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The Death of the Suffering Servant 52:13 to 53:12

When you or I try to do something, whether it's for the Kingdom of **God** or not, we are fortunate if we can accomplish just one thing! But when **God** does something, there is a kaleidoscope of benefits. The Scriptures we have before us are examples of this. When the inspired prophet penned these words, he was writing for multiple audiences. Obviously, every believer in every age benefits from the Gospel of **Yeshua Messiah**.



Viewed from **the Servant's** sacrifice on the cross, the First Covenant looks forward and the New Covenant looks back. These scriptures do the same for two different generations of **Jews**. **First, this was a near historical prophecy to the Jews of Jesus' day.** When **Yeshua** began **His** public ministry and performed many signs and wonders (**to see link click [Gl](#) - The Three Messianic Miracles**), the **Jews** of **His** day were compelled to make a decision about **Him** and **His** claims of messiahship. So, when **Isaiah** wrote about **the Suffering Servant**, it should have prepared the hearts and minds of faithful **Jews** looking forward to the cross. **Secondly, this is a far eschatological prophecy pointing to just prior to the Second Coming.** **Isaiah's** message of **the Servant** should cause them to look back to the cross and believe that **Yeshua** really was the **Messiah** and cry out for **Him** to return and save them (see the commentary on **Revelation [Ev](#) - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**).

This is the climax of the entire book of **Isaiah** and the fourth of **his** four **Servant** Songs (42:1-17, 49:1-6, 50:4-9). Here **the prophet** tells us *why* **the Servant of the LORD** is

suffering and *how* **Isra'el** will be redeemed. **The reason I take so much time to explain the different interpretations is because salvation is lost without a proper understanding that it is Jesus' death on the cross we are talking about.** There have been many claims of Jewish messiahship down through the centuries. For example Menahem ben Judah (around 70 AD), Simon bar Kokhba (around 130 AD), Moses of Crete (about 440-470 AD), Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676 AD), Abraham Miguel Cardoso (1630-1706 AD), and the more recent Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994 AD) have all claimed to be the promised **Messiah**. But all have violated what the prophet **Zechariah** had to say: **Many Gentile nations will be joined with ADONAI in that day and will become My people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD of heaven's angelic armies (CJB) has sent Me to you (Zechariah 2:11b).** No Gentiles followed any of these false messiahs.

Nevertheless, many **Jewish** commentators have come up with different interpretations to the identity of **the Suffering Servant**. Some say **he** is Moses, some say king Josiah, but most interpret the passage symbolically and say **the Servant** is **Isra'el** in exile. Others, like **Jacob Joseph Mordecai** try a more literal approach. His interpretation is very logical and makes perfect sense. He himself says that Scripture never bears any other than the simple and literal meaning. But without **the mind of Christ (First Corinthians 2:16)**, it is clear that **there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death (Proverbs 14:1-13).** **Jacob Joseph Mordecai said that the Suffering Servant is King Hezekiah.**²¹²

52:13a Behold my Servant shall prosper, as it is said in 2 Chronicles 32:30, And Hezekiah prospered in all his works, therefore, Hezekiah is rightly called God's servant, for he not only turned himself, but also brought back Judah, and a great part of Isra'el as well, to the service of God - an achievement which none of his ancestors, in spite of all their excellent intentions, ever contemplated. For he put away the high places, and sent runners throughout all Isra'el and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the commandment of the king: Children of Israel, return to ADONAI the God of Abraham (2 Chronicles 30:6). He restored the crown to its former state, entreating the favor of his princes and ministers, almost prostrating himself before them, while he said: Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of ADONAI the God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place (2 Chronicles 29:5).

52:13b He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high, for so it said in Second Chronicles 32:23: And many brought gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem, and presents to

Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was *exalted* in the sight of all nations thereafter.

52:14 Because of the dangerous illness that attacked him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness as he drew near to the gates of Death (Psalm 107:18).

52:15a Many kings and princes were amazed exceedingly at the miracle wrought for him, for not with sword or spear did ADONAI save His anointed from the hand of Sennacherib.

