



Research Article

Who Said, No Mission In The Old Testament: A Theological Framework Of Mission In The Isaianic Literature

ABSTRACT

This paper delineates the theological framework of the Isaianic theology of mission and how mission contributes to the overall theology of Isaianic literature. In the theological synthesis, the investigation established that there is a connection between YHWH, His attributes, mission, Israel, and the nations. The article revealed how YHWH relates to His mission and creation as well as to His redemptive purpose for all humanity. The abundant evidence in Isaianic literature concerning the theology of mission is related to the realization that YHWH's redemptive or salvific plans and work are inescapable when His mission to all humanity is a concern. When these are misjudged, a disconnect between YHWH's attributes and His redemptive purpose for the peoples of the whole universe occurs. YHWH has established an inseparable union between His mission and salvation to all humanity. Through the mission theology, Isaiah's language of redemption is sharpened, and the tenor of his salvific purpose espoused.

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INTRODUCTION

While most scholars argue against a theology of mission in the Old Testament (OT)² and center the debates on the framework and understanding of mission in the New Testament,³ the study of mission remains a perplexing phenomenon that the discourse is not increasing proportionately in the OT. The study of the concept of mission in the OT is comparatively underdeveloped. One, therefore, cannot comprehend "why various writers make such a point of avowing that the Old Testament makes absolutely no mention of a missionary mandate."⁴ Notwithstanding, some scholars have advanced the argument for OT mission theology.⁵ In OT mission studies, scholarly discussions, particularly in the Book of Isaiah, where some passages have been understood as mission-oriented, little or no discussion has been done on

² For example, Eckhard J. Schnabel argues that there is no definite command in commissioning people to go out for mission in the OT, contrary to what is found in the NT (cf. Matt 28:19-20). To him, God did not outline a serious blueprint to propagate His message. See Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004). Again, Ferdinand Hahn notes the absence of an OT mission command. He states, "There is an absence of a divine commission for the purpose and of any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles to win them for belief in Yahweh." Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London, UK: SCM, 1967), 20.

³ Walter C. Kaiser, "Israel's Missionary Call," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981); Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); J. Benton White, *Taking the Bible Seriously* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1993), 116; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 19. Horst Rzepkowski underscores that "the decisive difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is Mission. The New Testament is essentially a book about mission." Horst Rzepkowski, "The Theology of Mission," *Verbum SVD* 15 (1974): 80. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 19; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 49.

⁴ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 94.

⁵ Bryant Hicks, "Old Testament Foundations for Mission," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 53-62. See also Doug Matacio, "Centripetal and 'Centrifugal' Mission: Solomon and Jesus," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 4, no. 4 (2008): 31-42; C. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 71-392; Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003); Yoon Tahk Sohn, "Biblical Missiology and a Wholistic Mission Perspective," *Mission and Theology* 7, no. 5 (2001): 235-244; Jiří Moskala, "The Message of God's People in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 19, nos. 1-2 (2008): 18-39; Jiří Moskala, "The Mission of God's People in the Old Testament," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 19, nos. 1-2 (2008): 40-60.

the nature of mission. Scholars who have attempted to glean a mission theology from Isaiah have done so by briefly studying some concepts of Israel's relation with other nations.⁶ However, as most of the scholarly discussions on the theology of the book or its theological themes in Isaiah have centered on different concepts,⁷ mission has not received due consideration. Similarly, these mentioned themes have engaged the attention of Isaianic readers.

Emphases on the noted theological issues in Isaiah have been carried out mainly as theological themes in the book. With the absence of a full discourse on the theme of mission in Isaiah,⁸ could it be that a significant facet of the book has been overlooked? It is observed that the prophetic literature of the OT suggests "an indispensable aspect of a God whose character implies a missionary venture."⁹ Mission is deep-seated in God's nature. He sends and undertakes mission. Mission plays a significant part in His revelation of the plan of salvation for all humanity. The principal sources for mission understandings in the OT are the prophetic books, of which Isaiah is significantly valued.¹⁰

Some mission terms permeate the entire Isaianic literature, serving as a force that unites the book. Also, a perfunctory appraisal of the Isaianic literature may reveal a mission theme. For example, the Book of Isaiah refers to God's mission for His people, Israel, and the nations (far and near) surrounding it. Other concepts related to mission such as the covenant, Israel's election, and salvation pervade the Book of Isaiah.¹¹ Again, Isaiah addresses an audience living within a number of nations such as Egypt, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Assyria, Babylon, Sumeria, and Medo-Persia. It is not surprising that the prophet gives his message in the light of the notion of mission both within Israel and its surrounding nations. Also, it should be emphasized that Isaiah presents to the people living in imperial contexts a theological interpretation of the situation in the light of God's love for all humanity and His work in bringing them into His fold. While the arguments highlighted above are geared towards the development of mission theology, this article does not deal with the theology of mission but presents a theological framework upon which the theme of mission should be understood from the perspective of the Isaianic literature. An exploration into the theological framework of mission in the Isaianic literature is relevant. It will be helpful to understand how the prophet presents to the readers the concept in the book.

Theological Framework of Mission

As William Freedman has noted, theology "may become a part of the total perspective, pervading the book's atmosphere and becoming an important thread in the fabric of the work."¹² Relating to the Book of Isaiah, it can be posited that the theme of mission makes a pivotal contribution to the theology of the book. Bosch has noted that "mission is the mother of theology."¹³ The statement has subsequently been supported by Scott W. Sunquist, who posits that "theology starts with mission."¹⁴ With this understanding in view, in the discussion that follows, the article considers the theological

⁶ See Paul R. Raabe, "Look to the Holy One of Israel, All You Nations: The Oracles About the Nations Still Speak Today," *Concordia Journal* 30, no. 4 (2004): 336-349; Paul R. Raabe, "Why Prophetic Oracles Against the Nations?" in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 236-257.

