

The Messiah/Speaker and His Mission: A Linguistic Analysis of Isaiah 61:1-11

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Abstract

While the mission motif of Isa 61:1-11 seems to be passed over in silence, this study investigates the passage using linguistic analysis and discovers the theological significance of the motif of mission. The study indicated how YHWH relates to His mission, through the Speaker—identified as the Messiah, and His redemptive purpose for all humanity. Mission is centered on YHWH's empowerment of the Speaker to deliver comforting messages and give hope to the discouraged, accelerate the freedom of prisoners, and console the grieving since their anguish and sadness is about to be converted into cheer. The focus is on Israel, though the nations will witness and glory in Israel's salvation and righteousness. In effect, there will be a sprouting forth of YHWH's righteousness and praises from the peoples of all the nations—an expression that has the worldwide salvific mission of the speaker in view.

Keywords: Mission, Messiah, Speaker, YHWH, Salvation

Introduction

While research in Isaiah 61 have entered on the identity of the speaker of the passage,¹ other scholars have tried to reconstruct the text.² Some scholars have also studied the passage from different perspective.³ However, the mission import or motif

¹H. A. J. Kruger, "Isaiah 61:1-3(4-9) 10-11: Transferor of Privileges, An "Identikit" of the Servant of the Lord?," *HTS* 58.4 (2002): 1555-1576; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The 'Servants of the Lord' in Third Isaiah: Profile of a Pietistic Group in the Persian Epoch," in *"The Place is too Small for us": The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. R. P. Gordon (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 392-412; W. W. Cannon, "Isaiah 61:1-3: An Ebed Yahweh Poem," *ZAW* 47 (1929): 284-289; P. de Vries, "Structural Analysis of Isaiah 61 With a Special Focus On Verses 1-3," *Old Testament Essays* .26, no. 2 (2013): 298-314; Francis Landy, "Strategies of Concentration and Diffusion in Isaiah 61," *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 1 (1999): 58-86.

²Julian Morgenstern, "Isaiah 61," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40/41 (1969-1970):109-121; Julian Morgenstern, "The Suffering Servant — a New Solution," *VT* 11 (1961): 292-320, 406-431; Donald E. Gowan, "Isaiah 61: 1-3, 10-11," *Interpretation* 35, no. 4 (1981): 404-409; Jacob Stromberg, "An Inner-Isaianic Reading of Isaiah 61: 1-3," *Interpreting Isaiah. Issues and Approaches* (2009): 261-272.

³Hedy Hung, "The Kingship Motif in Isaiah 61: 1-3," *Torah and Tradition, Papers Read at the Sixteenth Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap, Edinburgh 2017*, 135-149; Miguel Álvarez Barredo, "Disposición Literaria De Is 56-66," *Verdad Y Vida* 73, no. 266 (2015): 39-64; Bradley Gregory, "The Postexilic

of the passage seem to be passed over in silence. A cursory reading of the passage (Isaiah 61:1-11) shows that the Speaker is endowed with a mission mandate where YHWH empowers Him to deliver comforting messages and give hope to the discouraged, accelerate the freedom of prisoners, and console the grieving since their anguish and sadness is about to be converted into cheer. Again, the textual arrangement and architecture of Isa 61 seems to suggest that it should be understood as mission-oriented. Isaiah 61:1-11 has mission lexical markers' presence in the text and appears in mission contexts. Also, the passage's contextual and linguistic connections with the mission motif present interesting mission implications.⁴

In order to understand the passage from its mission-oriented point of view, a preliminary question must be dealt with first. Does Isaiah 61 carry a mission motif? Put differently: Is it possible to view the passage of Isaiah 61 as a text espousing a mission mandate or nuance?

Methodology

The study employs the linguistic analysis,⁵ which deals with the morpho-grammatical-syntactic issues of the pericope; the semantic analysis of sentences, clauses, and words; and a synthesis of the issues highlighted in the analysis. The theological principles derived from the analysis of the passage are teased out and formulated based on the established meaning of the passage in the Book of Isaiah.

Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1-3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 475-496.

⁴The author has argued that mission is at the center of the theological discourse of the Book of Isaiah, see Elisha K. Marfo, "Reading Isaiah 2:1-5 in the Light of YHWH'S Mission: A Linguistic Analysis," *ANUJAT* 8.1 (2020): 21-42; Elisha K. Marfo, "Who Said, No Mission in the Old Testament: A Theological Framework of Mission in the Isaianic Literature," *EJRTS* 6.4 (2020): 223-235; Elisha K. Marfo, "Missionaries from the Nations: A Linguistic Analysis of Isaiah 66:18-21." *Ghana Journal of Theology and Religion* 9.2 (2019): 5-23; Elisha K. Marfo, "The Servant's Failed Mission: A Linguistic Analysis of Isaiah 42:18-25," *Sahmyook Theological Review* 31(2020): 94-125.

⁵See Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London, UK: SPCK, 1989); Susan A. Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003); Michael P. O'Connor, "Discourse Linguistics and the Study of Biblical Hebrew," in *Congress Volume, Basel 2001*, ed. André Lemaire (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 17-42. Also for a discussion on the history of linguistic analysis in the OT, see Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Towards an Integrated Approach* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014); Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensverd, *The Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London, UK: Equinox, 2008); Robert H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 4th ed. (London, UK: Longman, 1997); Jacobus A. Naudé and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé, "The Evolution of Biblical Hebrew Linguistics in South Africa: The Last 60 Years," *Old Testament Essays* 31, no. 1 (2018): 12-41; Cynthia L. Miller, "Methodological Issues in Reconstructing a Language System From Epigraphic Fragments," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methods and Assumptions*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 281-305; Diane Larsen-Freeman and Lynne Cameron, *Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008); Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 55 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1996); David A. Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1994); Robert B. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

Context, Theme, and Structure

The study considers Isa 56-66 as the wider context and 60-62 as the immediate context. Within the large context, the theme of gathering⁶ and YHWH's assurances of restoration following an imminent calamity⁷ are noted as the limits with which the wider unit falls. YHWH through Isaiah denounces Israel's sins (chaps. 58-59). Israel's improper fasting and improper Sabbath observance (58:3-12) are highlighted as part of their other sins (59:1-15). This gives way for YHWH's restoration of Israel in chaps. 60-62. In chaps. 63-66, YHWH's message of judgment and salvation for His people and the nations are emphasized, ending with a universal judgment and mission outreach (66:15-21).

