

**THE UNIVERSALISM OF ISA 56:1-8 VIS-A-VIS JESUS' GOSPEL OF
INCLUSION IN MK 11:17D**

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Abstract

Isa 56:1-8 serves as the prologue of 56-66. This passage is characterized by its universalism. It specifies what makes one to belong to the community of God's people in the era of salvation: keeping justice, practicing righteousness, observing the Sabbath, holding fast to what is good, and refraining from evil. "Justice" (mišpāt) emphasizes more the order desired by God, and "righteousness" (ṣeḏāqāh) accords with conformity to societal norms of justice. It also includes the elimination of anything that is at variance to peace and good order. These are the ideals which the prophet calls his hearers to hold fast to as they await the era of salvation. The imminent salvation is open to all nations. In this, Isa 56:7 concludes with a strikingly universalistic note. It states that God's salvific purpose is for all peoples without restriction. God's salvific action involves drawing people together. This article studies Isaiah's message of inclusion (Isa 56:1-8) in the light of Jesus' Gospel of inclusion in Mk 11:17d. The work uses an exegetical method of biblical analysis. The Bible version employed in this work is the New Revised Standard Version.

Keywords: Justice, Righteousness, Salvation, House, Sabbath, Foreigner, Eunuch.

Introduction

The question of who can become members of the cultic community is one of the concerns addressed by Isa 56:1-8. The passage addresses the concerns raised by two groups of people – the foreigner and the eunuch. The foreigner expresses fear of exclusion from the community (v.3a). The eunuch does not protest about any exclusion but about his childless situation (I am a dried-up tree, v. 3b) which seems to offer him no stake in the new era of salvation. The prophet responds to these concerns with an oracle of inclusion. God's house is open to all without exception. The prophet announces a changed

understanding of the membership of the community. It is no longer determined by ethnic or national considerations, but by a level of moral performance – doing what is right and holding fast to Yahweh’s covenant (vv.1f, 4, 6). This oracle lays the door open to people who were formerly thought to be excluded. Now the previous lines of exclusivity are broken down and the expanse of God’s mercy is extended. The prophet declares that God’s salvific purpose is directed to all people without restriction.

Structural and Stylistic Feature of Isa 56:1-8

Isa 56:1-8 falls into a three-fold structure: vv.1-2; 3-7; 8.¹ The passage is characterized by repetitions that express emphasis. The recurrence of the verb *šāmar* (keep) in vv.1-2, 4, and 6 creates a coherent movement and unity.² Secondly, it helps to underline the author’s central theme of the necessity of human response to the imminent divine intervention.³ The triple repetition of the root *qbs* (to gather) in v. 8a stresses the salvific gathering of the people by the Lord God. The divine name ‘Yahweh’ reoccurs seven times (vv.1a, 3a, 3b, 4a, 6a, 6b, 8a), three times in the context of speech formulas common to the prophetic writings: “Thus says the Lord” (vv. 1a, 4a) and “says the Lord” (v. 8a). These repetitions are a reminder that it is God’s word which is given.⁴

Background and date of Isa 56:1-8

Deut 23:1-8 has often been seen as a possible source of the lament by the foreigner in Isa 56:3a. Deut 23:3a mentions the nationalities whose descendants should not be admitted to the assembly of the Lord - the Ammorites or Moabites even to the tenth generation. In ancient Judaism, foreigners were not allowed to participate in the cult (Exod 29:33; 30:33; Lev 29:10, 12-13; Num.1:51; 3:10, 38; 16:40; 18:4, 7). Even their animals were considered unsuitable for sacrifice (Lev 22:25).⁵

Another possible background of Isa 56:1-8 is Ezek 40-48, which constitutes a restoration program for the post-exilic community. Ezek 44:9 strongly prohibits the inclusion of foreigners (*benê-nēkār*) in the liturgy: “Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner...shall enter my sanctuary.” The third possible background of Isa 56:1-8 is the rigorism of Ezra/Nehemiah in post-exilic Judah, which appeared to forbid the inclusion of foreigners

¹ P. R. Ackroyd, “Isaiah”, the *Interpreter’s One Volume Commentary on the Bible*. (Nashville: Abingdon. 1971): 365-366.

