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The Wicked Wealthy in Isaiah 53:9

The meaning and pointing of עָשִׁיר in Isa 53:9 (usually rendered "rich")
remain controversial subjects and need resolution because of the importance
of this verse and chapter in the history of Old Testament (OT) messianic
interpretation.[1]   One approach has been to emend it to "evil-doers"
(עֹשֵׂי רַע).[2] Others leave the text as it stands in the MT, believing the text
anticipates or predicts the burial of Jesus in the tomb of the rich Joseph of
Arimathea.[3] The fact that "rich" is a tri-consonantal reversal of its parallel
term "wicked" (רְשָׁעִים // עָשִׁיר) has been noticed by a few commentators.
But since "rich" is not a normal parallel for "wicked," they conclude
emendation is the best solution.   Most, however, do not mention this
literary feature or see it as exegetically significant.

This article will argue that emendation is not required because "rich" can
provide a proper synonymous and semantic parallel to "wicked" in this text
and within its OT context.[4] These "rich" are the "wicked rich." While
rejecting the MT reading as the Hebrew word for "rich," some in principle
have agreed by proposing a sense like "rabble" based on an Arabic cognate.
What follows will establish that Isa 53:9 is not a prophecy applicable to the
wealthy Joseph in whose tomb Jesus was buried. A contribution to scholarly
debate on this matter is made, not by discovery of the interplay of common
letters for "wicked" and "rich," but by demonstrating that this play on words
is an intentional use of the word "rich" because it offers this pun and provides
a suitable synonymous parallel to the "wicked ones" of the preceding poetic
line. These "rich ones" in the OT cultural climate also would have been
considered disreputable people. This study hopes to answer the challenge
posed by Watts in his commentary on Isaiah: "*With a rich one* remains
unexplained. The phrase has been applied to Jesus   but it is difficult to
find the meaning in its original setting."[5] Further it will challenge the answer
given by Young's commentary: "There is no need to assume that עָשִׁיר
necessarily connotes rich men who are evil."[6] Isaiah 53:9a (the first of two bi-
cola in v. 9) will be shown to be a synonymous and symmetric parallelism:
a-b-c // [a']-b'-c' with a 3:2 word-count meter. The translation of this text
that will be defended is:

A	B	C
And-it-was-assigned	with-the-wicked	his-grave //

[A']	B'	C'
[And-it-was-allocated]	with-the-wealthy [oppressors]	his-death.

Survey of Modern Interpretations/Translations of Isaiah 53:9a

The issues that divide interpreters and translators of Isaiah 53:9a are evident when versions and commentaries are compared. Many leave interpretation open to the reader while others are minimally or highly interpretive, but rarely is עָשִׁיר rendered other than "rich."[7] Others also have accepted that "[the] rich [ones]" is a repetition of "[the] wicked ones" in Isa 53:9a. While concluding that "'rich' is not a natural [parallel] to 'wicked'," North makes reference to Nyberg's work in 1942 which insists that these terms are synonymous and uses the OT prophets' denunciations of the rich as proof.[8] What follows will pick up where Nyberg left off and provide similar and additional, yet hopefully more convincing, support for the synonymous parallel of "rich" and "wicked" in Isa 53:9a. What is new is the conviction that the author purposefully employed עשׁיר to symbolize the "wicked" (רשׁע), using this reversal of letters as a literary device to enable his readers to make the interchangeable connection between the wicked and the "wicked wealthy." Childs rejects this approach by saying that a link between the burial of the rich and wicked "hardly offers a natural parallel within Israel."[9] This is true in terms of the burial customs for each class of citizens, but the concern of the text of Isaiah 53:9 is with the fact that the Servant undeservedly was treated like a criminal (which concept is identified as those who are "wicked" // "rich"). Even Childs helps on this point by noting that this juxtaposition (wicked // rich) continues the typology of the Servant as the righteous and innocent sufferer of the Psalter.[10] Others, in line with Nyberg, as Childs points out, allow for "rich" to have, within its semantic range, the sense "rich through extortion."[11]

Exegesis of "Rich" in Isaiah 53:9a

The main controversy that surrounds Isa 53:9ai (וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ) is the meaning of the opening verb based on the root נתן ("give"; "place"). Regardless of how this is resolved, it has little or no bearing on whether עָשִׁיר in 9aii means "a rich one" or "the rich ([oppressive] ones)."[12]

