

## A LETTER SENT TO A JERUSALEM RABBINIC STUDENT

Yaakov, thank you for your prompt e-mail. I too was pleased to meet up with you. Your earnestness and command of Hebrew is good and although I found some of your points of secondary importance viz Paul vis a vis **Christ** (and please don't be put off by my distinctive normal use of Christian language. As you live out your profession I do alike. Your serious concern to address the discussion through scripture is welcome and for this I thank you.

On Isaiah there are 44 singular references to the servant as a person in this chapter. Philip in Acts 8 joined the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch who at Passover could not come near to worship but purchased an Isaiah scroll. They read 53 together-specifically vv7-8 which prophesied one who would under threat of death was humiliated and received stripes. The Ethiopian asked Philip "Is the prophet (Isaiah)talking of himself or someone else?" Philip's response was to "begin there and tell him the good news of Jesus". The specifics of Isaiah 53 do not refer to numerous people but rather in Messianic terms to both the humiliation and the exaltation (vv11-12) of Messiah. This chapter has a cardinal point of reference Messiah. Chapter 45.1 terms Cyrus ׀jycm though neither you nor I would understand him to be truly Messiah. Equally as you rightly say Isaiah addresses Israel frequently as servant db[ as indeed in 44.4 where The Lord terms Israel "His chosen" yryj b

To be precise Isaiah predicts One who

- i Who would grown up without having especial attraction
- ii An ׀bakm cya –so a "man" who would undergo much suffering not a m[ or people
- iii He would be held in low esteem by the people of Israel
- iv He would suffer vicariously for Israel
- v It would appear to Israel that God punished Him for his own wrong
- vi He would be esteemed on the level of a leper
- vii He was to be pierced vicariously for Israel
- viii He was to be crushed or grieved vicariously for Israel
- ix His correction with stripes rsy ׀smm –Jesus received 39 stripes was for Israel's peace or true health not for His own improvement.
- x His wounds were "for us" said Isaiah ׀nl rbj Jesus received 5 wounds –one to the side, two to the feet and two to the arms which (whether received or not as Zechariah prophesied in 13.6)

(2) **Zechariah** also prophesied of Messiah that He would be the "smitten shepherd (13.7)-the one who would enter as on Palm Sunday as King Zech 9.9 and the one coming on a colt which Jesus fulfilled on Palm Sunday and ultimately ruling worldwide (Zech.9.9-10).

On the specific point of the day in Zechariah's prophecy when a fountain for sin & uncleanness is opened I would link **the time to the vicarious work of Christ** (as portrayed above by Isaiah) fulfilling the demands of the Lord and the law to atone for man's sin.

The internecine period where prophecy is despised and the zealot family assassins spoken of seems to go beyond the assassins Josephus speaks of in AD70 when such humiliated Hebrew religion nation and family. Is there yet another period of such throes before Messiah comes to rule? *Application wanting*

The hypothetical query in Zech 13.6 I think must be connected to "that day" of the Lord in its sorrow and gladness when Messiah comes. It is in the setting of 12.3-14.20 which is mainly thought not exclusively related to the Second Coming of Christ when Israel is a secular state and so the hypothetical query I would find relates best to the "smitten Shepherd" of 13,7 before whom Israel weeps as in Zech12 10-14 (i.e. **If one should say what are these wounds distinct on or in the middle of your arms he will reply 'These are they I was caused to receive in the house of my friends!'**)I would not make this passage a point of great importance only to say that what I

have written in bold type is accurate as of the Ginsburg text. The backcloth of the Day of the Lord has to be the context i.e. a future day.

Zechariah 13 v7 referring to the “sword that awoke against the Shepherd resulting in the scattered sheep” is of far superior perspicuity to Zech 13.6 and is interpreted by Matthew Levi in 26.56 and by Peter in Mark 14.51 of the apostles fleeing from Christ who said to the High Priest’s guard “Let these go their way”. These NT text of Matthew found deposited in 7Q5 not later than AD66 according to quite uncontrovertible papyrological evidence (cf Thiele –*The Jesus Papyrus*) so that it must have been produced together with Mark in the 50’s or early 60’s of the first century – within 20-25 years of Jesus’ death and while thousands of disciples still lived.

### (3) Returning to Isaiah 53.

A To return specifically to the burial of Jesus and the prophecy of Isaiah 53.9 Messiah (I don’t imagine you would say that all Israel found graves with wicked persons) whereas Jesus would have been assigned to Tophet and to burning with the thieves had not Joseph of Arimathea – a Sanhedrin member with another Sanhedrinist, Nikodem Ben Gurion intervened and buried Him in the tomb of the former.

B The question of the “deaths” 53.9 does not I think, mean that every Israelite was to die and be assigned a grave – that you and I understand. Though it goes utterly against the grain that God could become incarnate in the Son of His bosom and die (where His body went to the grave and His spirit to the Father) and rise again this is the context of the fulfilment of the prophecy cf v.11 “He will see of the travail of His soul” (Masoretic rendering) or “see of the light of life” (Dead Sea Scrolls rendering) as the NIV puts it. i.e. He will rise again. But what of the “**deaths**”? My take on  $\text{m}^{\text{t}}\text{m}^{\text{b}}$  is that we have definitively a 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular suffix with a feminine plural noun – to be rendered “His deaths”. The Syriac has **BEMOTHAH**  $\text{ܒܝܡܘܬܗܐ}$  simply “His death” (singular) and the LXX  $\text{ἀντι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ}$  meaning “with the rich after his death (singular). The insight of prophets is of course profound and may speak of Messiah as dying many deaths because He died vicariously on behalf of many. The NT believer has such reference points as make this plural awesome. Romans 5.6 “Christ died for the ungodly” 1 Cor. 15.3 Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” 2 Cor. 5.15 “He died for all”. This of course is nothing more than what Isaiah is maintaining – that Messiah would die vicariously – Yes pouring out His life – but also taking the death or punishment of Israel/mankind upon Him too. I think this is the simplest verdict.

C The use of  $\text{m}^{\text{t}}\text{m}^{\text{b}}$  – There is no contextual reason for making this a plural or suggesting a rare usage. Gesenius is even handed saying “This is used for MHL and also for  $\text{m}^{\text{t}}\text{m}^{\text{b}}$ ” Thus other references can be found where the context demonstrates the person best. Here to pull one of 44 references yelling and screaming away from the other 43 wrenches the sense absolutely. Isaiah 44.15 presents another such “singular use” – the idol is singular and worshipping “it” not “them” follows in the apodosis of the sentence naturally.

D You will recall my reference to QNUMA and QUM in John 5.21 & 26 under which primary existence and power to rise and raise Jesus arose – hence we celebrate Easter worldwide with great joy. This joy is real because as Isaiah writes in 53.11 through [dy or knowing Christ personally as Saviour by New Birth of the Spirit of God comes justification from sins and iniquity – both unconscious and conscious! This entire vital principle is explored by Paul writing to the Romans in his fifth chapter – worth a read – I enclose my Vide-mecum on Romans.

Isaiah speaks well of Messiah who “poured out His life to death and bore the sins of many and interceded for us. On the cross He said “Father forgive them for they know not what they do!”

I send my warmest greetings this Eastertide

And wish you happiness at Passover.

Yours sincerely

**Bob Coffey L’shuvkha Marya**

**To the glory of the Lord Aramaic Bible Companion**