² C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 40-66, NIB VI* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

³ P. A. Smith, “Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The Structure, Growth and Authorship in Isaiah 56-66,” *SVT 62* (New York: Brill, 1995): 53.

⁴ C. Westermann. *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*. (Philadelphia: Westminster press. 1967): 93-95.

⁵ E. J. Hamlin, “foreigner,” *IDB 2* (E-J), G. A. Buttrick (Ed). (New York: Abingdon Press. 1962): 310.

(Neh13:3) to the post-exilic community. Nehemiah, apparently on the grounds of Deut 23:3 (MT 23:4), demanded the annulment of the marriages with non-Israelite women (Neh 13:1f). If we read Isa 56:1-8 in light of the demand by Ezra/Nehemiah, then it is not surprising that the foreigners who had become part of the faith expressed fear of possible exclusion from the community.⁶

Isaiah breaks new ground in calling for the inclusion of foreigners and eunuchs (who were normally excluded) into the worshipping community. Isa 56:1-8 broadens the boundaries of who can belong to the worshipping community. Most authors date Isa 56:1-8 to post-exilic period.⁷

Analysis of Isa 56:1-8

Isaiah 56:1-8 serves as the prologue of Isa 56-66. The passage begins with the messenger formula, “thus says the Lord” (*kōh 'āmar yhw̄h*) and concludes with the oracular formula (*ne'ūm 'āḏōnāy yhw̄h*). The messenger formula, “thus says the Lord”, in v.1a and v.4a, gives authority to the prophetic declaration. The formula serves to attribute divine authority to the prophetic oracle.⁸ The oracular formula in v. 8a adds a further note of finality and summarizes the oracle which the prophet proclaims as the explicit will of God.

Isa 56:1-2: The Way of Justice Toward Salvation

Verses 1-2 center on the theme of imminent salvation. Isa 56:1 begins with an exhortation: “keep justice” (*šimrū mišpāt*) and “do righteousness” (*'āšū šedāqāh*, v.1ab) and proceeds to announce the imminence of God’s salvation: “for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed” (v.1b). This salvation is open to those who “keep justice” and “do righteousness.”

The imperative, “keep justice” (*šimrū mišpāt*) in v.1a, is parallel to “do righteousness” (*'āšū šedāqāh*) in v.1b. The imperative “keep” (*šimrū*) introduces an accusative of obligation, i.e., what ought to be done, i.e., *mišpāt* and *šedāqāh*. The primary meaning of *mišpāt* is right judgment.⁹ In 59:14b, *mišpāt* refers to human relations in public life. The

⁶R. N. Whybray. *Isaiah 40-66*. (Philadelphia: Westminster press. 1990): 197-198.

⁷C. E. Hammock, “Isaiah 56:1-8 and the Redefining of the Restoration Judean Community” *BTB* 30 (2000): 49 (46-57); J. L. McKenzie, “Isaiah,” *Dictionary of the Bible* (1965): 402; McKenzie. *Second Isaiah* (1968): 151; R. N. Whybray. “Isaiah 40-66,” *New Century Bible Commentary*. (London: Eerdmans. 1990): 41; C. R. North. “Isaiah”. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (1962): 742; A. S. Herbert. *The book of the prophet Isaiah 40-66* (1975): 133.

⁸B. S. Childs. *Isaiah*. (London: John Knox Press. 2001): 455.

