
INTRODUCTION

The next great text that brings us to see Jesus Christ in His total work, perhaps one of the greatest in the Hebrew Bible in presenting the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, is in Isaiah 53. This is the final “servant song” of Isaiah. There are four such servant songs: one in 42, one in 49, 50, and then in this concluding one in 53, actually beginning at 52:13 through 53. This great chapter and servant song is alluded to or referred to at least thirty to thirty-one times in the Greek New Testament. It is clearly understood by the early church and I believe first by our Lord Himself, to refer to His own suffering on the cross and His resurrection, as the Suffering Servant. I believe it is a directly Messianic passage. I am reminded of Isaiah chapter 40, where Isaiah says, looking towards those who would be in exile, that “you have suffered double for all of your sins.” Isaiah 53 is not a righteous remnant suffering in Babylon for the sins of the nation, because everybody suffered for their own sins in Babylon. Nor can it be that it is the Gentiles that the writer is referring to, and that the nation Israel is suffering for their sins. Certainly the suffering that is experienced in the nation of Israel does not pay for the sins committed by Gentiles. So I believe that this is clearly a directly Messianic text, bringing us to none other than Jesus Christ.

In Acts chapter 8, Philip, going to the Ethiopian eunuch, heard him reading from this text in Isaiah. We are told that Philip opened up the text and preached to him Jesus from this very text. I believe it is perhaps one of the greatest texts that refers to the total work of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Lesson 1: Isaiah 52:13

1.1 Text

חיה ישכלי עבדי, ירומ יפשא אביה חאל.

1.2 Vocabulary

Verb    “to deal prudently” or “to prosper”
שכל

Noun    “servant”
עבד

Verb    “to arise”
看向

Verb    “to be high”
גבה

Adverb “exceedingly”
מאז

1.3 Grammar

“Behold . . .” or “Lo . . .” This is an interjection, calling our attention to what is to follow. “. . . my servant will prosper . . .” or “. . . will succeed . . .” Actually, this is parsed as a Hiphil imperfect, third masculine singular, from the root 살. Notice the A-I pattern, the giving it away as a third masculine singular in this prefix. The verb 살 can mean “to deal prudently.” It can also mean “to prosper” or “to succeed.” I cannot help but feel that we have a double meaning here, to “act wisely” as well as “succeed.” This is of course what Jesus did. He was an obedient son to His father, who acted wisely, but who succeeded in all that He was to accomplish. “Behold my servant will succeed . . .” Notice עבד, this is the Father addressing His servant, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is from the noun עבד. It is in construct with the pronominal suffix . . . . Notice
becomes יְבֵד, and then יְהִי is the pronominal, first person singular suffix. “Behold my servant shall succeed . . .”

Notice we have three verbs, defining how the servant is going to succeed. יָרֹד, “. . . he shall be lifted up . . .” The verb יָרֹד is the stem. It is a Qal imperfect, third masculine singular with the י here, from the stem יָרֹד. It is a middle weak verb. It means “to be lifted up” or “to be exalted.” One cannot help but think of the exaltation of Jesus Christ as the beginning note of this great text. יָרֹד can also mean “to arise.” We are looking, no doubt, at the resurrection. Jesus arose. He was lifted up from the grave. He was also highly exalted. He shall be raised up, both from the grave and in exaltation. The repetition is for emphasis here. Notice י is a conjunction, and the root is יָשֵׁן, “to lift up.” It is a Niphal perfect, third masculine singular, from the root יָשֵׁן. Notice the I-vowel, the hireq, followed by a daghesh forte in the ש, showing us that a י has assimilated: יָשֵׁנ became יָשֵׁנ. with the doubling of the ש here, followed by the A-vowel, which shows it to be a Niphal stem. “Behold my servant . . . shall be raised, and he shall be lifted up . . .” The י is a waw conversive, turning over the verb, making the perfect a future: “and he shall be lifted up.” We are looking at His resurrection and His exaltation in these verbs. יָרֹד יָשֵׁנ יָשֵׁנ יָשֵׁנ, “. . . and shall be exceedingly high.” Notice יָשֵׁנ is the verb that means “to be high”, followed by the adverb יָשֵׁנ, that is, “. . . He shall be exceedingly high . . .” He is not just going to be raised and lifted up. He is going to be made exceedingly high, with what the Father will accomplish through the work of the Son. יָשֵׁנ is a Qal perfect, third masculine singular, from the root יָשֵׁנ. Notice the mappiq in the י, or the little dot. The Masoretes wanted us to be sure and pronounce the י here and so a mappiq is added to it. The י again is a waw conversive, turning the verb over, putting it into the

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future. “... he shall be exceedingly high.” We cannot help but think of the glorification of Jesus. He was exalted to the right hand of the Father, into that high position.

1.4 Translation

“Behold my servant will succeed, he shall be raised up, and he shall be lifted up, and he shall be exceedingly high.”

