

Message to Israel

God's Plan of Salvation

From the Tanakh

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

This paper was originally written during my college days, prepared especially for my close Jewish friends. I personally gave a copy to several of them. I was raised in a Jewish neighborhood. As a boy my closest friends were Jewish. I attended many bar mitzvah services and other worship services at the various synagogues in West Hartford, Connecticut and elsewhere. I attended so many synagogue services that I even memorized some of the Hebrew phrases which were spoken and I can still recite them to this day.

While a student at Wesleyan University, I studied both modern and Biblical Hebrew. My class in modern Hebrew was made up of mostly Jewish students, taught by a rabbi who was taking courses at Yale in Biblical studies. While studying on the seminary level, I continued my Hebrew studies and also helped tutor other students in this language. In total I took nine semesters of Hebrew (mostly Biblical Hebrew).

In the Hebrew Scriptures the Jews are said to be God's special and chosen people (Deut. 7:6-8; 10:15). Israel as a nation has suffered greatly and the Jews have been persecuted more than any other people, yet the future for this nation is bright. God has a great plan for His chosen people. All the prophets predicted that there is coming a great kingdom age, a time of peace and prosperity and world-wide blessing. These great promises and prophecies will be literally fulfilled (see for example, Isaiah chapter 2, chapter 11, chapter 35, Micah chapter 2, Jeremiah chapter 23, Daniel chapters 2 and 7, etc.). God will keep His promises. He cannot do otherwise.

The nation Israel will possess all the land that God promised to Abraham in Genesis 15 and Jerusalem will be the capital city of the world (Isaiah 2:1-4).

I am a debtor to Israel, to the Jewish people. I owe so much to them. First of all, I am in debt to them for the Bible which I love and which I believe to be absolute truth from God. It is the Jews who down through the centuries have preserved the Bible and copied the Scriptures carefully and meticulously so that today we can have these sacred writings in our possession. The Hebrew Scriptures (*The Tanakh*) and all but two books of the New Testament were penned by Jews.

Secondly, many of the great men of God whom I respect and seek to imitate, whose words and deeds are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, were Jews: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Jonathan, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others.

Thirdly and most importantly, during the end of my freshman year in college I received the Lord Jesus (Yeshua) Christ as my Lord and Savior. Yeshua Himself was a Jew, a son of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the kingly line of David. In Genesis 12:3 God promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed by the seed of Abraham. It is because of Yeshua that my life has been changed and blessed. I have been blessed by Israel's Messiah who as Abraham's descendant was perfect Man and perfect Jew, whose name would be called "the Mighty God" (אל גבור) Isaiah 9:5; 9:6 *in most English versions*) and "Immanuel" (meaning "with us is God," Isaiah 7:14).

The purpose of this paper is to present to Jewish people the simple and clear message from the Bible. Every quote found in this paper is from the Hebrew Scriptures. I am using *The Tanakh* published by the Jewish Publication Society (1985), the culmination of three decades of collaboration by academic scholars and rabbis representing the three largest branches of organized Judaism in America. I will also at times refer to the Hebrew text (the Masoretic

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text which is the traditional Hebrew text) when such clarification is needed.

Everything that I say in this paper will be supported with Scripture. This is important because I am presenting the Bible message, not my own message. I trust you will give this paper a careful reading, with an open mind and an open heart. Search the Scriptures yourself to see if these things are really true. May the living God bless you as you read and give you understanding of His Word.

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In this booklet, I would like to share with you a few things from the Tanakh for your consideration. Only God has the answers to man's needs. Hence it is important to see what He has to say. As you know, years ago God called out a nation unto Himself, the nation Israel. "The LORD your God chose you from among all other people on earth to be His treasured people" (Deut. 14:2). Israel was called to be a witness to the One True God in the midst of universal idolatry (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 43:10). This nation was the depository for the inspired Word of God (Deut. 4:5-8). God spoke through Moses, David, the many prophets and other godly men of Israel whom He chose to be His penmen.

We must carefully consider the message which God has given to us and which has been so well preserved even to this day. God's Word is the truth: "Truth is the essence of Your word" (Psalm 119:160). "The LORD exists forever; Your word stands firm in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). "Your teaching is true" (Psalm 119:142). God never lies, and that is why we must hearken unto His words. We must believe God's Word and take Him at His Word. In the Torah we read the following:

God is not man to be capricious, or mortal to change His mind. Would He speak and not act, promise and not fulfill?
(Num. 23:19)

God cannot and will not lie. His Word can be trusted completely.