⁹B. Johnson, “*mišpat*” in *TDOT* 9, G. J. Botterweck (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1998): 93.

absence of justice (*mišpāt*) implies a breach in the relation between humans or between Israel and God.¹⁰ Justice and righteousness often form a word pair (cf. Isa.1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 28:17; 32:16; 33:5; 58:2; 59:9, 14), and can be regarded as synonyms. As J. L. Koole has said, “justice” (*mišpāt*) emphasizes more the order desired by God, and “righteousness” (*ṣedāqāh*) stresses more the fellowship between God and people and between people themselves.¹¹ Righteousness, according to R. Sutherland, accords with conformity to societal norms.¹² For F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs (BDB) “keeping justice” implies doing what is ethically right.¹³ The prophet calls his hearers to hold fast to these ideals as they await the era of salvation.

For My Salvation comes, my justice revealed (v.1b)

The sequence of thought here moves from “exhortation”: “keep justice/do righteousness” in 56:1a to the declaration of the imminence of salvation in 56:1b: “for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.” The conjunctive particle *kī* (for) in 56:1 introduces the motive clause and ushers in the reason why one should heed the call in v.1a: “for soon my salvation will come.”¹⁴

The Hebrew term “*ṣedāqāh*” is used in two senses in Isa 56:1. In v.1a *ṣedāqāh* is used in the Proto-Isaian sense of “righteousness”; in v.1b, it is used in the Deutero-Isaian sense of “deliverance.”¹⁵ The practice of righteousness (*ṣedāqāh*, v.1a) is motivated by the imminence of God’s deliverance (*ṣedāqāh*, v.1b). What compels righteousness is the recognition that God is going to keep his covenant promises. The author calls on his listeners to be righteous because of the righteousness of God. Although this divine redemptive act is not yet visible, its dawn is in the imminent future (Is 56:1, cf. 5).¹⁶

Salvation Open to all Humans (v.2).

¹⁰ D. Kendall, “The use of *mišpat* in Isa.59,” *ZAV* 96 (1984): 399 (391-405).

¹¹ J. L. Koole. *Isaiah Part III, Vol 3: Isaiah 56-66, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Louvain: Peters. 2001): 7.

¹² R. Sutherland. “Righteousness” in *The Lutherworth Dictionary of The Bible*. (Cambridge: The Lutherworth Press, 1994): 766.

¹³ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs (BDB), *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson. 2003 [originally published 1906]): 842.

¹⁴ G. J. Polan. *In the Way of Justice Toward Salvation: A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56-66*, American University Studies VII, Theology and Religion. (New York: Peter Lang. 1986): 56; cf. L. Koehler et al, *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (CD-ROM Edition, 1994-2000).

¹⁵ J. W. Olley. *Righteousness in the Septuagint of Isaiah: A Contextual Study*. (Missoula: Scholars Press. 1979): 71.

¹⁶ L. Koehler, et al. *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (CD-ROM Edition, 1994-2000); BDB. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson. 2003): 97.

Verse 2 begins by proclaiming as blessed those who keep justice and practice righteousness. This macarism proclaimed in v.2 broadens its scope and includes all who “keep the Sabbath” and “hold fast” Yahweh’s covenant (v.6c). Verse two identifies those who will share in God’s salvation. It is open to all humans (*ben-’ādām*, *’ēnōš*). The two words, *’ēnōš* (mortal) and *ben-’ādām* (human being, literally, son of Adam), are used in the most generic and universal sense. In OT usage, *’ādām* and *’ēnōš* refer to mankind in general.¹⁷ This suggests that the salvation which is proclaimed as coming applied to humanity in general. The noun construct *kol* is inclusive. The blessedness applies to “all” (*kol*) who practice justice and keep the Sabbath.

Why is so much emphasis placed on the Sabbath commandment here? It is because the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant (Exod 31:12ff; Ezek 20:12, 20). Sabbath-keeping means holding fast “my covenant” (*berîṭ*, v 6; cf. Lev 26:42, 45). Keeping the Sabbath is a specific and symbolic example of doing the will of Yahweh.¹⁸ Trito-Isaiah regards the observance of the Sabbath as epitomizing righteousness.

