Old Greek Isaiah 53: A Paraenetic Message Regarding a Collective Servant?

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1 Introduction

The paper suggests that the translator of Old Greek (OG) Isaiah interprets the servant of Isa 52:13–53:12 (Isaiah 53 for short) collectively, and the chapter paraenetically, addressing his audience, the Jewish diaspora in Egypt.

This suggestion is based on two main observations. First, in Isaiah 53, the two occurrences of עַבְדִּי are translated by παῖς μου and δουλεύων. עֶבֶד occurs 40 times in the Masoretic tradition (MT) of Isaiah. The translator uses seven different words to translate it. Section 2 studies these translations in Isaiah 1–40 and 54–66. The study shows that the translator clearly distinguishes the words he uses, and deliberately and consistently chooses his translations according to context. Section 3 shows that in Isaiah 41–51, the translator in addition consistently employs singular/plural and personal pronouns (none, μου, (ἑ)αὐτοῦ), often against MT, in order to differentiate the designated individuals or groups and to convey a specific interpretation. Consequently, the paper suggests that the two different translations in Isaiah 53 are relevant. They are chosen deliberately, in line with their use elsewhere in OG Isaiah, in order to convey a specific interpretation.

Second, Section 4 shows that compared with MT, OG creates and strengthens textual links between Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 1 and 6.

Section 5 suggests that based on these links to Isaiah 1 and 6, the translator interpreted the servant's sickness in Isaiah 53 as the collective's sinfulness. Consequently, God punishes the servant by exile, but promises his blessings if the servant ceases to sin. This is followed up by an exhortation to the audience to offer sacrifices and to serve well as foreign slaves, for which in return God's blessings are promised. The paper then suggests that this interpretation of Isaiah 53 is motivated by the historical context, the Jewish community's need for self-preservation in the Hellenistic diaspora. The servant is presented as a token of identification for the community, followed by an exhortation to identify with the community through the traditional ritual of sacrifice, and to preserve the community by retaining the Egyptian's favour through servicing them well.

Section 6 concludes the paper.

1.1 Points for Discussion

I am aware that the paper is quite compressed. At the time of suggesting the title, I did not anticipate that the word studies would become that extensive. I am also aware that the following is missing:

- A discussion of previous works. In general, they focus on the identity of the servant in OG Isaiah 53, without taking the context of OG Isaiah into account. An exception is van der Kooij (2018), who discusses some of the translations of עֶבֶד in OG Isaiah.
- Thorough textcritical studies. For the time being and unless otherwise noted, I assume that the Vorlage sufficiently resembles MT/1QIs^{a}. I rely on the Göttingen edition of Isaiah (Ziegler 1939) for OG Isaiah, and on the edition by Rahlfs and Hanhart (2006) for other OG books.
- A discussion of the textual basis for word studies. If not indicated otherwise, only OG Isaiah itself and OG Pentateuch are considered.

I especially appreciate feedback on the content. Is the line of arguing clear and coherent? Are the specific points well argued? Where are weaknesses?

1.2 Preliminaries

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Statements about content that do not explicitly refer to either MT or OG, refer to both, implying that there are no significant differences between the two versions.

2 Translations of עֶבֶד in Isaiah 1–40 and 54–65

עֶבֶד occurs 40 times in MT Isaiah, 20 times translated by παῖς, and else by six other words. The following sections study the translations outside of chapters 41–53. They argue that the translator clearly distinguishes the words he uses, and deliberately chooses his translations according to context.

2.1 Δοῦλος and Cognates

In classical Greek, δοῦλος and cognates generally refer to slavery, but also to voluntarily submission under an external entity such as τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις (Plato, Leg III 698b), or πρεσβυτέρσιν (Leg III 701b), or ἡδονῇ (Plato, Ep 8 354e–355a). Rengstorf (1935, 265) deems any positively valued use of δοῦλος and cognates an exception of the rule that the Greek only rejected and despised any service even remotely resembling the service of a δοῦλος. However, Plato (Ep 8 354e) states that both slavery and freedom in excess are utterly evil (πάγκακον), but in moderation absolutely good (πανάγαθον). Since Plato can

deem δουλεία to be πανάγαθα, rather than the word group carrying a negative connotation with positive exceptions, the word group seems to refer neutrally to heteronomy, with a positive or negative evaluation depending on who or what is served. The heteronomic aspect of δοῦλος is further evident from its opposite, which is not the master, but the free man: το μέν γάρ δοῦλον, οἱ δ' ἐλεύθεροι (Euripides, Iph Aul 1400f), οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος (Gal 3:28).

