israelite scribes, and the locality of this literary production the court or scribal 'schools'. Three main literary forms have been discerned in this mode of literature, namely, sayings, disputations and reflections. Each of these forms has several subgenres. One theme common in this literature is the teaching of individual, just retribution, and its corollary, the suffering of the innocent.<sup>140</sup> In the next chapter a brief description of each of the five books shall be presented together with the views on the issue of the suffering of the innocent found therein.

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<sup>140</sup> In the words of Crenshaw (2010:16), "Wisdom addresses natural, human and theological dimensions of reality, and constitutes an attitude toward life, a living tradition and a literary corpus."

## Chapter Five

### Wisdom Literature and Innocent Suffering

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter a modest attempt was made at summarizing the complex issues surrounding the scholarly consensus or 'tradition' on the meaning and characteristics of Old Testament Wisdom literature and tradition. The difficulties bedeviling the definition and use of the term wisdom literature and/or tradition were highlighted, including the recent dissatisfaction expressed by some scholars of the Old Testament. Even though there was no specific definition given to delimit wisdom literature, common traits and characteristics among the traditionally accepted wisdom books and texts were outlined and discussed. One such theme that is pertinent to this study is the theme of the suffering of the innocent. This chapter shall move on to summarize the generally accepted views on the rather complex topics of the provenance and 'main' contents of the wisdom corpus, namely the books of Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth, Sira and Wisdom of Solomon and their respective contribution to the theme of the suffering of the innocent. A brief description of the meaning of the suffering of the innocent will be given first before the summary of the main contents of the wisdom corpus. This will provide the basis on which to assess the relationship, if any, of Isa 52:13-53:12 and the concept of vicarious suffering contained therein with wisdom literature and tradition.

#### 5.2 The Suffering of the Innocent

The theme of the suffering of the innocent is a common theme that is addressed in wisdom literature and tradition as already pointed out in chapters three and four. This is when a person who is considered just, upright or innocent suffers loss of health and property (cf. Job 1-2)<sup>141</sup> or was not privileged to have them in the first place. Put in another way, this person does not

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<sup>141</sup> Job is described as: 'אִישׁ יָשָׁר וְיָרֵא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מִרָע: 'a man who was perfect, upright, God-fearing and who shunned evil.' (Job 1:1b; cf. Job 28:28b).

prosper in terms of health, wealth, long life, offspring and honour.<sup>142</sup> Keeping in line with the orientation of these texts, the suffering of the innocent individual and not the nation takes centre stage. This theme takes centre stage because of several reasons. Firstly, in wisdom literature and tradition we see a quest, a search for meaning and happiness and an effort to make sense of the absurdities of life, at an individual level. Innocent suffering was one such absurdity in the light of the traditional teaching of just retribution and the act-consequence connection understanding promoted and held by the sages. Secondly, within the framework of the assumption of cosmic order and moral order in particular, the suffering of the innocent remained an enigma. Thus, the question, ‘where is the order in innocent suffering?’ could stubbornly and consistently have lingered at the back of the minds of the wise and the people in general. Also associated with the assumption of moral order was the traditional teaching of just retribution or the so-called act-consequence nexus which could provide an explanation for the suffering of the ‘wicked’ in many but not all instances, and which became a liability in the face of innocent suffering and the prosperity of the wicked in some instances.

### **5.2.1 The teaching on just retribution<sup>143</sup>**

To fully appreciate the problem of the suffering of the innocent one needs to understand the teaching of just retribution from which the problem of innocent suffering emerged. This teaching is expressed or rather given various names. This includes: the doctrine of retribution (Koch 1983); just retribution (Dell 2013); acts-consequence nexus (Adams 2008; cf. Koch 1983); and divine retribution (Neusner & Green 1996:531). Just retribution shall be adopted here for its simplicity and clarity.

Retribution is the allotting of rewards and punishment in relation to a person’s actions and behaviour (Neusner & Green 1996:527). Just retribution would, therefore, entail the fair and ‘deserving’ distribution of such rewards and punishments.

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<sup>142</sup> These were considered to be the markers of prosperity in ancient Israel (cf. Isa 53:10αγ).

<sup>143</sup> This teaching was briefly mentioned in Chapter Three at 3.1.3, as part of one of the perspectives from which suffering was ‘understood’ and ‘explained’ in the Old Testament. A detailed discussion was postponed to this chapter to help in the understanding of the theme of the suffering of the innocent.



The teaching of just retribution is found throughout the Old Testament from the Pentateuch to the Deuteronomic corpus, from the writings of the prophets and to the wisdom corpus. It is indeed tied to the notion of the covenant, the conditional covenants found in the Old Testament, to be precise (Deut 28; Jos 24: 14-24; cf. Neusner & Green 1996:531).<sup>144</sup> What is basic to this teaching is that actions have consequences. In general and by tradition, good actions were said to produce favourable outcomes and bad actions were said to produce unfavourable outcomes. It is not clear how the consequences came about. There are passages that ascribe the consequences to an external force or forces, mainly to Israel's covenantal God (cf. Deut 28; 30:15-20; Judg 2:6-23; Prov 3:11-12; Wis 1:7-8).<sup>145</sup> There are also passages that give the impression that the outcomes were understood as natural consequences of the actions, both in the natural and moral worlds (Prov 11:5; 18:21; 26:27; Qoh 10:8-9; Sir 27:26-27; cf. Koch 1983; Adams 2008:1-5). In both cases the teaching could be summarized thus: good actions lead to prosperity and bad actions to ill fortunes. In other words, the good prosper and the wicked are punished.<sup>146</sup>

This teaching is one of the approaches to life that was shared in varying degrees by Israelites so much so that it is the framework through which actions and events in the Old Testament are assessed. Individual as well as community experiences are explained in relation to their actions. We see this understanding in operation from the book of Genesis (Gen 2-3) to the book of Deuteronomy (Num 14:33; Deut 27; 28; 30:15-20); from the books of Joshua to the

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<sup>144</sup> A covenant is basically an agreement or treaty. There are different covenants in the Old Testament between God and individuals (Gen 15) or family (2 Sam 7:1-17) and between God and the people of Israel (Exod 24; 34). These covenants or agreements are indeed between unequal parties. God is the superior party and Israel or individual members of Israel constitute the minor party. Some covenants have conditions tied to them (Exod 24) and others do not (Gen 15). The conditional covenants have expectations that go with them, which originate from the superior party, as well as blessings and curses attached to them. Obedience to the stipulations of the covenant meant blessing and prosperity and disobedience meant curses and punishment (Deut 28; cf. Neusner & Green 1996:136-137).

<sup>145</sup> This is expressed consistently in the book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (cf. Deut 30:15-20, Judg 2:6-23), in much of the Prophetic literature, in the book of Job and the Wisdom of Solomon. The assumption behind this is that God is just and has the power and will to execute justice (cf. Gen 18:12-25; Ezek 18: 1-32; 33:10-20; Wis 12:12-18).

<sup>146</sup> Some are of the view that this teaching was developed within the circles of the wise (Bergant 1984:10-11; Weinfeld 1992; cf. NJB: 750 §3). This is highly possible but there is no direct evidence to prove it. The best one can say is that this is the teaching on which the instructions of wisdom are based, developed, and were critiqued within wisdom circles and literature. This applies both to the position that it is in-built in the nature of things and the position that God punishes the wicked and rewards the just. For them the world is ruled by a God who is just and wise.

books of Kings (Josh 7; Judg 2:6-23; 2Kings 17); from the prophetic books to the wisdom corpus. In the book of Proverbs this teaching becomes part of the dominant teaching expressed in many of the sayings and instructions found therein (Prov 3:33-35; 9:6, 18; 11:5). While in Proverbs it is presented as having been tested by experience and maintained by tradition (Prov 4:1-9), in the books of the Pentateuch, the books of the history of Israel (Joshua to Kings, Chronicles) and the prophets, the teaching is given a divine origin, within the covenantal framework. It is presented as part of the revelation of the God of the covenant. The book of Deuteronomy puts it succinctly, “Keep the commandments that the Lord your God has given you and you will prosper in the land that the Lord is giving you as possession” (Deut 4:40) and “But if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, and do not keep his commandments and laws....all these curses will befall and overtake you” (Deut 28:15).<sup>147</sup>

In the book of Job it is the subject matter of the disputation between Job, his three friends and the young man Elihu.<sup>148</sup> In the book Qoheleth it is questioned and relativized. In the deuterocanonical books of Sirach and Wisdom it is upheld positively as in the book of Proverbs. In the book of Wisdom the inadequacies of this teaching, highlighted by experience and brought in the open in the books of Job and Qoheleth, are said to be compensated for in the life here after (Wis 3:1-9).

For the sages the individual’s experience and destiny was of paramount importance and so was the teaching of retribution and its attendant problems. Though this teaching is witnessed to in the different parts of the Old Testament, it is highly probable that this teaching originated within the circles of the sages and continued to be central in their assessment of individual success and failure in this life (Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth and Sirach; cf. Bergant 1984:10-11) and in the afterlife (Wisdom of Solomon). It is on this basis that the instructions and teachings of wisdom are based. Support for this teaching is experience<sup>149</sup> and belief in a God who rules this

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<sup>147</sup> Proposals have been made regarding the influence of wisdom tradition or rather resemblances of wisdom literature to several texts in the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Crenshaw 1969:129; Weinfeld 1992; Kugel 2007:310-313).

<sup>148</sup> For the friends of Job, this teaching has become a doctrine to be adhered to even if experience bears witness to the contrary. For them these are considered to be isolated cases which could be explained in one way or another, within the framework of the teaching of just retribution, as will be shown below.

<sup>149</sup> In some circles reference to the supernatural origins of this teaching is also hinted at (cf. Job 4:12-21).

world with wisdom and justice (cf. Prov 10:1-32; Wis 12:15). However, isolated but significant individual experience to the contrary was acknowledged and progressively became a source of much debate, rich in both scope and depth.

While there is sporadic and qualified questioning of as well as dissatisfaction with this teaching in some parts of the Old Testament (cf. Jer 12:1-2),<sup>150</sup> the teaching of just retribution is questioned particularly in the books of Job and Qoheleth, in the light of their experience to the contrary, that is, the suffering of the just and the righteous, on the one hand and the prosperity of the wicked on the other.<sup>151</sup> For some Sages, the suffering of the just and innocent must have made little sense within the conceptual framework of the teaching of just retribution. In the book of Job, Job's friends defend the traditional teaching (Job 4:6-9), but Job's protest and the enigmatic response of God (Job 38-42) leads to the conclusion that while the teaching of just retribution is a reasonable starting point for understanding human experience and destiny, it remains inadequate for explaining the suffering of the innocent here on earth. Faith in God and his mysterious providence remains the provisional answer. Qoheleth reaches approximately the same conclusions and exhort his audience or readers to enjoy the gift of life and leave the rest to God (cf. 2:24; 3:13, 22; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7-11). Ben Sira, as will be shown below, maintains that at death justice will be served. It is the author of the Wisdom of Solomon who admits at one and the same time the veracity of the teaching of just retribution, and its final fulfilment not in this earthly life but in the life to come, life beyond the grave (Wis 3:1-9). The presumption of the teaching of just retribution is the framework within which the concept of vicarious suffering is crafted. The innocent servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 suffers as a consequence of the deeds of others. Vicarious suffering becomes one way of making sense of the suffering of the innocent.

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<sup>150</sup> In this passage Jeremiah questions God on the issue of the prosperity of the just. This questioning presupposes the teaching of just retribution. This questioning of Jeremiah emanates from the teaching of retribution gone 'awol'. This would not be, by any stretch of imagination, the first time this question is raised in the Old Testament. There are sayings in Proverbs that already hint at this ambiguity as will be shown below. This questioning and reflection is then taken up in some Psalms (cf. Psa 37; 73) and becomes the central issue in the books of Job and Qoheleth. In all these, the inadequacy, 'relevancy' and even 'sensitivity' of the teaching of retribution is questioned and debated.

<sup>151</sup> There is a marked shift from the concentration on the experience of the community as a whole to the experience of individuals, in their capacity as members of the community. Jeremiah's questioning, the complaints of Job and the Psalmist, and the 'pessimistic' outlook of Qoheleth emanate from their personal experiences that simply do not make sense in the light of the teaching of retribution.

### 5.3 The suffering of the innocent in Wisdom literature and tradition

From the sayings in Proverbs, to the disputation in Job, the observation and reflections in Qoheleth, to the poetic affirmations of Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon, the theme of innocent suffering found expression in different ways, contexts and for different reasons. In each book and context the theme is viewed from different angles and different provisional and open-ended 'explanations' are proffered. There appears to be a progression in the way this theme is addressed, a progression that culminates in the affirmation that goes beyond the grave, where the demands of just retribution will finally be fulfilled (cf. Wis 3:1-12).<sup>152</sup>

#### 5.3.1 The book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs has always been held as a typical representative of Israelite wisdom literature in relation to its forms, content and purpose.<sup>153</sup> The form is that of short sayings of various types (10-29),<sup>154</sup> and long poetic sections (Prov 1-9; 30-31). In general, the content and purpose of the material have to do with instructions aimed at instilling good conduct that ensures earthly happiness and success, and communal stability (Prov 1:2-6). This is what the book refers to as wisdom (Prov 1:1-6).

The audience is notably the young and the open-minded identified at the beginning of every chapter in Prov 1-9 (Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 6:1; 7:1).<sup>155</sup> It is also identified at the beginning and towards the end of the section collection in Prov 10-29 (10:1; 29:17). The reflection on and 'self-description' of the nature and necessity of wisdom also stands out in the first section of the book (Prov 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 8:1-31; 9:1-6). The book itself is a collection of these sayings and poems arranged in more or less clearly marked sections. There are basically seven sections in all.

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<sup>152</sup> It is part of the thesis of this study that vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 is a result of this on-going reflection on the meaning of innocent suffering.

<sup>153</sup> Dell (2013) uses Proverbs as the standard for assessing whether the book of Job could be counted among Old Testament wisdom literature. Dell (2013:15) calls Proverbs "the first and leading text of wisdom literature (cf. Dell 2000).

<sup>154</sup> Murphy (1981:4-6) groups them into two main groups: sayings (proverbs, experiential and didactic) and; commands and prohibitions.

<sup>155</sup> In the chapters that describe and reflect on wisdom (chapters 8-9) the audience is identified at Prov 8:32.

### 5.3.1.1 The Structure

The first section, chapters 1-9 is a long poetic section in which a father instructs his son (1:8-19; 2-7) and in which wisdom commends herself to the open-minded and those willing to heed her instructions (1:20-33; 8:1-9:6). Together with Prov 1:1-7, 1:8-9:18 serves as an introduction to the whole book.<sup>156</sup> The second section 10:1-22:16, is a collection of sayings attributed to Solomon (10:1). The third section is entitled 'sayings of the sages (22:17-24:34) and Prov 25-29 is again a collection of sayings attributed to Solomon but put down at the court of Hezekiah (25:1). The fourth section is a group of sayings attributed to Agur (30:1-14). The fifth and sixth sections are a collection of numerical sayings (30:15-33) followed by sayings attributed to Lemuel (31:1-9). The seventh and last section is an acrostic (alphabetical) poem in praise of the perfect wife (31:10-31).<sup>157</sup>

### 5.3.1.2 Date of Composition

These seven sections are basically collections of sayings and poems that were put together at various periods in Israel's history. It is not easy, however, to provide dates for these sayings and collections due to the ahistorical nature of the sayings, the lack of contextual and historical indicators, and the fact that the composition and gathering of sayings was an on-going process throughout the history of Ancient Israel (cf. Crenshaw 1992:513; Adams 2008:62-63). As already pointed out above, chapter 1-9 though at the beginning of the book, is not the earliest section of the book. It is considered to have been added later in this process, while chapters 10:1-22:16 and 25-29 are considered to be the earliest (cf. McCreesh 1993:453-454). The latter are usually dated to the monarchic period but their individual parts may have been composed even earlier than the period of the monarchy (cf. Adams 2008:63-68). Though the sayings in these chapters are ascribed to Solomon, this is understood in terms of patronage rather than actual authorship or composition (cf. 1Kgs 5:12). It is not easy to date the sayings ascribed to Agur and Lemuel (30:1-31:9). These were non-Israelite, Arabian sages. The same may be said about the dating of

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<sup>156</sup> It is the view of the majority of scholars that chapters 1-9 were a later addition to the book. Heckl (2015:228-236) argues that Prov 1-9 was added, during the Persian period to the collection of proverbs and instructions used in scribal schools with the aim of bringing these into the then accepted canon represented by the Pentateuch and Deuteronomic writings.

<sup>157</sup> For an elaborate structure of the book of Proverbs see Adams (2008:57-59).

Prov 22:17-23:11. What is noteworthy, however, is the resemblance of the sayings of Prov 22:17-23:11 to the Egyptian Instructions of Amenemope, usually dated to the first millennium BCE (cf. Crenshaw 1992:513).<sup>158</sup> The final editing of the book is dated between 6<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> BCE (cf. Crenshaw 1992:515; McCreech 1993:454; Adams 2008:68).

### 5.3.1.3 Innocent Suffering in Proverbs

The teaching of the book of Proverbs is varied and reflects the history of the literary nature and history of the composition of the book. The theme on innocent suffering is one of the many themes that can be discerned in the book. The meaning of this theme is affected by the other themes that are found in the book.

In the earliest collections, Prov 10-29 we encounter a variety of sayings emanating from the human experience of the natural and human worlds and the lessons that the sages drew from them (Prov 6:6-11). These are lessons that constitute what the book refers to as 'wisdom' (Prov 1:1-6). This practical wisdom is the source of virtue and righteousness. Its opposite is folly and wickedness. Practical wisdom is about making well-informed, timely and appropriate choices. This can and should be sought by everyone. It is taught by the parents or elders or teachers.<sup>159</sup> The book of Proverbs is, by and large, very positive about the access of wisdom to all, about the ability of human beings to attain wisdom and about the reliability and predictability of tried and tested successful conduct and practice (Prov 2:1-15). On the other hand sayings in the book of Proverbs also accept uncertainties and the fact of the relative validity of sayings and even contradictions in the light of experience (Prov 26:4-5). In the words of Murphy (1999:448) "the most severe limitation to wisdom was the Lord" (cf. Prov 16:1, 9; 19:21; 20:24). There is, therefore, a religious element assumed or explicitly expressed in many of the sayings in Proverbs. According to the prevailing view contained in these sayings, God is not only the giver and

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<sup>158</sup> Without ascribing specific dates, Crenshaw (1992:514-515) proposes the following historical sequence of the composition of the sections beginning with 10:1-22:16 and ending with 31:10-31: 10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27; 22:17-24:22; 1:1-9:18; 24:23-34 and 30:15-33; 30:1-14 and 31:1-9; 31:10-31.

<sup>159</sup> The father son relationship was extended beyond biological relationships to include elders in the community and teachers.

guarantor of wisdom (Prov 2:6), but the ultimate determiner of what constitutes wisdom (Prov 21:30).<sup>160</sup>

Generally speaking, the book of Proverbs promotes the connection between deeds and their consequences, as one of its presumptions and as one way of encouraging and motivating the young to embrace wisdom or the instructions of the wise. Good conduct, that is, actions done through wisdom, that is, righteousness leads to prosperity. Bad conduct, that is, actions done through folly, which is equated to wickedness, leads to doom, on this earth.

In the book of Proverbs righteousness is construed in terms of acting wisely, whose beginning and culmination is in the fear of the Lord (1:7; 9:10; 15:33a). Besides being the beginning and culmination of wisdom, the fear of the Lord is further qualified in various ways in the book of Proverbs. It is associated with: the knowledge of God (Prov 2:5); humility (Prov 15:33b; 22:4); ethical behaviour in general (Prov 3:7; 8:13); long life and security (Prov 10:27; 14:27; 19:23) and; the knowledge of the sages, of the wise (30:3).<sup>161</sup> Taking into consideration of all these qualifications, one can safely say that the fear of the Lord is the knowledge of the sages concerning the scope and limits of human wisdom (Prov 16:1-9). This is a theme that the books of Job and Qoheleth further explore.

Unlike in the books of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomic history (Joshua to Kings), and Prophetic books<sup>162</sup> where the teaching of just retribution is applied to the nation of Israel, in the book of Proverbs and Wisdom literature in general, the teaching is applied to the life of individuals. This is either seen as built-in in the nature of things (Prov 11:5; 13:20; 26:27; cf. Qoh 10:8; Sir 27:26-27) or is brought about by members of the community (Prov 14:35) or is seen as the intervention of God who rewards good conduct and punishes perpetrators of evil (Prov. 3:11-12; 10:3, 22; 24:12; cf. Schellenberg 2015:124). In the book of Proverbs, the latter is the more frequent.

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<sup>160</sup> For an interpretation and exposition of the different voices and opinions in the book of Proverbs and wisdom literature in general, see Penchansky (2012).

<sup>161</sup> The MT has קדושים which is usually translated 'holy ones' (NRSV; NJB). However, in the light of the context the highlights intelligence, wisdom and knowledge, it would make sense to translate קדושים with 'sages or the wise ones'.

<sup>162</sup> With the possible exception of the prophets Jeremiah (cf. Jer 12) and Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 18).

There is no systematic treatment of the issue of innocent suffering in the book of Proverbs. This is no surprise and is to be expected considering the nature of the book, as a compendium of collections of sayings and poems from different periods of Israel's history, experiences and conclusions. Having said that, in these collections the teaching of just retribution is applied to the life of individuals without any qualms nor qualifications (Prov 3:33-35; 9:6).<sup>163</sup> The acts-consequence nexus is unwaveringly maintained (Adams 2008:54).<sup>164</sup> In some sayings actions are said to naturally lead to certain consequences (Prov 1:18-19; 10:17; 11:31; 14:14; 26:27; cf. Qoh 10:8; Sir 27:25-27). In other sayings God intervenes to reward or punish (Prov 3:31-35; 10:3, 22; 15:29, 16:1, 4, 17:15). Still in other sayings it is left open (Prov 5:22-23; 10:16; 11:21).<sup>165</sup>

This unwavering maintenance of the teaching of just retribution finds further expression in what has been called the doctrine of two ways (cf. Clifford 1997:12). There are two ways of life as well as 'personalities' and their corresponding consequences that one can choose from. There is no middle-way (cf. Qoh 7:15-18).<sup>166</sup> These include: righteous and wicked; wisdom and folly; Lady wisdom (1:20-33; 8:1-31) and Lady folly (7:6-27). Readers are then exhorted to choose wisdom and righteousness, avoid folly and wickedness in order to live a happy, fulfilling and prosperous life devoid of suffering. Suffering is then considered to be a result of acting wickedly or choosing folly. This would probably provide an answer to the seemingly 'deafening' silence, or at least the perplexing absence of sayings that explicitly refer to the suffering of the innocent. One would wonder why the authors and compilers of the sayings and poems in Proverbs would be silent on such an important issue. There are sayings that point to the fact that the different

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<sup>163</sup> This is not to say that the sayings in Proverbs paint a simplistic, if not unrealistic picture of life. There are sayings that show that the sages were very much aware of a certain level of ambiguity and unpredictability in life (cf. Prov 27:1). There are also sayings which warn against the mistreatment of the poor. One such saying actually says "to mock the poor is to insult the Creator..." (Prov. 17:5, cf. 14:31). This would imply that poverty was not always thought to be a result of punishment from God or a result of laziness (cf. Prov 10:4; 15:19; 19:15; 30:7-9).

<sup>164</sup> For Adams (2008:54-55, 88) this is because the main purpose of the act-consequence connection is at the service of instruction, motivating the audiences, "through fear and reward" to choose righteousness and wisdom and to promote mutual solidarity.

<sup>165</sup> In the words of Adams (2008:79) "divine freedom and a self-regulating system are twin features of the collection." Mentioning one or the other was a function of the teaching, rhetorical strategy of the sage (cf. Adams 2008:51).

<sup>166</sup> There is a saying, however, that advises against eating honey in excess (Prov 25:16). But this is not in the area of morality.



authors and compilers were aware of the unpredictability of life (Prov. 17:5; 28:12, 28; 30:7-9; cf. Murphy 1993:448; Adams 2008:53-54). Apart from the warnings against the mistreatment of the just and the poor (Prov 17:5; 14:31), doing violence to the just (Prov 24:15-16), innocent suffering may be assumed or implied in a number of sayings. There is, however, comparatively no explicit reference to innocent suffering as a teaching and rhetorical strategy in any of the collections. It is the view of some, however, that there are a number of sayings that address or assume the subject of innocent suffering, depending on one's understanding of innocent suffering and one's appreciation of the formal characteristics and purpose of the sayings and poems in the book of Proverbs (cf. Bricker 1998; Adams 2008:88).<sup>167</sup> Indeed in the light of the nature and purpose of the collections, the different views expressed and voices heard in the collections, as well as the openness to ambiguity and unpredictability of human experience, some of the sayings would indeed assume the suffering of the innocent but unlike the books of Job and Qoheleth, these remain at the level of assumption and do not offer a critique of the issue. A good example is Prov 3:11-12. In this instruction, a child is exhorted not to scorn correction/punishment from the Lord:

מוסר יהוה בני אל־תמאס ואל־תקח בתוכחתו:

כי את אשר יאהב יהוה יוכיח וכאב את־בן ירצה:

‘The correction/punishment of the Lord, my son, do not despise;  
For the one whom he loves, the Lord disciplines,  
as a father the son he finds pleasure in’.

This saying may be interpreted in terms of innocent suffering, with respect to the fact that the one who is disciplined/punished (suffering) is one whom God loves and God loves the righteous. The saying also pinpoints the source of the suffering (God) and the purpose or reason for the suffering, correction or discipline. Using this saying as representative of the sayings that assume

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<sup>167</sup> In a PhD dissertation submitted to Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, (Bricker 1998) argues that the book of Proverbs is not merely concerned nor limited to traditional conservative teaching on just retribution, to which the books of Job and Qoheleth critiques. Rather, in Proverbs one finds a number of sayings that refer to and/or assume innocent suffering. Bricker (1998:116-220) investigates these sayings and demonstrates that they address innocent parental and emotional suffering, and innocent suffering caused by the words and deeds of others.

innocent suffering in Proverbs, one may infer that, in Proverbs the explanation of the suffering of the innocent is discipline and testing (cf. Prov. 17:3; 27:21).

In conclusion, the book of Proverbs abounds with sayings that toe the line of just retribution and emphasizes the act-consequence connection both as part of experience and as a teaching and rhetorical strategy to exhort the audience to choose acceptable conduct in order to achieve happiness and community stability. According to this view suffering is a result of bad or evil behaviour. However, there are some sayings that assume the suffering of the innocent but these are in the minority and the issue, though recognized is not critiqued in any of the sayings in the light of just retribution and its act-consequence connection counterpart. The critique of the experience of innocent suffering is taken up in earnest in the book of Job.

### **5.3.2 The book of Job**

The book of Job is usually considered the second book in the wisdom corpus. The history of its inclusion into this corpus and the possible reasons were given in the previous chapter, and more will be added in this section. The book of Job meets the problems of the teaching of retribution and innocent suffering head-on, through a poetic disputation between Job and his friends, and a narrative framework that both introduces Job and the cause and nature of his suffering, and concludes with the reinstatement and restoration of Job's prosperity.

#### **5.3.2.1 The structure and contents of the book**

The book of Job is made up of 42 chapters. These may be divided into three main sections. There are two sections in narrative form that frame a middle section which is in poetic form. The framing sections, Job 1-2 and Job 42:7-17, tell the story of the demise and the restoration of the fortunes of Job, respectively. The middle section is a disputation or dialogue on the state of affairs concerning the suffering of Job. This middle section may also be divided into three parts, that is, Job 3-31, 32-37 and 38-42:6. Chapters 3-31 are a disputation or dialogue between Job and his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.<sup>168</sup> The disputation or dialogue is presented in three cycles of speeches (3-14; 15-21 and 22-28). In each cycle of speeches each of Job's friends

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<sup>168</sup> Crenshaw (2010:105-106) discerns a frame of Jobian curses to the dialogue between Job and his friends, that is, chapter 3 and chapter 29-31.

speaks once and Job responds to each of them. In Chapters 29-31 Job gives a summary of his plea.<sup>169</sup>

The topic of the disputation is about the origins or cause of the suffering of Job, and how Job should cope with this suffering. This is presented from the perspectives of Job and his friends. However, the reader of the book is already privileged with the knowledge of the source of Job's suffering,<sup>170</sup> his status as a servant of God and his undeterred innocence. This is the subject matter of chapters 1-2.<sup>171</sup> Hence, the thematic content is about the suffering of the innocent.

Also found within this disputation section is chapter 28. The subject matter of this chapter is the whereabouts of wisdom and how difficult, if not impossible for human beings to find it (28:12-28). This is preceded by the description of miners tunnelling the earth in search of precious minerals (28:1-11). The chapter ends by affirming that God alone knows where wisdom is to be found and that from a human perspective, wisdom is the fear of the Lord, which is, keeping away from evil (28:21-28).<sup>172</sup> The authenticity, position and the content of this chapter have been a source of much consternation to students of the Old Testament (cf. Habel 1985:390-391; MacKenzie 1993:481; Lo 2003:1-2).<sup>173</sup> It is difficult to accept that this chapter is a continuation of the speech of Job in Chapter 27 as it stands. Furthermore, while the subject of wisdom is referred to in the foregoing sections of the disputation, the view towards wisdom in this chapter is completely different to those of Job and his friends. For Job and his friends,

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<sup>169</sup> Job contrasts his previous cordial relationship with God and good repute among his contemporaries (29:1-20) to his present deplorable state and bad name (30:1-31) and ends by pleading his innocence and for a just hearing (31:137).

<sup>170</sup> The source is presented as a wager between God and Satan. The wager is a test aimed at finding out whether humans worship God and live piously without expecting anything in return (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). Despite losing everything, and spurred on by his wife to 'curse' God, Job demonstrates that he indeed serves God הַנֶּחֱם 'for nothing'. He utters those memorable words of submission to God's providence and sovereignty:

עָרַם נֶצְתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרַם אֶשׁוּב שְׂמָהּ יְהוָה נָתַן  
וַיִּהְיֶה לְקַח יְהוָה שֵׁם יְהוָה מִבְּרָדָּ:

'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return:

The Lord gave and has taken away, may the name of the Lord be blessed' (Job 1:21; cf. 2:10).

<sup>171</sup> These chapters are presented in a narrative form akin to the patriarchal narratives in the book of Genesis.

<sup>172</sup> Dell (2013:29) further qualifies turning from evil as the teaching on retribution.

<sup>173</sup> MacKenzie (1993:481) notes that chapter 28 makes no direct reference to the speeches of Job and his friends or the problems raised therein and goes on to list the description of this chapter by some scholars in the light of the whole book. These include: an interlude; a bridge and simply as a later insertion. The position of this study is that the chapter indirectly addresses the problem raised in the dialogue and anticipates the contribution of the speeches of God. It demonstrates that there are problems beyond human understanding and that the best attitude in these instances is to 'fear the Lord' (Job 28:28).

wisdom can be attained and wisdom is found among the aged (12:2, 12; 15:8-9, 18). In chapter 28 the view is that wisdom is beyond human understanding and reach. This view is the one implied in the speeches of God in chapters 38-39.<sup>174</sup> In the light of this it is fitting to call chapter 28 in the book of Job an interlude (cf. Dell 2013:28-29).

In Chapters 32-37, another protagonist, a young man by the name of Elihu, is introduced from nowhere<sup>175</sup> and challenges both Job's friends and Job himself. Job's friends are challenged for failing to present the traditional doctrine of divine retribution and failing to convince Job. Job is challenged for maintaining his innocence at the expense of God's justice (Job 32:1-4). The Elihu speeches do not add anything drastically new to the debate but recaptures and expands the point of view of Job's three friends,<sup>176</sup> and anticipates the subject matter of the third section. Part of the expansion includes the disciplinary dimension of suffering<sup>177</sup> and the sovereignty of God (Job 33:12-24). The anticipation of the third section centres around the mystery of God's dealings and his transcendence (cf. 35:1-16).

In chapter 38-42:6, there is the speech of God, in which God does not really respond to the questions raised by Job in the disputation (Job 3-31), but in which God asks Job rhetorical questions that underscore the fathomless governance and sovereignty of God as creator. God lays before Job his 'mysterious' wisdom displayed in his governance of the works of creation. In the light of God's exposition, Job admits that he did not know nor understand the works and marvels of God. Hence, he retracts and repents in ashes (40:3-5; 42:1-6). While God does not provide answers to Job's questions, Job comes to understand that God cannot be called to account and that the wisdom of his ways are not always open to human scrutiny and understanding, especially the issue of the suffering of the innocent. The speeches of God also

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<sup>174</sup> For a further discussion concerning chapter 28 see Lo (2003). After presenting the positions of commentators who accept and do not accept the originality and authenticity of Job 28, Lo (2003:1-15) argues for the originality and the integrity of chapter 28 in the present context within the book. The tensions and contradictions are seen as part of the rhetorical strategy of the book (Lo 2003:15-20; 22-283; cf. Dell 2013:28).

<sup>175</sup> These chapters are considered to be secondary, introduced to further the argument of retribution and further unravel the untenable nature of Job's complains and stance. Linguistic, structural and theological reasons have been highlighted to support this view (cf. MacKenzie 1993:484). MacKenzie (1993:483) calls the author of these chapters the "critic" who was not contented with the original ending of the book.

<sup>176</sup> It is the view of many commentators that the Elihu speeches in Job 32-37 are a latter addition (cf. Crenshaw 1992:861).

<sup>177</sup> Even the disciplinary dimension of suffering had been hinted at by Eliphaz (Job 5:17).

bring into question or at least relativize the scholarly consensus of describing Israelite wisdom in terms of order or a search for order as pointed out above. In the light of God's speeches, this order should then be seen from the perspective of God and not human beings or their understanding of just retribution (cf. Murphy 1993:449; 1996:115-118; Adams 2008:83-93).<sup>178</sup>

Job's three friends toe the line of the tradition consistently maintained in the books of the Old Testament, that is, the tradition of just retribution (Job 4:7-9). Job, on the other hand, pleads his innocence and argues that he is unjustly being punished by God. He is even prepared to go to trial with God, if it were possible. In this dialogue the perennial problem of the suffering of the innocent is met head on and reflected upon in a manner that has fascinated and enthralled readers of the Old Testament. In poetic form, the author of Job presents arguments in favour of the teaching of just retribution and the reliable justice of God through the voices of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and later that of the young Elihu. Their argument revolves around two premises; that no mortal or angel is just before God (Job 4:17-18) and; that God does not falsify justice (Job 8:3). For them the teaching of just retribution becomes a doctrine to be believed in come what may. Job's argument is based on his personal experience, moral evaluation and understanding of justice (Job 31:1-37).

In view of the book's grappling with the theme of the suffering of the innocent, its quest to make sense out of it and the form through which this is expressed, that of disputation, the book should be counted among wisdom books as has been the convention. The protagonists also constantly refer to the wisdom of God and of the elders (cf. Job 11:6; 12:12). There is also the hymn to wisdom in chapter 28 and the conclusive acknowledgment of the mystery surrounding the created order and the sovereignty of God. These are themes that we find among the books that have conventionally been grouped under the category wisdom literature.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> While giving way to the scholarly consensus of wisdom as search for order, Murphy questioned the legitimacy and usefulness of the concept of order for understanding the teachings of wisdom. According to him, in view of the sages' acceptance of ambiguities of experience, limitations of the wisdom and the understanding that God is not a God of 'order', the sages did not operate with the concept of 'order'. Cosmic order is a scholarly construct influenced by the Egyptian concept of Ma'at and the Greek understanding of the universe as a *kosmos* (Murphy 1993:449; 1996:116).

<sup>179</sup> For more on the debate concerning the issue of classifying Job as wisdom literature see Dell (2013:14-31). According to Dell the classification of Job among the wisdom books goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Among the themes that are found in Job and other wisdom books, Dell includes "motivation for piety, just retribution, emphasis on God as creator and lack of focus on Israelite history and concerns" (Dell 2013:14). On the whole, Job

The possibility of a literary relationship between the book of Job and Isa 40-55 is generally accepted by scholars. However, there has been an on-going debate as to the kind and nature of this literary relationship between Job and Isa 40-55.<sup>180</sup> By and large the debate hinges on the dating of the two works. There are those who uphold an early date for the book of Job (Pope, 1973:xl; Hartley 1988:20). This would imply that if there was literary dependence, Isa 40-55 depended on the book of Job, since the former is generally dated during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Terrien 1966; Hartley 1988). There are those who maintain a later date, that is, a postexilic date for the book of Job. For these the book of Job is dependent on Isa 40-55 (Kynes 2012:99-105). It is important to note that the lack of the issue of vicarious suffering as a possible solution to the problem of the suffering of the innocent, a topic central to both books, has also been used as evidence against the literary dependence of Job on Isa 40-55 (cf. Terrien 1966:309; Hartley 1988:16). The position of this present study is that the question of the priority of the two books shall remain hidden in the contours of history, making it a topic for further research. What is certain is that there are correspondences in style, themes, vocabulary and expressions in both books, that allow for a study on the possible relationship between vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 and the book of Job and other wisdom books.

### **5.3.2.2 The theme of the suffering of the innocent in Job**

The theme of innocent suffering is the major theme of the book. The book of Job addresses the issue of innocent suffering in the light of the teaching of just retribution. Job is used as a test case. As pointed out above the book has three major sections: a prologue in narrative form (Job 1-2), a poetic section (Job 3-42:6) and an epilogue (Job 42:7-17). In the prologue the theme is about the act-consequence connection in relation to piety. In line with this the wager of Satan is

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is seen as questioning the traditional view of just retribution as it is expressed in the book of Proverbs. Dell goes further to question this conventional classification of Job in the light of the connections of this book and lack thereof with other wisdom books, namely Proverbs and Qoheleth, and other books of the Old Testament which include Psalms, Deutero-Isaiah, Deuteronomy and Jeremiah's confessions (cf. Dell 2013:21-27).

<sup>180</sup> For an exposition of this debate see Kynes 2012:96-97. He is of the view that, even though there is a majority that supports the priority in dating for Isa 40-55, that is, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to that of Job between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, there are some who continue to dispute the late dating of the book of Job. This would leave the question of the direction of dependence unresolved. On his part Kynes makes use of allusions and their respective contexts in the two books to argue for the priority of Isa 40-55 (Kynes 2012:99-105).

that Job is pious because of what he gets out of it (cf. Crenshaw 2010:100).<sup>181</sup> With the permission of God, Satan tests Job, who has been described as an innocent and faithful servant of God. Job's response to this undeserved/innocent suffering is one of submission to the sovereignty and providence of God (Job 1:21; 2:10). This sets the stage for the dialogue and speeches which follow.

The dialogue or disputation between Job and his friends centres on the issues of just retribution and innocent suffering. The suffering of Job is interpreted and explained by his friends in terms of the teaching of just retribution dogmatically construed by his three friends and the young Elihu (32-37). According to them Job has lost everything, progeny, wealth and health because he and his children have sinned against God (Job 8:1-11). Job on his part pleads his innocence and is prepared to go to court with God in order to prove his innocence. In Job's estimation and conviction his is a case of innocent suffering at the hands of a capricious God (Job 9:22-24). In the tripartite disputation Job constantly insists that he is innocent (Job 31:1-37), that God is the source of his suffering (Job 6:1-4; 16:12-14), and that God pursues him capriciously. His friends try, unsuccessfully, though, to convince him that the only explanation for his demise is that he has sinned, and that in any case no human being is innocent before God (Job 4:17-21). Job is not only perplexed at this, but wonders at what sin or bad human behaviour can do to God and why God does not pardon his offences (Job 7:20-21; cf. 35:1-8).<sup>182</sup> As the dialogue progresses possible explanations for suffering are explored. These include: sin (8:3-4); testing (Job 23:10); discipline/correction (Job 5:17-19); and warning (33:19-30). With regards to the suffering of the innocent, the friends maintain that the suffering is short-lived (Job 5:19-20), a testing for the perseverance of the sufferer, purification of faults committed unknowingly, discipline (5:17; cf. Prov 3:11-12), warning (36:7-21).

Job's faith in God is not deterred by this suffering and his conviction that he has been dealt a raw deal by God. In a number of instances, he expresses deep faith in God, not only as his judge but as his redeemer (Job 16:19-21; 19:23-26).

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<sup>181</sup> Crenshaw (2010:100-101) sees disinterested piety as the primary theme, and innocent suffering as the secondary theme of the prologue.

<sup>182</sup> The young Elihu adds righteousness to Job's question on what sin does to God. Even righteousness cannot benefit God. Elihu argues that wickedness and righteousness affect fellow human beings (35:8-16).

The speeches of God do not answer the questions or respond to the challenge posed by Job, concerning why Job who claims to be innocent is suffering. The speeches of God lay bare the mystery behind God's governance of creation, with the resulting impression that the questions and challenge of Job are out of place and beyond Job's comprehension. It is to this that Job admits his ignorance and the limitedness of the traditional witness to God. The epilogue concludes with the castigation of the friends of Job by God, and the upholding of Job's point-of-view, and restoration of his health, progeny, wealth and honour.

It has been noted above that in the book of Proverbs the teaching of just retribution is emphasized in the collections of the book for the purposes of teaching and exhortation, and that the issue of the suffering of the innocent, while not given the same explicit expression, is assumed. In the book of Job, the assumption is brought to the fore and becomes the centre of disputation. The meaning and appropriateness of the teaching of just retribution is debated, in the light of the experience of an innocent servant of God. As pointed out above this debate yields a number of 'explanations' for innocent suffering. Even though the friends of Job stubbornly cling to the teaching of retribution, despite Job's protest of innocence, what becomes increasingly clear is that the traditional teaching of retribution is an inappropriate and, at best, an inadequate 'explanation' for the suffering of the innocent. The speeches of God and the resultant silence of Job further confirm this inadequacy. The sovereignty of God and the mystery behind his relations with human beings and creation at large is a fitting conclusion to the book's view on this topic. However, the restoration of the health, progeny and fortunes of Job in the epilogue, ironically supports the teaching of just retribution. Job is rewarded for having spoken well of God (Job 42:8).

### **5.3.3 The book of Qoheleth**

The book of Qoheleth together with the book of Job has been characterized as wisdom in revolt or at least a critical evaluation of traditional wisdom assumptions and teaching (cf. Dell 2013:14).<sup>183</sup> This characterization has been influenced by the thematic content found in these two books. These books challenge traditional wisdom in different ways. The authors of these

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<sup>183</sup> Some classify Job and Qoheleth as 'crisis literature' because of their critique of traditional assumptions especially with respect to the issue of retribution (cf. Geese 1983:143; Adams 2008:102).



books speak out their minds spurred on by their observation and reflection on some aspects of experience, aspects that do not confirm the traditional observations and admonitions of the sages, some of which are recorded and expressed in the collections of the sayings and admonitions in the book of Proverbs.<sup>184</sup>

### **5.3.3.1 The title of the Book**

Different titles are used in the different translations that are extant. In the MT the title is Qoheleth. In the Septuagint (LXX), the Vulgate and several English translations it is Ecclesiastes. The MT title, Qoheleth is adopted in this study. The word Qoheleth is used in two basic ways in the book, as a personal name/noun (1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:9, 10) and as a general noun. As a personal name it is used to refer to a son of David (1:1) or simply one of the kings of Jerusalem (1:12). As a general noun it is used for someone who taught and/or collected sayings.<sup>185</sup> For the purposes of this study Qoheleth shall be used as a name of the author of this book as well as the title of the book.

### **5.3.3.2 Composition**

With respect to the history of the composition of this book, one can assume that like every other book of the Old Testament not everything goes back to Qoheleth. As a matter of fact there are certain aspects that support the view of several hands at work in the composition of the book. The superscription (1:1) and the epilogue (12:9-14) can hardly have been written by Qoheleth.<sup>186</sup> The presence of first and third person discourses would need some explanation. There are also a considerable number of tensions, and even contradicting viewpoints that certainly militate against the proposition of a single author.<sup>187</sup> Indeed these have been explained as either part

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<sup>184</sup> For a contrary view to the assertion that Job and Qoheleth critique traditional wisdom teaching, especially with reference to the suffering of the innocent see Bricker (1998).

<sup>185</sup> For the meaning and use of these titles see Crenshaw (1992:271). In the light of Ezra 2:55, 57 and Neh 7:59, Crenshaw concludes that it is better not to view Qoheleth as a personal name but as a word used to refer to some office related to the gathering of people or sayings (Crenshaw 1992:272; cf. 12:9-11).

<sup>186</sup> Some commentators (cf. Fox 1977:83-106; Sharp 2004) maintain that the epilogue is still the work of the first author. For a critique of this position see Adams (2008:116-117).

<sup>187</sup> One interesting tension concerns what happens after death. In 3:20-21, Qoheleth is not sure about what happens to the human spirit after death, while in 12:7 he affirms that the spirit of the dead go back to God where it came from.

and parcel of the style of the book<sup>188</sup> or simply evidence of Qoheleth's changing views over time (Crenshaw 1992:272). These explanations are possible but they will not do away with the evidence of editorial soothing of some of the harsh viewpoints of Qoheleth concerning just retribution, for example (2:26a; 3:17a; 8:12-13; 11:9b).<sup>189</sup> Therefore, the contribution of several hands in the composition of the present book is taken for granted in this study. However, apart from the superscription, the epilogue and sections that seem to tone down the overall orientation of the book, for example, 2:26a; 3:17a; 8:12-13; 11:9b, there will be no effort nor will it be deemed necessary to identify what belongs to Qoheleth and what is secondary.<sup>190</sup>

### 5.3.3.3 Genre (literary type)

There is no agreed general literary type for the book but Adams (2008:106-108) gives a good summary of the various proposals and comparisons with other Ancient Near East texts. These include: royal testament; diatribe; meditative reflection; and observation and reflection (cf. Murphy 1981:129-130; Crenshaw 1987:28-31; 1992:275; Adams 2008:107). All these categories have much to commend them but each one cannot adequately capture the diverse formal characteristics of the book. Having said this, much of the book describes the observations and reflections of Qoheleth (cf. Crenshaw 1987:28). Qoheleth lays down his observations of life, reflects upon them, and makes proposals as an end-product of his reflections. As the discussion below will show the observations centre around issues concerning the meaning of life and traditional wisdom teachings. These are reflected upon in the light of Qoheleth's personal assumptions and experiences. These observations and reflections are expressed through a

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<sup>188</sup> Whybray (1981:435-451) has proposed the use of quotations in Qoheleth as part of the style of the book. He identifies at least 7 such quotations (2:14a; 4:5; 4:6; 7:5-6a; 9:17; 10:2; 10:12) from the book of Proverbs.

<sup>189</sup> These texts are usually ascribed to the second epilogist who wrote 12:12-14 (Adams 2008:118-119). Adams dates this during the Hellenistic period.

<sup>190</sup> For a detailed account of the redactional contribution to the book of Qoheleth see Samet (2015:1-16). Samet demonstrates the redactional activity in Qoheleth in the light of the same witnessed in Mesopotamian vanity literature, where vanity literature engendered redactional efforts at toning it done in line with traditional views and value.

number of subgenres.<sup>191</sup> There are wisdom sayings (4:5; 5:2; 6:7).<sup>192</sup> There are instructions.<sup>193</sup> There are reflections,<sup>194</sup> introduced by various phrases like: אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי ‘I said in my heart’ (2:1, 15, 3:17); וַאֲרָאָה אֲנִי וַאֲרָאָה ‘and again I saw’ (4:1, 7) and; וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי לְרֵאוֹת ‘and I turned to reflect on wisdom’.<sup>195</sup> There are exemplar stories (9:13-16). There are woe oracles (2:16; 4:10). There are blessings and curses (10:16, 17). There are also ‘better’ sayings (7:1; 9:4).<sup>196</sup> Qoheleth’s employment of these various subgenres demonstrate the complex nature of the subject matter he set out to tackle and the personal reflexive approach he uses to undertake the task.<sup>197</sup>

#### 5.3.3.4 The Setting (historical and literary)

The geographical location and date of the composition or final compilation of the book is uncertain. With respect to the former, there have been several proposals. Due to a considerable number of Aramaisms in the text, a place where Aramaic was spoken has been proposed as one possible location, together with a proposal of its origins in the Aramaic language.<sup>198</sup> Phoenicia has also been proposed in the light of a number of commercial terms in the book (Dahood 1952). The royal testament in 2:1-11 has led some to suggest Egypt as a place of composition. The Aramaisms, commercial terms and royal testament do not in themselves rule out Palestine as a place of composition, especially with the discovery of Hebrew fragments of Qoheleth at Qumran.

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<sup>191</sup> The following identification and description of genres is guided by the work of Murphy (1981:129-130).

<sup>192</sup> These are short sayings that are based on experience and are presented in order to bring out some value or teaching (4:5; 5:2; 6:7; cf. Murphy 1981:184).

<sup>193</sup> These are teachings that Qoheleth directs to his audience. These could be in the form of prohibitions or commands, for example, the instructions to enjoy life (5:18), fulfil the vow that one has made to God (5:3)

<sup>194</sup> Reflection on the subject matter arising from personal observation is the most common literary type in this book (cf. Murphy 1981:129-130; Crenshaw 1992:275). Murphy argues that while there are several subgenres in Qoheleth, reflection is the most characteristic form in this book. For him a reflection is characterized by observation and thought, and hence has a loose structure depending on the author’s style. In general reflections state a thesis which pondered upon in a personal way (Murphy 1981:130, 181). In Qoheleth these reflections also make use of other genres.

<sup>195</sup> It is noteworthy that Qoheleth constantly uses the verb רָאָה ‘to see’ in a figurative sense of reflecting, pondering and contemplating (1:14; 2:12, 13).

<sup>196</sup> These are sayings that make comparisons usually using the word טוֹב ‘better’.

