

FRESH BAGELS ANYONE?

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It's no fun trying to chew a three day old bagel that's hard as a brick. But this is the food that our Jewish leadership is giving us for understanding Isaiah 53. The Rabbis today, taking their cue from Rashi, say it applies to Israel, and not to our Messiah. In the last Newsletter however, we saw that for the previous 1,400 years before Rashi, our Rabbis said the passage spoke of a Messiah who dies. In the Talmud, Suka 52a, our Rabbis wrote of Is. 53 saying, 'Is this not Messiah the Son of Joseph, who was slain?' Also in Sanhedrin 98a, our ancient Sages related Is. 53 to the sufferings of our Messiah.¹

The three verses of Is. 52:13-15 form a summary for the twelve verses that follow (Is. 53:1-12). Risto Santala says the section 'contains the most shocking paradox in the' 'history of redemption'.² The three verses speak of the exaltation of the Servant of Yahveh, his brutal and horrific suffering, and how the kings of the world would find salvation even though they weren't looking for it.

Isaiah 52:13: Raised and Lifted Up

'Behold My Servant! He will act wisely. He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.'³

The Servant of Yahveh: Israel or Messiah?

Who is the Servant that Isaiah speaks of? There are basically two main contenders, Israel or Messiah.⁴ Rashi, who lived in the 11th century, tells us it is the Jewish people. He paraphrases the verse saying: 'Behold, at the end of days, My servant, Jacob' 'shall prosper.'⁵ Both Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th century),

¹ Rachmiel Frydland, Author, Elliot Klayman, Editor, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah* (Cincinnati, OH: Messianic Publishing Company, 1993), p. 54. See also note 24.

² Risto Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 1992), p. 202.

³ *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), p. 1078. They have a slightly different translation but basically the same: 'Behold, My servant shall prosper, He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.'

⁴ David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit; originally published in 1922; 2000), p. 17. He writes that some have presented Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Josiah, or even Job as the Servant, but that, 'they have been sufficiently refuted by Jewish writers themselves.' And as for some liberal Christians who believe it doesn't refer to Messiah Yeshua, he quotes Hengstenberg who says, 'among the interpretations which refer the prophecy to a single individual other than the Messiah', 'scarcely any one has found another defender than its own author.' He goes on to ascertain the import of this: 'They are of importance only in so far as they show that the prophecy does most decidedly make the impression that its subject is a real person' and we might add, not a group of people (i.e. Israel).

and Redak who lived in the 12th to 13th century, (his name is an acronym for Rabbi David Kimchi), lend their support to this interpretation.⁶ Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel,⁷ who lived in the 17th century, wrote a commentary on Isaiah 53 called Reconciliation. He too tells us that the Servant is Israel and that ‘the sole subject of this prophecy’ (Is. 52:13-53:12), ‘is the people of Israel’.⁸ In this he echoes Rashi.⁹ He incorporates Messiah into it also, saying:

‘Behold, my servant Israel shall understand; he shall be exalted, extolled, and raised very high, at the coming of the Messiah.’¹⁰

The servant for him is Israel, even though Messiah is ‘brought in’. Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi, in his current work, *The Book of Isaiah*, just parrots what Rabbi Manasseh wrote. He says Israel, ‘will prosper and wax very great’¹¹ when Messiah comes. Yerushalmi also praises Messiah:

‘Messiah will exemplify Israel’s greatness: he will be exalted above Abraham’s exalted level and uplifted above that of Moses’, and higher than ‘even’ ‘the angels.’¹²

Rabbi Yerushalmi didn’t make up these words of praise about Messiah. He took it from our Sages. More on this in a moment. Rashi and his friends contend that the term, ‘Servant’ is applied to Israel in many places of Isaiah and that it should also pertain to v. 13. When God speaks of Israel as the Servant of Yahveh though, most of the time He literally says so:

‘But You, Israel, are My Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the Seed of Abraham, My friend’. (Is. 41:8; also, Is. 45:4; 48:20)

‘Yet now hear, Oh Jacob My Servant and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says Yahveh who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, Oh Jacob My Servant and you, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.’ (Is. 44:1-2)

‘Remember these things, Oh Jacob, and Israel, for you are My Servant. I have formed you, you are My Servant, Oh Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.’ (Is. 44:21)

There are also times when Yahveh doesn’t expressly state the name, ‘Israel’ or ‘Jacob’, but it is fairly clear that He means the nation. This is seen in Is. 42:19:

⁵ Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. two (New York: The Judaica Press, 1995), p. 442.