In OG, the word group is similarly used for positive or negative heteronomy, for obeying God, or foreign lords or Gods, respectively. In Ex 23:33 and Deut 28:64 all of Israel is addressed, indicating that δουλεύειν τοῖς θεοῖς designates a general rather than a specific service. NETS' renderings of δοῦλοι κυρίου (Isa 56:6) as "slaves of the Lord" and of κυρίῳ δουλεύειν as "being subject to the Lord" (Isa 56:6, 65:8–13) carry a connotation of being forced. However, the relationship is voluntarily (Isa 56:6). Muraoka (2009, s.v. "δουλεύω") translates δουλεύειν as "to perform the duties incumbent upon oneself dutifully and obediently." The heteronomic and voluntarily aspects of δουλεύειν τοῖς θεοῖς and δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ are maybe best conveyed by "obey the Gods," and "obeyers of God," designating those who adhere to their/his commandments.

Most occurrences of the word group in OG Isaiah can clearly be partitioned into two distinct groups:

- involuntary slaves of foreign nations (negative)
  - 14:2 captives of other people becoming Israel's δούλοι
  - 14:3 Israel served (ἐδούλευσας) these other people in slavery (δουλεία).
  - 19:23 the Egyptians will serve as the Assyrian's slaves (δουλεύσουσιν) as their captives of war.
  - 45:14 Sabeans becoming Israel's δοῦλοι, "bound by handcuffs."
  - 60:12 nations and kings who will not serve (δουλεύσουσί) Jerusalem as slaves, in contrast to those kings who were captured (60:11).
- those voluntarily obeying the Lord (positive)
  - οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ (42:19)
  - the Lord's δοῦλοι (56:6, 63:17, 65:9)
  - the Lord's δουλεύοντες (65:8, 13–15, six instances)

2.2 Παῖς

In Greek sources contemporary to LXX Pentateuch, παῖς was used to denote both children and slaves (van der Kooij 2008, 237). In LXX Pentateuch, it rarely carries the connotation of "child," if so, it refers to girls (Rebecca, Gen 24:28,57, Dina, Gen 34:12, a just married girl, Deut 22:15–28), or to "childhood" (Gen 46:34). The wast majority of occurrences refers to servants, covering the whole range from low slaves, synonymous with δοῦλος

(Lev 25:44), to honorable servants (for example, in Gen 24), specifically, the Lord's servant (Abraam, Gen 18:17, Isaak, Gen 24:14, Caleb, Num 14:24). It is also used as polite self-designation (for example, Gen 18:3,5).

In OG Isaiah 1–40 and 54–65, παῖς is used for servants in a honorable position in a close relationship to their master (marked by a genitive). When in singular, the servant is always identified: ὁ παῖς μου Ησαίας (20:3), Ελιακιμ (22:20), Δαυιδ (37:35).

Οἱ παῖδες σου is used as polite self-designation of Eliakim with others in Isa 36:11.

The proverbial comparison **כַּעֶבֶד כַּאדֹנָו** (Isa 24:2), "as with the servant, so with his master," is translated as ὁ παῖς ὡς ὁ κύριος. The choice of παῖς conforms to the word's emphasis on the relation to the master.

2.3 Οἰκέτης

In Isa 36:9, the Assyrian messenger calls οἰκέται those who trust in Egypt for horses and riders. According to van der Kooij (2018, 9f), this choice is motivated by the use of οἰκέτης in OG Pentateuch, where οἰκέτης always renders **עֶבֶד** in the phrase "Remember that you were **עֶבֶד** in (the land of) Egypt" (Deut 5:15, 15:15, 16:12, 24:18,20,22) and the similar phrase in Deut 6:21 (in total seven instances).

However, in OG Pentateuch, **עֶבֶד** is always translated as δουλεία in the phrase **מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים** (ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας, Ex 13:3,14, 20:2, Lev 26:45, Deut 5:6, 6:12, 7:8, 8:14, 13:11, in total nine instances), and δοῦλος and cognates also translate cognates of **עבד** describing Israel in Egypt in Ex 1:14, 6:5 (καταδουλοῦσχαι), Ex 6:6, Deut 13:6 (δουλεία), Ex 14:5 and twice in 14:12 (δουλεύειν), and in Lev 26:13 (δοῦλος).

Οἰκέτης conforms best to the context. Those trusting in Egypt would not have honorable positions, nor would they be heteronomically determined. Rather, they would become Egypt's vassals and thereby become part of the pharaoh's household.

2.4 Ἄγγέλος

The servants of Isa 37:24 are identical to the **מַלְאָכִים** of 37:9,14, there translated by ἄγγελοι. In Isa 37:24, **עֲבָדֶי** is appropriately translated ἄγγελοι, clarifying whom these messengers and their message refer to.

2.5 Θεραπεύων

In Isa 54:17, **עַבְדֵי יהוה** is translated as θεραπεύοντες κύριον. The only other occurrence of a cognate of θεράπων in OG Isaiah is in 24:2, in the comparison ἡ θεράπαινα ὡς ἡ κυρία, as the female equivalent to παῖς.