<sup>197</sup> In the view of Adams (2008:112) the structure of the book that begins with the consideration of nature (1:4-11), followed by the consideration of the unpredictability of human life (4-8) and ending with the consideration of death demonstrates the author’s conviction about life as a journey towards death.

<sup>198</sup> For a refutation of this proposal see Crenshaw (1992:274). For Crenshaw the discovery of Hebrew fragments at Qumran, and failure to provide an adequate theory of translation rules out the proposal that the book was originally written in Aramaic.

As far as the date is concerned, the Aramaisms, Persian loan words and late Hebrew vocabulary point to a post-exilic date, the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE being the *terminus ad quem*. Therefore, usually scholars date the book during the Persian period (cf. Kugel 1989:46; Seow 1997:21-25). Others, however, date the work during the Ptolemaic period. Adams (2008:123) for example, would date the book around 319-200 BCE.<sup>199</sup> Both proposals have much to commend them but precision with regard to the dating shall remain unattainable. Any date between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE is possible in the light of the available evidence.

### 5.3.3.5 The Subject matter

The subject matter on which Qoheleth reflects upon include: wisdom (1:2, 14, 17; 6:8, 12; 7:11-12); a God who is in charge but remote (3:11; 5:1) and whose work cannot be comprehended (3:11; 5:1; 8:17; 11:5); the purpose of life (3:11); just retribution (6:7-8; 7:15; 8:10-9:1-2); and death (6:3-6; 9:1-4). The proposals he comes out with in the light of his observations and reflections include: the importance but illusive nature of wisdom (1:17; 7:23-25); fearing and listening to God (3:14; 4:17; 5:6; 7:18; 8:12-13); enjoying what life has in store (2:24; 3:13; 7:18; 9:7-8); steering the middle-path (7:15-18); working hard and not putting one's eggs in one basket (11:1-6).

After a concerted reflection on the instructions and recommendations of traditional wisdom and the subject matter outlined above, Qoheleth questions the wisdom enterprise as a whole. For him wisdom is a tool for searching the meaning of life and what constitutes happiness (1:12; 2:3; cf. Crenshaw 2010:126-127). It helps one to succeed (9:13-18). It is the opposite of folly and stupidity (1:17; 2:13-14). While it may be better than folly (2:13-14), it brings vexation and pain to those who claim to have it (1:18). In the light of this nature and task of wisdom, Qoheleth is sceptical about the human ability to acquire wisdom. It is illusive and unfathomable (1:17; 7:23-29; cf. Crenshaw 2010:127-128). To those who claim to have acquired it he remains

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<sup>199</sup> Adams (2008:132) argues that the economic language in the book, the possible influence of Greek ideas, later Hebrew vocabulary and grammar and Qoheleth's preoccupation with death in the manner of Ben Sira, support the Ptolemaic era around 200 BCE. In relation to the issue of death Adams (2008:133-134) proposes that Qoheleth is opposing the suggestion of an afterlife that was taking root during this period.

doubtful as to its ability to achieve its proposed goal (6:12; 8:16-17; cf. Crenshaw 2010:133-137). In many words and ways, Qoheleth's answer is a big NO!

Human wisdom can indeed arrive at the acknowledgment of God as creator and at his remoteness (5:1). But human wisdom can never fathom the world order, both natural and moral, as assumed by traditional wisdom (3:9-11). In fact, while Qoheleth admits the possibility of a natural order (1:3-11; 3:1-8), he remains sceptical about the existence of a moral order (cf. Crenshaw 1987:23). He arrives at this through his observation of the failure of just retribution (6:7-8; 7:15; 8:10-9:1)<sup>200</sup> and the certainty of death for both the wise and the fool, the righteous and the wicked, even animals and human beings (3:19; 9:1-3). Death is not determined by virtue or vice, wisdom or stupidity. Death marks the beginning and the end of everything (9:5-6, 10). It is the separation of the flesh from the spirit. In death the flesh returns to the dust where it came from and the spirit returns to God where it came from (12:6-7).<sup>201</sup> It is a place of no return. All the same life is still comparatively better than death (9:4-5).<sup>202</sup> With regard to the natural order, while wisdom can help to discover that there is a time for everything under heaven, human wisdom does not and cannot always discover the appropriate time to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act (3:1-11; 9:12). All this leads Qoheleth to two conclusions, one a statement of 'fact' which is rather pessimistic and the other didactic exhortation, in the light of his discovery of the former. The unfairness of life and the arbitrariness of death lead him to begin and conclude his work with the expression:

הַבָּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קִהְלֵת הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הַבָּל:

'Vanity of vanities says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities, all is vanity' (1:2, cf. 12:8).

This expression with some modification is a mantra throughout the book. Its basic meaning is that life is transitory, illusory and futile.<sup>203</sup> This meaning is also put across by other expressions

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<sup>200</sup> He is mesmerized by the observation that the race is not always for the more swift, the victory for the stronger, or riches for the wise (9:11).

<sup>201</sup> This affirmation stands in tension to what Qoheleth says in 3:20-21. While he confirms that the flesh of both humans and animals returns to dust in death, he is doubtful whether the spirit of the former goes upward, and the spirit of the latter goes downwards to the earth.

<sup>202</sup> This too is relativized by the congratulations he extends to those who have died and the unborn (4:2-3; 6:3-6).

<sup>203</sup> The Hebrew word הַבָּל appears 72 times in the Old Testament and slightly more than half of these, 37 occurrences, are found in Qoheleth (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:223). It is no doubt Qoheleth's favourite word

like: what profit does a person have in all their toil (1:3); a chasing after the wind (1:14b, 17b; 2:26b, 6:9b); no profit under the sun (2:11b); a grievous ill/suffering (5:12, 15; 6:2).

This discovery or pessimistic conclusion does not lead him to give up on life. Indeed in the light of this discovery, Qoheleth instructs his audience to pay attention to the brighter side of life and make the best out of this entangling web of the absurdities of life. He instructs and exhorts them to enjoy whatever life has to offer, time (age) and resources permitting. This instruction or exhortation is used as a refrain at the end of major sections or reflections in the book. It is repeated at least seven times in different forms (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:17-19; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:7-10). He sees this ability to enjoy as a gift from God (2:24; 3:13; 5:17; 9:7). He, however, is against utter debauchery as he goes on to compare the house of mourning and that of feasting (7:1-4, cf. Crenshaw 1992:277) as well as advocating for moderation in everything (7:15-18). He also counsels against putting one's eggs in one basket (11:1-2), and of course he encourages hard work (11:6). Lastly but not least Qoheleth recommends the fear of the Lord, since there is nothing that human beings can subtract or add to the work of God.<sup>204</sup> Fear of the Lord in Qoheleth has to be understood in terms of faithfulness (5:6), reverence of the sovereignty, awesomeness and otherness of God.

When all this is taken into consideration, Qoheleth is not a victim of pessimism (cf. Adam 2008:138). After all has been said, like a good teacher steeped in the wisdom didactic tradition, Qoheleth offers a way to make sense out of the apparent absurdities of life. Unlike Job however, he does not appeal to God for an answer but finds the answer in the order of things as pre-ordained by God (3:10-12).<sup>205</sup> Qoheleth's preoccupation with critiquing the traditional teaching

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which he uses to capture his conclusions regarding the meaning and purpose of wisdom and life. The word is not easy to translate. Literally it means breath or vapour. In Isa 57:13 it appears in parallel with רִיחַ 'breath, spirit'. Hence, it has the connotation of something that is transitory as well as worthless (cf. Wright 1993:491). It has, therefore been translated with 'futile' and/or 'vanity'. In Qoheleth, however, it is not always used with this meaning. In 8:14 where it is used to describe Qoheleth's assessment of situations where the upright are treated as if they were wicked and vice-versa, absurd would be the most appropriate translation (see Fox 1989:29-51; cf. Adams 2008:103 footnote 7).

<sup>204</sup> This recommendation appears several times in the book (3:14; 5:6; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13). It has been argued that some of these occurrences do not go back to Qoheleth, notably 8:12-13 and 12:13 (cf. Crenshaw 1992:272). Even if this is the case, it does not weaken the case in the light of the orientation of the whole book toward the reverence of God in the light of his inscrutable ways.

<sup>205</sup> In the view of Crenshaw (2010:126), Qoheleth lost trust in God and in the human pursuit for knowledge.

of just retribution, his view on death, his recommendation concerning the fear of the Lord, and the literary mode of expressing his views are some of the issues that will be considered in this present study.

#### 5.3.3.6 Qoheleth and the suffering of the innocent

One of the themes that Qoheleth observes and reflects on is the theme of just retribution or act-consequence connection. He is of the view that people are inclined to do wrong because retribution is not carried out instantly (8:11-12).<sup>206</sup> He claims that he has observed the righteous person perishing in their righteousness and the wicked surviving in wickedness. He counts this among the futilities or better still, absurdities of life, that is, meaninglessness of life (7:15; 8:14).<sup>207</sup> The other observation he makes is that both come to the same end (9:1-2). He therefore, advises his audience not to be upright in excess or too wicked but to stir the middle way (7:16-18).

Qoheleth does not reflect on the suffering of the innocent directly and explicitly. He reflects and critiques the teaching of just retribution and the acts-consequence nexus. Qoheleth observes that it is not always the case that people reap what they sow. It is not always the case that the wicked and foolish suffer and the righteous and wise prosper. Furthermore, he observes that ultimately both the righteous and the wicked, the wise and the foolish come to the same end, namely death.<sup>208</sup> He finds both scenarios to be absurd (הַרְבֵּל) in the light of the traditional teaching of just retribution. He is left mesmerized, to say the least, and does not attempt to offer

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<sup>206</sup> In this reflection Qoheleth subscribes to the teaching of just retribution as well as observes that the acts-consequences connection does not always kick in with immediacy in the realm of morality. He gives this delay in just as one of the reasons why people are inclined to do evil (cf. Sira 5:4).

<sup>207</sup> In Qoh 8:12b-13, a statement to the effect that there is good in store for those who fear God and no good in store for the wicked. While this is a classical expression of just retribution, it appears to be an editorial addition, aimed at correcting the pessimistic statements at Qoh 8:11-12a, 14 (cf. Crenshaw 1992:272).

<sup>208</sup> For the context and background of Qoheleth's attitude towards death see Adams (2008). Adams argues that Qoheleth does not only offer a critique on earlier wisdom tradition or just retribution but also contributes to the then growing debate on retribution and the afterlife (Adams 2008:105). Having dated the composition of the book during the Ptolemaic period (ca. 315-200BCE), Adams proposes that Qoheleth's emphasis on death as the ultimate end, was a counter-argument to the belief in the afterlife and final retribution thereafter as was proposed by his contemporaries and expressed in Ben Sira (ca. 180 BCE). Adams argues for thematic links between the books of Qoheleth and Ben Sira. The theme of death and its implications that go beyond previous wisdom understanding of death are singled out and Qoheleth's argument that death is the end is seen by Adams as a denial of the possibility of an afterlife (Adams 2008:132-141).

any explanation for this state of affairs. Instead he offers a rational and practical way of coping with this absurdity, namely the middle-way and what has been called *carpe diem*.<sup>209</sup> Qoheleth encourages his audience not to be too upright or too wicked, too wise or too foolish (7:16-18). He also repeatedly exhorts his audience to enjoy what life has to offer, while age permits (Qoh 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7). In fact, he exhorts his audience to enjoy the good and consider when things are not going so well. Both come from God (7:14). This leads to his final exhortation, that of fearing God, that is, taking cognizance of God's sovereignty and otherness (5:6; 7:18).

These observations would imply that for Qoheleth, the suffering of the innocent was absurd (הַקָּל) and remained inexplicable within the framework of the teaching of just retribution. His exhortation to consider (רָאָה) that both the good and the bad from God (7:14) as well as his exhortation to fear God (7:18) would have been his contribution to the on-going reflection on the suffering of the innocent. As already pointed out above, for Qoheleth this fear of God has to be understood in terms of faithfulness (5:6), obedience (4:17), openness to and reverence of the sovereignty, awesomeness and otherness of God (3:14; 7:18; 8:12-13).

### 5.3.4 The book of Ben Sira

The book of Ben Sira is one of the two wisdom books in the longer canon, as pointed out above. It is also given the Latin title Ecclesiasticus. This Latin title is usually traced back to the early church father, Cyprian<sup>210</sup> and is found in many Latin manuscripts (cf. Di Lella 1993:496). It is the longest book among the books of wisdom literature and one of the long books in the Bible, comprising of a total of 51 chapters. It was originally written in Hebrew as witnessed by fragments found in Cairo, in a cave in Qumran and at Massada, and by the foreword written by the translator of the Greek version.<sup>211</sup> However, the text that is referred to in the longer canon is the Greek translation that goes back to the grandson of Ben Sira (vv. 1-35).<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> This is a Latin phrase which means to enjoy what the day has in store (literally: "grab the day"; cf. Cassell 2000:93).

<sup>210</sup> Cyprian was the bishop of Carthage from 248 to 258 CE.

<sup>211</sup> For the Hebrew version see Beentjes (1997). However, only about two thirds of the present book is extant in Hebrew (cf. Adams 2008:153).

<sup>212</sup> In the prologue to the book the translator spells out the task he took up to translate this work from Hebrew to Greek "for the benefit of those who, domiciled abroad, wish to study, to reform their behaviour, and to live as the Law requires" (v. 34-35, NJB).



#### 5.3.4.1 Authorship, Date and Place of Composition

The author is referred to in the book as Jesus son of Eleazar, son of Sira (Sira 50:27). He lived during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, in Jerusalem and ran a school (cf. 51:23-30). He was well travelled and acquainted with many cultures and wisdom (34:10-13). He made use of all this experience, interpreting it within the framework of his tradition and faith in God (39:1-11). He then set out, to instruct young Jews in the traditions of the fathers, in learning and wisdom, and in how to live according to the Law (vv. 1-14; cf. Adams 2008:155-156).

The book is dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (ca. 180-170 BCE). This dating is arrived at by considering the foreword written by the Greek translator of the book, the grandson of Sira (vv. 1-35),<sup>213</sup> and considering Ben Sira's eulogy (50:1-21) on the occasion of the death of the High Priest Simon, who probably died before 200 BCE. This would suggest that the composition of the book would have taken place between 150BCE and 200BCE. The preferred date by a number of scholars is 180BCE (cf. Di Lella 1993:497). The place of composition was Jerusalem, where Ben Sira was a teacher and ran a school (50:27; 51:23-30).

#### 5.3.4.2 Purpose and content

The historical context of the book is, therefore, placed during the reign of the Seleucids (198 BCE), but before the Maccabean revolt around 167 BCE. Ben Sira writes in an effort to dissuade fellow Jews from departing from their traditions, especially the law, lured by the attractions of Hellenism. He drew upon the Law, Prophets and the Writings, to teach his contemporaries wisdom and how to live according to the Jewish Laws (vv. 1-14; 33:18; 50:27) and in the process to demonstrate that the Jewish faith and tradition were incomparable to Hellenic culture.<sup>214</sup> To achieve this he made use of many literary genres, most likely taking the sayings and instructions in the book of Proverbs as his model (cf. Di Lella 1993:497).

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<sup>213</sup> The forward is not usually considered to be part of the book of Sira. In it Ben Sira's grandson states that he arrived in Egypt and started translating from Hebrew to Greek in the 38<sup>th</sup> year of the rule of King Euergetes. This King is usually identified as Ptolemy VII Physcon, who ruled between 170 and 164, then 146-117 BCE. Ben Sira would have lived two generations before that. This would suggest 180 BCE as the probable date of composition (cf. Di Lella 1993:497).

<sup>214</sup> Adams agrees that Ben Sira is an apologetic work, not only against Greek ideas or culture or Hellenistic opponents in general (cf. Hengel 1974:138) but also against other sages who questioned the usefulness of the wisdom tradition, and groups which were introducing the views of an afterlife (Adams 2008:157).

The book itself is a collection of various topics that were put together not in a discernable manner, with the possible exception of: the hymn to the glory of God (42:15-43:33); an outline of Israelite history (44:1-50:29); a hymn of thanksgiving (51:1-12); and a poem on wisdom (51:13-30). There are therefore many literary genres, including proverbs, hymns, prayers, autobiographical narratives and so on.

Ben Sira basically toed the line of traditional wisdom as it is presented in the collections of the book of Proverbs and other wisdom books (cf. Adams 2008:153-154). He was convinced that: wisdom came from God; is created by God and given to his loved ones (1:1-10); it consists in the fear of God (1:11-20; 21:11);<sup>215</sup> it is essential in the formation of good character and; it ensures life and happiness to those who possess it (4:11-19; 6:18-37; 14:20-27; cf. Di Vella 1992:940-941). More importantly, Ben Sira went further to identify wisdom with the Mosaic Law (1:16, 18, 26; 19:20; 24:23-24), and liturgical piety (35:1-10), and used Greek ideas and expressions, like *λογος* in outlining the relationship between God and creation (33:7-15; 24:1-34; cf. Adams 2008:154). Ben Sira also reflected on Israel's history and the prominent personalities from Enoch to Nehemiah, and bemoaned the good old days, as it were (44:1-50:13). This is to be expected in the light of the context and the purpose for which the book was written. Maintenance of tradition was essential, on the one hand and accommodation of new perspectives was equally important, on the other. He was concerned about the mercy of God, which according to him was dependent on people forgiving each other (cf. 28:1-7).

#### **5.3.4.3 Ben Sira and the Suffering of the Innocent**

Ben Sira also supported the teaching of just retribution (16:1-23) but was aware of paradoxes, and some level of uncertainty in the light of divine will and freedom (2:1-18; 18:1-7; 33:7-15; 40:8-9).<sup>216</sup> For him the justice of God will be fulfilled in this earthly life (2:10-11; 17:15-24), even

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<sup>215</sup> In the view of Ben Sira, the fear of the Lord was not only the beginning of wisdom (cf. Prov 1:7a; 9:10) but it was also the fullness of wisdom (1:14, 16; 21:11). For Di Vella (1992:940), wisdom as fear of the Lord was the central theme of the teaching of Ben Sira (cf. Adams 2008:177).

<sup>216</sup> In Chapter two, Ben Sira, encourages the fear of the Lord in times of ordeal. Hardships are to be expected by those who love the Lord, the righteous. They are to keep to the right path and remain faithful. They are to hope in the Lord and in his mercy. These ordeals are not viewed in terms of retribution but in terms of purification 'in the furnace of humiliation' (2:5). At the end of the chapter, it states that it is better to fall into the hands of God, than of human beings, for God is all-powerful and all-merciful (2:18).

at death (1:13; 11:26) so much so that one needs not to worry at the prosperity of the wicked (18:24-26; cf. Crenshaw 2010:151). Even the wicked who seemed prosperous all their life, were eventually to get what their conduct deserved at death (11:26-28). However, for him there is no afterlife (14:16-19; cf. Qoh 9:10) and hence no retribution after this life. He was aware of the suffering of the innocent or righteous, those who aspire to serve the Lord (2:1-11). His advice was that those who want to serve the Lord should be prepared for hardships, should accept them and should remain faithful. He offered the traditional explanation for innocent suffering in terms of testing and purification (2:1-6; cf. Prov 17:3; 27:21). He went further by insisting that the innocent sufferer will be honoured at death (1:13; 11:26). In his view then suffering was to be expected for those who serve the Lord. This suffering was a form of purification and not a result of sin, since Ben Sira foresaw the innocent sufferer being honoured at death. He, however, remains unclear as to the form this honour will take or how, since the innocent person would be dead. This receives further attention and development in the book of Wisdom.

### **5.3.5 The book of Wisdom**

This is the last book among the books of the wisdom corpus. In it is displayed the flowering of the wisdom quest that makes use of past traditions and provide new insights in the light of new developments and experiences. The meaning, nature, source and necessity of wisdom were further explored. A new teaching of an afterlife is proposed supported by the belief in the God of life and fidelity and the belief in the immortality of the soul as a gift from God. In the light of this the teaching of just retribution is upheld and its ultimate fulfilment is understood to take place in the afterlife.

#### **5.3.5.1 Title and authorship**

This is the second wisdom book in the longer canon. It was originally written in Greek and given the title *Wisdom of Solomon*.<sup>217</sup> In the Vulgate the title is simply '*The book of Wisdom*'. Either title is used by scholars depending on their preference. The book of Wisdom and/or simply

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<sup>217</sup> There is no evidence that the book was part of the Hebrew bible. Some scholars have, however, argued that it was originally written in Hebrew. This is unlikely in the light of the Greek topics and terms in the book and the quotations of the Old Testament from the LXX (cf. Wright 1993:510). Furthermore, there is no extant Hebrew version or fragments to support the proposal.

'Wisdom' will be used interchangeably in this study. The author of the book, however, is not named in the book. There is no superscript to that effect, but allusions to royalty. The author wrote as a king or to kings (Wis 1:1; 6:1-11, 21). Allusions to the life and reign of Solomon (7:7-11; 9:7-8, 12; cf. 1Kgs 3:6-9; 5:9-14, 19) makes Solomon the fictitious literary author. This probably influenced the Greek title of the book. The Greek title '*Wisdom of Solomon*' is not an indication of authorship but of literary patronage, as in the cases of some of the wisdom books like Proverbs, and Qoheleth. Unlike Proverbs and Qoheleth, however, in the Wisdom of Solomon, there is a discernable logical structure to the book and a consistency in language and style (cf. Winston 1979:14-18). This would point to a single author and minimal redactional contribution.<sup>218</sup>

### **5.3.5.2 Date and Place of composition**

From the contents of the book, particularly the use of Greek philosophical terms (7-9), and a keen interest in the Egyptian sojourn and the Exodus (10-19) the author must have been a Hellenised Jew, living in Egypt, most likely in Alexandria. He also quoted from the Greek version of the Hebrew bible, namely the Septuagint (LXX). The book is usually dated between the last half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, and the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (cf. Winston 1979:22-25; Wright 1993:510).

### **5.3.5.3 Structure and content**

Three sections are discernable in the book; chapters 1-5; 6-9 and; 10-19. Chapter 1-5 outlines the role of wisdom in human life (1:1-8), and the different fate of the upright and the wicked (3:1-12; 5:15-23). Of particular importance in this section is the claim of immortality and the afterlife (1:12-15; 2:21-24; 3:4; 4:1-2; 5:16-17). Chapter 6-9 describes the indispensability (6:1-11), nature and origin of wisdom (9:1-18), its relationship to God (7:22-8:1) and how one can acquire it (6:12-21). The section ends with the fictitious Solomon realizing that wisdom comes as a gift from God

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<sup>218</sup> This is the view of the majority of scholars (cf. Reese 1970:122-145; Winston 1979:13). There are some scholars however, who have proposed at least two authors and others discern two distinct sections (1:1-5:23 and 6:1-19:22 or 1:1-11:1 and 11:2-19:22) in the book with differences in style and content. They propose at least two different authors for these sections. For an exposition and refutation of this position see Winston (1979:12-14) and Wright (1993:510).

(8:21) and he earnestly prayed for this gift (9:1-18). Chapter 10-19 describes the presence and work of wisdom in the history of Israel, with particular emphasis on the deliverance from Egypt. Within this third and last section there are three chapters that discuss the issue of idolatry (13-15). The literary type of the book is said to belong to didactic exhortation popular during the Hellenistic period (cf. Reese 1970:117-121; Winston 1979:18-20).

The purpose of the book seems primarily to strengthen and safeguard the Jewish faith, in the face of the non-Jewish religious beliefs and practices, the Greek philosophical environment of Alexandria, and the suffering of the Jews at that time (Winston 1979:63-64). There is a possibility of a secondary intention of presenting the Jewish faith and tradition to non-Jews of the time, especially the rulers who had turned a blind eye to justice (Wis 6:1-11, 21, 24-25). The author made use of both the Jewish traditions and Greek beliefs and philosophical topics and terms to express his ideas<sup>219</sup> and persuade his readers. With regard to the issue of suffering, he holds out immortality as a reward to those who remained faithful and upright (Wis 3:1-3).

In the light of the author's preoccupation with wisdom (Wis 6-9), its origins, nature, relationship with God and presence in Israel's founding historical events and heroes (Adam and Moses), the author can fittingly be classified under Israel's sages (6:12-21; 7:22-8:1). He made use of the understanding and description of wisdom among his predecessors (cf. Prov 8:1-31; Sirach ), but went on to add a description of wisdom as a reflection and emanation of the glory of God (7:25-26).

#### **5.3.5.4 Wisdom of Solomon and the suffering of the innocent**

The author maintained the teaching of just retribution as maintained in the Jewish tradition, but reinterpreted it. The author of Wisdom interpreted long life not in terms of the number of years nor grey hairs, but an upright and untarnished life was for him old age (4:7-9). The death of the righteous at a 'tender' age was seen as the rescue of the righteous from the corruption of the wicked (4:7-14). Furthermore, unlike the foregoing Jewish tradition that limited retribution to this side of the grave, the author of Wisdom extended the just recompense beyond this earthly life. There will be judgment after death (3:7, 13, 18; 4:6, 20). The upright will be rewarded with

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<sup>219</sup> For example, the Platonic idea of body and soul (2:23; 9:15; cf. Plato's *Phaedo* 81c).

life without end in the presence of God, while the wicked will be punished (2:4-5; 3:1-12; cf. Nickelsburg 2006:67-68).

He did not only make use of the Platonic doctrine of body and soul (9:15; cf. Plato's *Phaedo* 81c; Winston 1979:207) and that of the immortality of the soul (2:23; 3:4), to argue for life after death, but primarily argued for immortality as a gift of God to the righteous (1:15; 3:4; 15:3). The author went further to insist that God made humans immortal (2:23) and that the gift of wisdom is incorruptibility (6:18-19). Death, he opined, came from the Devil and those who belong to him share in it (2:24). Therefore, the question of the suffering of the innocent is explained in the light of just recompense in the afterlife, and in the reserved experience of the afterlife itself. The ordeal of the righteous in this life is interpreted in terms of correction, testing, purification and burnt offering (3:1-9; cf. Job 23:10). Even though the righteous may suffer (2:10-20; 5:1-4; 8:9), the author confidently said that "the souls of the upright are in the hands of God," (3:1). This should be understood to mean that their souls were in the hands of God both in this life and in the life to come.

#### **5.4 Summary and concluding remarks**

This chapter summarized the structure and contents of the five books of the wisdom corpus. Particular attention was paid to the theme of the suffering of the innocent, as it was understood and grappled with within the framework of the teaching of just retribution. It was observed that in the sayings and instructions of the book of Proverbs, the teaching of just retribution is consistently maintained but applied to individual conduct and behaviour, rather than the nation at large, giving rise to what has been called the doctrine of two ways: the righteous and the wicked; the wise and the foolish. The suffering of the innocent, though presumed in some sayings, is not an issue in many of the sayings, in the light of the purpose of the collections, that of instructing and exhorting the audience to choose wisdom and not folly, righteousness and not evil. In the instances that suffering of the innocence is mentioned, it is explained in terms of discipline and testing (Prov. 17:3; 27:21).

In the book of Job, the teaching of just retribution and the suffering of the innocent are the main themes. Both are explored in the narrative framework and the poetic sections of the book. In the disputation between Job and his friends, Job's friends maintain the teaching of just

retribution and they are of the view that no mortal is innocent before God (Job 9:2, 21) but they explain the suffering of those who love God in terms of discipline and/or warning (Job 5:17-19; 33:19-30; 36:7-21). Job on his part pleads his innocence and blames God for arbitrarily and capriciously targeting him. The book ends with the speech of God that demonstrates the sovereignty of God's dealings with his creation, a sovereignty that goes beyond and is in a way not governed by the teaching of just retribution. This would imply that the answer to the problem of the suffering of the innocent is privy to God. In the book of Qoheleth this sovereignty of God is emphasized, while the teaching of just retribution relativised (Qoh 5:6; 7:18).

For Ben Sira suffering, or rather ordeals are to be expected for those who love and serve the Lord, as discipline and purification (Sir 2:1-5). He maintained the teaching of just retribution as it is expressed and maintained in the sayings and instructions of the book of Proverbs, and is also cognisance of the divine will and freedom (2:1-18; 18:1-7). In the light of the purpose of the book, that of upholding Jewish faith and traditions, and most probably apologetics against the emerging teaching and belief in the afterlife, for Ben Sira both the righteous and the wicked will receive what they deserve at death. He, however, did not elaborate on how this is accomplished.

Finally, it has been shown that in the book of Wisdom the teaching of the just retribution is maintained and the problem of the suffering of the innocent is 'explained' along the same lines as in the other books of the wisdom corpus but with two notable reinterpretations influenced by the context within and the purpose for which the book was written. The first is the understanding of longevity or old age not in terms of the number of years one lives but in terms of uprightness (4:7-9), such that the death of the righteous at a tender age is seen as a rescue from the wicked. The second is the extension of just recompense to the next life. In the afterlife the just and the wicked will receive what their actions and conduct deserve.

There is, therefore, a progressive 'rumination' or 'reflection' on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature and tradition. While the teaching of just retribution is maintained throughout, in the face of the experience to the contrary, several reasons, reactions and recommendations are made as pointed out above. Notably, common to the several reasons, reactions and recommendations is openness to the divine will, freedom and sovereignty.

The remaining part of this study aims at situating Isa 52:13-53:12 within the wisdom stream by showing how the text may be construed as a 'wisdom text'<sup>220</sup> and how the concept of vicarious suffering expressed therein forms part of the tradition of 'reflecting' and 'explaining' the problem of the suffering of the innocent within the framework of the teaching of just retribution, on the one hand, and the acceptance of divine will, freedom and sovereignty on the other hand. To begin with the constitution, structure and Gattung of Isa 52:13-53:12 shall be the preoccupation of the next chapter, chapter six.

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<sup>220</sup> In the sense of the thematic content, the perspective from which, and the way it is expressed and presented in text.



## Chapter Six

### The Constitution, Structure and *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12

#### 6.1 Introduction

The demarcation of the text, its structure and literary type (*Gattung*) is the concern of this chapter. This stage is concerned with what makes up the text, that is, its extent (beginning and end); the wording of the text; the 'integrity' and/or unity of composition of the text; and its structure and *Gattung*. As such this stage comprises three intimately related moments: delimitation (establishing the beginning and ending of the text); textual criticism (establishing the wording of the text that is as close as possible to the original wording of the text); and an analysis of the unity, structure and *Gattung* of the text. Indeed, it is only when this has been done that one may speak of a text communicating a message (cf. Yofre 2002:85). These preliminaries will prepare the stage for the study of the relation of Isa 52:13-53:12 to wisdom literature and tradition in the light of the vocabulary, expressions, and thematic content and other considerations.

#### 6.2 Delimitation

Delimitation is the procedure of establishing the beginning and ending of a text that is to be interpreted (cf. Yofre 2002:85; Robinson 1992:683). This is called for because of the nature and history of the composition and compilation of Old Testament texts. As for the nature of Old Testament texts, a cursory look at the texts shows that these texts do not always have introductory and concluding formulae, which are necessary in the process of deciphering the message of the text. With regard to the history of its composition and compilation, the majority of Old Testament exegetes and commentators are of the view that Old Testament texts were composed and compiled over a long period of time, and that several hands contributed to this process. This has had the effect that the beginning and ending of texts, especially prophetic and discursive texts, is not always clearly evident. Hence, there is the need to establish the beginning and ending of a text, if one is to avoid the pitfall of interrupting the flow of a text or including

within the text portions that do not either logically or 'historically' belong to the text (cf. Korpel 2000).

Criteria for delimiting ancient texts have long been proposed. These are usually divided into two groups; dramatic criteria and literary criteria. Dramatic criteria are usually applied to narrative texts (cf. Ska 2000:1-3). Some of the criteria include; change of action, change of place, change of time, change of characters, and change of scene.<sup>221</sup> Literary criteria are usually applied to discursive and poetic texts. These include; change of literary genre, change of style, change of structure, change of vocabulary or key words, change of content and theme. Until fairly recently these criteria have been generally accepted as being useful and practical. The proponents of the comparatively recent criticism, delimitation criticism, have highlighted the shortfalls of delimiting texts of the Old Testament using the above criteria. Their main dissatisfaction with these criteria is that they are heavily dependent on the disposition and interests of the interpreter (cf Korpel 2000:2). Instead, they propose the delimitation of Old Testament texts using Masoretic and pre-Masoretic indicators in the text, or at least, taking into consideration ancient delimitation markers that are witnessed to in the various ancient manuscripts.

Korpel (2000) argues that text sense divisions go back to the original writing of the text as evidenced by the comparatively similar delimitation in various manuscripts and that unit delimitation contributes to the interpretation of the text. Hence, the need for interpreters to take cognisance of ancient unit delimitations of the text as evidenced in the manuscripts. Korpel calls for critical evaluation of as many manuscripts and traditions as possible in order to come up with a hypothesis about the original division of the text. Korpel accepts that this is not an infallible science because markers were not followed at all times, and some markers disappeared over time because of their nature. In cases of discrepancies among manuscripts, Korpel proposes thematic continuity, parallelisms, 'enjambments', as tools for evaluation (cf Korpel 2000:19-25). In view of the last point that Korpel makes, which incorporates what modern interpreters do

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<sup>221</sup> The change indicates at one and the same time the end of the previous section or unit, and the beginning of a new section or unit.

while delimiting a text, this study shall make use of modern criteria of delimiting a text, while taking into consideration Masoretic delimiting markers as they appear in the BHS.<sup>222</sup>

The limits of Isa 52:13-53:12, that is, its beginning and its end has generally not generated much debate. This is because the text is clearly distinguishable from its surrounding context. Notwithstanding this clarity and consensus among exegetes,<sup>223</sup> the exercise of highlighting this distinctness shall be the subject matter of this section. The criteria that shall be used for this are the criteria of change of structure, content and theme from the previous text (Isa 52:1-12) and the following text (Isa 54:1-17). Masoretic delimitation indicators shall also be taken into consideration.

To begin with, the structure of 52:1-12 and the following text shall be considered.<sup>224</sup> While Isa 52:1-12 begins and ends with a series of three imperatives, the following text, Isa 52:13-53:12, begins with a particle of interjection הִנֵּה (behold), often used to introduce persons, things or clauses (cf. Isa 49:12, 22; 51:22; 54:11). Here it is introducing the servant of God. Furthermore, 52:1-12 falls into four sections, 52:1-2, 3-6, 7-10, and 11-12. This structure is confirmed by the Masoretic *setumah* that are found at the end of each section. The first and last sections begin with imperatives, feminine singular and masculine plural imperatives, respectively. As far as the speakers are concerned, the prophet is speaking in the first, third and fourth sections, while God is the speaker in the second section. The line structure of these four sections can be construed as follows, 2 – 4 – 4 – 2.

Isa 52:13-53:12 falls into five sections, 52:13-15, 53:1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12. It is important to note that this is considered to be one section in the Masoretic system of unit division. After the *setumah* (־) found at the end of 52:12, the next one is found at the end in 53:12. The line structure of the five sections of 52:13-53:12 may be construed as 3 -3 – 3 – 3 – 3. In addition, Isa

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<sup>222</sup> The main section divisions in the BHS are indicated by the *petuha* (פ) and the *setuma* (־), see BHS:xii-xiii. A *petuha* represents the space indicating a new paragraph and a *setuma* represents space indicating a new subsection. For more on the use of the *petuha* and *setuma* see Chinitz (2004:1-4).

<sup>223</sup> Norman Whybray is one of the few scholars who argue, from form-critical considerations, that Isa 52:13-15 constitutes a separate textual unit (Whybray 1978:163, note 1).

<sup>224</sup> For purposes of easy identification of the parts of the text, Roman letters shall be used to refer to the main parts of a verse and Greek letters for its subdivisions or colon. For example, a verse with four parts, two main parts and two subdivisions, shall be represented as follows: Isa 52:15a $\alpha$ , 15a $\beta$ , 15b $\alpha$ , 15b $\beta$ .

52:13-53:12 begins and ends with a speech of God. But the expressions, 'word of God' (cf. 52:5), 'says the LORD' (cf. 52:3) are completely missing in God's speeches of Isa 52:13-15 and 53:10-12.

As for the content or theme(s) in 52:1-12 there is an announcement or command to Zion/Jerusalem to reclaim power, splendour and independence in view of the return of God and the exiles (52:1-10) and an announcement to the exiles (bearers of the vessels of God) to purify themselves and leave their place of exile (52:11-12). But in 52:13-53:12 we find the description of the work of God's servant (52:13-15), the suffering of the servant (53:1-3, 7-9), the interpretation of the meaning of this suffering (53:4-6) and the prosperous future of the servant (53:10-12). In the light of the above observations Isa 52:13 begins a new unit which can be interpreted separately from 52:1-12. We now move on to establish the ending of this textual unit.

With respect to the end of the text, there is also change in structure and content, in Isa 54:1-10. In 54:1-10 we have a series of imperatives (54:1a, 1b $\alpha$ , 2), and negative commands (54:2, 4a) followed by the particle  $\text{וְ}$  supplying the reasons for the commands (54:1b $\beta$ , 3, 4, 5, 6, 10). This form of structuring is absent in 52:13-53:12. The imperatives, inviting the audience to rejoice (54:1a, 1b $\alpha$ ) and to prepare for an increase in offspring (54:2), as well as the negative commands, telling the audience not to fear or be ashamed (54:4), introduce a different tone and mood from that of the previous text (52:13-53:12). The theme of this section is also different from the previous section. While the theme of 52:13-53:12 is about the sufferings and exaltation of the servant, the theme of 54:1-10 is an invitation to rejoice at the once barren, rejected woman, in the light of the fecundity, prosperity and restoration being brought about by the everlasting love and mercy of God. In addition, the source of the joy and restoration is the mercy and love of God. The change in structure and theme of Isa 54:1-10 indicates that this is new textual unit.

Therefore, the Masoretic textual indicators together with the literary criteria of change of structure and content show that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a textual unit. While, the Masoretic indicators indicate this unit as one section, the literary criteria of structure and/or content show that this textual unit may be divided into several sub-sections.

## 6.3 The Text and Translation

This passage, like many Old Testament texts, has its fair share of textual uncertainties. This part of the study shall be concerned with making decisions on these uncertainties and shall also provide an English translation of the discerned text.

### 6.3.1. The Text

The text has a number of textual difficulties and various readings are witnessed to at different places in ancient manuscripts. These are found in the following verses 52:13b, 14a $\alpha$ , 14a $\beta$ , 15a $\alpha$ , and 53:2a $\alpha$ , 2b, 3a $\beta$ , 3b $\beta$ , 4a $\beta$ , 5a $\alpha$ , 7a $\alpha$ , 7b, 8b $\beta$ , 9a $\alpha\beta$ , 10a $\alpha\beta$ , 11a $\alpha\beta$ , 12b $\beta$ . A survey of these has shown that the textual difficulties and variants have to do with either (a) the form of some words and in some instances the word itself, or (b) the position of some words and phrases.

#### 6.3.1.1. Isa 52:13b

The MT has יָרוּם 'he is exalted'. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וַיִּרוּם 'and he is exalted'. The addition of the *waw* is most probably in imitation of the following two words. The LXX omits the word altogether. Probably it was considered redundant since it conveys the same meaning with the following two words. The Vulgate (Vul) has *exaltabitur* 'shall be exalted', as in the MT. The MT reading shall be adopted.

#### 6.3.1.2. Isa 52:14a $\alpha$

The MT has עָלֶיךָ (with a 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. masc. sig., pronominal suf. - 'at you'). This is supported by 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> with עליכה, the LXX with ἐπί σέ, 'upon you' (sg.)<sup>225</sup> and the Vul with *super te* 'upon you'. However, 2 Hebrew mss have עָלָיו (with a third pers. masc. sig., pronominal suf. – 'at him'). This is supported by the Targum and the Syriac versions. This would be in accord with the surrounding context where the discourse is in third person. There are instances in poetic and prophetic texts, however, where the sudden transition from the second person to the third person is attested to (Isa 22:16, 42:20, 47:8, 54:1, 11, 61:7, Jer 22:18; cf. GKC, 1910, 144p). In our case the transition

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<sup>225</sup> Having maintained the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. sig. suf., 'you', the LXX goes on to change the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. suffixes in the rest of the sentence. This change shall not be adopted in this study.

is from direct address to the servant, to a statement about the servant. In view of this either choice would not make a difference in the meaning of the text. In this study the 3<sup>rd</sup> person reading shall be adopted (cf. 2 Hebrew mss, Syriac and Targum versions, and BHS).

### 6.3.1.3. Isa 52:14aβ

The MT has מִשְׁחָתָה, a substantive that has been traced back to the root שָׁחַת – ‘to be spoiled, marred, corrupted’ (BDB 2000:1008) or מָשַׁח ‘to anoint’.<sup>226</sup> The former, however, would be the only occurrence<sup>227</sup> of the noun in the Old Testament. All the same, one Hebrew manuscript has מוֹשַׁחַת and the Babylonian tradition has מִשְׁחָתָה, both are hophal participles from שָׁחַת. The Vul has *inglorius*, ‘without glory’, as the LXX ἀδοξήσει. Syriac has *mḥbl* – ‘spoiled, marred’. BHS proposes מִשְׁחָתָה, a hophal participle from שָׁחַת ‘ruined, corrupted, disfigured’ (cf. Prov 25:26; Mal 1:14).<sup>228</sup> 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has מִשְׁחָתָה. This may be construed either as *qatal* from מָשַׁח ‘to anoint’ (cf. Kutscher 1974:262), or that the *yod* is a vowel letter, a common preference of the copyist (cf. Isa 52:13, 15). It has been suggested that the latter maybe a result of a Messianic interpretation of the passage by the copyist (Brownlee & Reider 1954:27-28). The proposal of BHS (מִשְׁחָתָה) shall be adopted and translated with ‘disfigured’.<sup>229</sup>

### 6.3.1.4. Isa 52:14aβb

The syntax as well as the content of 52:14aβb raises questions about the appropriate position of this section of the verse. BHS, for example, proposes to move this part of the verse to the end of 53:2 (cf. Blenkinsopp 2002:346e; Westermann 1969:253, 258-259). As far as the syntax is concerned, 52:14 is related to 52:15aα as protasis and apodosis by the words כַּאֲשֶׁר ‘as’, and כֵּן ‘so’, respectively. What is being compared is the level of horror or shock of the ‘many’, on the one hand, and what the servant does to the nations, expressed by הִנָּהוּ, on the other.<sup>230</sup> However, 52:14aβ which, according to this analysis, is part of the protasis, also begins with כֵּן. This is

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<sup>226</sup> See the discussion below at 6.3.2, note 19

<sup>227</sup> A *hapax legomenon*.

<sup>228,228</sup> In the former it is used to refer to muddied spring water and in the latter to a blemished animal brought for sacrifice.

<sup>229</sup> For reasons of this translations see below at the translation of the whole passage.

<sup>230</sup> The uncertainties surrounding the meaning of הִנָּהוּ will be discussed below at 6.3.2.

unusual within a protasis. The content of this part of the verse is about the indescribable disfigurement of the servant, placed here and introduced by כֵּן as a temporal and explanatory particle, establishing the time of the astonishment of the many and giving the reasons for it.<sup>231</sup> While the content of this part of the verse is about the disfigured and indescribable appearance of the servant as in 53:2aγ, it does not warrant the transposition proposed by BHS and other scholars as pointed out above. Instead, Isa 52:14aβ may be construed as an explanatory clause, explaining the astonishment of the many described in 52:14aα. In the light of this explanation and the absence of ancient manuscript evidence to support the proposal of the BHS, the MT reading shall be maintained.

#### 6.3.1.5. Isa 52:15aα

The MT has נִזְהָה, a hiphil conjugation in *qatal* form. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has יִזְהָה. The LXX has θαυμάσονται ‘they will wonder, be startled’. The Targum has יִבְדֵּר ‘he will scatter’. The MT reading poses translation difficulties emanating from the meaning of the word within the context of comparison started in 52:14. The word is from נִזְהָה which has been given two possible meanings; (a) to spurt, spatter (*qal*), sprinkle (*hiphil*) things like water, blood, oil, juice of grapes, and (b) ‘to leap, startle’ as in the Arabic *naza* ‘to leap’. It appears about 24 times with the former meaning in the Old Testament, 4 times in the *qal* and 20 times in the *hiphil* (cf. Fabry 1998:300; BDB 2000:633, I). The latter meaning will be witnessed to only here in the Old Testament (BDB 2000: 633, II). But it is supported by the LXX and makes better sense within the context. While the former meaning is common in the Old Testament, it hardly makes sense within the context. In the protasis the awe or shock of the many is stated as the element of comparison. One would also expect the same element in the apodosis, rather than the ‘spattering or sprinkling’ meaning of נִזְהָה (I). Furthermore, the meaning of the rest of the bicolon, 52:15aβ, metaphorically expressing the wonder of the kings, would complete the parallelism. The BHS proposes a number of emendations; (a) יִזְהָה / יִזְהָה ‘he/they will spatter’; (b) יִרְגְּזוּ ‘they shall tremble/become agitated’

<sup>231</sup> For an opposite view see Gentry 2007:30. Gentry (2007:30) argues that 15:14aβ is not giving the reason for the shock in 52:14aα, but that “that the ‘so’ clauses show a different situation: the exaltation of the servant. His exaltation in his anointing and sprinkling is proportional to the horror they feel in looking at him.” Gentry’s argument is influenced by his construal of מִשְׁחָה as ‘anointing’ and of נִזְהָה as ‘sprinkling’.

(cf. Hermisson 2004:23 note 13; see Moore 1890:216-222); (c) יִבְזֶהוּ ‘they despise’. These proposals and other proposals from scholars have their merits and demerits. In this study the MT reading shall be maintained and the meaning ‘astonish, startle’ adopted, in the light of the discussion above and in the light of the context which has a wisdom rather than a cultic ‘flare’ as will be shown below.

#### 6.3.1.6. Isa 53:2a

The MT has לְפָנָיו, ‘before him’. This is supported by the LXX and the Vul., and most probably 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>.<sup>232</sup> The BHS proposes לְפָנֵינוּ, ‘before us’ in the light of the use of the 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl.pronominal suf. in the surrounding context. The MT may be explained as a scribal error emanating from haplography.<sup>233</sup> While the BHS proposal makes sense within the context, in that it is the ‘we’ who are speaking, it does not have textual support. As the text stands, the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. pronominal suf. ‘him’, maybe understood as referring to God in 53:1b. The MT reading, therefore, shall be maintained.

Within this section of the verse the MT has the *athnah* under הִדְרָה. Putting the pause here breaks the follow of the verse and distorts the meaning. BHS proposes moving the *athnah* to the next word, וְנִרְאָהוּ. This is supported by Sammacus and it makes more sense within the context.

#### 6.3.1.7. Isa 53:3aβ

The MT has וידוע, a *qal* passive participle ‘and known’. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וידע which is *qal* active participle ‘and knowing’. 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> has וידע a *qal qatal* form ‘and he has known’. The LXX has εἰδώς, an active participle - ‘one knowing’. The Vul has *scientem*, an adjective— ‘acquainted with’. The MT reads better within the context and the forms of the word in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> can be attributed to scribal error.

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<sup>232</sup> This word is at the end of the line in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> manuscript and it is blurred. When one counts the letters in the word, however, the reading is more likely לְפָנָיו than לְפָנֵינוּ.

<sup>233</sup> This is a scribal error arising from the omission of a letter, a word or words because of a similar letter or words. In this particular case some of the letters in לְפָנֵינוּ would have been omitted, if at all לְפָנָיו was the original word. However, there is no textual support for לְפָנֵינוּ.



#### 6.3.1.8. Isa 53:3bβ

The MT has נִבְזָהוּ, a *niphal* participle from בָּזָה ‘despised’, ‘regarded with contempt’. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has ונבזוהו, *qal qatal* form from בָּזָה ‘to plunder’, with a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.masc.suf. Hence, it will be translated ‘and we plundered him’. The LXX has ἠτιμασθη ‘he was despised’. The Vul has *despectus*, ‘despised’. The word in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> seems to be an interpretation and it is not supported by any extant manuscript. BHS proposes ונבזוהו ‘and we despised him’. While this makes sense in light of the following phrase, וְלֹא הִשְׁבַּחְנוּהוּ ‘and we did not hold him in esteem’, it is not necessary, and lacks textual support. The MT shall be adopted.

#### 6.3.1.9. Isa 53:4aβ

Several Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac versions and the Vul have הוּא ‘he’ before סָבְלָם ‘he carried them’. This is missing in the MT and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. While the absence of הוּא affects the meter and balance of this colon, it does not affect the meaning. It shall not be included in this study.

#### 6.3.1.10. Isa 53:5α

The MT has מִחֻלָּל, a *polal/poal* participle, ‘pierced’. The BHS proposes the *pual* form מִחֻלָּל (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:303). The BHS proposal has no textual support. The MT shall be adopted.

#### 6.3.1.11. Isa 53:8bβ

In this colon there are four textual decisions to be made. In fact the whole colon poses textual difficulties. Firstly, the MT has עַמִּי ‘my people’. This is supported by the LXX which has τοῦ λαοῦ μου ‘of my people’ and the Vul which has *populi mei* ‘of my people’. However, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has עַמּוֹ ‘his people’. This may be a result of mistaking a *yod* (י) for a *waw* (ו) in the process of copying. The BHS proposes joining the word to the previous word to form מִפְּשָׁעָם ‘because of their sin’. This suggests an error of dittography on the part of the copyist. However, there is no textual evidence to support this proposal. The 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> reading, עַמּוֹ ‘his people’, shall be adopted. It makes more sense within the context of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers narration in 53:8abα.

Secondly, the MT has נִגַּע which is a noun for ‘an affliction, a blow, a stroke’. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has נוּגַע an infinitive construct ‘to strike’. The Vul has *percussit*, ‘he was struck’. However, the LXX

has ἡχθη 'he was led', a possible translation of יִבְּל (cf. Isa 53:7) and the Targum has ימטי 'he will transfer'. BHS proposes נִגַע or נִגַע, a *pual* or a *niphal* in *qatal* form respectively, 'he was afflicted or struck'. The MT reading shall be upheld as the harder reading, which can be understood as a nominal phrase that may be literally translated 'an affliction to him' or simply as 'he was afflicted'.