⁶ Ibid. Yet there seems to be some confusion as to Redak’s understanding of the Servant. Rachmiel Frydland quotes him saying, ‘Behold My Servant...This is King Messiah’, Frydland, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah*, p. 55, note 10. Also, Rachmiel writes that Ibn Ezra interprets the Servant as Isaiah (p. 52). Abraham Ibn Ezra lived from 1089-1164. He was a scholar and wrote biblical commentaries. Redak lived from 1160-1235. ‘His biblical commentaries were incorporated into standard editions of the Hebrew Bible’, Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor in Chief, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, 7th Edition (New York-Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), pp. 460, 557 respectively.

⁷ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 21. Rabbi Israel was born in 1604 and died in 1657. He was a rabbi in Amsterdam and an advocate before Cromwell and Parliament for the ‘readmission of Jews into England.’

⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

⁹ Frydland, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah*, p. 52.

¹⁰ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 22.

¹¹ Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi, Translated by Yehoshua Starrett, *The Book of Yeshayahu* (Jerusalem: Moznaim Publishing Corporation, 1999), p. 334.

¹² Ibid.

‘Who is blind but My Servant, or so deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me, or so blind as the Servant of Yahveh?’

Rashi’s placing of ‘Israel’ as the servant cannot be maintained in Isaiah 52:13.¹³ The following verses present a major problem for Rashi because the ‘Servant’ is seen as someone completely different from the people of Israel. That’s one reason why our ancient Rabbis assigned it to our Messiah:

‘And now, says Yahveh that formed me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, and that Israel be gathered to Him’, ‘Yes, He says, ‘It is too light a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the Tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel. I will give you for a light to the Gentiles and that you may be My salvation to the ends of the Earth.’ (Is. 49:5-6)

Rashi’s position is completely untenable.¹⁴ Israel is being saved by the Servant of Yahveh. The Targum¹⁵ on Is. 52:13 states that the Servant is Messiah. It reads, ‘Behold, My Servant Messiah shall prosper.’¹⁶ This authoritative paraphrase of Isaiah predates Rashi by about 1,000 years.¹⁷ Many of our ancient Sages thought the Servant to be Messiah, and not the Jewish people. When Yahveh meant ‘Israel’, He made it very plain by using either ‘Israel’ or ‘Jacob’. Israel or Jacob is never mentioned as the Servant in this verse or anywhere else in the entire section (52:13-53:12). As we go through the rest of the section, it’ll be easier to see that God is speaking about a man and not about the nation of Israel. Suffice it to say here, as we have just seen (Is. 49:5-6), one cannot always equate ‘the Servant of Yahveh’ with the Jewish people, as Rashi did.

The Three Verbs of Exaltation

Three verbs are used to describe the glory that will be given to this Suffering Servant of Yahveh. The Servant will be ‘raised up, lifted up, and greatly exalted.’ Initially, Rashi believed it spoke of the Messiah, but with Christinity so anti-Semitic and murderous toward the Jewish people, he later changed it to speak of Israel. That Israel will be exalted is not to be denied, but these verbs don’t *primarily* pertain to Israel, but Messiah Yeshua. In Midrash Tanhuma it declares,

‘Messiah shall be *more exalted than Abraham...more extolled than Moses...*and be very

¹³ The term ‘servant’ is applied to other individuals in the Tanach and in Isaiah. A few of them are Abraham (Gen. 26:24); Isaac (Gen. 24:14); Jacob (Ezk. 28:25); Moses (Josh. 1:2, etc.); Caleb (Num. 14:24), etc. In Isaiah sometimes ‘servant’ is applied to Isaiah himself (Is. 20:3; 44:26; 50:10), and sometimes to others (Is. 22:70 for Eliakim, etc.).

¹⁴ There are many places where it is inappropriate; Is. 42:1-9; Jer. 33:21, 22, 26; Ezk. 34:23-24; 32:24-25; Zech. 3:8, etc.

¹⁵ Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 905. The Targum translations and interpretations of biblical text are considered authoritative. This was also seen by Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 997. He states that verse 13, ‘is applied in the Targum expressly to the Messiah’.

¹⁶ Frydland, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah*, pp. 53, 55, note 15. *Targum* on Isaiah 52:13. This tells us that the ancient Jewish community believed the entire passage about God’s Servant related to Messiah and not to Israel, for this ‘begins’ Isaiah 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 56, note 24.

high; that is, *higher than the ministering angels*.¹⁸

Tanhuma saw Messiah as greater than Abraham, Moses, and the angels. In Judaism, there isn't anyone greater than *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham our Father), because of his faith in God. Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22). Abraham truly loved Yahveh more than his most precious earthly possession. That's why Abraham is called the Father of our faith (Rom. 4:11, 16). He trusted Yahveh when it didn't make any sense to him. Who could honestly say that Israel would be greater than Father Abraham?