⁷ Also, scholarly works on Isaiah have mainly centered on other equally-relevant concepts. These theological insights include Creation, redemption/salvation, the Servant motif, Messianism, the glory of YHWH, the new heaven and the new earth, temple, Sabbath, justice, and the day of YHWH. See Terrance R. Wardlaw, "The Significance of Creation in the Book of Isaiah," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 3 (2016): 449-471; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute Press, 1970); Hudyard Y. Muskita, "Justice, Cult, and Salvation in Isaiah 56-59: A Literary-Theological Study" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2018); Gregory J. Polan, *In the Ways of Justice Toward Salvation: A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56-59* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1986); John N. Oswalt, "Isaiah 60-62: The Glory of the Lord," *Calvin Theological Journal* 40, no. 1 (2005): 95-103; Antti Laato, *Who Is the Servant of the Lord?: Jewish and Christian Interpretations on Isaiah 53 From Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Studies in Rewritten Bible 4 (Turku, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2012); Harry M. Orlinsky and Norman H. Snaith, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah: The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah; Isaiah 40-66; A Study of the Teaching of the Second Isaiah and Its Consequences*, Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series 14 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014); Marvin E. Tate, "King and Messiah in Isaiah of Jerusalem," *Review and Expositor* 65 (1968): 409-421; Emil G. Kraeling, "The Immanuel Prophecy," *Journal of Biblical Prophecy* 50 (1931): 277-297; N. K. Gottwald, "Immanuel as the Prophet's Son," *Vetus Testamentum* 8 (1958): 36-47; Herbert M. Wolf, "Solution to the Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-8:22," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 449-456; Daniel K. Bediako, "Isaiah's 'New Heavens and New Earth' (Isa 65:17; 66:22)," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11, no. 1 (2008): 1-20; Daniel K. Bediako, "Sabbath in the Book of Isaiah," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 6 (2012): 161-175; H. Bo Lim, "The 'Way of the Lord' in the Book of Isaiah" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2006).

⁸ For example, Michael A. Grisanti focuses his study of mission on Israel's outward mission in Isa 40-55. See Michael A. Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40-55: An Update," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9, no. 1 (1998): 39-61.

⁹ Robert Dobbie, "The Biblical Foundation of the Mission of the Church: The Old Testament," *International Review of Mission* 51 (1962): 202.

¹⁰ G. Ernest Wright writes on the OT basis of mission. He points out that the OT shows an array of texts that indicate "the redemptive relation existing between the Chosen People and the peoples." G. Ernest Wright, "The Old Testament Basis for the Christian Mission," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (London, UK: SCM, 1961), 17. With the exception of the books of Jonah and Isaiah that show a deeper impact on the methods of mission in the OT, the OT in general has a different look on mission. He notes that "as to the mission of Israel in the world, the Old Testament, of course, gives no united voice, except on the fact that of the mission and on the necessity of becoming and remaining a royal 'people of God.'" Ibid., 19.

¹¹ For example, Seock-Tae Sohn has shown the relationship between election, covenant, and mission. See Seock-Tae Sohn, *The Divine Election of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991). See also Byron E. Shafer, "A Theological Study of the Root 'bhr' in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Jewish Literature, B.C." (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1968). For discussion on the authorship and methodology of the Book of Isaiah see, Elisha K. Marfo, "Isaiah's Authorship and Methodology: A Historical Review," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission & Ministry* 18 (2018): 109-137.

¹² William Freedman, "The Literary Motif: A Definition and Evaluation," *Novel* 4, no. 2 (1971): 125.

¹³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 16.

¹⁴ Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2013), 9.

framework of mission in Isaianic literature.

A Mission-Oriented God

Exposition on theological implications means a reflection on YHWH. He is at the center of theology, and theology is about Him. The import is that theological implications must be theocentric. Mission has been advanced as “the sending activity of God with the purpose of reconciling to himself and bringing into his kingdom fallen men and women from every people, nation, and tongue.”¹⁵ In the definition of mission, YHWH is the active sender, and His message is propagated. He is the foremost missionary who has engaged His creatures in a personal relationship from the onset of creation. Thus, YHWH is the principal originator of mission who seeks to draw humanity to Himself.

Mission in the Book of Isaiah has a broad scope. YHWH communicates through the prophet and his writing. Isaiah’s content, its meaning, and its application concern YHWH’s message to all people. YHWH’s sending and engagement with people in Isaiah to accomplish His mission seems central to His work of salvation of mankind. This mission permeates all theological reflection and is the motivating force behind YHWH’s election of His Servants—Israel and the Messiah (cf. Isa 42:1-9; 18-25; 49:1-6; 52:13-53:1-12; 55:1-13). Some dimensions of how God advances His mission are outlined for a better appreciation of YHWH’s engagement of His people.

Universal mission. God, the Creator, made humanity in His image (cf. Gen 1:26-27) with multiple roles that reflect His character and nature. When mankind fell (cf. Gen 3), humanity became separated from God. God decided to reconcile humanity unto Himself. This set forth God’s mission to all humanity as a way of bringing humankind into a personal relationship with Him. Here, God became a missionary to the world. As Bosch has noted, “If there is a missionary in the Old Testament, it is God Himself who will, as his eschatological deed par excellence, bring the nations to Jerusalem to worship him there together with his covenant”¹⁶ nation.

In Isaianic literature, God’s idea of universal mission is also portrayed through His message. In Isa 2:1-5, the nations and Israel are in view of God’s missional instruction. The nations stream to Zion in a missionary endeavor to learn about YHWH. The idea of the nations streaming to Zion is also noted in Isa 55:5 and 60:3. Isaiah 55:5 reads, “Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you.” Similarly, “nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn,” reads Isa 60:3. Unlike 2:1-5, where the nations come for instructions, in Isa 60 they bring wealth to Zion (v. 5). It shows YHWH’s universal plan for both Israel and the nations.

Isaiah 45:22 captures YHWH’s universal missional call to humanity: “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.” Bringing salvation to humanity is the agenda of YHWH’s mission. In the missionary move of YHWH, which is destined to reach out to all the nations and humanity in Isa 66:18-21, the mission is directed to the nations and the world outside Israel. The implication is that the nations would have the privilege of beholding the *דִּוְכָב* (glory) of the Lord. YHWH is coming to gather the nations so they could behold His *דִּוְכָב*.