Lastly, the MT and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> have לָמוֹ at the end of the verse. This may be construed as 'to them' as in Aquila, Sammachus, Theodotian and the Targum (cf. Job 3:14; BDB 2000:510). This would be unlikely in the context where an individual is in mind. The Vul has *eum* 'to him'. In the light of the context, it has been argued that the latter meaning is more appropriate as is also the case in Isa 44:15 (cf. GKC, #103f<sup>3</sup>). The LXX has εἰς θάνατον 'to death', instead. In Hebrew the LXX's construal would be from לָמוֹת, which is the reading proposed in BHS. The LXX's rendering seems to have been influenced by the context of the strophe.<sup>234</sup> The MT reading shall be maintained with the meaning 'to him'.

#### 6.3.1.12. Isa 53:9a

This bicolon contains three words that are attested variously. Firstly, the MT has נָתַן, a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sg., *qal waw* consecutive *wayyiqtol* form, 'and he gave'. This form poses difficulties as far as the sense of the colon is concerned. For instance, what would be the subject of the clause? If it is 'he' as the form of the verb shows, who is the 'he' within the context? 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וְיָתְנוּ, a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. pl. *qal waw* consecutive *wayyiqtol* form, 'and they gave'. This would make the persecutors of the servant the subject (cf. NRSV). The LXX has δώσω 'I shall give'. This would make God the subject. The Vul has *et dabit*, 'and he shall give.' God would be the subject in this case as well. BHS proposes נָתַן - a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sg., *pual waw* consecutive, *wayyiqtol* form, 'and he/it was given'. The קְבֻרוֹ 'his grave' would be the subject. The MT reading is the more difficult reading and shall be adopted with the impersonal meaning 'and one gave'.

Secondly, the MT has עָשִׂיר 'rich man'. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has עֲשִׂירִים 'rich men'. The LXX has τοὺς πλουσίους 'the rich' - plural. Neither the singular form of the MT nor the plural form of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and the LXX makes a significant difference in the meaning of the colon. The difficulty posed by the meaning of the word within the context has led to other emendation proposals. BHS

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<sup>234</sup> For various emendations of this section see Hermisson (1998:26 note 29).

proposes שְׂעִירִים 'he-goats/hairy beings/demons' (cf. Isa 13:21). Another proposal has been רע עשי 'evildoers' (cf. Muilenburg, 1956:627; Hermisson, 2004:27, note 32). Both proposals, however, lack manuscript support. The MT reading shall be adopted.

Lastly, the MT has בְּמָתָיו. This is a prepositional phrase with a noun in the plural and a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. masc. sg. suf. - 'in his deaths'. The noun in the plural seems to be out of context and it may be explained as an error of copying, in the light of בְּפִי at the end of the verse. The LXX has ἀναστατου θανάτου αὐτου 'for his death'. The Vul. has *pro morte sua* 'for his death'. However, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has בּוֹמְתוֹ 'his high place or his mound' or 'funeral mound' derived from בָּמָה II (cf. BDB 2000:119). In the light of this BHS proposes בְּמָתוֹ 'his grave/tomb' (cf. NRSV; NJB; Barré 2000:27; Hermisson 2004:27). This is possible in the light of the use of this word with this meaning in Ugaritic texts of Baal and Anath,<sup>235</sup> even though the word does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament with this meaning. The proposal of BHS, בְּמָתוֹ 'his grave/tomb', shall be adopted in this study.

### 6.3.1.13. Isa 53:10

There are several textual problems in this verse. In the first instance, the MT has הִקְהִלִי, a hiphil conjugation, *qatal* form of הלה 'to make (someone) sick' (cf. DBB 2000:317). The consonants on their own, הִקְהִלִי, may be construed as the noun הִקְהִלִי (sickness) with the definite article, ה, hence 'the sickness' (cf. 2 Chron 21:15; Hermisson 2004:27). 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has ויחללהו from חלל 'to pierce/wound/profane'. Hence, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> could be rendered 'and he pierced/wounded him'. The participle form of his word is paired with the participle form of דכא in Isa 53:5a. This probably influenced the copyist of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. The LXX has τῆς πληγῆς 'from the blow'. The Vul. has *in infirmitate* 'in/with sickness'. The MT consonants shall be maintained and construed 'with sickness' (cf. Isa 53:3aβ; Vul; NRSV and NJB which have 'with pain'; Hermisson 2004:28).

In the second instance, the MT has אִם-תְּשִׂים 'if it/you make(s)'. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has אִם תְּשִׂים. There are two observations to be made regarding 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. Firstly, the *mem* (מ) in the first word is not the usual form when the *mem* is at the end of a word. The usual form is ם. Secondly, on the 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> manuscript, the *tav* that begins the second word is written over another letter. With regards to the first observation, there is a possibility that the first word of this clause was

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<sup>235</sup> The word *bāmāh* appears in the story of Baal and Anat (I AB, 1. 7). It is translated 'tomb' by Ginsberg (1955:138).

different from the present אמ. Emendations have been suggested. Dahood (1960:406) proposed dividing the words thus אמת שם ‘truly he made himself’ (cf. Battenfield 1982:485). This emendation, however, is not supported by any ancient manuscript. The LXX has εἰν δωτε ‘if you (plural) would give.’ In the Hebrew it would be אמ־תְּשׁוּמוֹ. The Vul. has *si posuerit* ‘if he shall have put/laid down.’ BHS proposes תְּשׁוּמ, a *qal* passive ‘it is put/made’.<sup>236</sup> Read MT and translate as ‘if he makes himself...’

In the last instance, the MT has נַפְשׁוֹ ‘his life/soul’. It is supported by 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. The LXX has ἡ ψυχῆ ὑμῶν ‘your (pl.) soul’. The Hebrew rendering would be נַפְשְׁכֶם. The LXX makes the subjects of this part of the verse plural, “If you (pl.) would give *an offering*<sup>237</sup> for sin, your (pl.) soul ...” This is more of an interpretation rather than copying. The Vul. has *animam suam* ‘his soul’, as attested in the MT and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. The MT reading shall be adopted.

#### 6.3.1.14. Isa 53:11

There are five cases of textual uncertainty in this verse. Firstly, the MT has יִרְאֶה ‘he will see’. This is supported by the Vul which has *videbit* ‘he will see’. However, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has יִרְאֶה אור ‘he will see light’ and the LXX has δειξαὶ αὐτῷ φῶς ‘to show him light’. The reading of the MT shall be adopted. The presence of the object of the verbs in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and in the LXX can be explained as a result of the meaning rendered to יִרְאֶה, at least, in the case of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. יִרְאֶה literally means to see. But it can also refer to understanding (cf. Qoh 1:16), satisfaction, enjoyment, provision (cf. Gen 22:8, 14).<sup>238</sup> The object ‘light’ in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> is a reflection of the interpretation rendered to יִרְאֶה rather than a reflection of a more ancient reading.

Secondly, the MT has יִשְׁבֵּעַ ‘he will be satisfied’ with a pausal pointing. The BHS proposes יִשְׁבַּע, thus, removing the pausal pointing and reading יִשְׁבַּע together with the following בְּדַעְתּוֹ. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וישבע ‘and he will be satisfied.’ The LXX has *καὶ πλασαι* ‘and to form’. The Vul has *et*

<sup>236</sup> BHS also proposes emending this expression together with the previous word to הִקְלִים אֶת־שֵׁם ‘healed the one who made’. הִקְלִים is found at Isa 38:16 with the meaning to restore to health (cf. Job 39:4; BDB 2000:321). The suggested emendation, however, lacks manuscript support. For the origin and further explanation of this conjecture see Westermann (1969:254, 266-267) and Hermisson (2004:27).

<sup>237</sup> The italicised words are missing in the LXX and are derived from the context in this translation.

<sup>238</sup> BHS also points to the similar meaning of ראה and ריה ‘to be saturated, to enjoy’.

*saturabitur* ‘and he will be satisfied’. The MT reading shall be adopted and the word will be read together with the phrase that precedes it.

Thirdly, the MT has *בְּדַעְתּוֹ* construed either as inf. construct. with suf. of the verb יָדַע ‘to know’ – ‘by his knowing’ / ‘by knowing him’, or as a noun דַּעַת ‘knowledge’, hence, ‘by his knowledge’. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has *וּבְדַעְתּוֹ* ‘and by his knowledge/and by his knowing’. The Vul has *in scientia sua* ‘with his knowledge’. The LXX has *ἐν συνείσεσι* ‘with understanding’. The LXX’s rendering is more of an interpretation and it conforms to the recasting of the whole verse attested to in this tradition. One Hebrew manuscript reads *בְּרַעְתּוֹ* ‘in his adversity’ or ‘in the evil *done* to him’ (cf. Muilenburg 1956:630). This is best explained as a scribal error arising from the close similarity between the consonants ד and ר. The MT reading shall be maintained (cf. Watts 1987:226).<sup>239</sup>

Lastly, the MT has *וְצַדִּיק* after *וְצַדִּיק*. This is supported by 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, the LXX and the Vul. However, this makes the reading heavy and it is contrary to the usual Hebrew syntax where an adjective usually comes after the noun it qualifies. The second word, *וְצַדִּיק*, is missing in several MSS. Hence, it has been suggested that the word in the MT is a result of dittography and is to be deleted (Hermisson 2004:28). BHS proposes placing *וְצַדִּיק* after *וְדַעְתּוֹ* but this has no manuscript support. The MT shall be maintained and the word shall be read as a substantive in apposition to the following word *וְצַדִּיק*. Thus, ‘the righteous one, my servant shall make many righteous.’ (cf. GKC, §132h).

#### 6.3.1.15. Isa 53:12

There is one significant textual decision to be made in this verse. The MT has *וְלַפְשָׁעִים* ‘and for the transgressors’. This is supported by the Vul which reads *pro transgressoribus* ‘and for transgressors’. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has *וְלַפְשַׁעֵיהֶם* ‘and for their transgressions’. It is supported by the LXX which reads *καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν* ‘and because of their sins’, and the BHS which proposes *וְלַפְשָׁעֵם* ‘and for their transgressions’. The MT reading shall be adopted. It makes more sense in the light of the following verb.

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<sup>239</sup> Westermann (1969:267) is of the view that this part of the text is corrupt and cannot be reconstructed. He, therefore does not include the expression *בְּדַעְתּוֹ* in his translation.

### 6.3.2. Translation

52:13a Behold my servant shall act wisely; <sup>240</sup>	הִנֵּה יִשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי
b he shall rise, and be lifted up and exalted exceedingly. <sup>241</sup>	יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד:
14aα As many were shocked at him, <sup>242</sup>	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלָיְךָ רַבִּים
β so disfigured <sup>243</sup> than any man was his appearance,	כִּן־מִשְׁחַת מְאִישׁ מֵרָאֵהוּ
b and his form than that of the sons of men, <sup>244</sup>	וְתֵאָרוּ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:
15aα Thus he shall startle <sup>245</sup> many nations,	כֵּן יִזְהֶה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים
β On account of him kings shall shut their mouths,	עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם
bα For what they have not been told they shall perceive, <sup>246</sup>	כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפֵּר לָהֶם
β And what they have not heard they shall understand. <sup>247</sup>	וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבוֹנְנוּ:
53:1a Who has believed what we have heard	מִי הֵאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעֵתֵנוּ
b Or to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?	וְזָרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל־מִי נִגְלְתָה:
2aα For <sup>248</sup> he grew up like the young shoot before him	וַיַּעַל כַּיּוֹנֵק לִפְנָיו

<sup>240</sup> Or prudently, or with insight or discernment. This is the basic meaning of the hiphil of שָׁכַל (cf. Prov 17:8). See further elaboration below. Hence, the LXX translates it with σοφῶς εἰπεῖν ‘he will understand, have insight’, and the Vul with *intelliget* ‘he will understand’. However, when one acts wisely, success and prosperity are guaranteed. Thus, some translate with “Behold my servant shall prosper” (NRSV; cf. NJB).

<sup>241</sup> The rising, lifting and exaltation are figurative ways of expressing the great honour bestowed on the servant because of acting wisely. Honour or having a good name is one of the attributes of success upheld in Wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Prov 3:4; 8:18; 13:15; Job 19:13-22; 29:1-25).

<sup>242</sup> See above for the choice of עָלָיו ‘at him’, instead of עָלֶיךָ ‘at you’ as in the MT. The majority of modern English translations also prefer the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers., ‘at him’ (cf. NRSV; NJB and NIV but NASB adopts the MT reading).

<sup>243</sup> The difficulties presented by the form and meaning of מִשְׁחַת has already been pointed out above at 6.3.1.3. Basically the noun מִשְׁחַת may be derived from, either שָׁחַת ‘to corrupt, to ruin, to disfigure’ or מָשַׁח ‘to anoint’. Notwithstanding the fact that it would be the only occurrence of the noun, the former has been adopted mainly because it fits well the context set in 52:14aα, where the ‘many’ are shocked. Isa 53:14aβ goes on to give the reason why the ‘many’ were shocked. They were shocked by the ‘disfigured’ appearance of the servant and not by their anointment. For the same translation see Syriac and Vul. versions; NJB; NRSV; NIV; Joachimsen (2011:90) and Koole 1998:269. For the option of the second possibility, מָשַׁח ‘to anoint’ see Gentry (2007:27-31) and Barthelemy (1986:385-386).

<sup>244</sup> 52:14aβb is interpreted as an explanatory clause, giving the reason for the shock of the many. There are shocked because of the deplorable appearance of the servant. See above at 6.3.1.4.

<sup>245</sup> On the choice of this translation see the discussion above at 6.3.1.5.

<sup>246</sup> For this meaning of רָאָה see BDB (2000:907) and Koehler&Baumgartner (1998:862). This makes sense in the light of the parallel member הִתְבוֹנְנוּ ‘they shall understand’, in the following colon.

<sup>247</sup> The verbs in this colon and the previous colon are in *qatal* form and are construed as indicating future time in the light of the context.

<sup>248</sup> The waw has been read as an illative conjunction, illustrating or explaining what has been referred to in 53:1 through the rhetorical questions.

β And like the root out of dry ground.	וְכַשְׁרֵשׁ מֵאַרְצֵי צִיָּה
γ He had no form nor majesty	לֹא־תֵאָר לּוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר
that we should have looked at him, <sup>249</sup>	וְנִרְאָהוּ
b And no appearance that we should have been attracted to him	וְלֹא־מֵרָאָה וְנִחְמְדָהוּ
3aα Despised and forsaken <sup>250</sup> by men, <sup>251</sup>	נִבְזָה וְנִחְדַּל אִישִׁים
β a man of sorrows and acquainted with <sup>252</sup> sickness.	אִישׁ מִקְּבָאוֹת וַיְדוּעַ חֲלִי
bα And like one who hides his face, <sup>253</sup>	וּכְמִסְתֵּר פָּנָיִם מִמֶּנּוּ
β he was despised and we took no account of him.	נִבְזָה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ:
4aα In fact he bore our sickness,	אֲכֹן חָלִינוּ הוּא נָשָׂא

<sup>249</sup> The proposal in the BHS to move the *atnah* to the next word has been adopted here, see above at 6.3.1.6.

<sup>250</sup> Literally the expression נִחְדַּל אִישִׁים means ‘lacking of men’. This expression is found nowhere else in the Old Testament. While the adjective חָדַל appears only twice, here and in Psa 39:5, the verb appears about 59 times. The root meaning of the word has to do with the meaning of ‘ceasing’ (Prov 19:27), ‘lacking’, ‘to let alone’ (Job 7:16, 19:14) and even ‘transient’ (Psa 39:5). In Isa 53:3 the sense expressed is that the servant had no companions. In the light of the previous word ‘despised’, this lack of companions would have been as a result of being forsaken by the people, the ones who despised him. For a contrary view see Driver (1937:49), who argues that the verbal form of חָדַל is used nowhere in the passive sense in the Old Testament. He takes a cue from Job 19:14-15 and translates with ‘aloof from men’. Calderone (1961:451-460), offered another possibility. He proposed a second meaning of חָדַל akin to Arabic *hadula* ‘to be fat’. In the case of Isa 53:3, he interprets the fatness in terms of senseless, and translates “as the most senseless of men.” (Calderone 1962: 418). The active sense is also advocated by Barré (2000:13). He translates the expression with “withdrawn from humanity”.

<sup>251</sup> The plural form אִישִׁים is not the usual plural form of אִישׁ. The usual form is אַנְשִׁים. The form אִישִׁים appears only three times in the Old Testament (Psa 141:4, Prov 8:4 and Isa 53:3). It is instructive to take note that the three occurrences are in poetic texts, suggesting that it was a literary option. Boadt gives assonance as a reason for this option in Isa 53:3 (Boadt 1983:363-363).

<sup>252</sup> This is the traditional translation of וַיְדוּעַ. The word is a *qal* passive participle of יָדַע ‘to know, to be familiar with, acquainted with’. A case has been made for a second meaning of the word akin to the Arabic *wadu’a* ‘to be quiet, submissive’ (Day 1980:97-103). Hence, Day (1980:97) translates it with ‘humbled’ and cites other scholars before him like, Driver (1937:49) and Thomas (1937:404), who prefer the same translation. The theory of a second root meaning of יָדַע, however, has been challenged by Johnstone (1991:49-62) and by Emerton (1991:145-163). The traditional translation ‘acquainted with sickness’ and the alternative translation proposed by Thomas and others (cf. Westerman 1967:254), ‘humbled by sickness’ do not drastically differ in meaning such that either translation remains valid for the purposes of this study (cf. Motyer 1993:428).

<sup>253</sup> The nominal clause וּכְמִסְתֵּר פָּנָיִם מִמֶּנּוּ may be translated literally as ‘like a hiding of faces from him’. The nominal phrase is made up of a noun מִסְתֵּר derived from the verb סָתַר ‘to hide’ (cf. BDB 2000:712). But Some construe it as a hiphil participle of the verb (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:544). The noun or participle then, means ‘a hiding’ or ‘an object of hiding’. This is followed by פָּנָיִם ‘faces’ and a prepositional phrase comprising of מִן ‘from’ and a pronominal suffix. The form of the suffix may be construed either as 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. masc.sg or 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl. The object of the phrase is פָּנָיִם but the subject of the phrase is open to a number of possibilities. It could be the servant or the ‘we’ or even God. For an exposition of the position of a number of scholars with regard to this see Joachimsen (2011:377-378). The translation above construes the phrase as an impersonal nominal phrase, ‘as one who...’. This has the advantage of preserving the enigmatic sense of the verse, leaving it open to the various possibilities of interpretation.

β and our pains, he carried them,	וּמְכַאֲבֵינוּ סָבְלָם
bα While <sup>254</sup> we considered him struck,	וַאֲנַחְנוּ חִשְׁבָנָהוּ נִגּוּעַ
β smitten by God and afflicted.	מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים וּמֵעֲנָה:
5aα Yet he was wounded because of <sup>f255</sup> our transgressions,	וְהוּא מִחֻלָּל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ
β crushed <sup>256</sup> because of our iniquities.	מִדָּכָא מֵעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ
bα The punishment for our well-being <sup>257</sup> <i>was laid</i> upon him <sup>258</sup> .	מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו
β Because of <sup>f259</sup> his wounds we have been healed. <sup>260</sup>	וּבְחֻבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ:
6aα All of us as the sheep <i>that</i> <sup>261</sup> has gone astray,	כָּלֵנוּ כַצֹּאֵן תָּעִינוּ
β we had turned away, each man to his way <sup>262</sup>	אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ
bα And the LORD laid upon him,	וַיִּהְיֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ
β the punishment for the sin <sup>263</sup> of all of us.	אֵת עֹן כָּלֵנוּ:
7aα He was maltreated <sup>264</sup> and humiliated, <sup>265</sup>	נִגְשׁ וְהוּא נִעְנָה

<sup>254</sup> The *waw* in וַאֲנַחְנוּ has been interpreted as adversative, hence ‘while’ (cf. Joachimsen 2011:112).

<sup>255</sup> The preposition מִן ‘from’ is interpreted in a causal sense here and in 53:5aβ. For a contrary view see Whybray (1978:61–62). Whybray interprets the מִן in a consequential sense, ‘as a result of’ (cf. Orlinsky 1965:57–58).

<sup>256</sup> Others prefer ‘bruised’ (KJV) or ‘injured’ (Joachimsen 2011:113). The translation adopted here is in line with the meaning of the verb (to crush) as well as the context (cf. Job 6:9, 19:2; Isa 53:10; NRSV; Hermisson 1994:25).

<sup>257</sup> The MT has מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ. This expression occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. The noun מוֹסֵר, however, is used frequently in Wisdom literature especially in the book of Proverbs where it occurs 32x with the meaning correction, punishment and discipline (Prov 5:12; 6:23; 19:20; 22:15; cf. Job 20:3; 36:10). The expression מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ is a construct/genetive phrase literally translated ‘punishment of our well-being’. In this translation it is interpreted as a genetive of purpose, that is, ‘the punishment for our well-being’, in other words, ‘the punishment for the purpose of our well-being.’ Concerning the genetive of purpose see GKC §128q.

<sup>258</sup> In the Hebrew the clause is nominal. The italicised words ‘*was laid*’ best expresses the meaning of the prepositional phrase עָלָיו ‘upon’ in the context of the clause (cf. NJB)

<sup>259</sup> The preposition כִּי is interpreted here as a causal *beth* (cf. GKC 1910 § 119 l – q)

<sup>260</sup> The expression נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ, a nifal perfect 3<sup>rd</sup> pers masc sg, and prep + 1<sup>st</sup> pl pronominal suf., ‘literally translated ‘he is healed for us’. This hardly makes any sense within the context. In this translation the expression has been interpreted as an impersonal passive with an indirect object. Hence, there is a healing for us/we are healed (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:903; Jouon 2000:468 §128ba).

<sup>261</sup> The italicised ‘that’ is not in the text and has been supplied here to clearly bring out the comparison between the strayed sheep and the strayed ‘we’. This does justice to the definitive article in the כַצֹּאֵן.

<sup>262</sup> In the MT text it literally reads ‘all of us like the sheep had strayed, each man to his way we had turned’.

<sup>263</sup> The Hebrew עֹן can mean sin/transgression (2Sam 22:24, Prov 5:22), guilt (Lev 16:21, Num 14:19), or punishment for guilt (Gen 4:13; Ezek 21:30; Isa 40:2). Also see Koehler & Baumgartner (1998:689) and Whybray, (1978:29). In the present context the last meaning seems more appropriate.

<sup>264</sup> In the niphal, נִגְשׁ has the meaning of treating harshly (cf. 1Sam 13:6, 14:24, Isa 3:5; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:594; cf. NJB). Lipiński (1998:214), however, argues for the meaning ‘seized’ in the light of the context.

<sup>265</sup> Hermisson (2004:25 note 23) translates וְהוּא נִעְנָה with ‘and he bowed down’. He argues that while both the previous verb and the present one are in the passive voice, the second verb is intransitive. According to him this is brought out by the emphatic position of וְהוּא. The effect is that the second verb describes the reaction of the servant rather than an action coming from the outside as in the previous verb. However, Joachimsen (2011:122)



β but he remained silent, <sup>266</sup>	וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּי
γ Like a sheep for the slaughter, he was led,	כַּשֵּׂה לַטֹּבַח יוּבָל
δ And as a ewe before its shearers is silent,	וּכְרַחֵל לִפְנֵי גֹזְזֵיהָ נִאֲלָמָה
b so he did not open his mouth.	וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיו:
8aα By oppressive judgment <sup>267</sup> he was taken away,	מִמְעָצָר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לָקָח
β And his offspring <sup>268</sup> who was concerned with it? <sup>269</sup>	וְאֶת־דֹּרוֹ מִי יִשׁוּחֶת
bα For he was cut off from the land of the living,	כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים
β Because of the transgression of his people <sup>270</sup> he was afflicted.	מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַע לְמוֹ:
9aα And one set his grave among the wicked,	וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רֵשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ
β And his tomb <sup>271</sup> with the rich,	וְאֶת־עֵשִׂיר בְּמִתְיוֹ
bα though he had done no violence,	עַל לֹא־תָמַס עֲשָׂה
β nor deceit with his mouth.	וְלֹא מְרָמָה בְּפִיו:
10aα Indeed the LORD willed to crush him with sickness <sup>272</sup> ,	וַיְהִי הוּא חָפֵץ דָּכְאוֹ הַחֲלִי
αβ If he makes himself a guilt offering, <sup>273</sup>	אִם־תִּשְׂשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ

points out that the niphil participle נִעְנָה may be construed as either passive ‘humiliated’ or reflexive ‘humbled himself’.

<sup>266</sup> Literally, ‘he did not open his mouth’.

<sup>267</sup> The noun מִעָצָר appears 3 times in the Old Testament (Psa 107:39, Prov 30:16 and Isa 53:8). In Psa 107:39 it means oppression. In Prov 30:16 it means closure of the womb. The meaning in Isa 53:8 is not that easy to arrive at. Hence, several suggestions have been proffered. These include; oppression, arrest, imprisonment, dismissal, power and authority (cf. Wright & Milgrom 2001:313-314). The expression מִמְעָצָר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט, literally ‘from oppression and from judgment/justice’, is interpreted here as a hendiadys (two words are used to express one idea), hence, ‘from oppressive judgment’. For the various possible nuances of the preposition מִן see Joachimsen (2011:126) who gives the possibilities as causal, separative and privative.

<sup>268</sup> The MT דֹּר has been translated in various ways: generation (LXX - γενεα, Vul - *generationem*, NJB - contemporaries); future (NRSV); change of state/fortune (Driver 1935:403; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:206); descendants (NIV). The last option is adopted here but rendered ‘offspring’ (cf. 53:10aγ).

<sup>269</sup> The MT מִי יִשׁוּחֶת is from שִׁיחַ which means to think, imagine, be concerned with a matter. Here it is in the *poel* as in Psa 143:5, where it is best translated with ‘concerned with...’ (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:919; NJB).

<sup>270</sup> For this translation see comments at 6.3.1.11 above.

<sup>271</sup> For the translation of בְּמִתְיוֹ as ‘tomb’ see 6.3.1.12 above.

<sup>272</sup> See the comments at 6.3.1.13 above.

<sup>273</sup> Taking the text as it stands in the MT, אִם־תִּשְׂשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ, a few observations are to be made concerning whether אָשָׁם is to be understood in the temporal (when) or in the conditional (if) sense, and concerning the subject and object of the clause. The particle אִם can have a temporal ‘when’ (cf. NRSV) or conditional ‘if’ (cf. NJB) meaning. The latter is preferable in view of the following clause. As far as the latter is concerned there are two possibilities. The verb can either be construed as 2<sup>nd</sup> pers.masc.sg., ‘you’. If so to whom is the ‘you’ referring? The LORD is in the immediate context, and is the most obvious possibility. The object of the clause in this case would be נַפְשׁוֹ. But even though the LORD is in the immediate context (v.10aα), he is not addressed in the clause but is the subject of the clause. So, ‘If you make his soul a guilt offering...’ (cf. NRSV). The verb can also be construed as 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. fem.sg. In this case

a $\gamma$ He will see offspring, he will live long.	יִרְאֶה זָרַע וְאָרִיךְ יָמִים
b Thus, the will of the LORD will succeed through him.	וְסִפְזֵי יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח:
11a $\alpha$ From the anguish of his soul, he will understand, <sup>274</sup> be satisfied <sup>275</sup> ,	מִמַּעַמְל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה וְיִשְׂבַּע
a $\beta$ By his knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many,	בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים
b And the guilt of their iniquities he will carry.	וְעוֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:
12a $\alpha$ Therefore, I allot will him a share with the grea	לְכוֹן אֶחְלֶק־לוֹ כְּרַבִּים
$\beta$ And with the mighty he will share the spoil	וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יִחְלַק שָׁלַל
$\gamma$ Because he completely <sup>276</sup> emptied himself	מִסַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הִעָרָה לְמִנְתֵי נַפְשׁוֹ
$\delta$ And was counted among transgressors,	וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה
b $\alpha$ And that he carried the sin of many,	וְהוּא חָטָא־רַבִּים בְּנֶשָׂא
$\beta$ And for transgressors he interceded.	וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ:

## 6.4 The Unity of the Text

It has been noted that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a text that stands out from its immediate surrounding context, that is, Isa 52:1-12 and Isa 54:1-17. Within this text, however, there are instances where the logical flow of thought seems to be disturbed by change in subject, speakers and theme. There are also substantial syntactic problems. These call for a discernment of the unity of the text in terms of logical flow and composition.

The flow of thought from 52:13 to 52:14 seems to be problematic. In terms of content, the former speaks about the prudence of God's servant and his exaltation, while the latter speaks about the astonishment of the many caused by the deplorable appearance of the servant. In terms of time, the first two verbs in Isa 52:13 are in *yiqtol* form and the last two in *waqatal* form. Both forms point to a future time. The one verb in Isa 52:14 is in *qatal* form pointing to

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נַפְשׁוֹ would be the subject since it is a feminine noun. Literally translated 'If his soul makes' but idiomatically translated 'If he makes himself a guilt offering...'. In many instances in the Old Testament נַפֵּשׁ with a pronominal suffix is used in place of a personal noun (Gen 27:4, 19, 25, 31; 49:6; 1Sam 20:4; Psa 119:129; Isa 46:2). In this study the אִם is understood in a conditional sense and נַפְשׁוֹ is taken as the subject of the conditional clause (cf. NJB; contra Whybray 1978:64).

<sup>274</sup> For this meaning of רָאָה see BDB (2000:907), Koehler & Baumgartner (1998:862) and the discussion below in chapter seven.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Qoh 2:24; 5:17. In these texts Qoheleth advocates the enjoyment (רָאָה טוֹב) of one's toil or labour.

<sup>276</sup> The MT מְנִיחַ is here interpreted as a superlative (cf. Judges 16:16; 2Kings 20:1; Song of Songs 8:6; Thomas 1953:219-220; Barré 2000:27).

time in the past. The substantive מְשֻׁתָּת in Isa 52:14aβ has been construed with reference to time in the past. Furthermore, the subject of the verbs in 52:13 is the servant while that of 52:14aα is the ‘many’. These observations have led some commentators to argue that Isa 52:13 is misplaced (cf. McKenzie 1968:131, 132).

Indeed the above observations are valid. However, the servant who is the subject of the verbs in Isa 52:13, can be considered to be the object of the verb שָׁמַם in 52:14aα; and his appearance and form as the subjects of the nominal phrases in Isa 52:14aβb. Hence, the servant connects the two verses, providing a logical flow. The servant, who acts prudently and is exalted in 52:13 in the future, of course, is the same servant at whom the many were once astonished in the past. This is the astonishment that is compared to the future surprise caused by the same servant to the many peoples and kings in Isa 52:15. This flow of thought is reinforced by the fact that both verses can be ascribed to the same speaker, God (cf. Westermann 1969:255).<sup>277</sup>

Isa 52:14aβb causes syntactical problems arising from the presence of the כִּי ‘so’ twice. As has already been pointed out above at 6.3.1.4, it is unusual to have כִּי ‘so’, as part of a protasis, as it is in this case. It was also proposed at 6.3.1.4 that Isa 52:14aβb is best understood in terms of a temporal and explanatory clause, stating the time of the astonishment in the past and giving the reason for or source of the astonishment of the many. This understanding does not warrant a transposition of this part of the verse to the end of Isa 53:2 as proposed by some commentators (cf. Whybray 1978:143).

Hence, Isa 52:13-15 is a subunit where God speaks about the future exaltation of the prudent servant, who, in the past astonished many by his deplorable and less than human appearance. Comparable to this astonishment shall be the surprise of many peoples and kings because of the turn of events concerning the same servant.

In Isa 53:1 there is a change of speakers from God to the anonymous ‘we’. The ‘we’ are clearly the speakers up to Isa 53:6. There is also a change from statements about the servant and the reaction of the many and kings to two rhetorical questions concerning belief and revelation. The first rhetorical question is about belief in ‘our report’ (לִשְׁמִיעֵתֵנוּ), a report made by

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<sup>277</sup> This is certainly true of Isa 52:13 and highly probable of Isa 52:14-15. Watts (1987:229-230) proposes Tattenai, who was the governor of Judah before and during the reign of Darius, as the speaker of Isa 52:14-15. There is however, no textual evidence to support this.

the 'we'. This is best understood as picking up from Isa 52:15, where the kings' understanding of what they have not heard (וְאִשֶּׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ) is reported. While the second question may be construed as picking up from Isa 52:15b $\alpha$ . There what the kings have seen, that is, that which was not told them before (לֹא־טָפַר לֵהֶם רְאוּ) is reported.

What follows in Isa 53:2 is not an answer to the rhetorical questions in Isa 53:1 but a description of or better still a reflection on the humble upbringing and unattractive appearance of a 'him', introduced by a verb in *wayyiqtol* form. This may be construed as disrupting the flow of thought initiated in Isa 53:1. But it has already been indicated at 6.2.2 that the *waw* consecutive can be interpreted as an illative conjunction, answering, as it were, the questions raised in Isa 53:1 by means of illustration or reflection. Isa 53:2-12 is an illustration of the state of events that provoked the rhetorical questions raised in Isa 53:1 (cf. Hermisson 2004:24).

Isa 53:2-6 reads smoothly. The 'we' continue to speak, reflecting on the state of the servant, his sufferings and their initial and subsequent assessment of his sufferings. Their final assessment or conclusion is that it was a suffering for and on behalf of them. This is followed by a description of the silence of the servant in the face of maltreatment (Isa 53:7), and by statements concerning this unfair treatment and its consequences on the life of the servant (Isa 53:8-10 $\alpha$ ). The speaker in Isa 53:7-10 $\alpha$  remains unclear. It could be the 'we' or it could be the prophet.

In Isa 53:10 $\alpha\beta$ -12 there is a change in verbal forms. In Isa 53:1-10 $\alpha$  the majority of the verbs are in *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* forms but in *yiqtol* form in Isa 53:10 $\alpha\beta$ -12.<sup>278</sup> This signals a shift from time in the past to time in the future. There is also a change in speakers from the 'we' to God. This is signalled by the עֲבָדִי 'my servant' in Isa 53:11 $\alpha\beta$ . Here again, the subject is still the servant and the themes raised in Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:1-10 $\alpha$  are echoed. These include; the acting wisely and the prosperity of the servant (Isa 52:13, 53:10 $\alpha\gamma$ , 12 $\alpha\beta$ ) and; the bearing of the guilt of the many by the servant (Isa 53:4a, 53:11b, 12b).

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<sup>278</sup> There are five instances in Isa 53:1-10 $\alpha$  where there are *yiqtol* forms, that is, Isa 53:2 $\alpha\gamma$ , 2b, 7 $\alpha\beta$ , 7b, and 53:8 $\alpha\beta$ . With the exception of Isa 53:8 $\alpha\beta$ , the *yiqtol* forms are found in dependent clauses; consequential in Isa 53:2 $\alpha\gamma$ , 2b; and circumstantial clauses in Isa 53: 7 $\alpha\beta$ , 7b. In Isa 53:8 $\alpha\beta$  the *yiqtol* form is found within a question (cf. Hermisson 2004:32 note 49). In these instances the time reference is determined by the main clause. The main clauses are in the *qatal* form.

The analysis above shows that this text is made up of three subunits; Isa 52:13-15; Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$ ; and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12. In Isa 52:13-15, God is the speaker, and the main theme is the success of the servant. The time is in the future. The success of the servant is picked up in detail in Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12, where God is the speaker and the time is in the future. These two sections, that is, Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12, frame the whole unit, providing the introduction and conclusion. The middle section, Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  describes the events prior to or leading to the success of the servant from the perspective of the 'we'. Thus, Isa 52:13-53:12 exhibits unity of composition. Isa 52:13-15 is the prologue that introduces the subject matter to be further developed in the main body,<sup>279</sup> Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  and concluded in Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12.

## 6.5 The Structure 'and style' of the Text

Isa 52:13-53:12 has three major sections as has been pointed out above, that is, Isa 52:13-15; Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$ ; and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12. Isa 52:13-15 is the introduction. Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  is the main section and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12 is the conclusion.

The beginning of the introduction, Isa 52:13, is marked off by the demonstrative particle הִנֵּה 'behold', and the introduction is separated from the main section by the interrogative particles מִי 'who' in Isa 53:1. The demonstrative particle הִנֵּה 'behold' is often used to introduce a declaration, promise or predication in Isaiah 40-55 (cf. Isa 40:9; 42:9; 49:12; 54:11). The declaration proper is found in 52:13. It is about the 'acting wisely' and exaltation of the servant. This is the introduction to this subsection and as part of the subsection an introduction to the text as a whole.<sup>280</sup>

The following subsection, Isa 52:14-15a, begins and ends with the comparative particles, כַּאֲשֶׁר 'as' and כֵּן 'so', respectively. The former introduces the protasis and subordinating clause and the latter introduces the apodosis and subordinate comparative clause. Here, the shock and wonder of the many is compared to that of the many nations and kings. In the middle of this subsection there is an explanatory clause that is also introduced by כֵּן 'as', explaining the cause

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<sup>279</sup> This is contrary to the views of Whybray (1978:143). He argued, from form critical considerations, that Isa 52:13-15 is not part of this unit.

<sup>280</sup> The servant whose fate and fortunes are the subject matter of the text is introduced and what is declared concerning the servant is taken up again in Isa 53:11-12.

of the shock of the many in Isa 52:14a $\alpha$ . The last subsection, Isa 52:15b is introduced by a conjunction כִּי, which can be interpreted in terms of an explanatory conjunction, offering an explanation for the reactions of the many nations and kings in Isa 52:15a. Thus, in this section, that is, Isa 52:13-15, the servant, his ‘acting wisely’ and exaltation (52:13), the circumstances prior to (52:14) and as a consequence of his exaltation (52:15) are proclaimed. The structure of this introduction can be presented as follows:

Isa 52:13	Declaration of the acting wisely and exaltation of the servant, introduced by הִנֵּה
Isa 52:14-15a	Statement of the surprise of many nations and kings, introduced by כְּאִשׁוֹר
Isa 52:15b	Explanation for the surprise of the many nations and kings introduced by כִּי

Isa 52:13-15 introduces the servant, the themes of his sufferings and future exaltation. In this section the theme of suffering is limited to the disfigurement of the servant (Isa 52:14a $\beta$ b) but it is related to the themes of his ‘acting wisely’ and exaltation by means of the comparative conjunction כְּאִשׁוֹר ‘as’. These themes are the subject matter of Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  and Isa 53:10b-12.

Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  constitutes the main section. This section can be divided into three major sections, that is, 53:1-6, 53:7 and 53:8-10a $\alpha$ . This is signalled by the term יְהִיָּה that occurs at the beginning and end of the first section (53:1b and 53:6b) as well as at the end of the third section (53:10a $\alpha$ ). Furthermore, the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. discourse begins at Isa 53:1a and ends at the end of Isa 53:6. As far as the theme is concerned Isa 53:1-6 is about the deplorable state of the servant and the past and present understanding of his sufferings by the ‘we’, while Isa 53:7 is about the silence of the servant and Isa 53:8-10a $\alpha$  is about the harsh and unjust treatment of the servant, the reason for it, and its consequences.

These three sections can be divided into subsections; 53:1, 2-3, 4-6, 7, 8-10a $\alpha$ . Isa 53:1 is marked off by two interrogative pronouns posing rhetorical questions about who (מִי) believed the report of the ‘we’, on the one hand, and to whom (עַל־מִי) the hand of יְהוָה was revealed, on the other. Stylistically, the first question begins with the interrogative pronoun and the predicate (מִי הֶאֱמִין) but the second ends with a preposition, the interrogative pronoun and the predicate (עַל־מִי נִגְלְתָה). The next subsection, Isa 53:2-3, is marked off by the use of the comparative particle

כָּ ‘as’, in 53:2aαβ and 53:3bα, as well as the particle of negation לֹא in 53:2aγ and 53:3bβ. In Isa 53:2aα וַיִּעַל ‘and he grew up’, is used elliptically to describe the upbringing or early life of the servant (53:2aα), on the one hand and his unattractive appearance marked by the repeated use of the particle of negation לֹא and the assonance of the ‘lo’ sound (53:2aγb), on the other. In its turn, Isa 53:3 begins the first and last colon with נִבְזָה (niph. ptc. – despised), describing the contempt with which he was held by the ‘we’ because of his sufferings and sickness (53:3aβ) and because of his insignificant upbringing and his deplorable appearance (53:2).

Isa 53:4-6 is marked off by the repeated use of the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. suf נו ‘our, we, us’, and the assonance associated with it. Three subsections may be discerned, 53:4, 53:5 and 53:6. Isa 53:4 begins with the affirmative adverb אֲכֵנּוּ ‘truly, surely’. Isa 53:5 stands out by the alliteration of the consonantal sound /m/, and Isa 53:6 begins and ends with the noun and suffix כָּלֵנוּ ‘all of us’. In this section the ‘we’ confess that:

1. They had thought that his sickness and sorrow was a punishment from God that he deserved (53:4b);
2. He suffered thus because of their iniquities (53:4a, 5a);
3. He suffered for their wholeness and healing (53:5b) and;
4. They alone had gone astray, but the LORD laid their guilt on the servant (53:6).

What then follows in 53:7 is the silence of the servant in the face of mistreatment and humiliation, signalled by וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי ‘and he did not open his mouth’ at the beginning (53:7aβ) and end of the verse (53:7b).

Isa 53:8-10aα concludes the main section. It is about the harsh/unjust treatment of the servant (53:8aα) and a question introduced by the interrogative pronoun מִי (53:8aβ), the reason for and consequences of the treatment – death and burial or otherwise (53:8b, 9a), and a statement that he was innocent (53:9b). This section ends with a statement that it was the plan/pleasure/will of יְהוָה to crush him (53:10aα). It is set apart from the last section by the occurrences of *yiqqtol* verbs forms, characteristic of the last section.

The middle section, Isa 53:1-10aα, may be structured as follows:

Isa 53:1	Questions by the 'we' concerning belief and revelation of the LORD
Isa 53:2-3	Description of the upbringing, appearance and rejection of the servant
Isa 53:4-6	Confession that the servant suffered for and on their behalf of the 'we'
Isa 53:7	Description of the silence of the servant in the face of maltreatment
Isa 53:8-10α	Ill-treatment and declaration that the suffering was the plan of the LORD

The last section, Isa 53:10αβ, is marked off by the only occurrence of נַפְשׁוֹ 'his life, himself' in the whole text. It occurs three times, at the beginning of the section (53:10αβ), in the middle (53:11α) and towards the end of the section (53:12αγ). Furthermore, the section begins and ends with *yiqqtol* verbal forms and God is the speaker. In this section there are promises made to the servant concerning offspring, long life (53:10אγ), making many righteous (53:11אγ) and sharing in the fortunes of the mighty (53:12אαβ). The reasons for these promises are also given (53:10אβ; 53:11א; 53:12אγδb). This section may be structured as follows:

Isa 53:10אβγb	Conditional promise of offspring and long life
Isa 53:11	Promise of satisfaction to the servant and righteousness to the many
Isa 53:12	Promise of sharing with the mighty and the reasons for it.

The section echoes the issues in the previous sections to warrant the designation conclusion. These include the issues concerning the servant's acting wisely (52:13a; 53:11אβ), the servant's exaltation (52:13b; 53:10אγ, 12אαβ), the 'many' (52:14א; 53: 11אβ, 12ab) and the servants' suffering on behalf of others (53:4-6; 53:10אβ, 12אγδb).

With respect to style the text has a two tier chiasmic structure. There are the two outer frames (52:13-15; 53:10אβγb-12) that declare the prosperity and exaltation of the servant, and enclose the middle section (53:1-10α) that describes his suffering and the confession of the 'we'. In turn, the middle section also has three subsections; two outer frames that describe the deplorable state and maltreatment of the servant with a question(s) introduced by the interrogative pronoun מִי 'who' and; at the centre the confession of the 'we'. The chiasmic structure of the whole text may be presented as follows:



Isa 52:13	Promise of the prosperity and exaltation of the servant in the future
Isa 52:14-15a	Promise of the surprise of many nations and kings
Isa 52:15b	Explanation for the surprise of the many nations and kings
Isa 53:1	Questions by the 'we' concerning belief and revelation of the LORD
Isa 53:2-3	Description of the upbringing, appearance and rejection of the servant
Isa 53:4-6	Confession that the servant suffered for and on behalf of the 'we'
Isa 53:7	Description of the silence of the servant in the face of maltreatment
Isa 53:8-10α	Ill-treatment and the declaration of his suffering as the plan of the LORD
Isa 53:10αβγb	Conditional promise of offspring and long life
Isa 53:11	Promise of satisfaction to the servant and righteousness to the many
Isa 53:12	Promise of sharing with the mighty and the explanation for it.

The above structure shows that the text has three parts, Isa 52:13-15; 53:1-10α and 53:10αβγb -12, which constitutes the introduction, main body and conclusion, respectively. In view of the style the text has a two tier chiasmic structure. All in all 53:1-10α is the main section or body of the text and 53:4-6 is the centre of the main body. Accordingly, the content of 53:4-6 is the focus of the message of the text, the confession and declaration of the 'we' that the suffering of the servant was for and on their behalf, that is, vicarious suffering. This declaration and confession is confirmed by the divine oracle in the concluding frame, Isa 53:10αβ-12.

## 6.6 The *Gattung* of the Text

*Gattung* is a German word used to refer to the type of literature an expression or text belongs to. It basically refers to the *genus* or class of something.<sup>281</sup> The English equivalent is the word *genre*.<sup>282</sup> In literary studies the word *genre* is used to refer to type of literature.<sup>283</sup> The use of

<sup>281</sup> *Genus* is a Latin word for birth, origin, class or type of something (Cassell 1987:264)

<sup>282</sup> The English *genre* may be traced back, through the French *genre*, to the Latin *genus/generis* which referred to origin, descent, race, class, kind.

<sup>283</sup> Barton (1996:16) defines *genre* as "...any recognizable and distinguishable type of writing or speech – whether 'literary' in the complimentary sense of that word or merely utilitarian, like a business letter – which operates within certain conventions that are in principle (not necessarily in practice) stateable". In another chapter of the same work he says, "A *Gattung* or *genre* is a conventional pattern, recognizable by certain formal criteria (style,

the word genre in English literature and literary studies to refer to extensive literary types like novels, tragedy, history and so on, tends to limit the use of the German *Gattung* as it is used to refer to both extensive literary types and miniature literary types like proverbs, oracles of salvation (Barton 1996:31). For this reason the German *Gattung* will be used in this study.<sup>284</sup>

In many languages and linguistic traditions there are speech and writing presuppositions that encompass expectations, constraints, fixed expressions, and tacit agreements or conventions on the use and meaning of words and expressions that go beyond the literal use. These facilitate for the production of speech, as well as guide in the interpretation of speech. These conventions and fixed expressions give rise to literary types, that is, *Gattungen*. Indeed there are expressions whose meaning is determined by the *Gattung* to which these expressions belong (cf. Weeks 2013:16; Simian-Yofre 2002:109). The *Gattung* determines the meaning of an expression or text. It determines how the expression or text should be read in line with the conventions associated with the *Gattung*.

It is important then to know the *Gattung* of a text in the process of determining its meaning or message, and function or purpose. Even though this study is not specifically aimed at interpreting the meaning or message of Isa 52:13-53:12, it is still important to determine the *Gattung* of the text. This would shed light on the possible relation of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in this text. The assumption here is that there are typical *Gattungen* associated with wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Murphy 1981).

*Gattungen* have discernable or identifiable forms and thematic content. They are discerned, understood and described in terms of formal criteria and the thematic content or subject matter of the text (cf. Barton 1996:32; Simian-Yofre 2002:110-111). The content is what the text is talking about. The form is how it talks about it or how the 'content' of the text is organized.

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shape, tone, particular syntactic or even grammatical structures, recurring formulaic patterns), which is *used in a particular society in social contexts which are governed by certain formal conventions*" (Barton 1996:32).

<sup>284</sup> It is also important to note that in English the word genre is normally used for literary rather than oral compositions. *Gattung* in German is used for both (Barton 1996:31).

The form of a text encompasses all the linguistic aspects that constitute a text. These aspects include, among other things, choice of words (vocabulary), syntax, distribution and patterns of syllabic, consonantal and vowel sounds, tone, structure and typical formulae (Simian-Yofre 2002:102-108; Barton 1996:32). Texts that display similar formal aspects and, to a large extent, thematic content belong to the same *Gattung*.

Therefore, the designation of the *Gattung* of a text should include the form and content, allude to the life situation and the use/function of the *Gattung* (cf. Simian-Yofre 2002:111-112).

### **6.6.1 The *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12**

The identification and categorization of the *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12 have been many and varied. However, commentators have either concluded that the form and thematic content of Isa 52:13-53:12 is one of its kind or that there are “limited possibilities for subsuming the text under the usual forms” (Hermisson 2004:32), or that it is a mixed *Gattung* (Ejeh 2012:45) and hence, defy identification with any single *Gattung*. Notwithstanding, several proposals have been made.

Whybray (1978:110-111) cites Joachim Begrich as one of the commentators who proposed a mixed *Gattung* of Yahweh’s speeches (52:13-15 and 53:11-12) and a song (53:1-10) influenced by the individual psalms of thanksgiving (cf. Melugin 1976:74; Whybray 1978:109-139).<sup>285</sup> While, the categorization of Isa 52:13-15 and 53:11-12 as divine speech has been accepted by many commentators, the comparison of 53:1-10 to or influence by or imitation of individual psalms of thanksgiving has not received the same assent.<sup>286</sup> One major drawback has been that it fails to account for the fact that in the individual psalms of thanksgiving it is the individual who has been delivered who narrates the deliverance as well as gives thanks. In Isa 53:1-10, the servant who suffers and is delivered is conspicuously silent.