1.5 Application/Interpretation

We begin this great servant song then in verse thirteen with the note of glorification. Glorification starts with passion. I cannot help but think of our Lord Jesus in John 13, when Judas was about to betray him. He went out, and we are told that Jesus said these words, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” The route to glorification comes through His passion. We are seeing this here in the very beginning.

I am also struck by the fact that in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, we have two verbs used here. “Behold my servant shall be lifted up (u[ya<w) and shall be glorified (doca<zw).” These two verbs reoccur in John’s Gospel. For example, in John 3:14, as Moses (u!ywsen) “lifted up” the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man (u[yoqh?nai) “be lifted up.” In John we have this same verb, looking at a double meaning: viewing the cross (Jesus was lifted up on the cross), and the resurrection and ascension that followed the cross. Then in John 12:32, “If I be lifted up (u[ywqw?), I will draw all people to me.” This great text again is looking at the cross and the exaltation following resurrection that our Lord experienced. doca<zw is another verb used in the Septuagint. The verb is used in relationship to our Lord Jesus in John’s Gospel when we hear Jesus saying in John 13, “Now is the Son of Man e]doca<sqh,” “now is the Son of Man glorified.” And the resurrection will cause Him to be glorified. We also see the same verb in that great high priestly prayer in John 17, where the verb doca<zw is repeated when the Son prays to the Father to glorify Him with the glory He shared with Him from eternity.

The Septuagint used two verbs to describe the threefold verbal usage in the Hebrew. John, led by the Holy Spirit, used those two verbs to describe what our Lord had originally taught about His own exaltation and glorification.

As we move then into verse fourteen, we learn that the route to glorification is going to be passion in the next two verses.
Lesson 2: Isaiah 52:14

2.1 Text

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁפָם עֵלֵי עַל יְשֵׁי נַפְשּׁת מִיָּשֶׁר מַרְאַהוּ

2.2 Vocabulary

כַּאֲשֶׁר Conjunction “as” or “just as”
שָׁפָם Verb “to be astonished”
כִּי Adverb “thus”
מִשְׁפָה Noun “disfigurement”
מְרַאָה Noun “appearance”
חָא Noun “form”

2.3 Grammar

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁפָם עֵלֵי עַל יְשֵׁי

כַּאֲשֶׁר is a conjunction meaning “as.” “As many were astonished at you.”

Notice שָׁפָם is a Qal perfect, third common plural, from the root שָׁפָם, and this means “to be awestruck.” “As many were awestruck, amazed at you . . .” מְרַאָה is an adjective meaning “many ones” or “many people.” So “As many people . . .”, we could supply here, “. . . are astonished at you . . .” “As many have become astonished at you . . .” The use of the perfect here in this section, I believe is what we call a “prophetic perfect,” that is, it is written in the perfect tense even though it is looking at a future time frame to show that the action is already completed in the mind of God. It is already as good as done. It is as Romans 8 when Paul says that we have already been glorified. He uses the aorist tense in Greek, thus looking at a completed action. Even though we have not yet entered into glorification, it is as good
as accomplished. I think the same idea is here: “As many were astonished at you . . .” looks at the future as though it has already happened.

“... thus there was a disfigurement of his form beyond that of a man . . .” פְּרָאָה פַּרְעָה פְּרָאָה פַּרְעָה פַּרְעָה here is an adverb meaning “thus.” פְּרָאָה is a noun that means “disfigurement.” “Thus there was a disfigurement beyond that of a man . . .” In פַּרְעָה, is a comparative use of the פַּרְעָה here, and פַּרְעָה means “man”. “Thus there was a disfigurement in his appearance beyond that of a man.” The word “appearance” is פֶּרְאָה, with וה, the pronominal suffix, third masculine singular meaning “his appearance.” פֶּרְאָה became וה with one of the וה’s eliding. “... thus there was a disfigurement beyond that of a man in his appearance . . .” or “... as to his appearance . . .” We are looking here at the beatings and all that Jesus went through in the crucifixion, in the trial, and then ultimately leading up to the crucifixion.

“... and his form . . .” In לְחָנָה, לְחָנָה is a conjunction, לְחָנָה is a noun that means “form,” and ל is a pronominal suffix, third masculine singular. “... and his form . . .” מְבַנָּה, מְבַנָּה. Here we have that comparative use of the מְבַנָּה again. “... his form beyond that of the sons of men.” Notice the ל in the מְבַנָּה has assimilated into the ב here, מְבַנָּה, becoming מְבַנָּה, with the daghesh forte in the ב. “... among the sons of men.” בְּנֵי is the plural for “sons,” and since it is in construct here with בְּנֵי, it becomes בְּנֵי, with the sere-yod in construct. “And his form beyond that of the sons of men.”
2.4 **Translation**

“As many were astonished at you, thus there was a disfigurement of his appearance beyond that of a man, and his form beyond that of the sons of men.”

