

ISAIAH 43: 16-21- I am about to do a new thing

Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995),

Isaiah 42: 1-4 [Servant]

Is. 43:1-4, God introduces a Servant who is charged with a special task and whose style of carrying it out is described. ¹ Who is this servant? The servant, freed from the constraints of the positivistic quest, takes shape in the imagination as a catalyst for reflection on the nature of the response demanded of those who have received a call from God.. .. Raise the probability that the original readers also found more than a biographical sketch of a particular person or group. We suspect that they also found in the description of the Servant's vocation an invitation to reflect on the responsibility of all those who acknowledge God's sovereignty and recognize the dependence of all creation on God's order of justice. It is reasonable to assume that such reflection could at times focus on godly individuals, at other times on the vocation of groups within the community or even on the ultimate purpose of the entire nation. Whether in relation to the historical meaning of this and the other Servant passages or to the question of contemporary theological significance, therefore, it seems in violation of the poetic tenor of the material to try to pin down the meaning of the Servant to one individual, one class, or, for that matter, one time. Two principle themes accordingly emerges as the central foci of 42: 1-4: the description of who the Servant is in relation for God and the task to which the Servant is appointed. The description of the Servant contains echoes of 41:8-10, a passage in which God turns to address Israel after having nullified the claims of the false gods and their protagonists: ²

Is. 41: 8-10

⁸ You, Israel, my servant, whom I have chosen,

⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners,

¹⁰ do not fear, for I am with you, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand

Is. 42:1: Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

In both cases we find title, formula of election, and assurance of divine support. In the former case, the Servant is explicitly identified with Israel, as is true also in the second of the so-called Servant passage in chapter 49. In the first Servant Song, the referent is unspecified. What should be obvious through the comparison, however, is that the election is presented in terms apropos of both an individual such as prophet or king and the faithful community. ³

The task to which the Servant is called is "to bring forth/establish justice, in truth, to the nations/in the earth." The servant's task is justice (mispat). The concept mispat lies at the heart of Second Isaiah's message. Mispat was presented with the claim that it derives from no source other than the one true God ("who taught him the path of *mispat*?" 40:14). ⁴ Further underlining the fact that there is no source of justice (*mispat*) save Yahweh is the claim in 40:23 that the sovereign of the universe "makes rulers (*sopete*) of the earth as nothing." In the complaint in 40:27, a people experiencing the collapse of their moral universe in the Babylonian conquest complain, "My *mispat* is disregarded by God," an assertion that evokes the prophet's assurance of God's presence in power for those who "wait for the Lord." Finally, the

¹ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 40.

² Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 41.

³ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 42.

⁴ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 42.

trial in 41:1 opens with a summons to the nations to gather together for *mispat*.⁵

Mispat is the order of compassionate justice that God has created and upon which the wholeness of the universe depends. In Israel, God revealed *mispat* in the form of the *torah* (note that in 42:4 *mispat* and *torah* form a synonymous parallel). Those who repudiate (거부하다, 버리다) God's *mispat* introduce evil into the world. God acts through God's servants to nullify the power of evildoers and to restore the harmony that arises where God's *mispat* is acknowledged and observed.⁶

Universality of *mispat*: nowhere does the universality of God's domain of *mispat* come to clearer expression than in Ps. 82. Picking up on the motif of the assignment of the nations to the sons of the Most High ('elyon) found in Deuteronomy 32:8-9. Psalm 82 describes the mandate of each nation's deity in terms of responsibility for the administration of justice. Here the verbal form of the root of *spt* is used: Ps. 82: 3: ³ Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Ps. 82:4: ⁴ Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Because the patron gods of the nations have failed to uphold justice and thereby threaten the universe with the specter of a return to primordial chaos ("all the foundations of the earth are shaken," Ps. 82:5), God asserts his power as defender of *mispat*, condemns the unjust gods, and assumes universal rule: Ps. 82:8: ⁸ Rise up, O God, judge (*spt*) the earth; for all the nations belong to you.⁷

The frequent attempt to minimize or deny the universal dimension to Second Isaiah's concept of God's *mispat* display ignorance of the fact that by nature the biblical concept of divine justice bears universal connotations (cf 42:1, "justice to the nations," and 43:4, "justice in the earth and the coastlands").... The description of a Servant whose task is to bear witness to God's justice (*mispat*) in the earth is thus a description of the *raison d'être* of those accepting the sovereignty of the one true God.⁸

Rather than being a biographical description of one person in one place and time, the Servant thus is the description of the human being whom all who love God are challenged to become. Therefore, it is important to take note of every detail in that description. Verse 1 identifies God as the source of all that the Servant is and is called to do. God presents the Servant in intimate terms: "Here is my servant. With equal clarity, the source of the Servant's strength is identified, for it is God who upholds him. Servant is chosen because God delights in him.... In times when discipleship weighs heavily and the joy of living true to God's compassionate justice dims, remembering that the source of the vocation of those who love God is in God's *delight* can have an uplifting and empowering effect."⁹

That the servant is not left to his own cleverness is further emphasized by God's next pronouncement: "I have put my spirit upon him." The spirit in the Old Testament is the power and wisdom of God with which those called to serve are endowed (Is. 11:2), including the judges of the League period, Israel's king and the prophets. Through the empowerment of God's spirit, weak and ordinary human beings rise up to accomplish daunting tasks on behalf of God's reign of justice, as seen in the case of Gideon (Judg. 6:34), David (II Sam 23:2), and Ezekiel (Ezek. ¹⁰

The manner in which God intended the Servant to carry out the task of bringing forth justice to the nations stands emphatically in contrast to the manner of conflict and raw force:

² He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice. (Is. 42: 2-3).

