

A SURVEY OF THE RABBINIC INTERPRETATIONS OF ISAIAH 52:13-53:12 by Arnold Fruchtenbaum

INTRODUCTION

From the most ancient rabbinic writings this passage was interpreted to be messianic. On rare occasions some rabbis interpreted the Servant to speak of King Hezekiah but that was extremely rare.

What the rabbis could not reconcile are the contradictory messianic prophecies of a suffering, dying Messiah as over against a conquering, reigning, and royal Messiah. Will He come riding upon a donkey or riding upon a cloud. A minority of rabbis chose an either/or option: if Israel is righteous, He will come riding on cloud; if Israel is unrighteous, He will come riding on donkey. The majority of rabbis were uncomfortable with that option and innovated a two Messiah view. The first Messiah will be the Messiah Son of Joseph or Son of Ephraim who will fulfill the suffering and dying prophecies. He will be killed in the Gog and Magog war. Then will come the second Messiah, Messiah the Son of David, who will win the Gog and Magog war, resurrect the first Messiah back to life and bring in the Messianic Kingdom and Israel's final restoration.

However, around A.D.950 a new interpretation was inaugurated which identified the Servant as represent the whole House of Israel (rarely, the believing element of Israel), a view that was rejected by the vast majority of the rabbis until the 1800's. It was a period of time that European Jews were leaving the ghettos and thus getting exposed

to many evangelical believers who witnessed to the Jews using the key Isaiah passage and thus many Jews came to faith as a result. Thus the vast majority of rabbis over that century discarded the messianic view and adopted the national view and at the present time it will hard to find any rabbi who would adhere the messianic view.

The following pages will contain many quotations of the messianic view, then the transition to the national view, and different rabbinic reactions to the national view before that view became so dominant.

I. THE PERIOD FROM THE FIRST TO THE TENTH CENTURY

A. THE TARGUM OF YONATHAN

LII. Behold my servant Messiah shall prosper; he shall be high, and increase, and be exceeding strong, as the house of Israel looked to him during many days, because their countenance was darkened amount the peoples, and their complexion beyond the sons of men, so will he scatter many peoples: at him kings shall be silent, and put their hands upon their mouth, because that which was not told them have they seen, and that which they had not heard they have observed.

LIII. Who hath believed this out glad tidings? And they strength of the might arm of the Lord, upon whom as thus hath it been revealed? The righteous will grow up before him, yea, like blooming shoots, and like a tree which sends forth its roots to streams of water will they increase a holy generation in the land that was in need of him: his countenance no profane countenance, and the terror at him not the terror at an ordinary

man; his complexion shall be a holy complexion, and all who see him will look wistfully upon him. Then he will become despised, and will cut off the glory of all the kingdoms; they will be prostrate and mourning, like a man of pains and like one destined for sicknesses; and as though the presence of the Shekinah had been withdrawn from us, they will be despised, and esteemed not. Then for our sins he will pray, and our iniquities will for his sake be forgiven, although we were accounted stricken, smitten from before the Lord, and afflicted. But he will build up the Holy Place, which has been polluted for our sins, and delivered to the enemy for our iniquities; and by his instruction peace shall be increased upon us, and by devotion to his words, our sins will be forgiven us. All we like sheep had been scattered, we had each wandered off on his own way; but it was the Lord's good pleasure to forgive the sins of all of us for his sake. He prayed, and he was answered, and ere even he had opened his mouth he was accepted; the mighty of the peoples he will deliver up like a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb dumb before her shearers; there shall be none before him opening his mouth or saying a word. Out of chastisements and punishment he will bring out captives near; the wondrous things done to us in his days who shall be able to tell? For he will cause the dominion of the Gentiles to pass away from the land of Israel, and transfer to them the sins which my people have committed. He will deliver the wicked into Gehinnom, and those that are rich in possessions into the death of utter destruction, in order that those who

commit sin may not be established, nor speak deceits with their mouth. But it is the Lord's good please to try and to purify the remnant of his people, so as to cleanse their souls from sin: These shall look on the kingdom of their Messiah, their sons and their daughters shall be multiplied, they shall prolong their days, and those who perform the Law of the Lord shall prosper in his good pleasure. From the subjection of the nations he will deliver their soul, they shall look upon the punishment of those that hate them, and be satisfied to the law; and for their sins he will intercede. Then will I divide for him the spoil of many peoples, and the possessions of strong cities shall he divide as prey, because he delivered up his soul to death, and made the rebellious subject to the Law" he shall intercede for many sins, and the rebellious for his sake shall be forgiven.