52:15b but greater far was the miracle which displayed itself in the world when the orbit of the sun turned backward before the eyes of all, and when Merodach-Baladan sent ambassadors to him to enquire about the portent which had occurred in the earth; this is what is meant by the words: What had not been told to them they have seen; for they perceived clearly that so highly favored was he in the eyes of the LORD, that the order of creation was altered for his benefit.

53:1 Who has believed our message? Feigning surprise, asks the prophet of his pious contemporaries; for good Hezekiah was a descendant of the wicked Ahaz, and upon Hezekiah was the arm of ADONAI revealed in the destruction of Sennacherib.

53:2 At the time when all were immersed in idolatrous worship, Hezekiah grew up before Him like a tender shoot, out of dry ground, in which was no religion or fear of God.

53:3 As, from his birth upwards, Hezekiah rejected the deeds of his fathers, and the shameful customs of his age, the people abominated him, and held aloof from him, and hence he was despised and rejected by men, his father in particular hating him even to the day of his death, for he made him pass through the fire of Molech (Second Kings 16:3 and *Sanhedrin*, fol. 69), though he was delivered miraculously by God. Still, however, the few righteous who were to be found at that time felt a longing and desire for him saying: O that the shoot were to come up from the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1) and that the Spirit of knowledge and fear of ADONAI were resting on him (Isaiah 11:2),” and this is the meaning of the words: He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him (Isaiah 53:2), yet we desired him. When, after his father’s death, he ascended to the throne, his servants were so much dissatisfied that, with Shebna at their head, they rebelled against him, and sought to submit themselves to the wicked Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Isra’el, as Isaiah narrates in 53:6 and when they saw him afflicted with severe illness, their

hatred carried itself still further, and they poured contempt upon their prince, judging maliciously that his sufferings were because he had despised their own wicked faith, and that the graven images of their gods would hide their faces from him.

53:4 They did so even more when they saw that his affliction prevented him from maintaining the style and manners of a court (*Sanhedrin*, fol. 94), for he would eat only a pound of meat a day: since, then, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, with a whole heart, just as his father David had done (Second Chronicles 29:2), and removed all defilement from the sanctuary (Second Chronicles 29:5) and restored all Isra'el to the true faith, the sufferings which he endured must have been for the sake of his generation; almost, indeed, had the Almighty determined to quench the coal that was left, and to give Jerusalem to the hand of Sennacherib, and only in consequence of Hezekiah was the redemption of their soul achieved, and deliverance wrought for them by his transcendent merits, so far surpassing the sufferings which he bore.

53:5-6 After this, however, all perceived that he was pierced for their transgressions, and crushed for their iniquities, in order to make atonement for them unto God; for the attribute of judgment, displaying itself before them, laid on him the iniquity of them all, as the text says, for the transgressions of My people (Isaiah 53:8), even the wounds which should have fallen upon them.

53:7 When his sickness was at its worst, he acknowledged the justice of God's judgment upon him, but like a mute man who did not open his mouth, he expected from hour to hour the moment of his death, as he declared himself in his writing (Isaiah 38:9): I said in the cutting off of my days, let me go through the gates of death, etc, and accepted his afflictions as sent upon him in love, without murmuring, or complaining of the shortness of his days.

53:8 When, however, he heard the prophet Isaiah's command: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover (Isaiah 38:1), he entreated God to grant him a longer life in order that he might be enabled to serve Him; by oppression and judgment he would have been taken away in the prime of his life and when his reign had but lately commenced: now, if his death had occurred before he had time to restore the faith of his people to its pristine integrity, who would have told of his generation?

53:9 It would have been rather a generation departing in darkness until it was all

consumed without having seen the mighty acts of ADONAI, wrought by him on behalf of himself after him, but would have been buried with his wicked father - as the text states: He was assigned a grave with the wicked, implying that it was so determined - in spite of the innocence of his hands, and the fact that he had done no violence.

53:10 Yet, it was ADONAI's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and to put the guilt of his generation on his soul; accordingly, after his prayer, when God had heard his prayers and seen his tears, the promise is given that He will see his offspring and prolong his days; thus the Almighty added to his life fifteen years, and let him "see seed", for previously he had no children.