Missional goal. The ultimate goal of YHWH’s mission is to bring His salvation to mankind. The Servant of YHWH is to be “covenant for the people and a light for the nations” (Isa 42:6) so that YHWH’s “salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (49:6). Israel and the nations are both recipients of this great offer. In fact, all humans are to enjoy this special privilege.¹⁷

God’s missional goal of reaching out His salvation to Israel and the nations is highlighted several times in Isaiah. Though Isaiah proclaims YHWH’s divine judgment against the nations, he equally tells of the positive aspect of YHWH’s love towards them. In Isa 42:21, YHWH shows His loving-kindness and zeal to save the nation through Israel. When Israel learns and accepts His statutes and instruction, they would become attractive to the nations and would learn His *דְּבָר* (word) and follow His *תּוֹרָה* (Torah) (cf. 2:2-3). Similarly, in Isa 2:1-5, the prophet indicates that foreigners will connect and unite with God’s people. In 66:18-21, Isaiah notes that the survivors of the nations will bring their gifts and offerings to YHWH’s temple.

YHWH’s Servant the Messiah, in 52:13-53:1-12, undergoes a trial-and-death experience even being inhumanely deformed (*תִּזְעַק*) beyond recognition. It is through pain and anguish that YHWH’s quest to save mankind would be achieved through Him. The salvation-oriented goal of the mission theology in Isaiah helps in noting how the book espouses “truthful witness to God’s salvific purpose for his people.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Craig Ott, Timothy C. Tennent, and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), xv.

¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 19.

¹⁷ “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In the day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance’” (Isa 19:23-35).

¹⁸ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 4.

Divine Attributes Connected to Mission

The mission theology in the Book of Isaiah is the portrayal of YHWH's attributes. Though several attributes may be coined from the text, those that are visible in the context of mission are discussed. The attributes show the goodness and greatness of YHWH in Israel, among the nations, and the universe as a whole. They bring out the importance of a right understanding of YHWH in relation to His mission to humanity.

Loving-kindness. Love and kindness are a part of YHWH's character (Gen 32:9; Exod 34:6-7; Ps 25:10; 86:5; Isa 54:10), with several implications regarding His relationship with humanity and the world. His love for the world and humanity was a motivation for the creation of the universe. He voluntarily created the world (Gen 1-2). He also sustains it by His loving-kindness to humanity. In His love, He initiated a loving relationship with His creation. In His kindness, He sustains the world and everything in it. He loves the world and humanity not because He is under any obligation to do so, rather loving-kindness which is His character and His divine act of creation is a manifestation of that attribute. As such, YHWH "desires and works towards bilateral love relationship with each human via his universally relational love but does not unilaterally determine that anyone loves him in response."¹⁹ In His relationship with mankind, YHWH seeks to bring His salvation to all people on earth. Isaiah in his espousal on the theme of mission expresses this idea (Isa 42:1-6; 49:1-6).

Isaiah intimates God's love and kindness towards Israel and the nations. YHWH's loving-kindness is the underpinning force for His quest to save and redeem Israel and the nations and, by extension, all humanity. YHWH's Servant by His mission in Isa 42:3 endures all the brutalities meted out to Him so that in faithfulness, He will bring justice as well as establish justice on earth. In doing so, the Servant institutes YHWH's *דְּרוֹר* (Torah/law) upon which all the people will put their hope.

The Hebrew *דְּרוֹר* (loving-kindness) is a key term that shows YHWH's loving-kindness. The term *דְּרוֹר* conveys God's eternal faithfulness and compassion in His relationship with humanity. YHWH's loving-kindness is articulated in His covenant relationship with Israel and His people. It is a covenantal relationship in which YHWH seeks after humanity with love, compassion, and mercy. In its seven occurrences in the Book of Isaiah,²⁰ *דְּרוֹר* is attested in 55:3—a mission passage. In 55:3, *דְּרוֹר* is used in describing the loving-kindness of YHWH in relation to His faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. Because of the oaths, assurances, and steadfast love that YHWH has bestowed upon the house of David (Israel), which shall endure indefinitely, He seeks to extend such loving-kindness to His people.

YHWH calls His people into a mission that seeks to reunite them: "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to YHWH, and He will have mercy [*רחם*] on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (55:7). The use of *רחם* affirms the attribute of YHWH's loving-kindness for His people. When the people hear YHWH's missional call and forsake their ways, His mercy and compassion for them will make Him forgive their transgression and welcome them into His salvation. His salvation for Israel and the nations is emphasized in His loving-kindness and mercy.

YHWH's loving-kindness is emphasized when He says, "Listen to Me, house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne from their birth, that has been carried from the womb; even to old age I am He, and even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; yes, I will carry and will deliver" (46:3-4). This is YHWH's promise of never-ending love, kindness, and security. YHWH's fidelity to His covenant and His mercy and compassion for His people, along with faithfulness to keep His promises, is expressed in His loving-kindness. The context for YHWH's universal mission hinges on His loving-kindness for all humanity.

Salvation. God has no pleasure in the death of anyone (Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11). Though Isa 53:10 indicates that YHWH was "pleased to crush" His Servant (the Messiah), it was YHWH's desire in the broader context of His plan of salvation for all humanity. Due to His love for His creation and the redemptive plan, He was "pleased to crush Him" (53:10).

Isaiah notes that declaring the salvation of all the people at the ends of the earth is an act of YHWH. Salvation is the fulcrum of YHWH's mission. All humanity is to enjoy this great gift of YHWH. YHWH calls on all humanity to join themselves to Him in order for them to enjoy His salvation: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other" (Isa 45:22). YHWH envisages the salvation of the peoples of the nations as well as Israel as they come to Him. His mission of salvation is available to all.

In Isa 42:6 and 49:6, Isaiah notes that God's aim in electing His Servant (Messiah) and His people is centered on them becoming the light of the nations and bringing His salvation to the ends of the earth. In 49:6, the first person common singular suffix is used in *יְתַעֲשֶׂי* (My salvation) to show possession. YHWH is the antecedent of the pronominal suffix. God identifies Himself with this attribute of salvation. It is YHWH's salvation that His Servant brings to the ends of the earth. Interestingly, Isa 61:10 shows how YHWH's salvation becomes a gift He freely gives to His faithful

¹⁹ John C. Peckham, *The God of Love: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 250.

²⁰ Cf. Isa 16:5; 40:6; 54:8, 10; 55:3; 57:1; 63:7 (2x). However, it is worth noting that *דְּרוֹר* appears 248 times in 241 verses in the OT. See Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem, Israel: Kiryat-Sepher, 1983), 386-387.

ones. He clothes His faithful missionaries with His garment of salvation. The text reads, “I delight in YHWH; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with the garment of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest and a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10).