⁵ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 42.

⁶ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 42.

⁷ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 43.

⁸ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 44.

⁹ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 44.

¹⁰ Paul D. Hanson. INTERPRETATION: *A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 44.

The style of witness of the Servant stands so starkly in contrast to the ways of the nations and their leaders that it must be regarded wither as foolishness or as an intriguing alternative to a failed strategy. What sort of agent can this be, described in terms not of conqueror but of victim! Is it possible that the reign of justice can be promoted by submission and the express renunciation (거부, 단념) of force, even by special attention and care to fellow victims who are on the edge of collapse and death? The servant does not cry out when oppressed, does not move through the streets calling for pity, does not pus aside the weak in the hope of winning conventional power to his cause. The Servant, rather, bears witness with quiet, patient gentleness, confident that the nations will be drawn to God's reign of justice not by dint of human force but by attraction to embodied compassion and righteousness. The source of that attraction is not within the Servant but points to the reality that transcends all flesh. To live consistently in the service of the justice of God is to pattern one's life on the nature of God. Only in this way is a mortal empowered faithfully to bring forth justice.¹¹

Isaiah 43 : 16 -21

¹¹ Paul D. Hanson. *INTERPRETATION: A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 46.

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. **I am about to do a new thing**; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

내가 바다 가운데 길을 내고, 거센 물결 위에 통로를 냈다. 내가 병거와 말과 병력들과 용사들을 모두 이끌어 내어 쓰러뜨려서, 다시는 일어나지 못하게 하고, 그들을 마치 꺼져 가는 등잔 심지같이 꺼버렸다. 나 주가 말한다.

"너희는 지나간 일을 기억하여고 하지 말며, 옛일을 생각하지 말아라. 내가 이제 새 일을 하려고 한다. 이 일이 이미 드러나고 있는데, 너희가 그것을 알지 못하겠느냐?"

내가 광야에 길을 내겠으며, 사막에 강을 내겠다. 들짐승들도 나를 공경할 것이다. 이리와 타조도 나를 찬양할 것이다. 내가 택한 내 백성에게 물을 마시게 하려고, 광야에 물을 대고, 사막에 강을 내었기 때문이다. 이 백성은, 나를 위하라고 내가 지은 백성이다. 그들이 나를 찬양할 것이다."

The Unit 43:16-21 is a tightly knit proclamation of salvation.

It begins with a divine self-introduction, Proceeds immediately to describe God's act of deliverance, and ends with reference to the culmination of Israel's purpose in praise of God.¹²

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Animals will honor me, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, my people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

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¹² Paul D. Hanson. *INTERPRETATION: A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 71.

Is. 49:15 Compassion

Those who followed Yahweh were still scattered in lands far removed from Zion. Was this not evidence enough that God had forsaken this people? The nature of the images and the intensity of feeling that permeates God's reply to Zion in verses 15-26 reinforce the sense that a very sensitive topic has been broached by her complaint. First, appropriate as a response to Zion portrayed as a mourning mother, the charge that God has forgotten Zion is compared to the absurdity of imagining a mother forgetting her infant (v. 15). But appeal goes beyond reference to God's compassionate nature. Announcement is made of intense building activity and of waver of exiles returning home. 바벨론에 포로로 잡혀간 이스라엘사람들이 하나님께서 시온과 백성을 버리셨다고 불평했을 때 그렇지 않다는 반응을 짓먹이를 가진 어머니의 compassion 에 비해서 하나님은 말씀하십니다. 짓먹이를 가진 어머니가 짓먹이를 어찌 잊을 수 있겠느냐. 이는 말이 안되는 일이다. 설사 짓먹이의 어머니가 짓먹이를 잊어버리는 경우가 생긴다하더라도 하나님은 절대로 자기 백성을 잊지 않으시고 집으로, 시온으로 돌아오게 할 것이라고 다짐하시는 기사입니다.¹³

Is. 61: 1-3: A prophet for the lowly

The identity of this Servant is inextricably tied up with commitment to God's will, a commitment to be present as an agent of God's mercy to the broken and the oppressed and as one announcing that after years of mourning the time has arrived in which God will restore the conditions of justice and peace that characterize God's reign. ... A spiritually healthy community would be a community dwelling in a secure and productive land, and this involved brick and mortar....By placing God's justice and mercy at the heart of the rebuilding project, the Servant enables the community to reach the highest purpose possible for any human group, "to display [God's] glory (v.3).¹⁴

Those who had been humiliated by being deprived of temple and home and forced to serve foreign masters were to be served by the very ones who had subjugated them. ...They would "be called priests of the Lord, ... ministers of our God," thereby fulfilling God's promises to Moses on Mount Sinai.¹⁵

¹³ Paul D. Hanson. *INTERPRETATION: A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 133.

¹⁴ Paul D. Hanson. *INTERPRETATION: A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 224.

¹⁵ Paul D. Hanson. *INTERPRETATION: A Biblical Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 225.