Within the immediate context, chaps. 60-62, the coming messianic age seems to be the focus with a detailed task of the activities of the Servant of YHWH or the speaker of the message. Chapter 60 looks at the glorious future of Zion, where the coming from captivity brings much joy to the people Israel. The activities of the anointed One is highlighted in chap. 61. His testimony (61:1-3) is followed by a tailpiece (vv. 4-9) and ends with Zion's response to YHWH's goodness with praise and gratitude in vv. 10-11. Chapter 62 end the immediate context with a picture of the future relationship that would exist between YHWH and Jerusalem. The people of Israel will receive new names from YHWH (62:1-7) and they will enjoy the future resources themselves rather than their enemies (vv. 8-9). The people are therefore called to journey to Jerusalem along the highway prepared for them (v. 10), while the coming of the Savior does not benefit Israel but the entire world (vv. 11-12). This gives a clear understanding of the context within which Isaiah writes his message.

Thematically, Isa 61 reflects on the missional task which centers on the personal commitment of the anointed One. His mission, among other things, results in the restoration of a ruined world. The verses that follow highlight the transformation that the people of Israel are to receive. The task has to do with the pronouncement of favor and vengeance that leads to worldwide salvation. The shame of the people is changed to honor and they enjoy their service and support from YHWH. YHWH pledges His righteousness and salvation which at the end will triumph. The triumphant nature of righteousness and salvation is carried out on a universal scale where the nations come to honor God's people. Also, a concept that is espoused in the pericope is "YHWH's year of favor and the day of vengeance of our God" (v. 2). August Pieper contends that YHWH's year of favor and the day of vengeance are not two different events, but "this is one time, a time of grace for the poor and needy, and a time of retribution for all the enemies of God's people."⁸

Structurally, Isa 61 can be presented in three parts and is structured as shown below:

- vv. 1-3** The Messiah's understanding of His mission
- vv. 4-7** A proclamation of salvation
- vv. 8-11** YHWH's actions together with a response acknowledging His salvific purposes

⁶Cf. 56:8-9; 57:14; 60:4, 9-22; 66:18.

⁷Cf. 58:12, 14; 61:4; 62:4, 10, 12; 65:17-25; 66:18-20.

⁸August Pieper, *Isaiah II: An Exposition of Isaiah 40-66*, trans. Erwin E. Kowalke (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1979), 604.

The structure begins with vv. 1-3 which could be seen as the central point of the Speaker's message that center on the call and commission. In His proclamation, the Speaker, subsequently argued as the Messiah, asserts His authority to undertake the mission from YHWH.⁹ In vv. 4-7, the salvific message the Messiah has been sent to preach in vv. 1-3 is described. They lay out how the nature of the community will be realized: the rebuilding of ruined and ancient cities (v. 4) and the transformation from the shame the destruction to a situation of favor (v. 7). In vv. 5-6, further details of the restoration of ruined cities are outlined. Verses 8-11 begin by noting that YHWH, who loves righteousness and hates evil behavior, will have an everlasting covenant with His people. As a result, the people will experience joy in His divine salvation which is described in the imagery of marriage and agriculture. YHWH then accelerates the triumph of His people through victory and glory.

Isaiah 61:1-11 as a Literary Unit

Isaiah 61 as a text stands on its own. The beginning and the end of the unit under study must be rightly demarcated as accurately as possible to help understand the analysis and import of Isaiah's message. Although, the pericope begins and ends with the *setûmā* marker at the end of 60:22 and at the end of 61:9 respectively, vv. 10-11 are considered as part of the unit since there are linguistically and thematically linked with the rest of the verses of the chapter.

Linguistically, *יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ* forms an inclusio for the pericope; bringing the passage together. The phrase appears in both v. 1 and v. 11. Furthermore, the phrases *שְׂשׂוֹן אֶשְׂרָשׁ*, *יְעִטְנֵי*, and *פָּאֵר* in v. 10 are verbally linked to *שְׂשׂוֹן*, *מְעַטָּה*, and *לְהַתְּפַאֵר* in v. 3. Thematically, the image of v. 11 takes up that of v. 3. Again, the strophic structural arrangement of the verses in the pericope shows that they are a unit. Thus, the cohesion of 61:1-11 is achieved through the use of inclusio, repetition of words, and thematic linkage. The pericope of 61:1-11 is thus taken as a complete cohesive unit and analyzed.

⁹The Speaker announces, "The Spirit of YHWH God is upon me, because YHWH has anointed me" (v. 1a). The endowment of YHWH's spirit notes the source of His prophetic activity. It therefore gives Him a full authorization to perform the specific missional task. The missionary task is noted with the phrase "He has sent me" (v. 1b) where He begins the description of His mission. The prophet's mission is described in vv. 1b-3 by the use of a series of infinitive phrases: "To bring good news to the oppressed" (v. 1b); "To bind up the broken-hearted" (v. 1b); "To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners" (v. 2); "To comfort all who mourn" (v. 2b); and "To provide for mourners in Zion—to give them" (v. 3). The infinitive phrases show how the mourners will be comforted. Verses 1-3 end with a portrayal of the oppressed who will be called "oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH to display his glory" (v. 3b).