53:12 Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils, or the spoils of Sennacherib, because he bore the iniquities of the age, and was counted as a transgressor, and above all interceded for the remnant that were still left (who were the transgressors), as it is said in Second Kings 19:15: And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, "ADONAI, God of Isra'el, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth," and in Second Chronicles 32:20, "King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amos cried out in prayer to heaven." This, then, is the meaning of made intercession for the transgressors, in order that the City might not fall into the hands of the King of Assyria. And so, when all Judah and Jerusalem and the remnant of Isra'el returned to the services of ADONAI, and the sanctuary was restored to its original purity, and the priests to their ministrations, and the Levites to their pulpits (all which Ahaz had neglected), and when they beheld the miracles, then all his servants began to love and honor him; and when he died, he was not assigned a grave with the wicked, as had been determined, and as nearly took place, but he ended his life honorably and Hezekiah rested with his fathers and was buried on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honored him when he died (Second Chronicles 32:33).

Such is the interpretation, which I have been able to give of these verses. And if my view is not in accordance with the mind of the prophet, I pray the Almighty to grant me a reward for what I have done! May the ADONAI lighten mine eyes in His Torah! And may the purpose of mine heart be well pleasing to Him! This is one rabbinic interpretation of **Chapter 53**, that the suffering servant was **Hezekiah**. But there is another even more accepted interpretation that **Isra'el herself is the Servant of ADONAI**.

Rabbi Isaac Orobio de Castro, around the time of the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, **interpreted Chapter 53 as referring to Isra'el**. The victims of the Inquisition “were mostly **Jews** who had been ‘converted’ to Catholicism under duress from King Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and who were now accused of ‘Judaizing.’ Isabella decreed that all **Jews** must either accept baptism or leave Spain. Most refused to be baptized, even though it meant exile and the loss of most of their possessions. It seems that approximately 200,000 Spaniards of **the Jewish** faith were thus condemned to exile - which many times led to death, capture by pirates, and other such misfortunes.”²¹³ About 30,000 were killed in the 350 years of the Spanish Inquisition.

Down through **Jewish** history this is the most common interpretation of **Chapter 53**. (It would be helpful to understand in interpreting Rabbi de Castro’s writings, that many times he substitutes **Jacob**, or **Isra’el**, for the personal pronouns **he** or **his**). In his writings entitled *The Clear Fountain*, he states that **Isaiah has also prophesied in the Fifty-Third Chapter about the opinions of the Christians (Edom), the oppressors of Isra’el. They falsely apply the prophecy beginning Who has believed our message? to the martyrdom of Jesus, but it really refers to Isra’el, stricken by all nations, past and present, from the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, which later became the Christians. This is to be seen clearly from the Fifty-Second Chapter, which is connected with the following one. The error of the Christian doctrine is the consequences of their taking the expression my servant (52:13), as a real singular, whereas it is a collective singular, referring to Jacob and Isra’el. God said by the mouth of His prophet Moses that he would bring the curses which Isra’el suffered in the land of their enemies and haters on the Christians when Isra’el turns back from his (Isra’el’s) wicked ways (Deuteronomy 30:1-3). Isaiah prophesies the same (51:22-23), and promises redemption to the humiliated people, saying: Behold, My servant Jacob and My people Isra’el, who laid down his (Jacob’s) body as a pavement for the passers by, he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. The prophet means to indicate by these three degrees of exaltation that the height of the trodden Isra’el will be greater than its abasement was low in the past and present days, for God shall have taken away from them the cup of the dregs and of His fury, and put it into the hands of His oppressors (51:22-23). And the nations will see such a wonderful redemption of a people so abased; the prophet says: as there were many who were appalled at him (14a). It may be seen how this designation my servant is a collective singular, because it says: For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand (52:15b), they in the plural refers to Isra’el.**

53:1 Then, astonished, they (the Gentiles) **will say: Who has believed our message? which we have heard from the** (twelve) **men** (the apostles) **believing in our peace, or our Messiah, the messenger of God to the nations. Persuaded by the twelve men** (the apostles), **we Edomites** (here he is equating Christians to the Edomites who were constantly trying to destroy **the Jews**) **want to destroy Isra'el and the Torah, but now to whom has the arm of ADONAI been revealed?**

