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Divine Spirit as an Agent of Societal Justice in Isaiah

By
Warren D. Dodson

A Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Biblical & Theological Studies.

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Abstract

This thesis considers whether Isaiah portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice. *Mišpāt*, *ṣadāqâ*, *ṣedeq*, and *rûah* all occur frequently in the book of Isaiah. Some occurrences of *mišpāt*, *ṣadāqâ*, and *ṣedeq* refer to societal justice, specifically to right conduct with respect to the poor and needy members of the community. As we will observe in the chapters that follow, Isaiah scholarship has noted the importance of societal justice as a major theme of the book evidenced, in particular, in the opening chapters. While not every occurrence of *rûah* in Isaiah refers to divine spirit, i.e., the invisible activity of God in the midst of his people, a number of its occurrences do have this meaning. There are six texts in Isaiah (4:2–6; 11:1–9; 28:5–6; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; 61:1–11) where *mišpāt*, *ṣadāqâ*, and/or *ṣedeq* may relate to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah*. This thesis considers each of these six texts to determine (1) whether it refers to divine spirit, (2) whether it refers to societal justice as reflected in concern for the poor and needy, and (3) the relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in each text.

Following chapters of introduction, literature review, and methodology, the fourth chapter contains a lexical analysis of *mišpāt*, *ṣadāqâ*, *ṣedeq*, and *rûah*. The fifth chapter contains a historical-grammatical exegesis of the six texts seeking to answer the three questions set out above. Chapter six states the thesis's conclusions.

This thesis finds that all six texts speak of divine spirit. In some texts (11:1–9; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; 61:1–11) this conclusion is straightforward as *rûah* is described as coming from the Lord upon a person or people. Isaiah 4:4 instead speaks of the Lord effecting a purifying judgment by means of “a spirit of judgment” and “a spirit of

burning.” In Isaiah 28:5–6 the Lord himself becomes “a spirit of justice” to the one who exercises judgment.

The thesis also finds that all six texts with the exception of Isaiah 42:1–9 clearly or likely speak of societal justice as seen in concern for the poor and needy. The vocabulary and context of Isaiah 11:1–9 and 32:15–20 show that these texts clearly refer to societal justice. While the distinctive vocabulary of societal justice is lacking in Isaiah 4:2–6 and 28:5–6, the context within which these texts appear makes it likely that they refer to societal justice. Isaiah 61:1–11 presents a vision of future shalom which, in view of its context and vocabulary, likely includes societal justice. Isaiah 42:1–9’s lack of distinctive vocabulary and its implied audience and literary context make it unlikely that it refers to societal justice.

Five of the texts (11:1–9; 28:5–6; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; 61:1–11) show a direct relationship between divine spirit and whatever form of “justice” is in view in the text. The relationship in Isaiah 4:2–6 is more indirect as the spirit there primarily executes judgment against the injustice of the people, presumably resulting in a community more characterized by societal justice.

Concerning the ultimate question as to whether Isaiah portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice, Isaiah 11:1–9 and 32:15–20 clearly do; 4:4–6; 28:5–6; and 61:1–11 likely do; and 42:1–9 likely does not.

To Christina

Isaiah is the prophet of the spirit of God.

— Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament
Theology*.

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Abbreviations

BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRSVUE	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
TLOT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Both the frequency with which the words for “justice” (*mišpāṭ*) and “righteousness” (*šedāqâ* and *šedeq* and) occur in Isaiah and their occurrence at critical locations within the book indicate that these are key terms for Isaiah. While these words do not always occur with the same meaning, in a number of places they refer to right conduct within the community of God’s people according to the terms of the covenant. One particularly important facet of this covenant-governed conduct was the way the community treated its most vulnerable members. While the demands of justice encompass a broader range of concerns, in this thesis I am concerned with that form of “societal justice”¹ that involves “justice enacted in the social realm on behalf of the oppressed and poor.”²

The word *rûah* is also prominent in the book of Isaiah. While it too appears with a number of meanings, it often refers to what I am calling “divine spirit,” which may be defined as “the invisible activity of God in power through and amongst his covenant people, whether in dramatic irruptions or more sustained endowments.”³

There are six places in Isaiah where *mišpāṭ*, *šedāqâ* and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah* (4:2–6; 11:1–9; 28:5–6; 32:15–20;

¹I use “societal justice” rather than the more common “social justice” not to remove Isaiah from conversation with contemporary concerns but to leave open the possibility that his concerns might not map directly onto the contemporary debates.

²Thomas L. Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 88.

³Max Turner, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 551.

42:1–9; 61:1–11).⁴ The argument of this thesis is that these texts show that Isaiah portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice in bringing about a proper concern for the poor and needy members of the covenant community. While scholars have attended separately to the themes of justice and righteousness and of divine spirit in Isaiah, there has been little development of the relationship between these themes.

Because a lack of societal justice is one of the principal targets of Isaiah’s condemnation of Judah and Jerusalem, the question of what God will do to bring about societal justice is a central concern in Isaiah. While Isaiah does look to one or more human agents who will be instrumental in establishing justice, he also shows divine spirit to be an agent of societal justice.

Chapter Two will review the literature on societal justice and divine spirit in Isaiah. Chapter Three will set forth the methodology of this thesis. In Chapter Four I will survey the meaning and significance of *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ*, *šedeq*, and *rûah* in Isaiah, giving particular attention to its opening chapters. Chapter Five will contain the exegesis of each of my texts. Chapter Six will summarize my conclusions.

⁴Isaiah 40:13–14 is a seventh text in which *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* occur in close proximity to *rûah*: “Who has directed the spirit (*rûah*) of the LORD, or as his counselor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice (*mišpāt*)? Who taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding.” Because this passage speaks of God’s own justice, it is at most only analogically related to the societal justice that is the concern of this thesis. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 489–90 (identifying theme of vv. 13–14 as God’s “infinite wisdom”). Isaiah 59:14–21 might be considered an eighth text in which *mišpāt* and *šedāqâ* occur together with *rûah*. *Mišpāt* occurs in vv. 14 and 15; *šedāqâ* in vv. 14, 16, and 17; *rûah* in vv. 19 and 21. *Rûah* in v. 19 refers to divine judgment and is translated “wind” by NRSV, ESV, and NASB and “breath” by NIV. While *rûah* in v. 21 does refer to divine spirit (with Yahweh speaking of “my spirit”) its distance from the terms for justice and righteousness results in a more attenuated relation between themes. Furthermore, v. 21 is perhaps best interpreted as a relatively independent literary unit. J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 492–93; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56–66: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 72 (“This [verse] is the promissory conclusion to the first section [chs. 56–59].”). For this reason I have excluded Isaiah 59:14–21 from my analysis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The theme of societal justice in Isaiah has been well developed by Thomas Leclerc.⁵ He examines every occurrence of *mišpāṭ* in Isaiah while giving less comprehensive consideration of *ṣədāqā* and *ṣedeq*.⁶ He concludes that “both diachronically and perhaps even more so synchronically, justice/*mišpāṭ* is a key concern of the book.”⁷ He also concludes, however, that the meaning of justice differs across what he identifies as the three main divisions of the book (chs. 1–39, 40–55, 55–66), which he takes as primarily reflecting, respectively, pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic historical contexts.⁸ Still, he sees justice as a theme that brings unity to Isaiah’s diverse parts.⁹ Although he addresses all six of the passages under consideration in this thesis, apart from noting that “the mention of the ‘spirit’ [in 32:15] immediately evokes two earlier

⁵Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*. Other works treating the topic of justice in Isaiah have a more limited scope. Mark Gray, *Rhetoric and Social Justice in Isaiah*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 432 (New York: T & T Clark, 2006) (focusing primarily on chs. 1, 9, and 58 and reading the text against itself as an imperfect vehicle for justice); Christoph O. Schroeder, *History, Justice, and the Agency of God: A Hermeneutical & Exegetical Investigation on Isaiah & Psalms*, Biblical Interpretation Series 52 (Boston: Brill, 2001), xi (seeking to answer “whether the biblical claim that God acts in history and creation is true”), 53–79 (focusing on Isaiah 1–6); Andrew Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*, Biblical Interpretation Series 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000) (considering Isaiah’s ethical teaching more broadly before exploring the degree to which Yahweh’s actions in Isaiah are consistent with that ethical teaching).

⁶Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 15.

⁷Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 177.

⁸Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 162–65, 178.

⁹Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 178.

passages [11:2–9 and 28:6], both of which link the spirit to the royal ruler,”¹⁰ he provides no further analysis of the relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah.

A second work that considers three of the texts under review in this thesis (11:2–6; 28:6; 32:15–17) is the published extract from Bruce Vawter’s dissertation.¹¹ Given his assumption about the dating of the book of Isaiah, he only considered chs. 1–39. While his work is less comprehensive than Leclerc’s, he helpfully identifies a number of aspects of social injustice in pre-exilic Judah¹² and the factors that lay behind these social sins.¹³ However, apart from the observation that “[t]hese qualities of the ideal king are in 11,2 attributed to the *rûah Yhwh* as in Mi 3,8,”¹⁴ he does not develop the relationship between societal justice and divine spirit.

Wonsuk Ma has provided the only book-length treatment of divine spirit in Isaiah.¹⁵ He seeks to trace “the evolution of the various *רוח* references” in the book of Isaiah by dedicating a chapter each to pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic material, analyzing the various “spirit traditions” found in each.¹⁶ He specifically identifies six traditions that he follows throughout the book of Isaiah: “Leadership Spirit,” “Prophetic Spirit,” “Creation Spirit,” “The Spirit as God’s Independent Agent,” “The Spirit as Part

¹⁰Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 83.

¹¹Bruce Vawter, “*Social Justice*” in *the Prophet Isaiah* (Denver, CO: St. Thomas Seminary, 1958).

¹²Vawter, “*Social Justice*” in *the Prophet Isaiah*, 11–25 (“Heedless wealth,” “Latifundism,” “Apostate rulers,” “The sorrows of the poor”).

¹³Vawter, “*Social Justice*” in *the Prophet Isaiah*, 25–34 (“False alliances,” “False individualism,” “False religion”).

¹⁴Vawter, “*Social Justice*” in *the Prophet Isaiah*, 33.

¹⁵Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes : The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 271 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

¹⁶Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 5, 20.

of God’s Person of [sic] Sign of God’s Presence,” and “The Spirit Practically a Substitute for God.”¹⁷ Ma provides a fourth chapter considering divine spirit in the book of Isaiah as a whole. Although he mentions the theme of justice and righteousness as it appears in his consideration of divine spirit passages, he does not give any detailed consideration to how these two themes are related.

Ma and a few other scholars have noted in passing a connection between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah. In a more recent essay and with some overlap with the aforementioned monograph, Ma identifies four “Spirit traditions” in Isaiah: leadership (including 11:1–5 and 42:1–4), prophetic (including 61:1–3), creation (including 32:15–18), and wisdom.¹⁸ He concludes that the effect of the Spirit on leaders in Isaiah will be the care of “the weakest members of society.”¹⁹ “[T]he prophetic Spirit tradition,” likewise, “foresees the Spirit-endowed figure to actively bring liberation to those who are oppressed and poor.”²⁰ Finally, the creation Spirit tradition anticipates a “restored society [that] is marked by prosperity, justice and righteousness, peace and harmony.”²¹ Andrew Abernethy, after identifying a number of “agents of justice” in Isaiah, including the “messianic Davidic King” of Isaiah 11, the “Servant” of Isaiah 42, and the “Anointed Messenger” of Isaiah 61,²² observes that “amid God’s love for and quest to promote

¹⁷Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 29–32.

¹⁸Wonsuk Ma, “Isaiah,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Keith Warrington (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 34–45.

¹⁹Ma, “Isaiah,” 45.

²⁰Ma, “Isaiah,” 45.

²¹Ma, “Isaiah,” 45

²²Andrew T. Abernethy, *Discovering Isaiah: Content, Interpretation, Reception*, *Discovering Biblical Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 229–33.

justice, several chief agents arise across the book whom he empowers by the Spirit for the task.”²³ Commenting on Isaiah 61:1–3, John Oswalt notes that “[i]n Isaiah the Spirit is especially associated with the power to bring justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the spoken word (11:2; 32:15–16; 42:1; 44:4; 48:16; 59:21).”²⁴ Finally, VanGemenen and Abernethy state:

There are number of commonalities between the Davidic and Servant-Prophetic models of agency. The most significant commonality is the role of the *rûah* in establishing justice and righteousness in society. As Isaiah’s message unfolds, agency democratizes to the point where the entire community and future generations are endowed with God’s *rûah* to establish the social ideals found in the Davidic and Servant/Prophetic models.²⁵

These observations are all congruent with my thesis. However, none of them are accompanied by a detailed consideration of all the relevant texts in Isaiah. This thesis seeks to place the relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah on sounder exegetical footing.

²³Abernethy, *Discovering Isaiah*, 233; cf. Andrew T. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 40 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 135 (with respect to chs. 1–39: “the primary task of the Davidic ruler will be to establish God’s justice and righteousness in the world through God’s Spirit as an agent of God during the era of salvation”).

²⁴John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 564.

²⁵Willem A. VanGemenen and Andrew T. Abernethy, “The Spirit and the Future: A Canonical Approach,” in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, ed. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 336.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Space does not permit a full exegesis of each of the six passages under consideration. Instead, I will utilize a historical-grammatical approach to answer three questions for each text. First, does *rûah* refer to divine spirit? Second, do *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ* and/or *šedeq* refer to societal justice? Third, what is the relationship between divine spirit and societal justice?

My base text for exegesis is the Masoretic Text of Isaiah as published in *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.²⁶ Because the textual record suggests that the MT is “relatively secure,”²⁷ text critical questions will only be considered when there is significant doubt as to the reliability of this base text. I will not prepare my own English translation but instead reference widely used English translations.

I will deal with grammatical, lexical, and form-critical issues insofar as they are necessary to answer my three questions. I will discuss the structure and literary context of each passage.

The matter of historical context requires more particular consideration. The analysis of the historical context of a prophetic text may distinguish (at a minimum) (1) the context in which the prophet first presented the message of a particular text to his

²⁶Rudolf Kittel et al., eds., *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Editio quinta emendata. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997). The *Biblica Hebraica Quinta* for Isaiah is still in preparation. Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, “Biblica Hebraica Quinta (BHQ),” accessed November 23, 2022, <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/bible-society-and-biblical-studies/current-projects/biblica-hebraica-quinta-bhq/>.

²⁷H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 33 (“The Hebrew text of the Isaiah (the MT) has come to us in a fine state of preservation.”).

audience and (2) the context in which the final form of the biblical book was established and “published.” In the study of Isaiah both types of historical contexts are debated. I will here consider the second type first.

While there is no consensus as to who wrote which portions of Isaiah and when,²⁸ critical scholars are certain that the eighth-century Isaiah ben Amoz is not the sole author of the book that bears his name.²⁹ However, a number of scholars have recently challenged this position by showing that the arguments for plural and late authorship are far from conclusive.³⁰ In this thesis I follow a more traditional, if still minority, position,

²⁸Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 324 (“[C]ritical exegesis now rests upon a very hypothetical and tentative basis of historical reconstructions. Since it is no longer possible to determine precisely the historical background of large sections of Isaiah, hypotheses increase along with the disagreement among the experts.”).

²⁹Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 316–18; cf. John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible and Deutero-Canonical Books*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 335 (“Only a small part of the book of Isaiah, however, can be associated with the prophet of the eighth century.”); Werner H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell and David J. Reimer, 2nd ed. (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1999), 209 (“The lengthy book that tradition has attributed to the prophet Isaiah is a highly complex literary structure that developed through several centuries.”); Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” 370 (“I do not find the idea of unity of authorship to be either plausible or necessary.”).

³⁰Gregory K. Beale, “‘Isaiah the Prophet Said’: The Authorship of Isaiah Reexamined in the Light of Early Jewish and Christian Writings,” in *Bind up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 81–113; Gary V. Smith, “Cyrus or Sennacherib? Historical Issues Involved in the Interpretation of Isaiah 40–55,” in *Bind up the Testimony*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz, 175–193; Mark F. Rooker, “Characteristics of the Hebrew of the Recognized Literary Divisions of Isaiah,” in *Bind up the Testimony*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz, 195–225; John N. Oswalt, “The Implications of an Evangelical View of Scripture for the Authorship of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Bind up the Testimony*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz, 273–291; Richard L. Schultz, “Isaiah, Isaiahs, and Current Scholarship,” in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 243–61; Richard L. Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter? Prophetic Inspiration in Recent Evangelical Scholarship,” in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguélez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 150–170; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006), 378–80; Rachel Margalioth, *The Indivisible Isaiah: Evidence for the Single Authorship of the Prophetic Book* (New York: Yeshiva University, 1964).

agreeing with Oswalt that “the essential content of the book has come to us through one human author, Isaiah the son of Amoz.”³¹

Understanding Isaiah to be the essential author of the book that bears his name places the final form of the book in the historical context of pre-exilic Judah. If Isaiah himself was responsible for the book’s final form, then its implied audience was the people living in “Judah and Jerusalem” (1:1) between the death of King Uzziah in 740/39 and the end of Hezekiah’s reign in 687/86 (according to 1:1’s placing of Isaiah’s vision “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah”) or perhaps Sennacherib’s defeat in 681 BC (if Isaiah authored the record of this event in 37:36–39).³² Even if one accepts that others were responsible for the final compilation of Isaiah’s prophetic messages, that still gives a final form “within half a century after the death of Isaiah, and thus may be assigned with reasonable confidence to a date about 630 B.C.”³³ I thus assume that the book of Isaiah reached its final form sometime between 687 and 630 BC.

³¹John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 25; cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: With a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 785 (expressing his opinion that “the extant prophecy of Isaiah was compiled as an anthology of the utterances and proclamations of Isaiah ben Amoz by the disciples of the prophet,” but noting that the literary quality of the whole suggests the involvement of an exceptional compiler, perhaps Isaiah himself); Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:8 (going beyond Oswalt’s commitment to “essential content” to maintain that “[t]he prophet Isaiah himself was the author of the entire book; he himself committed it all to writing, and he was responsible for collecting his messages and placing them in the present book . . .”).

³²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 18 (dating Isaiah’s ministry between the death of Uzziah and the end of Hezekiah’s reign); C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 158 (suggesting that Isaiah may have recorded Sennacherib’s defeat and providing the date thereof).

³³Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 785; cf. Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 34–35 (suggesting that “Isaiah’s disciples” are responsible for the book’s “clear evidence of editorial activity” and dating the book’s final form to within 90 years of Isaiah’s death).

While final consideration of the historical context within which Isaiah initially made public each of the prophetic messages contained within his book requires analysis of each individual passage, a few general comments are in order. In contrast to the numerous dates of prophetic messages provided in Ezekiel, the book of Isaiah contains relatively few such precise indications of time. After the superscription in 1:1, which places Isaiah's entire ministry within the reigns of four kings of Judah, relative time indicators are only found in 6:1; 7:1ff.; 20:1; and chs. 36–39. The narratives of 8:1ff. and 22:15ff. also point to particular historical contexts. Finally, a few prophecies are given with specific time-frames for fulfillment (7:8; 16:4; 23:15, 17; 32:10; 37:30; 38:5). While these indications of time might permit us to consider the historical context of the initial prophetic utterance for these particular texts, the fact remains that the bulk of the material in Isaiah does not come with explicit indications of the time of its original proclamation. This is particularly true for chs. 40–66.³⁴

While some scholars attempt to date texts within Isaiah based on their content, this is a fraught enterprise. First, assuming the reality of predictive prophecy, reference to particular persons [e.g., Cyrus (44:28; 45:1)] or places [e.g., Babylon (43:14; 47:1; 48:14, 20)] does not itself determine the historical context of a particular prophecy. Second, it would be naive to assume that a particular prophetic message can only strike a particular note, e.g., either of judgment or of salvation, such that texts with different general tones must have arisen in different historical contexts. If whoever was responsible for the final form of the text of Isaiah thought it not unreasonable to place together such disparately sounding material as those found in 1:24–28; 9:5–11 [Eng. 9:6–12]; 30:15–18; 32:14–17;

³⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 28.