Linguistic Analysis of Isaiah 61:1-11

Verse 1¹⁰ begins with the sentence רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה עָלַי (The Spirit of Lord YHWH is upon me). The sentence begins with a nominal phrase, רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה, which is also syntactically the subject of the sentence.¹² In the usage of the term in the verse with רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה in a nominal phrase, the phrase רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה usually refers to the divine spirit, mostly the Holy Spirit.¹³ A similar phrase covering the same semantic range is רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים which also refers to “the spirit of God.”¹⁴ רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים can also designate an *evil* spirit from God (cf. 1 Sam 16:15-16, 23; 18:10). Thus, רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה is to be understood as “the spirit of the Lord YHWH.” In other words, if רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה has the same meaning as רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים, then רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים and the cognate expression רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה both denote the “spirit of God.”

In a first person form of an address, the sentence notes the Speaker declaring the presence of YHWH’s spirit upon him. The concept of the spirit of YHWH endowing someone is evident in the Book of Isaiah. In Isa 42:1 the author tells of YHWH putting His spirit upon the Servant: “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit [רוּחִי] upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”¹⁵ From the references, with the exception of

¹⁰The Targum begins with אָמַר נְבִיאָה רִיחַ נְבוּאָה מִן קֳדָם יְיָ אֱלֹהִים עָלַי חֲלַף דְרָבִי יוֹי יְהִי לְבִסְרָא (The prophet said, the spirit of prophecy from YHWH God is upon me, because YHWH has exalted me to announce good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to strengthen the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to those who are bound, be revealed to light). It could be seen as a way of aligning the passage to Jesus’ messianic statement in Luke 4:16-21. For further discussion on the Targum’s insertion of the preamble, see Bruce D. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*, ed. David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and David M. Gunn (Sheffield, UK: Department of Biblical Studies, The University of Sheffield, 1982), 52-56.

¹¹The MT expression אֱלֹהֵי (Lord) does not appear in the DSS, LXX and Vulgate. However, the Syriac and Targum have the expression and support the MT.

¹²רוּחַ can be translated as “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit, mind.” Clines, *DCH*, s.v. “רוּחַ.” רוּחַ is attested 378 times in the HB. Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem, Israel: Kiryat-Sepher, 1983), 1063-1066. Out of these occurrences, in 220 of them רוּחַ means *spirit* (cf. Exod 31:3; Num 24:2; Judg 3:10; Isa 63:11). In 99 occurrences, רוּחַ is construed as *wind* (cf. Gen 8:1; Exod 15:10; Num 11:31; Ps 1:4; Job 1:19). In 31 appearances, the term is attested as *breath* (cf. Gen 6:17; 7:15; 1 Sam 22:16; Job 27:3). The rest of the attestation of רוּחַ is in connection with an “emotional and intellectual frame of mind.” Daniel K. Bediako, “A Note on *Rûah* ‘Spirit/Wind’ in Genesis 1:2,” *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 4 (2017): 79. See also Job 15:13; 20:3; 21:4; 32:8.

¹³Cf. Judg 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam 16:13-14; 1 Kgs 18:12; Isa 11:2; 40:13; 61:1.

¹⁴Cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Chr 15:1; 24:20; Ezek 11:24.

¹⁵Here are other examples: Isa 11:2 “And the Spirit of YHWH (רוּחַ יְהוָה) will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.” Isaiah 44:3 reads, “For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit (רוּחִי) on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants.” Isaiah 48:16 reads, “Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now YHWH God has sent Me, and His Spirit (רוּחִי).” Isaiah 59:21 reads, “And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, says YHWH: My Spirit (רוּחִי) which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of

11:2 where the spirit is endowed on the Davidic branch, all the others show that the Spirit of YHWH is bestowed on YHWH's Servant, the prophet Isaiah, or the nations.¹⁶

The sentence also uses the twofold divine name: אֱלֹהֵי, as Lord/Master of the universe¹⁷ and יהוה, showing the personal covenant relationship with Israel.¹⁸ The combined usage of both divine names implies God's rulership and His covenant faithfulness. It is used here by the Speaker to affirm His commitment to the taskmaster and by extension put weight on His prophetic message. This is similar to the claim of YHWH's spirit by the Servant of YHWH in 42:1. עָלַי (upon me) helps in noting the endowment of YHWH's spirit on the Speaker. It also suggests that רִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה is a divine presence and lasting gift which comes from above. The sentence, therefore "probably indicates that God's spirit rests continually on the speaker."¹⁹

עָלַי (upon me) suggests that the Spirit approaches from above. The first person pronominal suffix is repeated in other expressions in the pericope: אֵתִי (me) and שְׁלַחֲנִי (sent me). The reference *to me* shows that Isaiah is referring to an individual other than himself. The Speaker here is enabled by YHWH's Spirit just as the Messianic King in Isa 11:1-3. The suffering Servant is referenced in the first person. Also, there are textual connections between the Servant passages and Isa 61:1-12. These include (1) לְאֲסוּרִים (prisoners) in 49:9 and לְאֲסוּרֵי (those who are bound) in 61:1; (2) לְפָתַח (to open) in 42:7 and פָּתַח־קוּמָה (opening) in 61:1; (3) אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה (Lord YHWH) in 50:4-5, 7, 9 and 61:1; and (4) צַדִּיק (righteousness/righteous) in 42:6, 50:8, 53:11, 54:17, and 61:3. It is noteworthy that there is permanency between the Speaker in Isa 61 (which focuses on preaching) and the Davidic Messiah in 11:1-10 (who is an instrument of YHWH's words; v. 4). The Speaker's task is mainly to establish YHWH's righteousness (11:5; cf. 61:3). These points to the fact that the Speaker of Isa 60 is synonymous with the Messiah who is identified as Jesus Christ in the NT.²⁰

The second sentence of v. 1 is וַעֲנֵן מִשְׁחָ יְהוָה אֵתִי לְבִשֵׁר עֲנָוִים שְׁלַחֲנִי לְחַבֵּשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב לְקַרְא לְשִׁבּוּיִם דְּרוּר וְלְאֲסוּרִים: פְּתַח־קוּמָה (Because YHWH has anointed me, to bring good news to the afflicted, He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners).²¹ The sentence begins with a casual conjunctive וַעֲנֵן (because). This means that the spirit of the Lord, YHWH, is upon the Speaker because YHWH has anointed Him. As Paul has noted, "The Lord's spirit has

your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, says YHWH, from now and forever." Other references in Isaiah include 30:1; 32:15; 34:16; 40:7, 13; 59:21; 63:10, 11, 14.

