

The Jewish prophet Isaiah spoke abundantly of the Messiah of Israel. It was about 700 years prior to the coming of the Messiah that he penned a series of prophecies known by scholars around the world as “The Servant Songs”. The most controversial of these passages is undoubtedly the chapter known as “Isaiah 53” (Isa 52:13-53:12).

Most within modern Judaism, following the teachings of scholars such as Rashi and Ibn Ezra, hold to the view that Isaiah spoke of Israel and not the Messiah. It must be noted that equally prominent rabbis such as Nachmanides or Rabbi Moshe Alshech believe that Isaiah speaks of King Messiah.

Additionally, the Babylonian Talmud and the Zohar amongst other writings speak of one who would suffer and save his people. Isaiah 53:10-12 is the last section of this famous passage of the Tenach and it sheds more light on different aspects of the redemptive career of the Messiah.

It pleased YHVH to bruise him

10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Contrary to the destructive diatribe used against Jewish people over the centuries, the Bible tells us that the L-rd (YHVH) was solely responsible to put Messiah to death, not the Jewish people or even the Romans. It was God’s will from the creation of time (Rev. 13:8)

Yeshua was to be the perfect atonement for Israel and all of mankind as he would shed his blood for our sins (Lev. 17:11, 19:21). Only His sinless death would fulfill God’s demand.

Yet a strange statement appears in the rest of the verse as we read that immediately after He is crushed as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring (contextually His followers as seen in John 1:12) and His days will be prolonged.

One must ask: “ how can someone’s days be prolonged if they are killed?” Only through resurrection can such a statement be true, which is exactly what Isaiah meant here. Incidentally, the concept of the resurrection is not foreign to the writers of the Tenach (Job 19:26, Psalm 16:10, Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19). Messiah was to rise again as the first fruit of the resurrection.

Knowledge of the Righteous One Saves us

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

Isaiah continues in verse 11 by telling us that *by His knowledge* He will justify many. The Righteous Servant of the L-rd cannot apply to Israel in any context, since no generations of the Jewish people would qualify from Abraham until now. Thus it must be a person. Scholars have different views on what “the knowledge of the Righteous One ” means in this context, but when kept in context with the rest of the

servant songs and particularly with Isaiah 52:13- 53:12, it points to Yeshua of Nazareth, also known as *Adonai Tziken* "The Lord our Righteousness" in Jer. 23:6. His "righteousness" or total absence of sin is the very basis for his substitution

Those who acquire knowledge of Messiah's death and resurrection will be justified (Eph 4:22-24). We are justified or better yet "saved" because we are made aware of the fact that he bore our iniquities, he paid for our sins since none of us could ever do it for ourselves (Ecc. 7:20). But awareness is not sufficient, we must accept this free gift that only the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could give us (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Servant of YHVH will be exalted

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

The idea conveyed in verse 12 is that of a general dividing the spoils of war after a victory. Thus the Messiah will end up being exalted for his obedience unto death. God will honor His Servant on our behalf because of his sinless death on behalf of a fallen world. Additionally, we are told that the Messiah also intercedes for us. He has become our advocate before God the Father.

As it becomes increasingly difficult to apply this section to ethnic Israel, we come to realize that the rabbis of old were right when they applied this powerful prophetic passage to the Messiah of Israel. The question remains: Which Messiah would be humiliated, suffer an agonizing death by crucifixion, atone for the sins of Israel and the rest of the world and yet be resurrected and rewarded by God to reign forever?

The age old Jewish concept that our people would see two messiahs; Messiah ben Yoseph who would suffer and die for his people and Messiah ben Dovid who would conquer and reign in the Messianic kingdom is partially true. Yet, it only becomes a saving reality when we realize that the ministries of both messiahs are fulfilled by the same person: Yeshua of Nazareth, who was Messiah ben Yoseph at his first coming and will return as Messiah ben Dovid.