Was there anyone like *Mosheh Rabbeinu* (Moses our Teacher), who knew God 'face to face' (Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10). Yahveh chose Moses to save Israel from Egyptian slavery, bring us God's Torah and shepherd Israel for forty years in the Wilderness. This makes Moses a figure the likes of which would be nigh impossible to equal, let alone surpass. Would all of Israel, as Rashi says, exceed the glory that was Moses? Yet our ancient Rabbis believed that Messiah would be greater than Moses.

The Sages tell us that Messiah would be greater than even the angels. The only one 'higher than the ministering angels' is God. Who is this Messiah? Who is 'between' Yahveh and His angels? Are there any beings or creatures that exist who are greater than the angels, yet lesser than God? No, but some ancient Rabbis rightfully placed our Messiah here from God's Word about Him in Isaiah 52:13.

Franz Delitzsch, a noted 19th century German Christian scholar, who also translated the Greek New Testament into a Hebrew New Testament (for Jewish people wanting to read a Hebrew New Testament) explains that the three verbs of praise, taken together, form a 'natural sequel to an *ever-increasing exaltation*' of Messiah:

'If we consider that' the first verb 'signifies not only to be high, but to rise up (Prov. 11:11) and become exalted, and also to become manifest as exalted (Ps. 21:14), and that' the second verb 'signifies to raise one's self, whereas' the third verb 'expresses merely the condition...we obtain this chain of thought:'

'he will rise up, he will raise himself still higher, he will stand on high.'

'The three verbs...consequently denote the commencement, the continuation, and the result or climax of the exaltation; and Stier is not wrong in recalling to mind the three principal steps of...the historical fulfillment...the resurrection, the ascension, and the sitting down at the right Hand of God. The addition of the word 'greatly or highly exalted, 'shows very clearly that' it 'is intended to be taken as the final result: the servant of' Yahveh, 'rising from stage to stage, reaches at last an immeasurable height, that towers above everything,'¹⁹ even Father Abraham, Moses and the angels.

The first verb, he will be raised up, pertains to the death and the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. The second verb, he will be raised high, refers to his entering the very Presence of God that we call Heaven. And the third verb, highly exalted, refers to his ministry of redemption which Messiah accomplished with his blood sacrifice. He now sits as anointed High Priest in the Presence of Yahveh. That Messiah was to be higher than the angels is also seen from Psalm 110:1 where King David wrote:

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 53, 55, note 18. 'See *Midrash Tanhuma* (KTAV Publishing, 1989) and *Yalkut*, vol. 2, para. 338, cited in Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Eerdmans, 1977), p. 727.' In the new edition of Edersheim's work (Nov. 2000), it's found on p. 997, under verse 13.

¹⁹ 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.

‘Yahveh said to *my Lord*, ‘Sit at My right Hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’ (Psalm 110:1)

Whom aside from God, would King David speak of as ‘my Lord’? The ancient Jewish Sages saw this ‘Lord’ as Messiah. Alfred Edersheim reveals that the ancient Rabbis applied the entire Psalm ‘to the Messiah.’ And the phrase, ‘Sit at My right Hand...is specifically applied to the Messiah.’²⁰ This we believe, is part of the ‘exaltation of Messiah,’ to be at God’s right Hand. Who sits at the right Hand of God? Only Messiah. Even the angels stand, and that, in front of God. Three verses later King David speaks of the Messiah being a High Priest for us, but not of the Levitical line:

“Yahveh has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” (Psalm 110:4)

Why would God make a different priesthood from the Levites? God the Father swears that Messiah is a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek’s Priesthood is greater than Aaron’s because it is seen as eternal. In Gen. 14 he blesses Abram (his name wouldn’t be changed until Gen. 17), and then he is gone, not mentioned again until David’s prophecy in Psalm 110. Without any mother or father recorded in Scripture, it is easy for us to see that Melchizedek was symbolically seen as an eternal priest, and this is the point. This Lord, our Messiah, as the ancient Rabbis linked the passage to, is an eternal High Priest, unlike Aaron and his sons.