¹⁶For further discussion on the fulfillments of Isaianic prophecies, see Elisha K. Marfo, "Fulfillment and Application of Isaianic Prophecies," *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 5 (2018): 1-15.

¹⁷David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (DCH)* (1995), s.v. "אֱלֹהֵי"; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)*, vols. 1-5 combined, trans. and ed. under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson, rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm (1994-2000), s.v. "אֱלֹהֵי."

¹⁸J. Barton Payne, "יהוה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 212.

¹⁹Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah, Part 3, Volume III, Isaiah 56-66*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998), 269.

²⁰See Matt 26:28; Luke 4:18-19; 22:20; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 7:22; 9:15; 12:24.

²¹The LXX adds τυφλοῖς (blind) before the MT פְּתַח־קוּמָה (opening) probably as a way of clarifying the phrase.

alighted upon me since I was appointed by Him to deliver messages of consolation to the disillusioned and disenfranchised.”²²

מָשַׁח has two main meanings: to smear with liquid (oil, paint) and to anoint individuals or cultic objects.²³ The purposes of anointing include cosmetic (i.e., protection against sun’s rays and prevention of excessive perspiration), curative (i.e., medicine for skin diseases), ritual use or bodily/spiritual cleansing (i.e., conferment of special powers and state of holiness [Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam 12:20; 2 Chr 28:15]), divine election and appointment (cf. Ps 2:6-7), and consecration or sanctification (Exod 28:41; 29:36; 30:26-28).²⁴ Again, when performed on an individual as in the OT, it announces that the person has been called to accomplish a special task or mission.²⁵ To be anointed by YHWH is not only to be cleansed but to be empowered by Him for the task or mission to which He has called you. Saul and David are examples of such empowerment (1 Sam 24:6).²⁶

The anointing of the Speaker (Messiah) should be construed as the appointment or commission for a missional task. The Speaker is chosen for a specific task which comes from the initiative of God. Due to this, He is given authority. The significance of the anointing is related to the oily anointment of priests to enable them to fulfill their priestly task (cf. Exod 28:41; 29:7), kings to usher them into rulership (cf. 1 Sam 9:16; 2 Sam 2:4), or prophets to hold the prophetic task or office (cf. 1 Kgs 19:16).²⁷ YHWH’s anointment of the Speaker corresponds to the anointing in the OT. In a related front, just as oily anointment of the body brings supply to the individual, YHWH’s anointing is to bring empowerment for the fulfillment of the missional task. From the context of the term’s usage in Isaiah, it can be posited that the Speaker is anointed and appointed to His missional task.²⁸

With the use of a series of infinitive constructs in vv. 1-3, the mission endeavor/task of the Speaker is outlined. The first is לְבַשֵּׂר עֲנָוִים (to bring good news to the afflicted), which could be seen as the chief purpose for the anointment of the Messiah. The piel infinitive construct לְבַשֵּׂר is from the root בָּשַׂר which means “to

²²Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 538.

²³Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “מָשַׁח”; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based Upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 218.

²⁴Claude J. Peifer, “Anointing in the Old Testament,” *Worship* 35, no. 9 (1961): 577-786; Anne Marie Kitz, “An Oath, Its Curse and Anointing Ritual,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 2 (2004): 315-321; Dominic Rudman, “The Commissioning Stories of Saul and David as Theological Allegory,” *Vetus Testamentum* 50, no. 4 (2000): 519-530.

²⁵See Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 218.

²⁶See Bruce C. Birch, “The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul in 1 Sam 9:1-10:16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971): 55-68; Christopher Begg, “Samuel’s Anointing of David in Josephus and Pseudo-Philo,” *Revista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 32 (1996): 491-529; Dominic Rudman, “The Commissioning Stories of Saul and David as Theological Allegory,” *Vetus Testamentum* 50, no. 4 (2000): 519-530.

²⁷Daniel Fleming, “The Biblical Tradition of Anointing Priests,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 401-414; Mary J. Obiorah and Favour C. Uroko, “‘The Spirit of the Lord God Is Upon Me’ (Is 61:1): The Use of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 74, no. 1 (2018): 1-6.