Membership of the Reconstituted Community (vv.3-7)

Isa 56:3-7 shift the focus to who can be a member of the community. This strophe presents two classes of people - the foreigner and the Eunuch - gives expression to their fears and sets those fears at rest. Verses 3-7 follow a chiasmic structure. There is an inversion of foreigner, Eunuch (v.3); Eunuch, foreigner (v.4-7). The concern of the foreigner is introduced first (v.3a) and responded last (vv.6-7), while the fear of the Eunuch is introduced last (v.3b) and responded first (vv.4-5).

The concern of the foreigner (v.3a)

Verse 3a expresses the concern of the “foreigner” (*ben-hannēkār*): “The Lord will surely separate me from his people.” Whereas v. 3a and v. 6a speak of the foreigner having joined (*lāwāh*) himself to the Lord, in v. 3b the foreigner expresses a fear of exclusion from Yahweh’s people. The verb employed by the foreigner, in stating his fear, is striking. The combination (*habdēl yabḏilanî*) underlines the gravity of what the foreigner fears may happen. The verb *bādāl* usually means “to separate” or “to set apart.” The same verb is used in speaking of Israel as being set apart from other peoples (Lev 20:24; Num 16:9; Lev 20:26) and of the tribe of Levi being set apart by Yahweh for the sacred ministry. However, Isa 56:3 refers to a separation of undesired elements. Apparently, the foreigner

¹⁷ F. Maass, “’adam”, *TDOT* 1. G. J. Botterwech (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974): 75; F. Maass, “’enos”, *TDOT* 1. G. J. Botterwech (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974): 346; H. Haag “ben-’adam”, *TDOT* 2, G. J. Botterwech (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975): 163.

¹⁸ J. D. W. Watts. *Isaiah 34-66*, *WBC* 25. (Dallas: Word Books, 1987): 248.

does not complain about the decision of the congregation but about Yahweh, who seems to abandon him.

The concern of the Eunuch (v.3b)

The concern of the Eunuch is contrasted with that of the foreigner. The Eunuch does not protest his exclusion from the congregation but about his childless condition: “Behold, I am a dried-up tree” (*vhēn ’ānī ’ēs yābēš*, v.3b). The expression, “I am a dried-up tree” (v. 3b), is a deprecating remark about the Eunuch’s inability to father children. The comparison to a tree (*ēs*) is a common metaphor (Isa10:18; 44:4). Authors like G. H. Johnston¹⁹, B. Kedar-Kopfstein²⁰, G. B. Eager²¹, J. Morgenstern,²² S. Frost,²³ and E. Davis²⁴ agree that the term, “Eunuch” (*sārīs*), primarily and literally refers to a sexually mutilated man (Deut 23:1; cf. Lev 22.23-25). In the exilic times, some of these Eunuchs were used for service at the imperial courts, especially in the harems.²⁵ Such physical mutilation of the privy parts, as G. H. Johnson remarks, was considered contrary to the design of God, especially because it destroyed the procreative power of the Israelites.²⁶ The law (Lev 21:20; Deut 23:1)²⁷ excluded people with physical blemishes from public worship²⁸ (Lev 21:16 ff; 22:24).

The concern of the Eunuch addressed (vv.4-5)

The complaint of the Eunuch in v.3b about his hopeless situation is now addressed in vv.4f. Verses 4-5 present a promise-condition pattern. In v.5, Yahweh promises to ‘give’ the Eunuch who “keeps” the Sabbaths, holds fast to his covenant, and does what pleases the Lord (v.4) into “a monument and a name” (*yāḏ wāšēm*) within his house (v.5). Verse 5 further says that the name which Yahweh will give him will be better than son and daughters because it endures in perpetuity.

¹⁹ G. H. Johnston. “Saris,” “in *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*. (CD Rom edition).

