

Isaiah 53

**THIS CHAPTER WILL
CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

He suffered and endured great pain for us.



Celebrate **MESSIAH**

Special Edition Newsletter
In Partnership with
Chosen People Global Ministries

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ONE CHAPTER REALLY CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE!



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SPECIAL EDITION

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That chapter is Isaiah 53, and the best-selling book in which it is found is the Bible — the Hebrew Scriptures, often described as the Old Testament.

Although this newsletter is primarily written for Jewish people, hopefully it will be read and understood by all those seeking to deepen their relationship with God. Whether or not you are Jewish, whether or not you are religious, I hope you will discover that reading and understanding Isaiah chapter 53 will change your life.

Allow me to offer a few compelling reasons why I hope you will find the fifty-third chapter of the Book of Isaiah meaningful:

- This chapter will help you understand some things about yourself — especially regarding your relationship to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- This chapter will demonstrate that the Bible can be trusted.
- This chapter will introduce you to God, who predicts the future and also brings it to pass.

This chapter will help shape your expectation of who the Messiah would be. You will discover how this chapter has been fulfilled in the life of the one whom many call “the greatest Jew who ever lived.”

I write from the vantage point of my personal faith in Yeshua the Messiah. I am a Messianic Jew — a Jewish person who believes that Jesus (Yeshua) is the Messiah of Israel and the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 — and my life was completely changed as a result.

Having been raised in a traditional Jewish home, I fully understand the challenges of keeping an open mind to the possibility that Jesus is the Messiah. When I came to believe this many years ago, I certainly had no intention of abandoning my Jewishness. I was looking for an authentic spirituality, and I imagine you might be interested in the same thing. I hope you might be willing to put aside — at least for a moment — the common belief that you cannot be Jewish and believe in Jesus.

After all, if one of our greatest Jewish prophets predicted the Messianic details that Yeshua would ultimately fulfill, then we would certainly have the basis to believe that one can be Jewish and believe in him.

More than anything, I hope that as you read these articles, your soul will be deeply touched by God. I pray that your spiritual search for a deeper and more intimate relationship with the Creator will become a reality in your life as it has in mine. There is no relationship in the world more fulfilling — or one that brings greater joy and satisfaction.

May the Lord enlighten your path and give you the insight to understand Isaiah chapter 53 — and to find a new and personal relationship with the God who made you and loves you.

Yours in Messiah,

Lawrence Hirsch
Executive Director of
Celebrate Messiah



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I'M JEWISH...NOW WHAT?

SATISFYING A UNIQUE SPIRITUAL DILEMMA

If most Jewish people today were to be completely honest, we might admit to being uncertain or even embarrassed at times by the idea that we are God's chosen people. To think that God especially chooses any people as special or unique seems to be somewhat narrow-minded and arrogant when viewed through the lens of our modern multicultural world.

What does it mean to be Jewish? Our history is important; the Holocaust, the modern State of Israel and antisemitism all concern us. Less serious matters — from Grandma's chicken soup for a cold to getting straight As in school — pop into our minds too! We all know the *shlick*, but I believe we also want deeper and more thoughtful answers about our identity and even about our relationship with the God who allegedly chose us.

Maybe one of the most important questions to ask is "What does it mean to be chosen?" The Jewish understanding of being chosen by God has been elusive and mysterious. After all, the impact of believing that there is a God who created us as individuals and called us as a people to some divine purpose could be profound — if we found it to be true. We would certainly want to discover what that divine purpose is for our lives and for our people, would we not?

In order to understand the idea of "chosenness" in Judaism, we need to examine the biblical passages where the idea is described. In Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, we learn from the Creator Himself the divine rationale for the existence of the Jewish people. This fact — further confirmed in the writings of the Jewish prophets — is that the nation of Israel was created and chosen by God for the benefit of the nations of the world (*goyim*). The Jewish people were called to be a light to the nations and tell the world about a good God who demanded righteousness from

the citizens of His kingdom.

Although the Jewish people were created and called by God to bring blessings to the world, we were not told specifically what these blessings might be. Should we relegate the blessings Jewish people were to bring to the world to ethical monotheism, as so many do — especially in comparative religion textbooks — or should we look for something more?

So what's so special about being Jewish? Besides belief in one God, the beauty of the Hebrew Scriptures and the volumes of Jewish ethics we have developed for the overall good of society, is there more? And to ask a very personal question, "What is in it for us?" Did the Lord simply choose us for the benefit of others and not concern Himself with our good?

These are the essential questions that we will consider in this newsletter.

God chose the Jewish people to have a relationship with Him personally and to pass along the greatness of this relationship to the nations of the world. The Jewish Scriptures tell us how this will happen. There is a promise described throughout the Bible that speaks of a day when the Messiah would come, and through this unique leader, both Israel and the nations would find their greatest sense of purpose, joy, peace and prosperity! Ultimately, the greatest blessing the Jewish people were to bring to the world was this very Messiah. But how and when Messiah would come is the question of the ages!

God, in fact, planned a Messianic "surprise appearance," as the Messiah entered the scene in a wholly unforeseen way...or did he? Read on and you will see.



