

# The One and the Many, the Past and the Future, and the Dynamics of Prospective Analogy: The Servant(s) as the Vindication of Moses and the Prophets

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## 1. Introduction

The issue of conceptual continuity and discontinuity in the presentation of the Isaian Servant(s) is important. What is taken over from earlier texts and traditions, and what constitutes innovation—and how should a proper appreciation of these matters guide our reading? The portrait of the Isaian Servant is in some respects unique. Yet it would be a mistake to overlook the parallels between this portrait and what we find in other ancient Israelite texts—and this is true not simply at the tradition-historical level, but also at the level of compositional strategy.<sup>1</sup> Even more important than the question of the tradition-historical antecedents of the Isaian Servant is the extent to which this figure within Isaiah is designed to be understood within the framework of a larger portrait of Israel's history, a framework that supplies the conceptual substructure for the

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<sup>1</sup> Some writers have claimed that the “Suffering Servant” is a construct created by later Christian readers of the book of Isaiah; so e.g. Harry M. ORLINSKY, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah: The So-Called “Servant of the Lord” and “Suffering Servant” in Second Isaiah*, VTSup 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 17: “the concepts ‘Suffering Servant’ and the servant as ‘Vicarious Sufferer’ are likewise post-biblical in origin—actually the product of Christianity in the period subsequent to the death of Jesus”; Donald JUEL, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 127: “We should not speak of “the Suffering Servant” or “the servant of the Lord” as if the phrases represent a distinct conception in postbiblical Judaism”; Leroy Andrew HUIZENGA, “The Incarnation of the Servant: The ‘Suffering Servant’ and Matthean Christology,” *HBT* 27 (2005): 25–58 (here 26): “The ‘suffering servant,’ however, was not a meaningful category for Matthew to appropriate or his hearers and readers to appreciate. . . . Rather, the servant figure has come into being through centuries of Biblical interpretation, emerging fully in the modern period.” The desire to avoid anachronism is understandable; but it seems to us that these studies fail to appreciate the extent to which the Servant as presented in Isaiah is *already* a product of interpretive activity, the result of the scribal coordination of earlier traditions.

Servant and servants.<sup>2</sup> This historical portrait is profoundly analogical, in which the repeated patterns of the past (pertaining to both figures and events) are continuously brought into comparison. The relationship that obtains between the past and the future, and specifically the prospective significance of the past for the future, is crucial for understanding the significance of both the Servant and servants in Isaiah, as well as the continuing interpretive reception of these figures outside that book.

This essay will contend that the book of Deuteronomy in particular functions as a template for understanding this analogical history of Israel, systematically presenting comparisons between the one and the many, the past and the future, failure and success, and epitomizing in this way the dynamics of prospective analogy. This essay will show, first, how Moses is depicted as a paradigmatic prophet who suffers and is willing to lay down his life as he struggles to create a righteous community, yet is also set in comparison to his contemporaries; second, how the presentations of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been coordinated with the presentation of Moses; and third, how the presentations of Moses and the “prophets like Moses” prefigure another Moses-like suffering Servant, who, after the exile, will successfully create a new community of servants and bring about the realization of Yhwh’s plans for Israel through Moses. Such a Servant and servants are presented to the reader in the book of Isaiah, and their portraits arise from analogical strategies employed in the process of literary composition and coordination.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Moses as the Model of a Prophetic Suffering Servant

### 2.1 *The Presentation of Moses as a Prophet*

The life of Moses as contained within the composite Pentateuch is a *prophetic* life from beginning to end. Moses’ portrayal as the paradigmatic prophet is

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<sup>2</sup> While scholarship has inquired into the tradition-historical antecedents of the prophetic suffering servant figures in Isaiah and Jeremiah, it has often overlooked a key aspect of the historical meaning of these texts: the degree to which these figures are designed to be understood in relation to *textually* constructed figures within the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>3</sup> Our focus in this essay will not be on tradition-historical differentiation or on a detailed reconstruction of the process of literary formation behind the presentations of the Moses and Isaian Servant figures. Instead, we will concentrate on the portraits arising from the aggregate whole, which is what was available to Second Temple-period readers. See further Ehud BEN ZVI, “Exploring the Memory of Moses ‘The Prophet’ in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah,” in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 335–64.

widely recognized,<sup>4</sup> and with good reason: he is presented as one who is commissioned by Yhwh to speak on his behalf (Exod 3:16; 5:1; 9:2; cf. Num 12:2a), and as one who is consulted by the people for oracles from Yhwh (Exod 18:15–16; Num 9:6–14). He is classified as a prophet (Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10), and is given the prophetic titles “man of God” (Deut 33:1; Josh 14:6; cf. 1 Kgs 13:1; 17:18; 2 Kgs 4:7) and “servant of Yhwh” (Num 12:7; Deut 34:5; Josh 1:1, 2, 13; cf. 2 Kgs 17:23; Amos 3:7). He is granted the spirit of prophecy (Num 11:25), and is described as communicating with Yhwh even more directly than prophets usually do (Num 12:5–8). He is an intermediary between the people and Yhwh (Exod 19:3–8), he delivers Yhwh’s instructions and warns and exhorts the people to keep them (Exod 16:32; Exod 21:1; Lev 18:1–5; Deut 4:9–10, 14–18, 40), and he intercedes on behalf of the people (Exod 32:11–13, 30–32; Num 11:1–2; 12:13; 14:13–19; 16:20–24; 21:7; Deut 9:18–29; 10:10). He also performs signs (Exod 4:1–17; 7:14–18) and miracles (Exod 15:23–25; 17:1–6, 7–13; cf. 2 Kgs 2–4), some of which are explicitly presented as validations of his prophetic role (e.g., Num 16:28–33). Finally, he serves as the model for future prophets who will be “like” him (Deut 18:15–19). As will be demonstrated below, the presentation of Moses and the presentations of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been coordinated together so that these prophets resemble each other.

## 2.2 *The Relationship between Prophet and People*

Central to this portrait of a prophetic life is the relationship between the prophetic individual and the corporate whole. We refer to the parallel actions and the bound fate of Moses and the people in connection with the prophetic task. This fraught, multifaceted, and complex connection between Moses and the people is a crucial thread running throughout the portrayal of a prophetic life.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Eckart OTTO, “Deuteronomy as the Legal Completion and Prophetic Finale of the Pentateuch,” in *Paradigm Change in Pentateuchal Research*, ed. Matthias Armgardt, Benjamin Kilchor, and Markus Zehnder, BZAR 22 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019): 179–88 (here 185): “Deuteronomy portrays Moses as the chief prophet and archetype or model for all the prophets in the Hebrew Bible”; Timo VEIJOLA, “Die Deuteronomisten als Vorgänger der Schriftgelehrten,” in *Moses Erben: Studien zum Dekalog, zum Deuteronomismus und zum Schriftgelehrtentum*, BWANT 149 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 192–240 (here 217): “Die Essenz der Prophetie wird nun mittels des nomistisch verstandenen Mose definiert, der wegen seiner Gottunmittelbarkeit zwar als Prophet ohnegleichen (Dtn 34, 10–12), aber doch zugleich als Anherr und Vorbild aller späteren Propheten erscheint (Dtn 18, 15–22).” See further Christophe NIHAN, “Moses and the Prophets: Deuteronomy 18 and the Emergence of the Pentateuch as Torah,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 75 (2010): 21–55; BEN ZVI, “Exploring the Memory of Moses,” 205.

<sup>5</sup> So interrelated are the two that one might debate whether Exodus-Deuteronomy represents the biography of Moses or the history of Israel. See Rolf P. KNIERIM, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method, and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 372.

On the one hand, as the human representative of the people before God, Moses is the advocate of the people: he stands in for and speaks up on behalf of the people, interceding before God; he lays himself down on behalf of the people in the face of divine anger, reminding God of his promises. He is thus regularly cast in an oppositional role, standing between God and the people. Yet he is also an exemplary righteous figure, distinct in this regard from the rest of the people. When he represents the people before God, he does so as a righteous representative, one known by name and favored by God. The exercise of his prophetic office requires him to *choose* to step into the gap and to lay himself down, to place his own unique credit, merit, or favor on the line.<sup>6</sup> God repeatedly tells Moses to step aside, to allow him to give vent to his anger and destroy the people, promising to start over with Moses himself (Exod 32:9–10; Num 14:11–12; 16:20–21; 17:9–10). And Moses repeatedly refuses to allow this, strenuously advocating for the people (Exod 32:11–14, 30–32; Num 14:13–20; 16:22; 17:11–15).<sup>7</sup> This is but one of several ways in which the fate of the people and that of Moses are intertwined.

On the other hand, as the prophetic mediator between God and Israel, Moses regularly finds himself at odds with the people, who refuse to listen and continuously disobey as he calls them to conformity with the covenant. They complain against him, are angry at him, accuse him of trying to kill them, threaten and abuse him, and question and reject his prophetic *bona fides*.

### 2.3 Moses as a Suffering Servant

This mediating position thus brings the prophet Moses into constant hardship, sorrow, and suffering, into a role for which he laments his inadequacy (Num 11:10–15). He is God’s servant who is despised and rejected (Exod 15:24; 16:2–3; 17:1–4; Num 12:1; 14:1–10; 16; 20:2–5; 21:5), who suffers both at the hands of and for the sake of the people, even unto death. Not only is he threatened with death by the very people for whom he cares (Exod 17:3–4; Num 14:10; 17:6–7), but he places himself in the face of divine anger in order to prevent the people’s destruction (Exod 32:9–11; Num 16:20–22) and even offers his own life in their place (Exod 32:32). Finally, Moses eventually is excluded from the land of promise *because of the people*.<sup>8</sup> It is because of the people’s rebellion at the border and their failure to believe (Num 14:9, 11) that Moses is initially prevented from entering the land; he must lead them forty years in the wilderness until the first generation dies off, thus preventing their

<sup>6</sup> Note the striking contrast between the portrayals of Moses and Aaron in Golden Calf narrative.