66:22–24, how can one say that such thematically complex messages could not have arisen in the same original context? Third, even scholars who acknowledge Isaiah as the essential author of the book understand the book’s arrangement to be not primarily chronological. Alec Motyer argues that Isaiah should be interpreted as a “‘mosaic’ in which stones from differing points of origin and with individual prehistories are brought into a new integration so that it is now not the prehistory but the new design that is significant.”³⁵ Oswalt likewise considers the book of Isaiah to be “an anthology, a collection of sermons, sayings, thoughts, and writings of Isaiah Thus it is not at all necessary to assume that all the materials in the book are in the chronological order in which they were first delivered.”³⁶

While the book of Isaiah as a whole may be situated within a particular geographic context and period of time, the position taken in this thesis is that a more precise determination of the historical context of the original proclamation of the individual units within the book is not always either recoverable or relevant for interpretation. As Motyer notes, “He [Isaiah] rarely offers dates because it is not useful or important that we should know the original setting of his oracles but only that we should discover how their inherent meaning subserves the unity of his message.”³⁷ For this reason, I will be reticent to go beyond clear textual indicators to specify the historical context within which particular prophecies arose.

My concern in the exegesis of the texts under consideration is to recover the meaning of those texts for their implied audience. While acknowledging that early

³⁵Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 32.

³⁶Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 26.

³⁷Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 32–33.

interpreters can aid us in recovering the original meaning of a text,³⁸ I will not consider how Isaiah has been appropriated by later Old Testament, Second Temple Jewish, or New Testament authors.

³⁸C. John Collins, *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1–11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 201–04.

Chapter 4

Lexical Analysis and the Role of Isaiah's Opening Chapters

Frequency of occurrence of *mišpāṭ*, *šedāqâ*, *šedeq*, and *rûaḥ*

The frequency with which *mišpāṭ*, *šedāqâ*, *šedeq*, and *rûaḥ* occur in the book of Isaiah is itself an indication of the importance of these terms for the message of the book. *Mišpāṭ* occurs 42 times, behind only Psalms (65x) and Ezekiel (43x).³⁹ There are more occurrences of *šedāqâ* in Isaiah (36x) than in any other book, with Psalms (34x) having the second most.⁴⁰ *Šedeq* occurs 25 times, second only to the Psalms (49x) and next ahead of Proverbs (9x).⁴¹ Noteworthy also is the frequency with which *mišpāṭ* occurs in conjunction with either *šedeq* or *šedāqâ* to function as a hendiadys. *Mišpāṭ* occurs with *šedāqâ* 11 times (1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:6 [Eng. 9:7]; 28:17; 32:15; 33:5; 56:1; 58:2; 59:9, 14) and with *šedeq* 4 times (1:21; 16:5; 26:9; 32:1).⁴² Given the frequency with which these terms occur, Richard Coggins is justified in identifying *mišpāṭ* and *šedāqâ* (along with *yəšû 'â*) as “key words” in Isaiah.⁴³ Rolf Rendtorff and Hugh Williamson likewise identify “justice and righteousness” as major themes in Isaiah.⁴⁴

³⁹Gerhard Liedke, “טפּשׁ,” in *TLOT*, 3:1392.

⁴⁰Klaus Koch, “קדצ,” in *TLOT*, 2:1048–49.

⁴¹Klaus Koch, “קדצ,” in *TLOT*, 2:1048–49.

⁴²Leclerc identifies these verses as containing this hendiadys. Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 88, 157. He also notes the occurrence of *šedeq* with the verb *špṭ* in 11:4 and 59:4. Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 88, 157. Gentry identifies a third occurrence of *šedeq* with the verb *špṭ* in 51:5. Peter J. Gentry, “Sizemore Lectures I: Isaiah and Social Justice,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2013): 6 n. 3.

⁴³Richard J. Coggins, “New Ways with Old Texts: How Does One Write a Commentary on Isaiah?,” *The Expository Times* 107, no. 12 (September 1996): 367.

⁴⁴Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Orton, Tools for Biblical Study 7 (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), 199; Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” 374–75.

Rûah is also a significant term in Isaiah, where it occurs 51 times, ahead of Psalms (39x) and second only to Ezekiel (52x).⁴⁵ While not every occurrence of *rûah* refers to “spirit” (as opposed, for example, to “wind”) or more specifically to divine spirit (as opposed to that of humans or animals), many occurrences do so link *rûah* with the being and activity of God that they may be recognized as instances of divine spirit.⁴⁶ This frequency of occurrence justifies Ludwig Köhler’s statement that “Isaiah is the prophet of the spirit of God.”⁴⁷ Ma summarizes the place of divine spirit in Isaiah thus: “the central message of the book of Isaiah is about God’s lordship over Israel, nations and his Creation, and God’s Spirit plays an important role in bringing his rule in human and cosmic life.”⁴⁸

Having noted the frequency with which *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ*, *šedeq*, and *rûah* occur in Isaiah, the remainder of this chapter will examine the range of meanings with which these terms occur in the book. Particular attention will be given to how the use of *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ*, and *šedeq* in the opening chapters of Isaiah points to the significance of societal justice to the book’s overall message.

⁴⁵*HALOT*, s.v. “רוח.”

⁴⁶For example, BDB places the following occurrences in Isaiah under the gloss “spirit of God”: 11:2 (4x); 30:1; 31:3; 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 61:1; 63:10, 11, 14. BDB, s.v. “רוח.”

⁴⁷Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. Stewart Todd (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1957), 118; cf. David G. Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” in *New Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Essays in Honor of Hallvard Hagelia*, ed. Markus Zehnder (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014), 31 (“Like Ezekiel, Isaiah can be considered a prophet of the Spirit.”).

⁴⁸Ma, “Isaiah,” 45.

***Mišpāt, ṣadāqâ, and ṣedeq* as referring to societal justice**

Not all occurrences of *mišpāt*, *ṣedeq*, and *ṣadāqâ* in Isaiah refer to societal justice. Sometimes *mišpāt* refers to the execution of judgment as a punishment (3:14), to a legal right entitled to protection (10:2), to God’s laws (26:8) (plural), to the place of judicial decision (28:6aβ), or to practical conduct that accords to the natural order (28:26). *Ṣadāqâ* (45:8; 46:13; 51:6; 51:8; 56:1; 59:16; 61:10) and *ṣedeq* (51:5; 62:1) can both appear in parallel with “salvation.” Both *ṣadāqâ* (48:1) and *ṣedeq* (45:19; 59:4) can refer to honesty, sincerity, or truth. These occurrences show that the terms *mišpāt*, *ṣedeq*, and *ṣadāqâ* per se do not always refer to societal justice in Isaiah.

However, *mišpāt*, *ṣadāqâ*, and *ṣedeq* also occur in Isaiah in contexts that show indisputably that they refer to societal justice, specifically to right conduct with respect to the poor and needy members of the community. Furthermore, the location of some of these occurrences makes it clear that this aspect of societal justice is a principal concern of the book. This is evidenced in the opening chapters of Isaiah.

Whether the opening unit of Isaiah (following the superscription in 1:1) is taken to be 1:2–31 or 1:2–2:5, many interpreters recognize that it functions as an introduction to the entire book.⁴⁹ Despite Isaiah’s strong words against Judah and Jerusalem through v. 15a, the precise nature of their wrongdoing remains unspecified. Then in v. 15b Isaiah charges the people: “your hands are full of blood.” The question arises as to whether this

⁴⁹Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 31 (noting the “general agreement that chapter 1 constitutes an introduction of some sort”); Paul D. Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 376 (taking ch. 1 as the introduction); William J. Dumbrell, “The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985): 112 (same); Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 46 (taking 1:1–2:5 as an outline of the book’s message); Robert H. O’Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 32 (identifying 1:1–2:5 as the prologue to the book).

blood is real or figurative and as to the circumstances of its shedding. The answer to these questions comes in vv. 16–17 as Isaiah gives the first imperatives of the book (other than the “hear” of vv. 2 and 10): “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove your evil deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice (*mišpāṭ*); rescue the oppressed;⁵⁰ defend (*šiptū*) the orphan; plead for the widow.” The effect of washing and cleansing and the removal of evil will be a process of ceasing and learning which will mean seeking justice, which in turn involves action on behalf of the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. As Barry Webb notes, “[t]he rebellion referred to generally in verse 2 is now specified: worship had been divorced from justice, and *the fatherless* and *the widow* had become the chief victims (17).”⁵¹

After words of promise and warning in v. 18–20, Isaiah returns to his charge against Jerusalem in v. 21: “How the faithful city has become a prostitute! She that was full of justice (*mišpāṭ*), righteousness (*šedeq*) lodged in her—but now murderers!” The contrast between justice and righteousness and murderers here recalls the contrast between justice and blood in vv. 15–17. That this is the proper way to understand “murderers” is shown by vv. 22–23. After a general charge of moral impurity in v. 22, v. 23 charges “Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend (*yišpōṭū*) the orphan, and the widow’s cause does not come before them.” Isaiah’s condemnation falls primarily upon Jerusalem’s governors, who have taken bribes rather than act on behalf of the orphan and widow.

⁵⁰The MT has *ʾaššarū ḥāmōš*. This pointing would give a meaning of “correct oppression” (ESV) or “Rebuke the oppressor” (NASB). The NRSV, NIV (“Defend the oppressed”), and NJPS (“Aid the wronged”) instead read the noun as *ḥāmūš*. Either reading would show this sentence to be relevant to the text’s concern for societal injustice.

⁵¹Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 43.

God will remedy the lamentable condition in which he finds Judah and Jerusalem. In addition to (or perhaps by means of) his acts of judgment against his enemies (vv. 24–25, 28–31), he “will restore your judges (*šōpṭayik*) as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness (*haššedeq*), the faithful city” (1:26). A situation characterized by unjust judges can only be remedied by the bringing forth of just judges.

The introduction of Isaiah clearly sets up societal injustice – specifically the oppression of the widow and the orphan – as a principal problem for Judah and Jerusalem and an important theme in the book. There can be no hope for God’s people unless societal justice is restored.

Another approach to reading Isaiah takes chs. 1–5 to be the introduction to the book.⁵² Under this approach as well, societal justice emerges as a central concern for the book as the message of ch. 1 recurs in ch. 5. In the song of the vineyard in 5:1–7, the first six verses depict the vineyard while the last verse explains it thus, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished garden; he expected justice (*lamišpāt*) but saw bloodshed (*mišpāḥ*); righteousness (*lišdāqā*) but heard a cry (*šə ‘āqā*)!”⁵³ As Webb observes “[t]he demand for social justice as a basic covenant obligation could scarcely be more succinctly and forcefully presented.”⁵⁴

The failure of Israel and Judah is further described in 5:8–23 through six *hōy* statements (vv. 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22). The first woe (v. 8) is against those who

⁵²John N. Oswalt, “Isaiah,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 218; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 40.

⁵³Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 40 (so distinguishing vv. 1–6 and v. 7).

⁵⁴Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 55.

accumulate lands, in apparent disregard for the provisions of the law that were intended to prevent the permanent dispossession and impoverishment of God's people (e.g., Lev. 25:8–17; Deut. 15:1–11). It is possible that behind the second woe (vv. 11–12) against excessive drinking and feasting lies an implicit charge against the kind of societal injustice that would fund such expensive and selfish forms of entertainment. It may also be that the failure of those drinking and feasting to “regard the deeds of the LORD or see the work of his hands” (v. 12) consists of their refusal to recognize God's protection of the poor and needy (e.g., Exod. 22:21–24) and the rationale for societal justice found in his saving acts toward Israel (e.g., Deut. 24:17–18). What is clear is that after three further woes (vv. 18–19, 20, 21) of a rather generic character, the concluding woe (vv. 22–23) is specific in its charge not only against excessive drinking but also against societal injustice: “who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of their rights!” (v. 23). In a dispute between the wealthy and the poor, it is the wealthy who have recourse to bribery to either defeat the just claim of the poor or to advance their own unjust claim. The effect of bribery is thus to perpetuate or even exacerbate wealth inequality.⁵⁵

It is clear from both Isaiah chs. 1 and 5 that at least some occurrences of *mišpāṭ*, *šadāqâ*, and *šedeq* refer to societal justice. These opening chapters prepare Isaiah's implied audience to see societal (in)justice as central to the overall message of the book. It will remain to be seen in the exegesis of the six texts under consideration whether societal justice is indeed implicated in each text.

⁵⁵Cf. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 56 (“The wealth was gained by oppression and could be held on to only by further oppression.”).

***Rûah* as referring to divine spirit**

Rûah occurs in the Old Testament with a wide range of meanings. In addition to various senses of “breath” and “wind,” it occurs with various senses of “spirit”: “temper, disposition,” “*spirit* of the living, breathing being, dwelling in the רִשְׁוֹן of men and animals,” “seat of emotions,” “seat or organ of mental acts,” seat “of the will” or “of moral character,” and “*spirit of God*.”⁵⁶

Isaiah uses *rûah* with nearly all of these meanings. Not considering those texts where its meaning is less clear, *rûah* refers to “wind” as a natural phenomenon (7:2; 17:13; 32:2), as a figure of divine action (41:16; 59:19), or as a figure of vanity (41:29). In connection to anthropology, just as God has given “breath” (*nəšāmā*) to all people, so he has given them “spirit” (42:5). Likewise, the human “spirit” appears as equivalent to the human “soul” (*nepeš*) (26:9), and is particularly connected to emotions (54:6; 65:14) and religious character (57:15; 66:2). *Rûah* can also refer to “breath” metaphorically as an instrument of judgment (11:4).

There are also numerous occurrences of *rûah* in Isaiah that clearly refer to divine spirit. The “spirit of the LORD” appears in 11:2; 40:13; 61:1; and 63:14. The Lord speaks of “my spirit” (42:1; 44:3; 59:21). Isaiah speaks of the Lord and “his spirit” (34:16; 48:16). The people had rebelled against the Lord’s “holy spirit” (63:10), “his holy spirit” whom he had “put within them” (63:11).

More specifically, *rûah* appears as a spirit that the Lord possesses but gives to humans to effect behavior congruent with his revealed character (11:2; 42:1; 61:1). Somewhat mysterious are the occurrences of *rûah* that refer to a spirit that God gives that

⁵⁶BDB, s.v. “רִשְׁוֹן.”

affects human behavior but not in a manner congruent with his revealed character [19:14 (“spirit of confusion”); 29:10 (“spirit of deep sleep”); cf. 37:7 (“I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor . . .”)]. The nature of the contrast between *rûah* and “flesh” (*bāśār*) (31:3) is likewise not immediately clear.

This thesis is concerned with *rûah* as divine spirit. The primary issue is whether *rûah* is depicted as a merely natural or anthropological phenomenon or as an aspect of divine being or action. This latter concept is itself a rich one, potentially relating to the divine “alter ego,” “agent of conveyance,” “agent of inspiration,” “agent of empowerment,” “agent of judgment,” “agent of animation,” or “mark of ownership.”⁵⁷ A potential danger for Christian readers of the Old Testament is that they will either (1) import New Testament understandings of the personality of God’s Spirit into Old Testament occurrences of *rûah* and assume that such understandings are native to the Old Testament texts, or (2) assume that only those Old Testament texts that affirm, assume, or hint at our New Testament understandings of the personality of God’s Spirit are relevant to a biblical theology of divine spirit. Given the nature of progressive revelation, there are many Old Testament texts that provide important background to the New Testament’s teaching regarding God’s Spirit but which are themselves quite fragmentary. My use of a broad definition for divine spirit is intended to allow Isaiah to contribute as much as possible to this background.

⁵⁷Daniel I. Block, “The View from the Top: The Holy Spirit in the Prophets,” in *Presence, Power and Promise*, ed. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 178.

Chapter 5

Exegetical Analysis

In this chapter I exegete each of the passages in Isaiah in which *mišpāt*, *šadāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah* (4:2–6; 11:1–9; 28:5–6; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; 61:1–11). For each passage, I review the literary and historical context, examine whether and how divine spirit and societal justice (as seen in concern for the poor and needy members of the community) are present, and consider how the relationship between divine spirit and societal justice is depicted.

Isaiah 4:2–6

Isaiah 4:2–6 is the first place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāt*, *šadāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah*: “once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment (*bərûah mišpāt*) and by a spirit of burning (*ûbərûah bā ‘ēr*)” (4:4).

Introduction to Isaiah 4:2–6

Although scholars disagree on the literary structure of the opening chapters of Isaiah,⁵⁸ a number of scholars recognize that chs. 2–4 function as a literary unit.⁵⁹

⁵⁸E.g., Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 161–65 (dividing chs. 1–12 into 1:2–31; 2:1–5:30; 6; 7–12); Oswalt, “Isaiah,” 218 (dividing chs. 1–12 into 1–5 (introduction to the book), 6, 7–12); Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 376 (dividing chs. 1–12 into 1 (introduction to the book), 2–4, 5–12).

⁵⁹Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 376; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 52; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, ed. James Martin, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954), 1:110; Childs, *Isaiah*, 57.

Although this section primarily contains messages of judgment, it opens (2:1–4) and closes (4:2–6) with messages of salvation.⁶⁰ Paul Wegner considers 4:4 to be the key verse in chs. 2–4.⁶¹

It is difficult to identify with any specificity the historical context of the original publication of Isaiah 4:2–6. Many critical scholars consider this unit to be postexilic in origin,⁶² a position at odds with my understanding of Isaianic authorship. There is nothing in chs. 2–4 that would connect their origin to a particular point in Isaiah’s ministry. The events described in 4:2–6 are themselves future with respect to the time of original publication.⁶³

One question concerning the structure of Isaiah 4:2–6 is the function of *’im* at the beginning of v. 4. Some translations (ESV, NRSV) read it as making the events of v. 4 the temporal condition for the events of v. 3.⁶⁴ Others (NASB, NJPS) make it the temporal condition for the events of v. 5. However, since the entirety of 4:2–6 is subject to the temporal marker *bayyôm hahû’* at the beginning of v. 2, little seems to rest on whether v. 4 is connected with v. 3 or with v. 5.

⁶⁰Abernethy, *Discovering Isaiah*, 41; cf. Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 376 (2:1–4 and 4:2–6 form an inclusio); Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 52 (2:2–4 describe “The ideal Jerusalem”; 2:5–4:1 “The actual Jerusalem”; 4:2–6 “The new Jerusalem”).

⁶¹Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 376.

⁶²Childs, *Isaiah*, 68 (himself questioning the relevance of this conclusion).

⁶³Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 376 (“The beginning (2:1–4) and end (4:2–6) deal with the future prospects of Judah and Jerusalem.”).

⁶⁴Cf. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. Emil Kautzsch, trans. Arthur E. Cowley, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Clarendon, 1910), § 106o.

Divine spirit in Isaiah 4:2–6

Of the six passages under consideration in this thesis, the meaning of *rûah* is least certain here. One challenge is that *rûah* appears twice in Isaiah 4:4. Does this indicate two distinct “spirits”? Another challenge is that, unlike those passages with, e.g., “my *rûah*” or “*rûah* of the LORD” the *rûah* constructions here do not show such an immediate relationship between *rûah* and God.

Although most translations translate the *rûah* constructions of Isaiah 4:4 as “a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning” or something equivalent,⁶⁵ departures from this translation underscore the uncertain meaning of *rûah* here. While NASB’s definite articles suggest a closer connection between *rûah* and God (“the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning”),⁶⁶ NET removes *rûah* as a distinct agent (“as he [the Lord] comes to judge and to bring devastation”).

The first *rûah* construction in Isaiah 4:4 is *rûah mišpāt*. The only other occurrence of this construction in the Old Testament is in Isaiah 28:5–6 (“In that day the LORD of hosts will be . . . a spirit of justice to the one who sits in judgment . . .”).⁶⁷ That passage

⁶⁵ESV, NRSV; cf. J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, ed. Peter Machinist, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 67; H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 301 (“a spirit of judgment and a spirit of destruction”); NIV (“a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire”); NJPS (“In a spirit of judgment And in a spirit of purging”).

⁶⁶Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 162 (“the spirit of judgment and the spirit of cleansing”).

⁶⁷A related occurrence is found in Micah 3:8, where the prophet declares: “I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord and with justice and might (*’et-rûah Yhwh ûmišpāt ûgəbûrâ*), to declare . . .” While English translations (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV) do not read “justice” as a genitive of “spirit,” LXX connects “spirit” to the following three nouns: ἰσχυρὸν ἐν πνεύματι κυρίου καὶ κρίματος καὶ δυναστείας. Gignilliat notes that “[d]espite the difficult grammar, readers do well to hold these two together. Micah’s strength, justice, and might derive from his being filled with the Holy Spirit.” Mark S. Gignilliat, *Micah: An International Theological Commentary*, International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 138–39. Regardless of how one construes the relationship between “spirit” and “justice” in Micah 3:8, its context of prophetic empowerment is too remote from the Isaiah 4:4’s concern for judgment to be particularly relevant.

shows a very close connection between *rûah* and God. However, scholars have generally not seen Isaiah 28:5–6 as significant for determining the meaning of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4.

The second *rûah* construction in Isaiah 4:4 is *rûah bā'ēr*. This is the only occurrence of this construction in the Old Testament.

