

DISFIGURED BEYOND MAN

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When I was a boy growing up in New Jersey I wanted to be many things. At first I wanted to be a fighter pilot. I just loved the way jets flew. Then I wanted to be a professional baseball player. I loved smacking the baseball for extra bases. As I got older, I thought that I wanted to be a lawyer. I went to college thinking that after that, I'd go to law school. But in my third year of college, I realized that I didn't want to devote my whole life to legal quarrels. I wanted 'life', not just a profession. It was in Florida, a year later, that I found what I wanted to be. I wanted to be like the Man who not only gave his life for me, but gave his life to me.

It's one thing to see a movie on Jesus, although Mel Gibson's is supposed to be 'an experience'.¹ It's quite another to have seen what actually happened to him and how badly mauled he was, before he got to the timber that he was pierced to. The beating and torture that Messiah received at the hands of the Roman soldiers before they crucified him is what Is. 52:14 relates to. It was common Roman practice to take the condemned man and beat him 'almost to death', and then to crucify him. Many of the condemned men never made it to the crucifixion, dying of the beatings inflicted upon them. Part of that beating was to be scourged with whips. We know that God forbid Israel to punish with the lash more than forty times:

'He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes' (Dt. 25:3).

But Rome had no such law limiting the amount of times the condemned would be whipped. They wanted to degrade the man. David Baron states that the Jewish people who saw Yeshua's crucifixion would be dismayed and appalled 'because of the greatness of His suffering, which would cause His blessed countenance and form'² to be totally distorted. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary affirms this saying: 'This marring of the visage, as we now know, was to be the result of his maltreatment at the hands of Pilate's soldiers.'³ Of course, the Roman Church (and too many others), conveniently skipped over this and placed all the blame on us Jews. Baron goes on to state that the words offered by Isaiah (52:14) picture the amount of suffering Messiah would go through for Israel:

'By these strong words and expressions the Spirit of God seeks to give us a glimpse into the depth and intensity of the vicarious sufferings of our Saviour, and of the greatness of the cost of our redemption; and as we contemplate this picture of the Man of Sorrows, with the 'face' which for us was 'marred' more than that of any man, and with His form bowed and disfigured more than the sons of men, may our hearts be stirred with shame and sorrow for' our 'sin which was the cause of it all, and with greater love and undying gratitude to Him who bore all this for us!⁴

¹ Aramaic was not Yeshua's primary language. It was Hebrew. Even Aramaic scholars have come to realize. With both the internal evidence of the New Testament (John 19:20; Acts 21:40; 22:2, etc.), and archeological finds like written letters of the day and coins, etc., Hebrew is seen as the language of the Jewish people then. We can only hope that Mel's portrayal of 'Jesus' is more accurate than the language he choose to give Him.

² David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit; 2000), p. 60.

³ Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament; Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 646.

⁴ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, pp. 60-61.

How It Happened

Yeshua was betrayed by a follower of his named Judah, into the hands of the Jewish leadership.⁵ He was taken to the representatives of the Sanhedrin, the highest religious-political institution in the Land. There, after precursory questioning by the High Priest, who feigned wanting to know if Yeshua was Messiah or not, he was condemned to death, blindfolded, spit upon, mocked and goaded, because he told them that he was Messiah. (Mt. 26:62-66; Lk. 22:66-71) They struck him and shouted, ‘Prophecy! Who hit you?!’ (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-64).

The Jewish leadership then took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who ruled in Jerusalem and the land of Judah. Rome allowed its vassal states a great deal of autonomy in ruling but one thing they retained was the power over life and death. The Sanhedrin could condemn Yeshua to death but the judgment couldn’t be carried out without Rome authorizing and enacting it. Pilate, as governor, exercised ‘supreme authority as representing the emperor.’⁶

Pilate ordered his Roman soldiers to scourge Yeshua (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Jn. 19:1). The whips of the Romans contained ‘scorpions’. These were whips, ‘weighted with lead, and studded with sharp-pointed pieces of bone’.⁷

Every slash would induce a ‘frightful laceration’⁸ of the skin. Scourging meant that,

‘The victim was stripped and tied over a post, where he was lashed with a long leather whip in which bits of sharpened bone and pellets of lead had been secured. Beatings of this nature were extremely cruel’.⁹

Wherever the lashes landed, his back, arms, side, face and legs, the scorpions would tear out his flesh and the lead would pound his body. Only God knows how many times he was lashed.