53:2 The Christian expositors apply the contents of this verse to Jesus, who was conceived without intercourse with man. This idea, however (as we shall prove by the help of God), is an astonishing blasphemy. Dani'el 12:10 says: Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. The prophet Isaiah speaks here also of Isra'el abased, humiliated, avoided, martyred, and spoiled by all nations, growing up before the providence of God like a branch and a root out of a dry land in consequence of their sins (Jeremiah 17:5-8). The prophet uses the expression roots in a dry land to explain the present exile and humiliation of His people. In the future, when God shall pour out waters upon these roots in dry ground and His blessing upon His children, then for what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has then believed our message and to whom has the arm of ADONAI been revealed (Isaiah 52:15b to 53:1)? Dispersed Isra'el is called roots in a dry land as compared with other nations who have a king and possess a country. Micah also compares the providence of God to grass and drops falling upon it in time of drought (Micah 5:7), by which providence Isra'el was preserved among all other nations more wondrously than in Egypt. Where are now the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians, with their different religions? They were mixed up in the time of drought with other nations, and disappeared. Jeremiah 30:11 and Hosea 2:3 and 3:4, all allude to the above-mentioned period of drought. Isaiah continues: He has no form, for he (Jacob) grows in the present exile as a root in a dry land.

53:3 Despised and rejected by men, as was always the case with scattered Isra'el. As hiding their faces from the despised one. And we esteemed Jacob not, the nations will say. Who would have believed that the arm of ADONAI would reveal itself to a nation despised and rejected of men? which covered its face, from which everybody kept aloof, as from a wounded man, and which is familiar with suffering, in other words, with being despised and humiliated by all nations, past and present. The fame of this wonderful redemption will even reach Cush (43:1-3).

53:4 The sufferings which we ought to have born, as evildoers are described by our teachers (Obadiah 1-2), *Isra'el bore*, which is even the case in our days. When Isra'el suffers humiliation, death, and destruction for supporting the holy law, the Gentile nations support blasphemies. Yet, we considered Jacob stricken by God, smitten by Him and afflicted. This the Gentile nations repeat even in our own days, saying that Isra'el is smitten by God because they put to death their God and Messiah and did not believe in Him, but finally they will say: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of ADONAI been revealed? This same was the case in Egypt, when the magicians said: This is the finger of God (Exodus 8:19), while later they were obliged to confess that God was fighting *for* Isra'el.

53:5 We were mistaken in believing that God disciplined Jacob for his sins, since in reality it was *our sins*, which caused his humiliation. **Those who hold to this view believe that Isra'el spiritually heals herself by the suffering she endures. Isra'el does not need a Savior because she saves herself.** Indeed in his interpretations de Castro replaces **Jesus** with **Isra'el**. And they said **Jesus** was blasphemous. **In fact, the cup of trembling and of fury, which was destined for him according to the word of God, was put into our hands (51:22). The punishment that we deserved for the Messiah to come** (they don't believe **the Messiah** has yet come, so when the antichrist comes, they will believe it is he whom they have waited for so long), **who is called our peace (9:6), and at whose coming universal peace ought to have been established, came upon Isra'el.** He is saying that if **Jesus** had really been **the Messiah**, universal peace *would have been* established. **By his stripes we are healed. In other words, Jacob** (the Jews) **was** (have been) **healed by the stripes that he received from us** (the Jews). **Thus the prophet says further on in Isaiah 53:10:** Yet, it was ADONAI's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. Even if we were to concede what the Christians say, and interpret this verse: **By the Messiah's stripes we were healed, then the Gentile nations would have to admit in amazement that when Isra'el drinks from the cup of trembling and fury, Jacob is healed.** For the rod and the staff with which God chastises His people are necessary during the time of their chastising (10:6-7). **In fact, Israel suffers oppression from the Christians who are healed by those very sufferings. The prophet explains this fact in 10:12, where Assyria represents Israel's enemy, and reference to his allusion is made in Psalm 91:1,12 and 14.**

53:6 We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. **At the beginning there were Arians and Catholics, now there are Calvinists and Lutherans, so that everybody turns to his own way (Jeremiah 49:7). Then the nations, amazed at such a great salvation, will exclaim: ADONAI has laid on Jacob**

the iniquity of us all. Isaiah alludes to those sects, saying: Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened (9:19). In other words, the prophet calls these different sects darkness. For it is in darkness that everyone has turned to his own way, and the same is true when people are blind in understanding.

