

Understanding Isaiah 53

The Gospel of the Suffering Servant

Review Honor and Shame

- Honor and Shame = **pivotal value**
- Not a fear of guilt, but a fear of being **publicly** shamed
- Physical abuse = shame to men
- Who should ascribe honor to us?
- **Honor status reversal**
- Did Yeshua come to **appease an angry God** or to **restore the honor** of God who was **shamed by Israel**?

Review of Righteousness and Justice

- R & J = **Social justice**, social reforms to take care of the oppressed
- R&J = foundation of **YHWHs throne**
- YHWH is a God who **rescues** those who are **oppressed**
- Concern for **restorative justice**
- Biblical judge = **eyes wide open**

Yeshua Our Patron Review

- Protocol of relationships
- Grace as a secular term
- Circle of Grace
- Our duty of reciprocity

Leper Messiah Review

- Human mortal condition = shameful leprosy
- 1st Century association between leprosy and the Messiah
- Sacrifices as a means of drawing closer to God, not substitutional punishment
- The *Asham* offering pivotal in reconnecting healed leper to the covenant community.

Identity of the Suffering Servant

- Text is **ambiguous**
- Clearly defined as **Israel in earlier songs**
- **Distinct from national Israel** in Isaiah 49
- **Talmudic** rabbis attributed him as the **Messiah**
- Dead Sea Scroll evidence
- Conclusion -> **clearly speaking of Messiah**, but when we understand Patron-Client relationship, we see that **includes Israel**

Genre & Historical Setting of Isaiah 53

- **Poetry**
 - **Metaphorical** language
 - Intentional word choices
- Set at the return from Babylonian captivity
 - **Dealing with shame** of exile.
- Overarching **theme of shame and suffering**
 - *Kipper* is not found in the text

Isaiah 52:13-16

- 13 See, My Servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.
- 14 Just as there were many who were astonished at him
—so **marred was his appearance,** beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals—
- 15 so he shall **startle/sprinkle** many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Discussion

- He will be **lifted up** and exulted...but in the mean time:
- **Marred** in appearance
- **Sprinkle** many nations...

Isaiah 53:1-3

1 Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the **arm of the YHVH** been **revealed**?

2 For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or glory that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance **that we should desire him.**

3 **He was dishonored and rejected by others;**

a man of **suffering** and acquainted with **sickness/disease**;
and as one from whom others **hide their faces**
he was **dishonored**, and **we held him of no esteem.**

Discussion

- Where else do we find the "**arm of YHWH**"?
- What are we seeing as a heavy theme?
 - **Suffering**
 - **Disdain**
 - **Dishonor**
- Verse 3 "**Man of suffering**" - See Exodus 3:7 - *machov*

Isaiah 53:4-6

- 4 Surely he has **carried our sickness**
and **carried our suffering**;
yet we had accounted him **stricken**,
struck down by Elohim, and **humiliated**.
- 5 But he was wounded/pierced **because of** our transgressions,
crushed **because of** our iniquities;
upon him was the **instruction/discipline** that made us **complete**,
and by his wounds we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the **YHVH allowed our iniquity to hurt him**.

Discussion

- "**Carried**" - Hebrew *nasa* "to carry, bear, **forgive**".
- "**Stricken**" - Hebrew *naga* "to afflict" - associated with **skin-disease**
- "**because of**" vs. "**for**" Hebrew prep *min* meaning "from, out of, because of".
Also LXX *dia* in the genitive: "because of"
- Instruction/**discipline**: See Heb 5:8
- **Gone astray** - not *shagag* but *ta'iynu*, a term used of not knowing which direction to travel in.
- "**YHWH allowed**" - Hebrew *paga* in the hi'fil means "to let something hurt someone" (Lexham Hebrew-English Interlinear Bible)

Isaiah 53:7-9

7 He was **oppressed**, and he was **afflicted**,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers
is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By a **perversion of justice** he was taken
away. And as for His generation, **who**
considered that He was cut off out of
the land of the living stricken **because**
of the transgression of my people.

9 They made **his grave with the**
wicked and his tomb with
the rich, although **he had**
done no violence, and there
was no deceit in his mouth.

Discussion

- **Silence** in the face of shaming and torture is **considered honorable**
- The Hebrew word for **slaughter** here is *tevach* which is not used in Leviticus
- Not to satisfy God's justice, but by a **perversion of justice**. No hint at vicarious substitution and paying a just penalty.
- "cut off from the land of the living" - **Skin-diseased** person and the **scapegoat** (which was not a sacrifice BTW)
- "grave with the wicked" - Even in death he is mistreated

Isaiah 53:10-12

10 Yet it was the **will of the YHVH** to crush him with pain. When you make his life a **reparation offering**, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the YHVH shall prosper.

11 Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall forgive their iniquities.

12 Therefore **I will allot him a portion with the great,** and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death **and was numbered with the transgressors** yet he forgave the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Discussion

- "Will of YHWH to crush him" - **God's plan required Messiah's death.** Why? Because of our free will. We have to choose right from wrong
- **Reparation** offering - Leper **Messiah** - **Restoration of defiled sancta (lost sheep of the House of Israel)**
- Result is the **justification** of many (**making righteous**)
- "allot his portion" - **He is justified** and glorified/**honored!**
- Because he was **numbered with the transgressors** - Compare with Exodus 32:32 which also contains the term *nasa chata*.

Implications to Our Faith

- **Western** guilt-based theology vs. **Eastern** honor/shame culture
- Better equipped to **defend** and **teach** Messiah to atheists, Muslims, and anti-Missionary Jews.
- **Broader understanding** of the work of Messiah and our proper response.
- 2/3rds of Christians live in poverty in 3rd world countries or in inner cities. To preach "suffered instead of us" doesn't ring true with those who are suffering. What if we preach "**who suffered with us**"?

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