The Romans didn’t stop at forty. They stopped when they got tired, and then another would take over. It was ‘sport’ for them.

R. T. France writes that the victim was ‘flayed to the bone’.¹⁰ ‘On some occasions these beatings were so severe that bones and organs were left exposed’.¹¹ Now we can begin to imagine the excruciating pain that Messiah Yeshua went through, how near death he must have been, and how disfigured he must have looked. This was only the beginning.

After the scourging, the Roman soldiers, which numbered anywhere from 200 to 600,¹² took off his

⁵ Mt. 26:25, 47-50; Mk. 14:10, 43-46; Lk. 22:3-5, 47-48; Jn. 18:2-3.

⁶ Alexander Balmain Bruce, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels*, vol. one (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 322.

⁷ Marcus Dods, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: The Gospel of St. John*, vol. one (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 853.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, Author; W. Ward Gasque, New Testament Editor, *New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 256.

¹⁰ R. T. France, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Author; The Rev. Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 393.

¹¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. four (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 359. Josephus BJ ii. 21.5 (612); vi. 5.3 (304).

¹² Bruce, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels*, vol. one, p. 327.

clothes and put a purple robe on him, to mock him as King of the Jews (Mt. 27:28; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2). Purple was symbolic of kingship. They made a ‘crown’ of thorns, out of thin, pliable branches from a tree that grows in Israel that has very large and sturdy, three to six inch thorns on its bark and branches. They put it on his already bloodied and pummeled head, gave him a staff (mocking a king’s scepter), and kneeling down in mock allegiance, proclaimed him, ‘King of the Jews!’ (Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17-18; Jn. 19:2-3). Then they took the staff (reed),¹³ which can be described as a cane or walking stick,¹⁴ and repeatedly beat him on his head (Mt. 27:30; Mk. 15:19). Isaiah tells us that they also tore out his beard:

‘I gave My back to those who strike me and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard.
I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting’ (Is. 50:6).

Having his beard pulled out meant that his facial flesh would also have been torn from him. How brutal and devastating this must have been for Yeshua. After all this, they paraded him through the city, and outside the walls, they crucified him. Completely naked, for humiliation, they pierced his hands and his feet with nails (spikes), to a wooden post for all the world to see (Mt. 27:31, 35; Mk. 15:20, 24; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:16-18). Now we can better understand what Isaiah meant when he prophesied of Messiah Yeshua,

‘Many were appalled at you, so disfigured beyond man was his appearance, and his form beyond the sons of men’ (Is. 52:14).

Thus, the Messiah of Israel was treated by both Jew and Gentile. Even his students (disciples), deserted him. Why did God allow His Son to be so brutally beaten, mocked and humiliated, and pierced to a tree? Very startling and extremely powerful is the symbolism. But first we’ll look at what Judaism today says about Is. 52:14, and then what our ancient Jewish Sages said about it.

Isaiah 52:14—Many Were Appalled

Of course, the plain meaning of the verse relates to a man whose appearance would be completely distorted, more than any man. But Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, following Rashi, paraphrases this verse to read that the people of Israel were the ones who were disfigured and that the Gentile nations would be the ones that were appalled at Israel. He states:

‘As many of the nations were astonished at thee, Oh Israel, saying at the time of the captivity, ‘Truly he is disfigured above all mankind in his countenance and form’.¹⁵

As Franz Delitzsch points out, if Israel was who Isaiah had in mind, the ‘you’ here (‘appalled’ or ‘astonished at you’), should have been in the plural. It’s singular. He writes, ‘we should no doubt expect עֲלֵי־כֶם’ (*ah-lay-hem*) ‘or עֲלֵי־יְיָ’ (*ah-lay-ich*) ‘after what has gone before, if the nation were addressed’.¹⁶ What we find is the second person singular, masculine form: עֲלֵי־יְיָ (*ae-leh-hah*) ‘at you’. The primary meaning, and the one we should take unless ruled out by some other factor, is that the ‘you’ is a man, just as the text states. Reading it literally, with the rest of the phrase, also strengthens this: ‘so disfigured from (a) man was his appearance’ and ‘his form from the sons of man.’ The language certainly presents a human being

¹³ Wesley Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 217.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 22. Rabbi ben Israel (1604-1657) lived 500 years after Rashi.

