

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah chapter 53

52:13 Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

52:14 Like as many were astonished at you (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men),

52:15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

53:1 Who has believed our message? and to whom has the arm of Adonai been revealed?

53:2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

53:3 He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; and we despised him, and esteemed him not.

53:4 Surely he has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering; yet we considered him stricken, struck by Elohim, and afflicted.

53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; everyone has turned to his own way; and Adonai has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

53:7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he did not open his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he did not open his mouth.

53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare

his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

53:9 They made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

53:10 Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see (his) seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Adonai shall prosper in his hand.

53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, (and) shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities.

53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

“As many were astonished at You; his visage was so marred, more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.” (Is. 52: 14-15; 53: 11.)

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah including these three verses of the fifty-second chapter is one combined picture of the suffering Messiah.

Some deceived commentators have tried without success to apply this chapter in Isaiah to the nation of Israel and to show that it describes no other and definitely not the life of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach. But how can a rational person not recognize this description of the marred face of suffering, this Man of sorrows, this victim of sacrifice, this Conqueror of Satan and sin as no less than Ha-Mashiach who in the fullness of time

appeared on earth and fulfilled every one of these minute predictions in His own person and in His sacrifice and death.

The prophet commences the fifty-third chapter with a wail of complaint against the indifference and unbelief that rejected his momentous message and refused to recognize the arm of Adonai. He gives a picture of the sufferings of the Messiah and the fruits that grow from the blood-stained soil of Calvary.

I. The Sufferer.

Many details make up this tragic picture as recorded in Isaiah 53.

1. The first is the lowly birth of Yeshua. "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground." (Is. 53: 2.) This great sufferer began His career amid circumstances of the deepest humiliation. He was born of a maiden mother with a cloud of reproach upon His name. His lot was that of poverty. His cradle was a manger. After being born in Bethlehem His parents settled in Nazareth, whose very name stood for all that was despicable and was a play upon the words of the text, for "Natsar," just means a dry sprout, "a root out of a dry ground." There seems to have been no natural attractiveness about the person of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach in a purely human way. He had no form nor comeliness, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. (Is. 53: 2.)

He was a contradiction of the ideals of the flesh, and a disappointment to every form of human pride.

2. His rejection by His own people. "He is despised and rejected of men; we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not." (Is. 53: 3.)

3. The privations and sorrows of His earthly life. All the elements which constitute man's cup of sorrow filled His bitter draught of earthly pain. He was poor and had to toil for His own livelihood and that of His mother. He was lonely and felt Himself a stranger in a strange world. His life was one of

constant self-denial, repression and intense toil, walking on foot again and again over all the land and working incessantly and often with wearied frame from dawn until darkness, teaching, healing, helping His fellow-men. He was indeed “acquainted with grief.” Others left Him, His disciples forsook Him, but sorrow never left His side.

4. Perhaps the keenest element in His sorrow was His sacrificial sufferings. “He was made sin for us who knew no sin.” “You shall make His soul an offering for sin.” (Is. 53:10.) “He bare the sins of many.” (Is. 53: 12). The terrible sting of sin entered His soul. We know something of what it is to be crushed with a single sin and perhaps agonize in prayer, before we rise above it and find forgiveness and victory; but on Him there rested all the sins of this whole wicked world. They were imputed to Him and counted as His own, and He had to bear their penalty and their stifling poison.

There are three things in the account of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach that are utterly above all human experience. The first is that an innocent Man suffered as no one else suffered before. The second is that He was crushed, defeated, destroyed by forces that He could easily have overcome, and the third is that through this very paradox He has won His victory and accomplished His great purpose of the world’s redemption for all who believe.

The question is often asked, “Is it right for an innocent person to suffer for the guilt of sinners ?” In answer we may say first that Elohim has so permitted and therefore, it must be right.

Secondly, vicarious suffering is the law of the universe. The vegetable world lives by absorbing the mineral. The animal world lives by absorbing the vegetable. The lower animals sacrifice themselves that the higher may live, and even the human race suffers and dies that it may give place to and propagate the next generation.

Thirdly, He was voluntary in thus suffering vicariously for others. It would be wrong to compel an innocent person to suffer for the wrong of others, but

if he chooses to be a substitute on the higher plane of self sacrifice we have no right to prevent it.

Fourthly, the One who suffered for us was not a stranger, but really one of our own who lived with us. And finally, it was on this principle that the human race fell through the sin of one man, Adam. It is therefore in keeping that the human race should be redeemed by another; the chosen Lamb of Elohim.