IS THE NATION OF ISRAEL THE FULFILLMENT OF ISAIAH CHAPTER 53?

Isaiah 53

- 1 "Who would have believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD
been revealed?
- 2 For he shot up right forth as a sapling,
and as a root out of a dry ground; he
had no form nor comeliness, that we
should look upon him, nor beauty that
we should delight in him.
- 3 He was despised, and forsaken of men,
a man of pains, and acquainted with
disease, and as one from whom men
hide their face: he was despised, and we
esteemed him not.
- 4 Surely our diseases he did bear, and our
pains he carried; whereas we did esteem
him stricken, smitten of God, and
afflicted.
- 5 But he was wounded because of our
transgressions, he was crushed because
of our iniquities: the chastisement of our
welfare was upon him, and with his
stripes we were healed.
- 6 All we like sheep did go astray, we
turned every one to his own way; and
the LORD has made to light on him the
iniquity of us all.
- 7 He was oppressed, though he humbled
himself and opened not his mouth; as a
lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as
a sheep that before her shearers is
dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment he was
taken away, and with his generation who
did reason? for he was cut off out of the
land of the living, for the transgression of
my people to whom the stroke was due.
- 9 And they made his grave with the
wicked, and with the rich his tomb;
although he had done no violence,
neither was any deceit in his mouth."
- 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to crush him by
disease; to see if his soul would offer
itself in restitution, that he might see his
seed, prolong his days, and that the
purpose of the LORD might prosper by his
hand:
- 11 Of the travail of his soul he shall see to
the full, even My servant, who by his
knowledge did justify the Righteous One
to the many, and their iniquities he did
bear.
- 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion
among the great, and he shall divide the
spoil with the mighty; because he bared
his soul unto death, and was numbered
with the transgressors; yet he bore the
sin of many, and made intercession for
the transgressors.

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Judaism teaches that Isaiah 53 is fulfilled in the suffering and survival of the nation of Israel, which bore the sins of the Gentile nations. Rashi, the great 11th century French rabbi, and other sages developed this response during the Middle Ages, when Jewish people were often persecuted for not believing in Jesus. This persecution is a blight on history and does not reflect the truth as God intended it to be lived out. It is understandable that some of our great rabbis chose to interpret Isaiah 53 in this way, but this explanation does not reflect the clear teaching found in the text.

Here are a few reasons why this prophecy cannot refer to the nation of Israel:

1. *Israel is not an innocent sufferer, as is the individual described in the passage.*

Israel as a nation was sinful, as described in the preceding chapters of the Book of Isaiah — especially chapters 1 and 5.

2. *Israel is not a silent sufferer, as is the individual described in the passage.*

Many excellent arguments have been made to demonstrate that the Jewish people have never been silent sufferers. Even when the Holocaust is used as an illustration of Israel's suffering without complaint, it can be equally demonstrated that our people had well-organized resistance movements.

3. *Israel never died, as did the individual described in the passage.*

It is evident that Israel has never died; the nation has continued to maintain a distinct national existence throughout the centuries. Some might say that the nation of Israel died, in a sense, during the Holocaust and therefore the

resurrection passage in Isaiah 53:10-12 is fulfilled in the rebirth of the modern State of Israel. But in that case, the passage would have to be interpreted allegorically or symbolically and the language does not warrant this method of interpretation.

4. *The text points to the suffering of an individual, not a nation.*

This is very clear from the words of the text. One has to really allegorize the words of Isaiah in order to make them apply to the entire nation. In addition, the theme of redemptive suffering in rabbinic tradition is specifically focused on traditions related to the suffering of an individual called Messiah son of Joseph.

5. *The nation of Israel is the beneficiary of the Servant's sacrifice.*

In verse eight, the prophet described the one who would suffer as being “cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people to whom the stroke was due.” The Hebrew term translated as “cut off” refers to the death of the individual and, if taken literally, clearly refers to an individual person dying for the sins of God's people, the Jewish people.

It is fair to ask the question, “How can Israel be killed on behalf of Israel?” This is impossible. The subject of Isaiah 53 simply cannot be Israel as a nation.

The traditional Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53 as a reference to the nation of Israel is simply not accurate. It is an explanation driven by history, culture and politics — but not by the text.

DOES YESHUA FULFILL ISAIAH 53?

By comparing the Hebrew Scriptures with the New Testament, we can see if Yeshua fulfilled the prophecy. One could argue that it is impossible to figure out who fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 53. There has been a long list of suggested candidates from both within and without the Jewish community. However, only one person has really fulfilled Isaiah chapter 53 to the degree described in the chart.