Similarly, YHWH’s desire to save Israel is noted in His election of His Servant. In Isa 49:5, YHWH’s intent of forming His Servant is outlined: “And now YHWH says, He formed me in the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob to Him and gather Israel to Himself. I am honored in the eyes of YHWH, and my God has been my strength.” Israel’s salvation, just like the nations, is paramount to YHWH. He seeks to save His people by reconciling them unto Himself. YHWH’s mission to His people (Israel) and the peoples of the nations is essential in His formation of the Servant. In other words, Israel’s election to be YHWH’s Servant is connected to mission.

As Isaianic literature is read, one can perceive God’s intention to reach out to the nations and the entire world. YHWH had to use His people, Israel, to reach out to the Gentile nations. He desires to save all peoples of the ends of the earth as much as the people of Israel. Isaiah fulfills YHWH’s intentions of mission to all people by the prophetic ministry to both Israel and the nations. The prophet makes known God’s redemptive attribute and message to Israel as well as the nations and the ends of the earth. YHWH’s redemptive or salvific goal for all humanity sets the ideological context for His universal mission.

Sovereignty. One of the most prominent attributes in the discourse on mission is YHWH’s sovereignty. God’s sovereignty is a description of creatorship. In other words, God’s sovereignty is viewed through the creation account. *אֶרֶב* (create) is used in showing the sovereignty of God through His creation of the universe.²¹ Isaiah 40:28 emphasizes that “YHWH is the everlasting God, creator of earth’s ends” (cf. Ps 90:2). Isaiah 42:5a (*עָקֵר בְּהִיטוֹן מִנְעֵשָׁה אֶרֶב הָהָרִים*) is employed to show YHWH’s creatorship. He created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. YHWH’s sovereignty is manifested in His creatorship and sustenance of the universe. In 42:5b (*חֲדָרָהּ הִלְלָע בְּעַל הַמָּשָׁן נָתַן*), YHWH gives breath to people and life to all humanity who walk upon the earth. YHWH’s sovereignty is here expressed in terms of His nature as a life-giver. All human beings have their being because He gives it. YHWH rules in the whole universe. His rulership upon the entire world espouses His kingship. He is the king of the cosmos.

YHWH’s act of creation and rulership over the entire universe stands out in demonstrating His greatness and might. Moskala has noted the worth of YHWH’s creation that it “brings us closer to our biblical source and to our mission. . . . On the other hand, this attention to creation propels us beyond our borders and brings us closer to the world.”²² In other words, while creation highlights YHWH’s sovereignty, it equally brings people to the basis of mission call and engagement with others.

YHWH, as sovereign God, solely created all things, all nations, and all people. As Isa 44:6 echoes His sovereignty, YHWH reiterates, “I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.” While J. Herbert Kane sees the manifestation of YHWH’s sovereignty in His creation, redemptive plans and work, and judgment over mankind, he argues that when it comes to God’s engagement with humanity “nowhere is the sovereignty of God more clearly seen than in the Christian mission, and this in several ways.”²³

God’s sovereignty is further underscored by descriptions of His kingship. Resounding throughout the Book of Isaiah is the declaration of YHWH’s kingship. His kingship is associated with His sovereignty. God’s sovereignty is not only related to His strongest nature above everyone, but it also encompasses His rulership and authority that transcends both time and space. His sovereignty enables Him to elect the Messiah as His Servant. As Richard Schultz notes, “The sending of the Messiah is first and foremost a demonstration of God’s sovereignty.”²⁴ As king over the universe, YHWH calls the attention of all nations on earth (49:1). His kingship manifests itself in judgment and salvation that He offers to Israel and the nations. He is the only God who possesses such an ability. Goldingay rightly articulates, “To say that Yahweh is the ultimate supernatural, extraordinary, uncreated, sovereign, heavenly being is in effect to say that Yahweh is the only God.”²⁵

In Isaianic literature, YHWH’s reign as the holy King provides a basis for His divine act of mission to Israel and the nations. He does everything possible to bring Israel to repentance and enjoy His redemptive grace; He equally reaches out to all people of the nations so they can experience His salvation. YHWH gathers all nations, including Israel, to behold His *דִּבְכָּה* (Isa 66:18). In chaps. 56-66, YHWH’s kingship is extended to the eschaton. As God brings universal judgment and salvation, He establishes His rulership over “the world and eternity as a cosmic king, and with

²¹ The verb *אֶרֶב* (create) is attested 48 times in the OT. In all its attestations, God is the subject. In the 38 Qal active forms, He is the subject. God is also implied as the subject in all the ten Niphal passive form. The verb conveys God as the originating of creation. In the Book of Isaiah, *אֶרֶב* is used 21 times. The verb is a technical term for the biblical doctrine of creation.

²² Jiří Moskala, “The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (an Intertextual Study)” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1998), 283-284.

²³ J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974), 87.

²⁴ Richard Schultz, “The King in the Book of Isaiah,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 164.

²⁵ John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 99.

God's rule on Zion resulting in international supremacy."²⁶

One aspect of YHWH's sovereignty is His holiness. In Isa 55:5, in God's invitation to all peoples (especially Israel) of the earth, the text points out that nations will answer to the call of His people because of His holiness. God introduces Himself as *לֵאֱלֹהֵינוּ שׁוֹדֵקְלָן דִּי־לֵאֱלֹהֵי הַנְּהָרִין* (YHWH your God, the Holy One of Israel).²⁷ The text points to YHWH's holiness as the reason for His people to embark on a mission. The *כִּי* clause that follows YHWH's revelation of His holiness shows why God's people are to engage in mission to all humanity: *כִּי־גָדַלָהּ* (For He [YHWH] has glorified you). Therefore, in Isa 55:5, the depiction of Israel's mission and the nations is emphasized by YHWH's holiness. In acknowledging YHWH's sovereignty and holiness, Isa 12:4-6 command God's people to "give thanks to YHWH, call on His name, make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing to YHWH, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you." The holiness of YHWH, coupled with His sovereignty, sets the tone for His mission globally.

To summarize, Isaianic literature portrays the sovereignty of YHWH. Dumitrescu rightly states, "YHWH demonstrates he is the ruler of all the earth, of all nations, and has no favorites."²⁸ YHWH's sovereignty is in connection to His creation, rulership or kingship, divine works, and holiness. All these avenues of YHWH's sovereignty are linked to His mission that seeks the redemption of all humanity on earth.