B. THE TALMUD OF JERUSALEM

R. Yonah says, it is written, "I will allot him a portion with the many: this refers to R. Aqibha, who introduced the study of the *Midrash, the Halakhoth, and the Haggadoth*.

C. THE TALMUD OF BABYLON

The Messiah- what is his name?...The Rabbis say, the leprous one [; those] of the house of Rabbi [say, the sick one], as it is said, 'Surely he hath borne our sicknesses, etc.

D. MIDRASH RABBAH

Another explanation (of Ruth ii. 14): - He is speaking of the king Messiah; 'Come hither', draw near to the throne; and eat of the bread, that is, the bread of the kingdom; and dip thy morsel in the vinegar, this refers to the chastisements, as it is said, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.'

E. YALQUT

1. *Who art thou, O great mountains?* (Zech. iv. 7.) This refers to the King Messiah. And why does he call him 'the great mountain? Because he is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, "My servant shall be high, and lifted up, and lofty exceedingly"- he will be higher than Abraham, who says, 'I raise high my hands unto the Lord' (Gen. xiv. 22); lifted up above Moses, to whom it said, '*Lift it up into thy bosom*' (Num. xi. 120; loftier than the ministering angels, of who, it is written, 'Their wheels were lofty and terrible' (Ez. i. 18). And out of who does he come forth? Out of David.

2. *I will tell of the institution* (Ps.ii.7). Already are the words [concerning my servant] told in the institutions of the Pentateuch, of the book of the Prophets, and of Hagiographa: in the Pentateuch where are they told? 'Israel is my firstborn' (Ex iv.22); in the prophets, where? 'Behold my servant will deal prudently,' and near to it, 'My servant who I uphold' (xlii.i); in the Hagiographa, where? 'The Lord said to my lord,' and 'The Lord said unto me' (Ps. cx., I, ii. 7).

3. (Ps.ii.6). According to another view this means, 'I have *woven* him, ...Jud. Xvi.14: i.e. I have drawn him out of the chastisements. R. Huna, on the authority of R. Aha, says, the chastisements are divided into three parts: one for David and the fathers, one for our own generation, and one for the King Messiah; and this is what which is written, 'He was wounded for our transgressions.' etc.

F. SIPHRE

R. Yose the Galilean said, come forth and learn the righteousness of the King Messiah and the reward of the just from the first man who received but one commandment, a prohibition, and transgressed it: consider how many deaths were inflicted upon himself, upon his own generations, and upon those that followed them, till the end of all generations.

G. ZOHAR

Section Vayikhal

Happy is the portion of the just in this world and in that which is to come! The souls which are in the garden of Eden below go to and fro every new moon and sabbath, in order to ascend to the place that is called the Walls of Jerusalem....After that they journey on and contemplate all those that are possessed of pains and sicknesses and those that are martyrs for the unity of their Lord, and then return and announce it to the Messiah. And as they tell him of the misery of Israel in their captivity, and of those wicked

ones among them who are not attentive to know their Lord, he lifts up his voice and weeps for their wickedness: and so it is written, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, etc. Then those souls return and abide in their own place. There is in the garden of Eden a place called Palace of the sons of sickness: This palace the Messiah then enters, and summons every sickness, every pain, and every chastisement of Israel; they all come and rest upon him.