THE PROPHETIC DESCRIPTION	THE NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT
The Servant was humble. (Isaiah 52:2, 13)	The New Testament writers describe the way in which Yeshua can be viewed as God's Servant, emphasizing his humility and unselfishness. <i>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.</i> (Mark 10:45) See also: Acts 3:13, Acts 3:26, Philippians 2:5-8
The Servant suffered silently and did not retaliate (Isaiah 53:7). The Servant was injured both physically and emotionally, but he was a willing sufferer, showing his excellent character.	<i>And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?" But he answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.</i> (Matthew 27:12-14) See also: 1 Peter 2:21-23
The Servant was willing to suffer a sacrificial and humiliating death for the sake of God's people. (Isaiah 53:8)	Isaiah predicted that the Servant would suffer and die sacrificially for us, even though the people on whose behalf he was suffering were rejecting and abusing him: <i>Then Pilate took Yeshua and scourged him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe. Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him with their hands.</i> (John 19:1-3) See also: Matthew 27:27-37
The Servant was a righteous and good man who suffered innocently (Isaiah 53:9-10). Like the sacrifices in the ancient Temple, the Servant was without blemish, as he could not have been a proper substitute for us if he were not.	Peter described the innocence of Yeshua the Messiah: <i>For to this you were called, because Messiah also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in his mouth;" who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously...</i> (1 Peter 2:21-23)
The Servant died a substitutionary death for our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6). This is the very heart of the prophecy! The death of the Servant would be redemptive; it was God's way of securing atonement for you and me.	Luke confirmed this, in his account of the meeting between the Apostle Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch: <i>So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah... The place in the Scripture, which he read, was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his justice was taken away, And who will declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth." So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Yeshua to him.</i> (Acts 8:30-35)



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THE PROPHETIC DESCRIPTION	THE NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT
<p>The Servant's sacrifice is viewed in Isaiah as an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10) and justifies many (Isaiah 53:11). The death of the Servant is compared to the sacrifice in the Temple known as the <i>asham</i>. This word is translated as "trespass offering," "guilt offering" or simply "offering." The death of the Servant in Isaiah 53 is clearly viewed by the prophet as a trespass offering—the offering designed both for the removal of guilt and its implied restitution. The death of the Servant was designed to accomplish something very specific: our atonement! Because the Servant died for our sins, we can be viewed as righteous by God.</p>	<p><i>But Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:1-14)</i></p>
<p>The Servant died and rose from the grave (Isaiah 53:10, 12). The predictions found in the latter verses of Isaiah chapter 53 indicate that the Servant would die—and yet would somehow "prolong his days" and receive a reward from the Lord. This implies a resurrection.</p>	<p>He died:</p> <p><i>And Yeshua cried out with a loud voice, and breathed his last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite him, saw that he cried out like this and breathed his last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:37-39)</i></p> <p>He rose from the dead:</p> <p><i>Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it...the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Yeshua who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and indeed he is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him. Behold, I have told you." So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Yeshua met them, saying, "Rejoice!" (Matthew 28:1-9)</i></p>

ISAIAH 53 AND YOU

The spiritual dimensions to the sacrifice of the Servant are still challenging for us to grasp, as most of us have been raised to be skeptical of anything we cannot see or prove in a laboratory!

This is where faith comes into the picture—not only faith in God, but openness to the possibility that the Bible is trustworthy, including what it says about the meaning of this one man's death. You would be amazed at how real, logical and tangible spiritual truths can become when comprehended by faith.

I cannot explain exactly why the death of the Servant can impact your life today, though clearly the Scriptures explain what happens when a person receives Yeshua as the Messiah (John 3:16). Yet from my own experience and that of many others, I know also that forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of a new and intimate relationship with God is possible. Ultimately, you will only be able to grasp this yourself if you open your heart to God.

From the love of a spouse or a child to the beauty of a sunset, it is impossible to measure “scientifically” the things that give us the greatest joys in life; they simply must be experienced. The impact of the death of the Servant on your life today, if understood with a heart of faith, will change your life. But the proof provided in the Bible can only take you part of the way—eventually you will need to do what I did: believe, and the Lord will do the rest. Fact, whether scientific or biblical, is simply a platform for exercising faith, as eventually you need to respond personally to what God did on your behalf through the Messiah.

Isaiah makes it clear that we deserved the punishment Yeshua suffered. The good news is that his death and resurrection satisfied God's righteous anger—which we all earned because of our sin and disobedience to the Torah and our own moral standards. If you recognize that Isaiah 53 points to Yeshua the Messiah and turn from your sins, then you can have peace with God.

I am sure you still have lots of questions. I remember the moment when I was ready to accept Yeshua as the Messiah. I still had questions, but somehow deep inside I knew that it was true.

Wouldn't now be a good time for you to receive the Messiah?

You might pray the following prayer:

Dear God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I know I am one of the sheep that has gone astray and turned to my own way. But, Lord, I also recognize that You laid the penalty of my sins on Yeshua the Messiah. I believe this and want to accept him as my Lord. Thank You for sending Yeshua to die in my place, allowing me to begin a personal relationship with You. Thank You for providing my atonement through Yeshua.

You might also meditate on these passages of Scripture found in the New Testament:

...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Yeshua and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)

If you prayed this simple prayer, you can be assured that God has forgiven you of your sin and that you have received the gift of eternal life—a life that begins now and lasts forever.

☐ I am Jewish and want to know more about Yeshua (Jesus). Please send me the FREE book, *Isaiah 53 Explained*.

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