The phrase וְאֶת־עָשִׁיר בְּמֹתָיו (53:9aii) is the great challenge for the exegete of this verse. Who is this rich one or rich ones? Why the plural expression "in his deaths"? Is the initial *waw* antithetical? Since the verse begins with a *wayyiqtol* (preterite, past-tense) verb, and not a *wᵉ-qatal* (so-called prophetic perfect), why do some say this text prophesies the death and/or burial of this servant with a rich man?[13] Is he Israel or an individual? Was he associated in death with the wealthy and wicked (synthetic parallel) or just the wicked (synonymous parallel) or, contrary to expectation, with the rich (antithetic parallelism)? Our concern is with the meaning of this clause in its

immediate literary, linguistic, and living contexts. Notably the NT does not use this text (Isa 53:9a) as one fulfilled by Jesus.[14] The term עָשִׁיר (("rich") is singular; but is it a collective (plural) or numerical (singular) single form in function?[15] The LXX uses plural forms for both "wicked" and "wealthy."

The poetics of Isaiah 53:9a are arguably those of a synonymous parallelism. The verb of 53:9ai must be supplied for 53:9aii and the final terms mirror each other ("his grave" and "in his deaths," which latter is often emended to "in his tomb"). All this warrants that the remaining and medial terms (adjectives) of 53:9ai and aii be viewed as mirror images.[16] Since "[the] wicked [ones]" is plural "rich" can be interpreted as a collective singular, i.e. "[the] rich [ones]." Further, since the context is about the intentional and/or actual mistreatment of a righteous one as if unrighteous, the mention of the "shearers" in 53:7 shows that the author is focused on the oppressors (cf. vv. 7a and 8a) of this "lamb" (cf. vv. 6-7). Such undeserved association with evil oppressors is the concern of Isaiah 53:9. As a result the initial *waw* of 53:9aii may be taken as pleonastic (stylistic and un-translated) or explicative ("even") rather than adversative ("but"; e.g., NASB uses "yet").

The Poetry and Poetics of Isaiah 53:9a

The Hebrew consonantal text of Isaiah 53:9a may be schematized as follows (cf. the MT major disjunctive accents):

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   c'          b'        [a]              c         b          a
ויתן את־רשעים קברו //  [יתן] ואת־עשיר במתיו  (9ai)
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(9aii)

It forms one line of a synonymous, incomplete bi-colon with a 3:2 word-stress meter.[17] As the mechanical layout of 53:9a above shows, 9aii is a mirror image of 9ai. Most telling is the fact that the words for "wicked" and "rich" share the same basic consonants but in reverse order, producing a kind of alliteration and assonance: ע+ // ר+שׁ+ע+י+ם

ש+י+ר (*rĕšā'îm* // *'āšîr*). This has been recognized previously by scholars.[18] But the main contention here is that this phonetic and morphological similarity was a pun intended to clarify that these "rich ones" are related to the "wicked ones." These are the wicked rich or wealthy oppressors. For those who interpret this oppressed servant messianically and individually, he would be treated like a criminal in his death and burial. He would be "assigned" by evil design a place with the dregs of society although he did not deserve it. This was the intention of the oppressors, regardless of what kind of tomb he actually received. For those who interpret this suffering servant as Israel (typologically messianic to some), the nation was unjustly treated as one deserving a dishonorable death or burial. This suffering servant, though not guilty of violence or verbal abuse (v. 9b, or if synonymous, only verbal violence), has a criminal's tribute and tomb planned for him. This proposed synonymy of "wicked" and "wealthy oppressors" is further strengthened by the fact that other approaches to explain contextually this term (עָשִׁיר) are: (1) to emend to עֹשֵׂי רָע "doers of evil"; or (2) to defer to an Arabic cognate

(thus Hebrew homograph) meaning "refuse [noun]" or "rabble"; or (3) to emend to "demons" (שֵׂעִרִים).[19] It should be noted that no textual data exist to support these or any other proposed emendations. We are left, therefore, to do the best we can exegetically with the text as it stands.

A major exegetical issue for many commentators is the plural form of the final term of 9aii "in his deaths" (בְּמֹתָיו).[20] The point of the various proposals is that this may have referred to a burial place or tomb built at a religious site.[21] An argument that tries to support the plural MT form "deaths" as original says that it refers to the nation of Israel rather than an individual, or it is a plural collective to parallel the singular collective in the synonymous colon.[22] "Tomb" is a more exact parallel with "grave" but "death" does not remove the synonymous nature of these two cola in Isaiah 53:9a. Whatever the conclusion ("death" or "tomb"), the evidence for the meaning of "rich" (עָשִׁיר) presented so far is not affected one way or the other.