Melchizedek was a Priest of God Most High (Gen. 14:18). The meaning of his name is, ‘my King’ (melchi), is ‘righteous’ (zedek). He was not only a priest but a king as well:

‘And Melchizedek, King of Salem’ (ancient Jeru-*salem*), ‘brought out bread and wine. Now he was a Priest of God Most High.’ (Gen. 14:18)

He was a King-Priest and this also is greater than Aaron. King of Salem means, King of Peace (Shalom). And his name means, ‘My king is righteous’. He was a righteous king who ruled over peace. And Abraham acknowledged him as greater than him, giving Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils that Abraham got from his conquest of the four kings (Gen. 14:1). To be both a (High) Priest and King, was not possible under Torah (the Law of Moses), for the priests came from the Tribe of Levi while the kings came from the Tribe of Judah, the Seed of David. But this is what Psalm 110 speaks of. God swears this of Messiah. Zechariah prophesied that Messiah would be High Priest and King of Israel:

‘Then say to him, ‘Thus says Yahveh of Hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is and He will build the Temple of Yahveh. Yes, it is He who will build the Temple of Yahveh and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His Throne. Thus, He will be a Priest on His Throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.’ (Zech. 6:12-13)

Messiah will be both King and Priest of Jerusalem, just as Melchizedek was. What wasn’t possible under Torah was now being prophesied by King David and Zechariah. In Messiah, the offices of High Priest and King of Israel would unite. This is a form of exaltation also. Our ancient Rabbis also spoke of Messiah building the Temple,²¹ Branch being just another name for Messiah. Jeremiah compliments this also by

²⁰ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 991. Midrash on Psalm 18:36 (35 in English), refers to Psalm 110:1 this way.

²¹ Frydland, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah*, p. 53. ‘And He will build the Temple that was polluted be-

speaking of the 'branch' in relating to Messiah:

'Behold, the days are coming,' declares Yahveh, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch and He will reign as king and be wise and do justice and righteousness in the Land' (of Israel). 'In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is his name by which he will be called, 'Yahveh is our righteousness.' (Jer. 23:5-6)

Here we see that the Branch will be a righteous son of King David and he will be the King of Israel who does justice and righteousness in the Land. This is our Messiah, Seed of David. We saw that he would be righteous, as implied in Melchizedek's name ('my king is righteous'), and Jeremiah now literally says that he will be called, 'Yahveh is our righteousness'. He will also bring shalom or peace (to be saved and to dwell securely or in peace).

In the book of Hebrews, part of the New Covenant, the writer echoes our ancient Sages exaltation of Messiah. He proclaims Yeshua as our Messiah, greater than Father Abraham (Heb. 7:1-2, 6-7), and Moses (Heb. 3:1-3), and greater than even the angels (Heb. 1:1-5). But first Abraham:

'Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham' 'returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, King of Righteousness and then also, King of Salem, which is King of Peace.' 'But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.' (Heb. 7:1-2, 6-7)

What the writer of Hebrews is saying is that Father Abraham, as great as he was, was not as great as Melchizedek. Two things stand out here. One, Abraham gave him a tithe, and two, Melchizedek blessed him. In Torah, the common Israelis gave a tithe to their brothers, the Levites. The Levites were seen as holier than their brothers because their lives were fully devoted to the ministry of God. And the one who blesses was always seen in ancient times as the one who was greater. Yeshua, who is pictured in the High Priest-King Melchizedek, is therefore greater than Father Abraham. The writer of Hebrews continues his presentation of Yeshua and our ancient Sages would have been proud:

'Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Yeshua, the Apostle (Sent One) and High Priest of our confession. He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His House. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.' (Heb. 3:1-3)

Moses, for all his faithfulness (Num. 12:7: 'My servant Moses is' 'faithful in all My House'), was not the builder of the House (the people of Israel), but it's 'keeper' or shepherd. Messiah builds the House of Yahveh (the Temple of people). And so the honor for Messiah is greater than Moses. And as for the angels and Messiah, the writer states:

'God, after He spoke long ago to the Fathers in the Prophets' 'in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He (Yeshua) is the radiance of His (Yahveh's) glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the power of His word. When He had

cause of our sins.' *Targum* on Isaiah 53:5.

made purification of sins, He sat down at the right Hand of the Majesty on High, having become' 'much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You'? And again, 'I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me'? (Heb. 1:1-5)

God has never told an angel to sit at His right Hand. Only Messiah, as God's Son, is told this (Ps. 110:1; 2:2, 6-7). The three verbs of exaltation of the Servant were seen by our ancient Rabbis as praise for Messiah. Praise well deserved, having laid down his life for us, as the New Covenant states of Yeshua. He is now seated at the right Hand of Papa God, having been exalted beyond even the angels.