<sup>7</sup> Note how Moses is commemorated as an intercessor in Ps 106:19–23, as one who “stands in the breach before [Yhwh], in order to turn away his wrath.”

<sup>8</sup> See Deut 1:37 (גַּם־בִּי הִתְאַנֵּף יְהוָה בְּגַלְלֵכֶם); 3:26 (וַיִּתְעַבֵּר יְהוָה בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם); 4:21 (יְהוָה) הִתְאַנֵּף בִּי עַל־דְּבָרֵיכֶם).

entry (Num 14:26–35). And it is the people’s subsequent rebellion in the wilderness (Num 20:1–5) that serves as the triggering event for Moses’ failure to believe, an act that results in his exclusion from the land (Num 20:6–12).

The prophetic portrait of Moses is that of a servant of God who suffers because of and for the sake of the people on whose behalf he has been called. He is the chosen one who suffers on behalf of the many. This story is tragic, insofar as not only is Moses not permitted to enter into the land, but is also told that the *future* generation of his people will fail and that disaster will befall them (Deut 31:16–21, 24–29).

One of the striking elements of this portrait of Moses as a suffering servant is the extent to which it is an analogical portrait, having been mapped in key ways onto the story of the Aqedah.<sup>9</sup> In both Gen 22 and Exod 19–34 there is a “testing” (Gen 22:1 // Exod 20:20, נסה) on a mountain (Gen 22:2, 14 // Exod 19:2ff) to see if someone “fears God” (Gen 22:12 // Exod 20:20), and in both stories a substitute is offered for the life of others (Gen 22:13; Exod 32:32). The second story explicitly refers to an element present in the first story (Exod 32:13 → Gen 22:17), and takes up the distinctive vocabulary of the first story.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The story of the test of Abraham and his giving up of a beloved son (Gen 22) exerted considerable influence on other texts; see e.g. Jeremiah UNTERMAN, “The Literary Influence of ‘The Binding of Isaac’ (Genesis 22) on ‘The Outrage at Gibeah’ (Judges 19),” *Hebrew Annual Review* 4 (1980): 161–66; Jonathan D. SAFREN, “Balaam and Abraham,” *VT* 38.1 (1988): 105–13; J. David PLEINS, “Son-Slayers and Their Sons,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 29–38; Jon D. LEVENSON, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale, 1993); Yair ZAKOVITCH, *Through the Looking Glass: Reflection Stories in the Bible* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1995), 72–77; Ricky NOVICK, “Abraham and Balaam: A Biblical Contrast,” *JBQ* 35.1 (2007): 28–33; Tzvi NOVICK, “Biblicized Narrative: On Tobit and Genesis 22,” *JBL* 126.4 (2007): 755–64; Gideon MILLER, “Peril and Deliverance and the Akedah-Sinai Narrative Structure,” *JBQ* 40.4 (2012): 247–52; Paba Nidhani DE ANDRADO, *The Akedah Servant Complex: The Soteriological Linkage of Genesis 22 and Isaiah 53 in Ancient Jewish and Christian Writings* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013); Hyun Chul Paul KIM, “Two Mothers and Two Sons: Reading 1 Kings 3:16–28 as a Parody on Solomon’s Coup (1 Kings 1–2),” in *Partners with God: Theological and Critical Readings of the Bible in Honor of Marvin A. Sweeney*, ed. Shelley L. Birdsong and Serge Frolov (Claremont: Claremont Press, 2017), 83–99 (here 93–94); Megan WARNER, *Re-Imagining Abraham: A Re-Assessment of the Influence of Deuteronomism in Genesis*, OTS 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 95–113.

<sup>10</sup> Shared distinctive vocabulary includes: צחק Gen 21:9; 22:2, etc. // Exod 32:6; נסה Gen 22:1 // Exod 20:20; וישכם בבקר Gen 22:3 // Exod 24:4; 32:6; 34:4; יום השלישי Gen 22:4 // Exod 19:11, 16; מרחק Gen 22:4 // Exod 20:18; 24:1; ראה Gen 22:4, 8, 13, 14 // Exod 19:21; 20:18, 22; 24:10; 32:1, 5, 9; 34:3, 10; נערים Gen 22:5 // Exod 24:5; נשוב . . . עד . . . ישב Gen 22:5 // Exod 24:14; השתחוה Gen 22:5 // Exod 24:1; 34:8; יחדיו Gen 22:6, 8 // Exod 19:8; ויבן מזבח Gen 22:9 // Exod 24:4; 32:5; אל/לא שלח יד Gen 22:12 // Exod 24:11; ירא(ה) Gen 22:12 // Exod 20:20; קרן/קרניו Gen 22:13 // Exod 34:29, 30, 35; עשה הדבר הזה Gen 22:16, 18 // Exod 24:3. The use of קרן in Exod 34:29, 30, 35 has attracted considerable attention; see the survey in Eric X. JARRARD, “Double Entende in Exodus 34:

In Gen 22, Abraham passes the test by fearing God, resulting in a reaffirmation of the covenant. In Exod 19–24, the people initially pass the test and fear God (Exod 19:21–24; 20:18–21), resulting in the establishment of a covenant; in Exod 32, the people fail the test of “fearing God” by worshipping the calf and breaking the covenant. Yet as the story continues, Exod 32–34 describes a reversal of the broken covenant into a remade covenant because of Moses’s prophetic work in which he lays himself down on behalf of the people. The point of these parallels to the Akedah (which span the entire Sinai pericope) is that Moses’ self-sacrificial actions are set on analogy to Abraham’s ultimate act of sacrificial obedience: both result in the re-confirmation of the covenant.

#### 2.4 Future Failure, Future Success: The Matrix of Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy represents the final day in the prophetic life of Moses. It is constructed on the basis of a continuous series of symmetries and comparative structures. One key way that these ubiquitous structures function is to create comparisons between successive generations, often turning upon success or failure.<sup>11</sup> They concentrate on the relationship between successive communities of the past, present, and future, specifically in relation to the figure of Moses.<sup>12</sup> As we have already noted above, the failure and fate of the people are intertwined with the failure and fate of Moses.<sup>13</sup>

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Revisiting the ׀ך of Moses,” *ZAW* 131.3 (2019): 388–406. But whatever the *meaning* of the word, it seems plausible that the *choice* of the word functions as an additional link between the Sinai narrative and Gen 22. Its function is to represent Moses on analogy to the ram who is offered up “in the place of his son” (תחת בנו, Gen 22:13).

<sup>11</sup> See Eckart OTTO, “Moses the Suffering Prophet,” in *Propheten der Epochen: Festschrift für István Karasszon zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Viktor Kókai Nagy and László Sándor Egeresi, AOAT 426 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 137–49 (here 137): “The Pentateuch is ending with two catastrophes, a collective one predicting doom and annihilation of the people, and an individual catastrophe for Moses, YHWH’s arch-prophet, who had to die before the people would have crossed the Jordan.”

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. the relationships between the structurally corresponding panels: Deut 1 // 2–3 and 5–7 // 8–11, in which the description of past failures in the wilderness (1:26–40, 41–46) is set in contrast to the recent successes in the Transjordan (2:1–23, 2:24–3:22), and the description of past success at Horeb (5:1–31) is set in contrast to past failure at Horeb (9:6–29). Note also how the description of Moses’ past failure in Deut 1:37 is set in comparison to the people’s past failure, and the reminder of Moses’ failure in 3:23–28 is set in contrast to the people’s recent success (and in 3:21–22, 28, their future success under the direction of Joshua). The center unit in chap. 4 contains past, present, and future temporal perspectives—and it too contains a reference to Moses’ failure (4:21–22).

<sup>13</sup> Both the people’s and Moses’ actions are described as a failure to “believe” (האמין, Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32) and as “rebellious” (מרד, Num 20:10, 24; 27:14). See further Hans-Christoph SCHMITT, “Redaktion des Pentateuch im Geiste der Prophetie: Beobachtungen zur Bedeutung der “Glaubens”-Thematik innerhalb der Theologie des Pentateuch,” *VT* 32.2 (1982): 170–89.

On one level—that of the suasive rhetoric of the character addressing the audience on the plains of Moab—the aim of Moses’s work within the book of Deuteronomy is to create a righteous community, a community that will differ from the previous generation of Horeb that died in the wilderness for their failure to believe. As both the character and the book emphasize, Moses himself will not enter the land, an outcome directly linked to the people’s failure.<sup>14</sup> Instead Joshua, Moses’s successor, will lead them.<sup>15</sup> But despite Moses’s extended, urgent and impassioned instruction, Moses is finally told by God that the people are certain to fail in the future,<sup>16</sup> breaking covenant and serving other gods. Moses informs the people of their fallibility<sup>17</sup> and testifies against them, teaching them a song that will continue to serve as a witness against them in the future when he is no longer there. This song is recorded as a prophetic testimony<sup>18</sup> to accompany and serve alongside the Torah. But Moses’s discourse, along with the broader composition in which it is embedded, also looks beyond that certain future failure to an even more distant future success and a vindication for “his servants” (Deut 32:36). The identity of these “servants,” as well as the specific nature of their vindication by God, are questions left opaque, or at very least not unpacked, within the Song of Moses itself. Yet these questions remain very much of interest for the broader composition of the book. For, on a higher level of literary rhetoric, the book of Deuteronomy itself seeks to create a righteous, Moses-following, post-exilic community; a community that, through the reading of the book, can imaginatively project

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<sup>14</sup> See Num 20:12; 27:12–14; Deut 1:37; 3:23–27; 4:21–22; 32:48–52; 34:4–5. The difference in perspective between Deut 32:31 (= Num 20:12) vs. Deut 1:37; 3:26; 4:31 is, from the vantage point in this essay, insignificant; Moses’ own failure is presented as a result of the repeated failures of the people, and their fates are bound together.