²⁰ B. Kedar-Kopfstein. “Saris”. In *TDOT* 10. G. J. Butterweck (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. (1999): 346-347.

²¹ G. B. Eager, “Eunuch”, n. 3242. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Electronic Edition (Bible Works).

²² J. Morgenstern. “Eunuch”, *An Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vergilius Ferm (Ed). (New York: The Philosophical Library. 1945): 260.

²³ S. Frost. “Memorial of the childless man: A study of the Hebrew thought on immortality.” *Int* 26 (1972): 445.

²⁴ E. Davis, “Eunuch”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.6. (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica. 1971): 959.

²⁵ J. Blenkinsopp, “Second Isaiah, Prophet of Universalism” *JOT* 40, (1988): 95 (83-103.). R. N. Whybray. *Isaiah 40-66*. (London: Eerdmans.1990): 198.

²⁶ G. H. Johnston. “Saris.” *Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*. (CD Rom edition).

²⁷ “He whose testicles are crushed or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.” (Deut 23:1 [RSV]).

²⁸ C. U. Wolf, “Eunuch” in *IDB* vol 2. (New York: Abingdon Press. 1962): 179.

The expression, *yād wāšēm* (monument and name) appears in the OT only here. Scholars such as P. R. Ackroyd,²⁹ B. Duhm,³⁰ C. Westermann³¹, and L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner³² understand the Hebrew word *yād* in this context to mean “monument” or “memorial”. Winkle interprets *yād wāšēm* as “memorial stele”.³³

The prophet announced that the name which God will give the Eunuch is an everlasting name (*šēm 'ōlām*) which “shall not be cut off”. To cut off one’s name, as J. Blenkinsopp remarks, is equivalent to obliterating the memory of someone.³⁴ Though the Eunuch may not have children to perpetuate his name, the memorial which he receives in Yahweh’s house constitutes an everlasting name that endures forever.³⁵ It is a permanent remembrance³⁶ of a non-physical kind. Here, the name is seen in the light of an uninterrupted fellowship with Yahweh. By this uninterrupted fellowship, the Eunuch becomes a symbol of a life dedicated to God.³⁷

The “monument” or the “name” that the Eunuch receives is significant because it is to be “in my (Yahweh’s) house (*bəbêṭî*) and within my walls” (Isa 56:5). Here, “my house” (*bêṭî*) and “my walls” (*hômōtay*) are juxtaposed by means of an emphatic *waw*. This suggests that the Temple building is meant. Consequently, the *NIV* interprets *bəbêṭî* as “within my Temple.” Thus, the Eunuch, who apparently cannot have a “house” of his own, is given a place in God’s house. Fidelity to the covenant (Isa 56:4) is the criterion for the realization of this promise.

It is striking that the “monument” and the “name” which God promises the Eunuch is said to be better than sons and daughters. Winkle thinks that a monument stele may be better than sons and daughters in one way: it endures longer.³⁸ The monument is a remembrance by which the Eunuch’s name will be perpetuated. This new openness towards the Eunuch implies that the life of the Eunuch does not depend on the memories of later people (progeny) but is guaranteed by fellowship with the Eternal One. This, however, involves a personal exercise of his will and depends on a level of moral performance. The Eunuch, himself, is left to choose (*bāhar*) to align himself to Yahweh, i.e., doing justice, practicing

²⁹ P. R. Ackroyd, “*yad*,” *TDOT* 5. G. J. Botterweck (Ed). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1986): 400-402.

³⁰ B. Duhm. *Das Buch Jesaia*. 1958, p.422, quoted by G. Robinson, “The Meaning of *rad*, Isaiah 56:5,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 282 (282-284).

³¹ C. Westermann. *Isaia 40-66. Antico Testamento* 19. (Brescia: Paideia Editrice. 1978): 378.

³² L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Leiden: Brill, 1994-2000, CD Rom Edition).