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God's Word will never fail and we must let the Tanakh guide and direct us (see Psalm 119:105). In the words of the great prophet Isaiah, "Grass withers, flowers fade—but the word of our God is always fulfilled" (Isaiah 40:8). "Trust firmly in His prophets and you will succeed" (2 Chron. 20:20).

With this basic understanding of the truthfulness and absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures, let us now proceed.

What Is Man's Basic Problem?

We all went astray like sheep, each going his own way.
(Isaiah 53:6)

All have gone astray. We are all like lost sheep who have wandered away from the LORD who is our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1). We have all turned away from God. We have each gone our own way, not God's way.

The LORD looks down from heaven on mankind to find a man of understanding, a man mindful of God. All have turned bad, altogether foul; there is none who does good, not even one.
(Psalm 14:2-3)

Again we see the word *ALL*. In the eyes of God there is not one good person on the face of the earth. Not one of us can live the kind of righteous life that God demands. Only the Bible reveals what man is really like because it was written from God's point of view. In the eyes of men we all seem to be somewhat good. However, how do we stand in the eyes of God? Remember this important truth: "For not as man sees does the LORD see; man sees only what is visible, but the LORD sees into the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

The Tanakh makes it very clear that all men have sinned and stand guilty before the Judge of all the earth. Even David said, "Indeed I was born with iniquity; with sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:7). Solomon wrote, "For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn't err" (Eccl. 7:20). Jeremiah said, "Most devious is the heart; It is **perverse** [the Hebrew term

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means ‘incurably sick’—who can fathom it?” (Jer. 17:9). Isaiah said, “We have all become like an unclean thing, and all our virtues like a filthy rag...our iniquities, like a wind, carry us off” (Isaiah 64:6). Isaiah, when confronted with the awesome holiness of God, confessed his own sinfulness: “Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:4). It is clear that man’s basic and greatest problem is SIN.

What About God?

The Tanakh declares without doubt that God is holy. In the Torah God Himself says, “**I AM HOLY**” (Lev. 11:44). In the book of Leviticus alone there are 87 references to God’s holiness. God in His holiness hates sin: “For You are **not** a God who desires wickedness; evil cannot abide with You; wanton men cannot endure in Your sight. You detest all evildoers” (Psalm 5:5).

Evil men deserve God’s judgment, but God in His love does not want to see sinful men perish: “As I live—declares the Lord GOD—it is not My desire that the wicked shall die, but that the wicked turn from his [evil] ways and live” (Ezek. 33:11). God has provided a way for sinful men to be saved: “Turn to Me and **gain success**, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22). [The Hebrew verb “**gain success**” means “be saved.” It is the common Hebrew verb **יָשַׁע** which means “to save, to deliver.” From this word we get the name Yeshua (Joshua), which means “Savior.”] The solution to our sin problem is found only in God. *He* must provide for our salvation. We cannot save ourselves.

God is holy and demands that we be holy. “You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Lev. 19:2). Man must conform to the holy and righteous character of God. How is this possible? How can sinful men be partakers of God’s perfect holiness and righteousness?

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Why Was Abraham Righteous?

In Genesis 12, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, the first Hebrew and the father of the chosen nation. Abram was not a perfect man, neither was he sinless. For example, in Genesis 12:11-20 Abraham deliberately told a “half-truth” with the intent of deception. In Genesis 16 Abraham had sexual relations with his wife’s handmaid in order to help God keep His promise! In spite of these shortcomings and failures, Abraham was a righteous man. Why was this so?

In Genesis 15:6 God tells us how Abraham became righteous: “And because he (Abraham) put his trust in the LORD, He reckoned it to his merit” (Gen. 15:6). The last part of this verse in the Hebrew text literally reads, “He (God) reckoned it to him for (as) righteousness (**צדקה**).”

As we have already said, Abraham was not a perfect, sinless man.. Yet he believed what the LORD said. He trusted in God. Because of this God counted his faith to him for righteousness. Whose righteousness? It cannot be man’s righteousness, because as sinners we do not have the righteousness that God requires: “and all our virtues [Hebrew: ‘all our righteousnesses’] are like a filthy rag” (Isaiah 64:6). We may consider ourselves to be righteous, but this only makes us self-righteous. We are certainly not righteous in the sight of God. “There is none who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:3).