He Will Act Wisely

The term branch is a powerful title for Messiah. It is one of many messianic titles or names for Messiah.²² The 'Branch' of Zechariah will build the Temple of Yahveh. This conveys the idea of him 'acting wisely' in order to succeed in his endeavors, and points us back to Isaiah 52:13 and Jer. 23:5. The verb in Is. 52:13 means that Messiah will act wisely and in Jeremiah, that he will be wise (even though some translations state 'act wisely'). The Hebrew verb root in Isaiah and Jeremiah is שָׁחַל (sah-hahl). It means, 'to act wisely, prudently', 'to prosper' and to 'have success'.²³ Some translations use the word 'prosper' in Is. 52:13 in the sense that what God sent Messiah to do, Messiah will accomplish. Alfred Edersheim, in commenting on the word 'prosper' reveals that the ancient Rabbis saw Messiah's wisdom in a unique way. He writes:

'That the Messiah had, without any instruction, attained to knowledge of God;²⁴ and that He had received, directly from him, all wisdom, knowledge, counsel, and grace (Bemid. R. 13), is comparatively little, since the same was claimed for Abraham, Job, and Hezekiah. But we are told that, when God showed Moses all his successors, the spirit of wisdom and knowledge in the Messiah equalled that of all the others together.'²⁵

Messiah has prospered. He is our High Priest. Some Jewish people today scoff at the need for anyone to mediate between them and God but our Torah teaches us just the opposite. We need Messiah to stand between us and our holy God. Our first High Priest, Aaron, is a perfect picture of this. We don't have a Temple or Aaronic Priesthood today but that doesn't negate the need for it. You may or may not go to the synagogue on Yom Kipur (the Day of Atonement), but for your sins to be forgiven, you need the High Priest of Israel to offer a sacrifice for you (Lev. 16). The Word of God has not changed.

In Yeshua, we have our High Priest who has offered his own precious blood for our sins (and sin nature, something Aaron and his sacrifices didn't deal with; this is one reason why the New Covenant is 'better' than the one given to Moses). Yeshua is 'building' the heavenly Temple now, with us, his people, both

²² Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*, p. 197. For about 30 messianic titles or names for Messiah from the Tanach, see p. 196.

²³ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 714.

²⁴ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 124, note 76: *Bemid. R.* 14, ed. Warsh. p. 55a.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 124-125, note 77: *Yalkut* on Numb. 27:16, vol. 1, p. 247d.

Jew and Gentile, who love him. Peter, another Jew who walked with Yeshua, tells us that the ‘stones’ of this Temple are actually us and that Messiah is the chief ‘stone’:

‘And coming to him (Yeshua) as to a Living Stone which has been rejected by men but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house’ (Temple) ‘for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Yeshua the Messiah. For this is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone and he who believes in him (Yeshua) will not be disappointed.’ (1st Peter 2:4-6; quoting Is. 28:16)

Precious stones: diamonds, emeralds, rubies, etc. This is a picture of the precious corner stone that Yeshua is, and that we will be like. It will be a very special heavenly Temple:

‘And I saw the holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the Throne, saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling of God is among men and He will dwell among them and they shall be His people and God Himself will be among them.’ ‘I saw no’ (natural) ‘temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple. And the City has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the Glory of God has illumined it and its Lamp is the Lamb.’ (Rev. 21:2-3, 22-23)

In the end of days, Messiah will reign from earthly Jerusalem for a thousand years (Ezk. 40-48). But this Temple that Peter and Revelation speak of is the heavenly one where God our Father and Messiah will be our Light for all eternity. This is what our God has in store for all those who believe and walk with His Son, Yeshua. And we are the living stones who will reflect the Glory of our God and His Messiah King. Yes, anyone can pray to God but only one can stand in the Presence of God Almighty and intercede for mercy and forgiveness of sin for us, and that is our High Priest. Messiah Yeshua devoted himself fully to His Father and because of that, he died as a sacrifice for us. He accomplished what his Father gave him to do, acting and being, righteous and very wise. And now we have peace with God our Father and true hope for tomorrow.

Behold My Servant!

The very first word in Is. 52:13 is ‘Behold’. The Chumash states, ‘Scripture customarily uses this word to introduce something significant.’²⁶ David Baron reveals four different ways the word is used concerning Messiah, the Servant of Yahveh:

1. Zech. 9:9: ‘Rejoice greatly, Oh daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, Oh daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you! He is righteous and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’
2. Is. 52:13: ‘Behold, My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.’
3. Zech. 6:12: ‘Then say to him, ‘Thus says Yahveh of hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where he is and He will build the Temple of Yahveh.’

²⁶ Rabbi Nosson Scherman and Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, General Editors, *The Chumash*, 2nd edition: 2nd impression (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Feb. 1994), p. 145.