<sup>15</sup> Note how Moses’s request for a spirit-filled leader (“do not let the people be like sheep without a shepherd,” Num 27:17), is fulfilled by Joshua (Num 27:18–23), with the result that the people “obey” (Deut 34:9). This development, a vindication of Moses in the near term, when placed into the prospective “success :: failure > failure :: success” framework of the book, anticipates a distant-term vindication of Moses, after the people have disobeyed. The motif in Num 27:17 appears to underlie Isa 53:6 (“all we like sheep have gone astray”).

<sup>16</sup> In light of this, the comment in Deut 34:9 comes as a surprise; see Jean-Pierre SONNET, “Redefining the Plot of Deuteronomy – From End to Beginning: The Import of Deut 34:9,” in *Deuteronomium – Tora für eine neue Generation*, ed. Georg Fischer, Dominik Markl, and Simone Paganini, BZAR 17 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 37–49.

<sup>17</sup> See Deut 29:3 (וּלֹא־יִתֵּן יְהוָה לְכֶם לֵב לְדַעַת וְעֵינַיִם לְרֹאוֹת וְאָזְנִים לְשִׁמֹּעַ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה); on the connection with Isa 6:9–10, see the discussion below.

<sup>18</sup> C. H. CORNILL, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1891), 71: “Da ist nun zunächst klar, dass das Lied zwar im Ausdrucke manches Eigenthümliche hat, aber in den Gedanken jeder Originalität entbehrt: es ist gewissermaassen ein Compendium der prophetischen Theologie, durch und durch voll Reminiscenzen an ältere Propheten.” See further OTTO, “Deuteronomy as the Legal Completion and Prophetic Finale of the Pentateuch,” 185–86.

itself back onto the plains of Moab; that can locate itself within the temporal sequence and analogical parallels between generations set up by the book; a community that, like Moses, will be obedient unto death, laying down its own life in service to a rebellious people and as a witness to the nations (Deut 32:36, 43).

In short, the book of Deuteronomy sets up an expectation not only for a future “prophet like Moses” (Deut 18:15–19), but also for a prophetic community—i.e., a community of suffering servants, who, like Moses, will serve as witnesses, calling the people to obedience to God and his Torah. These “servants” are mentioned as characters within the song, but the song itself, as Moses’s enduring final prophetic testimony to the people, prefigures these servants and their testimony. It does so in part by means of the projected parallel relationship between successive, analogically linked communities in the past, present, and future. And it does so in part by means of its allusive literary relationship to the prophetic books themselves, which functionally serves to establish the song of Moses as the very model—the conceptual blueprint—for a prophetic “book” of the kind found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the book of Deuteronomy and the prophetic corpus together anticipate the creation of a righteous community of servants. This is the vindication of Moses.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. The Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as Prophets “Like Moses”

The portrayal of Moses in Deuteronomy provides the reader with a framework for understanding the presentation of later prophets. Just as Moses the Servant of Yhwh speaks of Israel’s failure and future success on the eve of entrance into the land, so the later Moses-like prophets also speak of Israel’s failure and future success on the eve of exile from the land. Like Moses, these prophets

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<sup>19</sup> For some of these relationships and for the scholarly recognition of them, see further below.

<sup>20</sup> See OTTO, “Moses the Suffering Prophet,” 139–40, on Deut 29:28: “This verse differentiates between the individual and collective fates reflecting a postexilic attitude to retribution. Reward and punishment in Moses’ individual fate will remain a secret, which belongs to God, different from the fate of doom and salvation of the people. The fate of God’s servants, which do not fit to the strict doctrine remains a secret, so when prophets were imprisoned or killed, because they delivered God’s messages, so in 2 Chron 16:10; 24:20–22. Different from Moses’ fate the collective fate of the people is for Deut 29:28 not a secret but revealed in the Book of Deuteronomy. The verse reflects the amphibolic character of the text of Deuteronomy saying that the meaning of the text is not hidden and this includes also the subtext of Moses’ prophecies as this verse stands in the middle of a prophecy at a turning point between the prophecy of doom and salvation.”



are faithful, though despised and rejected by their own doomed generation, the generation predicted in Deut 31 to fail. In a variety of ways, the depictions of these prophets have been coordinated with the depiction of Moses.<sup>21</sup> Previous research has shown how this is accomplished in the cases of Isaiah,<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah,<sup>23</sup> and Ezekiel.<sup>24</sup> The result is that these prophets are prophets “like Moses” (Deut 18:18).<sup>25</sup> A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Konrad SCHMID, “The Prophets after the Law or the Law after the Prophets? Terminological, Biblical, and Historical Perspectives,” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch. Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz, Bernard Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 841–50, esp. 848: “Taken together, there is a historical realm of possible mutual influence reaching from approximately the eighth to the fourth centuries. It is likely not only that the Pentateuch influenced the prophets but that the influences ran in the other direction as well.” See also Reinhard ACHENBACH, “‘A Prophet like Moses’ (Deuteronomy 18:15) – ‘No Prophet like Moses’ (Deuteronomy 34:10): Some Observations on the Relation between the Pentateuch and the Latter Prophets,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 435–58, esp. 441, 451.

<sup>22</sup> On Isaiah as a “prophet like Moses,” see Norman HABEL, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narrative,” *ZAW* 77.3 (1965): 297–323 (here 309–14); Martin O’KANE, “Isaiah: A Prophet in the Footsteps of Moses,” *JSOT* 69 (1996): 29–51; Alphonso GROENEWALD, “Isaiah 1:2–3 and Isaiah 6: Isaiah ‘a prophet like Moses’ (Dt 18:18),” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68.1 (2012): 1–7; idem, “The Role and Function of *Ṣedaqa* and Torah in the Introduction to the Book of Isaiah,” in *Ṣedaqa and Torah in Postexilic Discourse*, ed. Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher and Maria Häusl, LHBOTS 640 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 71–85 (here 76).

<sup>23</sup> On Jeremiah as a “prophet like Moses,” see HABEL, “Call Narrative,” 306–7; Christopher R. SEITZ, “The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah,” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 3–27; R. E. CLEMENTS, “Jeremiah 1–25 and the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets. Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, JSOTSup 152 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 94–113; ACHENBACH, “Prophet like Moses,” 446–50; Benedetta ROSSI, “Reshaping Jeremiah: Scribal strategies and the prophet like Moses,” *JSOT* 44.4 (2020): 575–93.

<sup>24</sup> On Ezekiel as a “prophet like Moses,” see Henry MCKEATING, “Ezekiel the ‘Prophet Like Moses’?” *JSOT* 61 (1994): 97–109; Risa Levitt KOHN, “A Prophet Like Moses? Rethinking Ezekiel’s Relationship to the Torah,” *ZAW* 114 (2002): 236–54 (esp. 249–50); Rebecca G. S. IDESTROM, “Echoes of the Book of Exodus in Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 33.4 (2009): 489–510.

<sup>25</sup> On the role of Deut 18:15–18 in “open[ing] the gate for covenantal texts that were not yet written but could be written by the scribes of prophetic scrolls in the future,” see Reinhard ACHENBACH, “‘The Unwritten Text of the Covenant’: Torah in the Mouth of the Prophets,” in *Covenant in the Persian Period: From Genesis to Chronicles*, ed. Richard J. Bautch and Gary N. Knoppers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 93–107, here 96.

<sup>26</sup> The same strategy of the presentation of a prophet after the pattern of Moses can be seen in early Christian texts, in the Matthean and Lukan depictions of Jesus; see Dale C. ALLISON, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Robert F. O’TOOLE, “The Parallels between Jesus and Moses,” *BTB* 20 (1990): 22–29.

### 3.1 *The Commissioning of the Prophets like Moses*

Some of the closest connections between these prophetic figures can be seen in the accounts of their commissioning.<sup>27</sup> Like Moses, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are “sent” (Exod 3:10, 12–15; Isa 6:8; Jer 1:7; Ezek 2:3, 4; 3:5, 6) and are told to “go and speak” to the people (Exod 3:16, 18; 4:12; Isa 6:9; Jer 1:7; Ezek 2:4, 7; 3:1, 4, 11). Both Moses and the prophets are reassured, either by a promise of Yhwh’s presence (Exod 4:12, 15; Jer 1:8b, 19b; 15:20b) or by a promise of Yhwh’s empowerment (Exod 4:12, 15; Jer 1:18; 15:20a; Ezek 3:8–9), and they are told not to be afraid (Jer 1:8, 17; Ezek 2:6; 3:9; cf. Exod 3:6). In Isaiah’s case, the motifs of prophetic empowerment and encouragement have been relocated and transformed: they have been moved outside the commission report proper and placed in Isa 8:11–18, the motif of empowerment has been turned into an expression of confidence, and the motif of encouragement has been widened to include not only the prophet but also the prophet’s followers.<sup>28</sup>

Moses’ repeated objections to his commission (Exod 3:11; 4:10, 13) have also been taken up and transformed in various ways in the other prophetic commissioning reports: Isaiah does not protest but volunteers (Isa 6:8), Jeremiah’s single (and understandable) protest is easily overcome (Jer 1:6–7), and any protest on the part of Ezekiel is forestalled and internalized (Ezek 2:8; 3:14). The giving of confirmatory “signs” to Moses (Exod 4:1–9) has also been transformed in the depictions of the other prophets. Isaiah and his children function as “signs” (Isa 8:18); Jeremiah receives two confirmatory visions (Jer 1:11–14); both Ezekiel himself and his actions are said to be “signs” for the people (Ezek 4:3; 12:6, 11; 24:24, 27).