Elsewhere in OG, θεράπων and cognates do not occur with κύριον, but with κυρίου, τοῦ θεοῦ or μου/αὐτοῦ referring to them, as (self-)designation of Isaak (Gen 24:44), Joseph's

brothers (Gen 50:17), Moses (Ex 4:10, 14:31, Num 11:11, 12:7,8, Deut 3:24, Josh 1:2, 8:31,33, 1Chr 16:40), the sons of Ruben and Gad (Num 32:31), the patriarchs (Deut 9:27), and Job (Job 2:3, 42:7,8).

According to van der Kooij (2008, 232), θεράπων in OG Pentateuch refers to members of a king's "retinue," distinct from other servants "in terms of honor." However, θεράπαινα is used as the opposite of φαραω (Ex 11:5), indicating the lowest possible position. Θεράπαινα is also used in laws concerning beating of servants (Ex 21:26f), likewise indicating a rather low position. Thus, honor does not seem to be intrinsic to the word group.

Rather, its meaning "to cure" (2Kings 9:16) and expressions such as θεραπεύειν τοὺς πόδας (2Sam 19:25) suggest that θεραπεύειν has physical connotations. Thus, θεράπων possibly emphasizes physical tending of the master.

The combination of אָהֳלֵ֔, יְרִיעֹ֖ת and מִשְׁכְּנֹתַ֑יִךְ (Isa 54:2) elsewhere always describes the tabernacle (Ex 26:7,12,13, 36:14, Num 4:25). This may have prompted the translator to see a reference to the cult. OG has no equivalent to מִשְׁכְּנֹתַ֑יִךְ, but the combination of σκηνή and αὐλαία is in OG, apart from one verse in Judith, also only found describing the tabernacle (Ex 26:1,6, 37:1(36:8b), 40:17(19)). The translator's cultic referencing of Isaiah 54 is supported by his translation of Isa 54:11f. The stones סַפִּ֔יר and כַּדְכֹּ֖ד do not occur together elsewhere in MT. However, the stones ἄνθραξ, σάπφειρος and ἴασπις occur together in OG Ex 28:18, 36:18(39:11) and Ezk 18:13 (the lament over Tyros). In the Exodus verses, ἄνθραξ translates נפך. In Isa 54:11, it translates פוך, an al tiqre reading. These three gemstones are those in the second row of the breastpiece of the high priest.

Θεραπεύοντες κύριον could thus be intended to refer to priests, who are serving the Lord physically, tending the cult. Θεραπεύειν is used in this way in Tob 1:7, οἱ υἱοῖ Λευι οἱ θεραπεύοντες ἐν Ιερουσαλημ.

2.6 Σεβομένος (66:14)

[Postponed until after 6th of August, when there is a talk on "Considerations on the use of σέβομαι in the Septuagint and in Jewish-Hellenistic literature" at IOSCS]

2.7 Conclusion

The translator deliberately chooses translations of עֶבֶד according to context. He employs

- δοῦλος for those heteronomously determined; foreign slave, someone obeying God
- δουλεύων for someone obeying God
- παῖς for servants in a honorable position and a close relationship to their master, as proverbial opposite to κύριος, and as polite self-designation
- οἰκέτης for Egypt's vassals
- ἀγγέλος for messengers

– θεραπεύων for priests

3 Translations of עֶבֶד in Isaiah 41–51

In Isaiah 41–51, עַבְדִּי occurs in 41:8,9, 42:1,19, 43:10, 44:1,2,21,26, 45:4, 49:3, עֶבֶד יהוה in 42:19, עַבְדּוֹ in 48:20, 50:10, עֶבֶד in 49:5,6,7. It is translated παῖς μου in 41:8,9, 42:1, 44:1,2,21, 45:4, 49:6, οἱ παῖδές μου and οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ in 42:19, ὁ παῖς in 43:10, παῖς αὐτοῦ in 44:26, 50:10, δοῦλός αὐτοῦ/μου/ἑαυτῷ in 48:20, 49:3,5, and οἱ δοῦλοι[1] in 49:7.

The following sections argue that the translator consistently employs number (singular/plural) and personal pronouns (none, μου, (ἑ)αὐτοῦ), often against the Vorlage, in order to convey a specific interpretation.

3.1 God's Beloved "παῖς μου," Israel/Jacob

God addresses Israel/Jacob as "παῖς μου" in Isa 41:8,9, 42:1 (compared with MT and the versions from Qumran, the translator adds "Jacob" and "Israel"), 44:1,2,21, and 45:4. In these passages, God declares his love for the servant. In OG 44:2, "ὁ ἠγαπημένος" is added compared to MT/1QIs^a, further emphasizing God's love for the servant Israel.