Righteousness (justice and mercy). In the Isaianic literature, there is a balance between justice and mercy in YHWH's character. Gerhard von Rad has noted that "in the entire Old Testament, the righteousness of God is and remains *iustitia salutaris* [i.e., saving righteousness], because its essence accords with *iustitia justificatoria* [i.e., justice righteousness], that is, because its essence is to create justice for those who need it, to exercise justice on behalf of God's people and thereby to help them."²⁹ YHWH's faithfulness manifests in His justice and saving grace to all humanity. "The righteousness of God, then, is a gracious gift of salvation wrought the establishment or restoration of the covenant relationship between God and his people."³⁰ The theme of righteousness (justice and mercy) is mentioned in connection with mission in the Isaianic literature. YHWH as the only one God who brings judgment with a lining of hope in the Isaianic literature.

Isaiah offers a better comprehension of the messages of judgment, mercy, and hope in a significant way. In Isa 2:4, the prophet projects YHWH as a judge and goes on to indicate that He will judge between the nations. In Isa 61, YHWH is presented as the One who clothed His people with the garments of salvation and arrayed them in robes of *קִדְּצָב* (v. 10). As the sovereign God, YHWH will make *קִדְּצָב* (righteousness) and praise spring up before all nations (v. 11). In v. 3, those that follow Him as Lord will be "called oaks of righteousness a planting of YHWH." All these attributes of righteousness are outlined as enabling elements in YHWH's mission through His people. God's people are to preach YHWH's message to the poor and give encouraging words to the brokenhearted. God's people are also to proclaim YHWH's year of favor and His day of vengeance. Again, God's people are to comfort mourners and provide support to those who grieve (vv. 1-3). The administration of these qualities portrays YHWH's *קִדְּצָב* in His dealings with all people.

In YHWH's act and mandate to His Servant concerning His mission, *קִדְּצָב* is a key element that is featured prominently. Notably, a significant number of verses highlight the *קִדְּצָב* of YHWH which manifest itself in His Servant. In Isa 42:6, YHWH Himself proclaims that He has called His Servant (Messiah) in *קִדְּצָב*. Isaiah 42:3 indicates that YHWH's Servant in faithfulness will bring justice. Also, He will establish justice on earth (v. 4). Furthermore, YHWH's Servant will show mercy by justifying many and bearing their iniquities (53:11-12). Isaiah also emphasizes that in YHWH's *קִדְּצָב*, when the wicked forsake their ways, He will have mercy on them (55:7). Isaiah indicates that Israel would be a projector of YHWH's *קִדְּצָב* to all the nations. He states that the descendants of Israel

will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed. I delight greatly in YHWH; . . . he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as

²⁶ Andrew T. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 114.

²⁷ The epithet *לֵאֱלֹהֵינוּ שׁוֹדֵקְלָן* (Holy One of Israel) is attested 25 times (1:4, 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14.) in the Book of Isaiah. In his dissertation, Tony Tung-Kan Chen has shown how the phrase *the Holy One of Israel* is employed in the Book of Isaiah to depict YHWH's personal relationship with Israel. He also points that the title shows the powerful and unapproachable God in the persona of YHWH. See Tony Tung-Kan Chen, "The Relationality of the Holy One of Israel in the Book of Isaiah" (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2013). See also M. E. Baloyi, "'The Holy One of Israel' in the Book of Isaiah: An Exegetical Study" (PhD diss., North-West University, 2017); Larry M. Taylor, "The Holy One of Israel Is Savior: Theological Themes in Isaiah," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 34, no. 1 (1991): 13-19; Raabe, "Look to the Holy One," 336-349; Alphonso Groenewald, "'For Great in Your Midst is the Holy One of Israel' (Is 12:6b): Trauma and Resilience in the Isaianic Psalm," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 1-4.

²⁸ Cristian Dumitrescu, "Mission Theology in the Old Testament: A New Paradigm," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 53.

²⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962-1965), 1:371.

³⁰ Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.386 (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 37.

a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign YHWH will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (Isa 61:9-11)

In the light of the discussions on the divine attributes of YHWH to missions, it is evident that YHWH's loving-kindness, sovereignty, salvation, and righteousness are portrayed in connection with the theme of mission in the Isaianic literature. It should be stated that though the depiction of these attributes of YHWH is not exclusive to the mission theology, it is imperative to recognize their portrayal in Isaiah. It is in this light that YHWH calls on all to embrace His mission that seeks the salvation of Israel, the nations, and all humanity.

Mission Through Individuals

God has different ways of engaging people in mission. In the Book of Isaiah, there are depictions of individuals engaged in mission. God used these people in a unique circumstance to bring His mission goals to the intended people. These individuals and the mission they carry out are discussed.

Isaiah the prophet. The prophet's life is reflective of the divine missionary task assigned to him by YHWH. The presence of YHWH is seen not only in the messages of the prophet but in the embodiment of His word in the life of the prophet. So what the people see and hear through Isaiah is what they would hear and see from God. The prophet speaks YHWH's word in specifying what God wants His people to do. "The prophet becomes partly to the divine story; the heart and mind of God pass over into that of the prophet to such an extent that the prophet becomes a veritable embodiment of God."³¹ Goldingay rightly points out,

Isaiah speaks like a messenger who repeats the words of his master, 'the Lord Yahweh has said this' (e.g., Is 7:7; 10:24). There is a solemnity about being addressed by someone who comes with the Great King's authority and speaks with the 'I' of the great king as if he *were* the great king (cf. Is 36:4, 14, 16). That is how a prophet speaks as Yahweh's messenger as if he *were* the Great King. He brings the great king's presence; he speaks performatively.³²

Isaiah is called the "missionary prophet of the Old Testament."³³ While the prophet speaks of God's redemption of Israel, he equally notes that salvation is guaranteed for the nations outside of Israel. He emphasizes that the nations will stream to the light in the days to come as a way of enjoying the salvation of God along with Israel. This experience will be felt in the nations where survivors will go forth and spread the redemptive message of YHWH among the peoples.