Finally, the motifs of speech and Yhwh’s words in a prophet’s mouth appear in all these stories, with variations that appear to be creative literary modifications of the foundational Mosaic pattern. Moses complains that he is not a “man of words” and that he is “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Exod 4:10) and “uncircumcised of lips” (Exod 6:12). In response, Yhwh identifies himself as the one who “assigns a mouth to humanity” and makes people “mute or deaf, seeing or blind” (Exod 4:11). He then promises to “be with [Moses’] mouth” and—after Moses’ reluctance—tells Moses that he can “put the words in [Aaron’s] mouth” (Exod 4:12, 15). In Yhwh’s statement that he will raise up a prophet “like Moses” (Deut 18:18), he promises to “put [his] words in the

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<sup>27</sup> See HABEL, “Call Narrative.”

<sup>28</sup> Note the shift from singular address in Isa 8:11 to plural in vv. 13–14, and the references to “faithful witnesses” (8:2) and “disciples” (8:16). On Isa 8:11–16, Williamson remarks: “The present passage . . . indicat[es] that for a certain group, no doubt to be identified with Isaiah’s supporters, there was encouragement to stay separate without fear”; see H. G. M. WILLIAMSON, *Isaiah 6–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 281 (also 284, 294).

mouth of the prophet.” In the book of Isaiah, these motifs appear *before* the prophet’s commissioning proper, in his cry that he is a “man of unclean lips” (Isa 6:5). Only after a seraph touches a coal to his “mouth” and announces that his sin is removed (Isa 6:7) does Isaiah volunteer for the prophetic task. In his case, this amounts to ensuring the “blindness” and “deafness” of the people (Isa 6:9–10)—the same motifs that were present in Exod 4:11. In the book of Jeremiah, we find a speech-related objection similar to that of Moses: Jeremiah says that he “does not know how to speak” (Jer 1:6). Yhwh then touches his mouth and announces, “I have placed my words in your mouth” (Jer 1:9). Later in the book, Jeremiah says, “Your words were found, and I ate them” (Jer 15:16). Finally, Ezekiel is commanded to “speak [Yhwh’s] words” (Ezek 2:7; 3:4), a command that is accompanied by an order to “open your mouth and eat” a scroll (Ezek 2:8–3:3).<sup>29</sup> Here, Yhwh’s words are quite literally placed in the prophet’s mouth. In language that recalls Moses’ complaint in Exod 4:10, Yhwh then informs Ezekiel that he is not being sent to “a people difficult of speech and heavy of tongue”; ironically, such a people would listen to Ezekiel, but Israel will not (Ezek 3:5–6).

### 3.2 *The Intercession of the Prophets like Moses*

Moses is presented as the paradigmatic prophetic intercessor, a role which he repeatedly carries out (Exod 32:11–13, 30–32; Num 11:1–2; 12:13; 14:13–19; 16:20–24; 21:7; Deut 9:18–29; 10:10). It is not surprising that his role has shaped the presentation of other prophets, though the motif is transformed in various ways.<sup>30</sup>

The prophet Isaiah is not strongly presented as an intercessor, most likely because his role is defined in terms of facilitating the people’s blindness and deafness (Isa 6:9–10).<sup>31</sup> However, some have seen a subtle intercessory element in Isaiah’s response “How long, O Lord?” (עַד־מַתַּי אֲדַנִּי, 6:11a).<sup>32</sup> Insofar

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<sup>29</sup> Note the plus in MT Ezek 3:1, which looks like a conflation of Ezek 2:8 and Jer 15:16. This suggests that early readers were aware of the connections between the depictions of the prophets.

<sup>30</sup> See Lena-Sofia TIEMEYER, “God’s Hidden Compassion,” *TynBul* 57.2 (2006): 191–213.

<sup>31</sup> Is this a deliberate inversion of the role of Yhwh’s prophetic servants who summon Israel to return (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 25:4–6)? See ACHENBACH, “The Unwritten Text of the Covenant,” 97.

<sup>32</sup> So Mark J. BODA, “‘Uttering Precious Rather Than Worthless Words’: Divine Patience and Impatience with Lament in Isaiah and Jeremiah,” in *Why? . . . How Long? Studies on Voice(s) of Lamentation Rooted in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Leann Snow Flesher, Carol J. Dempsey, and Mark J. Boda (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 83–99, here 85: “Faced with the prospect of hardening the hearts of his nation, it appears that the prophet responds with muted protest, leveraging the tradition of lament.” So also HABEL, “Call Narratives,” 312: “Thus, in Isaiah too the prophetic ‘I’ is not absent”; Sheldon BLANK, “Traces

as this statement is a recognized element in lament psalms (e.g., Pss 6:4; 74:10; 80:5; 90:13; cf. 13:2; 89:47), this is quite possible.

In Jer 7:16; 11:14, Yhwh actually commands the prophet Jeremiah not to intercede.<sup>33</sup> As Tiemeyer has argued, the suppression of intercession seems to be part of an argument running through a number of prophetic books explaining how Yhwh can judge his people if he is by nature gracious and likely to forgive.<sup>34</sup> In two instances, Jeremiah is depicted as interceding for the people (Jer 14:7–9, 19–22)—and each time, Yhwh immediately rejects his attempt at intercession and warns him not to do so (Jer 14:10–12; 15:1–3).<sup>35</sup>

In the book of Ezekiel, the role of the prophet Ezekiel as intercessor is suppressed even further.<sup>36</sup> He and his community are already suffering in exile, and the fall of Jerusalem is presented as a foregone conclusion (Ezek 4–5). If the reader had any doubts, they are removed in Ezek 14:12–21; here Yhwh says that should exemplary righteous figures be present, they could not even save their own family members, let alone the city.<sup>37</sup> Because Yhwh has fed Ezekiel a scroll containing “lamentation, mourning, and woe” (Ezek 2:8–3:4) and because Yhwh controls his mouth (Ezek 3:26–27), the prophet is not free to

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of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah,” *HUCA* 27 (1956): 81–92, esp. 82; Brevard S. CHILDS, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 57.

<sup>33</sup> Jer 11:11b, 14b seem to have influenced MT Ezek 8:18. On the lack of intercession in the book of Ezekiel, see the discussion below.

<sup>34</sup> See TIEMEYER, “God’s Hidden Compassion”; see further Thomas M. RAITT, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 35–58, for his discussion of the “radicalization” of Yhwh’s judgment.

<sup>35</sup> Note the coordination of Jer 15:1–3 with Ezek 14:12–21, and note also that the refusal to accept intercession in Jer 15:1–3 has been bolstered in v. 4 with the Deuteronomistic explanation (2 Kgs 21:10–15; 23:26–27; 24:3–4) for why Jerusalem had to fall. In another instance, Jeremiah refers to intercession that he offered in the past (Jer 18:20b), but then asks Yhwh for vengeance and not forgiveness, because the people for whom he interceded have repaid his good with evil (Jer 18:19–20a, 21–23). In yet one more instance, Jeremiah seems to be described as making an attempt at provoking intercession by proxy (Jer 36:5–7). On the breakdown of the Mosaic office of intercession in Jeremiah, see further SEITZ, “The Prophet Moses,” 11–12.

<sup>36</sup> See TIEMEYER, “God’s Hidden Compassion,” 211–12; so also Hermann SPIECKERMANN, “The Conception and Prehistory of the Idea of Vicarious Suffering in the Old Testament,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 1–15 (here 12–13). Part of the reason the prophet Ezekiel is not presented as an intercessor has to do with how his role is described in relation to the fall of the city of Jerusalem (Ezek 24:25–27; 33:21–22), which has been irrevocably determined. It is also undoubtedly a by-product of the book’s “radical theocentricity”: all transformative action is performed by Yhwh, who acts for the sake of his own name (Ezek 36:16–32).

<sup>37</sup> Note the coordination of Ezek 14:12–21 with Jer 15:1–3. While the statement in the latter passage describes Yhwh’s rejection of Jeremiah’s attempt to intercede, at this point in the book of Ezekiel no such attempt was made.

intercede. Still, both Zimmerli and Greenberg suggest that Ezekiel's outcries in Ezek 9:8; 11:13 are instances of intercession.<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, the interrogative form of Ezekiel's speech is reminiscent of Moses' and Aaron's question in Num 16:22, which in context does successfully function as intercession (see Num 16:20–27a). In each case, what appears to be a mere question seems to function as an appeal. On the other hand, it is clear from Yhwh's response to Ezekiel that no intercession will be accepted (Ezek 9:9–10).<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3 *The Suffering of the Prophets like Moses*

The life of Moses is presented as the life of a suffering prophet. He experiences suffering and the threat of death along with his people at the hands of Pharaoh (Exod 1:15–2:15). But he also suffers at the hands of his own people: Moses' contemporaries do not listen to him (Exod 6:9; 7:13; 16:19–20; 32:1); they constantly complain to him (Exod 14:11–12; 15:24; 16:2–3; 17:2–4; Num 20:2–5; 21:4–5); they verbally oppose and slander him (Num 12:1–2; 16:1–3, 12–14, 41–42); they even attempt to kill him (Num 14:10).

The same pattern of suffering experienced by Moses can be seen in the presentation of other prophets. Isaiah undergoes humiliation by going “naked and barefoot” for three years in order to symbolically act out divine judgment (Isa 20:2–3). He also experiences hostile verbal reactions from his audience, who resists him and ignores his message (Isa 7:11–13; 28:14; 30:9–11). These negative experiences are inextricably linked to Isaiah's prophetic task and to his obedience to Yhwh.<sup>40</sup>

Jeremiah is portrayed as suffering along with the people insofar as he experiences exile with them (temporarily in Jer 40:1–5, and on a permanent basis in 43:5–7). This is comparable to the experience of Moses, who experiences hardship in the wilderness as the leader of the people. But more often, Jeremiah is described as suffering *at the hands of* his contemporaries: they ignore his message (Jer 6:10; 7:27; 18:18; 36:23–24; 37:2, 27; 38:15; 43:1–4; 44:15–19);

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<sup>38</sup> Walther ZIMMERLI, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 249: “When Ezekiel breaks out in a cry of intercession to Yahweh at this terrible event commencing in the midst of the temple then he is acting as a true prophet”; Moshe GREENBERG, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 203: “These are the only instances of Ezekiel's attempt to intercede for his people, and they may have to do with his (visionary) presence amidst the slain. The otherwise striking omission of intercession from the book is perhaps connected with its unconditional message of doom . . .”