The righteousness described in Genesis 15:6 is God’s righteousness. God alone is righteous, perfectly righteous. Abraham believed in the LORD and the LORD gave him —imputed to him—His own righteousness. Compare Jeremiah 23:6 where we learn that the LORD Himself must be our righteousness. All Abraham did was to *believe* what God said. What is it that man must do in order to gain God’s righteousness and God’s salvation? He must *believe* in the LORD. Faith is the key!

When it comes to salvation, man’s part is faith. He must believe God and trust fully in His Word and His promise, as did Abraham.

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What is God's part? What has God done to provide salvation for sinful man? Space will not allow us to go into great detail, but the following basic outline may be of help:

God's Plan of Salvation

Let us go all the way back to Genesis chapter 3, where we learn about the disobedience and fall of man. After Adam and Eve sinned, God clothed them with "garments of skins" (Gen. 3:21). Their own method of covering themselves with fig leaves was not sufficient. Man cannot cover himself. **God** must provide the covering. In order to make garments of skins for them, God had to slay an innocent animal or animals. Innocent blood had to be shed.

God was here giving Adam and Eve a picture of the salvation which He offers to every person. Notice the following truths: (1) The importance of the blood. The blood of an innocent victim had to be shed. (2) Expiation (atonement) for sin is only possible where there is blood shed: "it is the blood, as life, that effects expiation" (Lev. 17:11). This means that man's sin problem cannot be solved apart from the shedding of blood. (3) God's plan of salvation involves the death of an innocent substitute. Sin deserves and demands judgment and death. An animal was killed *instead of* Adam and Eve.

In Genesis chapter 4 we have Cain's offering and Abel's offering. Abel's offering was a blood sacrifice. An innocent animal was slain. Cain brought the work and labor of his own hands which was not acceptable. Man's works and intentions and *mitzvot* fall short of what God requires.

Animal sacrifices were offered even before the time of Abraham. Not only did Abel offer an animal sacrifice, but Noah did also (Genesis 8:20). Abraham and his descendants continued this God-given practice which had been instituted by God. Later the LORD explained the sacrifices in more detail in the Torah through the pen of Moses (Leviticus chapters 1-7). The peoples of the world who rejected God also continued to offer blood sacrifices, but these

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pagan religious practices soon degenerated even to the point where they offered human sacrifices, including child sacrifices (compare Lev. 18:21; 20:1-3; Jer. 7:31).

God's holy law is summarized by the Ten Statements or Commandments found in the Torah (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). None of us have kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. None of us have given God first place every day of our lives. There have been times, especially in the days of our youth, when we have all dishonored and disobeyed our parents. We have all taken the Lord's Name in vain at one time or another. When we are honest, most of us would admit that we have stolen something that did not belong to us. In short, we are all law breakers deserving death! And how many of us have kept the greatest commandment of all found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5?

God knew that, as sinful persons, none of us could keep His holy commandments. For that reason He provided for our sins through the sacrificial system. The animal offered for sacrifice had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 1:3; etc.). The Substitute who dies must be perfect and "without blemish."

This brings us back again to man's basic problem. God's perfect holiness and justice demands that sin be punished by death (compare Gen. 2:17 and Exod. 21:12,15-17). When the Hebrew man brought forward the spotless lamb and placed it on the altar he was acknowledging the following:

I recognize that I am a sinner (Eccl. 7:20) and that I deserve to die. However, as I put my hand on this spotless lamb (see Lev. 1:4), I am acknowledging that this innocent animal is my substitute and is going to die in my place. The blood of this animal will be shed so that I can live.

All of these offerings and sacrifices were a picture of God's provision for man's salvation. God was giving the children of Israel a picture of the sinless Substitute who would someday come.

God's Promise of a Savior

Just as the Jews were the custodians of the Holy Scriptures, so too they were the custodians of the Messianic promises. God promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed by Abraham (Gen. 12:3). Since all people on earth are sinners (Psalm 14:2-3), all people deserve God's curse, not God's blessing. Only those who have been saved from their sins can be blessed of God. Thus the promise of blessing for the families of the earth must include salvation for the families of the earth and this salvation (Yeshua) would come through the seed of Abraham. The Messiah must be of the line of Abraham.