Some suggest that the interpretation of the preposition (עַל) that begins the bi-colon immediately following (Isa 53:9b) does tip the scales one way or the other as regards the subject of Isaiah 53:9a. Oswalt, for example, notes that antithetical parallelism (thus adversative *waw*) for Isa 53:9a could be supported by a causal use of עַל in 53:9b; that is, that the original plans were thwarted due to the servant's righteousness.[23] But since synonymous parallelism is so likely in 53:9a, the preposition beginning the bi-colon of 53:9b must be taken as concessive "although," which is a rare but possible use of עַל.[24] However, regardless of whether one says "because he did no violence" or "although he did no violence," the arguments for the synonymous nature of Isaiah 53:9a stand.

The Wicked and Wealthy in the OT

The author of Isaiah 53 could expect his audience to relate to his parallel of "rich" and "wicked" and play on the shared root consonants because in their world of religious thought the "rich" were often considered disreputable. A number of OT passages support this,[25] as well as the collective use of singulars like "rich."[26] In the Book of Isaiah עָשִׁיר is a *hapax legomenon*.[27] It is found twenty-two other times in the OT.[28] Little is said of riches in Isaiah, when other words rendered "rich" are investigated. Mainly, riches are the spoils of the nations and salvation that God's people will receive eschatologically (Isa 25:6; 30:23; 33:6; 45:3; 60:5, 11; 61:6; 66:12). In Isa 10:3 wealth is left behind when disaster strikes. North notes that Nyberg insists the words "rich" and "wicked" in Isa 53:9a are synonymous and quotes the prophets' denunciations of the wealthy. In addition he quotes a Targum as identifying these "rich" as "rich in possessions they have obtained by violence."[29] The translation "a rich man" is viewed as pedantic since the singular Hebrew form (עָשִׁיר) is a collective (plural) in function.[30]

Synonymous Parallelism of Isaiah 53:9b

The bi-colon in 53:9b does not have to be synonymous in order for the

one in 53:9a to be synonymous, but then the likelihood that 53:9a is synonymous is strengthened. Most have taken 53:9b as synthetic but an argument can and will be made that it is synonymous. The following will show that this second bi-colon of 53:9 is synonymous: he did no violence [with his mouth] // that is, no deceit [was] in his speech.

The structure and poetry of this verse is suggestive of its synonymy:

[D]	C	B	A
[with his mouth]	he-did	no-wrong	Although
[בפיו	עשה	לא־חמס	על

D	[C]	B'² B'¹	[A]
with-his-mouth	[he-did]	and-no deceit	[Although]
בפיו	[עשה	ולא מרמה	[על

This results in a line of synonymous bi-colon, with the pattern a-b-c-[d] // [a]-b¹-b²- [c]-d, and a 3:3 word-stress meter. The *waw* beginning the second half of this parallelism is to be understood not as co-ordinative ("also") but as pleonastic (stylistic) or explicative ("even") or emphatic ("especially").[31] Reverse parallelism is perhaps less rare than often imagined.[32] The second member of the parallelism may contribute to the first, whereas most often it happens the other way around. Not only poetically is synonymy supported but also lexically and contextually. The word often rendered "violence" (חמס) can just mean "wrong [especially 'as a false witness']."[33] In context 53:9b is a flashback to v. 7, where the servant's mouth is first mentioned for its virtue: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (NRSV). The emphasis in context is on the lack of speech-related sins. He refused to be abusively defensive or to lash out verbally in revenge or anger at those who abused him. Isaiah 53:9b, then, may be read not as the servant's avoidance of physical and verbal retaliation but as only the latter, restated as reverse parallelism. The "violence" of Isa 53:9bi is the verbal violence of a false or hostile witness.[34] A key OT theme is the importance of knowing how and when to speak. OT wisdom literature abounds in advice about speaking seldom, sensibly, and sanely.[35] The Apostle Peter (1 Pet 2:21-24) may have reflected upon this OT spirituality in the light of Jesus' teachings,[36] when he recalled the words of Isa 53:9b to illustrate the sinless life of Christ, who stood silent before his accusers and went willingly and quietly to his undeserved crucifixion.

New Testament Use of Isaiah 53:9b

The NT does make messianic use of Isa 53:9b (1 Pet 2:22) while it nowhere employs 53:9a. Such an argument from silence does not prove the interpretation of "rich" as "[wicked] rich" as opposed to "rich [man]," but why the Apostles would have by-passed such a precise proof-text if they saw

a parallel between it and the rich Joseph of Arimathea is very curious. Peter, apparently, was more impressed with the typology of the parallel between the Isa 53 servant's silence than his burial, for whatever reasons. The interpretation being proposed merely clarifies that 53:9aii is a restatement of what is said about him in 53:ai (that he was treated like a criminal at the time of his death). Isaiah 53:9b adds that he was not deserving of such abuse; although (or "because") he had committed no violence or spoken deceitfully (as most versions have it). But as shown above this second bi-colon of 53:9 is likely synonymous, as is the previous one.