Section Pinchas

At the time when the Holy One desires to atone for the sins of the world, like a physician who to save the other limbs, bleeds the arm, he smites their arm and heals their whole person: as it is written, 'He was wounded for our iniquities,' etc.

Thy bride [i.e. the law], O faithful shepherd, was given by the Holy One to Abraham...and to Isaac....that she might be true to thee at the time when thou comest to her at the last redemption, as it is written, 'That which was, is that which shall be' (Ecc.i.9). Because they (Israel) produced and wrought good things for thee, thou hast borne for their sakes ever so many strokes in order that Messiah the son of Joseph might not be slain....And therefore it is written, ' He was wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we were healed.'

Section Ki Teitzei

...the faithful shepherd, of whom it is said, 'And the man Moses was exceedingly afflicted' (Num xii. 3), for he bore the weight of the sixty

myraids of Israel. Of him, too, it is written, 'From the place of his habitation he looked forth' (Ps.xxxiii.14). And also, with reference to the generation of the second captivity, 'But the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all.'

Section *Veara*

Come, consider the congregation of Israel, how it is called a *lamb*, as it is said, 'Like a lamb that before her shearers is dumb. Why was it dumb? Because while the other nations ruled over it, it was deprived of speech and made dumb.'

C.

H. YEPHETH BEN 'ALL

Others of them think the subject of it to be David and the Messiah, saying that all the expressions of contempt, such as 'many were desolated at thee,' refers to the seed of David who are in exile; and all the glorious things, such as 'behold my servant will be prosperous' and 'so shall he sprinkle,' refer to the Messiah. As to myself, I am inclined, with Benjamin of Nehawend, to regard it as alluding to the Messiah, and as opening with a description of his condition in exile, from the time of his birth to his accession to the throne: For the prophet begins by speaking of his being seated in a position of great honour, and then goes back to relate all that will happen to him during the captivity. He thus gives us to understand two things: In the first instance, that the Messiah will only reach his highest degree of honour after long and severe trials; and secondly, that these

trials will be sent upon him as a kind of sign, so that, if he finds himself under the yoke of misfortunes whilst remaining pure in his actions, he may know that he is the desired one, as we shall explain in the course of the section. The expression 'my servant' is applied to the Messiah as it is applied to his ancestor in the verse 'I have sworn to David my servant' (Ps. lxxxix. 4) as in this verse four grades of dignity which he will rise to successively: 1. *Yaskil* which describes his prosperity at the beginning of his career, when he will be victorious in war, a term used also for his forefather David (I Sam. Xviii. 14); 2. *Yarum* which means he will sit upon the throne of Israel at that time when our Lord Elijah will anoint him,- this also is applied to David (Ps. lxxxix. 20); 3. *Ve-nasa* referring to the time when he will reign over the entire world, 'Let him have dominion from sea to sea' (Ps. lxxii. 8); 4. *Ve-gava meod* which means he will reach the highest rank possible; hence the addition of the word *meod*. In having the last two expressions applied to him, I mean *nasa* and *gava*, the Messiah has the advantage over his ancestor, as we have explained upon Is. ix. 6.

'As many were desolated' forms here the protasis, of which 'so shall he sprinkle' is the apodosis. His condition is described as being such that any one seeing him would be desolated at him, on account of the sicknesses which had befallen him. *Ravim* signifies the great men who knew him. The prophet explains to them the cause of their desolation concerning him by saying, 'His countenance was marred beyond the sons of Adam,' i.e. he was so altered in form as to resemble a corpse: and,

alluding to the same fact, he says, towards the end of the section, 'For he was cut off out of the land of the living.'

(A word [*kamohu*] must be supplied), what they had never been *told the like of*: there have been indeed in Israel and in other nations kings of whose doing they have heard, but when they witness the reign of the Messiah they will know that there was never any king in the world like him. Israel turns back now to describe the manner of the Messiah's birth, comparing him to a young twig or sucker because he is one of the children of David, and to a root because he will become a root like his father David. So says Ezekiel (xvii. 22,23), 'From the top of his suckers I will crop off a tender one...and it shall become a goodly cedar.'