DCH places both occurrences of *rûah* under the general gloss of “spirit” as opposed to wind, breeze, or breath. It does not place them under the subgloss of “spirit of Yahweh” but under the subgloss of “power, force, of judgment, justice . . . , destruction . . . , words . . . ,” whose only Old Testament occurrences are here and Isaiah 28:6.⁶⁸ *HALOT* places these occurrences of *rûah*, along with that found in Isaiah 28:6, under a catchall heading of “particular types of spirit.”⁶⁹ *TDNT* identifies at least the first occurrence of *rûah* here as referring to “God’s Creative Power.”⁷⁰

Some commentators have interpreted *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4 as referring to the Spirit of God without giving any explicit attention to other possible meanings.⁷¹ Although Motyer acknowledges that *rûah* is susceptible of different meanings, he argues from Isaiah’s “rich awareness of the Spirit of the Lord . . . specially in Messianic passages” that *rûah* here refers to “the divine Spirit.”⁷²

A few scholars have questioned the translation of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4 as “spirit.” Oswalt notes a number of *rûah* constructions in Isaiah where *rûah* appears “to introduce

⁶⁸*DCH* 7, s.v. “רוח.”

⁶⁹*HALOT*, s.v. “רוח.”

⁷⁰Herman Kleinknecht, “πνεῦμα κτλ,” in *TDNT*, 6:363.

⁷¹Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 170; George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I–XXXIX*, International Critical Commentary 18 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 80; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:154; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 1:157.

⁷²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 66.

an abstract concept.”⁷³ He proposes the translation “through the process of burning and judgment.”⁷⁴ Williamson expresses essential agreement with Oswalt’s argument.⁷⁵ Webb likewise comments that “*Spirit* (small ‘s’) in verse 4 is probably an instance of the idiomatic use of the word to introduce abstract terms . . .”⁷⁶

Those scholars who have studied the biblical witness to the Spirit of God have likewise come to divergent conclusions as to the meaning of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4. Speaking of this and similar texts, Daniel Block concludes that however they are translated, “they obviously involve the divine *rûah*.”⁷⁷ Lloyd Neve argues that *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4 “must refer to the spirit of God” for neither wind nor the spirit of man can do the work attributed here to *rûah*.⁷⁸ George Montague, however, argues from texts like Isaiah 27:8 and 30:28 that it is better to interpret *rûah* here as “*wind* as an image of the Lord blowing away the chaff from his threshing floor and burning it.”⁷⁹ Ma also utilizes the analogy of winnowing to picture the function of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4. While noting the similarities between Isaiah 4:4 and 28:6, he stresses the difference in how *rûah* functions in the two texts. He concludes *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4 is “God’s impersonal power,” who “does not have a human agent, but functions as God’s agent to effect people or the ‘daughters of

⁷³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 148 (identifying 19:14; 28:6; 29:10; 37:7 and perhaps 11:2 as examples).

⁷⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 148.

⁷⁵Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 312.

⁷⁶Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 53 n. 54.

⁷⁷Block, “The View from the Top,” 191.

⁷⁸Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972), 51.

⁷⁹George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 38.

Zion.”⁸⁰ Finally, David Firth argues that while *rûah mišpāt* on its own might be taken “as equivalent to Yhweh,” its occurrence in parallel with *rûah bā ‘ēr* shows that these instead “describe the means by which Yhwh will cleanse Jerusalem for her glorious future.”⁸¹ However, he acknowledges the potential ambiguity of this text.⁸²

While scholars have debated the meaning of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4, given my rather broad definition of divine spirit (“the invisible activity of God in power through and amongst his covenant people, whether in dramatic irruptions or more sustained endowments”)⁸³ I conclude that Isaiah 4:2–6 does refer to divine spirit.

Societal justice in Isaiah 4:2–6

The majority of English translations translate *mišpāt* in Isaiah 4:4 as “judgment.”⁸⁴ However, *mišpāt* in construct with *rûah* is susceptible to at least two interpretations. First, *mišpāt* might mean judgment as an action or process effected by *rûah*. Second, *mišpāt* might mean justice as the result effected by *rûah*. Some scholars explicitly understand *rûah mišpāt* in Isaiah 4:4 in the former sense.⁸⁵ NET’s translation of “he comes to judge” also seems to reflect this interpretation. However, at least John

⁸⁰Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 138.

⁸¹Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” 41.

⁸²Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” 41.

⁸³Max Turner, “Holy Spirit,” 551.

⁸⁴ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS; cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 67; Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 301; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 162; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 144; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, trans. R. A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1972), 53.

⁸⁵H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah*, Didsbury Lectures 1997 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 25 (identifying this occurrence of *mišpāt* as an example of “retributive judgment”); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:155 (“it punishes evil”); cf. BDB, s.v. “טָשַׁטְשׁ” (“execution of judgment”); DCH, s.v. “טָשַׁטְשׁ” (“act of judgment”).

Calvin has argued in favor of the second interpretation: “Here *judgment* stands for *uprightness* from its effect; that is, when they who had deeply fallen are restored to their former condition. . . . The word *judgment* explains what is of chief importance in the restoration of the Church; that is, when those things which were confused or decayed are restored to good order.”⁸⁶ While Calvin’s argument is immediately appealing for my thesis, it is probably not the best interpretation. Given that *rûah mišpāt* appears in parallel with *rûah bā’ēr*, which likely has the sense of a spirit of “purifying,”⁸⁷ it is more likely that *mišpāt* refers to an action or process than a result.⁸⁸

However, even if *mišpāt* in Isaiah 4:4 does not itself refer to societal justice, it is still possible that this verse could be relevant to my thesis. Depending on the meaning of “the filth” and “the bloodstains” in the first half of the verse, it might still be possible to see *rûah* as an agent of societal justice.

Isaiah 4:4 speaks of the washing away of “the filth (*šō’at*) of the daughters of Zion.” The word *šō’at* also occurs in 28:8, where some translations interpret it adjectivally with the preceding noun: “filthy vomit” (ESV, NASB, NRSV). It also occurs in Proverbs 30:12, which speaks of “those who are pure in their own eyes yet are not cleansed of their filthiness.”⁸⁹ In the *Qere* reading of Isaiah 36:12 = 2 Kings 18:27, the word means

⁸⁶Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 1:156–57.

⁸⁷Clifford John Collins, “Homonymous Verbs in Biblical Hebrew: An Investigation of the Role of Comparative Philology,” (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 1988), 54.

⁸⁸Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 170.

⁸⁹ESV, NIV, and NASB are similar.

“human excrement”⁹⁰ or “dung.”⁹¹ The word *šō’â* does not itself clarify the nature of the wrong in view.⁹²

Isaiah 4:4 connects this filth with “the daughters of Zion (*bānôt-šîyôn*).” The only other occurrences of this phrase in Isaiah are in 3:16 and 3:17: “The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet; the Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.” Unlike Amos’s charge against the “cows of Bashan,” “who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, ‘Bring something to drink!’” (Amos 4:1), Isaiah does not here draw any direct connection between the daughters of Zion and societal injustice. Instead, “[t]heir sin is their arrogance and pride of spirit,”⁹³ and there is a further accusation of sexual shamelessness.⁹⁴ Still, in light of Isaiah’s broader message, perhaps Webb is correct that while “[t]he essential sin of the men was oppression” and “that of the women was ostentatious vanity,” “clearly the common factor is ill-gotten wealth.”⁹⁵

In addition to the washing away of the filth of the daughters of Zion, Isaiah 4:4 also speaks of the cleansing of “the bloodstains (*dāmē*) of Jerusalem from its midst.”

⁹⁰BDB, s.v. “הֲשֵׁי.”

⁹¹Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 447–48.

⁹²Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 170 (“The text does not answer the question whether the uncleanness was a result of cultic or ethical offense and which would have been judged worse than the other by the author of the section.”); Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 312 (noting that while this may refer to “moral guilt” it more likely here refers to “ritual defilement”).

⁹³Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 63.

⁹⁴Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 61.

⁹⁵Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 51.

dāmîm has previously occurred in Isaiah in 1:15, where the Lord tells Jerusalem that he will not listen to her prayers because “your hands are full of blood.” Perhaps this refers to “murderous acts of violence.”⁹⁶ However, given the remedy proposed in vv. 16b–17 (“cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow”), it is more likely that the evil in view is acts of societal injustice hyperbolically expressed with language of blood.⁹⁷ This interpretation receives support from vv. 21–23 where past justice and righteousness have given way to “murderers,” but then the following charge speaks of those who steal, love bribes and gifts, and fail to defend the orphan and widow.

A further connection between *dāmîm* in Isaiah 4:4 and societal justice is found in the immediately preceding context. Wegner structures the final portion of Isaiah 2:1–4:6 as follows: “Yahweh pronounces judgment upon the leaders (3:13–15)”; “Jerusalem’s proud women are also under judgment (3:16–4:1)”; “A future glorification of Jerusalem . . . (4:2–6).”⁹⁸ The same basic contrast between judgment against the (male) leaders and against the proud women is seen in Smith’s outline: “Removal of Judah’s Male Leaders (3:1–15)”; “Removal of Judah’s Proud Women (3:16–4:1)”; “God’s Glorious, Holy Kingdom (4:2–6).”⁹⁹ It thus appears that 3:13–15; 3:16–4:1; 4:4aα; 4:4aβ function in an A-B-B’-A’ structure. The “filth of the daughters of Zion” in Isaiah 4:4aα refers back to the “daughters of Zion” of Isaiah 3:16 and the “bloodstains of Jerusalem”

⁹⁶Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary 15A (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2007), 108; cf. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 98.

⁹⁷Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 98.

⁹⁸Paul D. Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary 20 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 47.

⁹⁹Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 88.

in Isaiah 4:4a β refers back to the “elders and princes” in Isaiah 3:14, of whom the Lord says: “It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?” (3:14b–15). J. J. M. Roberts seems to follow this linkage when he characterizes God’s work in Isaiah 4:4 as his cleansing “his city of the women’s filth and the officials’ oppression through that judgment.”¹⁰⁰

Both the broader context of Isaiah 1–4 and the more immediate context of Isaiah 4:4 suggest that “the bloodstains of Jerusalem” in that verse refers to the unjust actions of Jerusalem’s leaders against the weakest members of society. Isaiah 4:2–6 thus speak of a restoration of societal justice.

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 4:2–6

Isaiah 4:3 anticipates a time when “[w]hoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy.” This will be brought about “by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning,” one of whose targets will be “the bloodstains of Jerusalem” (4:4). Because the latter likely refers to acts of oppression by the leaders in Jerusalem, I conclude that Isaiah 4:2–6 portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice.

Isaiah 11:1–9

Isaiah 11:1–9 is the second place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāṭ*, *šadāqā*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûaḥ*:

¹⁰⁰Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 68; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:154 (“The filth of the daughters of Zion is the moral pollution hidden under their vain and coquettish finery; and the murderous deeds of Jerusalem are the acts of acts of judicial murder committed by its rulers upon the poor and innocent.”).

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD (*rûah Yhwh*) shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding (*rûah ḥokmâ ûbînâ*), the spirit of counsel and might (*rûah 'êšâ ûgâbûrâ*), the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD (*rûah da 'at wəyir 'at Yhwh*). His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge (*yišpôt*) by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness (*bəšedeq*) he shall judge (*wəšāpat*) the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth, and with the breath of his lips (*ûbərûah šapātāyw*) he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness (*šedeq*) shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. (Isa. 11:1–5)

Introduction to Isaiah 11:1–9

With Isaiah's turn in ch. 13 to his oracles against the nations (13–23), there is general recognition that ch. 12 stands at the end of a literary unit.¹⁰¹ There is less agreement as to whether this unit begins at ch. 5, 6, or 7.¹⁰² Regardless, ch. 11 stands near the end of a major literary unit, with vv. 1–9 followed by descriptions of further events that will happen *bayyôm hahû'* (vv. 10, 11) and by a song that will be sung *bayyôm hahû'* (12:1).

Insofar as it is possible to identify a more specific historical context for the original proclamation of Isaiah 11:1–9, it is tied to the events recounted in chs. 7–8. During the reign of Ahaz in Judah (ca. 165), Aram and Ephraim joined forces in an attempt to force Judah to join their anti-Assyrian alliance.¹⁰³ Isaiah challenged Ahaz to trust in Yahweh in the face of this threat (7:4–9), but Ahaz refused (7:10–13), turning

¹⁰¹Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 165–69; Oswalt, "Isaiah," 218; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 131; Wegner, "Isaiah, Theology of," 376–77; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:295.

¹⁰²Wegner, "Isaiah, Theology of," 376 (5–12); Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 74 (6–12); Oswalt, "Isaiah," 218 (7–12); Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 165 (7–12); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:206 (7–12).

¹⁰³Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 165; cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 39 (placing ch. 6–12 during the reign of Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite crisis).

instead to Assyria for deliverance (2 Kings 16:5–9). Isaiah responded to Ahaz’s disbelief with a message of coming judgment upon Judah at the hands of the Assyrians (Isa. 7:17–8:10).

In contrast to Ahaz’s failure as king and Isaiah’s specific message of judgment against the house of David (7:17), Isaiah 8:23–9:6 [Eng. 9:1–7] and 11:1–16 picture the glorious future reign of a Davidic king.¹⁰⁴ He will “establish and uphold” his kingdom *bəmišpāt ūbišdāqâ* (9:6 [Eng. 9:7]) and will “judge the poor” *bəšedeq* and have *šedeq* and “faithfulness” as his belts (11:4–5).

Although some scholars read Isaiah 11:1ff. as the continuation of a literary unit that begins at 10:33,¹⁰⁵ most see 11:1 as opening a new unit.¹⁰⁶ Some understand this unit to extend beyond 11:9,¹⁰⁷ but most regard v. 9 as the end of the unit.¹⁰⁸ I follow the majority of scholars in reading Isaiah 11:1–9 as a literary unit.

¹⁰⁴Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 74.

¹⁰⁵Greg Goswell, “Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 11,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 79, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 124; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 156; H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark, 2018), vii, 629, 633.

¹⁰⁶Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I–XXXIX*, 214; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 61; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 177; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 88; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 74; Wegner, *Isaiah*, 45; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 459, 462–63; cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, Forms of the Old Testament Literature 16 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 197–198 (placing 10:33–34 and 11:1–9 together in a unit entitled “Rise of righteous Davidic monarch” but distinguishing 10:33–34 as an “Announcement of YHWH’s trimming/cutting down Assyrian monarch” from 11:1–9 as “announcement of royal savior”).

¹⁰⁷Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 177 (finding unit to run to v. 10); Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 459, 463 (same).

¹⁰⁸Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 156–57; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 61; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 196; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 88; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 74; Wegner, *Isaiah*, 45; Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, vii, 629.

Divine spirit in Isaiah 11:1–9

Rûah occurs five times in Isaiah 11:1–9, four times in v. 2 and once in v. 4. ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, and NJPS all translate the occurrences in v.2 with “Spirit” or “spirit” and the occurrence in v. 4 with “breath.”

The occurrence of *rûah* in v. 4 (*ûbêrûah šepātāyw*) can be set aside as not directly relevant to my thesis. First, the text makes no explicit connection between this *rûah* and God. Instead, this *rûah* belongs to the “shoot” and “branch” of v. 1. Second, the linking of *rûah* and “his lips” shows that this occurrence refers to the movement of air rather than to a spiritual entity.¹⁰⁹

The first occurrence of *rûah* in v. 2 is *rûah Yhwh*. This is the first of six occurrences of *rûah Yhwh* in Isaiah (cf. Isa. 40:7, 13; 59:19; 61:1; 63:14). However, this phrase has appeared earlier in connection with a number of the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), with Saul and David (1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13, 14; 19:9 [modified by “evil”!]; 2 Sam. 23:2), with Elijah (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16), and with Micaiah (1 Kings 22:24). With the exception of 1 Samuel 16:14 and 19:9, the sense of *rûah Yhwh* from these previous occurrences is that of a means by which God empowers his servants. The fact that *rûah Yhwh* could be described as being upon someone (*wattəhî ‘ālāyw*) (Judg. 3:10; cf. 11:29), as clothing someone (*lābāšā*) (Judg. 6:34), as rushing upon someone (*wattišlah ‘ālāyw*) (Judg. 14:6, 9; 15:14; cf. 1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13), and as departing from someone (*sārā mē ‘im*) (1 Sam. 16:14) shows that *rûah Yhwh* was understood not as an inherent aspect of human existence but as something that came upon a person from outside.

¹⁰⁹BDB, s.v. “רוח” (placing this occurrence under the general gloss of “breath of mouth or nostrils”).

The verb in Isaiah 11:2 also indicates the external origin of *rûaḥ Yhwh*: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him (*wəṇāḥā ‘ālāyṿ*.)” There are two other occasions in the Old Testament where a *rûaḥ* is said to rest on someone. In Numbers 11 God tells Moses to gather seventy elders and that he “will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them” (Num. 11:17). Then in the fulfillment of this word, we read, “when the spirit rested upon them (*kəṇôaḥ ‘ălêhem*) . . .” (Num. 11:25; cf. 11:26). Likewise, in 2 Kings 2, when Elisha succeeds Elijah as prophet, the sons of the prophets say: “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha (*nāḥā rûaḥ ‘ēlyāhū ‘al- ‘ēlišā ‘*)” (2 Kings 2:15).

Whether *rûaḥ Yhwh* is an aspect of the Lord’s being or a means the Lord uses to effect his purposes (or both), it is clearly a spirit whose origin is God. Delitzsch states that “[t]he Spirit of the Jehovah’ . . . is the Divine Spirit, as the communicative vehicle of the whole creative fullness of divine powers.”¹¹⁰

Isaiah 11:2 elaborates on the significance of the resting of *rûaḥ Yhwh* upon the “shoot” and “branch” of v. 1 with three more occurrences of *rûaḥ*, each of which is linked to a pair of qualities: “wisdom and understanding,” “counsel and might,” and “knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” Because the first five of these qualities are all attributes of God,¹¹¹ it might seem best to understand them as referring to the *rûaḥ* that possesses these qualities. However, the last quality, “the fear of the LORD,” cannot be understood as a divine attribute. It is probably best then to understand all six modifiers of *rûaḥ* not as speaking of *rûaḥ* which possesses these qualities but as showing the qualities

¹¹⁰Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:282.

¹¹¹Job 12:13 (“With God are wisdom and strength (*ḥokmâ ûgəbûrâ*; he has counsel and understanding (*‘ēṣâ ûtəbûnâ*)); Job 21:22 (“Will any teach God knowledge (*dā ‘at*), seeing that he judges those that are on high?”).

that *rûah Yhwh* effects in the “shoot” and “branch.”¹¹² Isaiah 11:2 is thus similar to Exodus 31:3, where the Lord says of Bezalel: “and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship” (ESV).

Because Isaiah 11:2 refers to *rûah Yhwh* that effects wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord in the “shoot” and “branch” of 11:1, I conclude that *rûah Yhwh* in Isaiah 11:1–9 refers to divine spirit.

Societal justice in Isaiah 11:1–9

The “shoot” and “branch” of Isaiah 11:1 will “with righteousness . . . judge the poor (*wəšāpaṭ bəšedeq dallîm*), and decide with equity for the meek of the earth (*wəhōkîaḥ bəmîšôr lə ‘anwê-’āreṣ*)” (11:4).

Isaiah had previously spoken of the *dallîm* in 10:1–2, where he uttered a woe against those “who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice (*ləhaṭṭôt middîn dallîm*) and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey!” Given how *dal* is set in parallel to terms such as “orphan” (Ps. 82:3) and “widow” (Job 31:16) and frequently in opposition to “rich” [Exod. 30:15; Ruth 3:10; Job 34:19; Prov. 10:15; 28:11; cf. Prov 19:4 (“wealth”)], it is clear that its basic sense is “poor” as in objectively needy.¹¹³

¹¹²Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I—XXXIX*, 216 (“The spirit of Yahweh settles upon the king as a *spirit of*, or, as we should say, imparting, *wisdom and discernment . . .*”).

¹¹³Robert Martin-Achard, “ענה II,” in *TLOT*, 2:935 (identifying *dal* as “limited more to the economic and sociological realm”); Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 476 (“The עניים are the socially disadvantaged, people with no influence, to whom no one has to pay any attention. That most of them are also ‘poor’ is practically a given.”).