Immediately before Peter cites Isa 53:9b, he says that the way Jesus suffered is an example to believers (2:21), and immediately following he explains how this example is primarily in how he managed his mouth (2:23). Part of Matthew's account of Jesus' trial explains that he gave no answer to his accusers and refused to reply to a single charge from Pilate, to his amazement (Matt 27:12-14). Peter does not introduce this quotation with a formula of fulfillment or of it being a pronouncement of Scripture, and makes no reference to the OT author or book. He does employ it contextually, however, in a manner that indicates he understood Isa 53:9b (and presumably 9a et al.) as suitable for application to Jesus. But Peter's version of Isa 53:9b is more reflective of the Greek than Hebrew OT. Instead of "he did no violence [or 'devised no scheme'] " of the MT, 1 Peter 2:22 has "who committed no sin" (cf. LXX "because he practiced no lawlessness").[37] Apparently Peter wanted to emphasize that the Messiah (Jesus) was sinless not just innocent of particular types of wrongdoing or harm (physical or verbal). While the LXX uses "because," Peter chooses to focus on this sinless character, and is not concerned with the connection to 53:9a.

Conclusion

Challenging the consensus of opinion that "rich" (עָשִׁיר) in Isa 53:9aii is either synthetically or antithetically related to "wicked ones" (רְשָׁעִים) in 53:9ai, this examination of Isa 53:9 has determined that the relationship is most likely synonymous, and that the best translation of עָשִׁיר is as a collective singular adjective functioning as a plural indirect object (the same as "wicked ones" in the previous colon): "rich [ones]." Further the common association of wealth and wickedness in the OT world suggests that within this synonymous parallelism, the full sense is "[the] wealthy [wicked]." The author's intention in v. 9 was to tell about the servant's undeserved suffering (v. 9b), wherein he was portrayed and processed as a criminal in his death and burial by his persecutors and prosecutors (v. 9a). The plan of these evil people (rich and reprobate) was to place him among the refuse of mankind (v. 9a), even though he had committed no violent and verbal crimes (v. 9b). The synonymy of "wicked" and "wealthy" is strengthened by the fact that these two Hebrew words share the same basic consonants, but in reverse order. The author intended his readers to take this as a sign that "wicked" of the preceding parallel line is intertwined with the "wealthy" of v. 9aii. Therefore

emendation of עֹשֵׂיר to "doers of evil" (עֹשֵׂי רַע) as often resorted to, in spite of no textual evidence, is unnecessary. The content, construction, and context of Isa 53:9 argue for a synonymous parallelism not only in v. 9a but also in 9b. This depends on accepting the presence of reverse parallelism in both cases in addition to observing how other structures and statements in the immediate and more distant contexts support the synonymous nature of these two bi-cola. Consequently the proposal being made is that "violent" of v. 9bi be understood as a counterpart to "no deceit was in his mouth" of v. 9bii. The synonymy of Isa 53:9a is not dependent on this but is strengthened by it. It was demonstrated that OT thought is replete with concepts about the frequent wickedness that comes from wealthy and powerful people, the servant's (or for some the Messiah's) verbal virtue, and the righteousness of speaking the right words at the right time. Silence or economy of words is highly praised. The S/servant especially is praised for being quiet before his enemies and not sinning verbally. A case has been made for the understanding of Isaiah 53:9 as a text that reveals that (1) the suffering servant would be handled by his opponents as a criminal in regard to his death and burial (53:9a); and (2) this treatment would be unfair and unjust because this servant had never sinned verbally or had never acted violently or retaliated verbally (53:9b).

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End Notes

[1] TDOT recognizes this verse as "the most disputed text" (as regards this term in the OT) which many and especially older scholars consider corrupt. G. Johannes Botterweck , Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament [TDOT], vol. XI: 419 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), s.v. עָשִׁיר by Sæbø.

[2] Cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), s.v. עָשִׁיר ; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 348; Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 231; A. Schoors, *Jesaja II. De Boeken van het Oude Testament Deel IXB* (Roermond: J. J. Roman & Zonen, Uitgevers, 1973), 326; C. C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 420; and Claus Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja 40-*

66 (Göttingen: Bandenhoed & Ruprecht, 1966), 205, n. 6; and F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, transl. James Martin, 2 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973 rpt. ed.), II: 327

³ Cf., as representative of much Evangelical popular scholarship, the *Moody Monthly* article by Allan A. Macrae, which argues that the *waw* connecting each parallel line must be adversative ("but") and that the singular "rich" must mean "a rich man." See Allan A. Macrae, "With the Rich in His Death," *Moody Monthly* (September 1976): 70. For a defence of the messianic prophecy position cf. E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3: chapters XL-LXVI, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), 353, n. 34.