²⁸E. Young emphasizes that “this anointing with the Spirit is essential and abiding so that the work described may be carried out.” E. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 459. See also Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 270; Claude J. Peifer, “Anointing in the Old Testament,” *Worship* 35, no. 9 (1961): 577-786.

bring good news . . . herald of good tidings.”²⁹ The LXX translates לְבַשֵּׁר as εὐαγγελίσασθαι from εὐαγγελίζω. The Greek εὐαγγελίζω means “to bring good news, proclaim the gospel.”³⁰ By this, the preaching or proclamation of the Gospel is envisaged here. The foremost missional task of the Speaker is to preach the Gospel to the peoples of the world. “He evangelizes them in that he declares to them deliverance from their bondage. He speaks, however, not of himself but as one sent from God.”³¹

The preaching of the Gospel or good tiding is emphasized in the book because Isaiah employs בָּשָׂר seven times to show the relevance of YHWH’s word.³² The good tiding is preached to עֲנֻיִם (the afflicted), a masculine plural absolute adjective. The term is from the adjective עָנָו which means “poor, afflicted, humbled, or meek.”³³ Though the terms are generally construed for those living below the social structure and having economy pressure, it could also have a spiritual/religious connotation as in its usage here (61:1) and 11:4. Within the context of Isaiah, “the עֲנֻיִם are the people who will receive justice and salvation in the eschatological messianic kingdom. . . . These people come from all nations (cf. 56:1-8) and do not signify a national Israel. It is repentant faith in Yahweh, rather than ethnicity or geopolitical status, that defines the essential nature of this group.”³⁴ Though, Jesus Christ uses the statement of Isa 61:1-3 in Luke 4:16-22 with a focus on the lost sheep of Israel. These usages in Scripture highlight the universality of mission of the servant who brings good news to the afflicted.

After indicating that the purpose of the anointment is to preach the Gospel to the afflicted, the author comes to another key mission-driven task introduced by שְׁלַחְנִי (He has sent me). שְׁלַחְנִי is from the root שָׁלַח which has been argued earlier on (see analyses of Isa 2:1-6; 6:8-13) as a principal mission term for YHWH’s sending. YHWH’s sending is to accomplish several things in vv. 1-3 which are governed by the principal mission expression שָׁלַח—לְהַבִּישׁ (to bind up, v. 1), לְקַרְא (to proclaim, vv. 1, 2), פָּקַח (to open, v. 1), לְנַחֵם (to comfort, v. 2), לְשׂוּם (to provide, v. 3), and לְתַת (to give, v. 3)—which are all introduced by the preposition לְ. The original manuscript of the IQIsaa does not attest to שְׁלַחְנִי. Due to this, bringing good news depends on YHWH’s anointed one. It should be noted that the hithpael infinitive construct לְהַתְּפַאֵר in v. 3 is not regulated by the שָׁלַח. This relation of שָׁלַח to the infinitive constructs “brings out the special relationship of the messenger to his Sender; by communicating his Spirit, Yahweh is present in the messenger, He speaks and acts in his person and work, and from this, the messenger derives his authority. At the same time, the messenger bears responsibility towards his Taskmaster.”³⁵

לְהַבִּישׁ לְנַשְׁבְּרֵי-לֵב (to bind up the brokenhearted) is in reference to those with without hope and courage. YHWH has sent the Speaker on a mission to affect the healing of the injured heart. This missional task is in fulfillment of the mandate of YHWH Himself (cf. Pss 51:19; 147:3). It could be taken as spiritual or figurative due

²⁹Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “בָּשָׂר.” See also Clines, *DCH*, s.v. “בָּשָׂר.”

³⁰Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (2014), s.v. “εὐαγγελίζω.”

³¹Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965-1972), 3:459.

³²See Isa 40:9 (2x); 41:27; 52:7 (2x); 60:1; 61:1.

³³Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 278.

³⁴R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 56-66*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2014), 260-261.

³⁵Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 270.

to the use of the qal infinitive construct *לְהַבִּישׁ*, likewise *נִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב* (the brokenhearted).³⁶ *חָבַשׁ* means “to bind on, wind round, wrap” or “to bind up, to twist, to fetter, imprison.”³⁷ *חָבַשׁ* is used elsewhere in Isa 30:36 as well as Ps 147:3; Ezek 34:4; Hos 6:1 in a figurative sense. The Speaker is also to announce liberation for the captive, *לְקַרְא לְשִׁבוּיִם דְּרוּר*. Thus the sending of YHWH is also directed to the prisoners to be aware that their release (*דְּרוּר*) is nigh. *שָׁבוּיִם* from *שָׁבָה* means to “take (someone) captive.”³⁸ *דְּרוּר* means “release” and connected the release of slaves in the sabbatical year.³⁹ Those who benefit from the release (*דְּרוּר*), as employed in Lev 25:10; Jer 34:8-17; and Ezek 46:17, are people in servitude or enslavement. However, the use of *דְּרוּר* in Isa 61:1 designates prisoners. Here, *דְּרוּר* does not refer “individual in servitude. . . . The practice of release provides a metaphor for the release of captives, though captivity too, is here a metaphor.”⁴⁰ Thus, *דְּרוּר* could be construed in the sense of an opportunity to a new livelihood or full existence.

In the last phrase of the sentence *וְלְאֶסְרִיִּם פְּקַח־קוּחַ*, the qal passive participle *אֶסְרִיִּם* from *אָסַר* can be construed as prisoners. The root *אָסַר* means “bind, tie up a person for imprisonment.”⁴¹ Similarly, the expression *פְּקַח־קוּחַ*, a masculine singular absolute noun, is a *hapax legomenon* which the 1QIsa^a renders as single word *פְּקַח־קוּחַ*. *פְּקַח־קוּחַ* is “creative writing for *פְּקַח־קוּחַ*” and could mean “opening, i.e. liberation.”⁴² The qal infinitive construct form (*לְפַקַּח*) of *פַּקַּח* is used in Isa 42:7 to express the opening of the eyes which leads to the release from prison: “To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.” According to Paul, *פְּקַח־קוּחַ* denotes “the opening of the eyes so as to let in the light and serves as a metaphor (as in Akkadian) for the release of captives.”⁴³ The notion of light is what the prisoners can enjoy upon release, going outside, and opening the eyes to a new reality. The notion of light also “implies freedom, new insight, great joy, and all this in the restored fellowship with God.”⁴⁴

Verse 2 begins with *לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה וְיוֹם נִגְמָם*⁴⁵ *לְאֵלֵהֶינוּ*⁴⁶ (to proclaim a year of acceptance/favor of YHWH, and the day of vengeance of our God). The phrase is the continuation of the infinitive started in v. 1 concerning the missional tasks/activities of the anointed One of YHWH. He is to proclaim (*קָרָא*) a year of

³⁶See John Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London, UK: T. & T. Clark, 2014), 299-300.