3.2 Isaiah 42:19 — Blind Servants and Blinded Obeyers

MT: "Who is blind if not my servant (עַבְדִּי), and deaf like my messenger (מַלְאָכִי), whom I sent? Who is blind like the dedicated (מְשֻׁלָּם), and blind like the servant (עֶבֶד) of YHWH?"

OG: "Who is blind but my servants (οἱ παῖδές μου) and deaf but those ruling over them (οἱ κυριεύοντες αὐτῶν)? And blinded were the obeyers (οἱ δοῦλοι) of God."

Compared to MT, OG omits one stitch, changes those described from singular to plural, and reformulates the last question as a statement. עֶבֶד is translated by two different words, παῖς and δοῦλος. Further, the adjective עִוֵּר, "blind," which occurs three times in MT, is first translated by the adjective τυφλὸς, then omitted, and then translated by a passive form, ἐτυφλώθησαν, "they were blinded." Elliger (1978, 270–272) suggests that the change to plural is most likely done by the translator, while the other differences may be due to a Vorlage different from MT. However, since 1QIs^a supports MT, a different Vorlage seems unlikely.

OG changes also the surrounding verses, Isa 42:17–20 and 21–25.

1. Ziegler (1939) reads τὸν δούλον, but this is supported by only three manuscripts, while the most, best, and oldest read των δουλῶν. Singular corresponds to MT's עֶבֶד, thus, its occurrence in younger manuscripts can be explained as harmonization with MT. It seems that των δουλῶν is original, "the one detested by nations [consisting] of slaves of rulers"

3.2.1 Isaiah 42:17–20

In MT, 42:14–17 constitutes one paragraph, marked by a paragraph break after 42:17. In OG, 42:17 starts with αὐτοὶ δὲ, emphasized without equivalent in MT or 1QIs^{a}, closely linking the subject to the last word of 42:16, αὐτούς. While all of MT 42:17 is a statement about the idolaters in third person, in OG, only the first two Hebrew words are translated as such. The remainder of the verse is translated as imperative ("Be ashamed, [idolaters]!"), linking this second part of 42:17 to 42:18, which in both MT and OG is imperative. Thus, in OG, the first sentence of 42:17, αὐτοὶ δὲ ἀπεστράφησαν εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω· belongs to 42:14–16.

In MT, 42:20 continues to describe the blind servant of the Lord. In OG 42:20, verbs are plural corresponding to changing עֶבֶד to plural in 42:19, but also changed to second person.

Because of these changes, in OG, 42:17–20 (except the first sentence of 17) constitute a paragraph directly accusing the idolaters, in summary: "Be ashamed, [idolaters]! The deaf, listen! The blind, [. . .] see! Who is blind but my servants and deaf but their rulers? The obeyers of God were blinded. You (pl.) saw much, but did not guard. You (pl.) opened the ears, but did not hear."

Accused are the παῖδές μου and κυριεύοντες αὐτῶν, addressed as blind and deaf in 42:18 and 19, whereas the δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ are blinded (ἐτυφλώθησαν), they are victims. Corresponding to the use of παῖς and δοῦλος in Isaiah 1–40, the δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ likely designate a group of comparatively low status, those obeying God, whereas the παῖδές likely have high status, God's higher officials. Thus, the passage accuses the religious and secular leaders of idolatry and blinding those obeying God. This conforms with OG Isaiah, which even more than MT criticises Israel's leadership (Wagner 2019, 40).

3.2.2 Isaiah 42:21–25

OG 42:21f can be summarized as "God willed [. . .] Israel plundered and seized [. . .]" In Isa 42:24, first person (MT: "we have sinned") is replaced by third person (OG: "they have sinned"), changing the verse from confession to accusation: "Who gave Jacob as plunder and Israel to those plundering it? [Was it] not God? He against whom they had sinned in that they did not want to walk in his ways nor to obey his law." Similarly, in 42:25, the third person singular pronouns/verbs referring to Israel/Jacob are changed to third person plural, continuing the accusation. OG 42:21–25 accuses those who by sinning against God's law prompted God to punish Israel.

This conforms with the suggested interpretation of OG 42:17–20. Again, the leaders are accused of sinning, thereby prompting the punishment of the people who, like the δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ, are not accused.

3.3 Isaiah 43:10 — the Servant Israel as Exemplary Witness

MT: "You [are] my witness, says the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen, so that you may know and trust me and understand that I [am] he…"

OG: "Become for me witnesses, and I am a witness, says the Lord God, and the servant (ὁ παῖς), whom I chose, so that you may know and believe and understand that I am…"

OG changes "witness" from singular to plural, adds "γένεσθέ!" at the beginning of the verse, and "I am a witness" as self-description of God.

In MT and OG, God explicitly addresses Israel/Jacob in 43:1 and again first in 43:22.