The Messiah came up out of captivity. He then adds, "And like a root out of the dry earth,' meaning that he resembles a root emerging, sickly, and weak, out of the arid soil. This comparison relates to the beginning of his career; and the same is the case with the words 'he had no form no comeliness.' Which in no way refer to the period of his sickness. In this respect he differs from his forefather, who during the time that he was king, when great multitudes gathered round him, and he was consequently well known, had both form and comeliness. In the next words Israel describes how when they looked at him they saw in him neither majesty, nor comeliness, nor beauty, yet they desired his company, instead of fleeing from it and hiding themselves, as the words in the verse following imply that they did afterwards.

By the words 'surely he hath carried out sicknesses,' they mean that the pains and sickness which he fell into were merited by them, but that he bore them instead: the next words 'yet we did esteem him,' etc., intimate that they thought him afflicted by God for his own sins, as they distinctly say, 'smitten of God and afflicted.' And here I think it necessary to pause for a few moments, in order to explain why God caused these sicknesses to attach themselves to the Messiah for the sake of Israel.

It is plain from this how great their iniquity must have been, as in fact it is said, 'The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great' (Ezek. ix. 9); And great is the iniquity of the daughter of my people' (Lam. iv. 6); and in other passages similarly. The nation deserved from God greater punishment than that which actually came upon them, but not being strong enough to bear it (as Amos says, vii. 2, 'O Lord, forgive, I beseech thee; how can Jacob endure, for he is small?') the prophet had to alleviate it. Inasmuch now as at the end of the captivity there will be no prophet to intercede at the time of distress, the time of the Lord's anger and of his fury, God appoints his servant to carry their sins, and by doing so lighten their punishment in order that Israel might not be completely exterminated. Thus from the words 'he was wounded for our transgressions,' we learn two things: 1. That Israel had committed many sins and transgressions, for which they deserved the indignation of God; 2. That by the Messiah bearing them they would be delivered from the wrath which rested upon them, and be enabled to endure it, as it is said,

‘And by associating with him we are healed.’ God indeed will afflict the Messiah with longer and severer sicknesses than Ezekiel; but this is owing to the period in which he lives and to its requirements, and in giving him the rank of a prophet, he will bring his excellence to light.

The expression ‘smitten of God’ signifies that these sicknesses attacked him by the will of God; they did not arise from natural causes (like humours of the body), or belong to the class of disease occasioned by change of air: and the word ‘afflicted’ corresponds to ‘despised’ in ver. 3, the meaning being that he was afflicted with poverty.

Israel says: This chastisement which the Lord has put upon us, and from which he will heal us, is owing to him (*calav*). [(Maskil)] [*ubchavuvato*] means that the Messiah, by participating with them in these pains and sicknesses, will be the cause of their being healed. This verse exhibits Israel’s wickedness in not awaking to repentance after God had punished them with his plagues. They are compared in this respect to sheep without a shepherd wandering from the way, and torn by wild beasts, going astray among the mountains, without any to lead them back, as it is said, “My sheep wander through all the mountains’ (Ezek. Xxxiv.6)

And whilst God looks upon their work, and they do not think of their sicknesses, their guilt is thrown upon this guide, as it is said, ‘And the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.’ The prophet does not by *avon* mean *iniquity*, but *punishment* for iniquity, as in the passage, ‘Be sure your sin will find out’ (Num. xxxii.23). Here the words of Israel end, and the rest of

the section contains, as the context shews, the speech of God himself and the prophet here describes how the Messiah will resign himself to die, and be buried in their tomb. The addition 'because he did no violence' is intended to mark the difference between the Messiah and those wicked Israelites who had perished after the Messiah and those wicked Israelites who had perished after perpetrating violence and deceit: he means to say that though he made his grave with them he had still never participated in their actions. It was said above, 'The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all,' and the prophet repeats the same thought here, saying that God was pleased to bruise and sicken him, though not in consequence of sin. The prophet next says, "which his soul makes a trespass-offering," indicating thereby that his soul was compelled to take Israel's guilt upon itself, as it is said below, 'And he bare the sin of many' (ver.12). Here the narrative of the state of Messiah ends, and the account of the rewards given to him begins.