53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter. (de Castro writes in 1492 that) This is the case now with the Spanish Inquisition, when Isra'el is brought to the funeral pile, and if they try to speak, a gag is put on their tongue.

53:8 By oppression and judgment he is taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? Oppression is employed by the prophets in a good and bad sense. In a good sense of the last days of the Passover (Amos 5:22), and in a bad sense of mourning (Joel 1:13). Here we take it in the latter sense; in other words, the nations, amazed at the great redemption, will say: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of ADONAI been revealed? that Isra'el will be brought by us in chariots to the house of God, and taken away from their state of depression and the judgment, which God had pronounced against them in the day of His wrath (Isaiah 17:7; Zechariah 8:22; Isaiah 49:7 and Jeremiah 16:19). Thus the prophet continues his generation. In the former redemptions Isra'el was counted by tribes and families, but in the present redemption God alone will be able to count and distinguish the families. In other words, God will not choose His priests and Levites from the other nations, but He will distinguish and choose them from Isra'el alone. He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. In other words, for the transgression of the fathers the children suffer at the present time (Lamentations 5:7). To him is a collective singular, referring to Isra'el, and not to the Messiah of the nations.

53:9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked. God chose Isra'el, who died for the Torah and the holy name of God, and who are rich, in other words, who possess many virtues, but they make their grave among the wicked (Dani'el 11:32-34), because they are buried among the Gentile nations. And all that, says the prophet, because he had not acted falsely in regard to the commandments of God, for which Isra'el always was and is now reprimanded, and there was no deceit in their mouth. They (the Jews) always considered Jesus as someone who mislead Isra'el and consequently subject to capital punishment, according to Deuteronomy 13:7-10, which says: If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly misleads you, saying, "Let us go and worship other

gods” (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, gods of the people around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him not pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you away from ADONAI your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again. **The nations, on seeing the redemption of those (Jews) whom they (the Gentiles) called heretics and evildoers, but who are rich in great virtues, will exclaim:** Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

53:10 If, preserved in the Torah of God, Jacob (the Jews) accepts patiently the chastisement as a correction for his (their) sins, he (they) will see his (their) offspring and prolong his (their) days.

53:11 After the suffering of his soul, Jacob (the Jews) will say to himself (themselves), drink the cup of trembling, bow down that they (the Gentiles) may walk over you (51:22-23). By his knowledge will my righteous servant Isra’el justify many, on seeing the great redemption of the Gentile world the justified ones (the Gentiles) will confess, surely Jacob (the Jews) has (have) borne the griefs which we (the Gentiles) deserved (Jeremiah 16:19-20). The sages teach that these passages prove clearly that Isra’el will be justified by their martyrdom, but not by that of the predicted Messiah.

53:12 Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong. King David instituted a Torah (First Samuel 30:24), to which the spoil was equally divided amongst those who were the victors and those who guarded the town. The prophet says accordingly that those who fight for the Torah of God and die for it have the same part of the reward as those whose souls fight against the body for the sake of the Torah. Therefore, God will divide the spoil with many and the strong who guarded the city, or the Torah of God; for the martyred people (the Jews) poured out his (their) life unto death and was (were) numbered with the transgressors (the Gentiles).