During the time of Isaiah, orienting YHWH's people about His mission and what He envisaged for His nation and the peoples of the nations was vital. He, therefore, presented "the divine missionary intention and the God-ordained missionary duty of Israel."³⁴ He also highlighted the participation of the nations in the salvation of God. The nation on their part will see YHWH's קִדְּשׁוֹ and glory through Israel as Isa 62:2 indicates: "Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of YHWH will bestow." Isaiah notes the need for YHWH's word "to be promulgated to others."³⁵

Isaiah 6:8-13 reveals that YHWH empowers the prophet with the mission that seeks to call out the people of Israel and assure them of God's punishment and later forgiveness of their sins. Isaiah's response to YHWH's missional call indicates that he is just a recipient of a divine missional task. He carried out the mandate on behalf of YHWH who assigned him. The prophet carries out this mandate and informs that YHWH's intention of judgment and salvation is not only at the reserve of Israel, but the peoples of other nations are also to participate in it.

Grisanti argues that "Isaiah underscores Israel's role in providing a witness to the nations."³⁶ From the prophet's perspective and his message, through mission, there is YHWH's salvation for the nations and the whole world as much as Israel. In this, Israel has a unique role. They needed to make sure that their God "would be attractive to all nations, and they would come and worship Him (Isa 56:6-7; 61:9-11; 62:2)."³⁷

The Servant of YHWH (the Messiah). The Servant of YHWH plays a key role in YHWH's mission to humanity. The designation, Servant of YHWH, as a reference to Israel has a unique role of bringing YHWH's salvific

³¹ Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 150.

³² Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book*, 91-92. Emphasis in original.

³³ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1958), 220. See also C. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 485. Grisanti also considers Isaiah as "the father Jewish missionary activity." Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations," 46.

³⁴ Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations," 46.

³⁵ Moskala, "Mission in the Old Testament," 74.

³⁶ Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations," 62.

³⁷ Moskala, "Mission in the Old Testament," 74.

message to its people and the nations (Isa 49:1-6). Again as the Messiah, the Servant of YHWH is positioned to bring a lasting effect of redemption to all humanity.

In the mission of the Servant in Isa 42, the Messiah is called to serve as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations. In v. 6, YHWH announces that He has “called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have made you as a covenant of the people, a light to the nations.” So while the Messianic Servant serves as YHWH’s light to the nations, He reaches out to the ends of the world with YHWH’s salvation. Here, the outgoing movement of the mission of YHWH’s Servant is emphasized where the Messiah seeks to bring YHWH salvific message to the nations.

The Messiah’s role as YHWH’s Servant from Isa 42:6 portrays a double mission. While He serves as a light to the nations, as YHWH’s Servant, the Messiah is also destined as “a covenant to the people” (v. 6). He becomes a linkage between YHWH and His people, as well as a light to the nations. In this sense, it is seen that YHWH’s salvation is not reserved only for Israel, but to the peoples of all nations. The Messiah’s mandate is to bring the nations to share in the salvation of God.

Again in Isa 42:1-9, YHWH mentions thrice that the bringing of justice to the nations is a key component in the mission of the Servant. In v. 3 as YHWH appoints His Servant to His people, He labels the Servant as a messianic figure to bring justice to the nations. This missional focus is to spread YHWH’s message of justice worldwide. In this case, the Messiah was to exemplify His election to be YHWH’s kingdom of righteousness. God’s people are to be mission-oriented people in their service to the nations. The Messiah through His missional task plays a key role in the salvation of Israel and the nations. He is to bring *תְּרוּמָה* to the people of the coastlands (nations). The national and universal nature of mission portrayed in Isa 42:1-9 is shown in the mission that the Servant has toward Israel as well as to the nations.

In Isa 61, the mission of the Messiah 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 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). By bringing good news to the oppressed, those who are in trouble or distress, such as those grieving over personal transgression and another person’s iniquities, the Messiah makes available the free gifts of grace and relief from pain, guilt, and sin. By binding up the brokenhearted, the Messiah offers Himself as healing to those in affliction and anguish. Through the proclamation of liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, the Servant Messiah works the liberation of those in sinful bondage and offers salvation and transformation to those persons. He also brings a period of grace for the needy and those enslaved by sin. By comforting and providing for the mourners, the Messiah offers Himself as a reliable and dependable figure who brings emotional and spiritual support to the grieving. All these missional tasks of the Messiah are missional outreaches that seek the salvation of the people of the entire world.

Mission Through Nations or Groups

Isaianic literature presents a God who works out His mission through people grouping and nations. He envisions all people to be the recipients of His salvific gift to the world. This section of the study discusses mission of these nations or groups espoused in Isaiah.

Israel. God made mankind in His image with a mission. Humanity was to reveal God’s character and rulership over creation. When God’s ideal for humanity was brought to a halt by the fall (Gen 3), there arose the need to reconcile humanity to God. God had to identify a unique group that was to carry out its distinctive role as His agents on earth. This initiative commenced with the call of Abraham (Gen 12). Abraham’s call is seen as a sequel to mankind’s failure to serve God. Therefore, the election of Israel was more than redemptive of all humanity. Through Israel YHWH’s salvific grace was to be known by all people on earth.

YHWH presents His mission intention and task to Israel right from their election as His Servant (Isa 42:18-25). Israel was assigned a task and a message to proclaim.³⁸ God’s people were to be bearers of YHWH’s salvific message to everyone (Isa 66:19). Their missional mandate was universal in nature and to benefit all.

³⁸ Jiří Moskala, “The Message of God’s People in the Old Testament,” *Perspective Digest* 15, no. 2 (2010): 4-18.

YHWH's universal mission through Israel was first explicitly declared to Abraham.³⁹ God's call of Israel was partly for their distinctive role in bringing YHWH's message to the nations. They were to serve the nations or humanity in general (Isa 2:1-5; 42:18-25; 49:1-6). This was to be a way where the peoples of the other nations and Israelites themselves would be attracted to YHWH.