In saying, 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' he means that at the time when God will strike the transgressors of Israel with calamities, the Messiah will be numbered amongst them: this answers to the words in ver.7, 'he was oppressed and he was afflicted;' in the same way, 'he bare the sin of many' corresponds to 'when his soul makes a trespass-offering.' And the last words 'make intercession for the transgressors' mean that being associated with them in the misery arising from the

exaction of tribute and other similar causes, he will pray for their deliverance as well as his own.

I must here give a compendious account of the whole of the Messiah's career; it is as follows; His first advent will be from the north, as we have explained upon xli. 25, 'I have raised one up from the north and he came; then with his arrival in the land of Israel the period affliction and violence will cease from Jacob, and at the same time all the things mentioned in the present section will happen to him. Every good quality will be united in him, but in spite of all this the people will not recognize in him the will of God. For his sake, however, God will deliver Israel from all his afflictions: and when the season of redemption comes, our lord Elijah will appear to the people and anoint him, and from that moment he will begin to be prosperous, as it is said, 'Behold my servant shall prosper.' His forces will then spread in every direction and be victorious, as we have explained on lii. 15; and then at last Israel will dwell in safety. When news of this reaches God, they will rush forth and 'gather themselves together against the Lord and against his Anointed;' but when he prays to God in the midst of his people, God will come to him with deliverance, as his forefather prophesied: 'The Lord answer thee in the day of trouble,' etc., with rest of the psalm (Ps. xx). And then he will be 'high and exalted and lofty exceedingly; and afterwards the promise announced by God will be fulfilled, 'Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great;' and last of all he shall 'see seed and lengthen days.' Such is the narrative of his history

arranged in due order. And notice how to each of his sufferings and actions a reward or counterpart announced is, 'so he will sprinkle many nations;' to 'if his soul makes a trespass-offering,' he will see seed and lengthen days; to 'by his knowledge my righteous servant shall make many righteous,' 'I will divide him a portion with many.' Thus every detail of his history is provided with its counterpart" but to exhibit this fully would occupy us too long. Many of the parallels have been already mentioned by Benjamin of Nehawend in the preface to his commentary on the Canticle. We shall only add that the return to the idea of his death, expressed in the words 'because he laid bare his soul to die,' has two objects: 1. To sum up the scope and object of the whole section; 2. To introduce the final addition 'and made intercession for the transgressors.' Space does not permit us to pursue the explanation of this section in greater detail, as the reader will already have been wearied by its length; we have therefore adhered to the same compendious form adopted in our commentary elsewhere.

I. MYSTERIES OF RABBI SHIM'ON BEN YOHAJ

And Armilauz will join battle with Messiah, the son of Ephraim, in the East gate...; and Messiah, the son of Ephraim, will die there, and Israel will mourn for him. And afterwards the Holy One will reveal to them Messiah, the son of David, whom Israel will desire to stone, saying, Thou speakest falsely; already is the Messiah slain, and there is none other Messiah to stand up (after him): and so they will despise him, as it is written,

‘Despised and forlorn of men; ‘ but he will turn and hide himself from them, according to the words, ‘Like one hiding his face from us.’

J. B'RESHITH RABBAH OF RABBI MOSHEH HAD-DARSHAN

And Jacob went forth from Beersheva. This is that which is written, “I will lift mine eyes unto the hills; O whence cometh my help; (Ps.cxxi. 1)? and ‘Who art thou, O great mountain’ (Zech. iv. 7)? The great mountain means the Messiah, and why does he speak of him thus? Because he is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, ‘Behold my servant shall prosper.’