For Melugin (1976:74, 167-168) Isa 52:13-53:12 is composed of two speeches of salvation (Isa 52:13-15 and 53:11-12), and a confession by the nations (Isa 53:1-10). He sees the purpose

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<sup>285</sup>Whybray (1978: 109-140) also points out resemblances of Isa 53 to Psalms of thanksgiving and hence he labels Isa 53 a thanksgiving hymn. For a critique of Whybray’s categorization see Hermisson (2004:33).

<sup>286</sup> For a detailed critique of Begrich’s view, see Melugin (1976:74) and Whybray (1978:110-111). Other proposals have included a funeral dirge (see. Hermisson 2004:33; Ejeh 2012:45); prophetic liturgy (see Whybray 1978:112),

of the text as that of announcing salvation. He, however, notes a major difference between other speeches of salvation and Isa 52:13-53:12, namely that, “the deliverance is directly connected with the suffering” (Melugin 1976:74). While there is an element of confession in Isa 53:1-10, the passage includes more than just a confession as will be shown below.

It has been noted earlier (see 6.5) that Isa 52:13-53:12 may be structured into three sections. This would warrant a further investigation of each section in the determination of the *Gattung* of the text. Since, however, the similarity of the speakers, the time and content of Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12, have also been pointed out above at 6.1 and 6.4, these two sections will be looked at together in the determination of the *Gattung* of the text.

#### 6.6.1.1 Isa 52:13-15 and 53:10a $\beta$ -12

The formal aspects of Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12 include: the expression עֶבְדִי ‘my servant’ (52:13; 53:11) that speaks about the servant in third person and several particles. The particles are: particle of interjection הִנֵּה (52:13a $\alpha$ ), particles of comparison כֵּן and כֵּן (52:14, 15a), explanatory particle כִּי (52:15b), adverbial particle לְכֵן (53:12), and a hypothetical particle אִם (53:10a $\beta$ ). There are also a number of figures of speech (52:13b, 15a $\beta$ ; 52:14a $\alpha$ ; 53:12a $\alpha$ ; 53:10a $\gamma$ , 12a $\gamma$ ). There is a tone of satisfaction and astonishment. The thematic content is the presentation of the success of the servant (52:13), on the one hand and the surprise of the nations and kings (52:15), on the other. The specific details of each of these are given below.

The first section, Isa 52:13-15, begins with the particle of interjection הִנֵּה ‘behold’. This particle is followed by a verb describing the acting wisely or successfully of the servant. There are three particles of comparison כֵּן ‘thus’, comparing the initial shock of the many to the eventual surprise of many nations and kings (52:14-15). There is also an explanatory particle כִּי ‘for’ (52:15b) that introduces the reason for the shock and surprise. The figures of speech include: the acting wisely of the servant יִשְׁכִּיל (52:13); the exaltation of the servant in the expressions יָרוּם וְנִשְׂא וְגָבַהּ קִאֵד (52:13b); ‘the many’ רַבִּים (52:14a $\alpha$ );<sup>287</sup> the ‘shutting’ of mouths (52:15a $\beta$ ). The verbs in 52:13 create a tone of triumphant satisfaction, on the part of God, owing to the success of the servant,

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<sup>287</sup> רַבִּים may either be interpreted literally as ‘many’ or figuratively as ‘mighty ones’

while the verbs and particles of comparison in 52:14-15 create a tone of astonishment on the part of the nations and of the kings. The section ends by giving reasons for the surprise of many nations and kings introduced by the explanatory particle כִּי 'for'.

Isa 52:13 is comparable to Isa 42:1 (cf. Childs 2001:412). Both begin with the particle of interjection, the short form הֵן in the case of Isa 42:1 and the expanded form הִנֵּה in the case of Isa 52:13. In both a servant is presented as עֲבָדִי 'my servant'. God is the speaker.<sup>288</sup> Isa 42:1-4 is a divine oracle introducing the servant, chosen and filled with the untiring zeal to bring about justice to the nations. The particle in Isa 52:13, however, presents the acting wisely of the servant, whose actions surprise kings and nations. In both Isa 42:1-4 and Isa 52:13-15, the audience of the divine oracle is not specified. However, it may simply be the general public, as in other divine oracles in Isa 40-55 (cf. Seitz 2001:459).

In the other frame (53:10aβ-12), there is a conditional clause introduced by the hypothetical particle אִם 'if', and the phrase נַפְשׁוֹ 'his life'. The phrase נַפְשׁוֹ is found at the beginning, middle and end of the section. A condition of laying 'his life' as restitution is set (53:10aβ). This is followed by an apodosis in 53:10aγb, promising prosperity and the fulfilment of the plan/will of God. The נַפְשׁוֹ 'his life' in the middle is part of a prepositional phrase that gives the reason for the servant's satisfaction (53:11aα). This is followed by a statement about עֲבָדִי 'my servant' justifying many by his wisdom/knowledge and by bearing their guilt (53:11aβb). The concluding verse has two parts, a divine declaration about the exaltation of the servant introduced by the adverb לָכֵן 'therefore', with reference to the future; and the reason for the exaltation introduced by the expression תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר 'because', with reference to the past. There are a number of figures of speech in this section. There is reference to guilt offering in the protasis in the expression אִם-תִּשִׂים אֲשֶׁם נַפְשׁוֹ (Isa 53:10aβ); to offspring and long life in the expressions יִרְאֶה יְרֵאָה (53:10aγ); the advancement of the plan of God through him in the expression בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח (53:10bβ) in the apodosis; to understanding יִרְאֶה and knowledge or wisdom בְּדַעְתּוֹ (Isa 53:11a);<sup>289</sup> to spoils יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל (Isa 53:12aβ); and to the emptying of oneself completely הִעָרַה לְמֹת (Isa 53:12bβ).

<sup>288</sup> In all the cases where we find the expression עֲבָדִי in Isa 40-55, God is always the speaker (41:8, 9; 42:1, 19; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 49:3; 52:13; 54:17). In the case of 49:3, the speaker is the servant, who is however, reporting a direct speech of God; 'And He (God) said to me, "you are my servant..." (Isa 49:3).

<sup>289</sup> See the translation and accompanying notes of Isa 53:11aα at 6.3.2.

נִקְשָׁו (Isa 53:12aγ). The tone of Isa 53:10aβ-12 is again one of triumphant satisfaction with the success of the servant.

Isa 53:10aβ-12, like Isa 52:13-15 is a divine speech, in view of the presence of עֲבָדִי ‘my servant’ as noted above. The adverb לְכֵן ‘therefore’ is also often used to introduce a divine declaration or command (cf. 1 Kgs 14:10; 22:19; 2 Kgs 19:32; Isa 27:9; 51:21; 52:6). Thus, the *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10aβ-12 is that of a divine speech. But in these sections the audience of the oracle is not specified. In Isa 52:13-15 the acting wisely of the servant is announced through the comparison of the previous shock and the eventual surprise of kings and the nations because they understand something new. In Isa 53:10aβ-12 the acting wisely of the servant is expressed in terms of giving his life for the sins of others, according to the will of God.<sup>290</sup>

#### 6.6.1.2 Isa 53:1-10α

The Formal aspects of Isa 53:1-10α include: rhetorical questions followed by a reflection leading to a confession; 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. speech (vv.1-6) and 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. descriptions; descriptions of the suffering in figurative speech (plant life; dry land; physical appearance; sickness; slaughter; shepherding; court; funeral rites), synonymous parallelism, and; a tone of certainty.

The text in this section is framed by rhetorical questions. The section begins at 53:1 with two rhetorical questions introduced by the interrogative pronoun מִי ‘who’. Another rhetorical question with the same interrogative pronoun מִי ‘who’ occurs at 53:8aβ, the beginning of the last subsection. Rhetorical questions provoke reflection and usually form part of the structure of a reflection (cf. Murphy 1988:181). The rhetorical questions are, therefore, answered by a reflection and a confession in 53:2-7 and 53:8b-10α. The former reflection and confession is introduced by a *waw* consecutive, and the latter is introduced by an explanatory conjunction כִּי.

The subject reflecting and confessing in Isa 53:1-6 is expressed either in 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. pronominal suffixes (53:1, 5ab, 6) or 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl. independent pronoun (53:4bα) or by verbs in 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl. inflection (53:2b, 3b, 4bα, 6). Hence, the ones reflecting or speaking have been labelled the ‘we’ (Reventlow 1998:24).<sup>291</sup> However, the one(s) reflecting or speaking in 53:7-10α, remain unspecified. They could either be the ‘we’ as in 53:1-6 or God in the light of 53:8bβ if one

<sup>290</sup> For the structures of these two framing sections see 6.4 above.

<sup>291</sup> In 53:6aβ there is the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. to refer to the straying of the ‘we’ in the expression אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ

maintains the MT reading עַמִּי ‘my people’, which is not the case in this study,( see 6.3.1.11 above). Throughout the section, the suffering person is referred to in the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.

Both the reflection on the suffering of the servant and confession of the ‘we’ are expressed through a rich collection of imagery, metaphors and idioms.<sup>292</sup> There is the imagery of plant life and dry land, as well as physical appearance in 53:2. There are images of crushing (53:5aβ, 10a), carrying (53:4, 11b, 12bα), of sheep being led to slaughter (53:7) and of graves (53:9a). There are metaphors with reference to sickness (53:3, 5bβ), piercing (53:5a), discipline (53:5bα), sheep (53:6), and probably death in the expression נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים (53:8b). There are also a number of idioms which include: זְרוּעַ יְהוָה ‘the arm of the Lord’ (53:1b); וַחֲדַל אִישִׁים ‘and forsaken by men’; וּכְמִסְתַּר פְּנָיִם ‘as one hiding face’ (cf. Job 24:15).

Synonymous and synthetic parallelisms are made use of throughout this section. Each stanza is made up of a series of bicola. Each colon of the bicola either expresses the same thought or reinforces the thought expressed in the first colon in one way or another.

The rhetorical questions as well as the synonymous and synthetic parallelism express a reflexive tone and a sense of amazement on the part of the speakers (cf. Barré 2000:12). While the use of the adverb אָכֵן ‘but surely’ in 53:4a expresses a tone of certainty and conviction.

The section has three major stanzas, Isa 53:1-6, 53:7 and 53:8-10aα as already pointed out above at 6.4. The structure of this section may be construed in terms of a reflection thus:

53:1 – A theme is stated by rhetorical questions by the ‘we’. <sup>293</sup>
53:2-10aα – Reflection on what happened to the servant leading to a new insight
53:2 – Reflection on the deplorable upbringing of the servant
53:3 – Reflection on the low esteem he generated and its reasons (suffering); <sup>294</sup>
53:4-6 – Reflection concludes with a confession of previous view and a new insight that he suffered for and on behalf of the ‘we’ – vicarious suffering.

<sup>292</sup> By imagery is meant a word or phrase which appeals to the senses such that concrete or physical images are formed in the mind. By metaphor is meant the use of a word or group of words not literally but analogically. By idiom is meant the use of a group of words whose meaning is not derived from the combination of the literal meaning of each word in the group but from the conventional use of the phrase in the language. (cf. Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble 2002).

<sup>293</sup> It is this theme that is reflected upon in the following verses (53:2-7).

<sup>294</sup> Honour, a good name and esteem are important themes in wisdom literature (cf. Job 29).

53:7 – Reflection on the silence and submission of the servant despite the suffering;
53:8-9 – Reflection on the unjust treatment and death/suffering of the innocent servant for the people.
53:10α – Reflection on the role of the LORD in the suffering.

As far as the thematic content is concerned, there is the reflection on the suffering of the innocent person (vv. 2-3, 7-10α) leading to the transformed attitude and understanding of the ‘we’ towards this suffering (vv. 4-6). According to the structure discerned above at 6.5 the transformed attitude and understanding is at the centre of this section. The ‘we’ at one and the same time reflect on their contribution to the suffering of the servant, as well as declare their new understanding of the role of this suffering, that the servant suffered for and on behalf of them. This has been called a confession on the part of the ‘we’ (Melugin 1976:167).<sup>295</sup> It is indeed a confession but much more than a confession. The confession is the conclusion reached after a reflection on the events surrounding the servant. The confession is limited to the admittance of guilt by the ‘we’. The reflection also leads to a declaration/judgment of a new teaching concerning the role of the suffering of the righteous servant; that the suffering is for others and on behalf of others.

The theme introduced in Isa 53:1 in rhetorical form is presented as a revelation thus:

Who has believed what we have heard?	מי האמין לשמענו
Or to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?	וזרוע יהוה על מי נגלתה

The prepositional phrase לשמענו ‘to our report or what we have heard’ is used in parallel with the verb נגלתה ‘has been revealed’. Thus, the reflection that follows is a reflection on the experience of the servant, that is, what the ‘we’ have heard. The experience of the servant becomes the channel of the revelation of the LORD. The reflection of the ‘we’ on this

<sup>295</sup> Westermann (1969:255-256) calls Isa 52:13-15; 53:11b-13 an announcement, and Isa 53:1-11a a report. For him, the servant is the subject in all these sections.



experience/revelation leads to the new attitude, understanding and a confession on the part of the 'we'.

The theme in Isa 53:1 is also expressed by the idiom זְרוּעַ יְהוָה 'the arm of the Lord'. This expression and related expressions appear several times in Isa 40-55 (cf. Isa 51:9; 52:10). In these instances it refers to the power of God, especially the power of God to save and to redeem.<sup>296</sup> Therefore, what has been heard or revealed and reflected upon leading to the new insight by the 'we' is the power of God to bring about salvation from sin through the suffering of an innocent person. Moreover, this conclusion or confession by the 'we' is confirmed by divine oracle in the framing sections, 52:13-15 and 53:10a $\beta$  – 12, especially at 53:11a $\gamma$ b, where it is stated that: "by his knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many, he shall carry their guilt." In these sections the suffering person is also given the title 'my servant'. Therefore, the purpose of the text is to disseminate a new teaching about God's plan of bringing salvation through the suffering of the innocent servant.

The formal characteristics and thematic content of Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  as discerned above, have no direct correspondence to any text or texts in the Old Testament, nor even in extant texts of the Ancient Near East to allow for an identification of the *Gattung* to which it belongs. While the narrative poetic form, warrant that this section be labelled a hymn or simply a poem, the reflective tone resembles the reflections witnessed to in the book of Qoheleth (Qoh 2:1-11, 12-17, 18-26; cf. Murphy 1988:181).

In the glossary of terms Murphy (1988:181) defines a reflection as:

A genre ...that states a thesis or goal which the writer considers and evaluates in a very personal way. It captures "the course of thought", and has a loose structure, depending upon the author's style. Characteristics are quotation of wisdom sayings, employment of rhetorical questions and giving examples.

Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  as a reflection states a thesis or theme through rhetorical questions. It considers and evaluates the suffering of the servant in the manner described above. The reflection leads to a new insight. Together with the conclusion of the reflection, that of the vicarious suffering of

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<sup>296</sup> In Isa 52:10, the expression, though formulated differently, is used together with the expression יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'the salvation of our God'.

an innocent person it may be further labelled as *a reflection on the vicarious suffering of an innocent person*.

### **6.6.1.3 Isa 52:13-53:12**

In the light of the above discussion, the *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10aβ-12 is a divine oracle. The purpose is that of declaring the success and/or exaltation of the servant who brought about justification by suffering. Isa 53:1-10aα on the other hand, is a reflection on and confession about the vicarious suffering of an innocent servant. The purpose of the text is to declare the vicariousness of the suffering of the innocent servant, as a plan of God to bring about salvation. This would make Isa 52:13-53:12 a mixed text.

In this text we read about a servant of God whose suffering results in the atonement of the sins of many (Isa 53:4-6, 10aβ, 11-12) and the exaltation of the servant (Isa 52:13; 53:10aγ), which in turn results in the astonishment of the many nations and kings (Isa 52:15), and the reflection and confession of the 'we' concerning this suffering (Isa 53:1-6). This story is told in poetic form as the analysis of the structure above has shown. Hence, the text may be classified under the general literary type *narrative poetry*. Specifically, the two framing sections, Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10aβ-12, are divine oracles and the middle section Isa 53:1-10aα is a reflection. The whole text may thus be designated *an oracle and reflection on the vicarious suffering of the servant*.

## **6.7 Summary and concluding remarks**

In this chapter it has been demonstrated that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a text that is set apart from its surrounding context, that is, Isa 52:1-12 and Isa 54:1-17 by change of thematic content, form and structure. It has also been shown that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a unified text with three sections comprising of an introduction, main section and conclusion, respectively. Isa 52:13-15 introduces the subject matter that is reflected upon in 53:1-10aα and concluded in Isa 53:10aβ-12. This was further confirmed by the two-tier and chiastic structure of the text. Isa 53:1-10aα was identified as the central section, framed by two sections, Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10aβ. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that Isa 53:4-6 is at the centre of the central section. It was also shown that this central section is a reflection on the vicarious nature of the suffering of the servant. As far as the

*Gattung* is concerned it was proposed that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a mixed text, and one of its kind in the Old Testament. Notwithstanding this, the *Gattung - an oracle and reflection on the vicarious suffering of the servant*, was proposed.

The consideration of the structure and the *Gattung* of the text have shown that the theme of the text is that of an innocent servant who suffers. This suffering is allowed by God and used for God's purpose, that is, to bring about the righteousness and salvation of the many. Afterwards, the innocent servant is exalted and counted among the mighty. The purpose of the text is to present the suffering of the innocent servant as a means of bringing about righteousness. It is about the suffering for and on behalf of others, that brings salvation. This is what has been called vicarious suffering. This text is about the vicarious suffering of the servant. This suffering brings about salvation to many, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the suffering brings about, the exaltation of the servant.

Having established the text, its structure, form and *Gattung*, the following chapter will study the presence or absence of wisdom vocabulary, expressions and motifs, in the text in general and in places where the notion of vicarious suffering is expressed.<sup>297</sup> The objective is to establish the relation between wisdom literature and tradition, and the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

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<sup>297</sup> While vicarious suffering, that is suffering of an innocent person for and on behalf of others is referred to in one way or another in the three sections of the text, it is specifically stated in Isa 53:4a, 5-6, 8b $\beta$ , 10a $\alpha$ , 11, 12b.

## Chapter Seven

### Vicarious suffering and Wisdom literature and tradition

#### 7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish the relation of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12. This will be done by assessing the vocabulary, expressions, thematic content and other considerations. The conclusion reached in the previous chapters shall guide the procedures followed and the evidence used in assessing the relation of Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition to the concept of vicarious suffering. Basically there will be an assessment of the extent to which Isa 52:13-53:12 is expressed through vocabulary and expressions common to or typical of wisdom literature and an assessment of how these contribute to the expression of the notion or idea of vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12.

Building on the discussion in chapter two, 'significant' words, expressions and formulae in the text shall be identified, discussed with relation to their occurrences, meaning and use in this text and in wisdom literature and other parts of the Old Testament. Statistical criteria of the percentage of occurrences on the one hand, and the possible average number of occurrences in each of the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth,<sup>298</sup> and in each of the rest of the books of the Old Testament, on the other hand are used to determine whether or not a word or expression belong to wisdom literature and tradition repertoire. If the occurrence of a word in the wisdom books constitutes at least 7.7% of the total occurrences, it is considered a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The same holds, if the possible average occurrences in each wisdom book are more than the average occurrences in the rest of the Old Testament books.<sup>299</sup> These statistical criteria have to be supported or collaborated by the meaning and use of the word, for the word to be considered a wisdom word, especially with respect to the teaching of just retribution and the problem of innocent suffering. The choice of words and phrases shall be

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<sup>298</sup> Reference to Wisdom Psalms and the books of Ben Sira and Wisdom is also made were necessary.

<sup>299</sup> These procedures and criteria are outlined in Chapter Two at 2.6.1.2. These criteria are not according to strict statistical measurements but according to the number of times that a specific word or expression appears in a specific genre regardless of the differences in the length of the books or number of words in different books.

guided by the conclusions reached in chapter six with respect to the structure and form of Isa 52:13-53:12. Particular attention shall also be put on the meaning and use of the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' and the root ידע in Isa 40-55 and the wisdom books, on account of their importance in Isa 52:13-53:12.

## 7.2. Isa 52:13-15

In Chapter 6 (6.5), this section was discerned as structured as follows:

52:13 The acting wisely and exaltation of the servant.

52:14-15a Statement of the surprise of the many, many nations and kings.

52:15b Explanation for the surprise of the many nations and kings.

Isa 52:13 has two cola: הִנֵּה יִשְׁכִּיל עֶבְדִּי and; יָרוּם וְנִשְׂא וְגִבָּה מְאֹד. These present the servant and promise the exaltation of the servant. Central to Isa 52:14-15a are the words יִקְפְּצוּ and שְׂמֵמוֹ. These two words highlight the surprise of the many and kings. Central to Isa 52:15b are the words רָאוּ and הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ. These highlight the new perception of the many nations and kings. The meaning and use of these words and expressions, as well as their 'relationship' to wisdom literature and tradition shall now be discussed. The discussion shall begin at Isa 52:13, with the particle הִנֵּה since it introduces the whole text.

### 7.2.1 Isa 52:13a

הִנֵּה is a demonstrative or deictic particle or interjection. It shows or points to someone or something. Hence it is usually translated with 'behold' or 'see'. Its linguistic origin and use may be associated with the idea of the locative הִנֵּה 'here' (cf. GKC 1910: 307 § 105b). It appears in two basic forms, the long and the short, that is, הִנֵּה and הֵן, respectively. It appears 1057 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55 it appears 34 times. In the book of Proverbs it appears 5 times, twice in the short form<sup>300</sup> and thrice in the long form<sup>301</sup> (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:307-309). In the book of Job it appears 32 times in the short form and 17 times in the long form. In the book of

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<sup>300</sup> Prov 11:31; 24:12.

<sup>301</sup> Prov 1:23; 7:10; 24:31.

Qoheleth it appears 6 times only in the long form.<sup>302</sup> It occurs 60 times altogether in the wisdom books. This constitutes 5.6% of the total occurrences. On average the particle would appear 20 times in each of the wisdom books and 27.7 times in the rest of the books of the Old Testament. As the statistics have shown הִנֵּה is not a typical wisdom word. Its use is not restricted or particular to wisdom literature and tradition nor is it a complete stranger to this corpus.<sup>303</sup>

In Isa 52:13 the long form of the particle הִנֵּה is used. Here it is followed by the expression יִשְׁכִּיל עֲבָדַי as in Isa 42:1. It is, therefore, introducing the statement that follows, a statement or promise predicting the acting wisely or the prosperity (יִשְׁכִּיל) of the servant. יִשְׁכִּיל is a verb in *yiqtol* form and in the hiphil conjugation from the root שָׁכַל. This word and root has long been associated with wisdom literature and tradition (Hägglund 2008:37). The root of the word is found in Hebrew, Aramaic and Assyrian. In Aramaic סָכַל appears rarely with the meaning 'to understand'. In Assyrian the root appears in *šiklu* with the meaning clever (BDB 2000:968). In the Old Testament the root appears 77 times. It appears in the nominal form 16 times with the meaning 'prudence, insight' (Prov 13:15). It appears as a verb 61 times: once in the qal conjugation; once in the piel and 59 times in the hiphil conjugation (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:1142-1143). With regard to its occurrence in the wisdom corpus it appears in the books of Proverbs and Job 23 times. Interestingly it is not used at all in the book of Qoheleth. In Proverbs it appears 19 times. It appears 6 times as a noun<sup>304</sup> and 13 times as a verb in the hiphil conjugation.<sup>305</sup> In the book of Job it appears 4 times; once as a noun (Job 17:4) and 3 times as a verb in the hiphil (34:27<sup>306</sup>, 35; 22:2).<sup>307</sup> Statistically Wisdom literature accounts for 30% of the occurrences of the

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<sup>302</sup> Qoh 1:14, 16; 2:1, 11; 4:1; 5:17. In three of these verses (1:14; 2:1, 11), the particle *hinneh* is used to introduce the conclusion that Qoheleth has arrived at in his search for the meaning of life and for wisdom. This is the enigmatic expression 'all is vanity...'

<sup>303</sup> However, in comparison to its use in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, it is used often in Isa 40-55. It is used in several ways. These include pointing to something - persons or things (Isa 40:9, 10; 41:27; 42:1) and introducing a clause of prediction or an important declaration followed immediately by a verb (Isa 41:15; 51:22). In Isa 40:9, 10, for example, it is used to introduce the prediction of the coming of Israel's God. The short form הִנֵּה is used in Isa 42:1 to introduce the servant in the expression הִנֵּה עֲבָדַי 'behold my servant'. The particle is immediately followed by the phrase 'my servant'. The particle is introducing or designating God's servant with particular emphasis on his relationship with God and his mission (Westermann 1969:93).

<sup>304</sup> Prov 3:4; 12:8; 13:15; 16:22; 19:11; 23:9.

<sup>305</sup> Prov 1:3; 10:5; 19; 14:35; 15:24; 19:14; 16:20, 23; 17:2, 8; 21:11, 12, 16.

<sup>306</sup> It appears in the hiphil conjugation with the sense of taking heed of or understanding God's ways.

<sup>307</sup> In Isa 40-55 the word appears 3 times at 41:20<sup>2</sup> and 44:18 within the context of idol worship. In Isa 41:20 it is used in giving the rationale for God's coming to the aid of the oppressed (41:17) and turning the desert into

root שכל in the Old Testament. On average it would appear 10 times in each wisdom book and 1.5 times in each of the rest of the books of the Old Testament.

The basic meaning of the root שכל has to do with prudence and that which presupposes and emanates from it, like paying attention, perception, insight, understanding, wisdom or acting wisely and even prosperity (BDB 2000:968). In the one time it occurs in the qal conjugation it means to prosper, to be successful (1Sam 18:30).<sup>308</sup> It appears in the piel conjugation twice in Gen 48:14 and Isa 44:25. Its occurrence in the latter passage is questionable. The BHS proposes an emendation to סכל, 'to be foolish/stupid'. This makes sense within the context of Isa 44:25.<sup>309</sup> In Gen 48:14 it is construed as the second root meaning of the word and is usually translated with 'lay crosswise' (Koehler and Baumgartner 1998:922; BDB 2000:968 cf. NRSV; NJB).<sup>310</sup> As already pointed out above, the word appears mainly in the hiphil conjugation, that is, 59 times. It carries with it the causative force of the hiphil conjugation, basically to cause to understand, know, that is, to instruct, teach, even study (cf. Neh 8:13), to act wisely<sup>311</sup> and understanding the way of God (cf. 2Chron 30:22)<sup>312</sup> and the way of the just (Psa 101:2). On the whole the word expresses both an action and its consequences (Westermann 1969:258).

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marshy land (44:18-19). The reason given in 44:20 is 'so that they may see and know, consider and יִשְׁכִּילוּ 'understand', that the hand of the Lord has done this, and not any other god. In Isa 44:18 it is used to describe the hearts of makers of idols who fail to understand הַשְׁכִּיל .

<sup>308</sup> This verse is a summary of the successful campaigns of David against the Philistines. It compares his success to that of the other servants of Saul. It says that each time the Philistines came out for battle David was more successful (שכל) than the other servants of Saul. We see in this passage the occurrence of the two words שכל and עֶבֶד (servant). However, unlike in Isa 52:13, the servants are not the subject of the verb שכל.

<sup>309</sup> Isa 44:25 is found within the context of God's declaration of who he is. He is the redeemer and maker of Israel, creator of everything in the heavens and on the earth (Isa 44:24). He is the one who frustrates the foretelling (omens) of liars, makes foolish the soothsayers, who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish סכל (BHS), and not wise שכל as in the MT.

<sup>310</sup> The context in which the piel form of שכל is used in this passage would not rule out the root meaning of the word, that of acting wisely. Jacob in his old age and poor eyesight adopts his two grandsons Manasseh, the first born and Ephraim, the second. When these two were brought to him for blessing, Manasseh, since he was the first born, stood on his right and Ephraim on his left, since he was the second born. Jacob שכל (crisscrossed) his hands, and laid his right hand on the younger brother Ephraim and his left on elder brother Manasseh. Joseph tried to correct this anomaly but his father Jacob refused saying he knows what he was doing (Gen 48:1-22). The theme of the disregard of the practice of primogeniture plays out in this action of Jacob. The root meaning 1 of שכל, that of acting wisely, may still be maintained in this context. Jacob acted wisely with regard to this!

<sup>311</sup> Jos 1:7; 1Sam 18:5, 15, 30; 1Kgs 2:3; 2Kgs 18:7; Prov 16:23, 17:8.

<sup>312</sup> In this text both the noun and hiphil participle of the root שכל are used in an appositional phrase. The Chronicler recounts the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread during the reign of Hezekiah. During the seven-day feast, the Levites and Priests praised God (30:13-27). Hezekiah is said to have encouraged the Levites, the הַמְשַׁכְּלִים שְׂכָל־טוֹב לַיהוָה. This appositional phrase has been translated in various ways: "who had such

The root שכל has also been associated with the wisdom literature and tradition because it appears many times together with the synonyms and antonyms of חכמה (Deut 32:29;<sup>313</sup> 2 Chron 2:11; Prov 16:23; Dan 1:4, 17). This warrants its translation into English with ‘wisdom’, ‘understanding’, ‘insight’ and ‘knowledge’ in several passages.<sup>314</sup> Therefore, the number of occurrences of שכל in wisdom literature, its use as a synonym of the root חכם and its other synonyms as indicated above, and its semantic content that has to do with wisdom and understanding shows that שכל is a typical wisdom word (cf. Barré 2000:7; Häggglund 2008:37).<sup>315</sup> The next phrase is עֲבָדִי. This is made up of the noun עֲבָד with a 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pronominal suf. sg. from the root עבד. The root עבד appears numerous times in nominal, adjectival and verbal forms in the Old Testament. It appears 1242 times altogether, 953 times as a noun,<sup>316</sup> and 289 times as a verb.<sup>317</sup> What is of interest for this study is its appearances as a masculine noun עֲבָד. In Isa 40-55 it occurs 21 times: 19 times in the singular and twice in the plural. In the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, it appears 10, 12, and 3 times respectively. The occurrences in the wisdom books constitutes 3.1% of the total occurrences of עֲבָד. On average this form of the noun would occur 8 times in each of the wisdom books and 22 times in each of the books of the rest of the Old Testament. This does not make the noun a candidate of wisdom vocabulary.

This noun refers to someone who renders service or is subordinated to someone else (Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:387). It is also used to express a state of availability (obedience) dependence and humility in petitions and lamentations, especially but

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understanding of Yahweh” (NJB); “who showed good skill in the service of the Lord” (NRSV). Both translations bring out the sense that the Levites understood and knew the ways (skills) of worshipping God (30:21). This may be called piety.

<sup>313</sup> The synonymity of שכל to חכם and בִּין comes out clearly in this passage. The three words שכל, חכם and בִּין are used together to express Israel’s lack of wisdom and its consequences. The passage is part of the so-called song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43) that celebrates the greatness of God, the rebellious nature of Israel and its consequences, and the willingness of God to intervene on behalf of his people. Deut 32:29 bemoans the failure of the people of Israel to understand (יִשְׁכְּלוּ) the present and perceive (יִבִּינּוּ) things to come because they are not wise (חֲכָמִים).

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Isa 41:20; 44:18; 1Chron 22:12; Prov 16:22; 21:11-12; 23:9; Psa 94:8; Dan 9:22; 11:33; 12:10

<sup>315</sup> Barré (2000:7) includes חֲכָמִים among wisdom words in line with the use and interpretation of the word in Dan 12:3.

<sup>316</sup> The noun occurs in two major forms עֲבָד (805 times) and עֲבָדָה (145 times). There are also 3 occurrences of עֲבָדוֹת and עֲבָדָה in Gen 26:14, Job 1:3 and Psalm 104:14 (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:819-824; Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:381).

<sup>317</sup> The verb appears 271 times in the qal; 4 times in the niphal, 2 times in the pual, 8 times in the hiphil, and 4 times in the hophal (Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:381).



not limited to the Psalms.<sup>318</sup> This subordination is understood in different ways and meanings. These different meanings would require different translations of עֶבֶד guided by the type of subordination expressed. Thus עֶבֶד can be translated ‘slave’ (Prov Job 3:19; 7:2; 40:28; Qoh 2:7).<sup>319</sup> The noun can also be translated with ‘subject’ or ‘vassal’ (2 Kgs 16:7) in the context of political subordination and religious understanding. The more inclusive translation is that of ‘servant’, which captures the nuance of service rendered by the subordinate, irrespective of the nature of the subordination (Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:387-402).

### 7.2.1.1 עֶבֶד in Isa 40-55

At this juncture it is important to briefly look at the use, meaning and reference of the noun עֶבֶד in Isa 40-55. In Isa 40-55 the noun עֶבֶד occurs 21 times; 19 times in the singular and twice in the plural. In the singular, it appears as עֶבְדִּי, that is, with a 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sg. suf., 11 times<sup>320</sup>. This constitutes just over half of the number of occurrences in the book. In all the 11 instances it is God who is speaking, either directly addressing the servant<sup>321</sup> or presenting the servant to an audience.<sup>322</sup> The noun עֶבֶד is used with basically two references. It is used to refer to Israel and/or Jacob,<sup>323</sup> and to someone anonymous.<sup>324</sup> There are clear occurrences where the noun refers to

<sup>318</sup> The noun occurs at least 57 times in the Psalms. In the majority of cases the Psalmist expresses dependency on God and an expectation of God’s intervention. Outside the Psalms this use is found in Gen 19:19 and Deut 3:24, for example.

<sup>319</sup> In the Ancient Near East a slave was the property of his or her master as in many cases a slave was bought or inherited. The slave was different from a paid labourer. There were laws governing the welfare of these slaves, including the release of Hebrew slaves in the seventh year and sufficient provision after the release (cf. Deut 15; see Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:387-388).

<sup>320</sup> Isa 41:8, 9; 42:1, 19; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 49:3; 52:13 and 53:11.

<sup>321</sup> Isa 41:9; 44:1,2,21; 45:4; 49:3. In Isa 49:3a it is God’s speech that is reported by the servant וַיֹּאמֶר לִי עֶבְדִּי אֲתָהּ ‘and he said to me you are my servant.’

<sup>322</sup> Isa 42:1, 19; 52:13; 53:11. In these instances the audience is not very clear. In 42:1 it is an anonymous group. In 42:18 the subjects of the imperative are the blind and the deaf. The servant in 42:19 is described as blind and deaf but the blind and deaf of 42:18 are not identical to the servant who is blind and deaf in 42:19 (cf. Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:399). In 52:13 and 53:11, the audience may be interpreted in terms of the many nations and kings (cf. 52:15; 53:11-12).

<sup>323</sup> In Isa 40-55, Israel always occurs in parallel with Jacob, with the possible exception of Isa 49:3 depending on whether one considers ‘Israel’ in the verse as secondary or not. For further elaboration see the discussion in the footnote pertaining to ‘Israel’ below.

<sup>324</sup> It remains a source of much curiosity that though Cyrus is presented as one of those who will bring about the plans of God, especially the plan of repatriation and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, he is never referred to as עֶבְדִּי ‘my servant’. Instead he is referred to as רֹעִי ‘my shepherd’ (Isa 44:28) and מְשִׁיחִי ‘my anointed’ – reading the LXX τῷ χριστῷ μου instead of the MT מְשִׁיחוֹ, cf. BHS (Isa 45:1).

Israel and/or Jacob, where עֶבֶד and Israel and/or Jacob appear in apposition.<sup>325</sup> In its first appearance in Isa 40-55 at 41:8 it is linked with God's choice of Israel.<sup>326</sup> This association is reiterated in the texts above, where it is used in apposition to Israel. In these texts Israel as servant is the one formed and chosen by God (44:1-2; 45:4), the object of God's saving actions, forgiveness and consolation (43:22-28; 44:1-5; 48:20), but also the one who has forgotten this election and source of her deliverance (49:1-4) and the servant given a new mission to the Gentiles (49:6).<sup>327</sup> In these texts, therefore, Israel as servant is chosen by God out of love and for a purpose. The relationship is one of love and trust, rather than slave and master.

There are occasions where the identity of the servant in Isa 40-55 remains unknown.<sup>328</sup> In 42:1-4,<sup>329</sup> God is presenting or designating his servant, who is not named but whom God has chosen, whom he supports, whom he has given his spirit. His mission and how he is to accomplish it is also stipulated. He is to bring מִשְׁפָּט 'justice, judgment, truth' to the nations, in gentleness and faithfulness. The servant will not give up until his mission is accomplished, for the nations

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<sup>325</sup> Isa 41:8; 44:1,2, 21<sup>2</sup>; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3. The presence and interpretation of the word Israel in apposition to עֶבֶד in Isa 49:3 has been a source of much dispute. The word Israel appears in the majority of manuscripts but is missing in the Kennicot 96 manuscript. The context however, has led some commentators to argue that 'Israel' was a later insertion to the text. It has not only been argued that the verse makes complete sense without 'Israel' but also that Israel cannot be commissioned to minister to itself (cf. 49:5), among other reasons (see. Westermann 1969:208-210). Westermann (1969:209-211) is of the view that 'Israel' is a later addition to the text, added as a collective interpretation of the servant. With regards to the identity of the servant in Isa 49:1-6, Westermann is of the view that the choice between an individual or collective identity is limiting and inadequate. Even though, the context would favour an individual servant, it is about the ministry or office of being a servant that is at issue in this text (Westermann 1969:211-212). Simian-Yofre in Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre (1999:397) is of the view that 'Israel' in Isa 49:3b should be retained and that the servant in Isa 49:1-6 should be identified with Israel (collective sense). For him the main difficulty of Israel being sent to Israel is "resolved by assuming that a remnant is the object of such sending" (Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:397). Here Israel is retained in the light of the overwhelming textual witnesses and that the identity of the servant in 49:1-6 would therefore be Israel in line with the mission given to the servant in 49:6.

<sup>326</sup> Usually the root בָּחַר 'to choose, elect' is used to express this choice or election (41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2; 45:4).

<sup>327</sup> Simian-Yofre in Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre (1999:397-398) is of the view that Isa 49:5-6 was a later addition. In particular, he is of the view that Isa 49:6 was added to correct the political connotations of the mission of the servant Israel, which in his view was that of bringing back the exiles to Judah.

<sup>328</sup> Isa 42:1-4, 18-23; 43:8-13; 50:10; 52:13 and 53:12.

<sup>329</sup> The extent of this unit varies from commentator to commentator. Some propose 42:1-4 as a unit (Westermann 1969:92-97), which is the position taken here. Others propose 42:1-7 as a unit (cf. Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre 1999:398). There is evidence in support of each of these two positions but the re-occurrence of מִשְׁפָּט three times in 42:1-4 and its absence in 42:5-7(9) certainly makes 42:1-4 a unit or at least a sub-unit.

wait for his תּוֹרָה ‘teaching’.<sup>330</sup> In Isa 42:19, God describes the anonymous servant as his messenger who is both blind and deaf. The audience of this oracle of God is also described as blind and deaf (Isa 42:18). Both the audience and the servant are blind and deaf. The servant participates or shares in the deafness and blindness of the audience. In Isa 43:10, the anonymous servant<sup>331</sup> is addressed by God as עֲבָדִי ‘my servant’ in the MT.<sup>332</sup> This is part of a trial speech centered on the issue of the ‘true’ God (43:8-13). The servant is God’s witness to the fact that God is the one who announces events before they happen and that he is the only one who saves (43:12). The servant is also chosen for this - in order for the servant to know and believe that there is no other God besides Israel’s God and that he be a witness to this knowledge (43:11, 12b). This knowledge will be commented upon below at Isa 53:11aβ.

The עֲבָדוֹ ‘his servant’ in Isa 50:10 is best understood as making reference to the speaker of Isa 50:4-9 (cf. Westermann 1969:234; Ringgren, Rutgersworden&Simian-Yofre 1999:400; contra Watts 1987:201).<sup>333</sup> Isa 50:4-9 has been called a psalm of confidence (Westermann 1969:226-228). The speaker claims to have been given a disciple’s tongue and a listening ‘ear’, and expresses confidence in the protection and vindication of God. The purpose for which he claims this is given is not clear because of the uncertainty surrounding the interpretation of the expression לְדַבֵּר אֶת־יְצֵעַ דְּבַר . The meaning of לְעוֹת in this context has been the source of the

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<sup>330</sup> Simian Yofre in Ringgren, Rutgersworden & Simian-Yofre (1999:398-399) includes 42:5-7(9) in this unit, and goes further to explain the mission of the servant in terms of making the nations understand, which is taken as the metaphorical meaning of light to the nations of Isa 42:6, and of the opening of the eyes of the blind in Isa 42:7.

<sup>331</sup> Westermann (1969:121-126) identifies the servant with Israel in the light of the context and the mission envisaged for the servant but the text itself is silent on the identity of the servant.

<sup>332</sup> BHS proposes an emendation to the plural עֲבָדִי ‘and my servants’ in order to agree with the ‘you are my witnesses’ in the first colon of v.10. The Syriac version has the plural form. It could still make sense in the singular, ‘you are my witnesses and my servant’ (cf. Ringgren, Rutgersworden&Simian-Yofre 1999:399-400).

<sup>333</sup> Watts (1987:201-204) identifies the speaker of Isa 50:4-9, 52:11-12 and 52:13-53:12 with Zerubbabel who was a governor of Judah during the reign of Darius. The speaker of Isa 50:10-11 is identified with Darius. Zerubbabel was a descendent of David and embarked on the project of rebuilding the Temple with help of Joshua the priest and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (cf. 1Chron 3:19; Ezra 2:2; 4:1-5; 5:1-2; Hag 1:14-2:9; Zec 4:9). They faced opposition from the Samaritans (Ezra 4:1-5) and from Tettanai the governor of Transeuphrates (Ezra 5:1-5). There is no information about what happened to Zerubbabel. Watts (1987:202-203) is of the view that the vision of Isaiah says something about the fate of Zerubbabel without mentioning his name. He speculates that during the inquiries of Tettanai concerning those responsible for the building, Zerubbabel was persecuted and executed. In the vision of 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah, Zerubbabel’s suffering is interpreted as substitutionary suffering, thereby, sparing the population of Jerusalem.

difficulty. עִוֶּת appears as a verb 11 times mainly in the piel and pual conjugations.<sup>334</sup> The basic meaning is that of ‘bending, twisting or making crooked’ (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:691; cf. Qoh 1:15; 7:13). Metaphorically it is used to refer to the subversion of justice (cf. Lam 3:36; Job 8:3; 34:12) and falsification of scales (Am 8:3). In Isa 50:4 it is not in the piel or pual conjugations, and its direct object יַעֲרָ ‘weak, weary’ makes the interpretation of this text difficult. There have been several suggestions.

It has been suggested that לְעִוֶּת in 50:4 is a *hapax legomenon* whose meaning can only be derived from the context (Watts 1987:195).<sup>335</sup> Koehler & Baumgartner (1998:692) suggest reading לְעִוֶּת ‘to answer, respond to’, instead, in line with the LXX’s εἰπεῖν ‘to speak’ (cf. Westermann 1969:225). Thus, the colon will be rendered ‘to know to answer/comfort the weary with a word’ (cf. NJB; NRS). Simian-Yofre in Ringgren, Rutgersworden&Simian-Yofre (1999:400) proposes maintaining the word לְעִוֶּת but vocalize it as the piel infinitive construct (לְעִוֶּת) with the metaphorical meaning of defeating an adversary in court (cf. BHS). The יַעֲרָ ‘weak, weary’ will be the adversaries. For him the servant is one who has suffered and is awaiting judgment but with the help of God will persevere and defeat his adversaries. For others (cf. Westermann 1969:225; Watts 1987:194-195) the servant is one who answers or sustains the weary, who are Israel. Either of the interpretations remains tentative. What remains clear is that the servant has adversaries (50:6-9) and a mission, either that of defeating adversaries or that of comforting the weak with the help of God.

The last two texts where the noun עֶבְדִּי appears without clear identification of the servant in Isa 40-55 is in Isa 52:13 and 53:11. Both occurrences are part of the two frames that frame Isa 52:13-53:12 (as discussed at 6.2). In both God is the speaker and uses the term עֶבְדִּי ‘my servant’. In 52:13 God announces the acting wisely of his servant. In 53:11-12, God announces the moral status of the servant, the accomplishment of the servant and the reward God bestows upon the servant and the reasons why. The servant is the righteous one (53:11aβ). The servant makes many righteous. In the light of the mission of the servant in Isa 40-55, this is putting them in the

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<sup>334</sup> Lam 3:36; Am 8:5; Job 8:3 (twice); 19:6; 34:12; Qoh 1:15; 7:13; 12:3; Psa 146:9; 119:78. It is important to note that it is found nowhere else in Isa 40-55.

<sup>335</sup> Watts (1987:194-195) proposes translating לְעִוֶּת with ‘to help, to sustain’ in the light of the context. This has been adopted by the NJB and the NRSV.

right relationship with God, by his knowledge<sup>336</sup> and understanding of God displayed in his teaching (cf. 50:4), way of life (obedience and solidarity) and manner of suffering (50:4-9; 53:4-7). The servant is even prepared to die for this knowledge of God and its dissemination (Isa 53:8b $\alpha$ , 12a $\gamma$ ). In the light of the use of the root ידע in Isa 40-55 this is the knowledge that God is one, that God is just and righteous (Isa 50:7-8; 51:4, 8) and does not only have the power to save (Isa 51:7-8), but is also willing to save both Israel and the nations (Isa 49:5-7). It is this knowledge about God that the servant bears witness to (Isa 42:1-7), and it is in the light of this knowledge that the ‘we’ come to understand and confess the vicarious nature of the suffering of the servant.<sup>337</sup> This knowledge is both the source of this new understanding of suffering and the means through which reconciliation is accomplished.

The expressions אָשָׁם (53:10a $\beta$ ), עָוֹן וְחַטָּאת (Isa 53:11b; Lam 5:7; cf. Exod 28:38; Lev 16:22; Num 14:33) and אָשָׁם וְחַטָּאת (53:12b $\alpha$ ; cf. Lev 20:20; 24:15; Num 9:13), often used in cultic and legal contexts are used here metaphorically for an attainment of righteousness or right relationship of the many with God brought about by the anonymous servant’s knowledge of the one true God, a God of justice and forgiveness (Isa 42:4-9). The turning of the nations (Isa 52:15a) to this God, thanks to the knowledge, obedience and perseverance of the servant, leads to the exaltation of the servant. God announces the reward he bestows on the servant (53:12a $\alpha$ ).

From the point of view of the “we” the servant is said to have accomplished the עָשָׂה ‘purpose, will’ of God, by suffering in silence (53:6, 7) and by giving his life as an אָשָׁם ‘guilt offering’ (Isa 53:10). The servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 has a dual subordinate relationship as servant. The anonymous servant is God’s servant because s/he accomplishes God’s עָשָׂה and is rewarded for this. The servant has also a special subordinate relationship with the “we” and the many. To begin with, the “we” claim that the servant identifies with them and their lot.<sup>338</sup> The servant stands in solidarity with them. He shares in their sicknesses and wounds (53:4). But uniquely, both God (53:11b, 12b) and the “we” (53:5-6) claim that the servant carried the consequences of their sins. The righteous servant is one who suffers because of them, on their

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<sup>336</sup> See the translation and explanation at 6.3.2

<sup>337</sup> For further discussion on knowledge as central to the transformation that happens in Isa 52:13-53:12 see Ward (1978:128-129).

<sup>338</sup> This is also confirmed by God in the statement, “and he was counted among transgressors” (53:12a $\delta$ )

behalf and for their benefit (53:5). Thus, the servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 is the righteous one, who has acted wisely by accepting and accomplishing the will of God by identifying with sinners, and silently suffering, on their behalf, the consequences of their sins.

In the light of the foregoing, the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' in Isa 40-55 is basically used to refer to a group of people, namely Israel or to an anonymous individual. In both cases the noun is used to express someone or a group (Israel) with a special but subordinate relationship to God based on God's choice or election and a commission on behalf of God. As servants of God both Israel and the anonymous servant are chosen, protected and assigned a task. The task of Israel is that of bringing knowledge and understanding about the sole divinity of Israel's God both to herself and to the Gentiles. The task of the anonymous servant is to bring מִשְׁפָּט 'justice, judgment, truth' to the nations, in gentleness and faithfulness (42:1-4; 50:4-9), knowledge and understanding of the only God (43:10-12), and through suffering in place of them and for their benefit (Isa 52:13-53:12). Having discussed the meaning and use of עֶבֶד in Isa 40-55, the use and meaning of the noun in wisdom books will now be discussed.

#### 7.2.1.2 עֶבֶד in the Wisdom Books

In the book of Proverbs, the noun עֶבֶד appears 10 times in various sayings with the meaning of servant or slave. The subordinate aspect of a servant is underscored in all these sayings. Thus, it is unusual for a servant or slave to rule over princes (19:10) and it is something that the world cannot bear when a slave becomes a king (30:22). Even concerning folly and wisdom, a fool will be a servant to the wise (Prov 11:29b). While there are no sayings in Proverbs where the noun is used to express the relationship between God and human being(s), there are two sayings which mention a servant who acts wisely עֶבֶד מִשְׁכִּיל , as opposed to those who do otherwise. In Prov 14:35 such a wise servant is said to please the king and in Prov 17:2 such a servant is said to rule over a shameful child. The servant who acts wisely pleases the master, and acquires inheritance. In both these sayings the acting wisely of the servant is described by the expression עֶבֶד שָׂכַל. This is similar to the expression used in Isa 52:13 to introduce the text and would carry the connotation of success, pleasing the master (God) and acquiring inheritance (cf. 53:12).