¹⁶ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), p. 501.

and not the Jewish nation.

Add to this that Israel has been spoken of in the feminine form since Is. 51:17,¹⁷ and one is very hard pressed to think the 'you' here is Israel. Rabbi ben Israel also states that the Gentiles would 'perceive their mistake' (at mistreating Israel), and that here in Isaiah, they are acknowledging 'themselves to be the sinners, and Israel to be innocent.'¹⁸ The problem with this concept is that Israel was not innocent, pure and holy when she was taken into captivity and thrown off the Land. It was exactly the opposite. Also, and this is more significant, nowhere in Scripture does salvation for the Gentile come from Israel suffering for them. It comes from Messiah (Is. 42:6; 49:6, etc.).

What Rabbi ben Israel meant by the nations being 'astonished' was Israel's exaltation.¹⁹ If the captivity that he spoke of was the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple by the Babylonians, with the subsequent captivity, we are now more than 2,500 years away from that. Where is the exaltation of Israel? If the captivity that the rabbi was speaking of was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple by Rome, with the subsequent scattering of us Jews to the four corners of the Earth (70; 135 C.E.), we have seen more that 1,800 years go by.

Using either the Babylonian or Roman destruction, why is the restoration and exaltation of Israel taking so long, if Rabbi ben Israel's theory was correct?²⁰ Where has the redemption of Israel been all these years? Where is her exaltation above the angels (Is. 52:13)? If the prophecy relates to Israel being exalted above all that can be imagined, after her degradation as the rabbi would have us to believe, we have waited many years and not seen this. Placing the idea of Israel being exalted after the captivity is a desperate attempt to redeem a poor theory. The rabbi wants us to believe that Israel would be exalted 'at the time of Messiah' but fails to show us why there has been so much time between Israel's degradation and Messiah's coming.

Someone might comment that, 'If Yeshua was Messiah, we haven't seen his exaltation either for 2,000 years.' Although there seems to be a parallel here, it is only a parallel of form, not substance. Nowhere in Rashi or Rabbi ben Israel do we find an answer for the failure of Israel to be exalted among the nations after so long a period of time. This is something that should not be overlooked if the captivity was the seed of Israel's exaltation.

But with Messiah Yeshua, many Jews literally saw him alive after his death and resurrection, giving witness to his not only being alive but highly exalted at the right hand of God.²¹ And many more millions, both Jews and Gentiles, have felt his presence in their midst, having received the Spirit of the Holy One (Ezk. 36:24-26). These too become living witnesses concerning the exaltation of Messiah Yeshua.

It is very hard to believe that the Jewish people would be used to atone for the sins of the Gentiles; and that for many centuries. Aside from not finding anything within God's Word to verify such a thing, who would atone for Israel's sins so Israel could offer herself for the Gentiles? Any sacrifice to Yahveh must be unblemished, a symbol of purity, innocence (vs. guilt), and sinlessness. Moses wrote that it must be

¹⁷ Ibid. p., 499.

¹⁸ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 22.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 22. See point 5, for it seems that the captivity that Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel speaks of is the Roman dispersion of Judah. See also, pp. 25-26.

²¹ See 1st Cor. 15:3-8 for the account that more than 500 Jews had seen the risen Messiah; also, Acts 7:55-56, Rev. 1:12-18, etc. For an excellent book on modern day Jews who have seen Messiah, see Sid Roth's *They Thought for Themselves* (Brunswick, GA: MV Press, 1999). Especially insightful is the chapter on Ron Cohen, a former Jewish yogi who had much spiritual power and social influence.

without flaw:

‘You must not sacrifice to Yahveh your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is an abomination to Yahveh your God.’ (Dt. 17:1)

Israel could not say that it was without blemish (i.e. sinless). Therefore, making Israel to suffer for the sins of the other nations, over and over again, is not only a falsehood but it also makes Yahveh out to be a monster. It’s bad enough to suffer for one’s own sins but to have to suffer for another’s? And for centuries? This teaching punishes Israel for the sins of the world, continually. But God says that Israel suffered for her own sins because she broke His covenant with Him (Is. 24:5; Jer. 15:13-14; 31:32, etc.). Being scattered to the four winds, at the mercy or ruthlessness of the Gentiles, was part of the fruit of our disobedience (Lev. 26; Deut. 28).