⁴ In this article parallelism of the verses concerned will be described in traditional terms as synonymous, synthetic, or antithetic for convenience sake. While the author is very aware of the modern trends and theories regarding the nature of parallelism, these do not prove that the categories of synonymy or antithesis are not valid in many cases. "Synthetic" masks the great variety and complexity and mystery of bi-cola that are not strictly synonymous or antithetical, but time and space do not allow me to discuss these matters here. Suffice it to say that the following essay is an argument for the recognition of synonymy in these verses, regardless of the fact that many OT poetic passages or verses are monocola, tricola, or simple statements of "A, also B." It is well recognized that the OT poets could work apart from parallelism when desired or required; and that debate continues over the precise nature of meter and parallel thought, as well as the concept and character of Hebrew poetry. See e.g. publications by (see Selected Bibliography) A. Berlin, James Kugel, R. Alter, J. P. Fokkelman, A. Schökel, A. Cooper, M. O'Connor, F Landy, W. Watson, and D. Clines, *inter alia.*

⁵ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 231.

⁶ Young, 353, n. 34.

⁷ Among more recent and popular English versions, the NIV has "He was assigned a grave with the wicked [plural], and with the rich [singular] in his death" while NRSV has "tomb" instead of "death." If this is a synonymous bi-colon then the singular "rich" would have to be taken as a collective singular (singular in form but plural in function). NASB interprets the text as an intentional messianic prediction: "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death." But Blenkinsopp translates: "His grave was located with the wicked, his sepulcher with reprobates." Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 345. Along similar lines North offered: "And they gave him burial among felons, And with the dregs of men when he died." North, *The Second Isaiah*, 65. To move away from just English texts, and more traditional by contrast, Baltzer has "Und Er gab ihm bei Verbrechern sein Grab und bei einem Reichen seine Stätte." Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Jesaja* (Gütersloh, GR: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 494. Luther's text reads: "Und man gab ihm sein Grab bei Gottlosen und bei Übeltätern, als er gestorben war." *Die Heilige Schrift* (Philadelphia: The National Bible Press, 1967), 669.

⁸ North, *The Second Isaiah*, 231; citing H. S. Nyberg, "Smärtornas man. En studie till Jes. 52, 13-53, 12," *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 7 (1942), 5-82.

⁹ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 417

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. But no footnote is offered to tell who these are.

¹² KJV has the strange but literal "he made his grave," which represents the kind of translation that lead to the desire for emendation. Cf. Baltzer, *Deutero-Jesaja*, 494. Childs, *Isaiah*, 408; C. C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 253; North, *The Second Isaiah*, 65; Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 2ⁿᵈed. (Oxford:University Press, 1956), 122; Claus Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja 40-66* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 205; Schoors, *Jesaja II*, 326; Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, s.v. נתן. The verb as it stands has an indefinite subject, which apparently led Torrey to translate it "appoint." See Torrey, 253, 420. Exegetes face the urge to re-point the verb as passive ("he/it was assigned") or use a third plural subject ("they appointed"). Change וַיִּתֵּן *wayyittçn* either to וַיֻּתַּן *wayyuttan* or וַיִּתְּנוּ *wayyitt'nû*. This latter option follows 1QIsaᵃ ויתנו Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 348. Blenkinsopp renders it "located." Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 345. The LXX, interestingly, has the equivalent word but uses a future tense and 1ˢᵗ-person pronoun ("and I will give"), whereas the MT is unmistakably past tense and 3ʳᵈ-person. Similarly the Vulgate employs the future tense but stays with the 3ʳᵈ-person subject ("and he shall give"). Sapp has suggested that the consonantal text of MT or Qumran represents a present tense imperfect (ויתן *wytn* "he gives" or ויתנו *wytnw* "they give"). Sapp takes the Qumran text as a corrective on the MT. David A. Sapp, "The LXX, 1QIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, ed. William R. Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 190. With simple *waw* these could be interpreted, alternatively, as future tense, since the morphology would be the same—context making the difference. Some argue for an active form with passive function. E.g. Macrae alludes to examples in Gen 11:9; 48:1; Am 6:12; and Mic 2:4. See Macrae, "With the Rich in His Death," 70. But none of these examples uses נתן.