In the book of Job the noun עֶבֶד appears 12 times. Half of the occurrences are found in the narrative framework (Job 1-2 and Job 42:7-8). Of the 12 occurrences, 11 are in the singular

and one is in the plural. In the singular it appears thrice in absolute form, once without a preposition (Job 3:19) and twice (7:2 and 40:28) with the prepositions ךָ and לְ, respectively.<sup>339</sup> Again in the singular it appears 6 times with 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sg. suf. (עֲבָדִי), ‘my servant’ having God as the speaker that is, Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8. In Job 1:8, 2:3 and 42:8aα it is the object of the preposition עַל or אֶל<sup>340</sup> and in Job 42:7 and 42:8b it is the object of the preposition ךָ<sup>341</sup> and in Job 42:8aβ it is not accompanied by any preposition. It also appears twice in the singular with the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sg. suf. (עֲבָדִי) with Job as speaker (Job 19:16; 31:13). In the former it is the object of the preposition לְ; and in the latter it is not an object of any preposition. The one time it appears in the plural it appears with a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sg. suf., preceded by the preposition ךָ ‘in’.<sup>342</sup>

In the instances where God calls Job my servant (עֲבָדִי), the term expresses a special relationship between God and Job. In the prologue or opening frame (Job 1-2) this special relationship is expressed through the description of Job’s piety and his moral integrity, by God (1:8; 2:3), by Satan (1:9) and by the narrator (1:1-2). Job is described as a consistent offeror who is God-fearing (יָרָא אֱלֹהִים), even immediately after the misfortunes that befalls him (Job 1:21-22; 2:9-10). He is described as upright and as one who shuns evil (Job 1:8; 2:3; cf. 1:1; 1:9).<sup>343</sup> The relationship is also described in terms of God’s blessing and protection of Job, his family and property (1:10). In the epilogue or the closing frame, Job is also described as God’s servant. This could be understood in terms of Job’s ability to speak rightly or correctly (נְכוֹנָה)<sup>344</sup> concerning God in contrast to Eliphaz and his two friends (42:7). Job, as servant, is the one who is given the role to pray and intercede (יִתְפַּלֵּל) on behalf of his friends. Furthermore, as God’s servant, Job receives double of his former glory, after he had prayed for his friends (Job 42:10) as well as

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<sup>339</sup> In Job 7:1-3, Job is making a comparison between the lot of servants and hired labour, who long for a respite from their toil, with his lot of meaninglessness and the toil allotted to him. In Job 40:28, God asks Job a rhetorical question, whether Job can make an agreement/covenant with Leviathan (40:25), so that Leviathan becomes his perpetual servant. Both texts express a subordinate relationship characterized by both service/labour and obedience on the part of the servant or slave.

<sup>340</sup> In Job 1:8 and 2:3, God asks Satan if he has paid attention to (אֶל or עַל) ‘my servant’ (עֲבָדִי) Job.

<sup>341</sup> In these instances the ‘inaccurate’ words or speech of Eliphaz and his friends concerning God is compared to that of the ‘rightness’ (נְכוֹנָה) of the words of Job.

<sup>342</sup> Here Eliphaz is speaking, referring to God’s servants, in whom God does not trust (Job 4:18).

<sup>343</sup> In Job 28:28b to shun evil is understanding and wisdom. The same expression סוּר מִרַע literally, ‘to turn from evil’ is used in both instances.

<sup>344</sup> This is a niphalfem. ptc., from the verb כָּוַן ‘to be firm, straight, right’. The participle form is also used as a substantive to refer to what is right (Psa 5:10; cf. BDB 2000:465).

honour, long life and offspring (Job 42:11, 16-17; cf. Isa 53:10aγ). This special relationship also comes out clearly in the poetic disputations, especially in Job's speeches of protest and summons to God for a judicial hearing, and the sporadic outbursts of deep faith (Job 7:9-21; 19:23-29; 30:2-23; 31:1-37). There is an overwhelming impression painted of one who has a special relationship with God – a master – servant relationship, so to speak, and one who expects better in the light of this relationship.

In the book of Qoheleth the noun appears 3 times and in the plural form only. In the first occurrence (Qoh 2:7), Qoheleth speaks about how he acquired wealth, property and persons among them servants, in order to acquire happiness. In the second occurrence, where the noun appears twice, Qoheleth states what he has observed, that is, servants living as princes and princes as servants.<sup>345</sup> In Qoheleth, therefore, the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' is not used to express a relationship between a person and God.

With respect to wisdom literature, therefore, the noun עֶבֶד 'servant' is used to express the subordinate relationship between a master and a subordinate, who is, a servant, at the divine and the human level in the case of Proverbs and Job, and at the human level in the case of Qoheleth. The subordination is that of status and service. In the book of Job this idea of subordination and service is carried over to describe the divine and human relationship, most notably, the relationship between God and Job. In Proverbs the expression עֶבֶד שְׂכֵל is used in two sayings for a wise servant, who pleases the master and who acquires inheritance. Therefore, the expression יִשְׁכִּיל עֶבְדִּי in Isa 52:13 can rightly be translated 'my servant shall act wisely' and gives a wisdom colouring to what follows. But while שְׂכֵל is a wisdom word, the same cannot be said about עֶבֶד as its meaning, use and number of appearances in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth have shown.

### 7.2.2 Isa 52:13b

Isa 52:13b the colon reads יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְנִגְבְּה מְאֹד 'he shall rise, and be lifted up and exalted exceedingly'.<sup>346</sup> יָרוּם is a verb in the qal conjugation and yiqqtol form from the root רוּם. The root

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<sup>345</sup>This of course is contrary to the saying in Proverbs 19:10 but the possibility is alluded to in the numerical saying in Prov 30:22.

<sup>346</sup>For this translation refer to 6.2.2 above.



is used both as a verb and a noun. As a verb it appears 166 times and as a noun it appears 18 times.<sup>347</sup> In Isa 40-55 the root appears 5 times.<sup>348</sup> The verb appears 5 times in Proverbs and 4 times in the book of Job.<sup>349</sup> It does not appear anywhere in the book of Qoheleth. Its appearance in Wisdom literature is relatively infrequent, amounting to 4.9% of its total occurrence in the Old Testament. On average it would appear 3 times in each of the wisdom books, and 5 times in each of the books of the rest of the Old Testament. All the same the context within which it is used in these few occurrences in Proverbs and Job is similar to its use in Isa 52:13b.

The meaning of the root רום refers to height or being on high, like mountains (Deut 12:2; Isa 2:14), trees (Isa 2:13), stars (Job 22:12), highway (Isa 49:11), city (Prov 11:11), and even voice (Isa 40:9; Job 38:34). For example, in Job 22:12, in the context of describing the dwelling of God, which is גְּבוּהָ 'on high',<sup>350</sup> the verb רום is used for the stars which are high in the heavens. With respect to persons it means being raised in rank or status or to be great. Metaphorically it means to triumph (cf. Deut 32:27; Job 17:4; Psa 89:14) or to be praised (2Sam 22:47) or to be proud.<sup>351</sup> The synonyms of רום include: עלה (Job 24:24); נשא (Prov 30:13; Isa 52:13);<sup>352</sup> גבה (Job 22:12; Psa 131:1) and; גדל (Job 19:5).

The verb appears in the polel or pil'el conjugation<sup>353</sup> in Prov 4:8a within the context of the instruction to listen to one's parents and acquire wisdom (Prov 4:1-9). Prov 4:8a is a motive clause that insists that by securing wisdom one will be רוּמָם 'exalted'. In the wisdom sayings of Prov 11:11 and 14:34 the verb is linked to uprightness. In Prov 11:11 the blessing of the upright is said to exalt a city. In Prov 14:34 uprightness or righteousness is said to תְּרוּמָם 'exalt' a nation, but sin is considered to be a reproach to a people. In Job 17:4 the verb appears together with the root שכל as in Isa 52:13. Here Job claims that his companions or scoffers do not רוּמָם 'triumph' because God has shut their minds from שכל 'understanding/insight'.

<sup>347</sup>Of the 18x it appears as a noun, it is used as a proper noun 2x.

<sup>348</sup> Isa 40:9<sup>2</sup>; 49:11, 22; 52:13.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Prov 4:8; 11:11; 14:29, 34; 30:13 and Job 17:4; 22:12; 24:24; 38:34; 39:27.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. 35:5 where גְּבוּהָ is used as a synonym.

<sup>351</sup>Deut 8:14; 2Sam 22:28; Isa 2:12; Psa 131:1; Prov 30:13.

<sup>352</sup> The root נשא will be discussed further at Isa 53:4aα below.

<sup>353</sup> Koehler&Baumgartner (1998:880) construes it as a pilel (cf. Lisowsky 1981:1324) while BDB (2000:927) construes it as a polel. In this context the pilel and polel conjugations of the word carries the same meaning as the qal conjugation, that is, to be on high, to raise, to be exalted (cf. Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:880; BDB 2000:927).

While there is no statistical evidence or reason to posit that this word is a typical wisdom word, as the occurrences above have shown, its use in Prov 4:8a, 11:11, 14:34 and in Job 17:4 suggests its use in wisdom circles to talk about the exaltation that comes with wisdom and understanding. The same can be said about נָשָׂא and נָבִיא . Either of them appears several times together with רוּם and is used synonymously (cf. Prov 30:13; Psa 131:1; Isa 6:1). In Isa 52:13b the three synonyms are put together in the expression מָאֵד נְבִיא וְנִשְׂא וְרוּם to describe the exaltation of the wise servant.

In Isa 52:13, therefore, there is an oracle of God that proclaims the exaltation of his servant. This oracle makes use of a word (שָׂכַל) found and used extensively in wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Barré 2000:7). The oracle also brings to the fore a theme central to wisdom literature and tradition, the theme that the person who acts wisely succeeds and is honoured and exalted. The expression עֲבָדִי is important in the message of Deutero-Isaiah and in Proverbs and Job. It is used by God to refer to someone with a special relationship with God and a role to play as the discussion above has shown.

### 7.2.3 Isa 52:14-15aα

Isa 52:14 introduces the comparison that extends to Isa 53:15aα. In this comparison the shock (שָׂמַם) of the many (Isa 52:14aα) is compared to the surprise (נִזְהָה, II) of the many nations (Isa 53:15aα). The root שָׂמַם appears in verbal and adjectival forms in the Old Testament. The verb appears 71 times and the adjective thrice (Dan 9:17; Lam 5:18; Jer 12:11). In Isa 40-55 it occurs twice. It does not appear in any of the sayings in Proverbs. It appears 4 times in the book of Job and once in Qoheleth. The occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 6.8% of the total appearances. On average it would appear once in each of the wisdom books and twice in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. From a statistics perspective שָׂמַם is not a wisdom word as it appears only once on average in the wisdom corpus.

However, its occurrence in Job 17:8 and Job 21:5 calls for discussion in the light of this study. Job 17 and 21 belong to the second cycle of speeches in the dialogue between Job and his friends as indicated in Chapter 5 (5.3.1). Job 17 forms part of Job's response to the speech of Eliphaz in Chapter 15. Eliphaz argues and accuses Job of pretending to be wise and of blaming God for his suffering, instead of his own wickedness. Eliphaz goes further to argue that no mortal

is righteous before God (Job 15:14-16), and that the wicked suffer and do not prosper (Job 15:20-35). Job responds by labelling his friends as wearisome comforters (Job 16:1-6), who have taken the side of God against him (Job 16:7-17). Notwithstanding, Job maintains that his witness is in heaven (Job 16:18-22). Job goes on to say that he is on the verge of death, has become a byword of the people and that the righteous are יִשְׁמְרוּ 'appalled/astonished' at his sufferings (Job 17:1-8).<sup>354</sup>

Job's speech in Job 21 comes after that of Zophar in Job 20. Zophar argues that the triumph of the wicked is short-lived and that a painful end is in store for them (Job 21:1-29). Job's speech that follows is addressed to all three of his friends as the exhortations at the beginning of the speech indicate. Job begs for their attention and permits them to mock him thereafter, if they so wish (Job 21:2-3). Job implores his friends to see that his complaint is not in relation to the suffering of the generality of humanity. He invites them to look at and reflect on his personal situation. He is convinced that they will be appalled/astounded (הִשְׁמְרוּ)<sup>355</sup> and will be silenced.<sup>356</sup> This will be so especially in the light of his observation, contrary to that of Zophar, that the wicked live a long life in peace and prosperity (Job 21:7-16).

The context within which the word is used in Job 17:8 and Job 21:5 resembles that of Isa 52:13-15. The many in Isa 52:14 are appalled at the suffering of the servant, just as the wise are appalled by the suffering of Job (Job 17:8) and just as Job invites his friends to be appalled by his situation and his observation that the wicked are not punished (Job 21:5).

With regards to נזה in the protasis of the comparison (Isa 53:15a $\alpha$ ), it was observed in Chapter 6 (6.2.1.5) that the root has two possible meanings, and the second meaning, נזה (II) 'to leap, to startle' was adopted, since it makes more sense within the context of this comparison. It was also stated that this would be the only instance in which this root is used with this meaning in the Old Testament. Therefore, נזה (II) is not found in any of the wisdom books.

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<sup>354</sup> In the same speech Job also complains that God has hidden his friends' hearts from understanding and hence they are not exalted. The idea behind is that understanding leads to exaltation and honour (cf. Isa 52:13).

<sup>355</sup> This is a hiphil imperative of שָׁמַם. In the hiphil it is causative. Hence, it is translated 'to cause to be appalled or awestruck' (cf. Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:989).

<sup>356</sup> Here Job uses the metaphor שָׁם יָד עַל-פִּי 'put one's hand to the mouth'.

#### 7.2.4 Isa 52:15aβ

In this part of the verse it is stated that ‘on account of him kings shall shut (קפץ) their mouths’. The root קפץ appears 7 times in the Old Testament as a verb,<sup>357</sup> in the qal,<sup>358</sup> niphal (Job 24:24) and piel conjugations (Song 2:8). It appears once in Isa 40-55 (Isa 52:15) and twice in Job (Job 5:16; 24:24). It does not appear in Proverbs or in Qoheleth. Its appearances in Job constitute 28.6% of the total appearances. On average it would appear 0.66 times in each wisdom book and 0.14 times in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. These comparative occurrences in the wisdom books would make קפץ a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The general meaning of קפץ in the qal and niphal conjugations is ‘to draw together (gather) or to shut’ (Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:846). In the piel conjugation, it appears once as a participle in the Song of Solomon with the meaning of springing or leaping.<sup>359</sup> The word is used for shutting the mouth in Isa 52:15, Job 5:16 and Psa 107:42. In the last two occurrences it is used metaphorically. Thus, in Job 5:16 it is injustice that is set to shut its mouth at the hope of the poor and in Psa 107:42 it is wickedness that shuts its mouth at the blessing of the needy. Psa 107 ends by exhorting those who are wise to observe and understand the favours of the Lord (Psa 107:43). It is, therefore, only in Isa 52:15 that the word is used for the actual shutting of the mouth, in this case, by kings.<sup>360</sup> In all the instances, the shutting of the mouth is a result of and an expression of astonishment at the reversal of the expected. The root is not typically Deutero-Isaianic. The comparative occurrences, meaning and use would indeed make קפץ a wisdom word.

#### 7.2.5 Isa 52:15b

In this part of the verse the reasons why the kings shut their mouths are given. The kings perceive (ראו) what they have not been told and they understand (התבוננו) what they have not heard. The verb ראה occurs about 1 300 times in the Old Testament.<sup>361</sup> There are a number of nouns that

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<sup>357</sup>Deut 15:7; Isa 52:15; Job 5:16; 24:24; Psa 77:10; 107:42; Songs 2:8

<sup>358</sup>Deut 15:7; Isa 52:15; Job 5:16; Psa 77:10; 107:42.

<sup>359</sup> It is used in parallel with דלג ‘to leap, spring’.

<sup>360</sup> This verb is not used anywhere else in Isa 40-55

<sup>361</sup> The number of occurrences identified by scholars does not always agree but the differences are minimal.

Shoshan (1997:1041-1047) arrives at 1299 times, Koehler&Baumgartner (1998:861) counts 1300 occurrences and

are derived from the verb. These include: רָאָה - 12 times (seer, vision); רָאָי - 5 times (seeing, vision); מְרָאָה - 12 times (vision); מְרָאָה - 103 times (vision, appearance); רְאוּת - once (view - Qoh 5:10) and possibly תֵּאָר, 15 times.<sup>362</sup> It is significant to note that in Isa 52:13-53:12 the root appears 6 times, 4 times in the verbal form (52:15b $\alpha$ ; 53:2a $\gamma$ ; 53:10a $\gamma$ ; 53:11a $\alpha$ )<sup>363</sup> and twice as a noun (52:14a $\beta$ ; 53:2a $\gamma$ ). Its total verbal appearances is 1 133 and 111 of these appearances are found in the wisdom books. The occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 9.8%. On average it would appear 37 times in each wisdom book, and 31 times in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. This makes the verb רָאָה a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.<sup>364</sup>

In Isa 40-55, Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, the verb occurs almost exclusively in the qal conjugation. The basic meaning of רָאָה in the qal is 'to see, recognize and perceive' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:862). This is normally associated with the sense of sight, represented by the eye.<sup>365</sup> It is also associated with the heart.<sup>366</sup> The semantic range is usually divided into two categories, the noetic and the emotional (cf. Fuhs 2004:216).<sup>367</sup> The noetic lays more emphasis

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Fuhs (2004:212-213) comes up with 1303. In the texts under study it appears in Isa 40-55, 21 times; Prov, 13 times; Job, 50 times and; Qoh, 47 times. Of the 1 129 occurrences in the qal conjugation, it appears in Isa 40-55, 20 times; Prov, 12 times; Job, 50 times and; Qoh 46 times. In the other conjugations it appears in the niph'al once in Isa 47:3 and once in Prov 27:25. In the hiph'il and pual conjugations it appears once in Qoh 2:24 and once in Job 33:21 respectively. This makes a total of 1 133 verbal appearances.

<sup>362</sup> The noun תֵּאָר, appears 15 times in the Old Testament with the literal meaning of 'outline or form'. It is not used in any of the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth or wisdom Psalms. The noun is most likely derived from the verb תֵּאָר 'to trace' (cf. BDB 2000:1061). Its derivation from רָאָה is disputed (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:1016; Fuhs 2004:213). But תֵּאָר is used in parallel with מְרָאָה to describe the comely appearance of Rachel (Gen 29:17), Joseph (Gen 39:6) and of Esther (Est 2:7). In Isa 52:14 and 53:2 תֵּאָר and מְרָאָה are used together to describe the disfigured appearance of the servant.

<sup>363</sup> Of these, 3 occurrences are in the qal conjugation (52:15b $\alpha$ ; 53:10a $\gamma$ ; 53:11a $\alpha$ ) and one occurrence is in the niph'al conjugation (53:2a $\gamma$ ).

<sup>364</sup> The verb is also used in idiomatic expressions in the wisdom books. These include: רָאָה טוֹב 'to see good', that is, to experience happiness (Job 7:7; 9:25; Qoh 2:1, 24; 3:13; 5:17; 6:6); רָאָה אוֹר 'to see light' (Job 33:28; 37:21), again this would mean to experience happiness or to come to life (Job 3:16; Psa 49:19); רָאָה פְּנֵים 'to see one's face, to be in the presence of' (Job 33:26); רָאָה חַיִּים 'to enjoy life' (Qoh 9:9) and; רָאָה יָרֵעַ 'to see one's offspring' (Isa 53:10a $\gamma$ ).

<sup>365</sup> Gen 45:12; Lev 13:12; Deut 4:3; 7:19; Jos 24:7; Prov 20:12; 23:33; 24:18; 25:7; Job 13:1; 19:27; 21:20; 28:10; 29:11; Qoh 1:8.

<sup>366</sup> Prov 20:8, 12; 22:12; 23:33; 25:7; Job 7:7, 8; 10:18; 13:1; 19:27; 20:9; 24:15; 28:7, 10; 29:11; 42:5; Qoh 1:16; 5:10; 6:9; 11:7,9.

<sup>367</sup> According to Fuhs (2004:214-217) the meaning of רָאָה expresses the experience of seeing as a totality. This is a seeing that incorporates perception, that is, merging together the meaning, character and nature of the objects seen.

on the intellectual dimension of seeing, namely recognition and perception (Prov 24:32<sup>368</sup>; Qoh 2:3, 12, 13), while the emotional lays more emphasis on feelings and passions that result from seeing.<sup>369</sup> In the noetic category, ראה is used, usually but not exclusively, with other verbs that express perception, for example, בין (Isa 6:9; 32:3-4; 44:18; Job 11:11); שכל (Isa 41:20; 44:18), שמע (Isa 44:18; Job 13:1; Prov 20:12), ידע (Isa 44:9; Job 11:11; Qoh 6:5). In wisdom literature and tradition, the noetic use of ראה is prominent. This is a seeing that leads to perception or understanding.<sup>370</sup> This use comes out clearly in the book of Qoheleth. To this Qoheleth also adds the nuances of critical reflection on traditional wisdom (Qoh 1:14; 3:10) and intellectual attainment (Qoh 1:16; 2:13). In 52:15b it is used together with the hithpolel conjugation of בין thereby highlighting the noetic dimension of ראה, hence the translation ‘they perceive’ (adopted at 6.3.2).

The second colon of Isa 52:15b states that ‘they understand (הִתְבוּנָנוּ) what they have not heard’. הִתְבוּנָנוּ is a hithpolel conjugation of the verb בִּין. The root ‘בִּין’ appears both as a noun and a verb. The verb ‘בִּין’ appears 171 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:166-167). Just over a third of the overall occurrences (58 times) is found in the books of Proverbs (34 times), Job (23 times) and Qoheleth (once).<sup>371</sup>

The noun appears in two forms בִּינָה and תְּבוּנָה. The noun ‘בִּינָה’ appears 37 times (cf. Lisowsky 1981:213). More than half of the occurrences of בִּינָה (22 times) are found in Proverbs (14 times) and in Job (8 times).<sup>372</sup> The noun תְּבוּנָה appears 41 times (cf. Lisowsky 1981:1505; cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:1218). More than half of the occurrences (23 times) are found in Proverbs (19 times) and Job (4 times). In Isa 40-55 it appears (3 times), but not in Isa 52:13-53:12. The verbal and nominal occurrences of the root in wisdom books constitutes 41.4% of the total. On

<sup>368</sup> In this example story of the overgrown field of a lazy person (Prov 24:30-34) the sage ראה ‘saw’ the overgrown field and drew a lesson (ליקה מוסר) from it.

<sup>369</sup> cf. Gen 38:15; Exod 2:11; Judg 16:1; Job 9:25, 42:16; Isa 53:10; Qoh 3:13.

<sup>370</sup> Prov 6:6; Job 10:4; 11:11; 13:1; 28:27; Qoh 2:12, 13; 7:27; 8:9. In Job 28:27 the two verbs ספר and ראה appear together as in Isa 52:15 but in reverse order. God ראה ‘saw/understood’ wisdom and יְסַפֵּר ‘proclaimed it’.

<sup>371</sup> According to Lisowsky (1993:211-213) the verb appears 148 times in the OT. 63 times in the Qal (Isa 40-55 [twice]; Job [13 times], Prov [12 times], once in the niphil (Isa 10:13), once in pilel (Deut 32:10), 61 times in hiphil (Isa 40-55 [twice: 40:14, 21], Job [thrice: 6:24, 28:23, 32:8], Prov [12 times], 22 times in hithpolel (Isa 40-55 [twice: 43:18, 52:15]; Job [8 times])). The total in Proverbs is 24; Job is 24 and none in Qoheleth. Hence, in total the verb occurs about a third of the time in Proverbs and Job and in the hithpolel conjugation it also occurs about a third of the time but in the book of Job only.

<sup>372</sup> It, however, does not appear anywhere in the book of Qoheleth nor in Isa 40-55.

average the root would occur 34 times in each of the wisdom books and 4 times in each of the rest of the Hebrew Old Testament books. These comparative occurrences would make the root 'בין' a wisdom word (cf. Barré 2000:7).

The basic meaning of the root expresses understanding, perception and discernment (cf. BDB 106-108; Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:120-122). In the hithpolel conjugation, the verb has the nuance of paying attention to something,<sup>373</sup> reflecting upon something (1Kgs 3:21; Isa 14:16) and acting with understanding, that is, to behave intelligibly (Isa 1:3; Jer 9:16) or simply to understand (Jer 23:20; 30:24; Psa 119:100, 104; Job 26:14).<sup>374</sup> In Isa 52:15bβ the verb is used in parallel with ראה 'to see, perceive' (Isa 52:15bα). It is also used together with another verb of sensory perception, namely, שמע 'to hear'. It can thus be translated with 'to reflect upon' (NRSV) or 'to understand or perceive' (Westermann 1969:253; Watts 1987:224). The latter translation is preferred here, for the bicolon is describing the recognition, perception and understanding of the servant's accomplishments reached by the many and kings. Hence, 'what they have not heard (לא־שָׁמְעוּ), they understand (הִתְבִּינּוּ). Discernment and understanding is central to wisdom literature and tradition. It has also been pointed out above that the root בין is used synonymously with the root חכם. Thus, the meaning of the root בין together with its occurrences in the books of Proverbs and Job make בין one of the typical wisdom words.

The above discussion has shown that Isa 52:13-15 is about the presentation of the future exaltation of the servant (Isa 52:13), the shock (שמם) that has been brought by the deplorable appearance of the servant to the many, and the surprise (קפיץ and נזה) that grips the many nations and the leaders (מְלָכִים) of the nations.<sup>375</sup> The surprise of the many nations and their leaders is brought about by observing (ראה) and understanding (בין) the unique person (עֲלִיּוֹר) and unique accomplishment or exaltation of the work of the servant.<sup>376</sup> The words and expressions used, as well as the motifs of acting wisely, exaltation and understanding found in this text resemble much of what is found in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth. This gives this sub-unit a wisdom 'flavour', so to

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<sup>373</sup>Isa 43:18; Jer 2:10; Psa 107:43; Psa 119:95; Job 11:11; 23:15; 26:14; 32:12; 37:14; 38:18.

<sup>374</sup> In two passages (Psa 37:10; Job 31:1) it has the rare meaning of searching or looking for something.

<sup>375</sup> The verbs שמם, נזה and קפיץ are used comparatively in the dense construction of 52:14-15a.

<sup>376</sup> The uniqueness of the person and accomplishment of the servant as well as the understanding of the many nations and their leaders are described in the explanatory clauses כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפְּרָה לָהֶם 'that which was not told them' (52:15bα) and וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ 'and that which they had not heard' (52:15bβ).

speak (cf. Seitz 2001:463).<sup>377</sup> Furthermore, this subunit has a universal dimension that includes many nations and rulers. The effects brought about by the person and accomplishment of the servant goes beyond the boundary of the community of Israel to the Gentiles (Westermann 1969:21).<sup>378</sup> While this was hinted at in Isa 49:5-6, this universal outlook, is also characteristic of wisdom literature and tradition. Wisdom literature and tradition's universal outlook involves taking human experiences and observations, irrespective of nationality, colour or creed as sources of knowledge, wisdom and piety (Prov 30:1-14; 31:1-9; Job 1:1-5; Schellenberg 2015:117), and humanity in general as recipients of God's attention and care.

### 7.3 Isa 53:1-10α

Three major sections were discerned in the structure of Isa 53:1-10α (Chapter 6 – 6.4). These are Isa 53:1-6, 53:7 and 53:8-10α. These were further divided into five subsections or units, namely, Isa 53:1, 53:2-3, 53:4-6, 53:7 and 53: 8-10α. Each of these units is the subject of discussion in this section.

#### 7.3.1 Isa 53:1

Isa 53:1 is composed of two rhetorical questions basically asking for the identity of any person 'who has believed our report' (מִי הֶאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעָנוּ) and the person 'to whom the hand of the Lord has been revealed' (וּזְרוּעַ יְהוָה עָלָיִי נִגְלְתָה). The expression הֶאֱמִין לְשִׁמְעָה appears only here in the Old Testament. A phrase that is similar in meaning and which appears in more places in the Old Testament, is אמן לדבר 'to believe a word' (cf. 1Kgs 10:7; 2Chron 9:6; Prov 14:15; Psa 106:24). In Prov 14:15 the expression אמן לדבר is found in a saying that contrasts the simple (פְּתִי), from the shrewd (עָרוּם). The simple person is said to believe every word or matter (אמן לדבר), while the shrewd one is said to be discerning (בִּין).

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<sup>377</sup> Barré (2000:7-8) also observes that this unit (Isa 52:13-15) is framed by wisdom words הַתְּבוּנָה and יִשְׁפִּיל.

<sup>378</sup> In relation to the four servant songs in Isa 40-55, Westermann (1969:20-21) makes the point to the effect that the servant in the servant songs is not described in familiar biblical terms of king, prophet, righteous individual. Some elements of all these are found but there are also more elements. There are elements similar to the designation of a king (Isa 42:1-4), to a prophet (Isa 49:1-6), individual righteous man (Isa 50:4-9) and elements that include suffering, and a suffering that is vicarious (Isa 52:13-53:12). What remains certain is that the servant has a mission given by God and extending to both Israel and the Gentiles.



The verb אמן appears 100 times in the Old Testament, twice in the qal, 47 times in the niphil and 51 times in the hiphil. In Isa 40-55 it appears 4 times, twice in the niphil (Isa 49:7 and 55:3) and twice in the hiphil (Isa 43:10 and 53:1). It also appears several times in Proverbs and Job but not in Qoheleth. In Proverbs it appears 5 times, 3 times in the niphil (Prov 11:13; 25:13 and 27:6) and twice in the hiphil (Prov 14:15, 26:29). In Job it appears 10 times, once in the niphil (Job 12:20) and 9 times in the hiphil.<sup>379</sup> This comes to a total of 15 in the wisdom books of Proverbs and Job, which constitutes 15% of the total occurrences of the word in the Old Testament. On average the verb would appear 5 times in each wisdom books and twice in each of the rest of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament. These occurrences make the verb אמן a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The basic meaning of אמן is 'to be firm, trustworthy'. In the niphil conjugation it adds the nuance of being faithful, and in the hiphil that of believing (cf. Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:60-61). Trustworthiness is a characteristic associated with the wise and the upright in wisdom literature and tradition. Hence, the meaning of אמן and its number of occurrences in the wisdom books makes it a typical wisdom word.

The noun שְׂמִיעָה appears 27 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55 it appears once. In Proverbs it appears twice. In both occurrences in Proverbs it is used together with the adjective טוֹבָה 'good' (Prov 15:30; 25:25). The noun does not appear in Job or Qoheleth. Its appearance in Proverbs amounts to 7% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. The noun שְׂמִיעָה means 'things heard', or 'report' or even 'revelation' (cf. Koehler&Baumgartner 1998:985-986). In Prov 15:30 and 25:25 where it appears with טוֹבָה it means 'good news'. In Isa 53:1a where it appears with a first pers. pl. pronominal suf., it can mean 'our report' or 'what we have heard' or 'what has been revealed to us'. However, both the statistical occurrences and the meaning of שְׂמִיעָה does not make it a typical wisdom word.

In Isa 53:1b there is the expression יְהוָה זְרוּעֵ יְהוָה 'the arm of the Lord' and the verb גלה in the niphil conjugation. The expression זְרוּעֵ יְהוָה appears twice in the Old Testament, in Isa 51:9 and here in Isa 53:1b. It literally means the arm/shoulder of the LORD. The expression is also used metaphorically to refer to the strength (Isa 51:9; Job 40:9)<sup>380</sup>, justice (Isa 51:5)<sup>381</sup> or salvation

<sup>379</sup> Job 4:18, 9:16, 15:15, 22, 24:22, 31 29:24, 39:12, 24

<sup>380</sup> Here it is used together with עֵז 'strength' to describe God's powerful deeds of old (Isa 51:9-10).

<sup>381</sup> In this oracle God talks about his arms bringing justice שֹׁפֵט to the peoples.

(Isa 52:10)<sup>382</sup> of the LORD. There are other expressions referring to the זרוע of the LORD that are construed differently. These include: וזרעו משלה לו 'and his hand rules for him' (Isa 40:10); קשף יהנה את־זרוע קדשו 'The LORD has barred his holy arm' (Isa 52:10); זרוע תפארתו 'his glorious arm' (Isa 63:12); הושיעה־לו ימינו וזרע קדשו 'his right hand and holy arm have brought him victory' (Psa 98:1b). The expression זרוע יהנה does not appear in Proverbs, or Qoheleth. But in Job 40:6-9 God asks Job two rhetorical questions. The second question reads:

אם־זרוע כאל לך ובקול כמו תרעם:

'Do you have an arm like God's,  
and with a voice like his can you thunder?'(Job 40:9)

Here the expression זרוע אל is used metaphorically for the strength of God. The noun, זרוע, also, appears 5 more times in Job<sup>383</sup> and once in Proverbs (31:17). This makes the occurrence of the noun 7 times out of the 91 that it occurs in the Old Testament. This constitutes 7.7% of the total occurrences. This is a borderline case. On average the noun would appear twice in each of the wisdom books, and twice in each of the books of the rest of the Hebrew Old Testament. The occurrences of both the expression זרוע יהנה and the noun זרוע and their meaning leaves the candidacy of both for wisdom vocabulary an open possibility.

The verb גלה appears 113 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55 it occurs 6 times. In Proverbs and Job it occurs 7 times in each book. It occurs in the qal, niphil, piel, pual, hiphil, hophal and hithpael conjugations. In Isa 53:1b it is in the niphil conjugation. In the niphil it occurs 29 times in the Old Testament. In the niphil it appears 4 times in Isa 40-55 (40:5; 47:3; 49:9; 53:1), once in Proverbs (26:26) and once in Job (38:17).<sup>384</sup> Its occurrences in the books of Proverb and Job constitute 12.4% of the total. On average the verb would appear 4 times in each wisdom book and thrice in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. This does not make גלה a typical wisdom word. The verb has two primary meanings: 'to uncover, reveal or go into exile' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:182-183).

<sup>382</sup> In this prophetic speech the expression is used in parallel with the expression ישועת אלהינו 'the salvation of our God'.

<sup>383</sup> Job 22:8, 9; 26:2; 35:9; 38:15; 40:9

<sup>384</sup> Here God asks Job a question הַנְּגִלוּ לְךָ שַׁעַר־מָוֶת 'have the gates of death been revealed to you'.

In the light of the foregoing discussion one may conclude that the vocabulary and expressions in Isa 53:1 are not in any way typical wisdom words and expressions, with the exception of the verb אמן. Notwithstanding this, these words and expressions are used in or framed as two rhetorical questions (as stated in Chapter 6 – 6.5 and 6.6.1.2).<sup>385</sup> While rhetorical questions are found throughout the Old Testament, they are used with considerable frequency in the wisdom books.

Introducing an argument with a rhetorical question<sup>386</sup> or simply asking a series of rhetorical questions<sup>387</sup> or even concluding a reflection or argument with a rhetorical question (cf. Qoh 2:22; 3:21-22; 5:5; 6:6) is part of the wisdom style. In the book of Job, in particular, almost every speech or argument of the interlocutors is introduced by a rhetorical question or questions. The speeches of God in Job 38-41 are mostly composed of a series of rhetorical questions addressed to Job. Furthermore, questions introduced by the interrogative pronoun מַי also occur with considerably frequency in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth. Out of the 423 occurrences in the Old Testament, the interrogative pronoun מַי occurs 16 times in Proverbs, 62 times in Job, and 15 times in Qoheleth. In Isa 40-55 it occurs 23 times (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:648-649). The total occurrences in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth constitute 22% of the total occurrences in the Old Testament. This is a considerable number of occurrences taking into consideration the total number of books in the Old Testament.

### 7.3.2 Isa 53:2-3

In Isa 53:2-3 there is a description of the upbringing, appearance and deprecation of the servant. In Isa 53:2a there are terminologies normally associated with plant life, which are used in a comparative form to describe the precarious and vulnerable upbringing of the servant. This upbringing is compared to that of a sapling and a plant in dry land, through the expressions עלה פיוֹנֵק and כְּשֶׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה (עלה).<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>385</sup>A rhetorical question is a question asked in order to make a point rather than to solicit for an answer. Either the answer is obvious or there is no known answer to the question asked (cf. Murphy 1981:181).

<sup>386</sup> Cf. Job 4:1-2; 5:1; 7:1; 8:2-3; 9:2; 11:2; 15:2; 18:2; 19:2-3; 22:2-4; 24:1; 28:12, 20; 35:2-3; Qoh 7:13; 8:1.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Job 3:20-23; 15:8-9; 22:2-4; 38-41; Prov 6:9; 30:4; Qoh 4:10-11; 6:8, 11-12.

<sup>388</sup> It has already been pointed out at 6.5 that the verb עלה is used elliptically, that is, it is mentioned at the beginning of the first colon and presupposed at the beginning of the second. It has been added for clarity in this parenthesis.

The expression *עלה* *פיונק* or even *עלה* *יונק* is found only here in the Old Testament. It is neither a common Old Testament expression nor typical of wisdom literature and tradition. As far as *עלה* is concerned, this is a verb that appears in the qal, niph'al, hiph'il, hoph'al and hithpa'el conjugations, a total of 890 times in the Old Testament (Even-Shoshan 1997:874-879). In Isa 40-55 it appears 5 times in the qal (Isa 40:9, 31; 53:2; 55:13). It appears 6 times in Proverbs in the qal<sup>389</sup> and once in the hiph'il (Prov 15:1). It appears 6 times in Job in the qal<sup>390</sup> and twice in the hiph'il (Job 1:5; 42:8). It appears twice in Qoheleth in the qal (Qoh 3:21 and 10:4). Therefore, it appears 17 times, in total, in the wisdom books. This constitutes 2.0% of the total number of occurrences in the Old Testament. On average the verb would occur 5 times in each of the wisdom books, and 24 times in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. In the light of these statistics the verb *עלה* is not a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The primary literal meaning of *עלה* is 'to go up, ascend or climb' (cf. BDB 2000:748). The verb is also used with reference to plants or vegetation. In these contexts it means 'to bring forth shoots' (cf. Gen 40:10), 'to grow'<sup>391</sup> or 'to spring up' (cf. Isa 55:13). In view of the context of Isa 53:2a, which uses plant imagery, as will be shown below, *עלה* in 53:2a would mean 'to grow'.

In its turn *יונק* appears in the Old Testament 11 times.<sup>392</sup> It appears once, here, in Isa 40-55. It does not appear in any of the wisdom books. It has been construed as qal ptc. masc. from the root *ינק* (cf. Ringgren 1990:106). The corresponding feminine form *יונקת* occurs 6 times.<sup>393</sup>

The literal meaning of the root *ינק* is 'to suck' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:385). In the 10 occurrences of *יונק* it is clearly referring to a sucking child, in the light of the contexts. A sucking infant is vulnerable, delicate and utterly dependent on others. In the 11<sup>th</sup> occurrence, that is, Isa 53:2, its reference is open to two possibilities. The first is that of the literal meaning of a sucking child or an infant. This would be supported by the meaning of the root of this word as well as by the other 10 uses mentioned above. The verb *עלה* 'to grow up' that is used with *יונק* in this verse would be open to this interpretation. However, as it has been pointed out above,

<sup>389</sup>Prov 21:22; 24:31; 25:7; 26:9; 30:4; 31:29.

<sup>390</sup>Job 5:26; 6:18; 7:9; 20:6; 36:20; 36:33.

<sup>391</sup>Deut 29:22; Isa 5:6; 32:13; 34:13; Ezek 47:12; Hos 10:8; Prov 24:31; Jon 4:6.

<sup>392</sup> Deut 32:25; Isam 22:19; 1Sam 22:19; Psa 8:3; Isa 11:8; Num 11:12; Jer 44:7; Lam 2:11; 4:4; Joel 2:16; and Isa 53:2

<sup>393</sup> Ezek 17:22; Hos 14:7; Job 8:16; 14:7; 15:30; Psa 80:12

this would be the one and only instance in the Old Testament where the verb עלה is used together with יונק to describe human growth.<sup>394</sup> Furthermore, the parallel colon, Isa 53:2aβ, in which the verb עלה is used elliptically, makes reference to roots (שָׂרֵשׁ), making it possible for יונק to refer to a sucker or shoot. This metaphorical meaning would be supported by the metaphorical use of the feminine participle form יונקת. In the 6 occurrences of יונקת it invariably has the meaning of a sucker or shoot. Thus, יונק here is taken to refer to a shoot or sucker (cf. Lisowsky 1993:597). Again, a shoot or sucker is by nature vulnerable, delicate and at the mercy of the elements for survival. While יונק does not appear in any of the wisdom books, the feminine form יונקת appears thrice in the book of Job (8:16; 14:7 and 15:30). It is used by Bildad to describe the temporary prosperity of the wicked (Job 8:16) and their eventual fate by Eliphaz (Job 15:30). In the speech of Job it is used to compare the hope in store for plants that are cut with the ‘hopeless’ death of human beings.

The expression שָׂרֵשׁ מְאָרֵץ צִיָּה (עלה) does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament. A phrase with a similar meaning that is found elsewhere in the Old Testament is אָרֵץ צִיָּה. But before analyzing this phrase, it is important to say something about the noun שָׂרֵשׁ. שָׂרֵשׁ is a masc. noun that appears 33 times in the Old Testament (Even-Shoshan 1997:1211). In Isa 40-55 it appears only once here at Isa 53:2. In Proverbs it appears twice (Prov 12:3; 12:12). In Job it appears 9 times.<sup>395</sup> This makes a total of 11 appearances in the wisdom books, constituting 33% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. On average it would appear thrice in each of the wisdom books, and 0.6 times in each of the rest of the Old Testament. This would make שָׂרֵשׁ a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The primary literal meaning of the noun is ‘a root’ and the primary reference is to the root(s) of trees (Job 14:8; Jer 17:8).<sup>396</sup> The root was understood to have the function of providing nourishment, stability and was even considered to be the ‘origin/source’ of the tree. This understanding and use may explain the figurative use of שָׂרֵשׁ to express permanence (Am 2:9), stability/foundation (Prov 12:3), cause or reason (Job 19:28), family origins (Isa 11:1, 10), among others. In Proverbs the word is found in two sayings that

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<sup>394</sup> Is normally used to describe plant rather than human growth.

<sup>395</sup> Job 8:17; 13:27; 14:8; 18:16; 19:28; 28:9; 29:19; 30:4; 36:30

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:1012

contrast the wicked and the righteous. The saying in Proverbs 12:3 states that there is no security in wickedness but that the root *שִׁירָשׁ*, that is, foundation, of the righteous is not moved. In Proverbs 12:12, the root of the righteous is said to bear fruit.

In Job *שִׁירָשׁ* is used both literally and figuratively. It is used for roots of plants (Job 8:17; 14:8; 18:16; 30:4). It is used figuratively to refer to a foundation (Job 28:9; 36:30), to the cause or reason of something (Job 19:28), to the soles of feet (Job 13:27). In Job 29:19, Job uses *שִׁירָשׁ* as part of his description of the prosperity he had hoped for (Job 29:18-20) because of his uprightness (29:11-17). He speaks of his roots opening up to the waters (*שִׁירָשׁ־יִפְתּוּחַ־אֲלֵי־מַיִם*) and his branches covered with dew (Job 29:19). By root, Job means his being, his person. The imagery of plants growing near water is imagery of fecundity, and in human terms, prosperity. The imagery of the fecundity of a tree planted near water is also used in Psa 1:3 to describe the prosperity and fecundity of a righteous person, that is, of one who delights in the law of the Lord.<sup>397</sup> In contrast to Job 29:19, however, *שִׁירָשׁ* is used in Isa 53:2, with the expression *אֶרֶץ צִיָּה* 'dry land'.

The expression *אֶרֶץ צִיָּה* appears 8 times in the Old Testament.<sup>398</sup> This phrase appears in prophetic literature (6 times) and twice in the Psalms.<sup>399</sup> While one may say that the expression is relatively rare, the noun *אֶרֶץ* occurs with considerable frequency. In fact the noun *אֶרֶץ* is one of the more frequent nouns in the Old Testament. It appears about 2504 times (Even-Shoshan 1997:112-119). It appears 42 times in Isa 40-55, 21 times in Proverbs, 57 times in Job, and 13

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<sup>397</sup> Psa 1 is considered to be one of the Psalms that contain themes and forms of expression that are typical of wisdom literature and tradition. For example, the theme of the contrast between the righteous and the wicked typical of wisdom literature, and the *אֲשֶׁר־יִבְרַךְ* (blessed) form found in some wisdom books (cf. Prov 3:13; 8:32-33). Despite the problems associated with the criteria of classification, the other Psalms that are generally considered as wisdom Psalms in the light of their content and form include Psa 1; 32; 34; 37; 49; 73; 111; 112; 119; 127; 128 (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993:525-526). For a recent discussion concerning the legitimacy and designation of some of the Psalms as wisdom Psalms see Markus Saur and Tova Forti. Markus Saur (2015) is of the view that the primary focus should be on the issues treated by these Psalms rather than their classification. In Saur's view issues treated by the so-called wisdom Psalms were of concern to the society of Israel as a whole rather than a sector of the sages (Saur 2015:181-204). Tova Forti (2015) is of the view that it is possible and useful, as well as challenging, to classify and identify wisdom Psalms. Tova Forti goes further to propose criteria for such an enterprise. These include thematic, linguistic, stylistic, lexical and metaphorical criteria. Using this criteria she include Psa 39 and 104 among the wisdom Psalms (Forti 2015:205-220).

<sup>398</sup> Isa 41:18//Psa 107:35; Isa 53:2; Jer 51:43; Ezek 19:13; Hos 2:5; Joel 2:20; Psa 63:2.

<sup>399</sup> In Isa 41:18bβ and Psa 107:35 one finds the same expression *וְאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לְמוֹצְאֵי מַיִם* ... will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water'.

times in Qoheleth. It appears a total of 91 times in wisdom books. This constitutes 3.6% of the total. This means that אָרֶץ is not a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. The noun אָרֶץ means 'ground, land or country' (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:89). On its part צִיָּה appears 16 times. In Isa 40-55 it appears twice (Isa 41:18; 53:2). It appears twice in Job (Job 24:19; 30:3). In Prophetic literature it appears 10 times<sup>400</sup> and in the Psalms it appears 4 times (Psa 63:2; 78:17; 105:41; 107:35). In all its appearances צִיָּה has the literal meaning of dry, drought, and dry region or land (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:802).

Psa 78 is normally classified as a historical Psalm in the light of its contents that narrates the important moments in Israel's history from the Exodus to the monarchical period (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993:539). The purpose for this narration, however, is didactic. This is clearly expressed at the beginning of the Psalm (78:1-11). This introduction is similar to the other Psalms that have been classified as wisdom Psalms (Psa 49:2-5; cf. Prov 8:4). If one takes Psa 78 as an expression of the content and form of wisdom tradition and not necessarily as a wisdom Psalm, it makes the total appearance of צִיָּה in the wisdom corpus and tradition 3. This would come to 18.6% of the total occurrence of the noun in the Old Testament. If its occurrence in Psa 78 is not considered, its occurrences in wisdom books will constitute 12.5% of the total. On average it would appear once in each of the wisdom books if Psa 78 is taken into consideration and 0.67 times, if not. In the rest of the Old Testament it would appear 0.4 times. These statistics show that the noun צִיָּה is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. Even though it appears only in the book of Job, its appearances in the rest of the Old Testament are also minimal.

In the two cola of Isa 53:2αβ the verb (עלה) and the reference to the young shoot (יוֹנֵק) and the root שָׁרַשׁ are used figuratively to describe the nature of the origins, upbringing and early life of the servant. The origins were insignificant. The upbringing and early life were harsh, vulnerable, precarious and insecure like that of a young plant in a desert or land without water. The motif of describing human life in terms of plant life finds expression in Proverbs (cf. Prov 12:3; 12:12), Job (cf. Job 8:17; 14:8; 18:16; 29:19) and Psalm 1.<sup>401</sup> Therefore, in Isa 53:2αβ, some

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<sup>400</sup> Isa 35:1; 41:18; 53:2; Jer 2:6; 50:12; 51:43; Ezek 19:13; Hos 2:5; Joel 2:20; Zep 2:13

<sup>401</sup> It should also be noted that the description of human growth in terms of plant growth is also found in Ezek 16:6-7. Here the growth of Jerusalem (Israel) is described. Israel was hated from birth and thrown into the open field (Ezek 16:5). God, moved by pity, commands Israel to grow like the plant of the field (Seitz 2001:465).

possible wisdom words (שִׁשׁ and צִיָּה), and this wisdom motif of describing human life in terms of plant life are used to compare the upbringing and early life of the servant with a sapling and plant in dry land.

Isa 53:2aγb describes the deplorable appearance of the servant (as pointed out in Chapter 6 – 6.6.1.2). The section has been translated as follows:

He had no form nor majesty that we should look at him  
And no appearance that we should have been attracted to him (53:2aγb).

The vocabulary used in this description include: תֵּאָר; רָאָה; תֵּאָר; מְרָאָה; הִדָּר and; חָמַד.<sup>402</sup> The appearances, use and meaning of רָאָה; תֵּאָר and; מְרָאָה have been discussed above. Of the two possible meanings, that is, the noetic and emotional, the emotional nuance of רָאָה, that of being attracted, is depicted here at Isa 53:2aγ. This is confirmed by the parallel term חָמַד which basically means to desire, to be attracted to (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:308). Of the 15 times that תֵּאָר appears, it appears twice in Isa 40-55 in this text (Isa 52:14 and Isa 53:2),<sup>403</sup> but it is found nowhere in the wisdom corpus. Of the 103 times that מְרָאָה occurs in the Old Testament, it occurs twice in Isa 40-55 in this text (Isa 52:14 and 53:2) and only 4 times in the wisdom books (Job 4:16; 41:1; Qoh 6:9; 11:9). This constitutes 3% of the total occurrences of מְרָאָה. On average מְרָאָה would appear once in each wisdom book and twice in the each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. Therefore, while רָאָה is a common enough word in the wisdom corpus, the same cannot be said of תֵּאָר and מְרָאָה.