Our ancient Rabbis and Sages are diametrically opposed to what Rashi, Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel and others would have us to believe about Isaiah 53. Although Israel has suffered cruel beatings and tremendous sufferings over the centuries, and that unfortunately, much of the time at the very hands of those who have called themselves Christians,²² ‘Israel’ should not be read into Is. 52:14. It speaks of Messiah’s savage beatings at the hands of both Jew and Gentile. Our ancient Jewish Sages and Rabbis saw this many years before Rashi changed it in the 11th century. Their spiritual and Scriptural discernment was very accurate. They said that Messiah was the Suffering Servant that Isaiah wrote of. Rachmiel Frydland writes that,

‘the Talmud, the Targum, the Midrashim, the Zohar and Pesikta Rabbati recognize a suffering Messiah in fulfillment of Isaiah 53²³ and other similar descriptions in the Tanach.’²⁴

Maimonides, commonly called Rambam, and held within Judaism as the greatest rabbi who ever lived, fiercely opposed Rashi’s teaching that Israel was the Servant.²⁵ Our ancient authorities on God told us that Isaiah was speaking about our Messiah, not about our suffering for the Gentiles. No nation can be placed on the Altar of God for another nation. Sin can only be forgiven God’s way. Startling as this may be for many Jews, we find that the actual removal of sins from Israel, spoken by the Prophet Jeremiah, comes from God’s New Covenant with Israel:

‘Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; forasmuch as they broke My covenant, although I was a lord over them, saith the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every

²² For an overview of Christian persecution of the Jewish people since the time of Messiah Yeshua, see Max Dimont’s, *God, Jews and History*. For a heart rendering account of Jewish persecution during World War One, see S. Ansky’s, *The Enemy at His Pleasure*. It is a classic. And for an account of the resiliency of the Jewish people in a fiendish concentration camp, see *Treblinka* by Jean-Francois Steiner. One reviewer noted it’s ‘the most important piece of Holocaust literature ever written.’ We agree.

²³ Isaiah 52:13-15 is the summary that precedes Is. 53.

²⁴ Rachmiel Frydland, Author, Elliot Klayman, Editor, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah* (Cincinnati, OH: Messianic Publishing Company, 1993), p. 54. Also, p. 56, note 24: Sanhedrin 98a. Also, *Midrash Rabbah on Lamentations 3:49-50, 59; Midrash Tanhuma; Yalkut*, vol. 2, para. 338; *Midrash Rabbah on Ruth 2:14; Targum on Isaiah 52:13; Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36:142; Zohar 2, 212a; Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235 C.E.), Rabbi Mosheh Alshekh (16th century); Rabbi Daniel Zion (20th century)*, etc.

²⁵ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 13. Rambam was born (1135-1204 C.E.), 30 years after Rashi died.

man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the LORD'; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more' (Jer. 31:31-34).²⁶

Only with the coming of the New Covenant does God say that forgiveness of sin will come to Israel. Not after the 'captivity' that Rashi and many millions of Jews experienced. And certainly not with Israel being used as a 'sacrifice' for the Gentiles, which is what we will see Rashi present in Is. 53:5.

Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel's theory, that Israel would atone for the sins of the Gentiles, is bizarre. He and Rashi have also completely misinterpreted Isaiah by saying that it speaks of Israel and not Messiah. Interestingly enough, the verse just before the last quote from Jeremiah has Yahveh saying that every person will die for their own sins: 'But every one shall die for his own iniquity'.²⁷ So how could Israel die or suffer for all the Gentiles? Well, someone might say, how could Messiah then die for Israel's sins? First, it is written as such (Is. 53:4-5). Second, Messiah was sinless and therefore able to take another's place and die in their stead. And third, Messiah was also deity, which meant that his blood and his spirit both forgave one's sin (a picture of the Day of Atonement), and also began the process of the new nature, His, within that person, thereby completing the act of forgiveness, bringing true shalom, and being able to present the person to Yahveh as holy and pure on Judgment Day.