³³ D. W. V. Winkle, “The meaning of *yad wasem* in Isaiah LVI 5,” *VT* 47 (1997): 279 (378-385).

³⁴ J. Blenkinsopp. *Isa 56-66*. Anchor Bible 19B. (New York: The Anchor Bible. 2003): 139.

³⁵ Winkle. “The Meaning of *yad wasem* in Isaiah LVI.5,” *VT* 47/3 (1997) p.384 (378-385).

³⁶ J. L. McKenzie. *Second Isaiah*, AB 20. (New York: Doubleday. 1968): 151.

³⁷ S. Virgulin. *Isaia*. (Rome: Edizione Paoline 24. 1968): 309.

³⁸ Winkle, *VT* 47 (1997) p.382.

righteousness, and keeping the Sabbath. On his choice will the fulfillment of the promise depend.

The concern of the foreigner addressed (vv. 6-7)

Isa 56:6-7 offers an inclusive view of the community. In v.3a and 6ab, the foreigner (*hannēkār*) is described as one who joins himself to the Lord (*hannilwīm 'al-yhwh*). Circumcision seems to be taken for granted or is included in the phrase “who join themselves to the Lord”. The somewhat vague reason for “joining oneself to the Lord” is explained in v.6a by a series of three infinitives - to serve/minister (*lešārtô* - piel infinitive construct of *šārat*) the Lord, to love (*le'ahābāh* - qal infinitive construct of *'āhab*) the name of the Lord, and to be (*lihyôl* - qal infinitive construct of the verb *hāyāh*) his servants. “To love” the name of the Lord” (Isa 56:6) takes us into the ethos of Deuteronomy (Deut 6:5, 13; 7:9; 10:8; 13:3 etc).

Here the prophet announces a new understanding of membership of the community. It is no longer limited to kinship. In v.6b, membership of the community expands in scope to include “everyone” who “keeps the Sabbath” (*kol-šōmēr šabbāt*), and who holds fast to Yahweh’s covenant (*maḥāzīqīm bibrît*). The phrase, “hold fast to my covenant” (56: 4, 6) is a metonymy for “keep my Sabbath.” Holding fast to Yahweh’s covenant and keeping the sabbath, together with observing justice and practicing righteousness become specific requirements that inclusion into the worshipping community. Now the previous lines of exclusivity are broken down (Isa 56:3-7) and the expanse of the Lord’s mercy is extended. Here, the qualification for inclusion into the cultic community is the readiness to put oneself at the disposal of Yahweh.

The Temple as God’s House of Prayer for All Peoples (Isa 56:7)

The prophet responds to the foreigner’s fear of exclusion from the community of God’s people with an oracle of inclusion in v.7. This verse and the final oracle in v.8 further expand the universalistic note of this passage.³⁹ God promises three things to the foreigner who keeps the Sabbath – access to his “holy mountain” (*har qodeš*); admittance to his “house of prayer” and acceptance of their burnt offerings and their sacrifices “on my (God’s) altar” (*'al-mizbēhî*). In addition, their prayers will be acceptable in God’s house of prayer (*bētî tepillāh*; V.7ab). Isa 56:7 is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where the Temple is referred to as Yahweh’s “house of prayer” (*bētî tepillāh*). The universalism and accessibility of God’s Temple to all nations is expressed in declaration: “for my house

³⁹ J. Blenkinsopp. *Isaiah 56-66, AB 19 B*. (New York: The Anchor Bible. 2003): 131.

shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (*kî bêtî bêt-tepillāh yiqqārē’ lēkol-hā ‘ammîm*; v.7c).

The imperfect form, “shall be called” (*yiqqārē’* - *niphal* imperfect 3rd person masculine of *qārā’*), refers to a future that is secretly present. Here, the author places emphasis on the significance of the Temple as a house of prayer. This does not suggest that sacrifices and offerings are no longer acceptable; what it implies is that the basic understanding of the Temple’s function has changed. It is a place of prayer (cf. 1Kg 8:27-53), of communion with God,⁴⁰ and a gathering place for teaching (Isa 2:2-4).