The same promise was renewed to Isaac (Gen. 21:12) and Jacob (Gen. 28:14) and thus the Messiah must also be a descendant of Isaac and Jacob. Since the Jews may be defined as those who have descended from Jacob, we can say that the Savior must be a Jew. He must be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In Genesis 49:10 we learn that the kingly line (the line possessing "the scepter") must come out of the tribe of Judah. Since the Messiah will be God's anointed King (see Psalm 2), the Messiah must come from the line of Judah.

In Isaiah 11:1 we learn that the Messiah, God's great King, must come from Jesse, hence from the line of David. The covenant God made with David (2 Samuel chapter 7) confirms that this great King must come from the line of King David.

What About His Birth?

There is an amazing prediction in Micah which says that Israel's great Ruler must come out of Bethlehem of Judah: "And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrath, least among the clans of Judah, from you one shall come forth to rule Israel for Me—One whose origin is from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2).

God's great sign or miracle would be that the Messiah must be born of a virgin: "Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of His

own accord! Look, *the young woman* is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The Hebrew term "young woman" (*almah*) is used in the Torah of women who were certainly virgins (see Gen. 24:43 and Exodus 2:8). The Jewish translators of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek Septuagint in the third century B.C.E. used *parthenos* to translate the word *almah*, and the Greek term *parthenos* clearly denoted virginity.

The context of Isaiah 7:14 involves the LORD speaking to Ahaz about a great sign or miracle. For a young woman to become pregnant and give birth to a son is not a miracle. It happens all the time. But for a **virgin** to become pregnant and give birth to a son is a great miracle indeed.

In Isaiah 9:5 (9:6 in most English versions) the male child who is born is called the "the Mighty God (אל גבור)" and "peaceable ruler." He will trace His human descent from David (Isaiah 9:6; 9:7 in most English versions).

To summarize His birth: It must be in Bethlehem of Judah. It must be a miracle birth, by way of a virgin. The One born will be "the Mighty God," but will trace His human lineage through David.

The Death of Messiah— Does The Messiah Have to Die?

The Tanakh gives us the answer to this very important question.

The first promise of the Messiah is found in Genesis 3:15. Here is an accurate translation of this verse from the Hebrew: "And I will put enmity (hatred) between you (the serpent) and the women (Eve), and between your seed and her seed; **HE** shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

The Messiah is here spoken of as "the seed of the woman." The seed of the woman will have His heel bruised. This implies that the Messiah must suffer. Let us clarify this with other Scripture.

Daniel chapter 9 is a passage which orthodox Jews are today told

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not to read. It is a forbidden passage. The main reason for this is found in verse 26 where we are told that the Messiah will be **cut off**.

The JPS edition of the Tanakh does not accurately translate this verse. It is translated as follows: “The anointed one will disappear and vanish.” “Anointed one” is a good translation because the term “Messiah” simply means “the anointed one.” But the verb does not mean “disappear.” The meaning of the Hebrew term כרת is very clear and every rabbi is familiar with this common Hebrew term. It means “cut off” and often is used in the Hebrew Scriptures of a violent death. One example is in Genesis 9:11 where men are “cut off” by the violent death caused by the flood waters in the days of Noah. It is interesting that in Genesis 9:11 the JPS translators render this verb “cut off.” Daniel 9:26 literally says:

“the anointed One will be cut off; it is not for Him”

[יכרת משיח ואין לו]

He is not cut off for any crime which He had done, but He is cut off for the sake of others. He died, not for Himself, but for others, as their Substitute. This is why the common English version says, “Messiah will be cut off, but not for Himself.”

The Time of Messiah’s Death

The prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is truly amazing. Not only must the Messiah die (be cut off), but it actually tells us *when* this will happen. Consider the following:

Daniel sees the history of the nation Israel as a period of 70 weeks. The Hebrew term for “week” is a period of seven, but in this case it is not a period of seven days (as we normally think of a week) but a period of seven **years**. The beginning of this 70 “week” period was when the commandment was given to restore and build Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25). This commandment was given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 445 B.C.E. (compare Neh. 2:1-8). When must the Messiah be cut off? Verse 26 says He will be cut off *after* 62 “weeks” (which must be added to the seven “weeks” of verse

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25), making a total of 69 “weeks” (62 + 7 = 69). The Messiah, therefore, must die after 69 “weeks.”