³⁷Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “חָבַשׁ.”

³⁸Clines, *DCH*, s.v. “שָׁבָה”; Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “שָׁבָה”; Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 358.

³⁹Cf. Lev 25:10; Jer 34:8-17; Ezek 46:17. See also Clines, *DCH*, s.v. “דְּרוּר.”

⁴⁰John Goldingay, *Isaiah 56-66: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London, UK: T. & T. Clark, 2014), 300. See also Pual, *Isaiah 40-66*, 539; Bradley C. Gregory, “The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1-3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 3 (2007): 475-496. However, Henrique Pinto sees the text as literal and interprets it in terms of its significance to liberation theology. See Henrique Pinto, “Isaiah 61:1-2a in Liberation Theology,” *African Christian Studies* 5, no. 2 (1989): 11-42.

⁴¹Clines, *DCH*, s.v. “אָסַר.”

⁴²Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “פְּקַח־קוּחַ.”

⁴³Paul, *Isaiah 40-66*, 539.

⁴⁴Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 273.

⁴⁵The 1QIsa^a do not attest for the conjunction *וְ* (and) in the MT *וְיוֹם* (and the day). However, the Syriac, LXX, and Targum have the conjunction.

⁴⁶The BHS proposes that the verse ends after the expression *לְאֵלֵהֶינוּ* (for our God).

YHWH's favor for the nation(s). לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רְצוֹן לַיהוָה can be translated as "to proclaim a year of acceptance/favor belonging to YHWH." In this case, לַיהוָה is taken as a circumlocution.⁴⁷ The year of favor (שְׁנַת־רְצוֹן) in the OT relates to the year of jubilee (cf. Lev 25:28, 40, 50, 52), the 50th year (cf. Lev 25:10), and the year of liberty (cf. Ezek 46:17). It could also be construed as a time YHWH accepts His people and not reject them. It brings liberation which is a manifestation of YHWH's undeserved favor on the part of the people.

The proclamation of the Speaker also involves the announcement of YHWH's day of vengeance. יוֹם נָקָם (day of vengeance) is used by Isaiah in Isa 34:8; 63:4. It is also used in Prov 6:34. In its usage in both Isa 34:8 and 63:4, YHWH's day of vengeance is directed to the nation of Edom. The parallelism seen in the sentence suggests that יוֹם (day) corresponds with שָׁנָה (year) and that equating a day to a year (i.e., day-year principle) is not out of place.

Verse 2b, לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים (to comfort all who mourn), highlights that YHWH's act of visiting with favor and vengeance brings comfort (נָחַם) to all those who mourn (ל־אֲבֵלִים). YHWH has appointed the Speaker as herald to deliver His message of comfort to all those who mourn. In other words, the Speaker receives the missional task of comforting. The recipients of God's comfort are both Israel and the nations (cf. Isa 56:1-8; 60:20). לְנַחֵם is from the root נָחַם with basic meaning of "to regret, be sorry, console oneself, or to comfort with a word."⁴⁸ Isaiah uses the piel form of נָחַם in 66:13 two times to emphasize a comforting motherly nature through the employment of a simile: "As one whom his mother comforts [תְּנַחֵמְנִי], so I will comfort you [אֶנְחֵמְכֶם], and you shall be comforted [תְּנַחֵמוּ, in pual] in Jerusalem." The text highlights God's loving nature and His empathy with the figurative language.

In v. 3a, לְשׂוֹם לְאֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן לְתַתּוֹתָם לְהֵם⁴⁹ פָּאֵר תַּחַת אֶפְרַיִם שָׁמוֹן שְׂשׂוֹן תַּחַת אֲבֵל מַעֲטָה תַּהֲלֶה (to appoint those who mourn in Zion, giving them a turban instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting), YHWH intends to transform the mourners' state of bereavement into joyous and happy moods. The beginning clause of the sentence presents a difficulty concerning the metrical form and sentence construction. לְשׂוֹם from שָׂם (sometimes rendered as שׂוֹם) seems to be without a direct object. שָׂם means "to lay down, set down, arrange, fix, set, put, stand,"⁵⁰ or "appoint, designate, ordain."⁵¹ It could also mean "make, assign, preserve, order."⁵² Thus, it would be appreciated to situate לְשׂוֹם as an express the thought of appointment or provision. לְאֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן can be considered as either a subjective genitive (i.e., those who mourn *in* Zion) or an objective genitive (i.e., those who mourn *for* Zion). In other words, those who mourn are either mourning *in* Zion or mourning *for* Zion. Both thoughts can be entertained as it is those who mourn in Zion do so for their sins and are mindful of the consequences their sins bring upon the city. The emphasis is therefore placed on the reality that "the promise does not apply to the grieving in general but to those who in Zion, the city of

⁴⁷Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. and enlarged Emil Kautzsch, trans. Arthur Ernest Cowley (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1910), 419-420.

⁴⁸Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "נָחַם"; Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 234.

⁴⁹The phrase לְתַתּוֹתָם לְהֵם (to give to them) is not attested in the Syriac and LXX.

⁵⁰Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "שָׂם."

⁵¹Clines, *DCH*, s.v. "שָׂם."

⁵²Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 351.

God, look forward to salvation which only Yahweh can give.”⁵³ The mourning of the people will not be a lasting one because God’s salvation can be found in Zion.