Elsewhere in Isa 2:1-4 and Mic 4:1-5, Zion/Jerusalem is portrayed as a place where nations converge to learn of God’s way/Torah. Isa 56:7 is the only text where it is explicitly said that the foreigner will have equal status within the worshipping community of Israel. In this, the text strikes a strikingly universalistic note. It states that God’s purpose for his house is directed to all people without restriction. This prepares the way for the final oracular statement in v.8.⁴¹

V.8: Yahweh, the gatherer of Israel

The oracle closes in v.8 with a solemn formula of finality. The oracular formula in v.8, *ne’ūm ’ăḏōnāy yhw̄h* (utterance of the Lord God), forms a literary bracket with the messenger formula in v.1 (*kōh ’āmar yhw̄h*). This formula reinforces the divine and authoritative nature of the message earlier proclaimed in vv.1-7.

God is here portrayed as the one “who gathers” (*meqabbēs* - *piel* participle masc sing of the verb *qābaš* - to gather) Israel’s dispersed. The theme of gathering (v.8) is associated with the motif of restoration.⁴² God’s salvific action involves drawing people together. Those to be gathered are referred to as “Israel’s dispersed” (*nidhē yisrā’ēl*) and a second batch is referred to simply as “still others” besides those already gathered. Authors like R. E. Clements and G. T. Sheppard identify the “yet others” as converts from the nations.⁴³

⁴⁰ J. D. W. Watts. *Isaiah 34-66, WBC 25*. (Dallas: Word Books. 1987): 249-250.

⁴¹ P. A. Smith, “Rhetoric and redaction in Trito-Isaiah: the structure, growth and authorship in Isaiah 56-66,” *VTsup*. (New York: Brill. 1995): 64-65.

⁴² G. Widengren, “Yahweh’s gathering of the dispersed,” *JSOTsup31*, W. B. Barrick and J. Spencer (Ed). (1984): 241; B. Gosse, “Sabbath, Identity and Universalism Go Together after the Return from Exile,” *JSOT* 29 (2005): 359-70.

⁴³ G. T. Sheppard. “Isaiah” in *the Harper Collins Bible Commentary*. (New York: Harper Collins. 1988): 530.

The prepositional phrase, “to him” (*‘ālāw*), apparently refers to Israel. Thus, the motif of the in-gathering is the uniting of others to Israel.⁴⁴

The in-gathering, as G. Widengren notes, is in an eschatological future (Isa 56:8).⁴⁵ In the eschatological vision of the new heavens and the new earth in Isa 66:22-24, the Temple is the center of the re-made cosmos.⁴⁶ Isa 66 places the events described in the context of the end time, and therefore, parallels Isa 56:1-8.

Isa 56:7 vis-a-vis Jesus’ Gospel of Inclusion in Mk 11:17d

Mk 11:17d is the climax of the Temple cleansing episode in Mk 11:15-17. Jesus “entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves” (Mk 11:15). The merchants were profiteering on the pilgrims, charging commissions. The pigeon sellers were selling sacrificial offerings to the pilgrims. The priestly families seem to have had control of these businesses. Jesus frowned at the commercial activities going on in the court of the Gentiles, rendering the place uncondusive for the Gentiles worshippers.⁴⁷ Jesus’ protest action in the Temple cleansing episode is, first, a demonstration of Messianic authority. Second, it is an indictment of the Temple authorities for turning the Temple into a bazaar, cluttering the outer court of the Gentiles, and making it unsuitable as a place of worship for the Gentiles who come to the Temple to pray.⁴⁸

Jesus’ ground for taking such an action is the Scripture: “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers” (Mk 11:17). Jesus’ action in Mk 11:17 alludes to three main OT passages. First, it alludes to Solomon’s famous prayer of dedication (1 Kgs 8:22-54) which asks God to hear even the “foreigner” who comes to that Temple to pray. Second, it alludes to Isa 56:7 which proclaims the Temple as a “house of prayer for all nations”, and third, it alludes to Jer 7:11, which cautions against making God’s Temple a “den of robbers.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ G. J. Polan. *In the Way of Justice Toward Salvation: A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56-66*, American University Studies Series VII, Theology and Religion (New York: Peter Lang, 1986): 78.