4. Isaiah 40:9: 'Go up on a high mountain, Oh Zion, bearer of good news. Lift up your voice mightily, Oh Jerusalem, bearer of good news. Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'

Baron ties this fourfold picture of Messiah into the four accounts of Yeshua in the New Covenant.²⁷ For number one (Zech 9:9), we have the account of Yeshua in the book of Matthew, a Jewish man who walked with Yeshua. Matthew presents Yeshua as the King of Israel, the long awaited Messiah. 'Behold your King!'

Matt. 27:11: 'Now Yeshua stood before the governor and the governor questioned Him saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And Yeshua said to him, 'It is as you say.' (Which was an ancient Jewish way of saying, 'Yes'.

Matt. 27:29: 'And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they' (the Roman soldiers), 'put it on His head and a reed in His right hand and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

Matt. 27:37: 'And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, 'This is Yeshua the King of the Jews'.

Yeshua claimed to be our King. The charge against him was that he was our King. He died and God raised him up to be our King...forever.

The second point (Is. 52:13), has the account of Mark, a Jewish man believed to have recorded the words of Yeshua's chief Jewish student, Simon-Peter. Mark presents Yeshua as the Servant who is able to bear a great burden, our sins. Moses bore the sins of Israel before our God for forty years. This was his greatest service to Israel. And Messiah Yeshua bore the punishment of our sins on the tree of judgment, giving his life as a ransom for many, that our sins would not be held against us on Judgment Day. 'Behold My Servant!'

Mark 10:45: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His soul as a covering for many' (our translation, from the Hebrew).

Yeshua fulfilled his words, giving himself as the only sacrifice that is acceptable to God. That is how he has 'served' us. It wouldn't matter if you died for yourself. Your being a sacrifice wouldn't be acceptable to God as He has designated His Son for that, and you are not sinless. Only a perfect sacrifice could atone for your sin. Behold the sinless Servant of Isaiah 52:13.

For point number three (Zech. 6:12), we have the account of Luke, a Gentile that traveled with the Jewish man, Paul. He wrote of Yeshua being the ideal Man, something that would attract the attention of the Greeks with their seeking after perfection and philosophy. Luke records the title that Yeshua used most often of himself, the Son of Man (as the ideal Israeli), fully devoted to God, and having much compassion for Israel. 'Behold the Man!' lines up with the Man-Branch who will build the Temple of Yahveh.

Luke 19:9-10: 'And Yeshua said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house because he too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

'Son of man' could be taken as just a simple description of a man, or it could bring to mind Daniel's, Son

²⁷ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, pp. 52-54.

of Man:

‘I kept looking until Thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days’ (God Almighty) ‘took His Throne. His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His Throne was ablaze with Flames. Its wheels were a burning Fire. A River of Fire was flowing and coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands were attending Him and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him. The Court sat and the Books were opened.’

‘I kept looking in(to) the night visions and behold, with the Clouds of Heaven, one like a Son of Man was coming. And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to him was given dominion, glory and a Kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away. And his Kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.’ (Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14)

Yeshua is the Son of Man that Daniel prophesied of. His Kingdom is being ‘set up’ on Earth as millions come to follow him. And on Judgment Day, we shall all be raised up and transformed into his image and likeness, that we might serve him all the days of eternity. For he is our God and King who fills us with Joy unspeakable.

In the account of John, we have the fourth ‘Behold’ as the theme (reflecting Is. 40:8). John, another Jewish man that walked with Yeshua, presents Yeshua as deity, God the Son. Not the Father, but one with the Father, sharing the same nature; deity. In Yeshua, we see our God because he is the perfect image and likeness of the God of Israel. ‘Behold your God!’ and what God has done to save His people Israel. That Yeshua is deity along with the Father is seen in these sayings of his:

John 6:51: ‘I am the Living Bread that came down out of Heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever.’

John 8:12: ‘Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of Life.’

John 8:58: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I Am.’ (This is a designation that Yahveh uses for Himself; Ex. 3:14.)

John 10:9: ‘I am the Gate. If anyone enters through Me he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.’ (A reference to Yeshua being the Gate of Righteousness that we must enter through in order to live with God in Heaven:

‘This is the Gate of Yahveh. The righteous will enter through him’²⁸ (Ps. 118:20).

John 11:25: ‘Yeshua said to her, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live even if he dies’.

John 14:6: ‘Yeshua said to him, ‘I am the Way and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.’