In addition to the *dallîm*, v. 4 speaks of concern for ‘*anwê-’āreṣ*.¹¹⁴ The translation of this as “the meek of the earth” raises the question of whether the ‘*ānāwîm* here are “poor, afflicted, humble, meek” because they live in humble circumstances or because they are humble in their self-understanding.¹¹⁵ Calvin interprets v. 4 with the latter sense.¹¹⁶ There certainly are texts where ‘*ānāw* clearly bears a subjective meaning: Num. 12:3 (Moses’s surpassing humility); Ps. 25:9 (the Lord leads and teaches the humble); Zeph. 2:3 (the humble are those who do the Lord’s commands). However, there are other texts where objective lack is clearly in view: Prov. 14:21 (the objects of human generosity); Prov. 16:19 (contrasted with those who divide spoil). Given the parallelism in v. 4 between *dallîm* and *anwê-’āreṣ*, I conclude that the latter term here refers to those who are objectively needy.¹¹⁷

The first action of the “branch” and “shoot” in v. 4 is that he will “judge with righteousness (*wāšāpaṭ bāṣedeq*) the poor.” Isaiah has already shown that “to judge” does not merely mean to render a decision. Isaiah 1:17b exhorts the people to “rescue the oppressed, defend (*šiptû*) the orphan, plead for the widow.” The same chapter later charges the “princes” because “[t]hey do not defend (*yišpōtû*) the orphan, and the

¹¹⁴Williamson notes that although “1QIsa^a is not as clear as might be wished . . . the most recent editors [of that text] read עניי הארץ [*nyy h’rṣ*].” Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 621. BHS reads Symmachus to support this variant reading. This variant reading would support my thesis, since ‘*ānî* has already occurred in Isaiah in contexts that clearly concern societal justice (Isa 3:14–15; 10:2). However, because the textual support for a variant reading is slight, I favor holding to the MT.

¹¹⁵BDB, s.v. “עָנָו.”

¹¹⁶Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 1:377 (“those who, humbled by a conviction of their poverty, have laid aside those proud and lofty dispositions which commonly swell the minds of men, till they have learned to be meek through the subduing influence of the word of God. . . . those who know that they are *poor*, and destitute of everything good.”); cf. *HALOT*, s.v. “עָנָו” (characterizing this occurrence as meaning “bowed, but in the sense of humble, pious”).

¹¹⁷Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 123 (“The *needy* (*dal*) appear as the *poor* (‘*anwê*), who are virtually identical with the *oppressed* (‘*nîyyê*) in 10:2 . . .”).

widow's cause does not come before them" (1:23b). Isaiah 11:4 brings together "to judge" with "the poor" and so indicates not mere judicial procedure but action taken to defend.¹¹⁸

To judge with righteousness is indeed characteristic of ideal human kingship as seen in Psalm 72. The prayer there is that God would give "the king your justice (*mišpāṭēkā*) . . . and your righteousness (*wəšidqātākā*) to a king's son" (Ps. 72:1) so that the king might "judge (*yādîn*) your people with righteousness (*bəšedeq*), and your poor with justice (*wa 'ānîyēkā bəmišpāṭ*)" (72:2) and "defend the cause of the poor of the people (*yišpōṭ 'ānîyê- 'am*), give deliverance to the needy (*libnê 'ebyôn*), and crush the oppressor" (72:4). The ideal king "delivers the needy (*'ebyôn*) when they call, the poor (*wə 'ānî*) and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy (*dal wə 'ebyôn*), and saves the lives of the needy (*'ebyônîm*). From oppression and violence he redeems their life . . ." (72:12–14a). Psalm 72 highlights the king's responsibility to act with justice and righteousness to defend, deliver, and redeem the poor and needy.

Reading Isaiah 11:1–9 within the context of Isaiah and in the light of Psalm 72, it is clear that the concern of the "branch" and "shoot" is for the poor and needy. This does not stand in opposition to those texts that speak against judicial bias in favor of the poor (Exod. 23:3; Lev. 19:15). Instead, it arises in a context in which the rich and powerful were often able to buy "justice" through overt bribery (Isa. 1:23; 5:23) or through the more subtle suggestion that it would be to the judges' advantage to rule in their favor. As Roberts notes, "[v]erse 4 singles out the poor and the humble, not because they are given preferential treatment even when they are in the wrong, but because they are the ones

¹¹⁸Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 69 ("Judging' is more than rendering legal decisions; it is also delivering and saving those whose lives and well-being are threatened.").

most likely to suffer injustice in the Israelite judicial system.”¹¹⁹ A king who rendered righteous judgments would have the comparative effect of defending and delivering the poor and needy.

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 11:1–9

This vision of societal justice is not unique to Isaiah 11:1–9. As noted above, there is considerable overlap between the description of the rulership of the “branch” and “shoot” in Isaiah 11 and that of the ideal king in Psalm 72, particularly in their mutual concern for the poor and needy. However, there is a great contrast between the vision of Isaiah 11:1–9 and the pattern of kingship that prevailed through much of the history of Judah and Israel. As Wildberger notes, “if Isaiah attaches such great importance to establishing justice, for the poor and the lightly esteemed, that is clearly because the entire system of justice had, in plain words, gone to the dogs . . .”¹²⁰

It is into this situation that *rûah Yhwh* (re)appears as the means by which the ruler of God’s people would be empowered to govern them in keeping with God’s character. Moses possessed *rûah*, and the elders of Israel needed a share of that *rûah* to join him in the task of governing God’s people (Num. 11:16–17, 24–25). *Rûah Yhwh* had empowered the judges to deliver God’s people and in some way to govern them, albeit imperfectly (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 15:14). Saul and David received *rûah Yhwh* in conjunction with their being anointed as king (1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13). The fact that the kingships of Saul and David diverged so sharply is partially attributable to the differing

¹¹⁹Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 179; cf. Wegner, *Isaiah*, 137 (“He will judge righteously and render fair decisions for the *needy* and *poor* who cannot afford to buy his favour.”).

¹²⁰Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 475–76.

durations of their experience of *rûah Yhwh*. Whereas *rûah Yhwh* “departed from Saul” (1 Sam. 16:14), it “came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam. 16:13). The permanence of the presence of *rûah Yhwh* upon David was such that his “last words” (2 Sam 23:1) open with “The spirit of the LORD speaks through me . . .” (2 Sam. 23:2). After David, no other king is said to possess *rûah Yhwh*. Although the historical books do not explicitly connect *rûah Yhwh* with societal justice, perhaps it is not coincidental that the great king who bore *rûah Yhwh* also “administered justice and equity (*mišpāṭ ûṣədāqâ*) to all his people” (2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Chron. 18:14).

The “branch” and “shoot” of Isaiah 11 is similar to David in his possession of *rûah Yhwh* and in his calling to govern with righteousness. However, there are new elements in Isaiah 11 as compared to the account of David. First, “the spirit of the Lord shall rest (*wənāhâ*) on” (Isaiah 11:2) the “branch” and “shoot.” As noted above, that verb had previously occurred with *rûah* in the context of the elders being empowered to help Moses (Num. 11:16–17, 24–25) and of Elisha’s succeeding Elijah as prophet (2 Kings 2:15). However, in both those cases *rûah* was most closely tied to a human figure. In Isaiah 11:2 *rûah* is specifically *rûah Yhwh*. This shows “that this figure is to undertake his role on behalf of the divine king, not just of Moses or Elijah.”¹²¹ The verb *nāhâ* suggests that *rûah Yhwh* will be the “permanent possession” of the “branch” and “shoot.”¹²² Finally, the explication of the effect of *rûah Yhwh* with the three pairs of qualities takes this empowerment beyond any narrow calling. Because of *rûah Yhwh*, the “branch” and “shoot” will be sagacious, effective, and pious. These are the very qualities

¹²¹Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 647; cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 474 (“he stands in a relationship with the people as God’s proxy, has responsibilities with an incomparable task, and acts in unquestioned authority.”).

¹²²Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:283.

that will enable him to judge the poor with righteousness and decide with equity for the meek (11:4). As Hans Wildberger states, “[t]he Spirit of Yahweh gives the king the abilities necessary to carry out the demands of his office.”¹²³

I conclude that Isaiah 11:1–9 portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice, empowering the shoot of v. 1 to act on behalf of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 28:5–6

Isaiah 28:5–6 is the third place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāṭ*, *ṣədāqâ*, and/or *ṣedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûaḥ*: “In that day the LORD of hosts will be . . . a spirit of justice (*ûlêrûaḥ mišpāṭ*) to the one who sits in judgment (*‘al hammišpāṭ*) . . .” (28:6).

Introduction to Isaiah 28:5–6

Following the oracles against the nations of chs. 13–23 and the “Isaiah Apocalypse” of chs. 24–27, there is general scholarly agreement that ch. 28 opens a new literary unit in the book of Isaiah.¹²⁴ There is less agreement as to whether this unit ends

¹²³Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 471.

¹²⁴Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 1:vi, 2:1; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 5–6; Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 169–76; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 39; Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 377; Childs, *Isaiah*, 6–7; Abernethy, *Discovering Isaiah*, 54; Cheryl J. Exum, “‘Whom Will He Teach Knowledge’: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 28,” in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, ed. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 133; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 63; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 90; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 353.

at ch. 33¹²⁵ or ch. 35.¹²⁶ The repetition of *hōy* at 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1 provides a transparent structure for this unit.¹²⁷

The historical context of the original proclamation of this section is suggested by the occurrence of “Egypt” (30:2, 7; 31:1); “Egyptian” (31:3); and “Pharoah” (30:2, 3). Thus, even though the name “Hezekiah” does not appear in chs. 28–35, many scholars locate these chapters in the context of Hezekiah’s reign in Judah and his reliance upon Egypt in the face of the Assyrian threat (ca. 703–701 BC) (cf. 2 Kings 18:21, 24).¹²⁸

Given this historical context for the original proclamation of chs. 28–35, the occurrences of “Ephraim” in 28:1, 3 is curious, since the northern kingdom had effectively ended in 722 BC. Scholars have concluded that the opening verses of ch. 28 contain a message that had earlier been delivered against the northern kingdom but which has now been brought into a new context to speak against Judah.¹²⁹ The effect is thus a “comparison of Judah’s sins to Samaria’s.”¹³⁰

¹²⁵Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 176; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:1.

¹²⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 39; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 6; Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 377; Oswalt, “Isaiah,” 218; Childs, *Isaiah*, 7.

¹²⁷Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 228 (identifying six sections in ch. 28–35 each beginning with *hōy*); cf. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 177 (identifying five sections in chs. 28–33 starting at 28:1; 29:1; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:v (identifying same five sections); but see Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 117 (chs. 28–29, 30–31, 32–33, 34, 35).

¹²⁸Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 176–77; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 116; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 20, 227; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:1.

¹²⁹Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 118 (“It seems best therefore to see in verses 1–13 the re-employment of an earlier oracles for rhetorical purposes.”); cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 228 (similarly characterizing vv. 1–6).

¹³⁰Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 177.

Most commentators interpret 28:5–6 in connection with vv. 1–4.¹³¹ However, some commentators read vv. 5–6 in connection with vv. 7ff.,¹³² while others consider vv. 1–13 to be the relevant literary unit.¹³³ Otto Kaiser interprets vv. 5–6 separately from both the preceding and following texts.¹³⁴

Divine spirit in Isaiah 28:5–6

English translations are almost unanimous in translating *rûah* in v. 6 as “spirit” (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV). The NET represents a rare departure from the pattern by translating *rûah mišpāt* as “discernment.” BDB places this occurrence of *rûah* under the general gloss of “*spirit*, as that which breathes quickly *in animation or agitation = temper, disposition*” and the more specific gloss of “*disposition of various kinds, oft. unaccountable and uncontrollable impulse.*”¹³⁵ As it also did for the occurrences of *rûah* in Isaiah 4:4, *DCH* places this occurrence under the general meaning of “spirit” and the more specific meaning of “power, force, of judgment, justice,” while *HALOT* places it

¹³¹Willem A. M. Beuken, *Isaiah. Part II.*, trans. Brian Doyle, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 2:16; Childs, *Isaiah*, 204; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:5; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 229; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 90; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 342; Wegner, *Isaiah*, 47; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 5.

¹³²Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 2:273; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 361.

¹³³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 63, 506 (though conceding “it is not possible to be dogmatic in this assertion”); Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 118.

¹³⁴Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary*, trans. R. A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 241.

¹³⁵BDB, s.v. “רוח.”

under the catchall “particular types of spirit.”¹³⁶ *TDNT* identifies this occurrence of *rûah* as an example of “God’s Spirit fashion[ing] moral powers.”¹³⁷

Commentators have had relatively little to say about this occurrence of *rûah* and how it relates to its other occurrences in Isaiah. Willem Beuken sees it as referring to “the active influence of God upon his people.”¹³⁸ Franz Delitzsch notes that the Lord of 28:5 is “the Lord of the seven spirits” of Isaiah 11:2.¹³⁹ Finally, Oswalt interprets this passage to teach human inability and need for “an infusion of the divine spirit.”¹⁴⁰

Montague and Ma, both of whom are focusing on *rûah*, interpret its occurrence here differently. Montague highlights the unusual way that 28:6 relates the Lord and *rûah*: “It is not said that ‘the spirit of the Lord’ will do this, but rather ‘The Lord . . . will be . . . a spirit . . .’” He interprets this to mean that *rûah* here is not “a separate being from the Lord” but “the Lord himself.”¹⁴¹

Ma, however, rejects the move from the syntax of this verse to “the conclusion that ‘Yahweh is the spirit’.”¹⁴² He understands “the LORD of hosts will be . . . a spirit of justice” to mean that the presence of Yahweh in the future will guarantee the administration of justice.¹⁴³ He then likens “a spirit of justice” to “an evil spirit” in 1

¹³⁶*DCH* 7, s.v. “רוּחַ”; *HALOT*, s.v. “רוּחַ.”

¹³⁷Herman Kleinknecht et al., “πνεῦμα κτλ,” *TDNT*, 6:363.

¹³⁸Beuken, *Isaiah. Part II*, 30.

¹³⁹Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:5.

¹⁴⁰Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 508.

¹⁴¹Montague, *The Holy Spirit*, 39.

¹⁴²Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 43.

¹⁴³Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 44.

Samuel 16:14 and “a lying spirit” in 1 Kings 22:22, arguing that these all “refer not the nature of the spirit, but to the consequences of its activities.”¹⁴⁴ While Ma could have also referred to Isaiah 19:14 (“a spirit of confusion”) or 29:10 (“a spirit of deep sleep”), there is reason to distinguish “a spirit of justice” from all these other spirits, namely that Yahweh has revealed himself to be a God of justice (Is 30:18) but not a God of these other characteristics.¹⁴⁵ The Lord “looked for justice” (Isa. 5:7), “is exalted in justice” (Isa. 5:16), and “love[s] justice” (Isa. 61:8). The Lord’s effecting justice in his people is not merely a means to an end but is a manifestation of his very character.

Moreover, the syntax of 28:5–6 suggests that *rûah mišpāt* should be understood not merely as something that Yahweh effects but as instead what he himself becomes. NASB, NJPS, and Brevard Childs translate the verb *yihyeh* in v. 5 as “will/shall become.”¹⁴⁶ This verb is then linked to four prepositional phrases, each beginning with *l*. As Ronald Williams notes, “[w]hen the verb הָיָה means ‘become,’ it is often followed by a ל of product.”¹⁴⁷ Motyer accordingly observes that these verses show the Lord “becoming himself ‘a spirit of judgment to him who sits in judgment and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate’.”¹⁴⁸

Because *rûah mišpāt* in 28:5–6 is identified with Yahweh I conclude that it refers to divine spirit.

¹⁴⁴Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 44.

¹⁴⁵Cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 416 (“In Isaiah, a spirit (רוּחַ, *rûah*) from God may be poured upon some for either ill (19:3, 14; 29:10) or positive effect (11:2; 28:6) . . .”).

¹⁴⁶Childs, *Isaiah*, 324.

¹⁴⁷Ronald J. Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, ed. John C. Beckman, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), § 278.

¹⁴⁸Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 230.

Societal justice in Isaiah 28:5–6

Rûah mišpāṭ occurred previously in Isaiah 4:4. Whereas translations and commentators rendered the previous occurrence as “a spirit of judgment” (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS),¹⁴⁹ in 28:6 they generally translate it as “a spirit of justice” (ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV).¹⁵⁰ Although BDB (“act of deciding a case”) and *DCH* (“act of judgment”) both gloss this occurrence of *mišpāṭ* with merely descriptive language,¹⁵¹ it seems clear that “justice” here must be understood as normative. Just as the “strength” of v. 6b will result in the successful turning back of enemies, so the “justice” of v. 6a should result in the fitting achievement for the one sitting in judgment.

Verse 6 itself provides little context for understanding the nature of the “justice” spoken of here. As Asen correctly notes: “The root *špṭ* is multivalent. Consequently, context is all important for determining meaning.”¹⁵² Looking to the entirety of Isaiah, he draws from 1:17, 23; 3:12–15; 5:7–8; and 10:2 to conclude that “[e]lsewhere in Isaiah, justice is expressed in terms of the exploitation and oppression of the poor by their leaders.”¹⁵³ While I am inclined to agree with Asen and interpret “justice” in 28:6 according to this background, responsible exegesis requires that I also look at the immediate context of this verse.

¹⁴⁹Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 301; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 67; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 144; cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 162 (“the spirit of judgment”).

¹⁵⁰Cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 342; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 242; but see NJPS (“a spirit of judgment”); Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 502 (same).

¹⁵¹BDB, s.v. “שִׁפְטָה”; *DCH* 5, s.v. “שִׁפְטָה.”

¹⁵²Bernhard A. Asen, “The Garlands of Ephraim: Isaiah 28:1–6 and the Marzēah,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21, no. 71 (September 1996): 85.

¹⁵³Asen, “The Garlands of Ephraim,” 85.

As noted above, scholars disagree as to whether the relevant unit for interpretation is vv. 1–6, vv. 5ff., or vv. 1–13. I will not attempt to resolve this dispute but will instead look at both the preceding and following text for help in determining the meaning of “justice” in v. 6.

Isaiah 28:1–4 focuses on “the proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim,” which appears in vv. 1, 3. Scholars have proposed a number of referents for this “garland”: the walls of Samaria,¹⁵⁴ the leaders in Samaria,¹⁵⁵ and the garlands worn during drunken religious festivals.¹⁵⁶ Rolf Jacobson has more recently argued that “the proud garland” cannot refer to either the walls of Samaria or to a festive garland but instead bears its more common meaning of royal crown.¹⁵⁷ If this interpretation is correct, the target of these verses is the king of Ephraim and his advisors.¹⁵⁸

While the king of Ephraim is described as “proud,” the only specific charge brought against the Ephraimite leadership is their being “drunkards (*šikkōrê*) . . . those overcome with wine (*hālûmê yāyin*)” (v. 1).¹⁵⁹ Because this same charge is leveled in v. 7

¹⁵⁴John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, New International Biblical Commentary. Old Testament Series 13 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 153.

¹⁵⁵Exum, “Whom Will He Teach Knowledge,” 114; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 476.

¹⁵⁶Asen, “The Garlands of Ephraim,” 73–87.

¹⁵⁷Rolf A. Jacobson, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Iconography and the Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1–6,” in *Images and Prophecy in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Charles E. Carter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 127–33; cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 343 (agreeing with Jacobson’s analysis).

¹⁵⁸Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 344.

¹⁵⁹The NRSV (although not the NRSVUE) and NJPS suggest a further charge of gluttony against the Ephraimite leadership. Instead of following the MT’s *gē’ šəmānîm* in v. 1, which ESV renders “the rich valley,” they translate according to a consonantal text where the first word is instead *g’ y*, leading to the translation “those bloated with rich food” (NRSV) and “men bloated with rich food” (NJPS). Presumably NRSV is following the reading of 1QIsa^a. NJPS supports its reading by reference to Ibn Ezra. Although Roberts also follows this reading (“proudly bloated by rich food”) on the basis of parallelism and the more likely meaning of *šəmānîm*, he acknowledges that none of the ancient versions support this reading. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 342. This alternative reading might contribute to my argument that societal justice is

against “the priest and the prophet,” I will postpone my consideration of the relationship between intoxication and injustice until after I have introduced the context of that verse.

Although there is no explicit reference to the southern kingdom before v. 14, many commentators see v. 7 as now speaking of conditions in Judah.¹⁶⁰ It begins abruptly by speaking of “these also” (*wəgam-’ēlleh*) who “reel with wine (*bayyayin*) and stagger with strong drink (*ūbaššēkār*).” The identity of “these” is then specified as “the priest and the prophet” (28:7). After further description of their alcoholic incapacitation, we read that “they err in vision, they stumble in giving judgment (*pāqû pālilyā*)” (28:7). Most English translations are similar to NRSV (“they stumble in giving judgment”) in their translation of the final clause.¹⁶¹ Although there is some uncertainty over the meaning of *pālilyā*,¹⁶² a judicial meaning fits the context of Isaiah 28:7.

While the act of judging in the Old Testament was often associated with either the king (1 Sam 15:2–4; 1 Kgs 3:16–28) or local judges (Deut 16:18), the priests were also

in view in this passage, but I am not persuaded that it is necessary to depart from the MT.