⁴⁵G. Widengren, “Yahweh’s gathering of the dispersed.” *JSOTsup*31. W. B. Barrick and J. Spencer (Ed). (1984): 239 (227-245).

⁴⁶J. Blenkinsopp. “Second Isaiah, Prophet of Universalism”. In *JSOT* 40 (1988): 97 (83-103).

⁴⁷ E. P. Gould. *The Gospel According to St. Mark. Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel to St. Mark*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983): 213.

⁴⁸ M. A. Awabdy & F. J. Long. “Mark’s Inclusive of ‘for all nations’ in 11:17d and the International Vision of Isaiah.” *The Journal of Inclusive Biblical Studies*. 1 (2014): 234 (Pp.224-255). Retrieved January 25, 2018, from <http://place.asburyseminary.edu>.

⁴⁹ P. Perkins. *The Gospel of Mark. NIB* 8. L. E. Keck (Ed). (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995): 661.

Isa 56:7c offers ideological background to Mk 11:17d. The quotation in 11:17d: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (*ho oikos mou oikos proseuchēs klēthēsetai pasin tois ethnesin*) is a literary rendering of Isa 56:7c: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (*kî bêtî bêt-tepillāh yiqqārē' lēkol-hā'ammîm*). Isa 56:7c states that God's purpose for his house is directed to all people without restriction. In the Temple-cleansing episode (Mk 11:15-17), Mark's Jesus reaffirms the very purpose of God's Temple which Isaiah had earlier stated (Isa 56:7): It is "a house of prayer for all peoples." Thus, Mark portrays Jesus as the agent of God's international mission which is also stated in Isaiah 56:1-8.

It is not that Jesus condemns completely the commercial activity at the Temple which provided coinage and animals for offering in the Temple, both of which were necessary for the normal activities at the Temple. What Jesus condemns is turning the outer court of the Temple into a noisy, haggling marketplace,⁵⁰ and disrupting the Temple's cultic life.⁵¹ By driving the merchants out of the Temple, Mark's Jesus clears the way, figuratively, for the restored worship of the kingdom of God, in which all nations will participate along with the Israelites. Jesus' action and teaching in Mk 11:17 reflect the ideological impulse of Isa 56:7.

Conclusion

Isa 56:1-8 begins and ends with the assurance of salvation which consists in the ingathering of people who are to form the future Israel.⁵² Here, Yahweh's offer of salvation is all-embracing and inclusive of those who were often viewed as excluded (foreigners and Eunuchs). The "New Assembly" makes room for new situations and new possibilities; it opens the door of the cultic community to converts from the Gentile world.⁵³ Incorporation and membership of this cultic community are determined not on ethnic or national considerations but on a profession of faith and on a level of moral performance compatible with it. It involves a commitment to doing God's will i.e., doing what is right, practicing justice, observing the Yahweh's covenant, and keeping his Sabbath. The passage invites us to guide against any narrow-minded exclusivism which tends to exclude others.

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⁵⁰ C. F. D. Moule. *Mark. The Cambridge bible Commentary*. (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press. 1965): 89.

⁵¹ W. Harrington. *Mark* (Wilmington, Delaware. 1979): 180.

⁵² Blenkinsopp. "Second Isaiah – Prophet of universalism," *JSOT* 41 (1988): 94.

⁵³ A. Gelston, "Universalism in Second Isaiah", *JTS* 43, part 2. (1992) p.388 (377-397).

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