Belief in Messiah Yeshua is what Yahveh meant when He said to Fathers Abraham and Jacob, that all the families of the Earth would be blessed by their Seed (Gen. 12:3; 28:14). Messiah Yeshua IS the Blessing

²⁸ Although most translations have, ‘through it’, the literal rendering of the phrase is ‘through him.’ The Hebrew has no ‘it’ and must be either ‘him.’

and greater than Moses because Messiah is the mediator of a better Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). With a real belief in Yeshua,²⁹ our nature will be transformed on Judgment Day, from what we know now, to the very nature of God. This way we will be able to live with God forever. The Torah could never transform our nature. It wasn't meant to. What it does is point out the holy standard of God to us. It doesn't give us the power to walk it out but it does condemn us for not observing it. And only sacrifice with the shedding of blood 'fulfills' the Torah (Lev. 17:11), by restoring us to relationship with God.

Conclusion for Isaiah 52:13

There was nothing in Isaiah 52:13 to prove Rashi's position that Israel was the Servant, or that it was Israel that would be exalted or act wisely. As we saw, when God spoke of Israel as His Servant, He usually identified Israel as such (Is. 41:8, 44:1, etc.). And when He didn't expressly state it, the context allowed us to see Israel as the Servant (42:19). But in Is. 52:13 there was no indication of this. Israel was not mentioned in v. 13 as the Servant. And incidentally, Israel is not mentioned as the Servant in the entire section (Is. 52:13-53:12). Neither does the context in v. 13 (or the rest of the section), support Israel as the Servant.

These form a powerful biblical argument against Rashi's interpretation of Israel as the Servant. Why is it important to establish the Servant as Messiah and not Israel? Because once the section unfolds in front of us, it will become evident that Isaiah is speaking of Messiah Yeshua. This is the reason why Rashi bolted the traditional Jewish interpretation. He too could see it pointing to the Crucified one. But his heart was too hard to change his way of thinking about Yeshua.

When we looked at the word 'Behold', God wanted us to know that something significant was about to be said. It was easy for Rashi to present 'Israel' as the Servant because Israel is literally spoken of as God's Servant in many passages. But the problem from this perspective is that it is never seen as such with the word, 'Behold'. Nowhere in Isaiah, or anywhere else for that matter, is there mention of Israel with the phrase, 'Behold My Servant!' But as Baron brought out, 'Behold' fit in rather nicely with Messiah Yeshua's reality as the God-Man, our Servant-King. Note well the paradoxes.

Another point of contention between Rashi and ancient (and medieval) Judaism are the three verbs of praise for the Servant. We saw how our ancient Sages exclaimed that Messiah would be greater than the two greatest men of all time, Father Abraham and Moses our Teacher, and even the very angels of God. It would be hard to believe, as Rashi presented, that all the Jewish people would attain to a status greater than our Father Abraham. As the Father of our faith he stands in a singular and unique position as the first to fully surrender his life to Yahveh, with his son hanging in the balance. Is our faith ever going to be greater than his?

And what of Moses? Can we see ourselves as greater than the man who was called the most humble man on Earth (Num. 12:3)? Can we see all of us as greater than the one whom Yahveh chose to deliver us

²⁹ Biblical belief is more that a mental assent that Yeshua is the Messiah. It is a full, heart-felt proclamation that Yeshua is Messiah. It is a life that is fully dedicated and devoted to him. It's a life that's centered around Yeshua, coming to know him and being transformed by him, by his Spirit and by his Word. Anything less is not worthy of the King of Israel.

from Egypt, give us the Torah, bear our sins before Yahveh for 40 years, and point us to the Promised Land? And then there are the angels. Are we to think that all the Jewish people will be greater than the angels? The three verbs of exaltation exclaim someone who is very, very unique. Nothing like this exaltation is seen concerning Israel anywhere in the Tanach. And if one has the hutzpah (arrogance) to say, 'Yes!, Israel will be exalted above our greatest leaders', we can only wonder where does that leave the Son of David who would be our King (2nd Sam. 7:8-16, etc.)? And if we are to be so exalted, how would we get there? How would we all get to be that great? By magic? How would we do it? In Judaism today, and in Rashi's day, one has to work, work, work!, their way up the spiritual ladder of holiness. How many Jews do you know that qualify?

And wasn't it fascinating how the three verbs of praise for the Servant, as Delitzsch pointed out, corresponded exactly to the three levels or stages of Messiah Yeshua's exaltation? With his death-resurrection, ascension (into Heaven), and exaltation (seated), at the right Hand of God as our High Priest, Messiah Yeshua has accomplished our redemption from the world of sin and given us a new nature that we might dwell with him and his Father in the New Jerusalem.