In 43:1–7, God recounts how he has freed and will continue to free Israel. In 43:6, God promises that he will command north and south (both female in Hebrew) to release the Israelites.

In MT 43:8, God's shift from female to male imperative "Bring a blind people …!" starts a new section, 43:8–13, in which God summons a blind people (**עַם**, that is, Israel, 43:8) and the nations (43:9) into a heavenly court, where Israel is called to be God's witness (43:10, 43:12).

MT 43:15 is ambiguous, literally: "I the Lord your (pl.) holy one creating Israel your (pl.) king." Since in MT, God in this section addresses Israel, "your king" is commonly understood as an apposition to God. OG, however, is grammatically justified in interpreting it as an apposition to Israel: ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἅγιος ὑμῶν ὁ καταδείξας Ισραηλ βασιλέα ὑμῶν, "I the Lord God your (pl.) holy, the one having created Israel, [as] your (pl.) king." Thus, OG 43:15 addresses the nations.

In 43:8, OG changes MT's male imperative to first person singular. Compared with MT and 1QIs^{a}, OG adds και at the beginning of 43:8: "And I brought out a blind people (λαος) …" Thus, while MT Isaiah 43 introduces a new section in 43:8, OG presents 43:1–8 as one section, God's description of his past freeing and future protection of Israel. Consequently, OG presents 43:9–15 as addressing the ἔθνη. They are gathered and called to "Become for me witnesses, both I am a witness, and the servant, whom I chose!"

In both MT and OG, describing the servant as "chosen" refers back to 41:8f ("Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I chose …you are my servant, I chose you"). The same word for "I chose" is used in all three instances (**בָּחָרְתִּי**, ἐξελεξάμην). In MT, the form in 43:10 omits the personal suffix present in 41:8 and 41:9 (keeping it would be possible). In OG, the three instances have the exact same form, enhancing the reference.

God closes his address to the nations by telling them that Israel is their king (43:15). Since 43:16 begins with "Thus says the Lord," OG can readily start a new section in 43:16, in which God again addresses Israel (explicitly in 43:22).

In MT, Israel is called as a presently blind people (43:8). The people/the servant still have to come to know and believe and understand God, implying that they not yet do

(43:10). OG relegates the people's blindness and deafness to God's account of that he freed them, but since then they became loved by God (43:3f). Thus, while MT presents a blind people/servant, in OG presents the people/servant to the nations as exemplary witness (43:10,12) and their king (43:15).

3.4 Isaiah 49 — The Promotion of Israel

Isaiah 48 reiterates a prominent theme of the book of Isaiah: Jacob/Israel (48:1) was idolatrous (48:5) and lawless (48:8). Therefore, the Lord punished it by selling it into slavery ("I have exacted payment for (MT: I have refined) you," 48:10), but will now save it (48:10) because of his love of Israel ("Loving you, I did to Babylon as you want," 48:14). This is followed up by an exhortation to "hear my commandments" (48:18), for which in return God promises the blessings of peace (48:18) and offspring (48:19). "Go out from Babylon [...], say 'The Lord delivered τὸν δοῦλον αὐτοῦ, Jacob!'" (48:20)

The translator's choice of δοῦλος conforms to both meanings of the word, Jacob as sold as foreign slave to Babylon (48:10,14,20), and as a people adhering to the Lord's commandments (48:18).

In MT, the servant starts introducing himself in 49:1: "Listen to me coastlands, pay attention, people from far away! The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he gave a name to me."

In OG, the first part of the utterance is attributed to God: "Listen to me islands, and pay attention, nations! After a long time he will present himself." says the Lord. "From the womb of my mother he called my name"

By attributing the first part to God, by interpreting רָהַק temporarily, and by interpreting one of the two parallels of the second half as "he will present himself," the translator links this verse to the preceding 48:12–22, and relegates to a time long ago, as the exile would be from the point of view of the translator, that Israel had been lawless and was sold as a disgraced δοῦλος to Babylon. Now, Israel is rehabilitated. God himself gives the word to the servant Israel to introduce himself, in OG:

49:3 And he told me "you are my δοῦλος, Israel, and I will be glorified in you."

49:4 And I said "In vain I toiled and for nothing and for nobody I gave my strength. Because of this, my standing [is placed] with the Lord, and my pain before my God.

49:5 And now, thus says the Lord, the one having formed me from the womb as δοῦλος for him in order to gather Jacob and Israel to him — I will be gathered and I will be glorified before the Lord and my God will be my strength —

49:6 and he told me: 'It is great for you to be called παῖς μου in order to put in place the tribes of Jacob and to return the diaspora of Israel. See, I have appointed you as light of the nations, so that you become salvation until the end of the earth.'"