The root חָמַד appears both in the verbal and nominal form. As a verb it appears 21 times. It appears 16 times in the qal, 4 times in the niphil and once in the piel (cf. Lowinsky 1981:505). The primary literal meaning is 'to desire, to take pleasure in' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:308). As a noun it appears in two basic forms חָמַד 'splendour', and חֶמְדָּה 'loveliness'. The verb occurs in the book of Proverbs 4 times, thrice in the qal (Prov 1:22; 6:25; 12:12) and once in the niphil (Prov 21:20). In the book of Job it appears once in the qal (Job 20:20). In the nominal form it occurs 30 times in the Old Testament but the nominal form does not appear in any of the wisdom books. The appearances of the root in the books of Proverbs and Job constitute about

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<sup>402</sup> This description is similar to what is in Isa 52:14aβb, but the vocabulary used is different in some instances.

<sup>403</sup> The verb תֵּאָר 'to trace' appears twice in Isa 44:13.



10% of the total occurrences of the root in the Old Testament. On average the root would appear 3 times in each wisdom books and once in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This would make **המד** a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The root **הדר** appears both as a verb and a noun. As a verb it appears 6 times; 4 times in the qal, once in the niphil (Lam 5:12) and once in the hithpaal (Prov 25:6). Its literal meaning is 'to honour' and in its only occurrence in the hithpaal (Prov 25:6) it means to behave arrogantly (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:226). As a noun it appears in three basic forms; **הָדָר**, **הֶדְרָה**, and **הִדְרָה** with the meaning of honour, adornment or splendor (BDB 2000:213-214). **הָדָר** is a masc. noun. It occurs 30 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55, it is found only here (Isa 53:2) and in the wisdom corpus it appears twice in Proverbs (Prov 20:29 and 31:25) and once in Job (Job 40:10). It also occurs once in Psa 111:3.<sup>404</sup> Its total occurrences in the wisdom corpus constitute 11% of the total occurrences. On average it would appear once in each of the wisdom books of the Hebrew Old Testament, and 0.8% in each of the remaining books. The motif of honour is common in wisdom literature. This would make the root **הדר** a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

In Isa 53:3 the deprecation and rejection of the servant is reflected upon and confessed by the 'we'. The terminologies used for this are **יָדַע חָלִי**, **אִישׁ מִקְּאֲבוֹת**, **חָדַל אֲשִׁים**, **הִשָּׁב**, **נִבְזָה**, and **מִסְתַּר מִן פְּנֵים מִן**. **נִבְזָה** is a niphil.ptc.masc. from the root **בזה**. The verb appears 43 times; 31 times in the qal, 10 times in the niphil and once in the hiphil (cf. Lisowsky 1993:205-206). In Isa 40-55 it appears thrice, once in the qal (Isa 49:7) and twice in the niphil (Isa 53:3<sup>2</sup>). It appears thrice in the qal in the book of Proverbs (Prov 14:2; 15:20; 19:16). It appears once in the qal in Qoheleth (Qoh 9:16). It is also used in Psa 73:20 in the qal, and in Psa 119:141 in the niphil.<sup>405</sup> Out of the 43 times that the verb appears in the Old Testament, it appears 4 times in the wisdom books. This constitutes 9.3% of the total number of occurrences. On average the verb would appear

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<sup>404</sup> This Psalm is an acrostic (cf. Prov 31:10-31) hymn of praise that concludes with a wisdom saying at verse 10. It is often numbered among the wisdom Psalms (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993:525, 546). It is an example of the expression of the wisdom tradition.

<sup>405</sup> Psalms 73 and 119 are usually considered to be wisdom Psalms. The theme of Psa 73 is about the problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the innocent, a theme typical of wisdom literature and tradition (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993: 538). Psa 119 is the longest Psalm and is not easy to classify but it is usually classified under wisdom Psalms because of its acrostic form and other considerations (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993: 525, 547). In Psalm 119:141 the Psalmist says, 'I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts'. These two Psalms are also an example of the expression of the wisdom tradition.

once in each of the wisdom books and once in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. Both the percentage of appearances, which is above the threshold of 7.7%, and the average appearances of the verb בזה do suggest that this is a typical wisdom word. The meaning of בזה is ‘to despise, to hold in contempt’ (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:115-116). It is the opposite of ‘respect’ (Prov 14:2). In the qal passive and the niphil it is used for people who are despised and held in contempt by those around them, for various reasons. In Psa 119:141 it is the righteous who complains of being despised. In Qoh 9:16 it is the poor man’s wisdom that is said to be despised, simply because he is poor (Görg 1997:64-65). In Isa 53:3 נבזה begins and concludes the description of how the ‘we’ held the servant in disrespect and rejected him.

הַשְׁבֵּהוּ is a verb in the qal with 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.masc.sg. suf., from the root השב. This root is found in verbal and nominal forms.<sup>406</sup> It occurs as a verb 123 times in the Old Testament, in the qal, niphil, piel and hithpael conjugations (cf. Lisowsky 1993:536-537; Shoshan 1997:404). In Isa 40-55 it appears 4 times (Isa 40:15, 17; 53:3, 4). It is not among the favourite words of the author of Isa 40-55. In Proverbs it occurs 6 times and in Job it occurs 11 times. In the nominal form it occurs 25 times in four different forms; הַשְׁבָּה, הַשְׁבֵּהוּ, הַשְׁבֵּבוֹן and הַשְׁבֵּבוֹן. The first two forms appear 20 times in the Priestly sections of the books of Exodus and Leviticus referring to ingenious work. The last two nominal forms appear 4 times in the book of Qoheleth and once in 2Chronicles. The total number of occurrences of the root is 148. Twenty one of these occurrences are found in the wisdom corpus. This constitutes 14% of the total, which makes it a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. The primary literal meaning of verb is ‘to account, to devise, to consider’ (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:339-430; BDB 2000:362-363). Thinking, devising and considering issues was clearly a wisdom enterprise (cf. Prov 16:9; 24:8; Job 13:24; 35:2).<sup>407</sup> Hence, both the statistical evidence and meaning of השב makes it a wisdom word.

The expression הַדָּל אִישִׁים appears only here in the Old Testament. The root הדל appears in verbal, adjectival and nominal forms. As a verb it appears in the qal conjugation only (59 times), and as an adjective it appears twice (Psa 39:5<sup>408</sup> and here at Isa 53:3). As a noun it appears

<sup>406</sup> The nominal forms are הַשְׁבָּה ‘ingenious work’ (Exod 28:27); הַשְׁבֵּבוֹן ‘reckoning, account’ (Qoh 7:25, 27; 9:10) and הַשְׁבֵּבוֹן ‘device, invention’ (Qoh 7:29).

<sup>407</sup> The nominal form הַשְׁבֵּבוֹן is also used together with הַכְּמָה in Qoh 7:25, 9:10.

<sup>408</sup> Ps 39 is usually classified as a lament Psalm, but it also has wisdom motifs (Psa. 39:2, 5-6, 9, 12 and 13; cf. Kselman & Barre 1993:532). For example, Psa 39:2 speaks about the problem of the prosperity of the wicked (cf.

once in Isa 38:11 (cf. Lisowsky 1993:464). As a verb it appears 7 times in Job and 3 times in Proverbs. If one includes its adjectival appearance in Psa 39:5, the total appearances in the wisdom corpus is 11, constituting 19%. If its appearance in Psa 39:5 is not included it would constitute 16% of the total verbal and adjectival appearances of the root in the Old Testament. On average it would appear thrice in the wisdom books and once in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. The root meaning of the word includes: ‘ceasing’ (Prov 19:27), ‘lacking’; ‘to let alone’ (Job 7:16, 19:14) and even; ‘transient’ (Psa 39:5; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:277-278). In the light of the above statistics and the meaning of the root, **חָדַל** is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

**אִישִׁים** is a rare plural form of the noun **אִישׁ** ‘man, husband, humanity’. The form **אִישִׁים** appears only 3 times in the Old Testament (Psa 141:4; Prov 8:4 and Isa 53:3). Psa 141 is a prayer of lament but it has several wisdom motifs; control of the mouth and disassociation with the wicked (Psa 141:3-4); acceptance of correction from the upright (Psa 141:5; cf. Prov 9:8; 25:12). In Prov 8:4-5 personified wisdom invites **אִישִׁים** ‘humanity’<sup>409</sup> to listen to her voice. Besides its appearance in Isa 53:3, this rare plural form of **אִישׁ** is found in a wisdom book (Prov 8:4) and in a Psalm that has undoubtedly wisdom motifs (Psa 141:4).<sup>410</sup>

The expression **אִישׁ מִכְּאֲבוֹת** is found only here in the Old Testament but the noun **מִכְּאֲבוֹת** is found 16 times. In Isa 40-55 it is found in twice and only in this chapter (Isa 53:3 and 4). It is found once in Job (Job 33:19) and twice in Qoheleth (Qoh 1:18; 2:23).<sup>411</sup> The noun **מִכְּאֲבוֹת** is one of the two nouns that are derived from the verb **כָּאֵב**. The other noun is **כָּאֵב**. The verb **כָּאֵב** occurs 8 times<sup>412</sup> and the noun **כָּאֵב** occurs 6 times. The verb occurs once in Proverbs (Prov 14:13) and twice in Job (Job 5:18; 14:22). The noun **כָּאֵב** appears twice in Job (Job 2:13; 16:6). The total occurrences of the root in the Old Testament are 30. Its total occurrences in the wisdom corpus

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Psa 73), Psa 39: 5-6 speaks about the shortness of life (cf. Job 7:6, 16; 14:1,5). The adjective **חָדַל** in v.5 is best translated with ‘transient’, the uncertainty of the inheritors of one’s wealth (cf. Qoh 2:21-23; 6:1-2). The Psalm also concludes with words reminiscent of Job’s words asking God for a break and a breather (cf. Job 7:19; 14:6).<sup>409</sup> **אִישִׁים** is used in parallel with **בְּנֵי אָדָם** an expression used for all humanity.

<sup>410</sup> The usual plural form is **אִישִׁים** which appears a total of 521 times in the Old Testament.

<sup>411</sup> It also appears in Psa 32, a Psalm with wisdom motifs. This Psalm begins with the blessed are (**אֲשֶׁר־יֵי**) formula (Psa 32:1-2; cf. Psa 1:1; 34:9; Prov 3:13; 8:32, 34; Job 5:17; Qoh 10:17). The Psalm is also didactic (Psa 32:8) and contrasts the wicked and those who trust in the Lord (Psa 32:8-10), a theme common to wisdom literature and tradition (Kselman & Barre 1993:531).

<sup>412</sup> It occurs 4 times in the qal and 4 times in the hiphil conjugations (cf. Lisowsky 1993:659).

are 8. This constitutes 27% of the total, which makes the word a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. In all its occurrences the root means pain or sorrow (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:520). It is one of the words that is used to express suffering, as mental pain, in the Old Testament (cf. Exod 3:7; Psa 32:10; Qoh 1:18; 2:23). The occurrences of this root as well as its root meaning make it a strong candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The expression ידע חלי does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament but the expression אֲנָשִׁים יָדְעִים ‘men who are reputable’ (cf. NRSV) or ‘men who are experienced’ (cf. NJB) appears in Deut 1:13 and 15. In these two texts the expression is used to describe Moses’ choice of אֲנָשִׁים חֲכָמִים וְיָדְעִים ‘men wise and experienced’. At 6.3.1.7 וַיִּדְעֶנּוּ has been construed as a qal passive participle construct from the verb ידע with a conjunction וְ ‘and’ (cf. Watts 1987:225).<sup>413</sup> The verb appears 940 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997: 432-436) in the qal, piel, pual, hiphil, hophal, and hithpael conjugations. In Isa 40-55 it appears 35 times. In Proverbs it appears 35 times, in the book of Job 67 times, and in Qoheleth 34 times. This adds up to 136 appearances. Its appearance in these three wisdom books constitutes 14% of its total appearances in the Old Testament. On average it appears 45 times in each of the wisdom books, while it appears 22 times on average, in the rest of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament. As pointed out before (Chapter 5), it appears in parallel with חֲכָמָה and its synonyms in several texts, making it one of the synonyms of חֲכָמָה and a typical wisdom word. The primary literal meaning of ידע is ‘to know’. The qal passive participle means ‘to be known’ or be acquainted with (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:364-365; BDB 2000:393-395). The statistical evidence and the meaning and use of ידע makes it a wisdom word.

חלי is a masc. noun that appears 24 times in the Old Testament. It is found only twice in Isa 40-55 at Isa 53:3 and 4. It appears twice in Qoheleth (Qoh 5:16; 6:2). It also appears in Psa 41:1.<sup>414</sup> Statistically, it appears in the wisdom books twice out of the 24 occurrences in the Old Testament. This constitutes 8% of the total occurrences. On average it would appear 0.67 times in each of the wisdom books, and 0,6 times in the remaining parts of the Old Testament. This

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<sup>413</sup> GKC §50f construes it as a verbal adjective of inherent quality and translates it as ‘knowing’.

<sup>414</sup> Psa 41 is prayer of a suffering person that begins with a section couched in wisdom style, motifs and purpose (Psa 41:1-3). It begins with אֲשֶׁרִי ‘happy/blessed’. It talks about leading to the poor (cf. Prov 14:21; 19:17; 22:9). The purpose of this opening section is clearly ‘instructive’ (cf. Kselman & Barre 1993:533).

would be a marginal but considerable frequency according to the criteria above. The noun means ‘weakness or sickness’ (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:301). It also means suffering in the light of its use in Qoh 5:16 and 6:2, as well as its use in parallel with מְאֹיִב ‘pain, suffering’ in Isa 53:3 (cf. NJB). Suffering is a theme common in wisdom literature and tradition.

The expression מְסִתֵּר פְּנֵיָם מִן 415 appears in the form הִסְתִּיר פְּנֵיָם מִן 30 times.<sup>416</sup> The expression appears mostly in the Psalms of lamentation. In the wisdom corpus it appears thrice in the book of Job (Job 13:20, 24; 34:29).<sup>417</sup> In the majority of the cases (26 times), it appears with God as subject;<sup>418</sup> thrice with humans as subject (Exod 3:6 – Moses; Isa 50:6 – servant of God and; Job 13:20 - Job) and once with הַטְּאוֹתֵיכֶם ‘your sins’ as subject (Isa 59:2). In Isa 53:3 the subject of the phrase remains ambiguous. It could be God. This would be supported by the numerous times in which the expression appears with God as subject. It could be the ‘we’, especially if the suf. in מְסִתֵּר is construed as a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sg. suf. The subject could also be the servant. This was the rendering of the LXX, ὅτι ἀπέστραπται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ‘his face is turned away’. In this study it has been taken as an impersonal expression, ‘like one who hides the face’ (cf.6.3.2 and see Joachimsen 2011:377-378). In the instances the expression is used with God as subject it means the withdrawal of His favour and protection, which is total rejection (cf. BDB 2000:711). In the cases where humans are subjects, Moses hides or covers his face because he was afraid to look at God (Exod 3:6). The same is true of Job. Job requests God to remove his hand upon him

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<sup>415</sup>Lisowsky (1993:836) and BDB (2000:712) construe מְסִתֵּר as a noun ‘a hiding, act of hiding’ derived from the verb סָתַר ‘to hide’ and is in the construct state at Isa 53:3 (cf. Joachimsen 2011:377-378). Koehler & Baumgartner (1998:544) construes it as a hiphil participle of the verb סָתַר ‘to hide’, taking cue from the expression הִסְתִּיר פְּנֵיָם מִן (cf. Deut 31:17, 18; Isa 54:8; Isa 50:6). The verb סָתַר appears 80 times. It appears 30 times in the niphil, once in the piel (Isa 16:3), once in the pual (Prov 27:5), 43 times in the hiphil and 5 times in the hithpael conjunctions (cf. Lisowsky 1993:1007-1008). The primary literal meaning is ‘to hide, to conceal’ (BDB 2000:711). There is also the noun סִתְרָה which appears 35 times. The verb appears 5 times in Isa 40-55, 4 times in Proverbs, 8 times in Job. The noun appears twice in Isa 40-55, thrice in Proverbs, 5 times in Job. Both the verb and the noun does not appear in Qoheleth nor in any of the wisdom Psalms. The occurrences of the verb in Proverbs and Job constitute 15% of the total verbal appearances. The occurrences of the noun in Proverbs and Jobs constitute 23% of the total appearances of the noun.

<sup>416</sup>In Job 13:20 there is a similar expression that is constructed differently. The verb is in the niphil instead of the hiphil conjunction. The preposition of separation, מִן ‘from’, forms a prepositional phrase with פְּנֵיָךְ ‘your face’. Job is the subject of the verb and God is the implied object expressed by the phrase פְּנֵיָךְ. If this expression is included the total number will be 31.

<sup>417</sup> Job 13:20 has been included, see the discussion at the footnote above.

<sup>418</sup>Deut31:17, 18; 32:20; Isa 8:17; 54:8; 64:6; Jer 33:5; Ezek 39:23, 24, 29; Mic 3:4; Psa 13:2; 22:25; 27:9; 30:8; 31:21; 44:25; 51:11; 69:18; 88:15; 102:3; 104:29; 143:7; Job 13:24; 34:29.

so that he would not be terrified (Job 13:20-21). In the case of the servant in Isa 50:4-9, the servant did not hide the face from insult and spitting. This would mean that the servant was not ashamed of all the mistreatment he suffered. Despite this treatment the servant did not renegade from his task and even considered it as part of his mission (cf. Westermann 1969:230). In the context of the deprecation and rejection expressed in Isa 53:3, the expression **כְּמִסְתֵּר פְּנִים מִמְּנוּ** underscores this rejection and would include deprecation and rejection on the part of God as well . This is not only supported by the frequent use of the expression with God as subject, but also by the confession of the ‘we’ at Isa 53:4b, ‘we considered him struck and smitten by God’.

In wisdom literature and tradition rejection by God and acquaintances was considered to be a result of sin (cf. Job 13:24; 19:13-22).

It has been observed that the description of the upbringing, appearance and rejection of the servant because of his uncommonly appearance and sickness in Isa 53:2-3 makes use of a number of words and expressions that have been found to be candidates for wisdom vocabulary and expressive of the wisdom tradition and world view. In Isa 53:2, the words **שָׂיָה** and **שָׂרַשׁ** were singled out as possible wisdom words and the motif of comparing human life to plant life was also considered to be associated with wisdom tradition and worldview. With regards to the possible wisdom words used to describe the deplorable appearance of the servant in 53:2aγb were **רָאָה**, **חָדַר**, and **הִדָּר**. As for the description of the rejection of the servant because of his uncomely state, the possible wisdom words were found to be **חָדַל**, **הִשָּׁב**, **הִקְלִי**, **מִכְאוּב**, and possibly the expression **כְּמִסְתֵּר פְּנִים מִמְּנוּ**.

### 7.3.3 Isa 53:4-6

In this section of the text the ‘we’ confess that the servant suffered for and on their behalf (as stated in Chapter 6 at 6.5). The words and expressions used in this confession will be discussed in the following pages. The discussion shall be guided by the versification of the text, beginning with Isa 53:4a.

### 7.3.3.1 Isa 53:4a

The significant phrases in this verse are **וּמְכַאֲבֵינוּ סְבָלָם** and **הָלִינוּ הוּא נָשָׂא**. In the phrase **הָלִינוּ הוּא**, the subject is the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. masc. sg. This is expressed by the pronoun **הוּא** and contained in the form of the verb **נָשָׂא**, 'he carried or bore'. The object is **הָלִינוּ**, which is made up of the noun **הָלִי** 'sickness' and a 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. suf. **נוּ** 'our'.<sup>419</sup> Hence, the translation, 'he carried/bore our sickness'. The expression **נָשָׂא הָלִי** appears only here in the Old Testament. The expression literally means to carry or bear sickness. Through this expression the 'we' confess that the servant carried their **הָלִי**. The meaning and occurrences of the noun **הָלִי** have been outlined above (7.3.2). It was concluded that its occurrence in the wisdom books is marginal that is, 8% but that together with its figurative meaning<sup>420</sup> and use in Qoh 5:16 and 6:2, that captures the nuance of suffering makes this word a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. As in Isa 53:3, **הָלִי** is used together with **מְכַאֲב** 'pain, suffering', at Isa 53:4a. **הָלִי** at Isa 53:4a would then mean the pain and suffering of the group.

The verb **נָשָׂא** occurs 650 times in the Old Testament, in the qal, niphil, piel, hiphil and hithpael conjugations. It appears 18 times in the qal, in Isa 40-55, 7 times in Proverbs, 28 times in Job, and twice in Qoheleth. In the niphil it appears thrice in Isa 40-55 and once in Proverbs. It appears once in the hithpael in Proverbs. It does not appear in the piel and hiphil conjugations in any of the wisdom books (cf. Lisowsky 1993:956-962). In Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth it appears 39 times in total. This constitutes 6% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. This is slightly below the 7.7% mark. On average the root would appear 13 times in each wisdom book, and 17.7 times in each book of the rest of the Old Testament. These occurrences show that the word is not a typical wisdom word. The primary literal meaning of the verb is 'to carry (cf. Prov 9:12; Job 7:13; 10:5; 31:36), to lift (Gen 7:17; Isa 52:13; Job 10:5), to take/ to take away' (Isa

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<sup>419</sup> While it is clear that this 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl. suf., both here and in **מְכַאֲבֵינוּ**, is referring to the 'we', it may also be inclusive of the servant and the many in Isa 52:14-15. However, this is unlikely in the light of the foregoing description of the suffering of the servant by the 'we' in Isa 53:2-3. It is the servant's suffering, expressed in terms of precarious upbringing, dishonour, rejection and sickness, which is the concern of the confession of the 'we'. They have arrived at the conclusion that the servant suffered in their place, instead of them and for them. This is confirmed in Isa 53:4b.

<sup>420</sup> The literal meaning of **הָלִי** that of sickness or illness would be difficult to understand at Isa 53:4a. This is because sickness is a personal experience. One cannot be sick for somebody else or on behalf of somebody else. But one can suffer or be punished on behalf of somebody else, that is, the figurative meaning of **הָלִי**.

41:16; cf. BDB 2000:669-672). The verb נשא is also used figuratively, for example, 'to endure or suffer'.<sup>421</sup> This figurative use of נשא again makes it a candidate for a wisdom word. It appears with this figurative meaning in at least five passages in the wisdom books (Prov 9:12; 18:14; 30:21; Job 21:3; 34:31; Qoh 5:19).<sup>422</sup>

Even if one may say that the nouns נשא and תלי may be considered as wisdom vocabulary using the criteria above, the phrase תלי נשא does not appear in any of the wisdom books. In fact it appears only at Isa 53:4a in the entire Hebrew Old Testament. There is one phrase, however, in Proverbs which may be said to be close to the expression תלי נשא. This is the phrase נשא ענש (Prov 19:19). The phrase is made up of the qal participle active of the verb נשא and the noun ענש. The root ענש appears 11 times as a verb and a noun in the Old Testament. As a verb it appears 9 times, 6 times in the qal and thrice in the niphil conjugations. As a noun it appears only twice (2Kgs 23:33 and Prov 19:19). In the wisdom books its appearance is confined to the book of Proverbs. As a verb it is found twice in the qal in Prov 17:26 and 21:11; and twice in the niphil in Prov 22:3 and 27:12. The total appearances of the root in Proverbs are 5 times. This constitutes 45% of the total occurrences of the root. The literal meaning of the verb is 'to fine' (Exod 21:22; Prov 17:26; 21:11) and to punish (Prov 21:11; 23:3; 27:12; cf. BDB 2000:778-779). The noun means 'a fine' (2Kgs 23:33; Prov 19:19; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:722). The meaning of the saying נשא ענש in Proverbs 19:19 is that 'a hot-tempered' person will pay the penalty or fine or punishment.' This saying is yet another instance of the working out of the teaching of just retribution. The hot-tempered person will receive their due. This is not the idea expressed in the phrase תלינו הוא נשא , and וּמִכְאֲבֵינוּ סָבַלְמִ in Isa 53:4a $\alpha$ . Here it is the innocent servant whom the 'we' confess to have borne their suffering or punishment.

The expression תלינו הוא נשא in Isa 53:4a $\beta$  is a synonymous parallel member of וּמִכְאֲבֵינוּ סָבַלְמִ. It is made up of a conjugation ו 'and', of a noun מְאֹב 'pain/suffering' in the plural form and a 1<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>421</sup>Prov 9:12; 18:14; 30:21; Job 21:3; 34:31; Qoh 5:19.

<sup>422</sup>The figurative meaning is also used in several expressions, for example, נשא פנים 'to show favour or good conscience' (Num 6:26; Prov 18:5; Job 11:15; 13:8, 10; 22:8; 32:21), נשא עין 'to look, to watch' (cf. 2Kgs 19:22; Isa 49:18; Job 2:12), נשא קול 'to shout, sing, weep' (cf. Gen 29:11; Isa 52:8; Job 2:12), נשא עון 'to bear guilt' (cf. Exod 28:43; Lev 5:1, 17; Ezek 14:10), נשא חטא 'to bear the sin' (cf. Lev 20:20; Isa 53:12), נשא חטאת/פֶּשַׁע 'to forgive sin' (cf. Exod 32:32; Job 7:21) and נשא עֵנֶשׁ to pay a fine (cf. Prov 19:19).



pers.pl. suf. נו 'our'. The expression also has the verb סבל, a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. qal conjugation, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. pronominal suf.<sup>423</sup> The occurrences, uses and meanings of מְכָאוֹב have been discussed above (7.3.2) and the conclusion was that from the occurrences of the root in the wisdom corpus constituting 27% and its meaning of pain and suffering makes it a strong candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

Moving on to סבל, the root appears as a verb and noun. It appears 9 times as a verb: 7 times in the qal, once in the pual (Psa 144:14) and once in the hithpael (Qoh 12:5). In Isa 40-55, it appears 5 times in the verbal form.<sup>424</sup> In the wisdom corpus it appears once in the verbal form (Qoh 12:5).<sup>425</sup> As a noun it appears in four forms סָבַל (5 times), סָבַל (3 times) סָבַל (3 times) and סָבַלָה (6 times –exclusively in Exodus –'labour'). None of the noun forms appears in the wisdom corpus. The total occurrences of the root are 26 times and in the wisdom books it occurs once. This constitutes only 3.8%. This does not make the word a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the verb is to bear a load (BDB 2000:687; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:648). As for the noun forms, סָבַל means 'a porter', סָבַל means 'a load or forced service', סָבַל means 'a load' and סָבַלָה means 'labour' (BDB 2000:687; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:648). The phrase סבל מְכָאוֹב appears only here at Isa 53:4aβ. In the light of the discussion above it means to bear the suffering or pain of the 'we'. While מְכָאוֹב is a strong candidate for wisdom vocabulary, סבל is not but is one of Deutero-Isaiah's favourite words. The phrase is therefore Deutero-Isaianic. The author of this text made use of these two words, one from the wisdom repertoire (מְכָאוֹב) and the other (סבל) his favourite to express the confession of the 'we', with regard to their new understanding of the relationship between the precarious upbringing (Isa 53:2a), deplorable appearance (Isa 53:2b), deprecation, rejection and pain of the servant (Isa 53:3), and their new state. This new understanding of the 'we' is confidently expressed by the adversative adverb אֲכֵן

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<sup>423</sup>The pronominal suf. is resumptive, that is, it refers back to מְכָאוֹבֵינוּ. This has the effect of placing emphasis on the מְכָאוֹב 'pain/suffering' of the 'we'.

<sup>424</sup> This constitutes the majority of the verbal appearances, constituting 55.5% of the total. The verb appears again at Isa 53:11 and is used to describe the bearing of the iniquities of the many in the phrase סבל עֲוֹן, see the discussion below.

<sup>425</sup> The verb is found in the context where Qoheleth is describing old age in metaphorical terms. An old person is said to יִסְתַּבֵּל 'drag himself along like a burden'.

‘surely or in fact’,<sup>426</sup> at the beginning of Isa 53:4. The new understanding is also contrasted with the previous attitude to and understanding of the servant’s suffering in Isa 53:4b.

### 7.3.3.2 Isa 53:4b

In Isa 53:4b the ‘we’ confess that they previously thought that the servant’s suffering came from God. They thought of him (הַשְׂבָּיָה) as struck (נִגְוָע), smitten (מִכָּה), and afflicted (מִעֲנָה) by God (אֱלֹהִים). The number of occurrences and the meanings of the root חשב were discussed above and the conclusion drawn was that it is a strong candidate for wisdom vocabulary. However, it is to be noted that in Isa 53:3bβ חשב is used together with a particle of negation (לֹא) to express their negative view, attitude and thoughts concerning the servant’s affliction. Here at Isa 53:4bα it is used without the negative particle to explicitly express why they esteemed him not in Isa 53:3bβ. They thought he was afflicted (נִגְוָע, מִכָּה and מִעֲנָה) by God. The assumption behind this statement or confession is the teaching of just retribution.

נִגְוָע is a qal passive particle from the verb נגע. The root נגע appears as a verb and noun. It appears 150 times as a verb, in the qal, niph'al, piel, pual and hiph'il conjugations. As a noun it appears in the form נִגְוָע 78 times.<sup>427</sup> In Isa 40-55 it appears twice (Isa 52:11 and 53:4) as a verb and once (Isa 53:8) as a noun. In Proverbs it appears once in verbal form (Prov 6:29) and once as a noun (Prov 6:33). In Job it appears 8 times as a verb. In the book of Qoheleth it appears thrice in verbal form (Qoh 8:14[twice]; 12:1; cf. Lisowsky 1993:899-901). The total occurrences in the wisdom books are 13. This constitutes 5.7% of the total occurrences in the Old Testament. If one, however, removes the 58 technical appearances of the noun in Leviticus 13 and 14, the occurrences in the wisdom books will constitute 7.6% of the total occurrences. In both instances the occurrences fall short of the 7.7% threshold. On average the root would appear 4 times in the wisdom books, and 16 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This statistical evidence points to the fact that נגע is not a wisdom word.

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<sup>426</sup> אֱלֹהִים appears 18 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:60). In Isa 40-55 it appears 4 times. In the wisdom books it only appears at Job 32:8 at the beginning of the young Elihu’s speech. In all its appearances and uses אֱלֹהִים expresses strong contrast (cf. BDB 2000:38).

<sup>427</sup> It is noteworthy that 58 times out of the 78 times of the occurrences of the noun נִגְוָע are found in Lev 13 and 14 with reference to marks on the skin (skin disease), garments, materials and buildings.

The literal meaning of the verb is ‘to touch, reach and strike’ (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:593; BDB 2000:619). The verb is also used figuratively. It is used in legal contexts to refer to the abuse of the rights of others (cf. Jos 9:19). It is also used for an affliction with pain or disease with God as subject and usually persons as objects (2Kgs 15:5; Isa 53:4; Job 19:21; Psa 73:5, 14; cf. Schwienhorst 1998:205-207). In the two occurrences in Qoh 8:14, in the hiphil, it has the meaning ‘to treat as’ (Schwienhorst 1998:207). The noun **נגע** has three basic meanings and uses: affliction at the hands of God (Psa 38:12; 39:11; Isa 53:8); technical term for skin disease (Lev 13-14) and; a technical term for harm inflicted on the body (Deut 17:8; cf. Schwienhorst 1998:207-209). In Isa 53:4b $\alpha$  the verb is used to refer to an affliction or disease caused by God. This is confirmed by the words **מָכָה** (smitten) and **מַעֲנֶה** (afflicted) that are used together with **נגע**. This is also the meaning and use of the verb in Job 2:5; 19:21; Psa 73:5, 14. In Psa 73 the Psalmist complains that the wicked are not afflicted (**יִגְעוּ**) like other people (Psa 73:5) but s/he is afflicted (**נִגְעוּ**) all day long (Psa 73:14). Psa 73 is considered a wisdom Psalm mainly because of its content that deals with the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (Kselman & Barré 1997:538). The noun is also used in this sense in Isa 53:8 and Psa 39:11. In Psa 39:11 the Psalmist pleads with God to remove his **נגע** ‘stroke’ from him. It has already been argued above that though Psa 39 is a Psalm of lament it has many wisdom motifs (cf. Kselman & Barré 1997:532). Thus, while the root does not appear to be a typical wisdom word in the light of occurrences and its meaning, it is used a number of times in Job, Psa 39 and Psa 73 to refer to the affliction caused by God as in Isa 53:4b and Isa 53:8.

**מָכָה** is a hophal participle from the root **נכה**. This root appears 552 times as a verb, a noun and adjective in the Old Testament. As a verb it appears 504 times, once in the niphal, twice in the pual, 16 times in the hophal and the remainder (485 times) in the hiphil. As a noun it appears 44 times in the form **מָכָה** (cf. Prov 20:30). As an adjective it appears thrice as **נָכָה** ‘smitten’ (2Sam 4:4; 9:3; Isa 66:2) and once as **נִכָּה** ‘smitten’ (Psa 35:15). The noun **מָכָה** appears once in Proverbs. It is not found in Job, Qoheleth or in Isa 40-55. The adjectival form also does not appear in Isa 40-55, Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth. The verbal form appears 15 times in Isa 40-55, 6 times in

Proverbs<sup>428</sup>, 4 times in Job.<sup>429</sup> Its verbal and nominal appearances in the wisdom books are 11 times. This constitutes 2% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. On average it would appear 3 times in each wisdom book and 15 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. According to the number of these occurrences, therefore, the root נכה is not a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The root is mainly used in the Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic history, and the books of Chronicles. Its meaning in the hiphil conjugation is ‘to strike, to smite’, and ‘to be struck, smitten’ in the niphil, pual and hophal conjugations (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:615-616; BDB 2000:645-646). In the majority of cases the verb is used with humans as subjects. There are, however, several passages in which God is the subject of the verb (Num 32:4; Mal 3:24; Isa 53:4b). In these few passages where God is the subject one finds an individual as the object of the verb as is the case in Isa 53:4b (cf. 2Sam 6:7; Psa 69:27). In the few occurrences in the wisdom books, the verb is not used with God as subject and an individual as object as we find in Isa 53:4b. It is however, used with Satan as the subject and Job as the object in Job 2:7, where Satan is said to have נכה ‘smitten’ Job with sores. Thus, the root נכה does not present itself as wisdom vocabulary. It is still significant to note that נכה in the few occurrences it is found in Proverbs and Job, it is used to describe punishment (Prov 17:10, 26), reproof of scorners (Prov 19:25), discipline of children (Prov 23:13, 14), Satan smitting Job with sores (Job 2:7) and Job being struck by his enemies (Job 16:10).

קִעָנָה is a pual participle from the verb ענה (III). This verbal root has four basic meanings. The first is ‘to answer or respond’. The second is ‘to be occupied with or to worry’.<sup>430</sup> The third root meaning is ‘to be bowed down, humbled or afflicted’. The fourth and final root meaning is ‘to sing’ (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:718-720;<sup>431</sup> BDB 2000:772-773, 775-777). In the light of the context of Isa 53:4b, the discussion of this root will be limited to the third root meaning of

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<sup>428</sup> In the sayings of Proverbs it is used for punishment (Prov 17:10, 26), for reproof of scorners (Prov 19:25), discipline of a child (Prov 23:13, 14) and the effects of intoxication with wine (Prov 23:35).

<sup>429</sup> In Job it is used to describe how his servants were struck to death (Job 1:15, 17), how Satan smote Job with sores (Job 2:7) and how Jobs enemies struck him on his cheeks (Job 16:10).

<sup>430</sup> This second root meaning is confined to the book of Qoheleth (cf. Qoh 1:13; 3:10).

<sup>431</sup> In this dictionary ענה (II) is listed as ‘to be humbled, afflicted’ and ענה (III) as ‘to be occupied with, worry’.

ענה (III), that is, ‘to be bowed down, humbled, oppressed, afflicted’.<sup>432</sup> The verbal root appears 75 times with this meaning in the qal, niphil, piel, pual, hiphil and hithpael conjugations (Lisowsky 1993:1097-1098). In Isa 40-55 it occurs twice in this text only (Isa 53:4b and 53:7a). It is found twice in Job (Job 30:11 and Job 37:23)<sup>433</sup> and it is not found anywhere in Proverbs or Qoheleth or wisdom Psalms with this meaning. The occurrences of the verb ענה (III), in the wisdom corpus constitutes 2.7% of the total occurrences. On average it would appear 0.67 times in each of the wisdom books, and 24 times in each of the books of the rest of the Old Testament. The number of occurrences show that ענה (III) is not a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. Though the meaning of ענה (III), expresses suffering, it is only used twice in Job. Therefore, just like נגע and נכה, ענה (III) cannot be counted among wisdom vocabulary.

In all the three passive verbal forms of Isa 53:4b God is thought to have been the agent or source of the affliction suffered by the servant. The name used for God in this verse is אֱלֹהִים. The word appears 2603 times (Shoshan 1997:69-74). It appears 22 times in Isa 40-55, 4 times in Proverbs, 18 times in Job, and 41 times in Qoheleth.<sup>434</sup> The occurrences of the noun אֱלֹהִים constitute 2.4% of the total occurrences in the Old Testament. On average it would appear 21 times in each of the wisdom books and 70 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. There is also the noun אֱלֹהִים. This noun is mainly found in poetic texts, notably the book of Job and some ancient poems (cf. Deut 32:15, 17; Psa 18:32; cf. BDB 2000:43).<sup>435</sup> אֱלֹהִים is thought to be a singular form derived from אֱלֹהִים (BDB 2000:43). אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים are used for gods in general (Exod 12:12; Isa 41:23; 45:21), and also for Israel’s God<sup>436</sup>.

While אֱלֹהִים appears several times in Isa 40-55 in various forms and qualifications referring to Israel’s God, it appears only here in Isa 40-55 without any qualification as the name of Israel’s

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<sup>432</sup> This meaning is congruent with the meaning of the other three verbal roots used in this bicola, that is, נכה ‘struck’ and נגע ‘afflicted’, as discussed above.

<sup>433</sup> In Job 30:11, Job complains that God has loosed his bowstring and humbled or afflicted him. In Job 37:23 Elihu speaks of the power and greatness of God and claims that God does not יַעֲנֶה ‘violate/oppress’ righteousness.

<sup>434</sup> It also appears 4x in the wisdom Psalms (Psa 37:31; 49:8; 73:28; 119:115).

<sup>435</sup> The noun אֱלֹהִים appears 57 times in the Old Testament. It appears once in Isa 40-55. It appears in Proverbs once and it appears 41 times in Job. The occurrences of אֱלֹהִים in the wisdom books of Proverbs and Job constitutes 74% of its total occurrences in the Old Testament.

<sup>436</sup>cf. Exod 5:1; Isa 41:17; 45:18; Jer 10:10; Job 5:8; Prov 2:5, 3:4; 25:2; Qoh 2:; 3:13; 5:18; 8:2. In some contexts maybe interpreted as referring to rulers or judges (cf. Exod 21:6; 22:8, 27) or even superhuman beings (cf. Psa 82:1, 6; cf. DBD 2000:43).

God. Elsewhere in Isa 40-55 it is used without qualification generally for gods (cf. Isa 41:23; 44:6; 45:5, 14, 21; 46:9). The idea of אֱלֹהִים and/or אֱלֹהִים condemning and punishing is central to the drama and disputation in the book of Job (Job 3:23; 6:9; 9:13; 10:2; 19:21; 27:8). For example, in Job 19:21b, there is the expression יַד־אֱלֹהִים נִגְעָה בִּי 'the hand of the God has struck me'.

In Isa 53:4b the idea of God punishing is expressed so strongly with the unique combination of the three verbs נִגְוַע, מָכָה and מְעַנֶּה as to suggest a new understanding. The new understanding is that the 'we' are now convinced beyond doubt, as expressed by the adverb אֲכֵן 'surely or in fact', that the servant carried what they are calling 'our' sickness (הַחֲלִינֵנוּ) and 'our' wounds 'מִכָּאֲבֵינוּ'. What could this part of the text possibly mean? Does the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. suf. 'נו' refer to the wounds and sickness caused by the 'we' and the audience?<sup>437</sup> Does it refer to the sickness and wounds that they were also enduring (shared suffering)? Does it refer to the wounds and sickness the 'we' were supposed to endure but the servant endured it in their place (substitutionary suffering)?

In the light of their description of his deplorable upbringing, unattractive appearance, sickness and their deprecation of him in Isa 53:2-3, it is unlikely that this is the sickness caused by the 'we' nor that the 'we' were sharing in this suffering. This is confirmed by their confession of what they previously thought was the cause of the servant's suffering in Isa 53:4b. They previously thought that he was afflicted and wounded by God. The context would then favour the interpretation that the 'we' confessed that the servant suffered in place of them, that is substitutionary suffering. This would be a completely new affirmation and understanding, no wonder why in Isa 53:1 the 'we' ask those two rhetorical questions; 'who has believed what we have heard, to whom has the hand of the LORD revealed? Besides the effect of the rhetorical questions, these questions also express the source of this new understanding, a revelation from God (cf. Isa 53:1b). This new understanding would then make Orlinsky's argument that this understanding is incongruent with the Old Testament teaching irrelevant (cf. Orlinsky 1967). The affirmation is new and unique. Out of the 12 words used to express this new understanding, three of them, חֲלִי מְכָאוֹב, חֲשָׁב, and חֲשָׁב have been shown to be possible wisdom words. The figurative meaning of נִשָּׂא was also considered to be sapiential. It was also observed that there is an

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<sup>437</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> pronoun pl. suf. could also include the audience hearing the confession of the 'we'.

underlying assumption or understanding of the teaching of just of retribution. This becomes clear in Isa 53:5.

### 7.3.3.3 Isa 53:5a

In Isa 53:5 the 'we' go further by confessing that the servant suffered because of their *פְּשָׁע* 'transgression' and *עֲוֹן* 'iniquity, guilt', on the one hand, and that this suffering brought about their *שְׁלוֹם* 'well-being' and *נְרָפָא* 'healing', on the other. Therefore, the 'we' confess that the suffering of the servant was not only in place of them, that is, substitutionary (cf. Isa 53:4), but that the suffering was also for their benefit or well-being. This is what has been called vicarious suffering above, that is suffering in place of and for the benefit of another. The expressions used by the 'we' to confess and proclaim this are: *חָלַל מִפְּשָׁע* in Isa 53:5a and; *מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹם* and *רָפָא חֲבוּרָה* in Isa 53:5b.

The phrase *חָלַל מִפְּשָׁע* appears only here in the Old Testament. The MT has *מְחַלֵּל*, a polal/poal participle from the verb *חָלַל*. The root appears 141 times in verbal form in the Old Testament with three basic meanings: (a) to pollute, defile or profane; (b) to begin; (c) to bore or pierce, and; (d) to play the pipe (Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:302-303; cf. BDB 2000:319-320). *חָלַל* (I) 'to pollute, defile or profane' appears 79 times. In Isa 40-55 it appears thrice (Isa 43:28; 47:6; 48:11). It does not appear in any of the wisdom books with this meaning. *חָלַל* (II) 'to begin' appears 54 times. It does not appear in Isa 40-55 or in any of the wisdom books. *חָלַל* (III) 'to bore or pierce' appears 7 times. It appears twice in Isa 40-55 (Isa 51:9 and 53:5),<sup>438</sup> and once in Job (Job 26:13) with this meaning.<sup>439</sup> This verb is clearly not a wisdom word.

The prepositional phrase *מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ* is made up of the preposition *מִן* which has been interpreted (see Chapter 6 – 6.3.2) in a causal sense 'because, on account of' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:536; BDB 2000:833).<sup>440</sup> The phrase also has the 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl.suf. *נוּ* 'our' and the noun *פְּשָׁע*. The root *פָּשַׁע* appears 133 times in verbal and nominal forms. As a verb it appears 40

<sup>438</sup> In the light of the immediate context and the parallel term *מְדַכָּא* 'crushed', 'to pierce' is the preferred meaning of *חָלַל* in Isa 53:5a.

<sup>439</sup> In both Isa 51:9 and Job 26:13 the verb is used to describe the piercing of the ancient dragon.

<sup>440</sup> The causal sense of *מִן* has already been interpreted as expressing vicariousness (Hermisson 2004:25). The contrary proposal of Orlinsky (1965:57-58) and Whybray (1978:61-62) 'as a result of' was also discussed in Chapter 6 – 6.3.2.

times, 39 times in the qal and once (Prov 18:19) in the niph'al conjugations. In Isa 40-55 it occurs 5 times as a verb. In Proverbs the verbal form occurs twice (Prov 18:19; 28:21) and in Psa 37:38, a wisdom Psalm, it occurs once. As a noun it appears 93 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55 the nominal form occurs 4 times. In Proverbs it occurs 12 times and in Job 10 times. The occurrences of the root in the wisdom books are 24. This constitutes 18% of the total. On average it would appear 8 times in each of the wisdom books and thrice in each of the rest of the Old Testament books. This suggests that the noun פָּשַׁע should be considered a wisdom word according to the criteria above. The literal meaning of the root פָּשַׁע is 'to rebel, transgress' (cf. Job 34:37; Prov 10:19; 17:19; 29:16; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:785; BDB 2000:833). This may refer to the rebellion of nations (1Kgs 12:19) or transgression against God (Isa 43:27; 46:8; Job 35:6) or against a person (cf. Prov 18:19). It is one of the roots used to express the teaching of just retribution (cf. Prov 10:12; 12:13; 28:13; 29:6; Job 8:4).<sup>441</sup> The expression מְחַלֵּל מִפְּשָׁעוֹ is made up of a root פָּשַׁע often used in the wisdom corpus and another חָלַל that is not. This also has the effect of underscoring the uniqueness of the new idea.

The expression מְחַלֵּל מִפְּשָׁעוֹ is used in parallel with the expression מְעֹנְתֵינוּ. This expression does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament. מְדַכָּא is a pual participle from the verb דָּכָא. The root דָּכָא appears 21 times: 18 times as a verb and thrice as the noun דָּכָא. As a verb it appears in the niph'al, piel, pual and hithpael conjugations. In Isa 40-55 it appears twice, here, at Isa 53:5a $\alpha$  and at Isa 53:10a $\alpha$ , in the pual and piel conjugations respectively (cf. Lisowsky 1993:361; Even-Shoshan 1997:264). It is, therefore, not a typical Deutero-Isaianic word. It appears once in Proverbs (Prov 22:22) and 6 times in the book of Job.<sup>442</sup> The verbal occurrences in the books of Proverbs and Job constitute 33% of the total occurrences of the root.<sup>443</sup> This would make the root דָּכָא especially its verbal forms part of wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the verb is 'to oppress' (cf. Prov 22:22), 'to crush' (cf. Job 4:19; 6:9; 22:9), and in the pual conjugation it also carries the meaning 'to be humbled, or to be contrite' (cf. Isa 19:10; Jer

<sup>441</sup> In Job 35:6 Elihu asks rhetorical questions to the effect that what does פָּשַׁע do to God (cf. Job 7:20).

<sup>442</sup> Job 4:19; 5:4; 6:9; 19:2; 22:9 and 34:25. In two occurrences of the verb in Job (Job 4:19 and 6:9) the agent of the action described by the verb is God as in Isa 53:5a $\beta$  and 53:10a $\alpha$ .

<sup>443</sup> The noun דָּכָא is not used in any of the wisdom books.



44:10; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:209; BDB 2000:193-194).<sup>444</sup> In Proverbs דכא is used to prohibit the crushing of the poor at the gate (Prov 22:22). In Job it is used to describe: the fragility of human beings, made of clay (Job 4:19); the fate of the children of fools at the gate (Job 5:4); Job's claim that God takes pleasure in crushing him (Job 6:9); Job's complain to his friends who are 'crushing' him with their words (Job 19:2); Eliphaz's accusation of Job for crushing the arms of orphans (Job 22:9) and; Elihu's claim that the wicked and powerful will be crushed (Job 34:25).

Just as the 'we' confess that the servant was pierced because of their transgressions (מִפְשָׁעֵינוּ), they reinforce the confession with the parallel phrase מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ. Like its parallel member מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ is a prepositional phrase made up of the preposition מִן and a 1<sup>st</sup> pers.pl.suf. נו 'our' and the noun עֲוֹן in the plural. Like its parallel member, the preposition מִן is understood in the causal sense 'because of'. The noun עֲוֹן appears 229 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:842-843). It appears 6 times in Isa 40-55.<sup>445</sup> It appears twice in Proverbs (Prov 5:22; 16:6) and 15 times in Job.<sup>446</sup> It does not appear anywhere in the book of Qoheleth. Its occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 7.4% of the total occurrence of the verb. On the other hand, on average it would occur 5.6 times in the wisdom books and 5.9 times in each of the rest of the other books of the Old Testament. This does not make the noun עֲוֹן a candidate for wisdom vocabulary in the light of the criteria above. Its appearances in the book of Job remain significant, all the same.

It is used in Job with the three basic meanings associated with the noun. The noun עֲוֹן has three basic but related meanings. These are: transgression or sin (Prov 5:22; Job 10:6; Isa 53:5);<sup>447</sup> guilt caused by sin (Num 14:19; Job 11:6)<sup>448</sup> and; punishment for guilt (Isa 40:2; Job 19:29; 31:11).<sup>449</sup> In the light of the parallel member פֶּשַׁע 'transgression, sin', the appropriate meaning for מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ in Isa 53:5aβ is 'because of our sins'. Therefore, in Isa53:5a, out of the five words used, two, פֶּשַׁע and דכא, are possible wisdom words.

<sup>444</sup>The meaning of מִדְכָא 'crushed' has an effect on the meaning of its parallel member מְחַלֵּל that, as pointed out above, has three meanings but in the light of מִדְכָא 'crushed', 'pierced' for מְחַלֵּל makes better sense.

<sup>445</sup> Isa 40:2; 43:24; 50:1; 53:5, 6, 11.