Yeshua was hunted by our religious leaders and finally murdered by them. They didn't realize that their sins played right into the hand of Yahveh who had decreed that Messiah would die for the sins of our people (Is. 53:4-5). With the words, 'at you' (v. 14, 'Many were appalled at you'), Isaiah seems to be speaking directly to Messiah, as if actually beholding him. That Isaiah saw what Messiah would look like after his beatings should not come as a surprise to us. He saw Yahveh, 'high and lifted up' (Is. 6), and other prophets and kings saw Yahveh and Messiah too.²⁸

The word 'appalled' אֲשַׁמָּה (*sha-mame*) means, 'to be astonished, amazed'²⁹ or 'petrified, by paralyzing astonishment (Lev. 26:32; Ezek. 26:16)',³⁰ 'to be thrown by anything into a desolate or bereaved condition'.³¹ The word for 'disfigured' מִשְׁחָה (*mish-hot*), means that his 'appearance and his form were altogether distortion' 'away from men, out beyond men, i.e., a distortion that destroys all likeness to a man'.³² A more accurate description of what happened to Yeshua, could not have been made. His body and face were so distorted and disfigured by the beatings he received, it was hard to tell if he were even human. Unless we have a good reason to do otherwise, we should interpret v. 14 as our ancient (and some modern), Jewish Sages did, and not assign it to the nation of Israel, as Rashi and others after him have done. As the full text unfolds before us, it'll continue to become very evident that Isaiah is speaking of the person of Messiah dying for our sins, and not the nation of Israel dying for the sins of the Gentiles.

²⁶ The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), p. 1207.

²⁷ Ibid. Jer. 31:30.

²⁸ In Is. 6, Isaiah sees Yahveh 'high and lifted up'. King David saw both Yahveh and Messiah, as related in Psalm 110; 'Yahveh said to my Lord'. And Daniel (7:13), sees both the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man (Messiah Yeshua). In 1st Kings 22:19, the prophet Micaiah relates how he saw Yahveh; etc.

²⁹ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 725.

³⁰ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, vol. 7, p. 502.

³¹ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 60.

³² Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, vol. 7, p. 502.

The Tri-Fold Symbolism of His Beatings and Death

First, both Jew and Gentile bear equal guilt in condemning the Son of Man to death.³³ Both were equally responsible for his beatings and his death. All Jews were represented by the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Congress made up of priests and religious leaders). And all Gentiles were represented by Pilate, Rome's administrative head of Jerusalem. Symbolically, every human being condemned and had a hand in putting the Son of Man to death. It's as though all mankind's rage against God, was taken out on God's Son, Yeshua. Scripture says: 'the reproaches of those who reproach You, have fallen on me.' (Ps. 69:9b)

We were all there, beating him, spitting on him, mocking him, pounding the nails into his flesh and crucifying him. That's our nature. It's 'good and evil' (for our First Parents ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: Gen. 2:17ff), and we cannot disassociate ourselves from the evil. It's intertwined with the good and pollutes us. Our nature hates God and his Messiah Yeshua (Rom. 8:7). We are rebellious and disobedient at the core. And the sooner we realize this, the sooner we become aware of the depth of our moral depravity, our need for a Messiah-Saviour, and the incredible holy love of our God for us.

Man has always wanted to be God. The first sin of Adam and Eve reveal Man's desire to glorify himself above God. Rome occupied the position of 'god' in Yeshua's day. And to a lesser extent, so too the Sanhedrin. That's why both Jewish and Gentile representatives condemned the Son of God to death. God the Son had come to claim ownership and they rejected him. He was 'the competition' and they thought they could do away with him.

Second, in sublime contrast to Man's rage against God, the torturous beatings and death to His Son reveal a true picture of how much God loves us. What father would offer up his own son, to a mob of murderers, and be willing to forgive them? Yet our Father in Heaven did exactly that. Abraham offering up his unique son, Isaac, offers us a picture of this divine reality. Abraham revealed that his love for God was greater than his love for his son. And Isaac revealed that his love for his father was greater than his love of himself. Both willingly laid down their lives, their agendas, to obey God (Gen. 22). And God used this to show us how great Abraham and Isaac's love was. For we, as human beings, can grasp to some degree, the love that both of those human beings must have had, and the ordeal they went through, in order to show their love for God.

Abraham and Isaac were the prototype for our heavenly Father and His Son, Messiah Yeshua. How great is God's love for you, who willingly gave up His Son and did nothing to stop the brutal beatings? And how great is Yeshua's love for you, who willingly laid down his life for you? The beatings and the crucifixion display on the historic stage of the world, the love of both the Father and the Son for both Jew and Gentile. It was done so that we could literally see how much our Father and our Messiah love us.