I have learnt it from the words of R. Mosheh had-Darshan: The redeemer whom I shall raise up from among you will have no father, as it is written, ‘Behold the man whose name is Zerah [branch], and he shall branch up out of his place’ (Zech. Vi. 12); and so Isaiah says, “And he came up like a sucker,” etc. says R. B'rekhyah, The Holy One said to Israel, You have spoken before me, saying, we are orphans and have no father (Lam v. 3): The redeemer whom I shall raise up out of your midst will have no father also, as it is said, ‘Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall branch up out of his place’ (Zech. Vi. 12); and similarly by Isaiah, ‘And he came up as a sucker before him.’

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This is what is written. ‘There is light sown for the righteous’ (Ps. xcvi. 11). R. Abba says, ‘And with him dwelleth light’ (Dan. li. 22): this is the light of the King Messiah; and so it is said, ‘For with thee is the fountain of life, in they

light do we see light' (Ps. xxxvi.10)- that is, the light of the Messiah. These passages teach how the Holy One watched the Messiah and his generation, and kept them hidden underneath the throne of his glory. Satan said, Lord of the world, this light hidden beneath the throne of the glory-to whom does it belong? The Holy One answered, to the Messiah and to his generation. Satan said, Lord of the world, suffer me, and I will be an adversary unto the Messiah and his generation. The holy One said, thou canst not prevail against him. Satan answered, Lord of the world, suffer me, and I will prevail. The Holy one said, if this is the intention, I will destroy Satan out of the world, but not a single soul belonging to that generation will I destroy. Forthwith the Holy One began to make a covenant with the Messiah: O Messiah, my righteousness, said he, the iniquities of those who are hidden beside thee will cause thee to enter into a hard yoke" Thine eyes shall see no light, and thine ears shall hear great reproaches from the nations of the world; thy nostrils shall smell ill savours, thy mouth taste bitterness, and thy tongue cleave to thy gums; thy skin shall hand upon thy bones, and thy body grow weak in grief and sighing. Art thou willing to accept this? If so, it shall be well; but if not, behold, I drive them from me for ever. Said the Messiah, Lord of the world, I accept it joyfully, and will endure these chastisements, upon condition that thou givest life again to those who die in my days, and to those who died from the time of the first man until now; and that thou savest in my days not these only, but those also whom wolves and lions have

devoured, and who have been swallowed up in waters and rivers; and not only these, but such also as were born out of due time; nor again these only, but those also whom thou thoughtest to create but who were not created. The Holy One replied, I will do so: and forthwith the Messiah accepted the chastisements of love, as it is written, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.

And Jacob brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother (Gen.xxiv. 67). This is the King Messiah, who belonged to the generation of the wicked, but rejected them, and chose the Holy One and his holy name to serve him with all his heart, and applied himself to seek for mercy for Israel, and to fast and humble himself on their behalf, as it is said, "He was wounded for our transgressions,' etc. And when Israel is sinful, the Messiah seeks for mercy upon them, as it is written 'By his stripes we were healed,' and, 'He carried the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

K. LEQAH TOBH

'Let water stream from his buckets' (Num. xxiv.7)- from the poor who are in Israel: hence they say 'Be careful with the children of the people of the land [i.e. the poor], because from them doth the law go forth.' 'And let his see be on many waters': The kingdom of Israel is to be above all kingdoms of the earth. "May his king be high above 9or, from) Agag': from the days of Agag, king of Amalek, the kingdom of Israel took its rise. 'And let his kingdom be exalted.' In the days of the Messiah, of whom it is said,

‘Behold my servant shall prosper; he will be high and exalted, and lofty exceedingly.’

L. RABBI MOSHEH BEN NAHMAN

Hineh yaskil avdi the right view respecting this Parashah is to suppose that by the phrase ‘my servant’ the whole of Israel is meant, as in xliv.2, xlix.3, and often. As a different opinion, however, is adopted by the Midrash, which refers it to the Messiah, it is necessary for us to explain it in conformity with the view there maintained. The prophet says, the Messiah, the son of David, of whom the text speaks, will never be conquered or perish by the hands of his enemies. And, in fact, the text teaches this clearly.