¹⁶⁰Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 350; Childs, *Isaiah*, 206; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 228.

¹⁶¹ESV (“they stumble in giving judgment”); NASB (“They stagger when rendering a verdict”); NIV (“they stumble when rendering decisions”); NJPS (“They stumble in judgment”).

¹⁶²BDB, identifying this as the only occurrence of *pālilyā*, relates it etymologically with the verb *pālal*, and gives its meaning as “the giving a decision [sic].” BDB, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ.” HALOT likewise identifies this as a *hapax legomena* and a feminine substantive derived from *pālilī* (which it in turn connects to the root *pll*) and gives its meaning as “verdict, decision.” HALOT, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ”; HALOT, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ.” However, more recent scholarship has cast doubt on the meaning of *pālilyā*. DCH has five entries for *pālilyā* with wildly divergent meanings. DCH 6, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ I” (“giving judgment”); DCH 6, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ II” (“frenzy”); DCH 6 “פָּלִי יָהּ III” (“vomit”); DCH 6, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ IV” (“reasoning”); DCH 6, s.v. “פָּלִי יָהּ V” (“watchfulness”). Erhard Gerstenberger critiques much of the scholarship that has attempted to determine the meaning of words allegedly derived from a *pll* stem, stating that “[a]ll etymological theories . . . boil down ultimately to attempts to constrain the clear usage of a word group within the corset of a preconceived theology.” Erhard Gerstenberger and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “פלל,” in *TDOT*, 11:568. He proposes that the noun *ṭpillā* be understood as the source for the derivative *hithpael* verb, but that “[t]he occurrences of the *piel* and the other nouns derived from *pll* cannot in fact be connected with the *hithpael* and *ṭpillā*.” Gerstenberger and Fabry, “פלל,” *TDOT*, 11:568, 574. While he finds the interpretation of the *piel* as “judge, determine” . . . highly dubious,” he acknowledges that “[t]he noun *pālil* and its derivatives might have a juridical sense in . . . Isa. 16:3; 28:7.” Gerstenberger and Fabry, “פלל,” *TDOT*, 11: 574.

involved in determining disputes (Deut 17:8–13; 19:16–18; 21:1–5; 2 Chr 19:8–11).¹⁶³ The target of Isaiah 28:7 is the “the priest and the prophet (*kōhēn wənābî’*),” of whom it is alleged that, in addition to the general charge of intoxication, “they err in vision (*šāgû bārō’eh*), they stumble in giving judgment (*pāqû pālīlyā*).” There are twelve occurrences of *rō’eh* in the Old Testament with the meaning “seer”,¹⁶⁴ only here does it appear with the meaning “vision.”¹⁶⁵ We should then see “vision” as connected to “prophet” and discern the chiasm: A priest–B prophet–B’ vision–A’ judgment.¹⁶⁶ Isaiah 28:7 thus charges the priests with failing in their role as judges because of their intoxication.¹⁶⁷

Intoxication and societal justice

Whether one looks at the verses before Isaiah 28:6 or those that follow, the immediate context is of intoxicated leaders. This is the negative historical context to which vv. 5–6 responds with a message of hope for the future. Although Cheryl Exum only connects vv. 5–6 with the preceding verses, she correctly reasons that the good anticipated in vv. 5–6 must correspond to the bad present in the historical context.¹⁶⁸ If

¹⁶³Rodney K. Duke, “Priests, Priesthood,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 653.

¹⁶⁴*DCH* 7, s.v. “רָאָה I.”

¹⁶⁵*DCH* 7, s.v. “רָאָה II.”

¹⁶⁶Richard L. Schultz, “פלל,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:628 (“noting the chiasmic word order”); cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 231 (linking prophet with visions and priest with judgment); Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 510 (same); Exum, “Whom Will He Teach Knowledge,” 118 (same).

¹⁶⁷Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 22 (“[T]he ‘decisions’ would be primarily the duty of the priests.”).

¹⁶⁸Exum, “Whom Will He Teach Knowledge,” 117.

the Lord will be “a spirit of justice . . . and strength,” one can conclude that the leaders were specifically failing with respect to justice and security.

The question remains whether it is possible to determine the nature of the “justice” envisioned in v. 6 from the fact that the prevailing injustice is the result of intoxication. Leclerc sees a connection between the situation described in Isaiah 28 and that found in Isaiah 5.¹⁶⁹ Both *šēkār* and *yāyin* occur repeatedly in Isaiah 5. The Lord there speaks against those “in pursuit of strong drink,” who “linger to be inflamed by wine” (5:11). They feast with musical instruments and “wine” (5:12). They are “heroes in drinking wine and valiant at mixing drink” (5:22).

The Lord’s charges in Isaiah 5 do not merely involve his people’s abuse of alcohol, but also their injustice. They “join house to house” and “add field to field” (5:8), disdain the Torah’s prescription for land ownership and thus dispossessing the poor.¹⁷⁰ Their heroism in drinking is accompanied by their “acquit[ing] the guilty for a bribe, and depriv[ing] the innocent of their rights!” (5:23).¹⁷¹

This connection between alcohol and injustice is not surprising in light of the broader testimony of the Old Testament. Kings are warned to avoid intoxicating drink lest they “drink and forget what has been decreed, and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted” (Prov 31:4–5). The women of Samaria “oppress the poor” and ask their husbands to bring them intoxicating drinks (Amos 4:1). Williamson, in commenting on Isaiah 5, reviews this evidence (along with Isaiah 28:7) and concludes: “not only in

¹⁶⁹Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 76.

¹⁷⁰Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 158–59.

¹⁷¹Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 82 (“The connection between the two would seem to be that these officials are interested only their own pleasure, not justice.”).

Isaiah's thought but also in his wider social setting, the connection between vv. 22 [concerning alcohol] and 23 [concerning injustice] would not have occasioned surprise."¹⁷²

Priests were also forbidden to drink "wine or strong drink" when engaged in their official duties, in part so that they could uphold the Lord's statutes (Lev 10:8–10). As noted above, priests also exercised a judicial function, and "a faulty decision on the part of a priest could defame someone who was innocent, could even cost that person's life."¹⁷³ Given that a judge required particular vigilance to "not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits" (Ex 23:6) and was subject to the curse of anyone who "deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice" (Deut 27:19), his intoxication was calculated to result in their harm.

Given the relationship between intoxication and societal injustice both in Isaiah and in the broader Old Testament context, it is likely that Isaiah's implied audience understood that one of the primary problems with the intoxication of their leaders was their failure to maintain justice for the weakest members of the community. As Leclerc notes, "[d]runken arrogance alone does not warrant the destruction of the nation. No, drunkenness is emblematic of a wealthy and unconcerned leadership whose neglect gives rise to injustice . . . and whose self-absorption produces a power vacuum."¹⁷⁴

Although the immediate context of 28:5–6 suggests that these verses in part speak to societal justice, one difficulty is understanding how this message was of particular relevance in the historical context of its original proclamation. Wegner notes the

¹⁷²Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 393.

¹⁷³Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 22.

¹⁷⁴Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 77.

importance of the “remnant” in chs. 28–35. Those who would survive the coming judgment were to be marked by a change of heart and behavior. “This is why Yahweh repeatedly directs them to look after the poor orphans and widows, for this would demonstrate a genuinely changed life.”¹⁷⁵ While Judah’s failure to trust Yahweh in the face of political threat would lead to the punishment of the nation, Isaiah’s message of hope was not merely that a remnant would remain after the judgment but that they would be changed so as to fulfill their covenantal vocation.

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 28:6

The verses preceding and following Isaiah 28:5–6 show that the leadership of God’s people was characterized by intoxication, which in turn is linked within Isaiah and in the broader Old Testament context with failure to execute justice for the weakest members of society. Given that 28:5–6 provide a vision of future hope in the midst of the depiction of present failure in the surrounding verses, the effect of *rûah mišpāṭ* upon “the one who sits in judgment” in 28:6 is to be understood in contrast to the state of leadership described in those verses. Divine spirit appears here as an agent of societal justice who produces leaders who execute justice for the poor and the weak.

Isaiah 32:15–20

Isaiah 32:15–20 is the fourth place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāṭ*, *šedāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah*:

until a spirit from on high (*rûah mimmārôm*) is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice (*mišpāṭ*) will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness (*ûšedāqâ*) abide in

¹⁷⁵Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 377.

the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness (*haṣṣədāqâ*) will be peace, and the result of righteousness (*haṣṣədāqâ*), quietness and trust forever. (Is 32:15–17)

Introduction to Isaiah 32:15–20

Isaiah 32:15–20 is located within a major literary unit that begins at ch. 28 and runs through the end of ch. 33 or 35.¹⁷⁶ Taking the repeated *hōy* clauses as indicating the basic structure of this unit, these verses are more precisely located in a section beginning with the *hōy* clause of 31:1 and ending at 32:20.¹⁷⁷

As noted above in my analysis of 28:5–6 the apparent historical context of the original proclamation of chs. 28ff. was the reign of Hezekiah and his misguided reliance upon Egypt in the face of the Assyrian threat.

Many scholars identify three literary units in Isaiah 32: vv. 1–8, vv. 9–14, and vv. 15–20.¹⁷⁸ Some recognize two literary units: vv. 1–8 and vv. 9–20.¹⁷⁹ Marvin Sweeney, however, argues that the *hēn* of 32:1 marks it as the beginning of a unit that continues until the *hōy* of 33:1.¹⁸⁰ Although he recognizes subunits of vv. 1–8, vv. 9–19, and v. 20, he entitles the entire chapter “Prophetic Instruction Speech Concerning the

¹⁷⁶Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 176 (28–33); Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 377 (28–35).

¹⁷⁷Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 177; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 253; cf. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:50 (treating 32:9–20 as an “appendix” to the fourth oracle that began in 31:1); but see Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 134 (32:1–33:24).

¹⁷⁸Childs, *Isaiah*, 236; Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 320, 325, 331; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 230, 244, 255; cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 254 (separating vv. 19–20 as an “epilogue”); Wegner, *Isaiah*, 48–49 (seeing vv. 1–8 as concluding a unit beginning at 31:4).

¹⁷⁹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 63; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 408, 413; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 90; cf. Beuken, *Isaiah. Part II*, vi–vii (seeing vv. 1–8 as concluding a unit beginning at 31:1); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:43, 50 (same).

¹⁸⁰Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 409.

Announcement of a Royal Savior.”¹⁸¹ Mark Hamilton also, while recognizing vv. 1–8, vv. 9–14, and vv. 15–20 as subunits, concludes that “the combined work in Isa 32:1–20 derives from a careful approach to argumentation.”¹⁸² Although I follow those scholars who identify Isaiah 32:15–20 as a literary unit, I also follow Sweeney and Hamilton in recognizing that the entire chapter can be read in a unified manner. This will be important for my argument below because of the presence of *ṣedeq* in v. 1, *mišpāt* in vv. 1 and 7, “the hungry” and “the thirsty” in v. 6, and “the poor” and “the needy” in v. 7.

Divine spirit in Isaiah 32:15–20

The only occurrence of *rûaḥ* in Isaiah 32:15–20 is in v. 15, which speaks of a time when “a spirit from on high is poured out on us” (*yē ‘āreh ‘ālênû rûaḥ mimmārôm*).¹⁸³ NRSV and NJPS translate *rûaḥ* here as “a spirit”; ESV, NASB, and NIV as “the Spirit.” There is no explicit reference to God in Isaiah 32:15–20. At most, “my people” in v. 18 might suggest that the speaker is God, but that would require a change in speaker from v. 15, which is not otherwise marked in the text.¹⁸⁴ The relationship between God and *rûaḥ*

¹⁸¹Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 409.

¹⁸²Mark W. Hamilton, “Isaiah 32 as Literature and Political Meditation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 4 (2012): 683.

¹⁸³*Rûaḥ* also occurs in chapter 32 in v. 2, where “Each will be like a hiding place from the wind (*kəmaḥābē’-rûaḥ*) . . .” *Rûaḥ* appears here without connection to God and in a context that indicates that it refers to either wind as a natural phenomenon or perhaps as a metaphor for that which oppresses humans. *DCH* 7, s.v. “רוּחַ” (“wind, breeze”). This is reflected in the fact that ESV, NASB, NIV, and NRSV translate *rûaḥ* here as “wind”; NJPS as “gales.”

¹⁸⁴The LORD is identified in 31:4 as the speaker of the following text and in 31:9 as the speaker of the preceding text. Although ESV and NIV place 31:4b–5 and 31:8–9a in quotation marks, they do not resume the quotation marks at the beginning of 32:1 after the quotation formula in 31:9b. This judgment of these translations shows that while it might be possible to interpret chapter 32 as divine speech, the text itself gives no explicit indication that it is divine speech.

is primarily dependent upon the latter's source (*mimmārôm*) and associated verb (*yē'āreh*).

Isaiah 32:15 is the only place in the Old Testament where *rûah* and *mārôm* appear together. *Mārôm* is a relatively prominent word in Isaiah, occurring in sixteen verses, out of a total of 54 occurrences in the Old Testament. Although its basic meaning is “height,” it occurs with a number of senses.¹⁸⁵ It can bear a concrete sense as in “the inhabitants of the height” (Isa. 26:5) or “the heights of the mountains” (Isa. 37:24). It can also bear the extended sense of “heaven,” as in “the LORD will punish the host of heaven in heaven” (Isa. 24:21). More specifically it can refer to God's dwelling place (Isa. 33:5; 57:15). It appears that at a minimum the occurrence of *mārôm* in Isaiah 32:15 refers to “heaven.”¹⁸⁶ Especially in light of the near occurrence of *mārôm* in Isaiah 33:5 to refer to God's dwelling place, I concur with those scholars who conclude that “a spirit from on high” can be none other than “the Spirit poured out by God”¹⁸⁷ or “the spirit of God.”¹⁸⁸

Isaiah 32:15 is the only occurrence of the verb *ʾrh* in the *niphal* stem and its only occurrence in conjunction with *rûah*. In the *piel*, *hiphil*, and *hithpael* stems, this verb most often has the meaning of laying something bare or naked.¹⁸⁹ However, the verb also occurs in the *piel* stem with the meaning of pouring something out.¹⁹⁰ It is possible that

¹⁸⁵BDB, s.v. “מְרוֹם”; *DCH* 5, s.v. “מְרוֹם.”

¹⁸⁶BDB, s.v. “מְרוֹם”; *DCH* 5, s.v. “מְרוֹם.” It has also been suggested that *mārôm* occurs here to “replace the divine designation.” Hans-Peter Stähli, “רוֹם,” in *TLOT*, 3:1223; cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 260 (“רוח ממרום (spirit from on high) seems to be a paraphrase of רוח יהוה (spirit of Yahweh), which may have been used because of a reticence to bring Yahweh in directly to act in the course of events on earth . . .”).

¹⁸⁷Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 333.

¹⁸⁸Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 80.

¹⁸⁹BDB, s.v. עָרָה.”

¹⁹⁰BDB, s.v. עָרָה.”

the basic meaning of the verb is simply “be naked, empty,” but that different objects of the verb activate different elements of this meaning so as to require different words in translation.¹⁹¹ There is general agreement among English language translations (e.g., ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS) and Hebrew lexicographers that the sense of the *niphal* of *ʾrh* in Isaiah 32:15 is “to be poured out.”¹⁹² This verse thus joins those in which *rûah* appears with a “liquid idiom”: Isa. 29:10 (verb *nsk*); 44:3 (verb *ysq*); Joel 3:1–2 [ET 2:28–29] (verb *špk*); Ezek. 39:29 (same); Zech. 12:10 (same).¹⁹³ Firth argues that the *niphal* here “is best read as a divine passive” and that *rûah* stands in place of God.¹⁹⁴

I conclude that *rûah* in Isaiah 32:15 refers to divine spirit as at least a spirit sent by God and perhaps the spirit of God.¹⁹⁵

Societal justice in Isaiah 32:15–20

Immediately following the prophesy of the pouring out of *rûah* in Isaiah 32:15 is a description of botanical flourishing. This flourishing is the context for justice and righteousness: “Then justice (*mišpāṭ*) will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness (*ûṣədāqâ*) abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness (*hašṣədāqâ*) will be

¹⁹¹Herbert Niehr, “עָרָה,” in *TDOT*, 11:344.

¹⁹²*HALOT*, s.v. “עָרָה”; cf. *BDB*, s.v. “עָרָה”; Niehr, “עָרָה,” *TDOT* 11:344–45; contra Beuken, *Isaiah. Part II*, 221 (distinguishing Isaiah 32:15 from the “to pour out” occurrences of *ʾrh* and arguing that it here bears the meaning “to unveil”).

¹⁹³Block, “The View from the Top,” 202.

¹⁹⁴Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” 39–40.

¹⁹⁵Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 260; cf. *DCH* 7, s.v. “רוּחַ” (identifying this occurrence as meaning the spirit of Yahweh); *BDB*, s.v. “רוּחַ” (identifying this occurrence as meaning “spirit of God”); Kleinknecht, “πνεῦμα κτλ.,” *TDNT*, 6:363 (placing this occurrence under the heading “God’s Spirit fashions moral powers”).

peace, and the result of righteousness (*haššadāqâ*), quietness and trust forever” (Is 32:16–17).

Isaiah 32:16 is one of a number of places in Isaiah where *mišpāt* and *šadāqâ* occur in close association (Isa. 1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 28:17; 33:5; 56:1; 59:9, 14). There are also a number of occurrences of *mišpāt* in close association with *šedeq* (Isa. 1:21; 16:5; 26:9; 32:1).¹⁹⁶ Scholars have recognized this collocation of *mišpāt* with *šadāqâ* or *šedeq* as a hendiadys.¹⁹⁷ Moshe Weinfeld has written a monograph to show that “the concept ‘justice and righteousness’ is more associated with *mercy and loving-kindness* [as opposed merely to judicial proceedings] or . . . with the context of ameliorating the situation of the destitute.”¹⁹⁸ Williamson deems Weinfeld’s analysis “magisterial” and states that Weinfeld “demonstrates convincingly that throughout the ancient Near East this phrase (or its equivalents) is by no means limited to the sphere of the law courts alone, but that it refers more broadly, both positively and negatively, to social justice throughout society, often entailing notions of equality and freedom.”¹⁹⁹ Leclerc likewise understands this hendiadys to mean “social justice.”²⁰⁰

Given this general understanding of how the pairing of *mišpāt* and *šadāqâ* functions, perhaps it could be concluded without further analysis that Isaiah 32:15–20 is

¹⁹⁶Isaiah 26:9 is included as an instance of close association between these terms. However, because *šedeq* here functions adjectivally, the two terms here do not function as a hendiadys. Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 33–34.

¹⁹⁷John Scullion, “Righteousness (Old Testament),” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:731; Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 25; R. W. L. Moberly, “Whose Justice? Which Righteousness? The Interpretation of Isaiah v 16,” *Vetus testamentum* 51, no. 1 (2001): 60; Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 26 n. 37.

¹⁹⁸Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, 7.

¹⁹⁹Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 135.

²⁰⁰Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 41.

speaking of societal justice. However, there might be exceptions to Weinfeld’s analysis. For example, Walter Moberly has noted that it not wholly clear whether Isaiah 1:27 [“Zion shall be redeemed by justice (*bəmišpāt*), and those in her who repent, by righteousness (*bišdāqā*).”] refers to a future conditioned by “public integrity” or by “the purifying action of divine judgment.”²⁰¹ Isaiah 28:17 [“And I will make justice (*mišpāt*) the line, and righteousness (*ūšədāqā*) the plummet . . .”] utilizes these terms as a standard of judgment that is not clearly connected to notions of societal justice. It is thus necessary to look at the preceding context of 32:15–20 to see if there is any support for reading *mišpāt* and *šədāqā* here as a hendiadys referring to societal justice.

Isaiah 32 opens with a description of a future king who “will reign in righteousness (*ləšedeq*), and princes [who] will rule with justice (*ləmišpāt*)” (32:1). Verse 2 then describes these rulers as sources of protection and provision in the midst of natural dangers. A further effect of their rule is that “fools” and “villains” will be stripped of their social standing (v. 5). Verses 6–8 transition from a prophetic mode to wisdom speech as they contrast “fools” and “villains” with “those who are noble.” Part of the evil of “fools” is “to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink” (32:6). Part of the evil of “villains” is “to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right (*mišpāt*)” (32:7).

Isaiah 32:1–8 implicates societal justice in three ways. First, v. 1 describes the governance of the future rulers as being in *šedeq* and *mišpāt*. Even if there are occasions where this word pair may not function as a hendiadys meaning societal justice, it is likely that they do so when used as a descriptor of governance.

²⁰¹Moberly, “Whose Justice?,” 62.