2.5 **Application/Interpretation**

Here we no doubt see the Lord’s beatings and abuse accompanying His trial and crucifixion. He goes further to describe His passion in the next verse.
Lesson 3: Isaiah 52:15

3.1 Text

“Thus will he sprinkle many nations.” Notice the נֹּֽעַ again is an adverb meaning “thus.” הִנְּהַ֑יְנָּה comes from the verb הִנְּהַ֑יְנָּה, and notice the נ has assimilated in the י. Actually this pe nun verb is a Hiphil with the A-I pattern here: “Thus will he cause many nations to be sprinkled.” Some want to translate this “startle,” but when you go to Leviticus 16, and especially in a text as the great Day of Atonement (yom kippur), we find that הִנְּהַ֑יְנָּה is used repetitiously throughout that text to look at atonement in the sprinkling of the blood of the goat and the bullock. Leviticus 16 uses this verb. This verb has cultic meaning. So we should translate it as “sprinkle.” I believe we are looking at the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the cross for many
nations. גָּוִים is a masculine adjective plural noun, and גָּוִים is another masculine plural form with the מָיִם here. He is not just going to sprinkle one nation, but we are told “many nations.” I cannot help but think of that great hymn in Revelation 5, that out of every nation and tribe and people, there are those who are praising the Lamb who was slain. And through His blood, many have now become priests and have become God’s people through what Christ has accomplished.

In the next phrase, Isaiah goes on to say,

עִלָּיִל יֵקְפַּצְוּ מַלְכוֹת פִּיוֹת

“. . . upon him, kings will shut their mouths . . .” or “. . . at him . . .” Notice the preposition עִלָּיִל, and then מָיִם, a pronominal suffix, third masculine singular, on this preposition, “upon him.” וְקָפַץ is a Qal imperfect, third masculine plural, from the root קָפַץ, meaning “to shut.” It will be kings that will shut their mouths at him. מַלְכוֹת is from מֶלֶךְ, the noun masculine plural, with the מָיִם ending. This is followed by פִּיוֹת, the noun פִּיוֹת and the pronominal suffix מִהָיָה, third masculine plural. In the ancient near east, when one would be brought before a subject, it would often depict one putting one’s hand up to one’s lips, as though to silence the lips before this great king. I believe this is looking at Jesus, and the great truth that, “Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2). It does not mean that everyone will be saved. It only means that Christ will have universal dominion, either as one’s Savior or as one’s Judge. And kings, no matter how great they are, will bow before Him, either as Savior or as their Judge. “. . . kings will shut their mouths at him . . .”

כִּי אָשֶׁר לֹא שִפְרֵל לֹא יִרְאֵו

“. . . for . . .” Notice this causative clause here, with the conjunction “for.” “. . . for that which has not been told to them, they will see . . .” אָשֶׁר is a relative pronoun “that which,” and the negative particle לֹא. Notice שִפְרֵל is
a Pual perfect, third masculine singular, from מָלַּל, “to tell” or “to relate.”

“. . . for that which has not been related to them . . .” Notice לָהֶם. Here we have the preposition followed by מָה, pronominal suffix. “. . . that which has not been told to them, they shall see . . .” לִיא אֵל is from the verb לְאֵל, a lamed he verb, and the מ has dropped out. It is a Qal perfect, third common plural, meaning “to see.” “. . . for that which has not been told to them, they will see . . .” This again is a prophetic perfect viewing the future as if already accomplished.

וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא אָשֶׁם שָׁמֵעִינוּ: “. . . and that which . . .” Notice the relative pronoun again. “. . . that which they have not heard . . .” שָׁמֵעִינוּ is a Qal perfect third common plural from שָׁמֵעַ. “. . . that which they have not heard . . .” שָׁמֵעִינוּ, “. . . they shall understand.” The verb here is from בֵּן. It is a middle weak verb. This is a Hithpael perfect, third common plural, from the root בֵּן. Notice the gemination of the ב here in this Hithpael. “. . . that which they have not heard, they will themselves come to understand.”

3.4 Translation

“Thus will he sprinkle many nations; at him, kings will shut their mouths, for that which has not been told to them, they will see, and that which they have not heard, they will understand.”

3.5 Application/Interpretation

I believe that what we are being taught in this text is that kings will close their mouths before the Lord, because they are going to be told things that they have not seen, in the glorious resurrection, exaltation, and ultimate coming judgment of our Lord Jesus. That which they have not heard, in any time, in any previous history, they are going to come to understand. I believe this great text points to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus, who by sprinkling many nations, has now become Lord in universal dominion over all. And even kings will have to recognize this, and they will either be facing the Lord Jesus as their Savior or as their eternal Judge.
From the introduction of the Servant’s glorification through passion the prophet discusses the ignoble beginning of this Servant in 53:1-3.