<sup>446</sup> Job 7:21; 10:6, 14; 11:6; 13:23, 26; 14:17; 15:5; 19:29; 20:27; 22:5; 31:11, 28, 33; 33:9.

<sup>447</sup> It appears 55 times with this meaning (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:689). It is used in parallel with the words for sin and transgression like פֶּשַׁר (Prov 7:21; Isa 53:5) and הַטָּאת (Prov 5:22; Job 10:6; 13:23).

<sup>448</sup> It appears 159 times with this meaning (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:689).

<sup>449</sup> It appears at least 7 times with this meaning (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:689).

#### 7.3.3.4 Isa 53:5b

In Isa 53:5a the 'we' confess that the servant suffered because of their transgressions and their sins. In Isa 53:5b they move on to confess the benefits they received from this suffering in the expressions מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹם and בְּהִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ . The expression מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹם is a construct expression. The noun מוֹסֵר is in the construct state and is the governing noun (*nomen regens*) and שְׁלוֹם is the *nomen rectum*. The construction expresses the idea of belonging (cf. Jouon 2000:275-276 § 92). While there are a number of phrases with this noun in the construct state used to express various ideas,<sup>450</sup> the phrase מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹם appears only here in the Old Testament. In its turn the noun מוֹסֵר appears 50 times in the Old Testament. In Isa 40-55 it appears once at Isa 53:5b. This means it is not part of Deutero-Isaianic repertoire. It appears 30 times in Proverbs and 5 times in Job. It does not appear in the book of Qoheleth. Its appearances in Proverbs and Job constitute 70% of the total appearances. On average the noun would appear 11 times in each of the wisdom books, and 0.69 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This is a typical wisdom word used frequently in the sayings in the book of Proverbs. The noun can mean either of the following: punishment/chastisement (Prov 13:24; 23:13); discipline (Prov 1:2; 5:12; 6:23) and; instruction (Prov 1:8; 8:33; Job 36:10).<sup>451</sup> Punishment or chastisement makes better sense in Isa 53:5b, in the light of the context and the parallel member תְּבוּרָה 'wound'. This would be chastisement by God (cf. Isa 53:6; Prov 3:11; Job 5:17).

The word שְׁלוֹם is a noun that appears 237 times in the Old Testament (Even-Shoshan 1997:1146-1148). In Isa 40-55 it appears 8 times. It appears thrice in Proverbs, 4 times in Job and once in Qoheleth. Its appearances in the wisdom books constitute 3.4% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. שְׁלוֹם is, therefore, not a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The noun means peace (Isa 32:17), well-being (Job 5:24), prosperity (Isa 48:18) and even salvation (Isa 54:10).<sup>452</sup> While it is used in some passages to talk about prosperity, it is not used in wisdom

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<sup>450</sup> These include: מוֹסֵר אֵב (Prov 1:8; 4:1; 13:1; 15:5); מוֹסֵר יְהוָה (Deut 11:2; Prov 3:11) and; מוֹסֵר אָוִיל (Prov 7:22; 16:22).

<sup>451</sup> cf Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:503; BDB 2000:416. In Proverbs it appears with the meaning of punishment, discipline or correction, in the construct state, referring to the punishment, disciple or correction of either of the wise/wisdom (1:3; 15:33) or parent(s) (1:8; 4:1; 15:5) or God (3:11) or in the absolute state (5:12, 23; 6:23; 8:33, 10:17; 12:1; 13:18 24; 15:10, 32; 19:20, 27; 22:15; 23:13; 24:32). More explanation on this phrase is given above in Chapter 6 at 6.3.2.

<sup>452</sup>cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:973-974; BDB 2000:1022-1023.

literature and tradition to describe prosperity associated with wisdom or righteous living.<sup>453</sup> In the light of the parallel member in Isa 53:5b $\beta$  that speaks of healing, well-being would be the appropriate meaning of שְׁלוֹם in Isa 53:5b $\alpha$ . Thus, the expression מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ is made up of a typical wisdom word מוֹסֵר and another שְׁלוֹם that is rarely found in wisdom literature. The expression means ‘the punishment for our well-being’.<sup>454</sup> This is echoed in Isa 53:5b $\beta$  in the phrase בְּחַבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ.

The expression בְּחַבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ is made up of a prepositional phrase בְּחַבְרָתוֹ with a preposition בְּ, a noun חַבְרָה and a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.sg.suf. ו. It also has a verb רָפָא in the niphal and a preposition לְ with a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. pronominal suf. נו. In the prepositional phrase בְּחַבְרָתוֹ the preposition בְּ may be interpreted as *beth* of price (*beth pretii*) or a *beth* of instrument (*beth instrumenti*), or a causal *beth* as in the מִן in the previous cola (cf. GKC 1910 §119 l-q). The last option makes more sense within the context. Therefore, ‘because of his wounds we are healed’. The verb in the niphal נִרְפָּא has been interpreted as an impersonal passive (see 6.3.2; cf. Jouon 2000:468 §128ba).

The noun חַבְרָה appears 7 times in the Old Testament (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:343). It is not a common word in the Old Testament. Its distribution is as follows: thrice in the Pentateuch (Gen 4:23 and Exod 21:25 [twice]); twice in Prophetic literature (Isa 1:6 and 53:5); once in the Psalms (Psa 38:6) and once in wisdom literature (Prov 20:30). Its singular occurrence in Proverbs constitutes 14.3% of the total occurrences of the noun. This would make it a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. The meaning of the noun is wound or stripe/bruise. The noun is often used in parallel with words of similar meaning like מָכָה ‘blow’ and פָּצַע ‘wound’ (Gen 4:23; Isa 1:6; Prov 20:30; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:270; BDB 2000:289). Prov 20:30 is worth quoting since this saying expresses the idea related to what is in Isa 53:5b $\beta$ , even though different phrases are used:

רַחֲבֵרוֹת פָּצַע תִּמְרִיק בְּרַע וּמְכוֹת חַדְרֵי־בָטָן:

‘Blows that wound cleanse away evil;

<sup>453</sup>There is a saying, however, in Prov 6:31 in which the verbal form appears in the piel (יִשְׁלַם) with the meaning ‘to make good, to pay a debt’. A thief caught stealing is said to pay (יִשְׁלַם) sevenfold ( Prov. 6:30-31). For what it is worth, one may also mention, the claim that God is the one who makes peace (שְׁלוֹם) in the heavens, found in Bildad response to Job in Job 25:6.

<sup>454</sup> The construct state has been interpreted as a genitive of purpose (cf. GKC 1910:417 § 128q).

beatings make clean the innermost parts.’ (cf. NRSV).

In this saying, blows *תְּבָרוֹת* and beatings *מַכּוֹת* are said to bring about cleansing. In Isa 53:5b the blows received by the servant bring about *נִרְפָּא* ‘healing’.

The verb *נִרְפָּא* is the niphāl *qatal* form of *רפא*. This verb appears 67 times in the Old Testament (cf. Shoshan 1997:1089). It appears once in Isa 40-55 (Isa 53:5b). This means it is not a common word in this book. It appears twice in Job (Job 5:18;<sup>455</sup> 13:4) and once in Qoheleth (Qoh 3:3). Its appearances in the wisdom books constitute 4.7% of the total. On average it would appear once in each wisdom book and 1.7 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. The literal meaning of the word is ‘to heal, restore’, that is, physical healing and restoration (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:903; BDB 2000:950-951). It is also used figuratively for salvation. In Jer 17:14 *רפא* is used in parallel with *ישע* ‘to save’. In Jer 51:8-9, it may refer figuratively to the forgiveness of Babylon (cf. BDB 2000:951). Neither the number of occurrences nor its meaning make *רפא* a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

In Isa 53:5b the ‘we’ add a new nuance to their confession. Here they confess the benefits they have acquired from the suffering of the servant. By his suffering the servant has won for the ‘we’ well-being and prosperity (*שְׁלוֹם*). He has gained for the ‘we’ restoration or salvation (*רפא*). The servant did not only suffer in their place (substitutionary suffering; cf. Isa 53:4-5a) but also for their benefit (meritorious suffering; cf. Isa 53:5b). Suffering in place of and for the benefit of others is vicarious suffering. This is an understanding that is at once based on the teaching of just retribution, and that goes beyond it. As it has already been noted (see Chapter 5 – 5.2.1), according to this teaching the cause of suffering is sin. This understanding is the background on which the idea of suffering for others is based and from which it is developed.

In wisdom literature and tradition’s grappling with the problem of the suffering of the innocent, there was a sense that something good comes out of the suffering of the innocent. Thus suffering of the innocent was considered to be disciplinary, a testing and purification. The idea of the servant’s suffering being considered, a suffering in place of ‘us’ and for the benefit of ‘us’ by the ‘we’, could be said to emanate from wisdom literature and tradition’s relentless but also contentious (cf. Job and Qoheleth’s position) search for the good and benefits of the

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<sup>455</sup> In Job 5:18 Eliphaz declares that God may wound (*כָּאַב*) but his hands heal (*רפא*).

suffering of the innocent. According to the reflection and confession of the 'we', the innocent do not suffer 'senselessly' or for no reason. They suffer because of sin, in line with the teaching of just retribution. The sin, however, is the sin of others, an idea that is not foreign to the teaching of just retribution (cf. Exod 34:6-7; Num 14:18-19), but that is critiqued (Deut 24:16) and revised and 'individualized' (Ezek 14:12-23; 18:1-4 and 33:10-20). Furthermore, they do not suffer in vain. They suffer for the well-being of others. The suffering of the innocent is both substitutionary and meritorious.<sup>456</sup> It is a suffering in place of others and for their well-being, that is, vicarious suffering.

In the exposition and description of the contents of the book of Job, it was proposed that the book of Job does not discard nor do away with the teaching of just retribution. Besides proffering other reasons for the suffering of the innocent, the book proposes that the teaching of just retribution does not apply in every case of suffering and loss. In the speech of God, the rhetorical questions that God addresses to Job (Job 38-41), and the praise that God bestows on Job at the end (Job 42:7-8), do not respond to the questions raised by Job in the dialogue, nor address the question of the suffering of the innocent directly. The rhetorical questions of God imply that the answer to the question of the suffering of the innocent remains a prerogative of God. It forms part of what wisdom literature calls the fear of the LORD.

This prerogative is expressed not only in Isa 53:1 but also in Isa 53:6b; 53:10a $\alpha$  and 53:11-12, as will be shown below. In Isa 53:1 what the 'we' confess is said to be a revelation from God. It is not stated whether this was direct revelation or indirect revelation (experience). All the same, while wisdom literature and tradition does not show much reliance on direct or immediate revelation as in the case of prophetic literature and tradition, it refers to it in places (Job 4:12-21; cf. Schellenber 2015:126). The new understanding confessed by the 'we' emanates from God. It is God who is said to have laid the punishment of the guilt of the 'we' on the servant (Isa 53:6b). It is God who wills and is 'responsible' for the suffering of the servant (Isa 53:10a $\alpha$ ). Ultimately, it is God who offers the servant's suffering as a means for making many righteous (Isa 53:11-12; cf. Isa 53:5b).

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<sup>456</sup> Meritorious here means having benefit for the sufferer and others.

### 7.3.3.5 Isa 53:6a

Isa 53:4-6 ends in v. 6 with the 'we' confessing that each had gone astray and that God laid the punishment of their guilt on the servant. The main phrases that are used to express this are: תעה (53:6a $\alpha$ ); פנה איש לדרכו (53:6a $\beta$ ) and; פגע יהנה עון (53:6b). The phrase תעה כצאן is made up of a verb תעה and a prepositional phrase כצאן. This expression appears in Psa 119:176, with וּשָׁה instead of צאן. וּשָׁה is used as a synonym or unit of צאן (Exod 21:37). It is also used in the following verse in Isa 53:7a $\alpha$ . Psa 119 is the longest Psalm that contains several wisdom motifs (cf. Psa 119:98-100) and is acrostic in form. Some consider it a wisdom Psalm (cf. Kselman & Barré 1999:547). The Psalm concludes with verse 176, in which the Psalmist petitions God to look for him for s/he has gone astray like a lost sheep (תַּעֲיִתִי כְּשֹׂה אֶבֶד).<sup>457</sup>

The verb תעה appears 50 times in the qal, niphil and hiphil conjugations. It appears twice in Isa 40-55 (Isa 47:15; 53:6). It appears in Proverbs 5 times<sup>458</sup> and in Job 4 times.<sup>459</sup> It is not found in the book of Qoheleth. Its appearances in the wisdom corpus constitute 18%. On average it would appear 3 times in each wisdom book and once in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This would make תעה a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. The verb literally means to be wrong about something, that is to err (Prov 14:22), to loose one's way that is, to go astray (Exod 23:4; Psa 119:176) and to stagger (Isa 28:7).<sup>460</sup> It is used figuratively in an ethical sense to talk about straying from the path of life by refusing to take heed of instruction (Prov 10:17; cf. Prov 12:26; 21:16; Psa 119:110) and by planning evil (Prov 14:22). This figurative meaning is confirmed by the parallel expression איש לדרכו פנינו in Isa 53:6a $\beta$ .<sup>461</sup>

The verb פנה appears 135 times and in the qal, piel, hiphil and hophal conjugations. It appears 4 times in Isa 40-55, once in Proverbs (Prov 17:8), 5 times in Job and twice in Qoheleth. Its appearances in the wisdom corpus constitute 5.9%. On average it would appear twice in each

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<sup>457</sup>There is a saying in Prov 21:16 that has the expression תעה מדרך 'to stray from the way' as well as a prayer in Isa 63:17 with תעה מדרך יהנה. In Jer 50:6 there is also the idea of shepherds (רועים) leading sheep (צאן) astray (תעה).

<sup>458</sup> Prov 7:25; 10:17; 12:26; 14:11; 21:16

<sup>459</sup> Job 12:24, 25; 15:31; 38:41.

<sup>460</sup> cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:1035; BDB 2000:1073).

<sup>461</sup> The expression פנה לדרך also appears in Isa 56:11. Isa 56:11 talks about the insatiable greed of the leaders (shepherds). They do not know how to discern (לא ידעו הבין). Here we find wisdom terms ידע and בין.

of the wisdom books and thrice in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. Therefore, it does not meet the criteria for wisdom vocabulary.

The noun דָּרַךְ appears 706 times (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:272-276). In Isa 40-55 it appears 18 times. It appears 74 times in Proverbs, 32 times in Job and 4 times in Qoheleth. Its appearances in the wisdom books constitute 15.6% of the total occurrences in the Old Testament. On average it would appear 36 times in each of the wisdom books and 16 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This would make דָּרַךְ qualify as a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of דָּרַךְ is 'a way, a road or path'. From this literal meaning emerged various figurative uses of the word. These uses include: journey (Num 9:10; Isa 43:16; Job 12:24; Prov 7:8; Qoh 10:3), behaviour or manner of life (Isa 55:7; Psa 1:1; Prov 2:12, 6:6; Job 17:19) and God's deeds (Job 21:31;26:14; Prov 8:22).<sup>462</sup> In wisdom literature דָּרַךְ is often used in the figurative sense for behaviour and manner of life. The context of Isa 53:6 is such that one has to interpret דָּרַךְ figuratively.

Through the two expressions in Isa 53:6a the 'we' speak figuratively of their wayward behaviour. Of the six words used to express this, two, תעה and דָּרַךְ are possible wisdom words. In Isa 53:6a $\alpha$  they use the metaphor of sheep going astray. This is a metaphor drawn from the practice of shepherding, where the sheep follow the shepherd who leads them (cf. Psa 23:1-3; cf. Jer 50:6). The phrase תעה כצאן is similar to the phrase תַעֲיִתִי כְשֶׁה אֶבֶד found in Psa 119:176, a Psalm with wisdom motifs. In Isa 53:6a $\alpha$  the 'we' confess that they had not followed the shepherd. They had gone astray. They reinforce this with the parallel expression in Isa 53:6a $\beta$ , that each had gone on their own way. This is a figurative way of saying that each had sinned. They had not followed the shepherd, so to speak. This is confirmed by what follows in Isa 53:6b, where they claim that God laid upon him, that is, the servant, the punishment of their sins.

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<sup>462</sup> See Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:219; BDB 2000:202-204.

### 7.3.3.6 Isa 53:6b

The 'we' go on to say "and the LORD laid upon him, (וַיִּהְיֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ), the punishment for the sin<sup>463</sup> of all of us" (אֵת עֲוֹן כָּלֵנוּ). The expression פגע ב , appears several times in the Old Testament.<sup>464</sup> However, it is only in Isa 53:6b $\alpha$  that the expression is used with God as the subject. In the wisdom corpus it is found once in Job 21:15. Therefore, the expression is not a typical wisdom expression. The root פגע appears 49 times both as a verb and a noun. As a noun it appears as פְּגַע twice (1Kgs 5:18 and Qoh 9:11),<sup>465</sup> and once as מִפְּגָע 'target' in Job 7:20. As a verb it appears in the qal and hiphil conjugations 46 times. In Isa 40-55 it occurs thrice, twice in the hiphil (Isa 53:6, 12) and once in the qal (Isa 47:3). In the wisdom corpus it appears twice in the book of Job, once in the qal (Job 21:15) and once in the hiphil (Job 36:32).<sup>466</sup> The appearances of the root in Job and Qoheleth constitute 8.2% of the total. On average it would appear once in each of the wisdom books and 1.3 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This makes the root a possible candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the root פגע is 'to meet or encounter' (Jos 2:16; 1Kgs 2:25), 'to light upon or reach a place' (Amos 5:19; Isa 53:6) and 'to strike or touch' (Jos 19:11; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:751; BDB 2000:803). It also has a figurative meaning of entreating, in the qal (cf. Jer 7:16; Job 21:15) as well as in the hiphil conjugations (cf. Jer 36:25; Isa 53:12). In Isa 53 it is found twice with two different meanings, 'to lay upon' (Isa 53:6b $\alpha$ ) and to intercede on behalf of', that is, entreaty (Isa 53:12a $\delta$ ).<sup>467</sup> Both the literal and figurative meanings of the root פגע do not express ideas associated with wisdom literature and tradition. While the nominal occurrences show a high percentage, the two noun forms פְּגַע and מִפְּגָע are used in Qoheleth and Job respectively, to express two different ideas.

The occurrences, meaning and relation to wisdom literature of the noun עֲוֹן have been treated above (7.3.3.4). It was observed that the noun עֲוֹן is not a candidate for wisdom

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<sup>463</sup> As already stated at 7.3.3.3 the Hebrew עֲוֹן can mean sin/transgression (2Sam 22:24, Prov 5:22), guilt (Lev 16:21, Num 14:19), or punishment for guilt (Gen 4:13; Ezek 21:30; Isa 40:2). Also see Koehler & Baumgartner (1998:689) and Whybray (1978:29). In the present context the last meaning seems more appropriate.

<sup>464</sup> cf. Gen 28:11; 32:2; Judg 8:12; 15:12; 1Sam 22:17; 1Kgs 2:25.

<sup>465</sup> In 1Kgs 5:18, the noun means 'occurrence or happening' and in Qoh 9:11 it means 'chance' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:751; NRSV).

<sup>466</sup> The hiphil participle form in Job 36:32 does not seem to make sense in the context. It has been suggested to emend it to the noun מִפְּגָע 'target' from the root פגע (cf. BHS; Whybray 1978:60; Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:751). This noun occurs at Job 7:20 where Job complains that God is making Job his מִפְּגָע 'target'.

<sup>467</sup> For further elaboration on the meaning and use of פגע see Whybray (1978:60).



vocabulary. What remains to be said is that the meaning of עָוֹן at Isa 53:6b<sup>β</sup> would correspond to the third meaning of ‘punishment for guilt’, in the light of the context. The expression הִפְגִיעַ עָוֹן ‘he laid the punishment of guilt upon...’ does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is a unique expression that the ‘we’ use to express their belief that God had punished the servant instead of them or in their place. This is a further elaboration of what they had confessed in Isa 53:5, with the inclusion of the role of God in the suffering of the servant and an implication of the innocence of the servant. Initially, the ‘we’ had thought that the servant was punished by God because of his sins. Now they confess that he was punished by God because of their sins. This new understanding is also expressed by a new or unique expression הִפְגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עָוֹן כְּלָנוּ. Indeed this expression has no parallel in the Old Testament (cf. Whybray 1978:60-61) but it is consistent with the wisdom enterprise of probing, grappling with and searching for the meaning of innocent suffering, on the one hand, and the use of the noun עָוֹן in all its three nuances in the book of Job, on the other.

#### 7.3.4 Isa 53:7

It was already mentioned (see Chapter 6 – 6.4 and 6.5) that the speaker in Isa 53:7 is not specified and that the tone also changes. The first person pronouns characteristic of Isa 53:1-6 are absent here and in the rest of the remaining parts of the text. All the same, Isa 53:7 picks up the description of suffering of the servant, in the manner found at Isa 53:2-3, by describing the maltreatment and humiliation of the servant, on the one hand, and his passivity and silence on the other.<sup>468</sup> The maltreatment and humiliation is expressed through the verbs נָגַשׁ and עָנָה in the passive. While the submission and silence of the servant is expressed through the imagery of a sheep being led for slaughter (כִּשְׂחָה לְטָבַח יוֹבֵל), and a sheep being shorn (וַיִּכְרְטוּ לְפָנָיו גִּזְזִיָּה), his silence and passivity are described by the expression וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיּוֹ.

The occurrences, meaning and relationship of the verb עָנָה to wisdom literature and tradition have been discussed above (7.3.3.2). It was concluded that the third root meaning of עָנָה, that is, ‘to be bowed down, humbled, oppressed, afflicted’ is the most appropriate for this

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<sup>468</sup> The description shows that the servant suffered submissively and silently at the hands of others (cf. Westermann 1969:264).

context, and that its 2.7% occurrence rate does not qualify this verbal root meaning for a wisdom vocabulary candidate. These conclusions apply to this verse.<sup>469</sup>

The verb נגש is the niphil form of the root נגש. The root appears only in the verbal form 23 times (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:741). It appears in the qal and niphil conjugations. Notably it occurs in the qal participial form 15 times. In Isa 40-55 it appears once (Isa 53:7a). It appears in Job twice (Job 3:18; 39:7) but not in Proverbs or Qoheleth. Its occurrences in Job constitute 8.7% of the total appearances of the verb in the Old Testament. On average the form would appear 0.67 times in each of the wisdom books and 0.58 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This would make נגש a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The verb נגש means 'press one to work' (cf. Exod 5:6), 'to exact tribute' (cf. 2Kgs 23:25) and in the participial form it means 'one who oppresses' (cf. Job 3:18; 39:7; Zech 10:4; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:594; BDB 2000:620). In the niphil it means 'to be oppressed or treated harshly' (cf. 1Sam 13:6, 14:24; Isa 3:5). This would be the meaning of the niphil form in Isa 53:7a $\alpha$ ,<sup>470</sup> which is also the meaning of the following verb נענך. In Job 3:18 the verb is used by Job to describe the 'freedom' of prisoners from their נגש 'taskmaster' in Sheol. In Job 39:7, the verb is used in God's speech to describe the untameliness of the wild donkey by a taskmaster. Therefore, in Isa 53:7a $\alpha$  two verbs are used, one (נגש) a possible candidate of wisdom vocabulary and the other ענה which appears only twice in the book of Job, to express the maltreatment of the servant.

The silence of the servant, in the midst of maltreatment and affliction, is described using the phrase וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי at Isa 53:7a $\beta$  and at Isa 53:7b. The expression פתח פה 'to open one's mouth', appears 21 times.<sup>471</sup> It appears in Isa 40-55 twice and only here at Isa 53:7. It appears thrice in Proverbs (24:7; 31:8, 9) and twice in Job (3:1; 33:2).<sup>472</sup> The appearances of this

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<sup>469</sup> On further discussion on the meaning of this verb see the note on the translation of this text at 6.3.2.

<sup>470</sup> Lipiński (1998:214), however, argues for the meaning 'seized' in the light of. Isa 53:8 in which the servant seems to have gone through a skewed judicial process.

<sup>471</sup> Num 16:32; 26:10; 22:28; Josh 10:22; Isa 53:7<sup>2</sup>; Ezek 3:2, 27; 21:27; 33:22; Dan 10:16; Prov 24:7; 31:8, 9; Job 3:1; 33:2; Psa 38:14; 39:10; 78:2 109:2

<sup>472</sup> In Prov 24:7 it is said that fools do not open their mouths (פתח פה) at the gate. In Prov 31:8-9, Lemuel is exhorted to speak out פתח פה for the disadvantaged. In Job 3:1 the expression פתח פה is used to introduce Job's first speech where he curses the day he was born. In Job 33:2 Elihu uses the expression פתח פה to continue his arguments against Job's position.

expression in Proverbs and Job constitute 19%. This makes the expression a candidate for wisdom expressions.<sup>473</sup> The silence and submission of the servant is further emphasized by the expressions *וַיִּבֹל* (53:7aδ) and *וַיִּבֹל* (53:7aγ) which are sandwiched between the expression *וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּי* ‘and he did not open his mouth’.

The expression *וַיִּבֹל* (53:7aγ) does not appear anywhere else in the Old Testament formulated in this manner and with the same words. It has, however, been often said to be similar to the expression in Jer 11:19 (Westermann 1969:264). But there are notable differences though. In Jer 11:19a there is *כֶּבֶשׂ* ‘a lamb’ described by an adjective *אֲלוֹף* ‘tame, docile, trustful’, while at Isa 53:7 there is just *שֶׂה* ‘a sheep or goat’. The root *טבה* appears in the infinitive form in Jer 11:19 but as a noun in Isa 53:7. Both phrases are used to express submissiveness but in Jeremiah there is also an element of trust expressed by the adjective *אֲלוֹף*. Besides this expression in Jer 11:19, there is another similar expression in the same book at Jer 12:3, in a passage where Jeremiah questions God about the prosperity of the wicked (Jer 12:1-3). Jeremiah ends by asking God to *הַחֲקֵם כְּצֹאן לְטִבְחָה* ‘drag them like sheep to the slaughter’. In this expression the verb *נָתַק* ‘to drag’, in the imperative is used instead of *יָבֵל* in the passive ‘to be led’. Also the word for sheep or goat *צֹאן* is used instead of *שֶׂה* and the word for slaughter *טִבְחָה* instead of *טִבָּה*. All the same, the simile means basically the same, ‘like sheep for slaughter’. The problem of the prosperity of the wicked, on the one hand, and the suffering of the innocent on the other, is topical in wisdom literature and tradition (see the discussion in Chapter 5 – 5.2.1 as well as the reference to Jer 12:3). This expression is embedded in a text that is typically wisdom in form (questioning God and God responding cf. Job) and content (prosperity of the wicked; cf. Job 21:30).<sup>474</sup>

There is also an expression that articulates a somewhat similar idea and is formulated as a simile in Prov 7:22: *כְּשֹׂר אֶל-טִבְחָה יָבוֹא* ‘as an ox he goes to the slaughter’. Here, again there is *שֹׂר* instead of *שֶׂה* and the verb used is *יָבוֹא* other than *יִבֹל*. This simile in Prov 7:22 is used in the exemplary story (Prov 7:6-23) to discourage a young man from getting enticed by the wife of

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<sup>473</sup>It also appears in Psa 39, a Psalm that has recently been considered a wisdom Psalm (Forti 2015:205-220), and in Psa 78:2, a historical Psalm but whose beginning (Psa 78:1-8) is didactic (cf. Kselman & Barré 1993:532).

<sup>474</sup>God’s response to Jeremiah in Jer 12:5 is also comparable to the speech of God in Job 38-41 (cf. Couturier 1993:278).

another. The simile expresses the submissiveness of the young man. Furthermore, in the expression כְּשֶׂה לְטֹבַח יִוָּדֵל, the image of a sheep being led to slaughter is used to express the silence and submissiveness of the servant. Using examples from the natural world or everyday experience as sources of knowledge or as a pedagogical technique is part of the wisdom tradition (cf. Prov 6:6). All this would vouch for the expression as a wisdom expression.

As for the vocabulary, the verb יָבַל appears 18 times in the Old Testament, only in the hiphil and hophal conjugations. In Isa 40-55 it appears twice (Isa 53:7 and 55:12). It appears thrice in Job (Job 10:19; 21:30, 32). Its occurrences in the wisdom corpus constitute 16.7% of the total occurrences. On average it would appear once in each of the wisdom books and 0.42 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This makes it a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The meaning of the verb יָבַל means 'to bear along, to conduct, lead' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:359; BDB 2000:385). In two of the occurrences in Job it means to be led to the grave (Job 10:19; 21:32). In Job 21:30 it has the figurative meaning of 'to be spared', with reference to the prosperity of the wicked (cf. NRSV; NJB).

The root טָבַח appears in the verbal and nominal forms. As a verb it appears 11 times in the qal conjugation only, with the meaning 'to slaughter, to slay' (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:346; BDB 2000:370). The verb is not found anywhere in Isa 40-55. In the wisdom books it appears once in the book of Proverbs (Prov 9:2).<sup>475</sup> As a noun it appears in several forms which include: טָבַח 'slaughter', 11 times (Prov 7:22; 9:2); and טְבֻחָה 'slaughtered meat, slaughter', thrice (1Sam 25:11; Jer 12:3; Psa 44:23). The noun טְבֻחָה appears once in Isa 40-55 and twice in Proverbs. The noun טְבֻחָה is not found in Isa 40-55 or in any of the wisdom books. It is, however, found once in Jer 12:3 in a passage where Jeremiah questions God about the prosperity of the wicked (Jer 12:1-3) as stated above. The total number of occurrences of both nominal forms in the wisdom corpus constitutes 14.2%.

The vocabulary used in the expression and the expression itself, with the exception of עֲנָה, in Isa 53:7 can be considered to be sapiential in the light of the discussion above. This would make Isa 53:7 a wisdom text without even considering the expression וְכָרְחַל לְפָנַי גִּזְוִיָּה נֶאֱלָמָה

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<sup>475</sup> It is used in Prov 9:2 to describe the feast prepared by lady Wisdom. She is said to have slaughtered (טְבֻחָה) her beasts.

(53:7aδ). The verse is further describing the suffering endured by the servant, submissively and in silence at the hands of others. This adds a nuance of submission and silence as characteristics of vicarious suffering. This will be echoed in Isa 53:12aγ.

In light of the structure of the text discerned above the remaining sections that express vicariousness or express some aspect or characteristic of it are Isa 53:8bβ, 10, 11, 12aγδ, 12b.<sup>476</sup>

Isa 53:8bβ

### 7.3.5 Isa 53:8bβ

Here there is the expression *מִפְּשַׁע עָמִי נָגַע לָמוֹ*.<sup>477</sup> The prepositional phrase *מִפְּשַׁע* and the noun *נָגַע* have been treated respectively in the discussions of Isa 53:5aα and Isa 53:4bα. It was stated that the noun *נָגַע* appears 13 times in wisdom books, constituting 5.7% of the total occurrences in the Old Testament. The meaning of the noun included: affliction caused by God (Psa 38:12; 39:11) and skin disease (Lev 13-14). The meaning of the noun *נָגַע* at Isa 53:4 was interpreted in terms of ‘affliction, or disease’ inflicted by God. The conclusion arrived at was that though the root *נָגַע* does not appear to be a typical wisdom word in the light of statistical occurrences and its meaning, but that it is used a number of times in Job, Psa 39 and Psa 73 to refer to the affliction caused by God as in Isa 53:4b. This also holds true at Isa 53:8, with the exception that, while God may be considered the speaker, here, it is not stated that God is the one causing the affliction but it remains the main possibility in the light of the overall context.

With respect to the prepositional phrase *מִפְּשַׁע*, the preposition *מִן* was interpreted in a causal sense, that is, ‘because of’. The same holds true here. It was stated that the noun *פָּשַׁע* ‘to rebel, transgress’ occurs 22 times in Proverbs and Job and that this constitutes 18% of the total appearances in the Old Testament. It was indicated that this is one of the roots used to express the teaching of just retribution in several texts (cf. Prov 10:12; 12:13; 28:13; 29:6; Job 8:4). It was also noted that the ‘we’ confess that the servant was pierced because of their transgressions. Here it is God who states that the servant, referred to by the poetic form *לָמוֹ*, ‘to him’, was

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<sup>476</sup> Isa 53:9b expresses behaviour usually associated with the wise in wisdom literature and tradition, that is, restraint from violence ‘סָמָּח’, and absence of deceit ‘מְרִמָּה’ (cf. Barré 2000:8). These characteristics are also stated in Isa 53:6, 7 and 11a.

<sup>477</sup> For the textual issues in this colon see the discussion above at 6.2.1.11

afflicted.<sup>478</sup> In Isa 53:8bβ God confirms the confession of the ‘we’ at Isa 53:4-6 that the servant had suffered because of their transgressions. The difference here is that the beneficiaries are called עַמִּי ‘my people’. This adds another nuance to the characteristics of vicarious suffering, it is suffering of God’s innocent servant because of and for the benefit of the people of God.

### 7.3.6 Isa 53:10α

Isa 53:10a is made up of three cola: Isa 53:10aα; 10aβ and 53:10aγ. The first colon, Isa 53:10aα belongs to the second major unit, which is Isa 53:1-10aα, as discerned previously (see Chapter 6 – 6.4). Isa 53:10aα reads: וַיְהִינָה הַפֶּיַךְ דָּכָאוֹ הַחֲלִי ‘Indeed the LORD willed to crush him with sickness’.<sup>479</sup> This colon has two phrases: וַיְהִינָה הַפֶּיַךְ דָּכָאוֹ and הַחֲלִי. In both phrases יְהִינָה (God) is the subject. In the second it is implied but not specified. The expression וַיְהִינָה הַפֶּיַךְ דָּכָאוֹ הַחֲלִי is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament in this formulation and words. It appears with the same meaning but formulated differently in Job 6:9. Job says וַיֵּאֵל אֱלֹהִים וַיִּדְכָאֵנִי ‘and may it please God to crush me’. Therefore, the idea is not strange in wisdom literature and tradition.

As for the vocabulary, the root הפיך appears in verbal, nominal and adjectival forms. The root occurs in total 126 times: 74 times as a verb,<sup>480</sup> 12 times as an adjective, and 40 times as a noun הפיך. The root occurs 8 times in Isa 40-55,<sup>481</sup> 5 times in Proverbs,<sup>482</sup> 7 times in Job<sup>483</sup> and 8 times in Qoheleth.<sup>484</sup> The total occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 15.9% of the total. On average the root would appear 6 times in each of the wisdom books and 2.9 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This makes the root הפיך a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. The basic meaning of the root הפיך is ‘to delight, desire or take pleasure in’.<sup>485</sup> The noun also means ‘will or purpose’ of God (cf. Isa 44:28; 48:14; 53:10b). In Qoheleth the noun also has the nuance of ‘affair’ (Qoh 3:1; 5:7; 8:3).

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<sup>478</sup> Literally an affliction to him (נָגַע לְמִוּוֹ). Also see the discussion above at 6.3.1.11.

<sup>479</sup> For the textual issues relating to this colon see 6.3.1.13.

<sup>480</sup> As a verb it appears only in the qal conjugation.

<sup>481</sup> Isa 42:21; 44:28; 46:10; 48:14; 53:10<sup>2</sup> times; 54:12; 55:11;

<sup>482</sup> Prov 3:15; 8:11; 18:2; 21:1; 31:13

<sup>483</sup> Job 9:3; 13:3; 21:14; 21:21; 22:3; 31:16; 33:32.

<sup>484</sup> Qoh 3:1, 17; 5:3, 7; 8:3, 6; 12:1, 10;

<sup>485</sup> In one instance it, however, has the meaning ‘to bend down’ (Job 40:17; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:321; BDB 2000:343).

The occurrences of the root **חלל** and its status as a wisdom word have been addressed in the discussion of Isa 53:5aβ. It was noted that its appearances in the wisdom books, which constitute 33% of the total, as well as its use to describe suffering in Proverbs and Job makes it a candidate of wisdom vocabulary. On its part, **חלל** has been interpreted as a hiphil conjugation, *qatal* form of **חלה** ‘to make (someone) sick’ (see Chapter 6 – 6.3.1.13; cf. Hos 7:5; Mic 6:13; Hermisson 2004:28).<sup>486</sup> The root **חלה** appears in verbal and several nominal forms. The nominal forms include: **חלי** ‘sickness, weakness’, 23 times and; **מחלה** ‘sickness, weakness’, 4 times.<sup>487</sup> The verb **חלה** has three basic root meanings: (1.) To be weak or sick; (2.) To appease, mollify and; (3.) To adorn (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:300; BDB 2000:317-318). The first (1) root meaning ‘to be sick, weak’ is the appropriate meaning at Isa 53:10aα. **חלה** (1) appears 62 times in the qal, niphil, piel, pual, hiphil, hophal and hithpael conjugations. It appears once in Isa 40-55,<sup>488</sup> twice in Proverbs,<sup>489</sup> and twice in Qoheleth.<sup>490</sup> Its occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 6.5% of the total. On average it would appear 1.3 times in each of the wisdom books and 1.6 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. It is, therefore, not a candidate for vocabulary, nor is it a typical Deutero-Isaianic word. Isa 53:10aα reiterates the willingness of God to let the servant endure suffering (cf. Isa 53:6b). The sickness (**חלי**) referred to at Isa 53:3aβ, 4a is here said to have not only been caused but also willed (**חפץ**) by God (cf. Isa 53:10b). This idea is found in Job and expressed in wisdom terminology with the possible exception of the verb **חלה** (1).

#### 7.4 Isa 53:10aβ - 12

According to the discerned structure (see Chapter 6 – 6.5), Isa 53:10aβ–12 is the third and final section of the text. This section will be divided into three main sub-sections in this discussion. The sections are: Isa 53:10aβb; Isa 53:11 and; Isa 53:12.

<sup>486</sup> For an explanation of this form see GKC 1910 § 75ii and for other proposals see 6.3.1.13 above.

<sup>487</sup> For a treatment of **חלי** see Isa 53:3aβ.

<sup>488</sup> This is found here at Isa 53:10aα according to the interpretation of the word in this study see 6.3.1.13. This would make it the only occurrence of this verb and form.

<sup>489</sup> Prov 13:12; 23:35

<sup>490</sup> Cf. Qoh 5:12, 15. In Job it appears once with the second meaning ‘to mollify’ (Job 11:19).

### 7.4.1 Isa 53:10aβ

In Isa 53:10aβ there is the clause **אִם־תִּשְׂשֹׂם נֶפֶשׁוֹ** ‘If he makes himself a guilt offering’.<sup>491</sup> The textual problems in this colon were already discussed (see Chapter 6 – 6.3.1.13) and the decision was made to maintain the MT. As for the syntax, it was concluded that this is a conditional clause, introduced by **אִם** ‘if’ and that the subject of the clause is **נֶפֶשׁוֹ** (see Chapter 6 - 6.3.2). The expression **אִם־תִּשְׂשֹׂם נֶפֶשׁוֹ** appears only here.<sup>492</sup> But the individual words are fairly common. The verb **שׂ** appears 586 times almost exclusively in the qal conjugation.<sup>493</sup> It appears 28 times in Isa 40-55, thrice in Proverbs, 40 times in Job and nowhere in Qoheleth. Its occurrences in Proverbs and Job constitute 7.3% of the total. On average it occurs 14.3 times in the wisdom books, while it occurs 15 times on average in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. The statistical evidence shows that **שׂ** is not a typical wisdom word. The literal meaning of the verb is to place, put, fix and to pay attention (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:920-921; BDB 2000:962-964).

The root **שׂ** appears 103 times:<sup>494</sup> 36 times in verbal form; 3 times in adjectival; 46 times as a masculine noun **שׂוֹן** and; 18 times as a feminine noun **שׂוֹנָה** (cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:126). It appears once in Isa 40-55, which is here at Isa 53:10aβ and twice in Proverbs (Prov 14:9 and 30:10). The root is not found in Job or in Qoheleth. The occurrences in Proverbs constitute 1.9% of the total. On average it appears 2.8 times in the other books of the Hebrew Old Testament and 0.6 times in the wisdom books. The root is, therefore, not part of the wisdom repertoire. The noun **שׂוֹן** has several meanings ranging from guilt (cf. Jer 51:5; Psa 68:22), to guilt offering (cf. Lev 5:6; 6:10; Num 6:12; Ezek 40:39) and to a technical term for the law of retribution (1Sam 6:3, 4, 8, 17; Lev 5:16, 24; 22:14, Num 5:7; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:94).<sup>495</sup> The noun **שׂוֹנָה**

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<sup>491</sup> For the textual and syntactical issues concerning this colon, and the translation adopted here see 6.3.1.13 and 6.3.2 above.

<sup>492</sup> In Job 7:15a there is an expression formulated in almost the same way; verb, object and the subject being **נֶפֶשׁוֹ** with a pronominal suf.; **וַתִּבְחַר מִתְּחַלָּה לְמָוֶת** ‘so that I (my soul) will choose strangling...’. This is a resultant clause in which Job complains that dreams and visions brought to him by God leads him to choose death (Job 7:13-15). There are notable differences though. There is no conditional particle in Job 7:15a. The conditional particle **כִּי** is found at 7:13 and the vocabulary is also different with the exception of **נֶפֶשׁוֹ**.

<sup>493</sup> It appears 3 times (Ezek 14:8; 21:21; Job 4:20) and once (Gen 24:33) in the hiphil and hophal conjugations respectively.

<sup>494</sup> The majority of the occurrences of the root (39 times) are found in the book of Leviticus.

<sup>495</sup> For further elaboration on the meaning and use of **שׂוֹן** also see Kellermann (1977:429-437).



appears 752 times. In Isa 40-55 it appears 12 times. It appears 55 times in Proverbs, 35 times in Job and 7 times in Qoheleth. Its occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 12.8% of the total appearances of the noun. On average it appears 18.2 times in the other books of the Hebrew Old Testament and 32.3 times in the wisdom books. This would make נִפְשׁ a candidate for wisdom literature. The noun נִפְשׁ has several meanings. These include: throat (Qoh 6:7; Psa 63:6); breath, soul personality (223 times, cf. Gen 27:4; Psa 124:7) and desire (cf. Job 23:13; Qoh 6:3). Therefore, the conditional clause in Isa 53:10a $\beta$  is found only here and uses vocabulary not common in wisdom literature, with the exception of the noun נִפְשׁ which of course is scattered throughout the Old Testament.

The conditional clause is followed by an apodosis that is made of two parts: יִרְאֶה זָרַע יִצְרִיף 'He will see offspring, he will live long' and וְתִפְצֵן יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָה 'Thus, the will of the Lord will succeed through him'. The first part of the apodosis is made up of two phrases: יִרְאֶה זָרַע and יִצְרִיף יָמִים. The first, יִרְאֶה זָרַע appears only here in the Old Testament. The root זרע is used in two senses: (1.) to sow seed and; (2.) to stretch out (cf. BDB 2000:281-284). In the light of the context of Isa 53:10 the reference is to זרע (1).<sup>496</sup> The root זרע (1) appears 286 times, 56 times as a verb and 229 as the noun זָרַע. The noun appears 9 times in Isa 40-55, once in Proverbs (Prov 11:21), thrice in Job (Job 5:25; 21:8; 39:12) and once in Qoheleth (Qoh 11:6). The nominal occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 2.1% of the total. On average the noun would appear 1.67 times in each of the wisdom books and 6 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. The noun זָרַע means a sowing (Gen 8:22), seed (Isa 30:23; Qoh 11:6) or offspring (Prov 11:21; Job 5:25). In keeping with the criteria above זָרַע is not a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The number of occurrences of the verb ראה and its use and meaning were addressed in discussing Isa 52:15b $\alpha$ . It was concluded that the verb is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary and that it can mean physical seeing as well as perception or understanding. This is the second time that the verb is used in this text. Here at Isa 53:10a $\gamma$  it refers to physical seeing. The idea expressed here is that the servant is promised 'to have' and 'to see' his offspring into old age. Therefore, the expression זָרַע ראה is found only here but it is made up of a word common in wisdom literature (ראה) and one that is not (זָרַע). All the same the idea of having and seeing

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<sup>496</sup> The noun זָרַע and its relation to זרע (2) has been looked at above at Isa 53:1a $\beta$ .

offspring is associated with prosperity in wisdom literature (cf. Prov 21:9; Psa 37:28). In the narrative sections of the book of Job, Job's children are a sign of his property (Job 1:2; 42:13).

The expression *יִרְאֶה זָרַע* is followed by the phrase *יִאֲרִיךְ יָמִים*. The root *אָרַךְ* appears 150 times in verbal, adjectival and nominal forms. As a verb it appears 3 times in the qal and 31 times in the hiphil conjugations. As an adjective it appears as *אָרַךְ* (cf. Prov 14:29; Qoh 7:8)<sup>497</sup> or *אָרַךְ*, 3 times (2Sam 3:1; Jer 29:28; Job 11:9). As a noun it appears 96 times as *אָרַךְ* (cf. Exod 27:1; Job 12:12). It appears 3 times in Isa 40-55, 9 times in Proverbs, 3 times in Job and 4 times in Qoheleth. Its occurrences in wisdom books constitute 10.7% of the total. On average it would appear 5 times in each of the wisdom books and 4 times in each of the remaining books of the Old Testament. This makes the root *אָרַךְ* a candidate for wisdom vocabulary.

The meaning of the root *אָרַךְ* is 'to be long', and the nouns and adjectival forms refer to length (cf. Exod 27:1). It is also used in various phrases to express this idea. One of these is *אָרַךְ יָמִים*.<sup>498</sup> The phrase *אָרַךְ יָמִים* appears in several texts of the Old Testament, with the meaning 'to live long' with reference to time (cf. DBD 2000:73).<sup>499</sup> The majority of the occurrences (12) are found in the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>500</sup> The expression appears once in Proverbs (Prov 28:16) and once in Qoheleth (Qoh 8:13) where it is used to state the teaching of just retribution, namely that righteous living leads to a long and prosperous life. In Qoh 7:15 and 8:12, the hiphil participle form of *אָרַךְ* is used without the noun *יָמִים* to express an observation contrary to the teaching of just retribution. All this means that this expression can be considered to be a wisdom expression.

The last part of the apodosis in Isa 53:10b says, *וְהָפִיץ יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח* 'thus, the will of the Lord will succeed through him'. The occurrences of the noun *הָפִיץ* in wisdom books and its meaning were addressed in the discussion of Isa 53:10aα. It was determined that *הָפִיץ* is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary, and that it can mean 'to please, desire or 'will' with reference to God. In the book of Qoheleth it is also used to refer to 'affair'. The root *צָלַח* appears 63 times

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<sup>497</sup> But it appears only in the construct state *אָרַךְ*, 17 times.

<sup>498</sup> Other expressions include: *אָרַךְ אַפְּיִם* 'to be patient' (cf. Prov 14:29; 25:15) and *אָרַךְ רוּחַ* 'patient in spirit' (Qoh 7:8).

<sup>499</sup> Exod 20:12; Deut 4:26, 40; 5:16, 33(30); 6:2; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7; 25:15; 30:18; 32:47; Jos 24:31; Judg 2:7; Prov 28:16; Qoh 8:13.

<sup>500</sup> In Deuteronomy the Israelites are promised 'length of days' (*אָרַךְ יָמִים*) in the land, if they keep the Lord's commandments.

as a verb and in the qal and hiphil conjugations. It appears 4 times in Isa 40-55, once in Proverbs (Prov. 28:13). It is not found in Job or in Qoheleth. Its occurrences in the wisdom books constitute 1.6% of the total. It, however, is also found in the wisdom Psalms, Psa 1:3 and Psa 37:7. The root צלח appears with three basic meanings: (1.) To rush, invade, 10 times (cf. Judg 14:6; Amo 5:6); (2.) To advance or prosper (cf. Isa 54:17; Jer 12:1; BDB 2000:852). In Prov 28:13 it is found in a saying that states that no-one who hides sin prospers (צלח). In Psa 1:3 it is used to describe the prosperity of the righteous, while in Psa 37:7 it is used to exhort the just not to fret over the prosperity of the wicked (cf. Jer 12:1). Thus it is one of the roots used to express the teaching of just retribution. The expression צלח בקד is also found in Gen 39:3 and Dan 8:25. In Gen 39:3 the expression is used to describe the prosperity of Joseph caused by God. In Dan 8:25 it is used to describe the success of the king of Greece (cf. Dan 8:15-27).

As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 6 – 6.6.1.3.), Isa 53:10aβγb begins the last section of the text of Isa 52:13-53:12. The verse is formulated as a conditional sentence. There is reference to guilt offering in the protasis in the expression אִם־תָּשִׁים אֶשְׁמִי נִפְשׁוֹ (Isa 53:10aβ). Reference is also made to offspring and long life in the expressions יִרְאֶה זָרַע יִצְרִיף יָמִים (53:10aγ), and to the advancement of the plan of God through the servant in the phrase: וְהִפְזִן יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח (53:10b), in the apodosis. The expression אִם־תָּשִׁים אֶשְׁמִי נִפְשׁוֹ in the protasis lays a condition of willingness on the part of the servant, a willingness to offer himself, his very life as a guilt offering, that is, payment for guilt. In the light of the confession of the ‘we’ in Isa 53:4-6 and the declaration of God at Isa 53:8bβ this will be the guilt of others. Therefore, Isa 53: 10aβγb adds the nuance of willingness to the idea of vicarious suffering. This willingness is laid down as the condition for the prosperity promised in the protasis. The ‘conditional’ willingness is expressed using vocabulary and phrases not common in wisdom literature and tradition with the exception of נִפְשׁוֹ. As for the promise in the apodosis, the words ראה and ארך as well as the phrase ארך ימים are sapiential, while the phrase צלח בקד expresses the motif of prosperity associated with the righteous as shown above.