With each “week” as 7 years, this gives us 69 X 7 total years which equals 483 years. If you add 483 years to 445 b.c.e. you arrive at the year 32 C.E.* Soon after these 483 years the Messiah must die or be cut off. This was historically fulfilled when the Messiah was crucified outside of Jerusalem.

How Must the Messiah Die?

Not only does the Tanakh tell us that the Messiah must die and when He must die, but it also tells us **how** He must die. Again, let us allow the Hebrew Scripture to say what it says.

Psalms 22 is one of the most amazing prophecies found in the Tanakh. This Psalm gives an intensely graphic picture of death by crucifixion (written by David hundreds of years before there even was such a thing as Roman crucifixion). Note the details as you read the Psalm: bones (of the arms, hands and pelvis) out of joint; action of the heart affected; strength exhausted; intense thirst; partial nudity, etc. In verse 19 (*verse 18 in many English versions*) it even tells what they will do with the victim’s clothes (a prediction which was literally fulfilled by the action of the Roman soldiers, men who were certainly ignorant of this Psalm, thus making any self-fulfilling of the prophecy impossible).

Note especially verse 17 (*verse 16 in many English versions*). The JPS edition renders the phrase: “they maul my hands and feet.” The exact meaning of the verb (כור) is difficult to determine because this is the only place in the Tanakh where this verb occurs.

*These calculations are complicated, mostly due to the fact that in ancient times people reckoned a year at 360 days, instead of 365 days. Also when you go from B.C. to A.D. you must subtract one year. For a thorough discussion of these calculations, see *The Most High God* by Renald Showers and *Daniel’s Prophecy of the 70 Weeks* by Alva J. McClain.

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Many Bible scholars believe it means “to bore, to hew, to pierce.” Many English versions thus translate it this way: “They *pierced* my hands and feet.”

Another key prophecy is found in Zechariah 12:10. This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled at the Messiah’s second coming when the nation Israel will recognize their Messiah. It is when they realize who He is that they will mourn greatly. The Hebrew text says, “They will look upon Me whom they have PIERCED.”

This is another example where the JPS translators have not given us a good rendering of the original Hebrew text. Their flawed translation is this: “they shall lament to Me about those who are slain.” I encourage anyone who knows Hebrew to translate this phrase literally (word for word) based on the Hebrew text. It literally says this:

“They shall look upon Me whom they have **pierced**.”

[והביטו אלי את אשר-דקרו]

The verb [דקר] means “pierce, pierce through, run through.” It is used in the Torah in Numbers 25:8 of two people being pierced through with a spear by the hand of Phinehas. It is used in Judges 9:54 of a man being pierced with a dagger. It is used in 1 Samuel 31:4 of Saul being “run through” or pierced by a sword.

It is interesting that the LORD Himself says, “They will look upon ME whom they have pierced.” When was the LORD pierced? When did God die? Remember, the Messiah is more than a mere Man. He is the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:5), even the Son of God (Psalm 2:2,6-7). But how can God have a Son? Consider carefully the words of Proverbs 30:4 (speaking of the Creator God): “Who has ascended heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hand? Who has established all the extremities of the earth? What is his name **or His Son’s Name**, if you know it?”

In Zechariah 13:6 we have another interesting passage which possibly pertains to the death of the Messiah, but which has also

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been obscured by the JPS translation: “What are those sores on your back?” The footnote has this: “Lit. **sores between your arms**.” Both are poor translations. The Hebrew word for “back” is not used in the text, and the Hebrew word “arm” is not used either. The word that is found in the Hebrew text is the word “**hand**” [יָד]. The common English version renders it this way, “What are those wounds in your hands? [literally ‘between your hands’] Then he will say, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” Messiah was wounded between or in the middle of His hands by nail wounds.

We have seen that the Messiah *must* die, *when* He must die and *how* He must die. Now we must think about the most important question:

Why Must the Messiah Die?

When Jewish people ask sincere questions about Isaiah chapter 53 they are usually told that the suffering servant describes the nation Israel (rather than a personal Messiah). Though it is true that Israel as a nation has suffered greatly over the centuries, yet as we read these verses we find that the One spoken of is an individual, not a nation. As you read this chapter, notice the repetition of the personal pronoun “**he**.”