<sup>39</sup> As the reader discovers in Ezek 11:14–20, the destruction of Jerusalem is *not* in fact the “destruction of the entire remnant of Israel”; hope lies in Yhwh's future transformation of the exiles. But this transformation is not presented as the result of intercession.

<sup>40</sup> See Isa 8:17, “And I will wait for Yhwh, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob.”

slander, mock, and falsely accuse him (12:6; 15:10, 15; 17:15; 18:18–20; 20:7, 8, 10; 29:26–27; 37:13–14; 43:2); threaten him with death (11:19–21), arrest and imprison him (20:1–2; 37:14–16, 21; 38:28), beat him (20:1–2; 37:15), and attempt to kill him (26:7–11; 38:1–6, cf. vv. 9–10, 16). In all this he is clearly depicted as an innocent sufferer (Jer 15:10b; 18:20; 37:18). Moreover, Jeremiah's suffering is depicted as experienced because of his faithfulness to Yhwh: Jeremiah says that he "bears reproach on account of" Yhwh (Jer 15:15, שאתי עליך חרפה) and that Yhwh's word has become "reproach and derision" for him (20:8, היה דבר־יהוה לי לחרפה ולקלס). He experiences profound depression, humiliation, and isolation as a direct result of his prophetic task (Jer 15:17–18; 20:7–10, 14–18).

Ezekiel is also depicted as suffering along with the people. The book of Ezekiel makes repeated references to the prophet's exilic situation (e.g., Ezek 1:1, 3; 3:11, 15; 33:21), and depicts Ezekiel being told to physically act out the siege of Jerusalem (4:3), the famine in the city (4:9–11, 16–17; 12:17–19), the degradation of captives (5:1), the trauma of deportation (12:1–11), and the state of numbed shock experienced by those who hear news of the city's fall (24:15–24). Ezekiel is said to "be a sign" for the people by these actions (Ezek 12:6, 11; 24:24). In all these instances, the prophet embodies the suffering of the people. Even more space is given to describing the suffering Ezekiel undergoes at Yhwh's command, as part of his prophetic task. He is described as internalizing divine judgment (Ezek 2:8–3:3, 10), experiencing restricted speech (3:26), and performing a variety of humiliating and physically uncomfortable symbolic actions (4:4–6, 9–11, 12–15; 5:1).<sup>41</sup> He is told that Yhwh will take the life of his wife, but is prohibited from engaging in conventional practices of mourning and must keep silent (Ezek 24:15–18).<sup>42</sup> The reader is struck by the book's emphasis on the physicality of Ezekiel's experience: it describes Yhwh forcibly manipulating and restricting the prophet's body in a variety of ways (Ezek 3:12, 14, 22, 26; 4:8; 8:1, 3). Finally, Ezekiel is described as suffering at the hands of his fellow-exiles: as is usual for a prophet, no one responds positively to what he says (Ezek 3:7; 33:30–33; cf. 2:3–5), and the reference in Ezek 3:25 seems to point to some kind of constraint placed on the prophet by the people.

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<sup>41</sup> Because of Ezekiel's priestly status, the actions commanded in Ezek 4:12–13 are portrayed as objectionable to him (v. 14; cf. Lev 19:7–8; 22:8; Deut 23:12–14), and the action commanded in Ezek 5:1 would be similarly understood (cf. Lev 21:5).

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Block remarks, "The price Ezekiel is asked to pay for the privilege of serving as God's agent is high. More than any other prophet, even Hosea, Ezekiel plays the role of a suffering servant; the medium has truly become the message. Personal feelings are sacrificed that he might in his body bear witness to the inexorable work of God in the lives of his people"; Daniel L. BLOCK, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 793–94.

To sum up: the presentations of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been coordinated with the presentation of Moses as a prophet. They are commissioned in similar ways; they suffer in similar ways; they intercede in similar ways—or are denied the ability to intercede, in ways that highlight the connection. The role and characteristics of a “prophet like Moses” seem to be well-established. But the depiction of these prophets in terms of Moses does not simply look backwards, but also forwards. Like Moses in Deuteronomy, these “prophets like Moses” pre-figure a future Moses-like suffering servant, who, after the exile, will successfully create a new community of servants and bring about the realization of Yhwh’s plans for Israel through Moses.

#### 4. The Isaian Servant(s) as the Vindication of Moses

As shown above, Deuteronomy contains both pessimistic and optimistic outlooks in which the fates of Moses and the people are intertwined. Moses will die before entering the land because of his failure (Deut 1:37; 3:23–27; 4:21–22; 32:48–52; 34:1–6), and the people (in the future, as in the past) will break the covenant and go into exile (Deut 31:16–21, 27, 29; 32:15–30).<sup>43</sup> But we also see expressed the hope for (1) Yhwh’s continued instruction through a prophet “like Moses,” whose mouth will contain Yhwh’s words (Deut 18:15–19); (2) the creation of a righteous community after exile (Deut 30:1–9; 32:43); and (3) Yhwh’s compassion toward “his servants” (Deut 32:36, 43). Each of these three motifs appear in Isaiah 40–66, with the result that the individual Servant figure and the group called the “servants” together represent the vindication of the prophet Moses and the realization of his efforts.

##### 4.1 *The Patterning of the Isaian Servant on Moses and the Prophets*

The Isaian Servant is depicted as a prophetic figure,<sup>44</sup> patterned on Moses and the Moses-like prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.<sup>45</sup> His title, “Servant of

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<sup>43</sup> See OTTO, “Moses the Suffering Prophet.”

<sup>44</sup> “All that has been said above justifies the view that the figure of the Servant in some sort sums up the entire prophetic movement and its experiences down through the ages”; so Sigmund MOWINCKEL, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 233. So also Gerhard von RAD, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 2: The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1965), 259.

<sup>45</sup> For the earlier recognition of the relationship of the Isaian Servant to Moses, the earlier “servant of Yhwh,” see the comments of R. Samlai on Isa 53:12 in *b. Sotah* 14a. For the modern appreciation of this relationship, see G. P. HUGENBERGER, “The Servant of the Lord in the ‘Servant Songs’ of Isaiah: a Second Moses Figure,” in *The Lord’s Anointed. Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 105–40; Joseph BLENKINSOPP, “The

Yhwh” (Isa 42:1; 49:3, 5, 6; 52:13; 53:11) is used of Moses (Num 1:7; Deut 34:5), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), and other prophets (Jer 7:25). Like earlier prophets, the Servant is appointed by Yhwh:<sup>46</sup> just as Moses is “called” (קרא, quite literally in Exod 3:4), so also is the Servant (Isa 42:6; 49:1); just as Yhwh knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb (אצרך מבטן, Jer 1:5), so the Isaian Servant is formed from the womb (יצרי מבטן, Isa 49:5; cf. v. 1).<sup>47</sup> Like Moses and other prophets, the Servant is empowered for service by YHWH (Isa 42:1, 6; 49:2; 50:7; cf. Exod 4:1–9, 12; Jer 1:8b, 18–19; 15:20–21; Ezek 3:8–9), and Yhwh’s “words are in [his] mouth” (Isa 51:16; 59:21; cf. Exod 4:15; Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9; 15:16, 19; Ezek 2:8–3:3). Like Moses and other prophets, the Servant is taught by Yhwh and is in turn a teacher of others (Isa 42:4; 50:4; cf. Exod 4:12; Deut 4:1, 5, 14; 6:1; Isa 1:10; 8:16, 20; Jer 7:1–7; Ezek 18).

Baltzer has pointed out a number of other analogies between the descriptions of Moses and the Servant: Yhwh “puts [his] spirit on” (נתן רוחי על, Isa 42:1) the Servant, a construction that is used elsewhere only in Num 11:25, 25 where Yhwh takes the spirit that is on Moses and “puts his spirit on” (נתן רוחו על) the seventy elders so that they may prophesy. The Servant will “not grow faint” (לא יכה, Isa 42:4) in bringing forth God’s *torah*, a description that is also used to describe Moses’ vigor in Deut 34:7 (לא־כהתה עינו). The description of the Servant’s mission in Isa 42:6–7 is concluded with the statement “I am Yhwh; that is my name” (אני יהוה הוא שמי, Isa 42:8), a statement that seems to be modelled on the revelation of the divine name to Moses in Exod 3:15 ( . . . יהוה שמי ). And just as Moses “brings out” (הוציא, Exod 3:10–12) the people and brings forth *torah*, so the Servant “brings out” justice and prisoners (Isa 42:1, 3, 7).<sup>48</sup>

Just as other prophets suffer along with the people (Moses on the journey in the wilderness; Jeremiah and Ezekiel in exile, Jer 40:1; Ezek 1:1), the Servant

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Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, VTSup 70/1 (New York: Brill, 1997), 155–75 (here 158–60, 164–65); R. E. CLEMENTS, “Isaiah 53 and the Restoration of Israel,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. William H. Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 39–54; Christopher R. SEITZ, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible VI*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 307–552 (here 464); Klaus BALTZER, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), esp. 20–22; see also 125–36, 298–300, 306–11, 338–43, 363–64, 393–98, 404–29 (though Baltzer’s dramatic model of Deutero-Isaiah detracts from his assessment of the significance of the analogies between Moses and the Servant).

<sup>46</sup> Compare Isa 42:1, 6; 49:1, 5 with Exod 3–4; Isa 6; Jer 1:4–14, 17–19; Ezek 2–3.