אָפֶר לְתַתְּ לָהֶם פְּאָר תַּהֲת אָפֶר seems to highlight that instead of mourning, the people will be in a state of gladness. This is seen in the transposition of the terms פְּאָר and אָפֶר as a way of highlighting the reversal of the fortune of those who mourn. YHWH places a turban (פְּאָר) on the heads of the mourners instead of the ashes (אָפֶר) that signifies a moment of grief.⁵⁴ The turban (פְּאָר) denotes literally the head covering worn by a high profiled personality in the community (cf. Ezek 24:17) or the priest (cf. Exod 39:28; Ezek 44:18). In Isa 61:10, פְּאָר is employed figuratively for salvation. Similarly, the oil of gladness (שֶׁמֶן שְׂשׂוֹן) is offered instead of mourning. שֶׁמֶן שְׂשׂוֹן (oil of gladness) appears here and in Ps 45:8. Oil (שֶׁמֶן) in the OT is applied during anointing⁵⁵ and during festivity or joyous moments.⁵⁶ Thus, as a way of consoling the mourners, the Speaker as part of His missional task will anoint the mourners with oil to signal their new state of happiness.

In the last phrase of 3a, a faint spirit (רִיחַ כְּהָה) makes way for a mantle of praise (מַעֲטָה תְהִלָּה). In other words, in place of a faint spirit, the mourners will burst forth in YHWH’s praise. The joy of the people is described in a metaphorical way as a mantle of praise.⁵⁷ מַעֲטָה is a *hapax legomenon* derived from עָטָה. The basic meaning of עָטָה is to wrap oneself or to cover oneself.⁵⁸ Thus, praises will be like a glorious wrapping that covers the people instead of them remaining in a state of mourning.

Verse 3b, וְקִרְאָ לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצְּדָקָה מִטַּעַי יְהוָה לְהַתְּפַאֵר (that they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, that He may be glorified), shows that YHWH changes the name of the mourners and refers to them as oaks of righteousness (אֵילֵי הַצְּדָקָה). YHWH has planted His people. For the people to live and enjoy a better future, they have to rely solely on Him. He is a powerful and faithful God. He glorifies Himself by seeing the people strive in righteousness. The people are His shoots in whom He glories. Koole has noted that “the text no longer talks directly about the task of the herald of good tidings and bringer of salvation, but about the reaction to his work among the nations, which with their new name (קרא pu.) for Israel, cf. 60:14, praise those who share in the new salvation.”⁵⁹

In vv. 4-11, there is a shift from the missional task of the Speaker outlined in vv. 1-3 to the results of the task. After their (i.e., לְאַבְרָלִי צִיּוֹן) relief and comfort from a state of mourning, they engage in rebuilding their devastated places. There is a change from the third person plural forms in v. 4 to second person masculine plural forms in v. 5. The verse highlights the relationship that would occur between Israel and the nations. The nations will not be the oppressors of Israel, but rather the nations will serve Israel. The participation of the nations in Israel is espoused by Isaiah.⁶⁰

⁵³Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 276.

⁵⁴For a discussion on the use of ashes during times of bereavement, see 2 Sam 13:19; Josh 7:6; Job 2:8, 12; Ezek 27:30; Jer 6:26.

⁵⁵Cf. Exod 29:7, 21; 30:25; 1 Sam 16:1, 13; Ps 133:2.

⁵⁶Cf. Ps 23:5; Prov 27:9; Eccl 9:8; Amos 6:6.

⁵⁷Similarly, in a metaphoric way, Ps 104:2 pictures God as being wrapped in a robe of light.

⁵⁸Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 270.

⁵⁹Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 279.

⁶⁰In Isa 56:6-8, Isaiah notes that the foreigners will join Israel in their religious practice through the observance of the Sabbath as well as participating in the religious cult. Also in 60:10, the nations will help in the construction of the walls of Jerusalem. Again, in 66:21, the foreigners will render service in YHWH’s temple as Levites and priests. Lessing notes that

In v. 6, the entire nation of Israel is כֹּהֲנֵי יְהוָה (YHWH's priests) and will be referred to as מְשַׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ (ministers of our God). The phrase כֹּהֲנֵי יְהוָה is a synonymous sobriquet of מְשַׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Israel will "represent the people to God by means of sacrifice and intercession and God to the people by means of instruction and benediction."⁶¹ Israel's role as priests brings to the people salvation that the nations enjoy. In v. 7, Israel's reward and consolation will be doubled due to the shame the nation has experienced. There are an assurance and promise to receive restored fortunes: a double portion of inheritance/land (מִשְׁנֵה יִרְשׁוּ) and everlasting joy (שְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם). All of God's promises to His people will be realized in their most real form. Thus, Israel is going to enjoy everlasting happiness (cf. Isa 35:10; 51:11).

From vv. 8-9, YHWH emphasizes that He who loves justice and despises immoral conduct shall make a perpetual covenant with His people/nation. These acts of YHWH express His character. While YHWH emphasizes remaining faithful in recompensing Israel, He also promises to make an immutable and eternal covenant with His nation.⁶² In v. 10, YHWH clothes the Speaker, identified as the Messiah in the NT, with salvation and righteousness. He is offered such a gift as an expression of His character. Again, God YHWH will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. The particle adverb כֵּן (so, thus), in v. 11, introduces the salvific intent of YHWH concerning the people. All the nations (כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם) will behold the glory that comes with the sprouting forth of righteousness.⁶³

As argued in the linguistic analysis, this prophecy of Isa 61 finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In Luke 4:21, Christ Himself speaks to its fulfillment: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears." Also, the messianic nature of the accomplishment of the mission gives significant support. Christ's speech of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Him during His time on earth (Luke 4:16-22) does not mean the prophecy was to be exhausted with Him. Rather, "the prophecy would be fulfilled throughout the course of the Church upon earth. The passage brings to the fore the great work of redemption that the Messiah accomplished."⁶⁴ Following His ascension, the Christian church under His authority is to carry out His mission of proclamation of the glad tidings and salvific message (Matt 28:19-20).

the nations' participation "such as joining themselves to Yahweh, serving him, loving his name, becoming his servants, keeping the Sabbath, and holding on to his covenant (56:2-6), are not political or ethnic, but *theological*. These are OT description for the church of all nations." Lessing, *Isaiah 56-66*, 279. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 283. In this case, the other nations will benefit from the mediating role of Israel and Israel's instruction on the Torah will be the highlight of its teachings. The nations will recognize this role of Israel. תִּקְרָאוּ (shall be called) and יֵאָמַר (said [of you]) seem to emphasize the point.

