DA‘AT “HUMILIATION” IN ISAIAH LIII 11 IN THE LIGHT
OF ISAIAH LIII 3 AND DANIEL XII 4, AND
THE OLDEST KNOWN INTERPRETATION
OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

In his article “Da‘at in Isaiah liii 11”, VT 28 (1978), pp. 118-22, H. G. M. Williamson has proposed that Isa. liii 11 should be rendered as follows: “After his deep suffering, he will see light, he will be satisfied with his rest; my servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities”. In this translation Williamson agrees with D. Winton Thomas 1) in rejecting the older view that da‘at here has its common meaning “knowledge” and associating it rather with a second root yada‘, cognate with Arabic wadu‘a “to be, to become still, quiet, submissive”, but whereas the latter gave it the meaning “humiliation”, Williamson renders it “rest”, following a suggestion of P. A. H. de Boer 2). Williamson is surely right in rejecting the view that da‘at here means “knowledge”, since the introduction of a reference to the knowledge of the Servant in the present context seems abrupt, and it is not immediately obvious what knowledge is intended 3). However, Williamson’s rejection of the translation “humiliation” in favour of “rest” must in all likelihood be rejected, since there are two passages evidently closely related to Isa. liii 11, namely Isa. liii 3 and Dan. xii 4, in which the presence of the related participial form yadu‘a‘ “humble(d)” and the noun da‘at “humiliation” respectively both tend to support the meaning “humiliation” for da‘at in Isa. liii 11.
In Isa. liii 3 we read that the Servant was yēdūaʾ bōli. This has traditionally been rendered “acquainted with grief”. Such a translation, however, would rather require the active participle yōdēaʾ and not the passive participle if the verb “to know” were really present here, and as G. R. Driver, *JTS* 38 (1937), p. 49, pointed out, a comparison with the use of the same form in Deut. i 13, 15, suggests that it would have to be translated “known, famous for sickness”, which obviously cannot be right here. Driver therefore suggested that we have here an example of the second root yēdāʾ, cognate with Arabic waduʿa, and that yēdūaʾ bōli should be rendered “humbled by sickness”. This view removes the grammatical problem, makes excellent sense in the context and has been followed by many scholars, including D. Winton Thomas, *JTS* 38 (1937), p. 404, whilst J. A. Emerton has made a slight modification by suggesting the possibility that yēdūaʾ is paʿāl and that the phrase should be more precisely rendered “humble because of sickness” (p. 176). The presence of this second root yēdāʾ in Isa. liii 3 makes it very natural to suppose that the allusion to the Servant’s daʿat in v. 11 takes up the language of v. 3 and that it refers to his “humiliation”. That v. 11 does in fact take up v. 3 is strongly supported by the fact that there are several other examples of such repetition in the description of the Servant’s fate in Isa. liii: nāqūaʾ “stricken” in v. 4 is picked up by nuggaʾ (so nēgaʾ should probably be revocalized) “stricken” in v. 8, mēʿunneh “afflicted” in v. 4 is repeated in naʿanēb “he was afflicted” in v. 7, and mēdākkāʾ “bruised” in v. 5 is taken up by ḏakkēʾō “to bruise him” in v. 10. However, unlike the view that daʿat in v. 11 means “humiliation”, Williamson’s translation “rest” cannot be held to pick up the reference in v. 3, since it is clear that yēdūaʾ bōli alludes to the Servant’s affliction and not to his subsequent deliverance.

A further objection to Williamson’s translation of daʿat by “rest” may now be noted. Williamson maintains that “since (so far as I am aware) the meaning ‘humiliation’ has not been proposed for daʿat in any other passage, our understanding of it here as ‘rest’ does not run into the difficulty of identical nouns with different meanings being derived from the same root” (p. 120). However, Williamson has apparently overlooked the fact that the meaning “humiliation” has actually been proposed for daʿat elsewhere in the Old Testament, namely by D. Winton Thomas in Dan. xii 4 b), an oversight all the more surprising in that this view is alluded to and accepted by Emerton in an article (pp. 150, 177) to which Williamson himself