<sup>47</sup> Note that in the narrative logic of Exodus 1–2, Moses is also “called from the womb.”

<sup>48</sup> BALTZER, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 127, 130, 133.



also shares in the suffering of the people (Isa 53:3, 4).<sup>49</sup> Just as the prophets suffer at the hands of the people,<sup>50</sup> so too does the Servant, who is despised, rejected, beaten, and afflicted (Isa 49:7; 50:6; 53:3, 7). The similarities between the depiction of Jeremiah (who has long been viewed as an exemplary suffering prophetic servant)<sup>51</sup> and the Isaian Servant are so pronounced that Saadia Gaon believed the Isaian Servant to be the prophet Jeremiah,<sup>52</sup> though modern scholarship has accounted for these similarities under the rubric of literary dependence.<sup>53</sup> For example: Jeremiah is compared to “a tame lamb led to slaughter”

<sup>49</sup> BALTZER (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 407–8) compares the Servant’s experience of sickness to Moses’ experience of leprosy (Exod 4:1, 6).

<sup>50</sup> For the suffering of Moses, see e.g. Num 12:1–2; 14:10; 16:1–3, 12–14, 41–42. For the suffering of Jeremiah, see e.g. Jer 12:6; 15:10, 15; 17:18; 20:1–2; 26:7–11; 37:11–16; 38:1–6.

<sup>51</sup> On the presentation of Jeremiah as an exemplary sufferer, see Sheldon BLANK, “The Prophet as Paradigm,” in *Prophetic Thought: Essays and Addresses* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977), 23–34; esp. 31–32; A. H. J. GUNNEWEG, “Konfession oder Interpretation im Jeremiabuch,” *ZThK* 67 (1970): 395–416, here 399: “Jeremia ist der exemplarisch leidende Gerechte”; Peter WELTEN, “Leiden und Leidenserfahrung im Buch Jeremia: Herrn Prof. D. Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag,” *ZThK* 74.2 (1977): 123–50, here 145: “Mit der Einfügung dieser Stücke in den Kontext des Jeremiabuches wird der Prophet, so wie er uns in diesem ganzen Buch überliefert wird, insgesamt als ein leidender Gerechter interpretiert”; Hannes BEZZEL, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie*, BZAW 378 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 40, 55 (note however his qualifications, pp. 56, 286); idem, “The Suffering of the Elect. Variations on a Theological Problem in Jer 15:10–21,” in *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Hans M. Barstad and Reinhard G. Kratz, BZAW 388 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 48–73.

<sup>52</sup> See Joseph ALOBAIDI (trans. and ed.), *The Messiah in Isaiah 53: The Commentaries of Saadia Gaon, Salmon ben Yeruham, and Yefet ben Eli on Is. 52:13–53:12* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 46, 59.

<sup>53</sup> For the literary construction of the Isaian Suffering Servant on the model of the prophet Jeremiah, see Bernhard DUHM, *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1875), 289; Fred A. FARLEY, “Jeremiah and ‘The Suffering Servant of Jehovah’ in Deutero-Isaiah,” *ExpTim* 38.11 (1927): 521–24 (see e.g. 523: “Jeremiah would naturally be thought of as ‘The Servant of the Lord’; he would even furnish features for the picture of the ideal ‘Servant’ or ‘prophet’”); Sheldon H. BLANK, *Prophetic Faith in Isaiah* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), 100–104; idem, “The Prophet as Paradigm,” 31–32; Benjamin SOMMER, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusions in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 61–62, 64–66; Patricia Tull WILLEY, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 193–97; BALTZER, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 340; Katherine J. DELL, “The Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah: Jeremiah Revisited,” in *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms. A Festschrift to honour Professor John Emerton for his eightieth birthday*, ed. Katherine J. Dell, Graham Davies and Yee Von Koh; VTSup 135 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 119–134; Ulrich BERGES, “Servant and Suffering in Isaiah and Jeremiah: Who Borrowed from Whom?” *OTE* 25.2 (2012): 247–59. Fischer argues that the direction of dependence flows in the other direction (that is, the depiction of the prophet Jeremiah was constructed on the Isaian Suffering Servant); see Georg FISCHER, “Jeremiah,

(כבש אלוף יובל לטבוח, Jer 11:19a), and the Isaian Servant is described as “a sheep led to the slaughter” (שה לטבח יובל, Isa 53:7); Jeremiah’s enemies exclaim, “let us cut him off from the land of the living” (ונכרתנו מארץ חיים, Jer 11:19b), and the Isaian Servant is described as “cut off from the land of the living” (נגזר מארץ חיים, Isa 53:8); both Jeremiah and the Isaian Servant experience “pain(s)” (מכאבות, Isa 53:3; כאב, Jer 15:18) and “trouble” (עמל, Isa 53:11; Jer 20:18).<sup>54</sup>

Like Moses, the Servant intercedes for the people (Isa 53:12; cf. Exod 32:11–13, 30–32; Num 11:1–2; 12:13; 14:13–19; 16:20–22; 21:7). And just as Moses willingly offers his life (Exod 32:31–32), so does the Servant.<sup>55</sup> As Coats explains,

The suffering servant poem from the Second Isaiah depicts the death of the new Moses (Isa. 53.8). But the death of this particular servant did not occur for his own rebellion. He carried the rebellions of his people. And the result was death, like Moses cut off from the promised land, like Moses ‘stricken for the transgressions of my people.’ But the critical point is that the salvation offered the people of God by this new Moses is explicitly healing. ‘With his stripes we are healed.’ The death of the servant brings healing, restoration to the people.<sup>56</sup>

Yet Isaiah 53 takes the motif of laying down one’s life even further than Exod 32:32, for the Servant actually dies instead of and for the benefit of the people (Isa 53:5–6, 11–12), as part of Yhwh’s mysterious plan (Isa 53:10).<sup>57</sup> As was demonstrated above, the fates of Moses and the people were intertwined: both fail to “believe” (Num 20:12; Deut 1:32), and both experience Yhwh’s anger, resulting in their inability to enter the land (Deut 1:34–35, 37). In Isaiah, the relationship between Yhwh’s intercessory agent and the people is somewhat different: the Servant is innocent, yet Yhwh causes the people’s iniquity to

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God’s Suffering Servant,” in *Jeremiah Studies: From Text and Contexts to Theology*, FAT 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 249–66; idem, “Riddles of Reference: ‘I’ and ‘We’ in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah: The Relation of the Suffering Characters in the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah,” *OTE* 25.2 (2012): 277–91, esp. 288: “The *portrayal of the prophet Jeremiah*, especially in his confessions, but also in his vocation (Jer 1), can be seen as a *realisation of the suffering servant*, as he is depicted especially in Isa 49 and 53” [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>54</sup> See also the use of הפגיע in Isa 53:6; Jer 15:11 and לקח in Isa 53:8; Jer 15:15.

<sup>55</sup> Because of the Servant’s obedient submission to death, he will “prolong days” (אריך ימים, Isa 53:10)—a statement that is, as BALTZER (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 422) notes, a characteristic utterance of the Moses of Deuteronomy, who promises that the people’s obedience will result in “prolonging days” (e.g., Deut 4:40; 5:16, 33; 6:2; 11:8–9; 22:7; 25:15; 32:47).

<sup>56</sup> George W. COATS, *The Moses Tradition*, JSOTSup 161 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 141.

<sup>57</sup> Note that even though Moses’ offer of his own life is not accepted (Exod 32:32–33), his intercession secures the people’s survival, YHWH’s continued presence, and the establishment of the covenant (Exod 32:11–13, 30–32; 33:3, 12–16; 34:1ff.).

affect him (Isa 53:6), and he “bears their sins” (Isa 53:11, 12).<sup>58</sup> The Isaian Servant is portrayed as analogical to Moses not in Moses’ failure, but in Moses’ intercessory success. And just as the account of Moses laying down his life shares features with the story of Abraham’s test in Gen 22, so also does the description of the Servant in Isaiah.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.2 *The Creation of a Righteous Community of Suffering Intercessors: the “Servants”*

The book of Deuteronomy depicts the people of Israel as unfaithful not only in the past (Deut 1:26, 27, 32, 43), but also—from the temporal perspective of the book—in the future. Despite Moses’ strenuous efforts to teach them Yhwh’s laws, statutes, and ordinances, the people will break the covenant and go into exile (Deut 31:16–21, 27, 29). But the book of Deuteronomy also expresses hope for the formation of a righteous community in the future. Deuteronomy 32 in particular focuses on this pessimism (Deut 32:15–30) and optimism (Deut 32:36, 43). We find the very same perspectives about Israel’s history in Isaiah, in some cases expressed in the same words. There is good reason to conclude that Isaiah 40–66 and Deuteronomy (and in particular Deut 32) have been shaped in light of each other.<sup>60</sup>

The pessimistic assessment of the people in Deut 29:3 as not having “a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear” appears in the prophetic corpus (Isa 6:9–

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<sup>58</sup> See SPIECKERMANN, “Vicarious Suffering,” 11. For the possible influence of Ezek 4:4 on Isa 53:12, see Richard KRAETZSCHMAR, *Das Buch Ezechiel übersetzt und erklärt*, HAT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), 46; ZIMMERLI, *Ezekiel 1*, 164–65.

<sup>59</sup> See DE ANDRADO, *The Akedah Servant Complex*, 67–94; more cautiously, LEVENSON, *Death and Resurrection*, 201.