⁶²While the covenant may recall YHWH's covenant with Israel as highlighted in Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 56:4, 6; and 59:21, it is in 55:3 that בְּרִית עוֹלָם (everlasting covenant) is used as in 61:8. The everlasting covenant is the result of YHWH's activities through the Servant with His people.

⁶³"God's activity in nature is the image and the guarantee of his activity in history. It is He who opens the great future in his supreme faithfulness. Hence the double divine name in 1a, אֱדַנְי יְהוָה, is repeated here." Koole, *Isaiah 56-66*, 296.

⁶⁴E. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:460.

Implications on Mission

The pericope commences with the appointment and outline of the mission the Speaker, identified as the Messiah. YHWH has appointed Him to deliver words of comfort and to give hope to the discouraged, to accelerate the freedom of prisoners, and to console the grieving since their anguish and sadness is about to be converted into cheer. In other words, the mission of the Speaker following His anointing is described by the use of a series of infinitive phrases in vv. 1b-3: “To bring good news to the oppressed” (v. 1b), “To bind up the brokenhearted” (v. 1b), “To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners” (v. 2), “To comfort all who mourn” (v. 2b), and “To provide for mourners in Zion—to give them” (v. 3). The infinitive phrases show how the mourners will be comforted. Verses 1-3 end with a portrayal of the oppressed who will be called “oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHWH to display his glory” (v. 3b).

The Speaker’s task follows His call in v. 1. He has been anointed by YHWH and given good tidings to proclaim. However, the scope of the proclamation of the message is restricted. It is focused on Israel, though the nations will witness and glory in Israel’s salvation and righteousness. Righteousness and praises sprouting forth from the peoples of all the nations express the worldwide salvific mission of the Speaker. Coupled with the activities of YHWH’s Servant in the corpus of Isaiah, that salvific mission is accomplished.

YHWH is depicted as a Creator and Ruler of the universe. His rulership is not only over Israel but over all the nations and peoples in the entire world. He is a universal God who reaches out to all people. YHWH through His Servant brings comfort and peace to humanity. He restores the brokenhearted and in righteousness administers judgment. All the nations will recognize the acts of YHWH and His righteousness and praise will spring forth before the nations. The Speaker, on His part, is to function as an intermediary between its people and YHWH, as well as between the nations and YHWH. As YHWH’s priests, the Speaker is a minister of YHWH on behalf of the heathen nations, while bringing them to YHWH’s knowledge and redemptive purpose. Israel shall be called “the Ministers of our God; you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves” (v. 6).

The passage highlights a wide scope of mission. YHWH communicates through the prophet His election of His Servant. The Servant’s missional task, its content, its meaning, and its application concern YHWH’s message to all people. YHWH’s sending and engagement with people to accomplish His mission seems central to His work of salvation of mankind. This mission pervades all theological reflection and is the motivating force behind YHWH’s election of His Servants—the Messiah. God advances His mission for a better appreciation of His engagement of His people.

As part of YHWH’s mandate to Israel, they are to bring the nations to the realization that YHWH is the only true God of all the ends of the earth. When the nations are convinced about this fact, they will worship YHWH and Him alone. Israel and the nations must then aspire to live according to the commands of YHWH through service. This mission bestowed upon Israel by YHWH highlights an aspect of the mission motif of the passage. Israel has a mission to all nations. They are to minister to the nations and teach them about YHWH’s righteousness and glory.

YHWH’s love and kindness towards humanity shows His character, with several implications regarding His relationship with humankind and the world. His love for the world and humanity was a motivation for the creation of the universe. In

His relationship with mankind, even following the fall of humans, YHWH seeks to bring His salvation to all people on earth. The passage (Isa 61:1-11) in its espousal on the theme of mission expresses this idea.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that in Isa 61:1-11, the speaker of the passage, identified as the Messiah, is empowered with a mission following YHWH's anointing of Him. In the mission of the Messiah, He asserts His authority and empowerment to undertake His mission from YHWH: "The Spirit of YHWH God is upon Me because YHWH has anointed Me" (v. 1a). The endowment of YHWH's spirit is the source of His prophetic mission. It, therefore, gives Him full authorization to perform the specific missional task. The missionary task is noted with the phrase "He has sent me" (v. 1b) where he begins the description of His mission. Through the mission of the Messiah, YHWH, who loves righteousness and hates evil behavior, will have an everlasting covenant with His people. The people will experience joy in His divine salvation. YHWH then hastens the triumph of His people through victory and glory.

YHWH has appointed Him to deliver words of comfort and to give hope to the discouraged, to accelerate the freedom of prisoners, and to console the grieving since their anguish and sadness is about to be converted into cheer. In other words, His mission is described by the use of a series of infinitive phrases in vv. 1b-3: "to bring good news to the oppressed" (v. 1b); "to bind up the broken-hearted" (v. 1b); "to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners" (v. 2); "to comfort all who mourn" (v. 2b); and "to provide for mourners in Zion" (v. 3). He is to proclaim YHWH's good tidings but with restricted scope. The focus is on Israel, though the nations will witness and glory in Israel's salvation and righteousness. In effect, there will be a sprouting forth of YHWH's רָצוּן and praises from the peoples of all the nations—an expression that has the worldwide salvific mission of the speaker in view.

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