From the earliest days Isaiah 53 was understood by the Jews as applying to the Messiah.** The interpretation that the suffering servant in this passage refers to the nation Israel originated in medieval times. Why did the Jews change their minds about Isaiah 53? Rabbi Solomon Yitzchaki (*Rashi*), a noted medieval commentator of the Eleventh Century said this, “Since Christians interpret Isaiah 53 as being a prophecy concerning Jesus, we maintain that this is a prophecy concerning the people of Israel.” Whether we are

** For documentation of this fact, see the pamphlet *Isaiah 53: Of Whom Does the Prophet Speak?* (Available from The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-9900 Phone: 1-800-257-7843).

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Christians or Jews, it is important for us to let the sacred text speak for itself.

Let us consider some of these important verses in Isaiah 53 so that we can understand *why* the Messiah must die:

Verse 3

He was despised, shunned by men, a man of suffering...He was despised, we held him of no account.

When the Messiah came, He was rejected by men. He was despised and hated and put to death. He was a suffering Messiah. He was not received and welcomed as the Messiah and for the most part His saving work was rejected.

Verse 4

It was...our suffering that he endured. We accounted him plagued, smitten and afflicted by God.

The Messiah was smitten by God. A holy God must judge sin and punish sin. When the Messiah took our sins upon Himself, He was judged and punished by God. We are the ones who should have been punished, but He was punished in our place. He died as our Substitute, as our perfect Sacrifice. He took upon Himself the punishment we deserved. He was judged in our place. We are the guilty ones who deserve death, but He died instead of us.

Verse 5

But he was wounded because of our sins, crushed because of our iniquities. He bore the chastisement that made us whole, and by his bruises we were healed.

Why was the Messiah “smitten by God” (verse 4)? He was smitten “because of our sins” and “because of our iniquities” (verse 5). He died for our sins. This is perhaps the meaning of the phrase in Daniel 9:26 which has been translated, “Messiah will be cut off, but **not for Himself.**” The Hebrew man placed his hand upon the

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lamb of sacrifice acknowledging that the animal would die for his sins (Leviticus 1:4). This was a picture of our sins being placed on the Messiah as He died in our place. Healing and wholeness and salvation can only come as a result of what He did for us when He suffered and bled and died.

Verse 6

We all went astray like sheep, each going his own way; and the LORD visited upon him the guilt of all of us.

The bad news is that we **all** have sinned. The good news is that Yeshua died for **all** of us. We are all guilty, but He bore the guilt of us all. All of our sin was laid on the Messiah. He who was sinless was treated as a sinner for us. As our Substitute He took our sins upon Himself.

Verse 7

Like a sheep being led to slaughter, like a ewe, dumb before those who shear her, He did not open his mouth.

The Messiah became the perfect Sacrifice, the perfect Substitute. All the other sacrifices merely pointed to Him. He was as a lamb without blemish and without spot (absolutely sinless, the only Man who ever lived who kept God’s commandments perfectly), and He was willing to be slaughtered for you and for me.

Verse 8

He was cut off from the land of the living through the sin of my people, who deserved the punishment.

This verse supports the fact that Isaiah is not talking about the nation Israel as the suffering servant. He is talking about the Messiah who was cut off because of the sin of his people Israel. Israel deserved the punishment as do all people. We are all guilty before a holy God. We have all sinned and broken God’s commandments. We deserve the death penalty but He died in our place.

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He bore our condemnation. He faced the wrath of God in our stead. He was judged instead of us. Who crucified the Messiah? Was it the Romans? Was it the Israelites? Was it Pilate? The ultimate answer is this: “I crucified Yeshua. It was because of me He died. It was for my sins that He suffered and bled and died. I should have been put to death because I am the guilty one, but He died for me.”

Verse 10

But the LORD chose to crush him...that, if he made himself an offering for guilt, He might see offspring and have long life.

The LORD chose to crush Messiah. At first thought this seems to be a horrible statement. Why would it please the LORD to crush His anointed One? But we must remember that this was done for our sakes, and for our salvation. The Messiah had to receive a crushing blow so that we could receive God's gift of salvation, which we do not deserve at all.

How can a dead Messiah see offspring and have long life? This is impossible unless He comes back from the dead. The Messiah will die, and yet He will live.

Verse 11

My righteous servant makes the many righteous, It is their punishment that he bears.