The people of Israel were to live according to the dictates of God as a way of glorifying Him, to serve as an attraction to the nations by projecting YHWH's redemptive promises to them, and to be a light to the nations. Therefore, Israel's calling by God came with missionary activities they were to carry out on behalf of God. They were to be the means of bringing the nations and all humanity to God. Ferdinand Hahn points out that "Israel is God's witness solely by reason of its existence and of God's salvation which is given to it. As this saving activity takes place in the midst of the nations, and Israel . . . bears witness thereof with thanks and praise before Yahweh, it is the light of the nations, so that they come and acknowledge Yahweh as the one God."⁴⁰

Israel as God's chosen nation was both set apart from the other nations and elected by YHWH to be a blessing to the nations. Israel was to be used by God as His channel of blessing and salvation to all the nations on earth. Israel was to be a priestly state, intermediaries of YHWH's salvific plan to the nations. Peters rightly captures this:

While Israel was to be uniquely related to God, it was to be a kingdom of priests in this world and for this world but not of this world. It is a simple fact that no priesthood exists for itself. . . . What the tribe of Levi was to the people of Israel, Israel as a nation was to be to the nations of the world. The *Missio Dei* was to be mediated through the people of Israel to the world of mankind. Israel's calling was of world significance and for a world ministry.⁴¹

Isaiah emphasizes this point as part of the mission motif he espouses. The prophet notes that Israel's blessings, together with the victory over the nation, are an indication of YHWH's divinely proven interaction in the relationship that would exist between Israel and the nations. Israel would serve as God's agent of blessing to the nations. Isaiah 2:1-5 seems to highlight this idea. Isaiah notes that Zion-Jerusalem is the focal point of YHWH's mission strategy for בְּיִגְעֶהְלֶכְךָ. It is the missional center for the instruction and teaching of YHWH's קְרוֹת. Here in Jerusalem, the nations and Israel submit to the instructions of the קְרוֹת. As the nations come to Zion on their own will, they receive YHWH's blessings, instructions, and benefit from His judgment and rebuke.

Israel's missional duty towards the nations that come into their territory is instructional. Israel is to assist the nations in knowing the הָרָה of YHWH and appreciating His divine will for them through the teaching of the קְרוֹת and יִרְבֵּךְ הָרָה. Here, Israel functions as an intermediary in the divine instruction of the nations.⁴² Israel does not go on outreach to evangelize those nations. Rather, God brings בְּיִגְעֶהְלֶכְךָ and Israel serves as His instrument in missional instruction. All the nations stream to Jerusalem. They equally entreat others to come so as to "go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the God of Jacob" (v. 3).

The concept of the nations streaming to Zion also appears in Isa 55:5 and 60:3. The Book of Isaiah's central idea is that of nations coming to Israel in a mission-oriented nature. The nations come peacefully to reside and enjoy

³⁹ God informed Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3). Abraham becoming a blessing to all humanity on earth was emphasized three times by God in Genesis (cf. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Abraham was to serve as the light to the whole earth. In the call narrative of Abraham (Gen 12), YHWH used three main imperative phrases to highlight His blessings to Abraham which will be transferred to all nations. God proclaimed, "I will bless you" (הִכְרַתְּכָא) and "be a blessing" (הִכְרַתְּכָא) in v. 2. In v. 3, God stressed that "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (וְכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ יִבְרַכְּךָ). The Hebrew phrase הִכְרַתְּכָא used in v. 3 is employed in the LXX as πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ (all the tribes). It is again attested in Gen 28:14. However, in Gen 18:18; 22:18; and 26:4, with the Hebrew כָּל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ (all nations), the LXX translates it as πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (all the nations). The import of the text anticipates all humanity on the earth, inclusive of all tribes or families. Due to God's declaration, Abraham was to propagate and influence the nations that he came in contact with. "Abraham became the special messenger—a missionary—to the entire world with a mission which would later be carried out by Israel and that would find its fulfillment on an even greater scale in the *Ebed Yahweh*, the Servant of the Lord (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3)." Moskala, "Mission in the Old Testament," 67. Abraham was to serve as a channel for God's salvation and blessings to all people on earth. In effect Israel, God's people and descendants of Abraham, existed for others. They were to serve the nations or humanity in general. This was to be a way where the peoples of the other nations and Israel themselves would be attracted to YHWH. Following Abraham, Isaac was also given a universal mission. Through Isaac and his descendants "all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen 26:4). A similar affirmation was given to Jacob (cf. 28:13-15; 35:11-12; 46:3) and Moses (cf. Exod 3:6-8; 6:2-8).

⁴⁰ Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 19.

⁴¹ George W. Peters, "Missions in Biblical Perspective," in *Vital Mission Issues: Examining Challenges and Changes in World Evangelism*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1998), 13-14. Emphasis in original.

⁴² Wilma Bailey, "Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-4: Learning the Ways of the God of Jacob," in *Beautiful Upon the Mountains*, ed. M. H. Schertz and I. Friesen (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 51-61.

the blessings of YHWH in Jerusalem. Isaiah gives this interesting picture of Israel. It is a mission-oriented place where people of all nations move into in anticipation of the instruction of YHWH and the hearing of His words. The nations come to Zion to seek YHWH. So to Israel, the mission was more than going outside their territory, it was their peculiarity that blesses others through the redemptive teaching of YHWH's *לְרִית*, *לְרִיד*, and *לְרִיד*. Thus, God's redemptive plan for the nations depended somehow on Israel's existence in the midst of the nations. As Israel lived for YHWH, it was beaming the hope and light of YHWH's redemption for the nations. When the nations find salvation, they join God's community (Isa 40-66), which is a focal point of YHWH's universal salvation.

The nations. YHWH's salvation is not for Israel only. He has made His redemptive plan for all humanity. Though YHWH called Israel as His peculiar people after His own heart, He equally works with the nations. God used individuals outside of Israel for mission and as a blessing to both His people and the nations.

The Isaianic literature describes a missionary move that is destined to reach the nations and all humanity on earth. YHWH informs that He is coming to gather the nations so they can behold His glory (66:18-21). This missional move comes after a harmonious relationship between the nations and Israel. Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will worship together as God's people.⁴³

In YHWH's future hopes for the nations as indicated in 66:18-21, the nations' function as (a) the survivors of the nations who will serve as missionaries to all nations. They will proclaim YHWH's glory to those who have not heard about God, including the unbelieving Israelites. (b) As a result of their mission to the world, the nations will bring their offering or tribute just as the sons of Israel bring offering to YHWH's temple. (c) From among the nations, YHWH will choose some as Levitical priests who will serve Him in His cultic services and worship.