<sup>60</sup> On the connections between Deut 32 and Isaiah, see CORNILL, *Einleitung*, 71; Karl BUDDE, *Das Lied Mose’s Deut. 32 erläutert und übersetzt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920), 45; Ernst SELLIN, “Wann wurde das Moselied Dtn 32 gedichtet?” *ZAW* 43 (1925): 161–73; Sten HIDAL, “Some Reflections on Deuteronomy 32,” *ASTI* 11 (1977/78): 15–21 (here 15); Michael FISHBANE, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 478–79; Bernard GOSSE, “Deutéronome 32,1–43 et les rédactions des livres d’Ezéchiel et d’Isaïe,” *ZAW* 107 (1995): 110–17 (here 114–16); Paul Allan SMITH, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth, and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66*, VTSup 62 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 143–44, 151; Paul SANDERS, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, OtSt 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 75, 421; SOMMER, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 134–39, 273–74; Hyun Chul Paul KIM, “The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1–43) in Isaiah 40–55,” in *God’s Word for Our World, Vol. 1: Biblical Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, Deborah L. Ellens, Rolf P. Knierim and Isaac Kalimi (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 147–71; Thomas A. KEISER, “The Song of Moses a Basis for Isaiah’s Prophecy,” *VT* 55.4 (2005): 486–500; Eckart OTTO, “Moses Abschiedslied in Deuteronomium 32. Ein Zeugnis der Kanonsbildung in der Hebräischen Bibel,” in *Die Tora: Studien zum Pentateuch. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, BZAR 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 641–79 (here 657–71).

10; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2),<sup>61</sup> and is particularly pervasive in Isaiah.<sup>62</sup> This motif of Israel's blindness and deafness is taken up in Isa 42:18–20, and the following verses spell out the results, which are also identical to Deuteronomy's pessimistic evaluation: although Israel was given Yhwh's law, they failed to obey, and were exiled (Isa 42:21–25).

Deuteronomy's optimism about the eventual formation of a righteous community is also realized in Isaiah. The problem of Israel's blindness will be solved by the opening of blind eyes—a task that is attributed to Yhwh's Servant (Isa 42:7). Isaiah 53 can be seen as the outworking of this task: because of the righteous Servant's willingness to lay down his life, he will “see offspring” and “make many righteous” (Isa 53:10, 11). This hints at the formation of a community who will embody the values of the Servant. As Beuken has demonstrated, the formation of this righteous community—identified as the “servants” (Isa 54:17; 56:6; 65:8–9, 13–15; 66:14) and the “offspring” (Isa 59:21; 61:8–9; 65:9, 23; 66:22)—constitutes the main theme of Isa 56–66.<sup>63</sup>

The last part of the book of Isaiah describes the profile of the servants / offspring, the community whose identity is shaped in light of the Servant and who are the result of his work.<sup>64</sup> Just as the Servant is Yhwh's “chosen” (בְּחִירִי, Isa 42:1), so also are the servants / offspring (בְּחִירִי, 65:9, 15). Just as the Servant is a righteous sufferer (Isa 53), so also are the servants / offspring; their righteousness is referred to in Isa 54:14, 17; 57:1; 61:3, and their suffering is referred to in Isa 57:1; 66:5. These servants / offspring are those who “seek” Yhwh and respond to his offer (Isa 65:8–10; 66:2b, 5), and their opponents are those who do not (Isa 65:1–2, 11, 12; 66:4).<sup>65</sup> This righteous community of servants can therefore be seen as the realization of Moses' goal for Israel according to Deuteronomy—a goal that he was unable to achieve in his lifetime.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> On the literary relationship between these passages, see Franz HESSE, *Das Verstockungsproblem im alten Testament: Eine Frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, BZAW 74 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1955), 60–61; Wolfgang KÖHLER, *Die Verstocktheit Israels im Jesajabuch: Studie eines theologischen Motivs* (Berlin: Lit, 2019), 10–11.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. Isa 6:9–10; 29:18; 32:3; 35:5; 42:18–20; 43:8; 44:18. See R. E. CLEMENTS, “Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes,” *JSOT* 31 (1985): 95–113 (here 101–4).

<sup>63</sup> W. A. M. BEUKEN, “The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah ‘The Servants of YHWH,’” *JSOT* 47 (1990): 67–87.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph BLENKINSOPP, “The ‘Servants of the Lord’ in Third Isaiah: Profile of a Pietistic Group in the Persian Epoch,” *PIBA* 7 (1983): 1–23; repr. in “*The Place Is Too Small for Us*”: *The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. R. P. Gordon (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 392–412; idem, “A Jewish Sect of the Persian Period,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 5–20; idem, “The Servant and the Servants”; W. A. M. BEUKEN, “Isaiah Chapters LXV–LXVI: Trito-Isaiah and the Closure of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 204–21.

<sup>65</sup> See Isa 55:6–7 for the offer to which these verses refer, and note the shared vocabulary.

<sup>66</sup> Note Deut 4:29: וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּמִצִּיאַת כִּי תִדְרָשׁוּ בְּכָל־לֵבְבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ.

But the Isaian servants do not merely represent the realization of Moses' efforts to form a righteous community. They are also depicted as taking up the prophetic role of intercession associated with both Moses and the Isaian Servant, a depiction that is the result of compositional activity in the last few chapters of the book. It is widely acknowledged that the lament in Isa 63:7–64:11 is an older unit that has been placed in its current context, and that Isa 65–66 has been composed as a response to it.<sup>67</sup> The lament is voiced by one who identifies himself and Israel as “your servants, the tribes of your inheritance” (63:17, עבדיך שבטי נחלתיך). He prays on behalf of the entire people (64:5, 8 “all of us”), confessing their sins and pleading with Yhwh to return (64:17), to cease from being angry (64:8, אל־תקצף), and to not remember iniquity (64:8).

The language of Isa 63:7, which recounts Yhwh's “compassion” (רחמיו) and “abundant lovingkindness” (רב חסדיו), recalls the *Gnadenformel* of Exod 34:6 in which Moses' intercession results in the revelation of Yhwh's character as “compassionate” (רחום) and “abundant in lovingkindness” (רב־חסד)—qualities that Moses points to in his subsequent intercession for the people's sins (Num 14:18). The plea in Isa 64:8 “do not remember iniquity forever” (אל־לענך תזכר עון) recalls Yhwh's self-revelation in Exod 34:7 as the one who “forgives iniquity” (נשא עון), also referenced by Moses in his subsequent intercession (Num 14:18). And just as Deut 9:26–29 depicts Moses praying to Yhwh for the people, calling them “your people, your inheritance” (עמך נחלתך) and recounting Yhwh's “redemption” (פדה),<sup>68</sup> here too in Isa 63:7–64:11 the speaker prays for the people, calling them the “tribes of your inheritance” (שבטי נחלתך, 63:17) and recounting Yhwh's “redemption” (גאל, 63:9, 16)

<sup>67</sup> See Jacob STROMBERG, *Isaiah After Exile: The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30–32, 49–51; see also Odil Hannes STECK, *Studien zu Tritojesaja*, BZAW 203 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 221–26; Brooks SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah: Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration*, JSOTSup 193 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 154–56; Ulrich F. BERGES, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form*, trans. Millard C. Lind (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012), 466–71; Lena-Sofia TIEMEYER, “The Lament in Isaiah 63:7–64:11 and Its Literary and Theological Place in Isaiah 40–66,” in *The Book of Isaiah: Enduring Questions Answered Anew. Essays Honoring Joseph Blenkinsopp and His Contribution to the Study of Isaiah*, ed. Richard J. Bautch and J. Todd Hibbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 52–70 (here 58–60). There is also wide agreement that Isa 60–62 represents the earliest material in Trito-Isaiah, with Isa 56:1–8 and 65–66 composed as a frame around it; see STROMBERG, *Isaiah After Exile*, 30.

<sup>68</sup> Isa 63:7–64:11, Deut 9, and Psa 106 contain a number of similarities, both conceptual and lexical: note e.g. Isa 63:9 // Ps 106:10 (גאל . . . הושיעם); Isa 63:13 // Ps 106:9 (יוליכם); Isa 63:17 // Ps 106:5 (נחלה); Deut 9:7, 8, 19, 22 // Isa 64:4, 8 // Ps 106:32 (קצף); Deut 9:23, 24 // Isa 63:10 // Ps 106:33 (מרה); Deut 9:25 // Ps 106:23 (השמיד). Yhwh's anger (קצף, Isa 64:4, 8) is a significant theme in Deuteronomy (Deut 1:34; 9:7, 8, 19, 22), and is used to depict both Israel and Moses as the deserving objects of Yhwh's wrath and to link their fates together.

specifically *under the leadership of Moses*. Given the numerous depictions of Moses as an intercessor at Sinai and in the wilderness, the references to Moses and Israel's experience under Moses in this Trito-Isaian lament (esp. Isa 63:9, 11–13) can be seen to have a strategic role in context.<sup>69</sup>

The concerns of the lament are taken up but subtly modified in the following section.<sup>70</sup> The petition that Yhwh should act “for the sake of your servants” (Isa 63:17; למען עבדיך שבטי נחלתך) is taken up in 65:8, where Yhwh promises that he will act “for the sake of my servants, so as not to destroy the entirety” (למען עבדי לבלתי השחית הכל). What is significant for our argument here is that the lament's equation of the servants with the people (63:17) and references to the entirety of the people (64:5, 8 כלנו) are qualified and limited in 65:10, where the servants are defined exclusively as “my people who seek me” (עמי אשר) (דרשוני).<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, while Isa 65–66 might be said to function as a corrective to the lament, it also represents a positive response to it insofar as the editorial juxtaposition of the two units and modification of 63:17 in 65:8 depicts the righteous servants who respond to Yhwh as those who successfully intercede for the people. The servants, then, are depicted as intercessors, like the Servant in Isa 53 and like Moses in the Pentateuch.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4.3 Yhwh's Compassion for the Servants

As previously noted, Deut 32 articulates both pessimistic (Deut 32:15–30) and optimistic (Deut 32:36, 43) perspectives on Israel's future. When Israel rejects Yhwh for other gods (vv. 15–18), he punishes them (vv. 19–26), but he restrains himself for two reasons: first, to prevent misunderstanding on the part of Israel's “adversaries” (vv. 26–27), and second, because he sees that “his servants” are powerless (v. 36). Yhwh will therefore “have compassion on his servants” (v. 36), and “take vengeance on his adversaries” (vv. 41, 43). As noted above, Deuteronomy's poem about Israel's history contains numerous lexical and conceptual parallels with Isa 40–66.