Regarding MT 49:5 (and analogously, 49:6), the meaning of לְשׁוֹבֵב יַעֲקֹב אֵלָיו is debated. Proponents of the hypothesis of Duhm ([1892] 1968, 14), that the "servant songs" (Isaiah 42:1–4, 49:1–6, 50:4–9 and 53) are originally independent of Isaiah 40–55 and describe an individual servant of the Lord, typically translate "... formed me in the womb to be his servant, to return Jacob to him ..." and subsequently point out that since the servant is given a mission concerning Jacob and Israel, he must be different from Israel/Jacob. Those who do not support the hypothesis of the servant songs and the individual servant, translate "... formed me in the womb to be his servant *by returning* Jacob to him ...." Both interpretations are grammatically valid.

While OG translates "in order to return Jacob," the translator lumps together Israel from the parallel stitch with Jacob, and changes the thus freed parallel verb "[he] will be gathered" to "I will be gathered." While MT uses two different verbs, the same verb is repeated in OG. Thereby, in OG, the servant makes explicit that it is he who will be gathered. Consequently, the first part of OG 49:5 must mean "formed me as a δοῦλος for him in order [for him] to gather [me] to him ..."

In these verses, the servant presents himself by retelling Isaiah 48 from his perspective: God called him to obey him, but the servant toiled in vain (corresponding to the repeated accusations of idolatry and lawlessness). However, he proves to have learned his lesson by confessing that God is his only hope. Upon this confession, God promotes him from slave to honorable παῖς μου. The servant takes on God's own mission to gather Israel that is still in diaspora. And while in MT, the servant is appointed as light of the nations "so that my [God's] salvation reaches the end of the earth," in OG, God promotes the servant to himself being salvation. "As light of the nations," εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν, also occurs in 42:6, for which the translator has clarified in 42:1 that Jacob/Israel is the servant.

3.5 Isaiah 44:26 and 50:10 — God's "παῖς αὐτοῦ"

In these two verses, an unidentified "his servant" occurs in both MT and OG. In both instances, the scarce information points at a specific prophet, probably Isaiah.

3.5.1 Isaiah 44:26

In both MT and OG, in 44:26, "his servant" is paralleled by "his messengers," and these two words are in turn in 44:25 negatively paralleled by "diviners ..., those practicing divination ..., the wise" (MT) and "the ventriloquists ... the wise" (OG). Since all parallel words are plural, "his servant" in MT is sometimes amended to "his servants" (for example, by Elliger (1978, 454)). However, the servant (singular) versus messengers (plural) is supported by 1QIs^{a}, Vulgata, and Peshita, and 1QIs^{b} supports the singular servant (lacuna at "messengers") (454). Berges (2008, 367) argues the servant (singular) should be considered original because of the textual witnesses and because it is the lectio difficilior.

In 44:26, the Lord confirms the servant's "ῥήματα." In OG Isaiah, ῥῆμα occurs 14 times. It designates God's prophetic words ten times (14:28, 15:1, 16:13, 17:1, 29:11, 38:7, 40:8, 42:16, 55:11, 66:5), which also is the most likely meaning here. Since the parallels refer to God's (false) messengers, and that παῖς in contrast to them is singular, παῖς αὐτοῦ seems to refer to one specific messenger, the one proclaiming God's ῥήματα, the prophet Isaiah.

3.5.2 Isaiah 50:10

"Who among you is fearing the Lord? He shall hear the voice of his servant. Those wandering in darkness and not having light, . . ."

The most likely candidate for the addressed "you" is the group most recently addressed, the children of Zion. Further, the formulation οἱ πορευόμενοι ἐν σκότει καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς φῶς recalls Isa 9:2, ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει, ἴδετε φῶς μέγα! Consequently, it is those within Israel who fear the Lord who are addressed, and called to hear the voice of his servant, who thus must be the prophet.

3.6 Conclusion

In these chapters, the translator deliberately chooses translations of **עֶבֶד** and introduces changes to the text with two overall effects. First, παῖς μου, ὁ παῖς, and δοῦλός αὐτοῦ/μου/ἑαυτῷ consistently designate Jacob/Israel, οἱ παῖδές μου religious leaders, and παῖς αὐτοῦ the prophet (Isaiah). Second, Israel designated as παῖς μου or ὁ παῖς is always portrayed positively.

4 Textual Links to Isaiah 1 and 6

Compared with MT, OG Isaiah 53 strengthens and creates a number of textual links to Isaiah 1 and 6.

First, πόνος, πληγὴ, τραυμα(τίζω), μώλωψ (53:4f) are four of the five words describing the sick state of Israel in OG 1:5f. In MT, only two words from 1:5f are used in 53:4f.