¹³ Of interest is the fact that only Matthew finds it necessary to speak of Joseph's wealth (cf. Matt 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; and John 19:38-42).

¹⁴ However, Peter does utilize Isaiah 53:9b (the second of the two bi-cola in v. 9; cf. 1 Pet 2:22), which suggests a mindset among the Apostles that the entire verse and perhaps chapter are Christological, at least by application. Peter calls Christian slaves to follow Christ's example of not retaliating against those who mistreat them but rather fully trust in God (cf. 1 Pet 2:18-24). Isaiah 53:9b is quoted as a proof-text that Christ did not retaliate verbally when insulted on the Cross, what Peter calls "the tree"(1 Pet 2:21-24). The text, if messianic, only· foreshadows or foretells that the S/servant will be treated in purpose, if not in practice, as a criminal when dead and buried, although he committed no crime.

¹⁵ This is handled in one of two ways by the versions. NRSV, KJV, NKJV, NIV, and JB (to name a few) all read "with the rich"; while the ASV and NASB, for example, have "with a rich man." The former versions take this word as a collective singular while the latter ones as a numerical singular. LXX and Vulgate have "and the rich" (respectively, καὶ τους πλουσίους and et divitem) as well as Syriac (*'tyr*) and Targum (עתירא *'attîrê*). Macrae's argument ("With the Rich in His Death," 70-71) that something must be added after "rich" is insightful, but this does not mean that "man" must be added. It is just as reasonable to add "ones." His point that languages like German and Hebrew often use a singular adjective like

rich to mean "rich man" applies equally to "rich men." The definite use of anarthrous nouns in Greek or Hebrew is well documented. In OT poetry many nouns are definite without the definite article prefixed. Nothing in the Hebrew language indicates clearly that an anarthrous noun (as "wicked ones" in Isa 53:9ai) applies to a small number of people while if definite it would mean "a large group." The surrounding context defines this wicked group as more than a few.

¹⁶ Cf. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, *NICOT*, ed. R. K. Harrison and R. L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 397 Oswalt urges that the text must not be made to say more than it does by forcing an antithetical parallelism onto a text that structurally is clearly synonymous. Delitzsch (*Isaiah*, II: 326-29) argues in much linguistic detail for the traditional "rich," also compelled by the presupposition of Jesus' fulfillment of the verse. Disagreement with Delitzsch is not on a linguistic and lexical basis but a poetical and hermeneutical one. He is bothered by Luther's marginal gloss "a rich man who sets all his heart upon riches, *i.e.* a wicked man" (p. 327), the very view this article supports. Delitzsch wrote when conservative scholars had fewer hermeneutical options than today, especially with our expanded understanding of how the NT uses the OT in light of first-century Jewish exegesis. But as will be shown, the understanding of "rich" as synonymous with "wicked" does not remove a valid messianic application to Jesus, it just restricts the fulfillment to his being treated like a criminal rather than that plus being buried in a rich man's tomb. The translation of עָשִׁיר in Isa 53:9aii is properly "rich" as Delitzsch and others demonstrate. Its interpretation or application in the context of Isa 53, the poetry of v. 9, and biblical prophecy is that of "[the wicked] wealthy." "Rich" here parallels "wicked ones" so is a figurative way to restate the latter (which is the first group named in Isa 53:9ai, followed by its counterpart "rich [ones]" in 53:9aii). Word meanings (usages) are principally governed by context and in poetry to parallelism. Authors are not restricted to common lexical options especially when writing poetically.

¹⁷ The word order (explicit or implicit) for each member of the parallel line is verb + indirect, adjectival object + direct object (V/S + IO + DO). Poetic analysis of OT Hebrew continues to be controversial and subject to various systems and nomenclature. Whatever scheme or terminology is employed, the synonymous nature of this passage (Isa 53:9a and/or 9b) is made plausible if not probable by issues of context and structural and literary features that do not change regardless of how the poetics are labeled or counted. For Isaiah in particular see Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity. The Literary Structure of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994. For surveys of theories of OT poetic techniques see among many other valuable or classic books and articles, Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, JSOTS Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2ⁿᵈ edition, 1986); James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, transl. G. Gregory, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1971 reprint of 1787 ed.); and L. A. Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988).

¹⁸ See, e.g., North, *The Second Isaiah*, 231, who notes the alliteration; Baltzer, *Deutero-Jesaja*, 527, who points out the reversal of the consonants רשע *r-š-ʿ* and עשר *ʿ-š-r* was previously observed by Gesenius. North makes no more out of this than to defer to an emendation to עשׂי רע "those doing evil." Baltzer only

comments on this word-play in passing and agrees that the "rich" is somehow related to an "evil doer" ("Frevler"); then moves on to what he considers the most pressing exegetical matter for this verse, the plurality of "death" in 9aii.