The Messiah is called God's “righteous servant.” He was perfectly righteous. He was sinless. He lived a perfect life and kept the commandments perfectly. He was the only righteous man who ever lived—right acting, right thinking, right speaking, right being. He was perfectly innocent, and yet He died in our place as if He were a guilty sinner. It is my punishment that He bore. The only righteous Man who ever lived paid the penalty for my crimes. He was sentenced to death so that I might be pardoned. He died that I might live. He was treated as an unrighteous criminal so that I might be justified or declared righteous in Him (even as Abraham was justified in Genesis 15:6).

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Verse 12

For he exposed himself to death and was numbered among the sinners, whereas he bore the guilt of the many and made intercession for sinners.

He did not die for a few; He died for the many. The One died for all. He poured out His soul unto death. He bore our guilt and was punished for our sins. Sin demands death (see Genesis 2:17 in the Torah and see also Ezekiel 18:4). Yeshua died instead of us and paid the death penalty *in full*. The LORD who is the righteous Judge of all the earth is now completely satisfied that sin's penalty has been paid. Because of what the Messiah did for us, the LORD is able to provide for us complete forgiveness of sins: “For I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more” (Jer. 31:34 and see also Psalm 103:10-12).

What Must I Do?

In conclusion, let us go back to verse 1 of Isaiah 53:

*Who can **believe** what we have heard?*

This is the crucial question. Will you **believe** what you have heard from Isaiah? Will you **believe** what the prophets have written? Will you **believe** what the Tanakh says? Will you **believe** the traditional Hebrew text which God has so wonderfully given to us and preserved for us?

God has told us about the Messiah—who He is and what He has done. We can either believe this message or not. We can receive the message of the Tanakh or we can reject it. We can put our trust in the Messiah or we can try to explain away these amazing prophecies.

Thank you for taking the time to read this little booklet. If I can be of further help, please let me know. I have learned how difficult it is for a Jew to believe in Yeshua. Often there is a great cost involved. For some it could even mean separation from family members, excommunication from the synagogue and a funeral in

Message to Israel from the Tanakh

effigy. But can any price be too high to pay for a right relationship with the living God? And God may use you in a very special way to reach other Jewish people with His message of Life and Salvation.

For helpful literature along these lines, ask us for the testimony of Dr. M. L. Rossvally, surgeon in the U.S. army during and after the Civil War. Dr. Rossvally was an orthodox Jew and the story of how God worked in his life and in his family is remarkable indeed.

Let me close with two verses from the Psalms:

(1) *Taste and see how good the LORD is; happy the man who takes refuge in Him!* (Psalm 34:9, verse 8 in the standard English versions).

(2) Psalm 2 speaks about the Messiah, the Lord’s anointed (verse 2), God’s great King (verse 6), the One of Whom God said, “You are My Son” (verse 7). The Psalm ends with these words:

Happy are all who take refuge in Him!

May you come to know the blessing and happiness of putting your trust in Yeshua, the One who died for you!

* * * * *

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ISAIAH 9:5

(Isaiah 9:6 in most English versions)

Four names are given to this Child, each name consisting of two members or two Hebrew words. The Masoretic accentuation supports the position that there are four names.

Literally translated the verse reads as follows:

Because (a) child [male child] has been born for us;

A Son has been given for us;

And the rule (dominion) has been [placed] upon His shoulder;

And His Name has been called...

WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR פלא יועץ

The Hebrew term “wonderful” means “that which surpasses human thought and power, incomprehensible.” He is a wonder. The word is used in Judges 13:18 of the Name of the Angel of the LORD who in verse 22 is identified as God. See also Isaiah 28:29 where the counsel of the LORD of hosts is said to be wonderful or unfathomable.

MIGHTY GOD אל גבור

Compare this identical phrase found in Isaiah 10:20-21 where “Mighty (Heroic) God” refers to the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

ETERNAL FATHER אבי עד

With respect to His people, He will ever be as a father. “You, O LORD, are our Father; from of old, Your name is ‘Our Redeemer’” (Isaiah 63:16 and Psalm 103:13).

RULER OF PEACE שר שלום

His reign of peace is described in Isaiah 2:4.

Isaiah 9:6 (9:7 in most English versions) further describes His kingdom of peace. The Ruler is clearly identified as a descendant of King David, the true Messiah who will establish the kingdom which had been promised by the mouth of all the prophets. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts shall bring this to pass!