There is no doubt that Isaiah's picture of the Messiah's sufferings represents them as vicarious. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way and Elohim has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

(Is. 53: 6.) What a picture of concentrated suffering. It is as though one man were suddenly compelled to stand for all the sins of all the people in the world and from every quarter they came in upon him until he was swamped, bankrupt and crushed. It is as though a shepherd had gone out alone to stand between the flock and the wolves, and they all set upon him until they had torn him to pieces and he fell bleeding and dying, but the sheep were saved. It is as though all the burning rays of yonder sun at its torrid noon were converged in a great burning glass into one single point of flame and one sensitive heart was placed beneath that fiery focus and burned to cinders. All our guilt and all the penalty it deserved met upon Him and He sank beneath the awful load, but not until He had met the claim, had canceled the debt and had saved the world !

5. His trial and judgment. "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation, for He was cut off out of the land of the living." (Is. 53: 8.) What a pathetic story the trial of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach was. Worn with a sleepless night, His clothing damp with the bloody sweat of the garden, His heart sore with the betrayal of the false apostle Judas, He is hurried before the council of the Jews and there He has to face the

repeated denial of apostle Peter and the false accusations of His bitter foes.

Again He is hustled to the court of Pilate, dismissed to the judgment seat of Herod, marched back again amid the mockeries of the soldiers to Pilate's court once more, and there insulted, stripped and scourged with cruel lashes loaded with nails, until the flesh hangs bleeding from His bones, and even Pilate, moved with a strange sympathy, points to Him as a spectacle of compassion and cries, "Behold the man!" Then amid a hideous carnival of cruelty and scorn, He is condemned and compelled to carry His heavy cross to the hill of Calvary where they crucify Him.

He gave Himself up as an offering and a willing sacrifice. He had all manner of evil said against him. At last he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow. He had wounds and stripes. He was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of male factors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it instead. He was wounded and pierced in his hands, and feet, and side. There was scarcely any part of His whole skin that was not bleeding or bruised. His head was crowned with thorns, His hands and His feet were nailed to the cross. He was wronged and abused; He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth (v. 7). He was mocked and beaten, injuriously treated and viciously dealt with. That was his charge in which He was perfectly innocent and did not deserve. He was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, He laid it to heart, He was patient and not led to anger under it and kept possession of his own soul.

But the bitterest dregs of His cup of sorrow were yet to come. These were caused by the Father's stroke. "It pleased Adonai to bruise Him; you have put Him to grief." (v. 10). For that dreadful moment He stood in the place of guilty men and it was their day of judgment. Therefore upon His single head there fell the judgment stroke which the guilty world deserved. He bore our hell and in that awful moment for an instant His heart was crushed. When

our dark hours come to us, we can bear anything if we have His presence. But when death was creeping over Him, and demons were tormenting Him and men were torturing Him, He reached out for His Father's hand, He looked up for His Father's smile and all was darkness and wrath, and He uttered that bitter cry, "My Elohim, My Elohim, why have You forsaken Me?" "He was made sin for us who knew no sin."

He is the sacrificial Lamb of Elohim; and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, nay, before the butchers, so He opened not his mouth against them, which denotes not only His exemplary patience under affliction and His meekness under reproach, but His cheerful compliance with His Father's will. Not my will, but thine be done.

By this will we are sanctified, His making, His own soul, His own life, an offering for our sin. Our sins are our sorrows and our grief (v. 4), or, as it may be read, our sicknesses and our wounds. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Yeshua Ha-Mashiach suffered. This is asserted here in Isaiah 53 plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions. It is certain that we are all guilty before Elohim.

We have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of Elohim (v. 6): All we like sheep have gone astray, one as well as another. The whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with a multitude of actual transgressions against the Most High Elohim.

We have all gone astray from Elohim who is our Creator and rightful owner. We in our sin have alienated ourselves from Him. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander but the Messiah led the way for us to be sanctified by His sacrifice, (His stripes - that is, the sufferings He underwent - V. 5). He purchased for us the forgiveness of our sins that we may be fit to serve Elohim by giving us the way to find our home again to be with our Master in eternity. And by the doctrine of Ha-Mashiach's cross, and the powerful cleansing it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us and we are saved from eternal damnation.

In His death and burial. "He poured out His soul unto death. He made His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death." (Is. 53: 12, 9.)

He was imprisoned in the grave under a judicial process, He laid there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him, he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set him at liberty, by which the judgment given against him was reversed and taken off; this redounds not only to his honor, but to our comfort; for, being delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. He rose to die no more; death had no more dominion over Him. He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore !

To this day, of the many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it, live it, and submit to the power of it. Therefore many people believe not the report of the gospel of Ha-Mashiach, because the truth of Elohim is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will they be brought to acknowledge the divine power which goes along with the Word of Elohim.

The arm of Adonai is made bare in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Ha-Mashiach's doctrine, in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a soft voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit which makes the Word of Elohim effectual. They believe not the Gospel of Ha-Mashiach because, by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of Elohim, which therefore He justly denied them and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not.

Soon shall Revelation 19:12-16 be fulfilled, "I saw heaven opened and, behold, a white horse and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He was clothed in a

vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of Elohim, and, He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, “King of kings and Adonai of lords.”

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