INTERPRETATION

Behold my servant shall understand. For, at the time of redemption the Messiah will perceive and *understand* the end, and know when the period for his coming is at hand, and the time has arrived for him to reveal himself to the congregation of those that are waiting for him. *Yaskil* is used in the same sense as by Daniel, xii. 9 f., where the meaning is that there will be come among the wicked who will display their wickedness by ‘reproaching the footsteps of the Messiah’ (Ps. lxxxix. 52) on account of his long tarring, and by refusing to believe in him at all; thus they will not perceive the end, but will go astray after any one who may claim to be the Messiah; ‘those that understand,’ on the other hand, ‘will be attentive’ for the true end, and look for it expectantly. In agreement with the words of

Daniel, Isaiah says the Messiah, the servant of the Lord, will *understand*: he will perceive the end, and forthwith will rise up and be exalted, and his heart will be 'lofty in the ways of the Lord' (2 Chron.xvii.6) to go and gather together the outcasts of Israel, 'not by strength and not by might, but by his spirit' (Zech. Iv. 6), thrusting in the Lord, after the manner of that first redeemer who came to Pharaoh with his staff and scrip (cf. I Sam. Xvii. 40), and smote his land with the 'rod of his mouth' (Is. Xi. 4). And so it is said in the Midrash, 'He will be higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, and loftier than the ministering angels; the Messiah, that is, will be higher than Abraham, who was an expounder of the belief in God, and in spite of the opposition of the king, gained proselytes in the land of Nimrod: For the Messiah will do more than he did; he will proselytize many nations. And he will be more exalted than Moses, and loftier than the ministering angels; the Messiah, that is, will be higher than Abraham, who was an expounder of the belief in God, and, in spite of the opposition of the king, gained proselytes in the land of Nimrod: for the Messiah will do more than he did; he will proselytize many nations. And he will be more than Moses: Moses went in unto Pharaoh, that great and wicked king, who said, I know not the Lord (Ex. V. 2), and, although only a shepherd and the humblest of men, was not afraid of him, but brought forth his people out of the 'furnace of iron' (Deut. Iv. 20, Jer. Xi. 4). But the Messiah will do more than Moses: for he will stir himself up against the kings of the whole world, so as to bring forth Israel from their hands, and to execute vengeance upon the

Gentiles. And he will be loftier than the ministering angels, for although these exert themselves diligently in the redemption of Israel (like Michael, Dan. X. 20,21), yet the Messiah will achieve more than the whole of them together. And wisdom will accompany this elevation of the Messiah, and his nearness to God: for neither Abraham, whom the glorious and fearful Name speaks of as *his friend* (Is. Xli. 8), and with whom also he made a covenant; nor the ministering angels, who 'stand round about him on his right hand and on his left; (1 Kings xxii.19), approach so closely to the knowledge of the Almighty as the Messiah; for of him it is written that he 'came to the Ancient of days,' and that they 'brought him near before him' (Dan. Vii. 13), but of the angels it is only said that 'ten thousand times ten thousand *stood before him*'.

When the report of the Messiah comes among the people, who is there among them that will believe it? The arm is that which he will cause to journey at the right hand of the Redeemer, just as it is said that he 'caused the arm of his majesty to journey at the right hand of Moses; (Is.lxiii.12).

He was pained for the iniquities of Israel, which occasion his tarrying, and hold him back from becoming a man who is sick is continually distressed with pain *choli* is here used of the distress produced by excessive love, as 1 Sam. Xxii. 8, 2 Sam. Xiii. 2; or it may mean, perhaps, that he will really, as is sometimes the case with men, be made sick by his distress. *Yet he carried out sicknesses*, being himself sick and