Second, the translator creates a link between 52:13 and 1:3 not present in MT: συνίημι translates **שׂכל** in 52:13, but **בין** in 1:3. In OG 1:3, God accuses: "Israel has not known *me*, the people have not understood (συνῆκεν) *me*." The first "me" is added compared to MT, for the second "me," the translator changes the personal suffix of **עַמִּי**, "my people," to a direct object. The translator specifies the accusation to not knowing God and not understanding him. In contrast, the servant will understand (συνήσει, 52:13). **בין** occurs 20 times in Isaiah, but is translated as συνίημι only in 1:3, 6:9, 6:10, 43:10, and 52:15. These instances refer to gaining or having insight into who God is.

Third, Isa 1:4f elaborates what it means to not know God: The people are sinful (ἁμαρτωλόν; **חֹטֵה**), full of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν; **עָוֹן**), lawless (ἄνομοι; **מַשְׁחִיתִים**, "corrupt"), and commit

lawlessness (ἄνομια; סָרָה, "apostasy"). The translator uses only ἁμαρτια, ἄνομια, and their cognates to render four Hebrew terms. The more specific "being corrupt" and "apostasy" are generalized to "lawlessness," thus intensifying God's accusation of the peoples' sinfulness and lawlessness, and the textual link to Isaiah 53.

In OG 1:16, God calls the people to "become pure (καθαροὶ), take away the wickedness from your souls (τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, an addition compared to MT)!" In OG 1:25, God announces that he will burn the people pure (καθαρός), among others, he will humble (ταπεινώσω) the proud. In 53:8, ταπεινώσις is used for MT's עֹצֶר, "arrest." In OG 53:10, καθαρίζω is used for MT's דכא, "to crush."[2]

By his use of συνίημι, πόνος, πληγὴ, τραυμα(τίζω), μώλωψ, ἁμαρτία, ἀνομία, καθαρίζω, ψυχή and ταπεινώσις, OG creates and strengthens a number of references from Isaiah 53 to Isaiah 1. Similarly, there are a number of references to Isaiah 6. Also in 6:9 and 6:10, the people are accused for not understanding (συνίημι), and Isaiah confesses his people's and his impure (ἀκάθαρτα, 6:6) lips, which the seraph purifies (περικαθαριεῖ 6:7). In Isa 1:16,25 and 6:6f, καθαρός and cognates are used in place of four different Hebrew roots in MT.

Consequently, the servant's condition of sickness described in 53:4f seems to refers to God's accusation of Israel described in Isaiah 1 and 6.

5 Isaiah 53

OG Isaiah 53 differs significantly from MT. Some of the most prominent differences concern the relationship of God and his servant. In MT, God wills and actively causes the servant's suffering, and while the servant is rewarded, God is not explicitly active in rewarding him. Contrarily, in OG, God only hands the servant over, that is, instead of actively causing his suffering as in MT, God just passively withdraws his support and leaves the causing of the suffering to others. Apart from that, God only wants to vindicate, save, and reward the servant. The translator also improves the we-group's relationship to God and the Servant, for example, by removing all references to the we-group despising the servant. (Bauer 2018, 36–38)

In Isa 52:13–15, God describes the future glory and also disreputation of his servant (ὁ παῖς μου). Isaiah 53:2–5 describes the servant's past disreputation and sickness, the latter in OG in terms of God's accusation of Israel's sinfulness in Isaiah 1. This sinfulness is confirmed by the collective confession (53:6). Παιδεία (53:5) translates מוּסָר here and in 26:16 ("Lord, . . . in small trouble your παιδεία of us."), the only occurrences in MT. In addition, OG translates לִמּוּדִים, "teachers," by παιδεία in 50:4 ("The Lord gave me a tongue of παιδεία"), and adds the word to 50:5, turning MT's "The Lord God opened my ear", to

2. דכא occurs also in 53:5, where OG translates with μαλακίζομαι, "make sick." It is commonly assumed that the translator in 53:10 resorts to Aramaic, where דכא means "to clean."

"the παιδεία of the Lord opens my ears." παιδεία is instruction from God in all instances, thus, it seems likely that the servant undergoes God's παιδεία.

Because of the group's sins ("διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν," 53:5, "ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν," 53:6), he was handed over to the enemies:

- παραδίδωμι (53:6, 12) occurs 18 times in OG Isaiah. It translates twelve different words in MT. Except for one instance, it is used when God hands a people or town over to its enemies.
- γῆ (53:8) can mean "land" (as in Isa 2:7f (paralleled to ἡ χώρα, 2:6)), thus, αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ can mean "his life was removed from the land," that is, he was sent into exile.
- The use of θάνατος (53:8) can be compared to Isa 9:8,11f. In 9:8, OG intensifies MT's "The Lord sent a word against Jacob/Israel" to "The Lord sent death (θάνατος) against Jacob/Israel," with "death" designating Israel's enemies (9:11f).
- The disreputed condition of the servant (53:2f) conforms with the conditions in exile.

God speaks again from verse 8bβ (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνομιῶν . . .). In OG 53:9, God promises to vindicate and save the servant after he stopped to sin and be deceitful.