And it wasn’t like the Rabbis were ignorant of Christian theology. They knew exactly what they were rejecting. Another Rabbi writes: **Christianity has formed out of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah its principal argument for providing the truth of the gospel history; for as this contains nothing more than the life, passion, and death of Him**

whom they adore as very **God and Messiah**, and they find the same portrayed in this chapter in such vivid colors that its expositors call it *the passion chapter*, and **Isaiah**, the evangelical prophet, they make use of it as a convenient proof that **Isaiah** predicted by divine inspiration all that is related in the gospel, and that the **Messiah** was to die and suffer for the sins of mankind; that in this the redemption God had promised the people of **Isra'el** so many ages before would consist; that this people will acknowledge this truth in the latter days, and being converted to the Christian faith will confess how unjustly it punished and put to death the **Messiah** innocent of all sin, and that **Isra'el** will wonder at the glorious end of **Him** whom it had before executed on the charge of high treason against **God** (in other words, Christians saying that this is what the Jews will ultimately believe) . . In order to be able to apply the **Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah** to the **King Messiah**, as the Christian church pretends, it was obliged to suppose *that the innocent had to die for the redemption of souls*, on which supposition the whole Christian doctrine rests. How is it possible to apply this to a man whom the (Gentile) nations adore as **God-man** and the **Son of God**, who consequently lives and rules with **God**! What an unintelligible story this is!²¹⁴

How to Interpret Isaiah 53

If you trace **the Servant** motif beginning with **Chapter 49** you can see why **Isaiah 53** cannot refer to **Isra'el**. It can only refer to **the Messiah, Jesus Christ**. Because once **Isaiah** established who **the Servant** is in **Chapter 49**, he **consistently** maintains the same motif through **Chapter 53**.

A. In the general context there are the three other **Servant** passages:

The first Servant passage is **42:1-4** in which it spells out **the mission of the Servant** and the ministry **He** was to perform at **His** First Coming.

The second Servant passage is **49:1-13** in which there are three main points, first, in **49:1-4** the **Servant** of **ADONAI** is **accomplishing His mission with great difficulty** because **He** was being rejected by **Isra'el**. Secondly, in **49:5-7** we learn that because of **Israel's** rejection of **the Servant**, **He** will become a light for the Gentiles and many of the Gentiles would come to **Him**. Thirdly, in **49:8-13**, ultimately all **Isra'el** will come to a saving knowledge of **the Servant** and that is when the final regathering and restoration is going to take place.

The third Servant passage is **50:49** where it deals with **the sufferings of the Servant** of

ADONAI. It describes the sufferings **He** will endure, but does not say anything about **His** death.

But now we come to **52:13** to **53:12**, which is **the fourth Servant passage**, and the most strategic of the four **Servant** passages. There are two main points, **why and how the Servant suffers**.

B. The immediate context is in **51:5**:

There we read: **My righteousness draws near speedily, salvation is on the way, and My arm will bring justice to the nations**. Righteousness and salvation is going to be brought forth from **ADONAI**. But the *means* by which salvation will come to men is by the **arm**. And in this **arm** the Gentiles will trust.

Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of ADONAI; awake as in days gone by, as in generations of old (51:9). The point here being that it is the **arm of the LORD** that will redeem. **ADONAI** and the **arm of ADONAI** are two distinctive elements. It is going to be the **arm of ADONAI** that will bring about the redemption.

ADONAI will lay bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God (52:10). Again notice the relationship between **His holy arm** and **salvation**. When **all the nations** look at **God's arm**, what do they see? They see **salvation** (Yeshua); they see **Jesus** (Yeshua). This concept of the **arm of ADONAI** will be extensively developed in **Chapter 53**. In verse 1 we read: **Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of ADONAI been revealed?** And the rest of the chapter will be used to develop this theme.

One more thing in the immediate context is **52:3**: **For this is what ADONAI says: You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed**. Yet, in **Chapter 52** **Isaiah** says nothing about how **Isra'el** would be redeemed. **He** only speaks about how they would *not* be redeemed. But how *would* they be redeemed? That is the purpose of **52:13** to **53:12**.

C. The prophetic setting of this chapter is a prophecy about the crucifixion and resurrection.

Both elements will be present. But the actual prophetic setting should be viewed as in the closing days of the Great Tribulation because this section is the national confession of **Isra'el**, just prior to the Second Coming of **the Messiah**. At **the Messiah's** First Coming,

prior to **His** departure, **He** said: **You will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”** So here in **Isaiah**, we are told the words that **all Israel (Romans 11:26)** will use in her national confession (**Zechariah 12:10 to 13:1**), which in turn will bring about the Second Coming.