Second, although v. 2 identifies a number of natural dangers in the face of which these rulers offer protection and provision, it is likely that these dangers should be interpreted metaphorically. Sweeney and Williamson have noted the similarity between Isaiah 25:4–5 and 32:1–2.²⁰² Isaiah 32:2, speaking of the king and rulers of v. 1, states: “Each will be like a hiding place from the wind (*rûah*), a covert from the tempest (*zārem*), like streams of water in a dry place (*bāṣāyôn*), like the shade (*kāṣēl*) of a great rock in a weary land.” Isaiah 25:4–5, addressed to God, states:

For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm (*mizzerem*) and a shade (*ṣēl*) from the heat. When the blast (*rûah*) of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm (*kāzerem*), the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place (*bāṣāyôn*), you subdued the heat with the shade (*bāṣēl*) of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

While some interpret Isaiah 32:2 to speak of comprehensive provision and protection without emphasis upon any particular beneficiaries,²⁰³ given the danger posed by fools and villains to the weakest members of society in vv. 6–8 and the similar description of God’s protection of the poor and needy from the ruthless in Isaiah 25, it is proper to interpret Isaiah 32:2 as speaking particularly of the king and rulers’ protection of and provision for the poor and needy.²⁰⁴

Third, these future rulers will effect the humbling of those “fools” and “villains” who would otherwise act against “the hungry,” “the thirsty,” “the poor,” and “the needy” (32:5–8).

²⁰²Marvin A Sweeney, “Textual Citations in Isaiah 24–27: Toward an Understanding of the Redactional Function of Chapters 24–27 in the Book of Isaiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, no. 1 (March 1988): 46; Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 66–67.

²⁰³Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 257; Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 237.

²⁰⁴Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 410 (“Each of these royal officials . . . will be for the needy and oppressed like a refuge from the wind and a shelter from the rainstorm . . .”); Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 14a (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2010), 471 (“Four poignant images of royal protection in v. 2 reinforce the government’s responsibility to the defenseless.”).

The overall picture of Isaiah 32:1–8 is of “a well-functioning society in which nobles protect the vulnerable.”²⁰⁵ The question remains, however, of how 32:1–8 relates to 32:15–20, and specifically to my interpretation of *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* in v. 16. As noted above, while many scholars have divided Isaiah 32 into separate literary units, some have argued that the chapter can be read as a coherent whole. Even if one were to concede that portions of this chapter at one time existed apart from their current context, “the person who wrapped vv. 1–8 and 15–20 around vv. 9–14 should not have forgotten the subject of the first unit when composing the third.”²⁰⁶ The argument for reading vv. 1–8 and vv. 15–20 together is bolstered by their joint echo of Psalm 72, where a king ruling in justice and righteousness (vv. 1–2) results in mountains and hills yielding prosperity for the people (v. 3), defense of the poor and needy (v. 4), the flourishing of righteousness and abounding of peace (v. 7), deliverance of the needy and poor (v. 12), and abundance of grain and the blossoming of people (v. 16). Given the close placement of vv. 1–8 and vv. 15–20, the similar language of *šedeq* and *mišpāṭ* in v. 1 and *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* in v. 16, and the resonance between these two passages taken together with Psalm 72, I agree with those scholars who interpret vv. 15–20 as in some way the continuation of vv. 1–8.²⁰⁷

If *šedeq* and *mišpāṭ* in v. 1 refer to the character of future rulers as those who protect and provide for the weakest members of society, then, in the absence of

²⁰⁵Hamilton, “Isaiah 32 as Literature and Political Meditation,” 672.

²⁰⁶Hamilton, “Isaiah 32 as Literature and Political Meditation,” 682.

²⁰⁷Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 538 (“The king who rules with righteousness (32:1–2) is associated later in the chapter with the pouring out of God’s Spirit, the transformation of nature, and the inauguration of a time of peace, security, and prosperity (32:15–20); Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, 75 (“Vv. 15–20 have no apparent connection to verse 14 and the immediately preceding section. But the passage should probably be considered a continuation of the description of the future age described in verses 1–5 . . .”); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 122 (“Later in the chapter, that age of righteous rule is further described as an outpouring of God’s Spirit . . .”).

countervailing evidence, it is likely that *mišpāṭ* and *šədāqâ* in v. 16 have the same meaning.²⁰⁸

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 32:15–20

Whether one understands the *mišpāṭ* and *šədāqâ* of v. 16 as the cause, consequence, or concomitant of the flourishing of v. 15,²⁰⁹ it is clear that “[t]he spirit of the Lord is seen as the source of all the eschatological blessings that follow.”²¹⁰ I contend that this truth also extends back to the beginning of Isaiah 32. Oswalt construes the relationship between vv. 1–8 and 9–20 thus: “The first describes the nature of true leadership and the effect stemming from it (32:1–8). The second explains what is the fundamental ingredient for that kind of leadership to exist: God’s Spirit (32:9–20).”²¹¹ Reading Isaiah 32 as a whole, and specifically reading vv. 15–20 in connection with vv. 1–8, it is clear that Isaiah here prophesies a future time when God will pour out *rûah*, with the result that rulers will rule in *šedeq* and *mišpāṭ* and *mišpāṭ* and *šədāqâ* will dwell in a flourishing land.²¹² I thus conclude that Isaiah 32 presents *rûah* as divine being who

²⁰⁸My failure to consider vv. 9–14 is not based on any judgment as to their dating or authorship vis-à-vis vv. 1–8 and vv. 15–20. Beyond the fact that most scholars acknowledge vv. 9–14 as somehow literarily distinct from the preceding and following verses, these verses do not clearly contribute to the question of the place of societal justice in chapter 32. The only potential wrongdoing alleged against “the women” (v. 9) is that they are “complacent” (vv. 9, 10, 11) and “at ease” (v. 11). As Webb notes, “their only fault seems to be their apparent assumption that the present state of affairs can go on indefinitely.” Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 137. The function of these verses in the chapter appears to be to underscore the severity of the judgment that was to come upon Jerusalem and Judah both as an indication of the degree of their current disorder and as a backdrop to the wonder of God’s future work of restoration.

²⁰⁹Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 334–35 (seeing the righteousness of v. 16 as consequent upon the flourishing of v. 15b).

²¹⁰Montague, *The Holy Spirit*, 40.

²¹¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 579.

brings about societal justice as it effects a future governance and communal life of God's people characterized by proper concern for the weakest members of society.

Isaiah 42:1–9

Isaiah 42:1–9 is the fifth place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāt*, *šadāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah*:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit (*rûhî*) upon him; he will bring forth justice (*mišpāt*) to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice (*mišpāt*). He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice (*mišpāt*) in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. (42:1–4)

Introduction to Isaiah 42:1–9

While it has been widely recognized that ch. 40 opens a new major unit in the book of Isaiah, there has been some disagreement as to where that unit ends.²¹³ The historical context of the implied audience of this unit is suggested by the ending of ch. 39, where Isaiah tells Hezekiah that the wealth of his house and some of his descendants will be carried away to Babylon (39:5–7). The opening words of Chapter 40, “Comfort, O comfort my people” (40:1), therefore appear as a message to those who have experienced the judgment foretold in the previous chapter. The message of chs. 40ff. thus primarily

²¹²Hee Suk Kim, “Eschatological Pattern of the Spirit of the Lord in Isaiah 11:1–5,” *한국기독교신학논총 [Korean Journal of Christian Studies]* 72 (December 2010): 15 (“The coming of the Spirit has a role to empower God’s agent, who is described in the first half of Isaiah 32 (vv. 1–8), in order that he may become enabled to reverse the failure in the past.”).

²¹³Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 378 (identifying unit as chs. 40–48); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:128 (same); Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 31 (40:1–51:11); Oswalt, “Isaiah,” 218 (40–55); Childs, *Isaiah*, 460 (40–55); Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 155; but see Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 289 (38–55).

concerns God's determination to deliver his people from captivity.²¹⁴ Although the initial audience of Isaiah's prophecy would have been the residents of Judah and Jerusalem somewhere between the late eighth and mid-seventh centuries BC, the implied audience of these chapters is those in captivity between 586 (or perhaps as early as 605 or 597) and 538 BC.²¹⁵ Webb observes that "[i]t is likely . . . that in the latter part of his life Isaiah was called to a new task: to *comfort* God's people in words that his disciples cherish and preserve in the dark days ahead until Israel was at last ready to hear them."²¹⁶

Turning to the opening of ch. 42 itself, many interpreters have recognized vv. 1–9 as a distinct unit,²¹⁷ although others have argued for an earlier beginning,²¹⁸ an earlier

²¹⁴Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 155 ["Release from Captivity" (40:1–48:22)]; cf. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:129; Wegner, "Isaiah, Theology of," 378.

²¹⁵Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 336 (date of Daniel's removal to Babylon as 605), 196 (date of Ezekiel's removal to Babylon as 597; date of fall of Jerusalem as 586), 33 (date of Cyrus's decree as 538).

²¹⁶Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 160–61; cf. John N. Oswalt, "Who Were the Addressees of Isaiah 40–66?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169, no. 673 (January 2012): 47 ("Isaiah 40–66 is not primarily addressed to the people and the concerns of the eighth century. Rather, these chapters were addressed to their descendants . . .").

²¹⁷S. D. (Fanie) Snyman, "A Structural-Historical Exegesis of Isaiah 42:1–9," in *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 253; Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom*, 138; Firth, "Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah," 46; Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III*, trans. Brian Doyle, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1997), 1:207; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 318; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 108; Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2012), 184; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 169; Wegner, *Isaiah*, 321.

²¹⁸John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 1:189 (finding unit to begin at 41:21); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66, Forms of the Old Testament Literature* 17 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 69 (same).

ending,²¹⁹ or a later ending.²²⁰ It is difficult to reconcile the “one from the north” who “shall trample on rulers as on mortar” (41:25) with the gentle servant portrayed in 42:2–3, making it more likely that the *hēn* of 41:29 closes one unit while the *hēn* of 42:1 opens another.²²¹ Although the MT has a paragraph marker after 42:4, textual analysis supports reading 42:1–9 as a unit. First, it seems fitting to understand the “servant” of 42:1 to be the same one whom Yahweh has called, taken by the hand, and kept in 42:6. Likewise, although the referent of *rûah* in 42:1 is different from that in 42:5,²²² it still functions as a catchword joining vv. 1–4 and 5–9. It seems best to recognize a literary break between verses 9 and 10 (here agreeing with the MT paragraph marker) because the portrayal of Yahweh as a warrior in vv. 13ff. is so unlike that of the gentle servant in vv. 2–3. Likewise, the negative portrayal of the servant in v. 19 is unlike the positive portrayal of vv. 1–4. I thus follow those who recognize 42:1–9 as a literary unit.

The structure of 42:1–9 is determined by the different addressees of the text.

Yahweh speaks to Israel about his servant in vv. 1–4 while in vv. 5–7 he speaks to the servant himself. Then in vv. 8–9 Yahweh again speaks to Israel.²²³

²¹⁹Marjo C.A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40–55*, Oudtestamentische Studiën 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 153–154 (following the division markers in the Hebrew texts and ending the canticle at v. 4); Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, trans. David M. G. Stalker, Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1969), 92 (interpreting Isa. 42:1–4 separately as “the first so-called servant song”); John Scullion, *Isaiah 40–66*, Old Testament Message 12 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 40 (same).

²²⁰Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 189 (to 42:17); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:174 (to 43:13); Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary 15B (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 152 (to 42:13).

²²¹Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:174.

²²²BDB, s.v. “רוח” (identifying occurrence in v. 1 as meaning “*spirit of God*” and that in v. 5 as meaning “*spirit of the living, breathing being, dwelling in the נְשָׁמָה of men and animals*”).

²²³Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 171.

Divine spirit in Isaiah 42:1–9

In Isaiah 42:1, the speaker says of the servant that “I have put my spirit upon him (*nātattî rūḥî ‘ālāyw*).” The identity of the *rūaḥ* here is first dependent on the identity of the speaker of this verse. After 42:1 begins with first-person speech about the servant, vv. 2–4 provide a third-person description of the servant. Verse 5 is likewise in the third person but contains a quote formula identifying God Yahweh as the speaker. Finally, vv. 6–9 are in the first person with Yahweh expressly identifying himself as the speaker in vv. 6 and 8. Taking 42:1–9 as a unit, I conclude that the figure addressed in the second-person by Yahweh in v. 6 (“I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people”) is the same figure described in the third person in vv. 1–4.²²⁴ From this I further conclude that Yahweh is the speaker in v. 1.

The conclusion that Yahweh is the speaker in 42:1 is supported by two additional factors.²²⁵ First, Yahweh speaks in v. 1 of “my servant (*‘abdî*).” There are a number of other texts in Isaiah that speak of a “servant” in contexts which make it clear that such a one belongs to Yahweh (37:35; 41:8–9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1–2, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5–6; 50:10).²²⁶ It can be assumed that, in the absence of any contrary indication, a declaration concerning “my servant” in Isaiah is from Yahweh. Second, the speaker of v. 1

²²⁴Cf. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 171; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 109.

²²⁵Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 170 (“Clearly, God himself is the one who makes the announcement in verse 1.”).

²²⁶The same is true of the “servants” that appear in the latter chapters of Isaiah (54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8–9, 13–15; 66:14). The “servant” of 52:13 and 53:11 should probably also be understood as belonging to Yahweh, but the case there is less clear than in the other texts cited.

“uphold[s] (*’etmāk*)” his servant. In 41:10, God promises to “uphold (*təməktīkā*)” his servant Israel. This again makes it likely that the speaker of 42:1 is Yahweh.

From my determination that the speaker of 42:1 is Yahweh it follows that *rūhī* here is Yahweh’s *rūah*. ESV and NIV translate this as “my Spirit”; NASB as “My Spirit”; NRSV as “my spirit”; and NJPS as “My spirit.” The lexica likewise identify this occurrence of *rūah* as referring to the spirit of Yahweh/God.²²⁷ Although John Goldingay expresses frustration at the necessity in English to distinguish between “spirit,” “breath,” and “wind,” he understands *rūah* here to speak of God “letting forth divine power and life in the world, in order to achieve something.”²²⁸ Koole interprets this giving of *rūah* to the servant to mean that “God himself is present in him.”²²⁹ Whether *rūah* in Isaiah 42:1 is understood to be an aspect of the divine being or an instrument of divine agency, it is clear that *rūah* here is divine spirit.²³⁰

Societal justice in Isaiah 42:1–9

Mišpāt appears three times in Isaiah 42:1–9: “he will bring forth justice to the nations (*mišpāt laggōyim yōšī’*). (v. 1) . . . he will faithfully bring forth justice (*le’ēmet yōšī’ mišpāt*). (v. 3) . . . until he has established justice in the earth (*’ad-yāšīm bā’āreš*

²²⁷*DCH* 7, s.v. “רִיחַ”; *HALOT*, s.v. “רִיחַ” BDB, s.v. “רִיחַ.”

²²⁸John Goldingay, “The Breath of Yahweh Scorching, Confounding, Anointing: The Message of Isaiah 40–42,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5, no. 11 (1997): 29.

²²⁹Koole, *Isaiah III*, 1:208.

²³⁰It should be noted that *rūah* also occurs in v. 5 where God says that he is the one “who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath (*nəšāmā*) to the people upon it and spirit (*wəruah*) to those who walk in it . . .” Rather than *rūah* referring to a means by which God effects a particular result, it appears here as “that which animates all life.” Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” 47; cf. Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 193 (“human breath given by God.”). This occurrence of *rūah* is not relevant to my consideration of *rūah* as a divine agent of societal justice.

mišpāt) . . . (v. 4).²³¹ ESV, NASB, NIV, and NRSV translate all three occurrences of *mišpāt* as “justice”; NJPS as “the true way.” While *mišpāt* is the key word in this passage, or at least for vv. 1–4,²³² a review of scholarship supports Beuken’s observation that its meaning “remains quite obscure” in this context.²³³

There are a number of factors in the text and context of Isaiah 42:1–9 that complicate the determination of the meaning of *mišpāt* here. First, the term appears three times in the preceding context, each occurrence being translated differently in the NRSV: 40:13 (“Whom did he [the LORD] consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice (*mišpāt*).”); 40:27 (“Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right (*mišpāt*) disregarded by my God?’”)²³⁴; 41:1 (“Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the people renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us draw near for judgment (*lammišpāt*).”) Second, in Isaiah 42:4 *mišpāt* occurs in parallel with *tôrâ* [“. . . until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching (*ûlâtôrâtô*)],²³⁵ which is itself a difficult

²³¹The fronting of *mišpāt* in v. 1 highlights its importance. Koole, *Isaiah III*, 1:217; cf. Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax*, § 574a.

²³²Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 1:213; Koole, *Isaiah III*, 1:216; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 171.

²³³Willem A. M. Beuken, “*Mišpāt*: The First Servant Song and Its Context,” *Vetus testamentum* 22, no. 1 (January 1972): 4; cf. Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 214 (“Here, the word has been understood in at least three related ways.”); H. G. M. Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good: Old Testament Justice Here and Now* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 99 (“[C]ommentators in the past have offered an astonishingly wide variety of understandings of what is meant by justice here.”); Koole, *Isaiah III*, 1:217 (“The history of exegesis shows that משפט has been understood from a religio-ethical, a legal, and a more political point of view.”).

²³⁴Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 8 (“For the reader of Second Isaiah’s prophecy, there cannot but be a relation between Israel’s complaints and God’s word to Israel when he designates his Servant . . .”).

²³⁵Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 185 (“The משפט should be understood here [v. 1] as in v. 4, where it parallels תורתו (‘His teaching’) . . .”); Scullion, *Isaiah 40–66*, 40–41 (translating all three occurrences of *mišpāt* as “my law” and stating: “The translation ‘my law’ proceeds from the parallelism between *mishpat* and *tôrâh* in v. 4.”).

word to interpret.²³⁶ Finally, assuming that the Lord’s speech to the servant in vv. 5–7 develops the Lord’s presentation of the servant in vv. 1–4, an important question is whether the blindness and imprisonment of v. 7 (“to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon”) are literal or figurative; and if the latter, whether spiritual, political, or otherwise.²³⁷

Given these issues, it is not surprising that scholars have advanced a number of interpretations of *mišpāt* in Isaiah 42:1–4. Beuken concludes that it “stands for what the course of history is due to bring to the people of God’s predilection . . .”²³⁸ Delitzsch understands it to mean “true religion regarded on its practical side, as the rule and authority for life in all its relations . . .”²³⁹ Goldingay and Payne summarize the servant’s role vis-à-vis *mišpāt* as “seeing that Yhwh’s decision or act of vindication is declared or propagated.”²⁴⁰ Oswalt interprets *mišpāt* as “nothing less than the salvation of God defined in its broadest sense.”²⁴¹ Motyer takes it to mean “the Lord’s truth and the truth about the Lord . . .”²⁴² Claus Westermann expressly rejects a similar interpretation by Paul Volz and instead reads Isaiah 42:1–4’s message regarding *mišpāt* to mean that “the

²³⁶Joseph Jensen, *The Use of Tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 3 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973), 23 (“Deutero-Isaiah uses *tôrâ* five times . . . It is not easy to determine an exact significance for the term in any of these passages; it seems to have the broadest possible sense of ‘instruction’ or ‘revelation,’ and is employed with other terms that would not usually be considered synonymous or even similar in meaning.”).

²³⁷Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 141 (“While verse 7 could be understood literally, the language is probably figurative . . .”)

²³⁸Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 30.

²³⁹Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:175.

²⁴⁰Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 1:216.

²⁴¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 110.

²⁴²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 320.

Gentiles' gods' claim to divinity [will be] declared to be nothing: Yahweh alone is God."²⁴³

None of the interpretations of *mišpāṭ* cited above have any direct relationship to God's concern for the poor and needy and his desire that his people act for their protection and provision. It is not surprising that interpreters have generally not seen a connection between the servant's mission in Isaiah 42:1–9 and societal justice. Unlike some other passages under consideration in this thesis, there is an absence here of the kind of vocabulary that typically characterizes Isaiah's concern for societal justice. Although such terms occur in 41:17 (“When the poor and needy (*hā'ānîyîm wāhā'ēbyônîm*) seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”), this does little to show that *mišpāṭ* in 42:1–9 includes human action to relieve the effects of material lack. Likewise, although *šedeq* appears in v. 6 (“I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness (*bāšedeq*) . . .”), the distance between this term and *mišpāṭ* and the fact that this refers to the righteousness of God's action rather than human action prevent us from seeing these terms as functioning as a hendiadys referring to societal justice.