OG 53:10 confirms that God wants to purify the servant. This is followed up by an address to the listeners: "If you (pl.) offer sin sacrifices, your (pl) soul will see offspring longlivingly." Περὶ ἁμαρτίας designates the sin sacrifice in Leviticus and Numbers (Koenen and Kabiersch 2011, 2668), and offspring and long life are typical Deuteronomical blessings for obeying God's commandments.

OG 53:10b–11 gives a list of what God wants to do: "And the Lord wants:

- to take away from the pain of his soul
- to show him light and to form through understanding,
- to pronounce righteous a righteous who as slave is serving (δουλεύων) many well, and their sins he will bear."

While MT has עַבְדִּי both in 52:13 and 53:11, and OG translates עַבְדִּי as ὁ παῖς μου in 52:13, OG translates עַבְדִּי as δουλεύων, also omitting the first person possessive pronoun, in 53:11. Since the translator throughout the preceding chapters meticulously has equaled the servant Israel/Jacob and παῖς (μου), it seems unlikely that δουλεύων refers to the servant Israel/Jacob. Rather, God wants to pronounce righteous a (any) righteous serving many well. To be pronounced δίκαιος by God implies to be pleasing to God and therefore, to be protected and blessed by him. This is supported by Isa 54:17. In OG, "there is an inheritance for those servicing (τοῖς θεραπεύουσι) the Lord, and that is that you (pl.) will be for me righteous (δίκαιοι), says the Lord" (54:17. In MT, the inheritance is formulated more tangibly, the servants will be victorious in battle and court).

As argued in Sect. 2.1, δουλεύων in OG Isaiah either refers to obeying God, or to being a foreign slave. Since in 52:13, it is the πολλοί who are served, it must be the latter. Thus, OG 53:10f exhorts the audience to offer sacrifices and to serve the Egyptians well. In turn, God will bless them with offspring, long life, and by calling them righteous.

OG Isaiah 53 repeats the narrative of the sinful, exiled, and saved servant Israel, however, the salvation is envisioned for the future. OG Isaiah 53 combines the servant's narrative with promising God's blessings to those offering sin offerings and to those who "as foreign slave serve many well."

5.1 Isaiah 53 in its Historic Context

The time and place of the translation indicate a situation in which preservation of Jewish identity against Hellenization is a prominent concern (Wagner 2013, 237). It seems likely that this concern motivated the translator's interpretation.

First, to strengthen Jewish identity and community, the translator might have wanted to provide his audience with tokens of identification. Thus, he might have wanted them to identify with the servant of Isaiah 53, who as παῖς μου refers to the collective, but here not explicitly is identified as Israel. As the servant Israel was a δοῦλος in Babylon, the community is now δουλεύων in Egypt. As offspring of the servant Israel, they have inherited the honorable title παῖς μου, the accompanying close relationship with God, and God's promise of being saved and blessed. Presenting the servant's relationship with God and the we-group more positively than in MT could be motivated by making it easier to identify with him.

Second, the exhortation to offer sin sacrifices (53:10) fosters identity by promoting a traditional ritual of the community. Since this necessitates a place to sacrifice, it also promotes the temple in Leontopolis as another token of the shared identity, and as a meeting place for the community.

Third, since "they understood that self-preservation meant retaining the favour of the ruling power of the day" (Rajak 2009, 180), the exhortation to "as [foreign] slaves serve many well" (53:11) supports self-preservation of the community in Egypt.

6 Conclusion

The translator employs seven different words to translate עֶבֶד, which he clearly distinguishes and deliberately chooses according to context. With παῖς and δοῦλος, he also uses singular/plural and different pronouns, often against his Vorlage, in order to further distinguish the designated individuals or groups, and thereby to convey specific interpretations. In particular, δοῦλος and cognates always designate either foreign slaves or those obeying God, and παῖς always designates a honorable servant. Specifically, in Isaiah 41–

51, παῖς (μου) always refers to Israel, and the servant Israel is always, also against the Vorlage, portrayed positively.

The translator interprets Isaiah 53 conforming to the book of Isaiah's repeated narrative of Israel as sinful, punished by exile, and saved. Based on Isaiah 1 and 6, the translator interprets the sickness of God's servant in Isaiah 53 as the collective's sinfulness. God punishes the servant by exile, but promises to save him if he ceases to sin. This is followed up by an exhortation to offer sacrifices and to serve well as foreign slaves, for which in return God's blessings are promised.

This interpretation of Isaiah 53 might be motivated by the community's need for self-preservation. The servant's salvation and reward are placed into the future, and the servant is portrayed more positively as in MT, making him an attractive figure of identification for his community. This is followed up by an exhortation to identify with the community through the traditional ritual of sacrifice, and to preserve the community by retaining the Egyptian's favour through servicing them well.

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