D. Does this chapter refer to an individual, **the Messiah**, or does it refer to **the nation of Isra’el**?

This is the major point of conflict in this chapter. **The rabbinical interpretation today has this chapter referring to suffering Isra’el in the Gentile world.** How can we prove that this cannot be so? How can we prove that this has to be an individual **Personality**? **First, it is important to know that all ancient rabbis up until 1050 AD took the position that this is speaking of the Messiah.** This is without exception. It was not until Rabbi Rashi, one of the most famous rabbis in the Jewish world, proposed the theory that **Chapter 53** was referring to suffering **Isra’el**, that the idea was even considered. He was opposed in his day by the majority of the rabbis who said Rashi was deviating from the truth because he was going contrary to the teachings of the rabbis for the past ten or eleven centuries. But as time went on, the popularity of Rashi’s viewpoint began to take hold in Jewish theological circles. Even today Rashi serves, more or less, as a Jewish Pope to Orthodox Judaism. If someone wants to get a final word in a theological debate they go to Rashi. They will say, “Rashi says this,” or “Rashi says that.” As a result, Orthodox Judaism holds his view today. But originally, his was not the Jewish interpretation. The traditional Jewish viewpoint is that the passage is Messianic, not national.

A second way that Chapter 53 does not refer to the nation of Isra’el is by the use of distinctive pronouns. There is a contrast made between **we, us, our** and **he, him, his**. Who is the **we, us, our**? If **Isra’el** is **the Suffering Servant** then the **we**, and the **us**, and the **our** have to be the Gentile nations. The problem with that view is that this is **Isaiah** speaking. **He** was a **Jew** and **his** audience was all **Jewish**. **He** was not speaking to Gentiles here. So **Isaiah**, when identifying **himself** with **his** own people, uses the pronouns **we, us** and **our**. Those pronouns refer to **Isra’el**. But the pronouns **He, His** and **Him** has to be someone distinct from **Isaiah** and from **Isra’el**, and that only leaves us with **the Messiah**.

A third evidence is that throughout this chapter the Suffering Servant is viewed as an individual personality. A nation cannot go through the experiences that are attributed to **the Suffering Servant**. An entire **nation** cannot be put into a prison. An entire **nation** cannot be put to death. An entire **nation** cannot be put on trial. Only individuals go through those processes.

A fourth evidence, and one of the most compelling evidences, occurs in 53:7. While **the Servant** is suffering, **His** suffering is voluntary, willing, and silent. **Isra'el** has suffered. That is very true. But **Isra'el** has *never* suffered voluntarily, or willingly, or in silence. Look at the Jewish Defense League; they are anything but silent sufferers. One thing **Isra'el** is *not* famous for is suffering silently.

A fifth evidence is that in this chapter the Servant is suffering vicariously, by way of substitution, on behalf of others. And while **Isra'el** has **suffered**, the prophets have made it clear that **Isra'el** will **suffer**, but for **her** own sins. Not for the sins of the Gentiles. **The Suffering Servant** in this chapter is clearly declared to be an innocent **sufferer**, not guilty of any sin whatsoever.

A sixth evidence is that justification results because of the sufferings of the Servant in 53:10-12. **Isra'el** has **suffered** for over two millennia now and no one has been justified yet. No Gentile nation has been justified, or become righteous as a result of **Isra'el's** **suffering**.

A seventh evidence is in 53:8-12. The Suffering Servant clearly dies. But while millions of **Jews** have died, **Isra'el** as a nation and as a people have always survived. And **the Jewish people**, with numerous attempts to do so, have never been destroyed.

An eighth evidence is the fact that this interpretation violates **Zechariah 2:11b** where we read that **many Gentile nations will be joined with the Messiah**. In that way **ADONAI** declares that that would be the super signal to let us know that **the LORD of heaven's** angelic **armies (CJB)** had **sent Him to us**.

Finally, the Servant is resurrected. After **He** dies **He** is brought back to life. **Isra'el** never died to begin with, so there was no resurrection.

Therefore, the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 cannot refer to the nation of Isra'el, it can only refer to One Person, the Messiah, Yeshua Messiah. There are five basic sections to this prophecy, and the first line of each section gives us the theme of that section.