The nations will participate in YHWH's salvation and realize that YHWH is the only true God. They will, therefore, be glad to serve Him as missionaries to proclaim His glory to all people.⁴⁴ Blenkinsopp notes that "Chapter 66, and therefore the book as a whole, ends with three oracular pronouncements (*ne'um YHWH*) (vv. 17-21, 22-23) that speak of the ingathering of Jerusalem at the end-time, a mission to the Gentile preceding the final theophany, and the creation of the new heavens and a earth."⁴⁵ YHWH's mission to the nations brings salvation to all humanity.

YHWH's message to Israel that the nations will stream to Zion for instruction and worship shows that Israel had a responsibility towards the nations (2:1-5). Through their actions and words in engaging the nations, Israel was to communicate and witness YHWH's character.⁴⁶ As the nations stream into Jerusalem, Israel was to reveal the only true God to the peoples. Israel was to project YHWH as the God of all creation whose sovereignty over the whole universe was unquestionable.

The juxtaposition of Israel and the nations. The relationship between Israel and the nations is one that is characterized by the blessings both Israel and the nations receive in the presence of YHWH. Following the call of Abraham (Gen 12) and YHWH's covenant and election to have Israel as His people (Gen 15-18), Israel had a mandate that sought to ensure that through them the nations would be blessed by God. Israel was to serve as a witness to the nations. Israel's mission to its people and the nations was both centripetal (inward moving) and centrifugal (outward moving). Israel's mission was to bring redemptive or salvific benefits to the nations as Israel was God's elect and was to function as a vehicle to bless the nations.

YHWH's election of Israel as His people is not separated from mission. Israel had a missional mandate towards the nations. YHWH's mission had to do with His people living in accordance with His ways as witnesses to the nations. Israel was to be a witness people to the nations, showing in its communal living YHWH's original intention of mission to all humanity. Israel was to assume a place in YHWH's mission as being what the nation was elected to be, since "mission is not primarily about *going*. Nor is mission primarily about *doing* anything. Mission is about *being*. It is about being a distinctive kind of people, a countercultural . . . community among the nations."⁴⁷

As Israel interacted with the nations, God expected them to treat the peoples of the nations living within Israel's territory with tolerance. Leviticus 19:34 highlights God's ideal for Israel's love and tolerance for the foreigners. Israel was to even accept the peoples of the nations as members of their community (as members of YHWH's people). Isaiah 25:6-8 gives reference to God calling other nations His people and handiwork.

As the nations witnessed the covenant between YHWH and Israel, they became acquainted with the favors and benefits Israel received from their God. Israel became a living witness in the sight of the nations around it (Isa 55:3-5).

⁴³ Isaiah outlines, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance'" (Isa 19:23-25).

⁴⁴ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. David M. G. Stalker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1969), 425.

⁴⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Formation of the Hebrew Bible Canon: Isaiah as a Test Case," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 66. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁶ John N. Oswalt, "The Mission of Israel to the Nations," in *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. W. V. Crockett and J. G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 85-95.

⁴⁷ Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 123. Emphasis in original.

The nations, upon witnessing the blessings of YHWH to Israel, pilgrim to Jerusalem (Isa 2:1-5).

The same idea of the nations coming to Jerusalem is espoused in Isa 25:6-8 where the nations gather in Jerusalem for a feast and to receive something from Israel. In Ps 87:4-7, Jerusalem is projected as the mother of all nations and Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia acknowledge this unique role of Israel. The nations equally acknowledge it as a city founded by YHWH. Also, in Isa 60, Jerusalem is described as the city of light. As a city of light, nations come from their darkness to experience Israel's light. In their coming, the nations "bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of YHWH" (v. 6).

In Isa 2:1-5, this pilgrimage of the nations to Zion is suggested for the future. In the days to come, Zion was going to be a center of excellence in the mission where peoples of all nations will stream to. They come to Jerusalem that Israel may teach them YHWH's *דְּרָוֹת*, *דְּרָוֹת*, and *דְּרָוֹת* so that the nations may walk in the *דְּרָוֹת* of YHWH. In this case, the nations come to Jerusalem not only for missional instruction but with a readiness of heart to live and practice the instruction they will receive: "that we may walk in His path" (v. 3). Here, Israel had a distinctive mission and responsibility of sharing the revelation of YHWH with the peoples of the nations. The nations will receive YHWH's salvific message and grace from Jerusalem and Israel.

In the mission of the Servant in Isa 49, Israel is called to restore the tribe of Jacob to YHWH. They are also to serve as a light to the nations and bring salvation to all humanity: "I will make you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6). So while Israel serves as YHWH's light to the nations, Israel reaches out to the ends of the world with YHWH's salvation. Here, the outgoing movement of mission of Israel is emphasized where Israel seeks to bring YHWH salvific message to the nations.

In Isa 55:1-13, Israel enjoys YHWH's covenant with David with its accompanying divine promises. The nation is called "a witness to the peoples," "a prince," and "commander to the peoples" (v. 4). Like David, Israel is to proclaim YHWH's *דִּוְכָה* and mighty to its people and the nations. Israel takes the role of David—the role of witnessing for YHWH. Israel has to experience YHWH's salvation as it is to proclaim the same to the nations.

CONCLUSION

The article has endeavored to delineate connections between a mission-oriented God, His mission, His attributes, and agents through which His mission is undertaken as a theological framework of mission in Isaianic literature. God engages in a universal mission that seeks to reconcile humanity unto Himself. It is to bring mankind into a personal relationship with Him. The ultimate goal of the universal mission is to offer His salvation to humanity. Salvation is the center of YHWH's mission. YHWH's love and kindness, sovereignty, justice, and mercy revealed in His character are some of the attributes that underpin His mission.

The abundant evidence in the Isaianic literature concerning the theology of mission is related to the realization that YHWH's redemptive or salvific plans and work are inescapable when His mission to all humanity is a concern. When these are misjudged, a disconnect between YHWH's attributes and His redemptive purpose for the peoples of the whole universe occurs. YHWH has established an inseparable union between His mission and salvation to all humanity. Through the mission theology, Isaiah's language of redemption is sharpened, and the tenor of his salvific purpose espoused.

YHWH's redemptive purpose is for all humanity, but uniquely He has appointed Israel as a distinctive nation that serves as a light to all nations and a vehicle that brings His salvation to the Gentile world. Thus, Israel is God's community of faith among the nations, recipients of His redemptive grace, who are to be His missionaries of His holy character, *דְּרָוֹת*, and *דְּרָוֹת* to the ends of the earth.

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