God's love is further exemplified, how different it is from our love, with the question: 'How could Yeshua even think of forgiving those that actually did this to him? In the midst of suffering all this physical and psychological torture, as they were nailing him to the tree, Yeshua said, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing' (Luke 23:34).³⁴

³³ Long and bitter has been the life of the Jew among the European 'Christian Church' over the last 1500 years. Many Jews have been murdered, raped and persecuted for being 'Christ killers'. In this, the Jewish people have identified with their Messiah's sufferings while the 'Church' has aligned itself with the Accuser and Destroyer (Satan).

³⁴ Some think this saying applies only to those Roman soldiers that actually put the spikes into his hands and his feet while others think he said it to encompass all that assaulted him that day. Either way, his love is unique.

The Roman centurion who watched over the crucifixion site was moved by what he saw. He said, 'Truly, this was the Son of God.' (Mt. 27:54; Mk. 15:39).³⁵ This is not human 'goodness' but a true reflection of God's holy love. This is how much God loves you. Yeshua voluntarily laid down his life³⁶ to graphically reveal God's love for those who hate God (all mankind): 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us.' (Rom. 5:8)

Oh, the unfathomable love of God for both Jew and Gentile. He sent His Son to die for you that your sins could be forgiven (the New Covenant), and your sin nature eradicated and replaced by Messiah's divine nature:

'He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature' (2nd Peter 1:4).

Oh, how great and awesome is our God! There is no one like Him! His love for you is literally seen in Messiah Yeshua's brutal beatings and crucifixion! Who cannot be touched and humbled by this display of love and forgiveness? What a mighty and awesome God we serve!

And third, Yeshua's brutal beatings, humiliation and crucifixion also serve as a picture of what awaits those rebels who continue to despise and reject what the Father has done for them, in sending His Son to take their just punishment. Yeshua was our substitute. What happened to him should happen to every human being for having a nature that is so contrary to God. Torah states that every one who hangs on a tree is cursed (Deut. 21:23).

Yeshua was cursed for us so that we would have an opportunity not be to cursed. What happened to Yeshua is a graphic presentation to both Jew and Gentile of what eternity in Hell will be like. This is the warning! If God allowed His Son to be brutally beaten, mocked and pierced to a tree, how much more will be done to those who despise His Love and Forgiveness in Messiah Yeshua?

The horrendous beatings and the crucifixion of Messiah Yeshua picture three streams of divine thought: one, Man's rage against God. Two, God's love for Man; and three, what eternity will be like for those who spurn the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua, King of the Jews.

Having begun with Messiah's extraordinary exaltation as the Servant of Yahveh, v. 14 tells us of his complete and total physical and societal humiliation. Verse 15 will reveal what his death provides for Israel and the nations.

'Among our rabbis today are many pious men, yet they do not study the prophecies of the Bible and so do not know the truth concerning The Messiah. Nevertheless, a few rabbis who have studied the Messianic prophecies have accepted Yeshua as the one and only Jewish Messiah.'³⁷

'Some of our Jewish people have the erroneous idea that if a Jew accepts Yeshua as The Messiah, he is no longer a Jew. This is not true! According to the Holy Scriptures, one does not fully know the joy of being a real Jew until he accepts Yeshua, The Messiah, and follows all the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.'³⁸

³⁵ Roman soldiers kept guard over the crucified lest they be taken down before they died.

³⁶ In John 10:18, Yeshua declares that he voluntarily laid his life down and that 'no one took it' from him. And in Matt. 26:53, he tells us that he could have stopped the beatings anytime he wanted to: 'Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?'

³⁷ Sanford R. Howard, *L'Chayim: Finding The Light of Shalom* (Thorsby, AL: Sabbath House, Inc., 1999), p. 220.

³⁸ Ibid.

Thirty four years ago I found out what I wanted to be. Now I'm calling you to come and join me. I want you to experience the Joy and Life that is Messiah Yeshua. Tell him you want to be just like him. Ask Him to forgive and cleanse you of your sins and to fill you with His Spirit. Ask Him to love you. You will not be satisfied until you have been loved by him and love him in return.