[19] The Arabic cognate *'šr* ("wicked") could suggest a Hebrew consonantal homograph (עשׁר) that is used just this one time in the OT literary corpus. In transmission it could have been corrupted to עשׁיר (and this form is a *hapax* in Isaiah). Of course this is highly conjectural. Cf. J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976 rpt. of 1953 ed.), II: 301-302; and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, II: 327 North (*The Second Isaiah*, 231) cites A. Guillaume's reference to Arabic *!uŏrᵘⁿ* "rabble" or "refuse of mankind." Cf. A. Guillaume, "A Contribution to Hebrew Lexicography," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* XVI/1 (1954): 10. For the "demons"hypothesis see D. W. Thomas, "A Consideration of Is 53 in the Light of Recent Textual and Philological Study," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 44 (1968), 79-86.

[20] The entire phrase "and with a wealthy one [or 'the wealthy'] in his deaths" is usually deemed unintelligible, so re-punctuation is resorted to automatically (בָּמָתוֹ *bāmātô* instead of בְּמֹתָיו *běmōtāw*), since the change affects only the removal of one letter, the *yod* from the MT. This changes the meaning to "his burial mound" or "his sepulcher"(following Albright's proposal). Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 348 and R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, The New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1975), 178, both who cite W. F. Albright's 1957 essay in *The High Place in Ancient Palestine*, Volume du Congrès: Strasbourg, *VTSup* 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957),242-58, and noting that this option may also be supported by 1QIsaᵃ Since this approach preserves the consonantal text, with the minor exception of the removal of a vowel letter which may have been inserted later by the *Naqdanim*, it is arguable and plausible that here we are dealing with a lexical rather than transcriptional error (although accepting that the vowel points were applied to the wrong word, the authoritative consonantal text remains unchanged). Rather than reading preposition בְּ+ "death/s"(מוֹת) + possessive pronominal suffix 3ms (*waw*), the root is במה "back, hill, ridge, high place"> במות "high place(s)" or "great high place(s)." The ה suffix may be interpreted otherwise as feminine or abstract (Ugaritic cognate is *bmt*, "back"). One wonders why not just suggest בְּמֹתוֹ "in his death"as better alternative, since "[the] rich [one]" is singular morphologically if not functionally.

[21] *BDB* wonders if "funeral mound" is the meaning in Ezek 43:7, a passage among a few others that Albright considered to validate במות as "funeral mounds" or "tombs." Cf. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, gen. eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 5 vols., rev. W. Baumgartner and J. J. Stamm et al., transl. M .E. J. Richardson, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994-2000), s.v. במה, where one meaning given is "Canaanite grave" (cf. Ezek 43:7; and Job 27:15 as a conjecture). Still this view is currently thought unlikely by some authorities. See Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand

Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996)s.v. במה by Martin J. Selman, where only Isa 6:13; 53:9; and Ezek 43:7 are possible supports.

²² Cf. "Is Isaiah 53:9 refering [sic] to Jesus?"(www.geocities.com/Athens/ Agora/4229/isaiah.htm); but even if a collective plural or not, if the text is about the nation, the nation may be typological of and, therefore, applicable to the Messiah as a retrospective historical parallel (picture or anticipation or foreshadowing). Plural collectives are known in the Hebrew OT, e.g. the well-known אלהים "gods" used as the proper name of the one, true God. Other uses are for intensity or abstraction. Plural collectives also are common in Arabic (cf. Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and rev. T. Muraoka, Vol. 2, *Part Three:Syntax* (Rome: Editice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1991), 497-502. NRSV renders במתיו as "tomb" following the proposal of the editors of *BHS*. Qumran reads בומתו. Cf. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 226; North, *Second Isaiah*, 231; Sapp, "The LXX, 1QIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53," 178, n. 10. Singular "death" is found in Greek, Syriac, and Latin OT versions, as well as by Qumran and Targums.

²³ Isa 53:9 (a or b) is not mentioned in Jo•e Krašovec, *Antithetic Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 35 (Leiden: E. J. Brill. 1984).

²⁴ E.g. see Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, 397-98. In support of the concessive use of the preposition על, Oswalt cites Job 10:7; 16:17; and 34:6). The point of 53:9, for Oswalt, is to highlight the final irony of this Servant's life. He was not buried with the poor, who had been his faithful companions in life but was surrounded in death (not burial) with those who oppressed him and whose sins he carried (Ibid., p. 398). In this way Oswalt tries to makes sense out of the use of "grave" in 53:9ai and "death" in 53:9aii.