There are, however, three aspects of Isaiah 42:1–9 that show a possible connection between *mišpāṭ* and societal justice. First, the manner of the servant's bringing forth and establishing justice is such that “a bruised reed he will not break; and a dimly burning wick he will not quench . . .” (v. 3). Ma argues that this language “may point to the central element of justice being to protect the powerless and judge the culprit.”²⁴⁴ Smith interprets these two images as “symbolic of anybody who is broken,

²⁴³Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 95.

²⁴⁴Ma, “Isaiah,” 38.

abused, worthless, and about to be discarded” and concludes that “[t]his verse demonstrates that God’s tender care for the weak and oppressed (1:17; 40:11) will be exemplified in the servant’s behavior.”²⁴⁵ However, the move from these images to a concern for societal justice is hindered if one takes the implied historical situation of this passage to be that of Judah in exile and interpret these images as referring to Judah “languish[ing] in exile.”²⁴⁶

Second, it is possible to argue from the general characterization of the servant in this passage that *mišpāṭ* must include societal justice. While many scholars have noted that the servant in Isaiah 42:1–9 is presented primarily as a royal figure,²⁴⁷ Williamson has moved from that observation to conclude that *mišpāṭ* must mean what it typically means when used in the context of Israel’s king. He notes that “[i]n Israel the king constituted, so to speak, the ultimate court of appeal, and he was responsible for the impartial administration of justice.”²⁴⁸ He thus rejects the interpretations of *mišpāṭ* as “‘religion’, ‘truth’, ‘the principles of true religion’ and ‘revealed law’, as well as . . . the judgment or verdict of the law court in the various ‘trial scenes’ that are imaginatively depicted in the surrounding passages.”²⁴⁹ He concludes that *mišpāṭ* here “include[s] social justice” and that, despite the lack of detail as to the shape of that justice, “it is something

²⁴⁵Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 162–63.

²⁴⁶Wegner, *Isaiah*, 321.

²⁴⁷Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 132 (“There is a considerable degree of agreement nowadays that, whatever else is to be said about the servant in Isaiah 42:1–4, he is presented to us in royal guise.”); cf. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 160 (“Since the establishment of justice is strongly emphasized in these verses and the servant’s function influenced all the nations of the earth, the kingly background of the servant stands out as the most predominant emphasis in 42:1–4.”); Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 4; Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 209.

²⁴⁸Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 100

²⁴⁹Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 99.

that the nations anticipate with positive emotions . . . and . . . benefits those who are metaphorically depicted as bruised reeds and dimly burning wicks.”²⁵⁰

Williamson elsewhere notes that in the Old Testament the king “was to have particular regard for those least able to defend themselves, such as the orphan and widow, and the ‘bruised reed’ and ‘dimly burning wick’ of verse 2 are an admirable poetic description of such people.”²⁵¹ Williamson concludes that *mišpāṭ* in Isaiah 42:1–4 has the same sense that it generally has in Isaiah when it is translated as “justice”: “the total ordering of the well-being of society.”²⁵² Williamson’s argument is certainly bolstered if one takes Psalm 72 as a crystallization of the relationship between the ideal king of Israel and *mišpāṭ*.

A third aspect of Isaiah 42:1–9 that supports construing *mišpāṭ* here as including societal justice is its similarity to Isaiah 11:1–5. In 42:1, the Lord says, “I have put my spirit upon him (*nātattî rūḥî ‘ālāyw*). In 11:2, it is said of the “shoot” that “the spirit of the Lord (*rūaḥ Yhwh*) shall rest on him (*‘ālāyw*).” While the servant of 42:1–9 is to bring forth and establish *mišpāṭ*, the figure in 11:5 “with righteousness . . . shall judge (*wəšāpaṭ*) the poor.” The servant will bring forth justice “faithfully (*le’ēmet*)” (42:3). The shoot will have “faithfulness (*wəḥā’ēmūnā*) [as] the belt around his loins” (11:5). The “bruised reed” and “dimly burning wick” of 42:3 can be understood as a picturesque parallel to “the meek of the earth” in 11:4. Goldingay notes that these points of similarity “suggest that 42:1b relates directly to 11.1–5.”²⁵³ Since I have already determined that the

²⁵⁰Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 100–01.

²⁵¹Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 136.

²⁵²Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 137.

rûah-bearing shoot of Isaiah 11 is shown to establish societal justice, there is some reason to conclude that the servant of Isaiah 42 has the same mission.

The kingly portrayal of the servant in Isaiah 42:1–9 and the parallels between this passage and Isaiah 11:1–5 both support interpreting *mišpāṭ* as including societal justice. The obstacles to accepting this interpretation are the three prior occurrences of *mišpāṭ* (40:14, 27; 41:1), the lack of more typical vocabulary related to societal justice, and the relative lack of relevance to the text’s implied audience. The first obstacle might be answered by the observation of Goldingay and Payne that a number of words occur multiple times in Isaiah 40–42 with different meanings.²⁵⁴ *Rûah* is one example: “when the breath (*rûah*) of the LORD blows upon it” (40:7); “Who has directed the spirit (*rûah*) of the LORD” (40:13); “the wind (*rûah*) shall carry them away” (41:16); “their images are empty wind (*rûah*)” (41:29). Indeed, the three previous occurrences of *mišpāṭ* themselves bear three different meanings. I thus find that the prior occurrences of *mišpāṭ* do not themselves prevent the interpretation of this term in Isaiah 42:1–9 to include societal justice.

It must be acknowledged that Williamson appears to stand almost alone in his interpretation. Even Leclerc, who is highly attuned to the theme of societal justice in Isaiah, concludes that the meaning of *mišpāṭ* in Isaiah 42:1–4 is Yahweh’s “just and unrivaled sovereignty.”²⁵⁵ The only other interpretation of which I am aware similar to

²⁵³John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 155; cf. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 134 (“But of course, beyond this general association of the Spirit with kingship, we have already met the specific instance of Isaiah 11:2, which many commentators also assume to be in the back of the writer’s mind at this point . . .”).

²⁵⁴Goldingay and Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, 215.

²⁵⁵Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 110.

Williamson's is that by J. M. Bernal Giménez.²⁵⁶ He interprets *mišpāṭ* in Isaiah 42:1–4 in accord with a more general biblical understanding as “the defense of the weak, the liberation of the oppressed, respect for the rights of the poor.”²⁵⁷

Williamson's argument suggests that *mišpāṭ* in Isaiah 42:1–9 may include societal justice. However, the relative lack of support for this interpretation in the literary context and the widely varying interpretations advanced by other scholars make it seem more likely that Isaiah intended to use *mišpāṭ* with a broad sense that perhaps incorporates a number of the interpretations advanced. Beyond this, it is difficult to say that Isaiah 42:1–9 is intended to speak directly to Judah's vocation to protect the vulnerable members of her community.

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 42:1–9

The structure of Isaiah 42:1b establishes the relationship between *rûaḥ* and *mišpāṭ*: “I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations (*nātattî rûaḥ 'ālāyw mišpāṭ laggôyim yôšî*’).” As Block notes, “It seems the latter [his Spirit] in particular empowers him [Yahweh's servant] to administer justice for the nations, and to endure until he has established justice in the earth . . .”²⁵⁸ A number of scholars have noted the parallel between this verse and Isaiah 40:13–14 [“Who has directed the spirit of

²⁵⁶José María Bernal Giménez, “El Siervo Como Promesa de ‘Mišpaṭ’: Estudio Bíblico Del Término ‘Mišpaṭ’ en Is 42,1–4.” in *Palabra y Vida : Homenaje a José Alonzo Díaz en Su 70 Cumpleaños*, ed. A. Vargas-Machuca and G. Ruiz (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid, 1984), 77–85. My access to Giménez is limited to the characterization provided and portions translated by Leclerc. Leclerc, *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice*, 105.

²⁵⁷Giménez, “El Siervo Como Promesa de ‘Mišpaṭ,’” 78.

²⁵⁸Block, “The View from the Top,” 189; cf. Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 91–92, 95.

the LORD (*rûah Yhwh*) . . . and who taught him the path of justice (*mišpāt*)? . . .”].²⁵⁹

Considering these two passages, Beuken concludes that “[i]t becomes evident that there is an intrinsic coherence between God’s *rûah* and Israel’s *mišpāt*.”²⁶⁰ Whether *mišpāt* in Isaiah 42:1–9 bears the sense that it has in 40:13–14, at least at the lexical level Isaiah shows a strong connection between the two in both texts. While it is not clear that *mišpāt* in Isaiah 42:1–9 refers specifically to societal justice, it is clear that divine spirit empowers the servant to bring forth and establish *mišpāt*, in whatever manner one may construe the sense of that term.

Isaiah 61:1–11

Isaiah 61:1–11 is the sixth and final place in the book of Isaiah that *mišpāt*, *šedāqâ*, and/or *šedeq* may refer to societal justice and occur in close proximity to *rûah*:

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me (*rûah ’ădōnāy Yhwh ’ālāy*), because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit (*rûah kēhâ*). They will be called oaks of righteousness (’*ēlê haššedeq*), the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. . . . For I the LORD love justice (*mišpāt*), I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. . . . I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness (*mə ’il šedāqâ*), as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord

²⁵⁹Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 29–30; Goldingay, “The Breath of Yahweh Scorching, Confounding, Anointing,” 30; Koole, *Isaiah III*, 1:216. As noted in the introduction, although *rûah* and *mišpāt* do occur in close proximity in 40:13–14, it is clear that *mišpāt* here cannot refer to societal justice. These verses thus fall outside the scope of this thesis.

²⁶⁰Beuken, “*Mišpāt*,” 30; cf. Goldingay, “The Breath of Yahweh Scorching, Confounding, Anointing,” 30 (“The link between Yahweh’s *ruach* and Yahweh’s capacity for *mishpat* is taken up in the link between the servant’s being endowed with Yahweh’s *ruach* and his being entrusted with Yahweh’s *mishpat*.”).

GOD will cause righteousness (*ṣādāqâ*) and praise to spring up before all the nations. (Isa. 61:1–3, 8, 10–11)

Introduction to Isaiah 61:1–11

There is a widespread, though not unanimous, understanding that there is a literary break at the end of Isaiah 55 and that chs. 56–66 constitute the last major literary unit of the book.²⁶¹ Childs supports this understanding on the basis of “striking differences in style, historical background, and theological emphasis.”²⁶² Webb also observes that 40:1–51:11; 51:12–55:13; and 56–66 each end with descriptions of the future worship of Yahweh (51:11; 55:12; 66:23).²⁶³

Some have discerned a chiasmic structure to chs. 56–66 whose center includes Isaiah 61.²⁶⁴ Goldingay has presented the most detailed chiasmic structure, finding 61:1–9 to be the central unit in chapters 56–66.²⁶⁵ I agree with these scholars that Isaiah 61 stands at the center of the closing section of Isaiah.

²⁶¹Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” 366; Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 160; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 18–19; Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 515; Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 219; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 461; Childs, *Isaiah*, 694; but see Wegner, “Isaiah, Theology of,” 378 (identifying final unit as chs. 58–66); Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 181 (same); Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:128 (same).

²⁶²Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 694.

²⁶³Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 30; but see Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 123 (identifying a thematic repetition in 48:22; 57:21; and 66:24).

²⁶⁴Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 160 (chapters 60–62 as center); Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 461 (59:14–63:6 as center); but see Childs, *Isaiah*, 705 (disagreeing with Westerman and other scholars who discern a concentric structure and seeing instead “a linear progression”).

²⁶⁵John Goldingay, “Isaiah 56–66: An Isaianic and a Postcolonial Reading,” in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire*, ed. Andrew T. Abernethy et al. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 152.

The “lack [of] specific historical allusion” in Isaiah 56–66 makes it difficult to determine the historical context to which these chapters speak.²⁶⁶ While Webb sees these chapters as speaking most immediately to those who had returned from the exile that served as the historical context of ch. 40–55, he recognizes that they also speak to the entire time “between the death and exaltation of the Servant of the LORD in chapter 53, and the consummation of history in the new heavens and new earth in chapters 65 and 66.”²⁶⁷ Motyer is likewise loath to restrict the historical context envisioned in these chapters to post-exilic Judah. He observes that “[t]o tie these chapters too restrictively to the post-exilic period is to lose touch with their link with the Servant, which is in fact stronger than their link with Cyrus and the return.”²⁶⁸ Given my understanding of Isaianic authorship, I understand Isaiah 56–66 to have been originally “published” in the seventh century BC but to speak to a situation that extended from the late sixth century BC into the future.

Childs notes that Isaiah 61 is “generally regarded as a unity.”²⁶⁹ A number of textual features support this reading. First, *’ādōnāy Yhwh* appears in vv. 1 and 11.²⁷⁰ Second, as Koole observes, “[i]n v. 10 *שִׁשׁוּן*, *שִׁשׁוּן*, *שִׁשׁוּן*, and *שִׁשׁוּן* refer back to *שִׁשׁוּן*, *שִׁשׁוּן*, and *שִׁשׁוּן* in v. 3a.”²⁷¹ Third, *ḥaṣṣedeq* in v. 3 is echoed by *ṣadāqā* in vv. 10 and 11, and

²⁶⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 22.

²⁶⁷Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 219–20.

²⁶⁸Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 22–23.

²⁶⁹Childs, *Isaiah*, 502.

²⁷⁰Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:266; Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 536. However, the force of this argument is somewhat weakened by the overall frequency with which this form of the divine name appears in Isaiah (3:15; 7:7; 25:8; 28:16; 30:15; 40:10; 48:16; 49:22; 50:4, 5, 9; 52:4; 56:8; 61:1, 11; 65:13, 15).

²⁷¹Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:266.

tahillâ occurs in v. 3 and in v. 11. Finally, v. 3 (“oaks of righteousness” and “planting of the LORD”) and v. 11 (“as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up”) both utilize floral imagery.²⁷² Finally, Pieter de Vries has analyzed 61:1–11 colometrically and concluded that the chapter has fifty cola, which he sees as corresponding to the theme of jubilee in the chapter.²⁷³ Despite this evidence of unity, a number of interpreters see a textual break between vv. 9 and 10, reading vv. 10–11 either as an independent unit²⁷⁴ or as the start of a unit running to 62:12²⁷⁵ This latter reading follows the section divisions found in the MT and 1QIs^a.²⁷⁶ Indeed, the chapter break at 62:1 is not supported by the paratext of any Hebrew manuscript.²⁷⁷ I conclude, however, that the evidence of unity is sufficiently strong to consider 61:1–11 as a unit.

Scholars disagree as to the structure of Isaiah 61. Webb divides the chapter into vv. 1–6, 7–9, 10–11,²⁷⁸ Motyer into vv. 1–5; 5–9; 10–11,²⁷⁹ Delitzsch into vv. 1–3, 4–6,

²⁷²Curtis W. Fitzgerald, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56–66” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003), https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/fac_dis/98.

²⁷³Pieter de Vries, “Structural Analysis of Isaiah 61 with a Special Focus on Verses 1–3,” *Old Testament Essays* 26, no. 2 (2013): 313.

²⁷⁴Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 312–14.

²⁷⁵John Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, International Critical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), v; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 8.

²⁷⁶Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 289.

²⁷⁷Marjo C.A. Korpel, “Unit Delimitation as a Guide to Interpretation: *A Status Quaestionis*,” in *Les délimitations éditoriales des Écritures: des bibles anciennes aux lectures modernes*, ed. Guillaume Bady and Marjo C.A. Korpel, Pericope 11 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 11.

²⁷⁸Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, 234–36.

²⁷⁹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 499–505 (placing vv. 10–11 at the head of a unit running from 61:10–62:12).

7–9, 10–11;²⁸⁰ Childs into vv. 1–7, 8–9, 10–11.²⁸¹ English translations likewise differ in their structure of the chapter: NRSV (1–4, 5–7, 8–11), ESV (1–4, 5–7, 8–9, 10–11) NASB (1–3, 4–9, 10–11), NIV (1–3, 4–6, 7, 8–9, 10–1). Noting the different paragraph breaks in these translations, de Vries states “[t]here are reasons for defending every division.”²⁸² Discerning the structure of the text is complicated by the second person plural pronomial suffix in the MT at the beginning of v. 7 where the rest of the verse seems to require a third person plural. For my analysis, the essential feature of the structure of Isaiah 61 is that the anointed one of v. 1 is clearly the speaker of vv. 1–3a.

Divine spirit in Isaiah 61:1–11

The speaker of Isaiah 61:1 says that “[t]he spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me (*rûaḥ ’ădōnāy Yhwh ’ālāy*).” Although *rûaḥ Yhwh* occurs a number of times in Isaiah (11:2; 40:7, 13; 59:19; 63:14), this is the only occurrence in the Old Testament or anywhere in the extant literature of Second Temple Judaism of *rûaḥ* in construct with the divine name *’ădōnāy Yhwh*.²⁸³ Whatever additional meaning the inclusion of *’ădōnāy* might give, for the purpose of determining the meaning of *rûaḥ*, *rûaḥ ’ădōnāy Yhwh* appears to be equivalent to *rûaḥ Yhwh*.

²⁸⁰Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:424–32.

²⁸¹Childs, *Isaiah*, 787–92.

²⁸²Vries, “Structural Analysis of Isaiah 61 with a Special Focus on Verses 1–3,” 302.

²⁸³*DCH* 7, s.v. “רֹחַ.”

The collocation of divine *rûah* with the preposition *‘al* occurs in several other places in Isaiah (11:2; 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 59:21) and is a further indication of the divine origin of *rûah* in 61:1.²⁸⁴

Whether one understands *rûah* in Isaiah 61:1 as referring to “Yahweh’s active, life-giving power”²⁸⁵ or as the means by which God “empowers and directs this person,”²⁸⁶ it appears here as divine spirit.²⁸⁷

Societal justice in Isaiah 61:1–11

There are a number of interpretive challenges in Isaiah 61 that make it difficult to determine whether it speaks of societal justice. First, the parallel of *ṣādāqâ* and *yeša‘* in v. 10 points to “righteousness” here referring to the character of God’s action on behalf of his people rather than to right human conduct. Is Koole correct to state that *ṣādāqâ* in v. 11 must have the same meaning?²⁸⁸ Should a similar meaning be found in v. 3 as indicated by NJPS’s translation of “terebinths of victory”?²⁸⁹ Second, the speaker of 61:1 has been sent “to bring good news to the oppressed (*‘ānāwîm*).” Are these *‘ānāwîm* individuals who are materially deprived and socially oppressed, a whole nation that is politically oppressed, or are they “the humble” (so NASB and NJPS)? Third, in v. 8, does

²⁸⁴Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:269 (“This implies that the gift comes from above . . .”).

²⁸⁵Goldingay, “The Breath of Yahweh Scorching, Confounding, Anointing,” 15.

²⁸⁶Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 633.

²⁸⁷It should be noted that *rûah* also appears in 61:3: “the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit (*rûah kēhā*).” This is not divine spirit but rather an example of “human/animal mind/disposition.” Block, “The View from the Top,” 178.

²⁸⁸Cf. Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:296.

²⁸⁹Cf. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 115 (“Terebinths of Victory”), 542; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 364 (“trees of salvation”).

the Lord hate “robbery and wrongdoing” (NRSV) or “robbery in the burnt offering” (NASB)?²⁹⁰ Fourth, are the “captives” and “prisoners” of v. 1 in literal captivity and imprisonment, and if so, by whom? Or is this figurative language referring to some other form of misfortune?²⁹¹

Without attempting to resolve these and a number of other interpretive challenges in this text, I propose that the very difficulty scholars have had in identifying the anointed one in Isaiah 61:1–3 provides a clue to the interpretation of the chapter.²⁹² Isaiah 61 stands as the textual center and climax of Isaiah 56–66 and has been written in such a way as to encourage and provide a transhistorical challenge to every generation of readers with the widest possible scope both for God’s redemptive intentions and for his people’s vocation. John J. Collins observes: “The importance of the passage transcends its historical context It presents a concise summary of the mission of a servant of God in any age.”²⁹³ Enrique Nardoni likewise notes that “[t]he disconnection from the

²⁹⁰The MT (‘*ôlâ*) supports that latter translation, as do some interpreters. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 503; Wegner, *Isaiah*, 444; cf. NJPS (“robbery with a burnt offering”). The former reading (‘*awlâ*) follows the MT’s consonantal text but repoints the vowels. Perhaps a majority of scholars support this reading, Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:431; Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:289; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 368, 370; cf. ESV (“robbery and wrong”); NIV (“robbery and wrongdoing”), with some noting that the *bâ* preposition shows that these terms do not refer first to robbery and then to some other wrong but instead to robbery accomplished through injustice. Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 314.

²⁹¹Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 635 (“It would be somewhat dangerous to read all this background of releasing slaves into the use of this term in 61:1 and thereby limit the use of the term solely to the release of slaves from bondage. At a minimum, this could involve the proclamation of a metaphorical release from any past social or spiritual enslavement the people were under.”).