#### 7.4.2 Isa 53:11

In this verse God promises satisfaction to the servant and righteousness to the many and the means through which these are accomplished. There are several words and expressions that are

used to warrant a detailed discussion which will include the use of ידע in Isa 40-55 because of the importance of this root in this part of the text.

#### 7.4.2.1 Isa 53:11α

In Isa 53:11α there is the phrase מְעַמֵּל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה וְיִשְׂבֹּעַ ‘from the anguish of his soul, he will understand, be satisfied.’ There is a prepositional phrase מְעַמֵּל נַפְשׁוֹ and two qal verbs in the *yiqqtol* form. The prepositional phrase is made up of the preposition מִן ‘from’ and the noun עֲמָל ‘toil’, together with the noun נַפְשׁ with a 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. pronominal suf.masc. sg. The occurrences, and meaning of נַפְשׁ were treated above and it was determined that it is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. As for עֲמָל, the root appears as a verb 20 times in the qal conjugation. It also appears as noun 55 times (cf. Even-Shoshan 1998:897). This makes the total appearances of the root 75. It appears once in Isa 40-55, 4 times in Proverbs, 10 times in Job and 34 times in Qoheleth. In wisdom books it appears a total of 48 times. The majority of the occurrences are found in Qoheleth (20 times). The average number of appearances in each book of the wisdom corpus is 16 and in each of the remaining books of Hebrew Old Testament is 2.1 times. The appearances in the wisdom books constitute 64% of the total. This indicates that the root עמל belongs to wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the verb is ‘to labour, toil, suffer’ (Psa 127:1; Qoh 2:21), and that of the noun is ‘trouble’ (Jer 20:18; Job 7:3; Qoh 1:3), ‘labour, toil, suffering’ (Psa 105:44; Prov 16:26; Job 3:20; Qoh 2:10). This is one of the words used to express the idea of suffering in the wisdom books (Prov 16:26; Job 3:20; 20:22).

The number of occurrences of the verb רָאָה, its use and meaning were addressed when discussing Isa 52:15bα and Isa 53:10aβ. It was determined that the verb is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary and that it can mean physical seeing as well as perception or understanding. This is the fourth and final time that the verb is used in Isa 52:13-53:12. The verb is found once in the prologue (Isa 52:15bα), once in the main body (Isa 53:2b) and twice in the epilogue (Isa 53:10aγ and 53:11α). Thus, it is one of the sapiential words that frames the text. In Isa 53:11α it has the meaning of ‘understanding’ as in Isa 52:15bα. The servant will understand from or through his suffering.

The root **שבע** appears 130 times: in verbal (97 times), adjectival (10 times) and nominal forms (23 times; cf. Even-Shoshan 1997:1106-1107). As a verb it appears in the qal, niphil, piel and hiphil conjugations. As a noun it appears in three basic forms: **שָׂבַע**, 8 times (cf. Prov 3:10; Qoh 5:11); **שָׂבַע**, 8 times (cf. Psa 16:11; Prov 13:25); and **שָׂבַעָה**, 7 times (Isa 56:11; Ezek 16:49). It appears thrice in Isa 40-55, 20 times in Proverbs, 9 times in Job, and 5 times in Qoheleth. In the wisdom books it appears 34 times. This constitutes 26.0% of the total. On average it would appear 11.3 times in a wisdom book, while it would appear 2.6 times in each of the rest of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament. In the light of this, the root **שבע** is a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the root has to do with satisfaction brought about in various ways or sources like food (Prov 12:11; 27:20) and seeing (Qoh 1:8).

The expression **מִן עֲמַל נִפְּשׁ** is found only here in the Old Testament. But the whole colon is talking about the understanding (**ראה**) and the satisfaction (**שבע**) that the servant will get from his (**נִפְּשׁוֹ**) sufferings. All the words used to express this belong to wisdom vocabulary as has been shown. However, Isa 53:11a $\alpha$  does not add any new element to the concept of vicarious suffering, except reinforcing the willingness of the servant.

#### 7.4.2.2 Isa 53:11a $\beta$

In this part of the verse God makes a statement that has been interpreted and translated as ‘by his knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many’ (see Chapter 6 – 6.3.2). The textual and syntactical difficulties in Isa 53:11a $\beta$  were discussed (see Chapter 6 – 6.3.1.14). The MT form of the text was adopted, that is, **בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים** and translated ‘by his knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many’. **בְּדַעְתּוֹ** is a prepositional phrase made up of the noun **דַּעַת** ‘knowledge’, a pronominal suf. masc. sg. **וֹ**. It is also made up of the preposition **בְּ** ‘in, with, by’ which has been interpreted here in the instrumental sense ‘by, or through’. Knowledge is the means through which the servant brings about the justification of the many<sup>501</sup>. It appears twice in this text, in middle section (Isa 53:3a $\beta$ ) and here in the epilogue (Isa 53:11a $\beta$ ).<sup>502</sup> Throughout this study it became clear that the root **ידע** is typical wisdom terminology. The root **ידע** is also an

<sup>501</sup> See the discussion above at Isa 52:13.

<sup>502</sup> While the root **ידע** is missing in the prologue (Isa 52:13-15), its synonym **בין** is found at Isa 52:15b $\beta$ .

important word in Isa 40-55. The occurrences, meaning and use of this root in Isa 40-55 is now going to be reflected upon.

#### 7.4.2.2.1 ידע in Isa 40-55

The root appears 42 times in Isa 40-55. It is used mainly in the verbal form to describe a state of mind, a state of perception. As a noun (דַעַת), it appears only 5 times (40:14; 44:19, 25; 47:10; 53:11). But it is used with synonyms: תְבוּנָה (40:14; 44:19); הִקְמָה (44:25; 47:10).<sup>503</sup> In Isa 40-55 the verbal and nominal forms of ידע are used to describe the knowledge of God. This is the knowledge that belongs to God, and the knowledge about God and his purpose and will. With respect to the former, this knowledge is *sui generis*. Nobody has taught God to acquire this knowledge (40:13-14) and it is beyond human grasp (40:28, cf. 55:9). The content of the knowledge that belongs to God is מִשְפָּט 'justice', עֲצָה 'counsel, wisdom' and תְבוּנָה 'understanding' (Isa 40:13-14; 48:4). With respect to the latter, that is the knowledge about God. This is the knowledge that Israel's God is the only true God,<sup>504</sup> and the knowledge of his purpose and will.<sup>505</sup> In the second part of Isa 40-55, it is used for the coming to the knowledge of Israel's God, by Israel (Isa 49:23; 52:6) and by all flesh (Isa 49:26).

The root is also used in the context of the lack of knowledge. The blind do not know the way (Isa 42:16). Israel does not perceive (Isa 42:25) nor know the new things God is about to do (48:6-8). Makers and worshippers of idols do not know (Isa 44:9, 18, 19, 25; 45:20) and Cyrus does not know the one empowering him (Isa 45:4-5). It is used to describe the deceptive knowledge of Babylon, who thought that she will not know שָׁכֹל 'the loss of children' (Isa 47:8), whose wisdom and knowledge led her astray (Isa 47:10) and who relied on מוֹדִיעִם לְהַקְדִישִׁים 'those who knew how to 'read' the moons' (Isa 47:13).

Finally, the root is used to describe the servant's knowledge. The identity of the servant in Isa 40-55 remains a debated issue (cf. North 1948:1-5; Westermann 1969:20-21; Watts 1987:115-117). In some passages it is clear that it is Israel and in other passages the identity

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<sup>503</sup> The noun דַעַת appears 91 times, 40 times in Proverbs, 9 times in Job, 7 times in Qoheleth. More than half of the total occurrences are found in the wisdom books.

<sup>504</sup> Isa 40:21-26; 43:10; 44:8, 9, 18-19; 45:3, 4, 5, 6; 45:20; 49:26.

<sup>505</sup> Isa 40:21, 27-31; 41:20; 43:16-20; 44:25b; 47:8-11<sup>3</sup> times; 48:6, 7, 8<sup>2</sup> times; 49:23b; 51:7; 52:6.

remains anonymous. Some have identified the anonymous servant with Israel in line with the passages that clearly state Israel as servant. Others have identified the anonymous servant with some individual.<sup>506</sup> All the same, the root ידע is used in a number of passages for the anonymous servant's knowledge as a disciple (50:4), the servant's knowledge of the protection of God (50:7), the servant's acquaintance with sickness (53:3), and the servant's knowledge that justifies many (53:11).

The servant's knowledge becomes important, if not central to the accomplishment of the servant in Isa 52:13-53:12 (cf. Ward 1978:128). But what is the content of this knowledge of the servant, the knowledge that brings about justification to the many? In the light of the use of the root ידע in Isa 40-55 this is the knowledge that God is one, that God is just and righteous (Isa 50:7-8; 51:4, 8) and does not only have the power to save (Isa 51:7-8), but is also willing to save both Israel and the nations (Isa 49:5-7). It is this knowledge about God that the servant bears witness to (Isa 42:1-7), and it is in the light of this knowledge that the 'we' come to understand and confess the vicarious nature of the suffering of the servant. This knowledge is both the source of this new understanding of suffering and the means through which reconciliation is accomplished.

#### 7.4.2.2.2 צדק in Isa 53:11aβ

The root צדק appears 523 times in verbal, adjectival and nominal forms. As a verb it appears 41 times and in the qal, niphal, hiphil and hithpael conjugations. As a noun it occurs in two forms: צדק, 119 times and צדקה, 157 times. As an adjective it appears as צדיק, 206 times (cf. Lisowski 1993:1205-1209; Even-Shoshan 1997:975-978). It appears 30 times in Isa 40-55, 93 times in Proverbs, 35 times in Job and 11 times in Qoheleth. The root occurs 139 times in wisdom books. This constitutes 26.6% of the total. On average the root would occur 46.3 times in each of the wisdom books and 14.5 times in each of the rest of the books of the Hebrew Old Testament. These statistics make the root צדק a strong candidate for wisdom vocabulary. The literal meaning of the root has to do with righteousness or to be righteous (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:793-795; BDB 2000:841-843). In the hiphil conjugation it means 'to justify' (Isa 50:8; Job 27:5), to declare someone just (Isa 5:23; Prov 17:15). The adjective צדיק is used: in a juridical sense for

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<sup>506</sup> See the discussion on Isa 52:13.

guiltlessness (Deut 25:1); in a moral sense for someone who is morally upright (Psa 1:6); in a religious sense to describe piety (Prov 9:9; Job 12:4; Qoh 7:20) and the state of being just in the ‘eyes’, that is before God.

At Isa 53:11a $\beta$  the hiphil form of the verb צדק is used together with the prepositional phrase בְּדַעְתּוֹ and the nominal phrase צְדִיק עֲבָדִי. This colon has been interpreted earlier as stating the means by and through which the righteous servant justifies many. The expression צדק בְּדַעַת appears only here in the Hebrew Old Testament. But בְּ צדק appears in Psa 51:6b: לְמַעַן תִּצְדַּק : צדק בְּדַעַת. The preposition בְּ in this colon is usually understood in a temporal sense ‘when’. Thus the colon can be translated ‘in order that you may be justified when you give sentence, and pure when you judge’ (cf. NRSV). The expression בְּדַעַת צְדִיק is found in Prov 11:9. This wisdom saying states that:

בְּפִה תִּגְדַּל יְשׁוּעַת רַעֲוֵהוּ וּבְדַעַת צְדִיקִים יִתְלַצוּ:

‘With the mouth the godless destroy his friend;  
But with knowledge the righteous ones are delivered’.

In this saying knowledge is the instrument by and through which the righteous are delivered (יִתְלַצוּ). The idea that knowledge is used by the righteous as a means for deliverance is a wisdom motif. In Isa 53:11a $\beta$  knowledge is used by the righteous servant as one of the means of justifying the many in the manner described above at Isa 52:13a $\alpha$ . The other means is stated in Isa 53:11b.

#### 7.4.2.2 Isa 53:11b

In Isa 53:11b God further states that: וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל ‘And the guilt of their iniquities he carries’. The occurrences, meaning and uses of the noun עֹן and of the verb סבל were discussed at Isa 53:5a $\beta$  and Isa 53:4a $\beta$  respectively. The concluding remarks were that the noun עֹן is not a wisdom word, even though it appears 15 times in the book of Job and with three basic meanings: sin, guilt of sin and punishment for sin. The appropriate meaning of עֹן in the context of Isa 53:5a $\beta$  was considered to be ‘sin’. In the context of Isa 53:11, that makes reference to toil or suffering (cf. Isa 53:11a $\alpha$ ) and knowledge that justifies (Isa 53:11a $\beta$ ), ‘punishment for sin’ would be the more appropriate meaning of the noun here. As for the verb סבל, it was determined that the root is not used in wisdom books frequent enough to be considered a wisdom word and that it means



‘to carry or bear a load’. Here at Isa 53:11b there is the expression סבל עֹן. This phrase occurs twice in the Hebrew Old Testament, here and at Lam 5:7. In Lam 5:7 the author laments that:

אַבְתֵּינוּ הִטְאוּ וְאֵינָם אֲנַחְנוּ עֹנֵיהֶם סָבְלֵנוּ:

‘Our fathers sinned and are no more;  
And we are bearing the punishment of their sins.’

Thus, there is no evidence that the expression סבל עֹן belonged to wisdom tradition repertoire. At least the expression is not found in any of three wisdom books.

All in all, in Isa 53:11aβb God states that the righteous servant justified many through his knowledge and by bearing the punishment of their sins. Vocabulary and expressions used to put across this idea are common in wisdom literature and tradition (ידע and צדק) and that of Lamentations (סבל עֹן). This statement adds to the notion of vicarious suffering a significant element, which is that of knowledge. As stated above at Isa 52:13aα, this is the knowledge that makes the servant and others righteous. The content of this knowledge is the unity of God and the power and the willingness of God to save both Israelites and non-Israelites. It is the knowledge to which the servant bears witness, and the knowledge through which the ‘we’ come to the full realization of the significance and role of the suffering of the servant.

#### 7.4.3. Isa 53:12aγδb

Isa 53:12 God promises rewards to the servant (Isa 53:12aαβ). He also gives four reasons for these rewards and exaltation (Isa 53:12aγδb). It is the section in which God gives the reasons for the reward that terminologies related to vicarious suffering are found.

The first colon has תחת אשר הֶעֱרָה לְמִוֶּת נַפְשׁוֹ ‘because he completely emptied himself’.<sup>507</sup> The occurrences meaning and use of תחת was discussed earlier (see Chapter 3 – 3.3.2) within the context of the notion of taking the place of another. It appears 506 times: 7 times in Isa 40-55, 9 times in Proverbs, 21 times in Job and 33 times in Qoheleth. In the wisdom books it appears 63 times, constituting 12.4%. On average it would appear 21 times in each wisdom book and 12.3 times in each of the remaining books of the Hebrew Old Testament. This would make תחת a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. It is used as a substantive or preposition. As the former, it is

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<sup>507</sup> For this translation see 6.3.2 and the discussion below.

used to refer to something that is underneath, the under part (cf. Exod 24:4). As the latter it indicates position – underneath (Gen 18:4; Job 20:12; Qoh 1:3; 2:11) or taking the place of another (Num 3:12; Prov 21:18; Job 28:15; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998: 1026).

The expression **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר** appears 12 times in the Old Testament with the meaning (a) instead of that (Deut 28:62) and (b) in return for that or because of (Num 25:13; Deut 21:14; Jer 29:19; cf. Koehler & Baumgartner:1998:1026; BDB 2000:1066). The latter meaning is more appropriate within the context of Isa 53:12. The expression does not however appear in any of the wisdom books.

**הִעָרָה** is the hiphil form of the verb **עָרָה**. The verb occurs 17 times in the niphal, piel, hiphil and hithpael conjugations. The verb appears only here in Isa 40-55 and it is not found in any of the wisdom books. The literal meaning of the verb is ‘to lay bare’ (cf. Isa 3:17; Psa 137:7) and ‘to pour out’ (cf. Gen 24:20; Isa 32:15; Psa 141:8).

The phrase **לְמִוֶּת** is a prepositional phrase made up of the preposition **לְ** and the noun **מִוֶּת**. The noun appears 161 times. It appears twice in Isa 40-55, 17 times in Proverbs, 8 times in Job, and 6 times in Qoheleth. It appears 31 times in wisdom books, which is 19.3% of the total occurrences. On average the noun would appear 10.3 times in each of the wisdom books and an average of 3.6 times in the remaining books of the Old Testament. This would make **מִוֶּת** a candidate for wisdom vocabulary. **מִוֶּת** literally means ‘death’, that is the opposite of life (2Sam 15:21; Prov 10:2; Job 30:23; Qoh 3:19 cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1998:508; BDB 2000:560). Thomas (1953:219-221) demonstrated that **מִוֶּת** is also used to express the superlative in some passages, for example, Judg 16:16; 2Kgs 20:1; Jon 4:9 and; Song 8:6 (cf. Barré 2000:27). While none of the examples of the superlative use are found in the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, Thomas (1953:221) cites an example of this use in the Hebrew version of Sira 37:2 in the expression **אל מות** translated in the Greek version with **ἕως θανάτου** (until death), for the superlative.

The expression **עָרָה נֶפֶשׁ** also appears in Psa 141:8.<sup>508</sup> But the expression **עָרָה נֶפֶשׁ לְמִוֶּת** appears only here. This expression has been interpreted in various ways. Some see it as referring

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<sup>508</sup> Psalm 141 is an individual lament and in verses 7 to 10, the Psalmist expresses confidence in God (cf. Kselman & Barré 1993:550). In verse 8, the Psalmist petitions God not ‘to expose’ his life (**אלִּי־תֵעַר נֶפֶשִׁי**).

to the servant's death (Westermann 1969:268; Watts 1983:232; Barry 2010:107-132)<sup>509</sup> and others see it as referring to the servant's willingness to empty himself 'completely', that is, to suffer to the point of death without actually dying. In the latter case לְמִוֹת is interpreted as expressing the superlative (Thomas 1953: 219-220; Whybray 1978:104-105, Barré 2000:27). Either interpretation does not add anything to the notion of vicarious suffering. The notion does not have to include death as a necessary element. The suffering of the innocent servant may or may not lead to death.<sup>510</sup> In this study the latter interpretation has been adopted because it leaves the possibility open. Both interpretations capture the willingness of the servant to suffer.

Therefore, the colon תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֶרְהָ לְמִוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ in Isa 53:12aγ is made up of three words that belong to wisdom vocabulary, namely, תַּחַת, מִוֹת and נִפְשׁוֹ, and one word that is not found in any of the wisdom books (עֶרְהָ). The expressions תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר and עֶרְהָ לְמִוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ do not appear in any of the wisdom books. But the prepositional phrase לְמִוֹת appears in Sir 37:2 as אֵל מוֹת with the same superlative meaning. This part of the verse expresses the complete willingness of the servant to suffer (cf. Isa 53:10aβ).

The next reason given for the reward is stated thus: וְאֵת-פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה 'And was counted among transgressors'. This statement is made up of a conjunction וְ 'and', a preposition אֵת 'with', two verbs, one, (פִּשַׁע) a qal participle, the other, (מִנָּה) a niph'al in the *qatal* form. The occurrences, meaning and uses of פִּשַׁע were addressed in discussing Isa 53:5aα (see 7.3.3.3). It was observed that the occurrences of the root in wisdom books constitute 18% and that it is one of the words used to express the teaching of just retribution.

The root מִנָּה appears as a verb (29 times) and as a noun (25 times).<sup>511</sup> What is of interest to this study is its verbal appearances. As a verb it appears in the qal, niph'al, piel and pual conjugations. It appears once in Isa 40-55, once in Job (Job 7:3) and once in Qoheleth (Qoh 1:15). It, therefore, appears twice in wisdom books, which constitutes 6.8%. On average, it would appear 0.66 times in each of the wisdom books and 0.75 times in each of the rest of the Old

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<sup>509</sup> Westermann (1969:268) understood it as expressing sacrificial death on the part of the servant.

<sup>510</sup> For more on the elements that constitute vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 see Spieckermann (2004:7).

<sup>511</sup> As a noun it appears as: מִנָּה (12 times) or מִנָּה (8 times) 'a part, portion'; מִנָּה (twice) 'counted number, time' and; מִנָּה (5 times) 'a weight' (cf. BDB 2000:584).

Testament books. The root מנה cannot be considered to be a wisdom word. Its literal meaning is to count, to be numbered (BDB 2000:584). Therefore, in Isa 53:12aδ there is one possible wisdom word פשע and one which is not מנה. The statement itself further expresses the solidarity of the servant with transgressors. This is another element of vicarious suffering. A wisdom word forms part of the statement that expresses this solidarity.

The third reason is expressed by the statement, והוא הטא־רבים נשא 'And that he carried the sin of many'. Of interest in this statement are the two words הטא and נשא, and the expression נשא הטא. The occurrences, meaning and use of נשא were addressed in discussing Isa 52:13b (7.2.2) and Isa 53:4aα (7.3.3.1). At Isa 53:4aα it was observed that the occurrences of the verb נשא in the wisdom books constitutes only 6% of the total, but that its figurative use to express suffering is relatively common in wisdom books. As for הטא the root appears in verbal, adjectival and nominal forms. As a verb it appears 238 times which are in the qal, piel, hiphil and hithpael conjugations. It appears 25 times as a verb in Wisdom books, but not in Isa 40-55. As an adjective it appears in the form טא 'sinful' (19 times). As a noun it appears as: טא (33 times), טא (2 times) טא (8 times) and טא (292 times). In total the root appears 592 times: 5 times in Isa 40-55, 16 times in Proverbs, 18 times in Job and 8 times in Qoheleth. It occurs 42 times in the wisdom books, which constitutes 7.1% of the total. On average it would occur 14 times in each wisdom book, and 15.3 times in each of the rest of the Old Testament. These statistics show that the root טא is on the borderline. As for the meaning, the root literally means 'to miss the mark, to do wrong, to sin' (cf. BDB 2000:306-309).

The expression טא נשא appears 9 times.<sup>512</sup> Apart from Isa 53:12aδ, it is found within legal contexts in the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Ezekiel. Several offences are referred to, and the expression טא נשא is used to state incurring guilt (Lev 19:17; 22:9; Num 18:22, 32; Ezek 23:49) and being liable for punishment (Lev 20:20; 24:15; Num 9:13). It is also only in Isa 53:12aδ that the expression is used to state a situation within which a person incurs the guilt or punishment of others. This is a new use of the expression which does not rule out interpreting it in a vicarious sense.<sup>513</sup> The expression reiterates and together with the statement in Isa 53:12bβ brings to

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<sup>512</sup>Lev 19:17; 20:20; 22:9; 24:15; Num 9:13; 18:22, 32; Isa 53:12; Ezek 23:49.

<sup>513</sup> Also see Whybray 1978:30-31, who goes further to argue that in the light of the meaning of טא in Lam 5:7 and Isa 53:11, טא נשא in Isa 53:12bα does not have vicarious connotations.

conclusion the new understanding of the suffering of the righteous servant. The righteous servant suffered on behalf of and for the benefit of others.

The fourth and final reason is stated thus: וְלַפְּשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ, 'and he interceded for transgressors'. The occurrences, use and meaning of the root פשע were discussed when Isa 53:5a $\alpha$  and at Isa 53:12a $\delta$  were discussed (see 7.3.3.3 and 7.4.3). פשע is a wisdom word and is used to express the teaching on just retribution. The occurrences, use and meaning of פגע were discussed (see 7.3.3.6). It was observed that the verbal occurrences of the root are limited to the book of Job, constituting 4.3% of the total verbal appearances, while the nominal appearances constitute 66.6% of the total occurrences. The various meanings and uses of the verb were also stated. It was also observed that it has two possible meanings in the hiphil conjugation, which are (1.) to cause to lay upon; and (2.) to entreat, intercede. The latter was given as more appropriate for the context of Isa 53:12b $\beta$ . Its status as a wisdom word remains open. The statement means that the servant interceded for transgressors. This adds another nuance to the notion of vicarious suffering, that of intercession. This element is expressed by two words, one a candidate for wisdom vocabulary (פשע), and the other whose status as wisdom vocabulary remains open (פגע).

Thus, the reasons given for the exaltation of the servant, in Isa 53:12a $\gamma\delta$ b state the unreserved willingness for suffering (Isa 53:12a $\gamma$ ), solidarity with transgressors (Isa 53:12a $\delta$ ), the bearing of punishment for many (Isa 53:12b $\alpha$ ), and interceding for transgressors (Isa 53:12b $\beta$ ). This is expressed using a number of words that are common in Wisdom literature and tradition (פָּשַׁע, מָנַח, מְנַח, מְנַח, מְנַח, מְנַח), others that are not (עָרָה and מָנַח) and others that are somewhere in between (פָּגַע, מְנַח, and מְנַח).

#### **7.4 Summary and Concluding Remarks**

The occurrences, meaning and use of words and expressions in Isa 52:13-53:12, in the Hebrew Old Testament in general and in the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, in particular have been presented in this chapter. The aim, as stated above, was to ascertain the presence of wisdom vocabulary, expressions and motifs in this text and in its expression of the notion of vicarious suffering.

It was observed that some words and expressions are very likely sapiential. This was confirmed by their frequent appearances in the wisdom corpus as well as their meaning and use. It was also observed that others were possible candidates for wisdom vocabulary or expressions, and others were most probably not. In the first section or prologue, Isa 52:13-15, the most probable wisdom words observed are: *הַתְּבוּנָה* and *רָאָה*, *קִפְצָה*, *שָׁכַל*. The possible candidates are *גִּבְהָה*, *נִשְׂאָה* and *יָרוּם*,<sup>514</sup> and *שָׁמַם*. The most probable non-sapiential ones include: *כָּבֵד*<sup>515</sup> and *נִזְהָה* (II). It was pointed out that this prologue is framed by two wisdom related words: *הַתְּבוּנָה* and *שָׁכַל* (cf. Barré 2000:7-8). The concluding remarks to this first section were that, the words and expressions used, as well as the motifs of acting wisely, exaltation, understanding and the universal outlook found in this text resemble much of what is found in Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth (cf. Seitz 2001:463).

In the middle section, that is Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$ , it was observed that *אָמַן*, *רָאָה*, *חָשַׁב*, *יָדַע*, *מִקְאוֹב*, *חָשַׁב*, *חָדַל*, *בִּזְזָה*, *הִדְרָה*, *חָמַד*, *שִׁרְיָה*, *צִיָּה*, *זָרוּעַ*, *חִפְצָה* and *דָּרָךְ*, *מִוֶּסֶר*, *דָּכָא*, *פָּשַׁע*, *חֲלִי*, *תַעֲהָה*, *פָּגַעַה* and *נָגַשׁ* are possible candidates for wisdom vocabulary. The following are very unlikely to be considered to be wisdom words: *רָפָא*, *שְׁלוֹמָה*, *עֲוֹן*, *חָלַל*, *עֲנָה*, *נִכְהָה*, *נָגַעַה*, *סָבַל*, *עָלָה*, *שָׁמַעַה* and *חֲלִי*. The rhetorical frame of Isa 53:1 and the expressions *יָהֵן זָרוּעַ* and *פָּתַח פִּיהוּ כְּמִסְתֵּר פְּנִיָּם מִמֶּנּוּ* were considered to be most probably wisdom expressions. Finally, the epistemological motifs of learning from life experience (plant life, shepherding), was considered to be typically wisdom.

In the third and final section of the text (Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12), *מִנָּת*, *פָּשַׁע*, *יָדַע*, *עָמַל*, *חִפְצָה*, *רָאָה*, *נִפְשָׁה*, *פָּגַעַה*, *חֲטָא*, *נִשְׂאָה*, *שָׁבַע*, *אָרַךְ* and *פָּגַעַה* were considered very likely to be wisdom words. While *עֲוֹן*, *זָרַעַה* and *אָשַׁם* were considered to be possible wisdom words and *עָרָה* and *סָבַל* were considered to be probably non-wisdom words. Furthermore, in this section possible wisdom expressions included: *אָרַךְ יָמָיִם* and *צִלָּה בְּיָדוֹ*, *אָרַךְ יָמָיִם* and the wisdom motif of seeing off-spring as a sign of prosperity was also observed.

<sup>514</sup> It was observed that these terms are used in wisdom literature to talk about the exaltation or prosperity that comes with wisdom and understanding.

<sup>515</sup> It was also noted that while from a statistical perspective *עָבַד* cannot be considered a wisdom word, it is used in the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth to express the relationship between a master and a subordinate at both a divine and human level. In the book of Job God refers to Job as *עָבָדִי*, for example.

At 7.4.2.2.1 the occurrences, use and meaning of ידע in Isa 40-55 was discussed. It was observed that the root is used for the knowledge that belongs to God, and the knowledge about God (that Israel's God is the only true God) and the knowledge of the purpose and will of God (that God is willing and able to save both Israel and the nations). It was further proposed that this is the knowledge that the righteous servant possesses, and communicates to bring about justification.

The use of עֶבֶד in Isa 40-55 and in the wisdom books was also discussed (see 7.2.1.1 and 7.2.1.2). It was perceived that עֶבֶד is used to refer to the subordinate relationship between a master and a subordinate, that is, the servant, at both the divine and the human level. In Isa 40-55 it is used to refer to Israel in some passages of Isa 40-55, and to an anonymous person in other passages. Both have tasks to accomplish. The task of Israel is that of bringing knowledge and understanding about the sole divinity of Israel's God both to herself and to the Gentiles. The task of the anonymous servant is to bring מִשְׁפָּט 'justice, judgment, truth' to the nations, in gentleness and faithfulness (42:1-4; 50:4-9), knowledge and understanding of the only God (43:10-12), and through suffering in place of them and for their benefit (Isa 52:13-53:12), that is vicarious suffering.

The notion of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament means to suffer because of and for the benefit of others. Elements that make up this idea are: the will of God (Isa 52:13; 53:6b, 10aαb), a righteous person, 'the servant' (Isa 53:4, 11aβ), the unreserved submission and willingness of a righteous person (Isa 53:7, 10aβ, 12aγδb), solidarity of the servant with the sinners (Isa 53:12aδ), acknowledgement of the role of the suffering by the sinners (Isa 53:4-6), knowledge of the unity God and of God's will to save sinners (Isa 53:1, 11aβ).

The text of Isa 52:13-53:12 makes use of a number of words and expressions that are found in wisdom literature and tradition.<sup>516</sup> to express the notion of vicarious suffering, as has been shown above. As for the worldview or assumption informing the formulation of vicarious suffering there is the recurring grappling with the problem of the suffering of the innocent that

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<sup>516</sup> See also Barré (2000:7-8) who also observes that the prologue, main body and epilogue of Isa 52:13-53:12 are framed by wisdom vocabulary. He includes: יִשְׁכִּיל (Isa 52:13a); הִתְבוּנָה (Isa 52:15bβ); מוֹסֵר (Isa 53:5bα) and; קִדְעָתוֹ (Isa 53:11aβ). Barré also includes the characteristics of silence, non-resistance to hostility, and absence of violence and deceit as typical of the behaviour of the wise.

is witnessed in wisdom literature and tradition and the debated teaching on just retribution. The notion of vicarious suffering arises from the presumption of just retribution and that of the suffering of the innocent.

In Isa 52:13-53:12 innocent suffering is said to be willed by both God and the innocent sufferer and is caused by the sins of others with whom the innocent sufferer is in solidarity. Innocent suffering is then seen from the perspective of just retribution, willed and accepted by God, the innocent sufferer as well as the beneficiaries, who are the transgressors. The punishment the transgressors were supposed to endure, in line with the teaching of just retribution, is borne by the righteous servant on their behalf and for their benefit.

This is a new and unique teaching that does not only use vocabulary, expressions and metaphors from wisdom tradition, as the literature in Chapter One has demonstrated. There are also words, expressions and metaphors from other settings of Israel's life, namely, the cult (53:5a, 12b $\alpha$ ), plant life (53:2a $\alpha\beta$ ), the medical sphere (53:4), shepherding (Isa 53:6-7) and the legal setting (Isa 53:10a $\beta$ ). Therefore, the notion of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament is expressed through the mixture of various traditions, in an effort to capture this new and unique understanding of suffering. Wisdom tradition is one such tradition that has contributed to the formulation of the notion of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Summary and Concluding Remarks**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter synthesises the salient features of the discussion in each of the preceding chapters. The chapter also provides concluding remarks with regards to the overall findings of the study. These are findings with regards to the hypotheses of this study (see Chapter 1 – 1.9). This chapter and the study as a whole will be wrapped up with concluding remarks pertaining to the issue of



the relation of the concept of vicarious suffering with Old Testament wisdom literature and wisdom tradition.

## **8.2 Summary**

In Chapter One the introductory issues concerning the topic ‘Vicarious suffering in wisdom literature and tradition: A traditio-historical approach’ were presented. These included the background, aim, objectives, relevancy, background literature, research hypotheses and methodology. It was stated that the overall aim of the study was to ascertain the relationship between the concept of vicarious suffering as it is expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition, using the traditio-historical approach. Four research hypotheses were formulated. The first hypothesis was that the concept of vicarious suffering is present in the Old Testament. The second stated that the fullest expression of vicarious suffering is found in Isa 52:13-53:12. The third stated that the concept of vicarious suffering is an outcome of the reflection on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in the Old Testament. The fourth and last hypothesis stated that wisdom literature contributed to the origin, formulation and expression of the concept of vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12.

The subject matter of Chapter Two was the presentation and discussion of the ‘approach’ that was adopted for this study, that is, the traditio-historical approach. The terminology that has been used for this approach, its history, foci (scope) and procedures were outlined and discussed. The presentation concluded by describing how this approach will be used in this study, its relevance, strengths, and weaknesses and proposed mitigations. The reasons why this approach was chosen, among other possibilities, were that the questions that it asks of texts coincide with and are relevant to the questions that were at the centre of this study, namely the relation between the tradition(s) informing and expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12 and those expressed in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

In Chapter Three an attempt was made to establish the meaning of vicarious suffering, and the presence of this concept in the Old Testament. Firstly, the phenomenon of suffering in general, and its expressions in the Old Testament in particular, was addressed. It was observed that suffering is part and parcel of the human experience. It was also established that according

to the contemporary 'standard account', suffering is personal and it involves a perception of harm and threat, and that while pain is often associated with suffering, it does not necessarily cause suffering. Ultimately suffering is a result of the failure to understand and accept what one is going through. This led to the definition of suffering as 'personal emotional anguish arising from various sources perceived to be harmful and life threatening.'

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, two observations were made. Firstly, it was observed that there is no systematic treatment of the subject of suffering but that the issue is discussed at various stages and in various contexts. Suffering is understood in terms of carrying a burden and in terms of pain (physical, emotional, and spiritual pain). It was also noted that according to the Old Testament account, the origin or source of suffering is viewed from basically two perspectives; that suffering is inherent in creation and that it is a consequence of the transgression of God's law. It was also proposed that these perspectives led to what has been called the teaching of just retribution. It was noted that emphasis on retributive justice brought about the problem of the suffering of the innocent. Both the teaching of just retribution and the ensuing problem of the suffering of the innocent was said to be important and recurrent themes in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition.

Secondly, the meaning and use of the concept of vicarious suffering and its presence or absence in the Old Testament were also studied. The observations were as follows. It became clear that the meaning and use of the Latin *vicarius* has expanded since it entered the English language. It now encompasses the meaning of taking the place of another as well as empathy. In English, taking the place of another can be, inclusive or exclusive 'place-taking'. Hence, vicarious suffering is a suffering that is experienced in place of another (inclusive or exclusive). As to the presence of this concept in the Old Testament, the debate that continues among scholars of the Old Testament, and the Bible in general were highlighted. Some words, and practices in the Old Testament that express what has been defined as vicarious suffering, were examined. At the end it was proposed that while the idea of taking the place of another in various contexts and situations is quite common, suffering in place of another human being is uniquely expressed in Isa 52:13-53:12.

Chapter Four addressed the issue of Old Testament Wisdom literature and tradition. To begin with, the meaning and use of the Hebrew חָכְמָה ‘wisdom’ was discussed. It was observed that the word is used in various ways and contexts to express the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them in various professions or trade and for the achievement of prosperity. It was observed that חָכְמָה is ‘personified’ in several texts. Despite human endeavours, ultimately, the source of חָכְמָה rests with God or what is referred to as ‘the fear of the Lord’.

It was also noted that the Scholarly ‘consensus’ among Old Testament scholars is to use the word wisdom to refer to an approach to reality (worldview or tradition), a movement in Ancient Israel, and literature that have more common features or resemblances than differences with respect to form, content and context. It is usually associated with a movement or tradition that promoted, preserved and, disseminated this approach and understanding of reality. This movement was not limited to a particular group, locality or social class. Israelites from different walks of life shared in varying degrees this approach and understanding. However, the literary expression of this approach or tradition is usually associated with Israelite scribes, and the locality of this literary production was the court or scribal ‘schools’. Dissenting voices to this scholarly consensus were also pointed out. Three main literary forms were said to belong to this literature, that is, sayings, disputations and reflections. A common theme that was singled out in this literature was the teaching of just retribution and its corollary, the problem of the suffering of the innocent. This became the subject for discussion in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Five the structure and contents of the five books of the wisdom corpus were presented and discussed. Particular attention was paid to the theme of the suffering of the innocent, as it was understood and grappled with within the framework of the teaching of just retribution. It was observed that in the sayings and instructions of the book of Proverbs, the teaching of just retribution is consistently maintained and applied to individual conduct rather than that of the nation, with the view of encouraging good behaviour and discouraging bad behaviour. Suffering is presented as the consequence of bad conduct. With respect to the suffering of the innocent, it was observed that they are no sayings that address the issue explicitly but that the issue is presumed in some sayings. In the instances where the suffering of the

innocence is hinted at, it is explained in terms of discipline and testing (Prov. 3:11-12; 17:3; 27:21).

With regards to the book of Job, it was observed that the teaching of just retribution and the suffering of the innocent are the main themes. Both are explored in the narrative framework and the poetic sections of the book but particularly so in the poetic sections. In the poetic section Job's friends maintain the teaching of just retribution and they are of the view that no mortal is innocent before God (Job 9:2, 21). They admit instances of innocent suffering and 'explain' it in terms of discipline and/or warning (Job 5:17-19; 33:19-30; 36:7-21). Job on his part argues that the teaching of just retribution is not always applicable in every case. In his case he pleads his innocence and blames God for arbitrarily and capriciously targeting him. The book ends with the speech of God that demonstrates the sovereignty of God's dealings with his creation, a sovereignty that goes beyond and is in a way not governed by the teaching of just retribution. This would imply that the answer to the problem of the suffering of the innocent is privy to God. This was also seen as applicable to the view of Qoheleth. In the book of Qoheleth this sovereignty of God is emphasised, while the teaching of just retribution is relativised (cf. Qoh 5:6; 7:18).

As for the two books of the longer canon, that is Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon it was observed that the issue of innocent suffering was paid attention to. For Ben Sira suffering was to be expected for those who love and serve the Lord, as discipline and purification (Sir 2:1-5). Ben Sira maintained the teaching of just retribution but remained cognisant of the divine will and freedom (Sir 2:1-18; 18:1-7). In the light of the purpose of the book, that of upholding Jewish faith and traditions, and most probably apologetics against the emerging teaching and belief in the afterlife, for Ben Sira both the righteous and the wicked will receive what they deserve at death.

It was also observed that in the book of Wisdom of Solomon the teaching of just retribution is maintained and the problem of the suffering of the innocent is 'explained' along the same lines as in the other books of the wisdom corpus but with two notable re-interpretations influenced by the context within and the purpose for which the book was written. The first is the understanding of longevity or old age not in terms of the number of years one lives but in terms of uprightness (Wis 4:7-9), such that the death of the righteous at a tender age

is seen as a rescue from the wicked. The second is the extension of just recompense to the next life. In the afterlife the just and the wicked will receive what their actions and conduct deserve.

It was noted that there is a progressive 'rumination' or 'reflection' on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature and tradition. While the teaching of just retribution is maintained throughout, in the face of the experience to the contrary, several reasons, reactions and recommendations are made in the face of innocent suffering. These include: the view that no human being is innocent before God; the view that innocent suffering is disciplinary and a warning to the innocent. The view that is common in all the books is that of accepting the divine will, freedom and sovereignty with regards to the issue of innocent suffering. In the book of Wisdom there is also the possibility of fulfilment of just retribution in the afterlife.

In Chapter Six, the constitution, structure and *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12 were studied. It was shown that that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a text that is set apart from its surrounding context, in terms of change of thematic content, form and structure. It was also shown that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a unified text with three sections comprising of an introduction (Isa 52:13-15), main section (53:1-10a $\alpha$ ) and conclusion (Isa 53:10a $\beta$  -12). This was further confirmed by the discernment of two-tier and chiastic structure of the text. Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$  was identified as the central section, framed by two sections, Isa 52:13-15 and Isa 53:10a $\beta$ . Furthermore, it was demonstrated that Isa 53:4-6 is at the centre of the central section. As for the *Gattung*, it was proposed that Isa 52:13-53:12 is a mixed text, and one of its kind in the Old Testament. Notwithstanding this, the following *Gattung* was proposed: '*an oracle and reflection on the vicarious suffering of the servant.*'

The consideration of the structure and the *Gattung* of Isa 52:13-53:12 have also shown that the theme of the text is that of an innocent servant who suffers. This suffering is allowed by God and used for God's purpose. Afterwards, the innocent servant is exalted and counted among the mighty. It was proposed that the purpose of the text is to present the suffering of the innocent servant as a means of bringing about righteousness and salvation. This suffering brings about salvation to many, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the suffering brings about, the exaltation of the servant.

The objective of Chapter Seven was to examine the presence of wisdom vocabulary, expressions and motifs in Isa 52:13-53:12, paying particular attention to the sections where the notion of vicarious suffering is expressed. It was observed that some words and expressions are very likely sapiential, others are possible 'candidates' and that others are most likely not typical wisdom words. It was observed that in Isa 52:13-15 the most probable sapiential words are: שָׁכַל; קִפְּץ and הִתְבּוֹנֵן. It was further observed that the wisdom words שָׁכַל and הִתְבּוֹנֵן frame this introductory section of the text. It was also pointed out that the motifs of acting wisely, exaltation, understanding and the universal outlook found in this text resemble much of what is found in Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth, Ben Sira, and Wisdom of Solomon.

A number of observations were made concerning the middle section of the text, that is, Isa 53:1-10a $\alpha$ . It was observed that אָמַן, רָאָה, חָשַׁב, מִכְּאוֹב, יָדַע, פָּשַׁע, דָּכָא, מוֹסֵר, דָּרָד, חִפְּץ and חִפְּץ are wisdom words. The rhetorical frame of Isa 53:1 and the expressions זָרוּעַ יְהוָה, מִמְּנוּ, פָּתַח פִּי, and לְטַבַּח יוֹבֵל were considered to be wisdom expressions. Finally, the epistemological motif of learning from life experience (plant life, shepherding), was considered to be sapiential.

Observations were also made with regard to the parts of the text where the notion of vicarious suffering is expressed, that is Isa 53:4a, 5, 6b, 8b $\beta$ , 10a $\alpha$ , in the middle section. In Isa 53:4a, the expression הָיָא נְשָׂא was not considered sapiential but the noun מִכְּאוֹב in the expression וּמִכְּאֲבֵינוּ סָבְלָם was considered sapiential. In each of the three of the four cola in Isa 53:5, it was observed that there is a wisdom word, that is, פָּשַׁע in 53:5a $\alpha$ , דָּכָא in 53:5a $\beta$  and מוֹסֵר in 53:5b $\alpha$ . The root פָּגַע in Isa 53:6b $\alpha$  was considered a possible sapiential word. In Isa 53:8b $\beta$  פָּשַׁע was considered sapiential. חִפְּץ and דָּכָא in Isa 53:10a $\alpha$  were considered to be sapiential.

In the concluding framework, Isa 53:10a $\beta$ -12, it was observed that the words נִפְּשׂוּ, רָאָה, חִפְּץ, עָמַל, רָאָה, יָדַע, תַּחַת, מְנוּחַת, and פָּשַׁע, as well as the expressions זְמַיִם אַרְךָ and צִלַּח בְּיָד are sapiential. The notion of vicarious suffering is expressed at Isa 53:11 and 53:12a $\beta$ b. The words יָדַע, רָאָה, עָמַל (53:11) and תַּחַת, מְנוּחַת, and פָּשַׁע (53:12a $\beta$ b) were considered sapiential.

In Chapter Seven the occurrences, use and meaning of יָדַע and עֶבֶד were also discussed. It was observed that the root יָדַע is used in Isa 40-55 to talk about the knowledge of one God. This is the knowledge that the עֶבֶד 'servant' (both Israel and the anonymous servant) possess,

communicate to others and suffer for. In the process the עֶבֶד 'servant' brings about righteousness and salvation to many, as willed by this one God.

In the light of the foregoing, the concluding remarks of chapter seven were that the text of Isa 52:13-53:12 makes use of a number of words and expressions that are found in wisdom literature and tradition, and that elements of the vicarious nature of the servant's suffering are also expressed in some words and expressions found in wisdom literature and tradition and in others that are not. It was also argued that the notion of vicarious suffering arises from the presumption of just retribution and that of the suffering of the innocent. These are themes that are found recurring in wisdom literature and tradition, as shown in chapters four and five. It was further stated that the notion of vicarious suffering is a new teaching that is conceived and expressed through words, metaphors, motifs and assumptions from various settings and traditions in Ancient Israel. This includes the cult (53:5a, 12b $\alpha$ ), the medical sphere (53:4, 5b $\beta$ ), legal setting (Isa 53:10a $\beta$ ) as well as wisdom literature and tradition as the study has shown.

### **8.3 Concluding Remarks**

This study has led to a number of observations. The first is that suffering is part and parcel of the human experience. It is therefore, to be accepted as such. The second is that while suffering is addressed in various ways and contexts in the Old Testament, in the majority of cases it is viewed from the perspective of the teaching of just retribution. 'Sporadic' experiences contrary to the teaching of just retribution led to the problem of the suffering of the innocent. The third is that the concept of vicarious suffering is present in Isa 52:13-52:12 and that this concept is a result of the on-going reflection on the problem of the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature and tradition.

The fourth is that there are resemblances in the assumptions, formulation and expression of the concept of vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 and the assumptions, formulations and expressions found in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition. The assumptions included the teaching of just retribution and its corollary, the suffering of the innocent and the openness to the 'mystery' of suffering that gives room to the will and purpose(s) of God. The latter is aptly captured in the expression, 'the fear of the Lord'. This is an expression that captures the

disposition and attitude encouraged in Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition. Ultimately the meaning of suffering in general, and the suffering of the innocent in particular rests with God, as Job discovered (Job 38-41) and as God declares and the 'we' confess in Isa 52:13-53:12. The notion of vicarious suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 did not only contribute to the ongoing struggle to make sense of the suffering of the innocent in wisdom literature and tradition but wisdom literature and tradition also contributed to the formulation and expression of the notion of vicarious suffering, as this study has tried to demonstrate.

The use of sapiential terminology, expressions and assumptions in Isa 52:13-53:12 would also suggest a sapiential intent or purpose, namely that of instruction. This would be instruction concerning the recommended attitude towards innocent or undeserved suffering. It is possible to view innocent suffering in terms of suffering on behalf of and for the benefit of others. Viewed in this way suffering becomes 'liberating' both for the one who suffers and for the beneficiaries.

#### **8.4 Recommendations for further study**

The findings above have opened up possibilities for further research on the relationship between Isa 52:13-53:12 and Old Testament wisdom literature and tradition. While, this study has shown the resemblances of the assumptions, formulation and expression of the concept of vicarious suffering and some of the assumptions, formulations and expressions in the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth, it became clear that more of these resemblances are found in the book of Job.

To begin with, the book of Job grapples imaginatively with the teaching of just retribution and the suffering of the innocent. As it was pointed out earlier, (see Chapter 5 –5.3.2.2), the book of Job does not discard or do away with the teaching of just retribution in the light of the problem of the suffering of the innocent. Besides proffering other reasons for the suffering of the innocent, the book proposes that the teaching of just retribution does not apply in every case of suffering and loss. Furthermore, in the speech of God, the rhetorical questions that God addresses to Job (Job 38-41), and the praise that God bestows on Job at the end (Job 42:7-8), do not respond to the questions raised by Job in the dialogue, nor address the question of the suffering of the innocent directly. The rhetorical questions of God imply that the answer to the question of the suffering of the innocent remains a prerogative of God. In addition, there are



other resemblances of Isa 52:13-53:12 with the book of Job. Job is referred to as ‘my servant’ in the framing sections of the book (Job 1:8, 2:3, 42:8 [thrice]; cf. Isa 52:13; 53:11). In both the suffering of a holy or innocent person is presented. God is said to have allowed it. In the prologue Job refuses to curse God, just as the servant is said to have been silent. In the end Job’s attitude towards his suffering is acknowledged by God, just as the servant’s in Isa 53:12. Job’s fortunes are also restored just as the servant is exalted. There are also some notable differences between these two texts. The purpose for the suffering in Job 1-2 is to find out if Job serves God disinterestedly while the purpose for the suffering in Isa 52:13-53:12 is to reveal God’s plan of salvation, through the suffering of an innocent person, the servant. These resemblances and differences call for further research on the relationship between Isa 52:13-53:12 and the book of Job.

Another area for further research concerns the disappearance of the notion of vicarious suffering in latter wisdom texts of the Old Testament and other texts from the Second Temple period. The concept of vicarious suffering is not found anywhere else outside Isa 52:13-53:12. It is neither made reference to nor developed in the latter texts. The one possible reference to Isa 52:13-53:12 is found in Dan 12:1-3, where reference is made to the מְשֻׁכְּלִים ‘the wise ones’ (cf. Isa 52:13) and the מְצַדִּיקֵי הַרְבֵּיִם ‘those who make many righteous’ (cf. Isa 53:11). Otherwise the absence of this notion calls for further investigation that goes beyond the aim and parameters of this study.

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