Messiah Yeshua has not only acted 'very wisely' in becoming our Redeemer, but he is the righteous King who is wise. In writing about the teachings of Messiah Yeshua found in the New Covenant, Alfred Ederseim reveals that they center around,

'the corruption of our whole nature by sin, and hence the need of God-teaching, if we are to receive' the Messiah 'or understand His doctrine. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit' wherefore, 'marvel not that I said, 'You must be born again.' That was Messiah's 'teaching to Nicodemus, and it became, with growing emphasis, His final teaching to the teachers of Israel. It is not St. Paul who first sets forth the doctrine of our entire moral ruin: he had learned it from' the Messiah; it 'is the ultimate reason of the need of a Redeemer, and the rationale of the work which' Messiah 'came to do. The Priesthood and the Sacrificial Work of' Messiah, as well as 'His Kingship, as not of this world, are based upon it.' 'The teachers of Israel knew not the total corruption of man - Jew as well as Gentile - and, therefore, felt not the need of a Saviour.'³⁰

Jeremiah records God speaking about our (sin) nature another way: 'The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately incurable. Who can understand it?' (Jer. 17:9)

Our problem is not with sinful acts, as sinful as that is, but with who we are. We are by nature, a people diseased with sin in our very being. We can never attain the holiness of Yahveh no matter how hard we try, no more than a leopard can change his spots. It's part of our soul.

What makes Rashi's bagel stale, while it is only 900 years old, and our ancient Sages 'fresh' when it is more than 2,000 years old, is that God's Truth is always fresh. Proper interpretation of God's Word is alive and always new. Our ancient Sages thoughts fit well with what we know of Messiah Yeshua. He is the Servant who's been raised to incredible heights by God our Father.

In the next fourteen verses we will see overwhelming evidence within Isaiah's text (52:13-53:12), that it is our Messiah whom Isaiah speaks of, and not Israel. At critical points within the text we'll find that Rashi's interpretation miserably crumbles. Once his teaching is laid bare, you too will find yourself

³⁰ Ederseim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 590.

'scratching your head' in bewilderment as to how he could ever have presented the text as pertaining to Israel, especially in defiance and rebellion against our ancient Sages and his own contemporaries. We have presented four areas against Rashi's interpretation (of Israel being the Servant):

Our ancient Sages (Talmud, Midrash, Targum, etc.), along with medieval (Maimonides, Crispin, etc.), and modern Jewish thought, The Jewish Encyclopedia, etc.

1. the Scriptures themselves which present Messiah's exaltation (e.g. Psalm 2, where Yahveh installs His King in Israel and it's His Son; Zech. 6:12-13, the understanding that Messiah will build the Temple and be our High Priest and King; Psalm 110:1, where King David speaks of having another Lord (Messiah), other than Yahveh; Psalm 110:4, where Yahveh declares that there will be a High Priest given to us that will be after the order of Melchizedek, etc.), and how,
2. the testimony of the New Covenant confirming Messiah Yeshua's exaltation as our High Priest and King of Israel, along with being God the Son who is building the Temple of Yahveh, and his being the Servant of Yahveh, sent to deliver us from sin and death, and
3. our own personal experience of Yeshua as the Servant-Messiah, having walked with him for 28 years this Sukote, and knowing Yeshua to be our Messiah.

We present verse 13 as speaking of our long awaited Messiah. It was very easy to do this because knowing that Yeshua is Messiah is better than eating a fresh onion bagel with cream cheese. Yes, we are biased and we're not ashamed of it. We also think that we've presented both sides of the issue. Now you are faced with a serious dilemma. There are two Jewish traditions for this verse. One that says the Servant is Israel and the other that says it is Messiah. The first tradition, which began with Rashi, is about 900 years old. The second is more than 2,000 years old and has our ancient Sages, Maimonides and many others supporting it. Which is to be believed? Should we believe the older one because it's older? Or should we believe the newer one because it's newer? How do we know if a tradition is true or not? Which is God's Truth?

Messiah Yeshua was cursed for you (Deut. 21:22-23), so that you wouldn't be cursed on Judgment Day. Messiah Yeshua gave his life for you that you would have his Life, today. He did this because he loves you. God's Word is true because He is Truth. We can only speak of what we know. Rashi was wrong. We know. Rashi didn't know Messiah. We do. And we are telling you that Isaiah 52:13 speaks of our Messiah as Yahveh's Servant, exalted beyond Father Abraham and Moses our Teacher and the heavenly angels, as our ancient Sages spoke of. Messiah Yeshua is the Son of God who has brought us forgiveness of sin by his own death. Ask the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to reveal to you whether Rashi or we are right about Messiah Yeshua. Keep on asking him until He shows you. And then you too will know the love, peace, joy and forgiveness that only the Servant of Yahveh can give you.³¹

³¹ Revised on 26 April 2015.