²⁹²Cf. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 162 (agent of 61:1–3 is a prophet); John Sietze Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 115 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 200 (speaker of 61:1 is a royal figure); Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66*, 326 (“ . . . chs. 61–62 were composed in the late 6th century B.C.E. to portray the ordination of Joshua ben Jehozadak as high priest in the newly-restored temple.”).

²⁹³John J. Collins, “Isaiah,” in *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Based on the New American Bible with Revised New Testament*, ed. Dianne Bergant and Robert J. Karris (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 449.

historical context expanded the horizon of these oracles, and they became a revelation of God’s plan for the elect in whatever circumstances they may live in the future.”²⁹⁴

Williamson also sees Isaiah 61:1–3 as serving this transhistorical function: “One cannot earth this passage in a single historical situation or even two, but must regard it rather as an idealized expression of what the exercise of social justice could embrace in the insignificant Persian province of Judah, in Roman-occupied Palestine of centuries later, or . . .”²⁹⁵

Isaiah 61:1–11 in its literary context

Assuming that Isaiah 61 intends to speak of the future in a way that transcends any singular fulfillment, is there any reason to believe that it speaks to societal justice? Given the central place of chapters 60–62 and particularly chapter 61 within Isaiah 56–66, it is reasonable to expect that this chapter would somehow connect to the thematic pronouncement of 56:1: “Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice (*mišpāṭ*), and do what is right (*šadāqā*), for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance (*wəšidqātī*) be revealed.” Commenting on the first half of this verse, Goldingay notes that *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* function as a hendiadys “suggest[ing] something like faithful exercise of authority.” He further states: “This exhortation concerning the exercise of authority is addressed to the community as a whole, but responsibility for making sure that power is exercised in a way that does honour community relationships will rest especially with

²⁹⁴Enrique Nardoni, *Rise up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World*, trans. Seán Charles Martin (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 117.

²⁹⁵Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 103 (concluding ellipsis in the original).

people who have authority in the community.”²⁹⁶ This opening verse of Isaiah 56–66 prepares Isaiah’s implied audience to discern in the following chapters both the Lord’s salvific *ṣədāqā* and Israel’s vocation of *mišpāṭ* and *ṣədāqā*.²⁹⁷

The chief threats to Israel’s vocation are idolatry and societal injustice. Isaiah 57 addresses the former threat; Isaiah 59 the latter.²⁹⁸ Between those chapters we find Isaiah again showing the relationship between the Lord’s salvation and Israel’s vocation:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then (’āz) your light shall break forth as the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator (*ṣidqekā*) shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.” (58:6–9)

This remarkable passage appears to condition the Lord’s future saving action upon his people’s pursuit of societal justice.²⁹⁹

In Isaiah 59:1–2 the Lord refuses to hear his people because of their sins. After the more general description of their sin (v. 3), verse 4 finds particular fault with their abuse of judicial process: “No one brings suit justly (*baṣedeq*), no one goes to court (*nišpāṭ*) honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, conceiving mischief and begetting iniquity.” Goldingay interprets the first half of this verse to mean that the

²⁹⁶Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 66.

²⁹⁷Cf. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 88 (“By fusing the socially concerned use of ‘righteousness’ (*ṣədāqā*) from Isaiah 1–39 with the hopes for salvific righteousness from Isaiah 40–55, Isaiah 56:1 draws the entire book together.”).

²⁹⁸Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 512.

²⁹⁹Nardoni, *Rise up, O Judge*, 117 [“[T]he community awaiting its eschatological redemption is constantly encouraged to secure God’s acceptance by producing works of compassionate and liberating justice (58:6–9).”].

members of the community are bringing corrupt charges to court.³⁰⁰ In light of the parallels in the opening chapter of Isaiah between bloody hands and right judgment for the oppressed (1:15–17) and between murder and bribery and injustice toward the orphan and widow (1:21–23), it is proper to understand the bloody hands of 59:3 and shedding of innocent blood in 59:7 as referring to the outcome of this corruption of the judicial process. This leads directly to the conclusion of 59:8a that “[t]he way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice (*mišpāṭ*) in their paths.” As the chapter goes on to lament the absence of *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* in vv. 9 and 14, the prophet is likely drawing on the fruitful ambiguity of these terms already highlighted in 56:1. The people may lament the absence of the *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* of God’s saving intervention, but they must at the same time grieve the absence of both *mišpāṭ* and *šadāqā* in their own behavior.³⁰¹ Consequently, a full future restoration would require not only God’s deliverance of his people from their external enemies but also his transforming of them internally to bring an end to domestic predation.

Isaiah 60–62 clearly speak of a glorious future for God’s people.³⁰² Chapters 60 and 62 portray this future as involving the coming of the people and wealth of the nations, the return, strength, security, and glory of God’s people, and the intimate relationship between God and his people. There is little in these chapters that speaks to

³⁰⁰Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 192.

³⁰¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 519 (“Thus the concepts are tilted more toward the salvific in this verse [v. 9], and more toward the behavioral in v. 14. But neither use is absolute.”).

³⁰²Achtemeier, *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56–66*, 80 [“After the mixture of conditional promises, scathing judgments, warnings, and calls to repentance of chapters 56–59, we find in the second section of Trito-Isaiah (chapters 60–62) nothing but unconditional, soaring, lyrical proclamations of salvation to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.”]; Christopher R. Seitz, “Isaiah 40–66,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 6:326 (entitling 60:1–62:12 “Zion’s Exaltation”); Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 532 (entitling 60:1–62:12 “The Lord Has Glorified You”).

the societal justice for which Isaiah 56:1 calls and for which Isaiah 59 cries out. The parallel between *ṣadāqâ* and *šālôm* in 60:17 and the fact that both expressions follow a promise of material abundance suggests that *ṣadāqâ* is there not directly concerned with the right exercise of power vis-à-vis the poor and needy. Likewise, the reference in 60:21 to the people all being *ṣaddîqîm* is placed between a promise of God’s perpetual blessing of his people and their secure possession of the land, making it again less likely that this term has societal justice in view. The occurrences of *ṣadāqâ* in 62:1 and *ṣedeq* in 62:2 (the first of which occurs in parallel with *yəšû ‘â*) so clearly have a salvific sense that NRSV and NIV translate them as “vindication.” Finally, although 62:12 prophesies Zion being called *‘am-haqqōdeš*, the context does not explicitly connect this new holiness with societal justice. It appears that, if the climatic chs. 60–62 are to speak not only to the future deliverance of God’s people but also to their future transformation with respect to societal justice, then chapter 61 must address the latter aspect.

The language of societal justice within Isaiah 61:1–11

Turning now to Isaiah 61, it is important to clarify that my argument will not be that Isaiah 61 speaks of future moral transformation (including societal justice) to the exclusion of future deliverance and national glory. Nor will I argue that any expression within Isaiah 61 refers solely to societal justice. Instead, I will argue that Isaiah 61 prophesies a glorious future using language that is intended (among other purposes) to lead Isaiah’s implied audience to acknowledge their duty to value and pursue societal justice, specifically in relation to the poor and needy members of their community.

The anointed speaker of 61:1 has been sent “to bring good news to the oppressed (*’ānāwîm*).” ESV and NIV translate *’ānāwîm* as “the poor.” *’ānāw* occurs at least two other times in Isaiah. The shoot and branch of Isaiah 11 “with righteousness . . . shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek (*lā ’anwê*) of the earth” (11:4). In 29:17–21, a day is anticipated in which the deaf will hear and the blind see, when “[t]he meek (*’ānāwîm*) shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the neediest people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel” (29:19). The cause of this transformation is stated in vv. 20: “For (*kî*) the tyrant shall be no more, and the scoffer shall cease to be; all those alert to do evil shall be cut off . . .” Verse 21 then specifies the work of these evil-doers: “those who cause a person to lose a lawsuit, who set a trap for the arbiter in the gate, and without ground deny justice to the one in the right.”³⁰³ A third possible occurrence is in 32:7, where villains “devise wicked devices to ruin the *poor* with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.”³⁰⁴ Even if the primary referent of *’ānāwîm* in 61:1 is the “community as a whole”³⁰⁵ or includes a “religious dimension,”³⁰⁶ its previous occurrences in contexts involving societal injustice or the remedy thereof should remind Isaiah’s implied audience of God’s concern for societal justice.

This same dynamic also holds for *dārôr* in 61:1, where the speaker says that he has also been sent “to proclaim liberty to the captives (*liqrō’ lišbūyim dārôr*).” Bergsma notes that “the phrase לקרא דרור is freighted with connotations of the jubilee year, as most

³⁰³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 539 (“all who watch to do evil are especially defined by v. 22 (*sic*) as those in political and judicial authority who are ever alert for ways to use their power to prey on the innocent”); Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 114 (“The way the evildoer acts is illustrated with vocabulary from the judicial arena.”).

³⁰⁴The MT has *’āniwîm*. The *qere* is *’ānyîm*, and the *ketiv* *’ānāwîm*.

³⁰⁵Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 299.

³⁰⁶Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:271.

scholars recognize.”³⁰⁷ In Leviticus 25:10, the Lord commanded Israel that, every fiftieth year, “you shall proclaim liberty (*ûqārā`tem dārôr*) throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family.” Whether Jeremiah 34:8–22 refers to the year of jubilee, the release of slaves of the seventh year, or an extraordinary proclamation of liberty, we again see a proclaiming of liberty (*liqôr dārôr*) (34:8, 15, 17) in a context of actual slavery. Likewise, the “year of liberty (*šənat haddārôr*)” in Ezekiel 46:17 refers to a context of actual servitude.³⁰⁸ Again, even if 61:1 refers not to “individuals in debt-servitude but a community in servitude to an imperial power”³⁰⁹ or whether the “Jubilee [in this verse] is undoubtedly used in a spiritual and eschatological sense,”³¹⁰ the presence of this language from God’s covenant with Israel should have reminded Isaiah’s implied audience of God’s concern for action that breaks the cycle of poverty.³¹¹ Still, it is not certain that 61:1 might not be referring to a proclamation of release for actual slaves. Westermann states: “The liberation of the captives does not mean the exiles, but, as in 58.6, people put in prison for debt and the like.”³¹² Williamson likewise notes that “it is

³⁰⁷Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 201; cf. Firth, “Spirit, Creation and Redemption in Isaiah,” (“It is widely recognized that the language here is linked to that of Jubilee in its concern for the poor . . .”).

³⁰⁸The only other occurrence of *dārôr* in the Old Testament is in Exodus 30:23 where “liquid myrrh (*mār-dārôr*)” has the sense of “fine-flowing” myrrh. BDB, s.v. “רֹרֶר.”

³⁰⁹Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 300.

³¹⁰Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 176.

³¹¹Smith argues against this possibility on the ground that “there is limited evidence that the Hebrews followed this practice throughout their history.” Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 634. It is not clear why the people’s prior obedience to a clear prescription should have been necessary for their right understanding of a prophesy that the prescription will yet be obeyed.

³¹²Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 366.

possible that the use of ‘liberty (*dʿrôr*)’ may point towards a more economic and social than political form of freedom from oppression.”³¹³ Whether directly or by implication, the proclamation of *dərôr* in 61:1 again shows God’s concern for societal justice in the life of his people.

The use of *ʿānāwīm* and *dərôr* in Isaiah 61:1 would have reminded Isaiah’s implied audience of Israel’s vocation to pursue societal justice by acting on behalf of the poor and needy members of the community. This would be true even though this text anticipates a future fulfillment. Just as God’s remembered past acts provided a rationale and incentive for his people’s pursuit of societal justice (Deut. 15:12–15; 24:17–18), so do his prophesied future acts.

This consideration of *ʿānāwīm* and *dərôr* leads on to an analysis of the promise of 61:3 that “[t]hey will be called oaks of righteousness (*ʿêlê haššedeq*).” As already noted, some translate this so as to preclude reference to moral conduct.³¹⁴ However, others interpret *šedeq* here as having a double meaning. Mark Gignilliat concludes that “[t]he term »righteous« here in Isaiah 61 is located within this dual understanding of righteousness both as gift and obligation.”³¹⁵ Goldingay translates the phrase as “oaks of faithfulness.” He argues that while this certainly includes “divine faithfulness,” the preceding context suggests that it might also include “a human commitment to doing

³¹³Williamson, *Variations on a Theme*, 185; cf. Childs, *Isaiah*, 791 (noting that the context of deliverance in Second Isaiah is “captivity and exile” while in Third Isaiah it is “economic slavery within the land”).

³¹⁴NJPS (“terebinths of victory”); Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 115 (“Terebinths of Victory”); Montague, *The Holy Spirit*, 54 (“In vs. 3 ‘oaks of justice’ probably does not refer to the ethical character of the new people of God but rather to the Lord’s saving justice which the restoration will glorify.”).

³¹⁵Mark S. Gignilliat, “Oaks of Righteousness for His Glory: Horticulture and Renewal in Isaiah 61,1–4,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123, no. 3 (2011): 403 (Gignilliat expressly rejects the translations “oaks of salvation” and “oaks of authenticity” because they foreclose “the multi-perspectival understanding of the lexeme.”).

right by one's community."³¹⁶ Jan Koole, noting the parallel between *šedeq* and *yəšû 'â* in 62:1 and the phrase *'ōšēh šedeq* in 64:4 [Eng. 64:5], concludes that "[t]he word [in 61:3] probably contains both elements."³¹⁷

A complete exegesis of Isaiah 61 with respect to societal justice would require that I also consider the text critical question in v. 8 and the occurrences of *šadāqâ* in vv. 10–11 in parallel with *yeša '* and *təhillâ*. However, I have already shown that “oaks of righteousness” in v. 3 is best understood to refer to God's people being both the beneficiaries of his righteous salvation and those characterized by righteous conduct. I have furthermore shown that whether the language of *'ānāwīm* and *dərôr* in v. 1 refers directly to action on behalf of the materially poor and literally enslaved or has its primary reference to action to deliver the nation from political oppression, the use of these terms would have directed Isaiah's implied audience to a consideration of God's concern for societal justice. Again, my argument is not that Isaiah 61 is exclusively or even primarily about societal justice; indeed, much of the chapter appear to have little connection to this theme. I instead accept Williamson's characterization of vv. 1–3 that the beneficiaries of the speaker “seem . . . to be an amalgamation of all the differing situations of distress that the book envisages: oppressed, broken-hearted, captives, prisoners, all who mourn and those of faint spirit. Self-evidently these are not descriptions of a single individual or group in just one position of need.”³¹⁸ I thus conclude that Isaiah 61 in part speaks to God's concern for societal justice as it is intended to move his people to act on behalf of the poor and enslaved.

³¹⁶Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, 306.

³¹⁷Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:278.

³¹⁸Williamson, *He Has Shown You What Is Good*, 102.

The relationship between divine spirit and societal justice in Isaiah 61:1–11

The speaker of Isaiah 61:1 defines his mission with seven infinitives: “to bring good news,” “to bind up,” “to proclaim (2x),” “to comfort,” “to provide,” and “to give” (61:1–3). As Westermann notes: “All that he has to do is speak. Nevertheless, in and through this proclaiming he is to effect a change on those to whom he is sent.”³¹⁹ The connection between proclamation and effect is secured by his possession of *rûah*.³²⁰ Indeed, the seven infinitives of the speaker’s mission may be seen as an echo of the seven-fold gifting of *rûah* to the shoot and branch in Isaiah 11:2.³²¹

John Bergsma has noted the connection between Isaiah 61:1–3 and Isaiah 49:7–9. He identifies a number of jubilee images in the latter text and notes that “[t]he prophet characterizes the Lord as personally enacting a jubilee on behalf of Israel.”³²² Discussing the move from a divine enactor of jubilee in ch. 49 to a human one in ch. 61, he observes: “This close association between the LORD and the ‘anointed one’ should not be surprising, since the ‘Spirit of the LORD’ rests on the ‘anointed,’ enabling him to perform acts proper to the LORD.”³²³ Koole likewise states, “by communicating his spirit, Yahweh

³¹⁹Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 366.

³²⁰Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God’s Kingdom*, 165 (“[T]he prophetic figure will serve as a herald of good news, whom the Spirit will empower to utter a message that will bring life to the despairing hearts of the faithful.”).

³²¹Achtemeier, *The Community and Message of Isaiah 56–66*, 89 [“That Spirit works to send the community to do a seven-fold task (cf. the seven-fold endowment of the Spirit in Isa. 11:2).”].

³²²Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 192.

³²³Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 202.; cf. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 500 (“It is the Spirit of this God – Sovereign, Saviour, Judge – which rests on the Anointed One so that he can work the works of God.”).

is present in the messenger, He speaks and acts in his person and work, and from this the messenger derives his authority.”³²⁴

Isaiah 61 speaks of (and as) one who will come empowered by divine spirit to proclaim and effect a comprehensive salvation that addresses every form of wrong, including societal injustice. This chapter is intended not only to produce anticipation in its implied audience for its final fulfillment but also to move them to receive the empowerment of divine spirit in their time and to work for the societal justice that the Lord will one day perfect. I thus conclude that this chapter portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice.

³²⁴Koole, *Isaiah III*, 3:270.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The six texts from Isaiah under consideration in this thesis (4:4–6; 11:1–9; 28:5–6; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; 61:1–11) yield diverse results on the topics of divine spirit and societal justice.

In all six texts *rûah* is connected to “the invisible activity of God in power through and amongst his covenant people”³²⁵ and cannot be understood as referring to natural phenomena (e.g., wind) or to aspects of common human life (e.g., breath or spirit as the principal of life). In 11:1–9; 32:15–20; 42:1–9; and 61:1–11 *rûah* comes from the Lord upon a person or people, making its identification as divine spirit straightforward. While some have interpreted 28:5–6 to say that God will bring about “a spirit of justice” in those who exercise judgment, I have concluded that the text instead speaks of God himself becoming a spirit of judgment, from which I have further concluded that 28:5–6 also speaks of divine spirit. Likewise, while some scholars interpret “a spirit of judgment” and “a spirit of burning” in 4:4 to refer to processes accomplished by God, my broad definition of divine spirit has allowed me to conclude that 4:2–6 also refers to divine spirit.

Two texts (11:1–9 and 32:15–20) contain vocabulary and are situated in contexts which make it clear that they speak of societal justice as expressed in a proper concern for the most vulnerable members of the covenant community. Both texts appear in contexts where those with power are acting against the interests of the poor and needy, and both anticipate the coming of rulers who will instead protect the poor and needy.

³²⁵Turner, “Holy Spirit,” 551.

Although I have concluded that 4:4–6; 28:5–6; and 61:1–11 speak of societal justice, this has required lengthier argumentation from vocabulary and context. The arguments in support of finding societal justice as a factor in 28:5–6 and 61:1–11 are particularly difficult. To conclude that 28:5–6 refers to societal justice, it is necessary to establish a strong biblical linkage between drunkenness and societal injustice toward the poor and needy. If it could be shown that drunkenness *per se* is the evil in view in the context of 28:5–6 (as opposed to drunkenness being the cause of some other evil), my argument would be severely weakened. My conclusion that 61:1–11 speaks of societal justice is dependent on recognizing that this passage is intended to speak very broadly. While 61:1–11 presents a comprehensive vision of shalom, some of its vocabulary and its place within chs. 56–66 make it likely that societal justice is included in that vision. The most challenging text in terms of identifying a connection with societal justice is 42:1–9. Despite the arguments of Williamson, I feel the significant weight of scholarship against finding such a connection. I conclude that it is unlikely that 42:1–9 refers to societal justice.

All of my texts with the exception of 4:4–6 clearly show divine spirit as directly involved in producing whatever form of “justice” is in view. In 11:1–9 and 42:1–9, the divine spirit is upon individuals with the effect that they act to establish justice. The Lord’s becoming “a spirit of justice” in 28:5–6 serves to reverse the patterns of bad governance seen in the preceding and following contexts. The pouring out of the spirit upon God’s people in 32:15–20 clearly results in the appearance of “justice” and “righteousness” (which often function as a hendiadys for societal justice) and should probably be understood as also bringing about the righteous rule of the king and princes

of v. 1. The speaker of 61:1ff. is able “to bring good news to the oppressed” and “to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners” because the “spirit of the Lord GOD is upon [him]” (61:1). In 4:4–6 it seems best to understand the work of the “spirit” as primarily being one of executing judgment against the people’s “filth” and “bloodstains” (4:4). While the result may be a people characterized by societal justice, the agency of divine spirit in this result is indirect.

Regarding my ultimate question as to whether Isaiah portrays divine spirit as an agent of societal justice, specifically with respect to proper concern for the poor and needy, my conclusion is that 11:1–9 and 32:15–20 clearly do so; 4:2–6, 28:5–6, and 61:1–11 likely do so; and 42:1–9 likely does not.

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