Like the Servant (Isa 53), the Isaian servants / offspring suffer for their righteousness (Isa 57:1; 66:5). And just as the Servant is promised vindication (Isa

<sup>69</sup> See Richard J. BAUTCH, “Dating Texts to the Persian Period: The Case of Isaiah 63:7–64:11,” in *On Dating Texts to the Persian Period: Discerning Criteria and Establishing Epochs*, ed. Richard J. Bautch and Mark Lackowski (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 139–47 (here 142–43).

<sup>70</sup> STROMBERG (*Isaiah After Exile*, 30–32) notes how Isa 65:1 (לא־קרא בשמי) takes up 64:6 (אין־קורא בשמך), Isa 65:6 (לא אחשה) takes up 64:11 (תחשה . . . העל־אלה . . . תחשה), Isa 66:1 (בית קדשנו . . . היה לשרפת אש) responds to 64:10 (אִי־זה בית אשר תבנו־לי) responds to 63:17; 64:5, 8. See further STECK, *Tritojesaja*, 221–26.

<sup>71</sup> The response of the servants in Isa 65:10 is in contrast to the description of the response of the servants' opponents in Isa 65:1, 12. All these passages reflect Yhwh's offer in 55:6–7.

<sup>72</sup> See BERGES, *The Book of Isaiah*, 456–58.

50:8–9; 52:13; 53:12), so also the servants are promised vindication in the face of those who oppose them: protection (54:17), an inheritance (65:9–10), and Yhwh’s blessing (65:13–15). However, Yhwh will punish the opponents of the servants (Isa 65:12–15; 66:4).

The two-fold response of Yhwh in Deut 32 of “compassion” for his “servants” (ועל-עבדיו יתנחם) v. 36<sup>73</sup> and “vengeance” for his “adversaries” (אשיר נקם לצרי, vv. 41, 43) also plays a central role in Isaiah’s argument about the servants.<sup>74</sup> Both responses show up in Isa 61:2, where Yhwh’s agent (speaking with the voice of the Servant)<sup>75</sup> is commissioned “to proclaim . . . the day of vengeance of our God” (יום נקם לאלהינו) (לקרא . . . יום נקם לאלהינו) and “to comfort all who mourn” (לנחם כל-אבלים). In context, the “vengeance” is for Yhwh’s “adversaries” (Isa 59:17–18), and the “comfort” is for “those who mourn in Zion”—the ones who are called “oaks of righteousness” (61:2, 3). As Beuken has demonstrated, these are the servants / offspring (61:9).<sup>76</sup> The servants are spoken of as “righteous” (61:3) in Isa 54:14, 17; 57:1; they are portrayed as “the ones who mourn” (61:2, 3) over Israel’s sin in Isa 59:9–15; 63:15–19;<sup>77</sup> they are described as “ministers” (61:6) in Isa 56:6; they are described as having “joy” instead of “shame” (61:7) in Isa 65:13; 66:5; and they are described as “possessing” the land (61:7) in Isa 65:9. Again, just as the Isaian Servant is the realization of Moses’ prophetic intercessory role, and just as the Isaian servants are the realization of the righteous community of Israel that Moses struggled to produce, so the vindication of Yhwh’s servants spoken of in Deut 32 is realized in Isa 54, 56–66.

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<sup>73</sup> The “servants” are also mentioned in MT Deut 32:43, though in fact several different versions of this verse are attested in the textual witnesses (4QDeut<sup>g</sup>, MT, LXX). For a reconstruction of the text’s development here, see Arie van der KOOIJ, “The Ending of the Song of Moses: On the Pre-Masoretic Version of Deut 32:43,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy, In Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, ed. F. García Martínez et al., VTSup 53 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 93–100. If this reconstruction is correct, it seems plausible that the readings “nations” and “servants” in the proto-MT of v. 43 were adjustments made in light of the outlook of the book of Isaiah.

<sup>74</sup> Those who see a connection between Yhwh’s “servants” in Deut 32:36 and Isa 65:8, 13 include SELLIN, “Moselied,” 169–70; KIM, “The Song of Moses,” 162–64; and (cautiously) Petra SCHMIDTKUNZ, *Das Moselied des Deuteronomiums: Untersuchungen zu Text und Theologie von Dtn 32,1–43*, FAT 2/124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 230–32. Note also the comment on Deut 32:36 and its connection to Isa 65:8 by R. Obadiah SFORNO, באור ועל עבדיו יתנחם – יתנחם על הרעה הראויה לעמו וירחם עליהם: על התורה (Venice: 1567): בשביל עבדיו שבתוכם כאמרו כן אעשה למען עבדי לבלתי השחית הכל.

<sup>75</sup> See W. A. M. BEUKEN, “Servant and Herald of Good Tidings: Isaiah 61 as an Interpretation of Isaiah 40–55,” in *The Book of Isaiah / Le Livre D’Isaïe*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen, BETL 81 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 411–42.

<sup>76</sup> BEUKEN, “Main Theme,” 70, 72–73.

<sup>77</sup> See Isa 63:17 and the argument above for how this is taken up and modified in Isa 65.

## 5. Conclusion

In this essay we have demonstrated, first, how Moses is depicted as a paradigmatic prophet who suffers and is willing to lay down his life as he struggles to create a righteous community. Moreover, the book of Deuteronomy sets Moses in comparison to the people of Israel: just as the first wilderness generation fails, Moses also fails, and both die before entering the land. Before he dies, Moses is portrayed as instructing the second generation of the people, attempting to create success by means of constant reference to the failures of the previous generation. Tragically, Moses is told that after his death, the people will commit apostasy and go into exile. But Deut 32:36, 43 (as well as the blessings in Deut 33) hold out hope for success even after this failure.

Second, we have shown how the analogical relationships between Moses and his contemporaries in the book of Deuteronomy set the pattern for the descriptions of subsequent prophets and their relationship with their own Israelite contemporaries. The presentations of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been coordinated with the presentation of Moses, so that they are set on analogy to him as “prophets like Moses” (Deut 18:15–18). The descriptions of their commissioning all display similarities, and the motifs of prophetic suffering and intercession (or prohibition of intercession!) are prominent in the case of each figure. Like Moses, these prophets also tragically die without having created a righteous community.

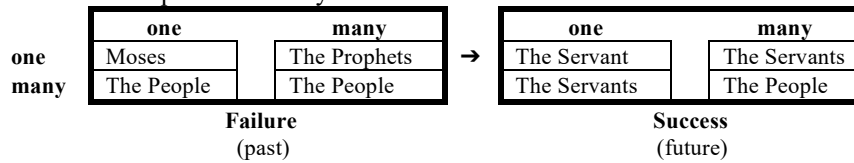
Third, we have shown how the presentations of Moses and the “prophets like Moses” prefigure a future Moses-like suffering servant described in the book of Isaiah—a Servant who, after the exile, will successfully create a new community of servants and bring about the realization of Yhwh’s plans for Israel through Moses. The complex relationship between Moses and the people in the Pentateuch (and between the prophets and the people in the prophetic corpus) is mirrored in the complex relationship between the Isaian Servant and Israel. A number of ambiguities in Isa 40–55 (prompting the longstanding debates over “the identity of the servant”) arise from what is best explained as a deliberate compositional strategy of analogy.<sup>78</sup> But the analogical strategies go beyond what we see in Isa 40–55 alone. The Isaian depiction of the Servant(s) has been coordinated with the presentation of Moses and other prophets. Like Moses and the other prophets, the Isaian Servant suffers; like Moses, the Isaian Servant lays down his life to preserve his community. The description of the Isaian servants—who are righteous, who suffer for their righteousness, who are promised vindication, and who attempt to intercede—represent the vindication of Moses’ prophetic life and his efforts to create a righteous community.

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<sup>78</sup> See Peter WILCOX and David PATON-WILLIAMS, “The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,” *JSOT* 42 (1988): 79–102.



The compositional strategies described above combine to create a model of history (and therefore of reality) that is profoundly analogical, in which the patterns and rhythms of the past are determinative for the present and future.<sup>79</sup> This is a model of reality in which the Servant of Yhwh, in a way that is predictable from the analogical contours of the past, becomes an essential figure within God’s plan for history.



Understanding analogical history of this kind, with its emphasis on the significance of the past for the future, has powerful implications for the present volume’s theme of the exegetical formation of identity. Such a view of history is the expression of a set of ideas about God, humanity, the order of the world, and ultimately about one’s place within it. Such literary strategies sponsor, indeed, actively seek to inculcate,<sup>80</sup> a practice of reading one’s own time and circumstances in light of the analogical past, of understanding and locating oneself in light of its recursive analogies. To this extent, the dynamics unpacked in this essay—the one and the many, the past and the future, failure and success—greatly illuminate the reception of Isaiah’s Servant(s) in the reading communities described in the following chapters of this volume.

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<sup>79</sup> See further D. Andrew TEETER, “Jeremiah, Joseph, and the Dynamics of Analogy: On the Relationship between Jer 37–44 and the Joseph Story,” *HeBAI* (forthcoming); Jacob STROMBERG, “Figural History in the Book of Isaiah: The Prospective Significance of Hezekiah’s Deliverance from Assyria and Death,” in *Imperial Visions: The Prophet and the Book of Isaiah in an Age of Empires*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Joachim Schaper, FRLANT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming).

<sup>80</sup> See e.g. Dominik MARKL, *Gottes Volk im Deuteronomium*, BZAR 18 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), esp. 15, 18.

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