²⁵ Cf. 2 Sam 12:1-4; Job 27:13, cf. v. 19 (and note the word play between "rich" and "ruthless"[עשיר '*šyr* and עריץ '*ryṣ*]); 31:24; Psa 49:5 (6 MT); 52:9; Prov 11:28; 18:23; 22:7, 16; 28:6, 11; Eccl 4:8; Mic 6:12 (using the same word for "violence" as in Isa 53:9b); Amos 4:1; et al. See Schoors, *Jesaja II*, 326, who also recognizes promised riches for those who fear Yahweh(Psa 112:3; Prov 22:4). In the NT cf. Mat 19:23-24; Lk 6:24 (which proves the "poor" of v. 20 are the economically poor); 16:19-25; 1 Tim 6:17; Jas 1:9-11; 2:5-7; 5:1-6.

²⁶ Exod 30:15; Jer 9:23 (22 MT); Ruth 3:10; Job 27:13 ("wicked man" parallels "ruthless ones"); Psa 37:16 ("righteous"// plural "wicked"); 49:2 (3 MT); Prov 22:2; 28:11; Eccl 5:12 (11 MT); [cp. Eccl 10:6 (where collective singular "fool" parallels plural "rich")]; possibly Eccl 10:20.

²⁷ Genesius speaks of both "good" and "bad"wealth as options of meanings for עשיר. The latter is the sense of "haughty" or "impious" given that riches are a source of pride and pride in the OT is impiety. In relation to Isa 53:9 he cites Job 27:19, "They go to bed with wealth, butwill do so no more; they open their eyes, and it is gone"(NRSV). Cf. *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, transl. Samuel P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), s.v. עשיר. DCH still lacks the volume containing this Hebrew term (cf. David J. A. Clines, gen. ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 5 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1993-2001), hereafter DCH. Vol. 6 is forthcoming (November 2007).

²⁸ Exod 30:15(where the arthrous and collective singular form appears for "rich" and "poor"); 2 Sam 12:1-2, 4; Jer 9:23 (22 MT); Mic 6:12; Psa 45:12 (13 MT); 49:3; Job 27:19; Prov 10:15; 14:20; 18:11, 23; 22:2, 7, 16; 28:6, 11; Ruth 3:10; Eccl 5:11; 10:6, 20.

²⁹ North, *The Second Isaiah*, 231.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ NRSV, JB, and NEB have "and"; ASV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, NIV, NAB, Vulgate, and LXX have "nor" or "neither."

³² See David Noel Freedman, "What the Ass and the Ox Know—But the Scholars Don't," *Bible Review* 1:1 (February 1985):42-43.

³³ Cf. Gen 16:5 where NIV has "wrong" (also Job 19:7; 21:27; Prov 8:36). In several passages this term is used in a context of false speech (e.g. Exod 23;1; Deut 19:16; Jer 51:46; Mic 6:12; Psa 27:12; 35:11). See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon*, s.v. חמס, where the following verses are given for this term meaning a witness who does wrong or false witness: Exod 23:1; Deut 19:16; Psa 35:11. There is a homograph (II חמס) that means "devise,"and this fits the context better, although this is speculative and not firmly fixed in Hebrew lexicography. It can be considered, however, as a possible solution. Cf. Koehler and Baumgartner, s.v. חמס II, which compares Syriac *ḥmas* "to devise"; and Arabic *hamasa* "to mumble"; cf. Job 21:27, " the schemes by which you would wrong [חמס]me." Cf. VanGemeren, *NIDOTTE*, s.v. II חמס, by *John E. Hartley,* which word is said to mean "think, invent" (cf. Syriac "meditate, muse, study"); the verb in Job 21:27 is said to be related to this Syriac cognate. DCH mentions this verse and others in Job in relation toIIחמס, but in line with its lexical philosophy gives no etymological data.

³⁴ For 53:9bii NAB has "spoken any falsehood"; NEB "spoken no word of treachery"; JB "no perjury in his mouth."

³⁵ Cf. Job 2:9-3:1; Prov 4:24; 6:12; 13:3; 17:27;18:7; Eccl 5:2, 6; 6:11; 9:17; 10:12, 13; 1:10.

³⁶ Cf. Matt 6:7; 12:34, 37; 15:11.

³⁷ ὅς ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν cf. ὅτι ἀνομίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν. This influenced the Vulgate, "he had done no iniquity"(imquitatem non fecerit).