distressed for the transgressions which should have caused sickness and distress in us, and bearing the pains which we ought to have experienced. But we, when we saw him wakened and prostrate, *thought* that he was *stricken, smitten of God and by his stripes we were healed* because the stripes by which he is vexed and distressed will heal us: God will pardon us for his righteousness, and we shall be healed both from our own transgressions and from the iniquities of our fathers. *Rapha* as vi. 10, lvii. 19: The metaphor of *healing* is often used with reference to redemption, cf. Jer. Xxx.13. *All we like sheep had gone astray*: he charges Israel with guilt, because during their exile they apply all their attention to the business of this world, and every one devotes himself to the interests of himself and of his own household, when they ought rather to be weeping and praying before God night and day that he would pardon the iniquity of Israel, and speed the time that is to bring deliverance: for with repentance the Messiah will come at once, but without it he will delay until the end arrives in accordance with the oath (Dan. Xii. 7). *And the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all*- it light upon him, because he is continually distressed that the wheels of his chariots tarry (Judg. V. 28): we, however, pay no attention, but abandon ourselves to our own concerns in the midst of the Gentiles.

The prophet continues: *And because he was numbered with the transgressors*, expected, as I have stated, to be reckoned amongst them, and *carried the sin of many* - what happened to him at that time was not

for his own since, but for the sins of others - *and for transgressors yaphgia*, i.e. (according to what is said above, ver. 6) allowed the iniquity of sinners and transgressors to *light* upon himself. There is, however, no mention made in the Parashah that the Messiah would be delivered into the hands of those who hated him, or that he would be slain, or hung upon a tree; but that he should see seed and have long life, and that his kingdom should be high and exalted among the nations, and that night kinds should be to him for spoil.

M. 14. RABBI SH'LOMOH ASTRUC

*An Exposition of the Parashah, 'Lo, my servant shall prosper,'
by the holy En Sh'lomoh Astruc.*

My servant shall prosper, or be truly intelligent, because by intelligence man is really man - it is intelligence which makes a man what he is. And the prophet calls the King Messiah *my servant*, as he says above *my people* (lii.6): when he speaks of the people, the King Messiah is included in it' and when he speaks of the King Messiah, the people is comprehended with him. What he says then is, that my servant the King Messiah will prosper. Our Rabbis declare that he will be *higher than Abraham*, because Abraham possessed nothing except seventy souls, but the King Messiah will bring to his service of God, 'many people,' i.e. the whole world: *more exalted than Moses*, for Moses drew but a single nation to the service 'many peoples.' And will restore peace between many kings: *and loftier than the angels*, for his sway will extend even over the heavens,

whose movements he will miraculously change. Or we may say that he will be high through [lit. from] Abraham, because his elevation will owe its origin to the righteous merits of Abraham and to what he will inherit from him in the knowledge of the unity and sufficiency of God: exalted through Moses, because it will be a consequence of his establishing and cleaving to the law of Moses: and *lofty through the angels*, in that it will depend on the intelligent powers which belong to him and are his ministers, and which tend to attach themselves to God, so that he will be like the angel of the Lord of hosts.

The sense will then be, 'they will exert themselves so as to speak of the dignity of the Messiah.' After this, the prophet gives a reason why the kings and nations should thus speak, viz. *because that which had not been told them they have seen*, i.e. they have seen in this Messiah what had never been told them of any man born: and that *which they have never heard* of as belonging to any created being, *they have perceived* in him. Such are the words of the Gentiles and their kings.

He was despised and forlorn of men, i.e. he was not permitted to enter the society of men, *because he was a man of pains, and broken by sickness*.

And so the next verse says, *He was wounded for our iniquities*, etc., i.e. his being wounded and bruised by the pains which we caused him was a penalty upon him, and after that, his iniquities and transgressions became out, according as it is written, 'All those what eat

him will be guilty' (Jer. li.3). Our Rabbis say also, 'He desires to lay waste his house, and to wash his hands on the man.'

N. 15 a) RABBI SA'ADYAH IBN DANAN

I was perusing the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when I came to the Parashah *Behold my servant*, I set before myself the notes of those who had commented upon it, and pondered over them and examined the opinions they contained. But all alike, I found, lacked solidity and soundness: as was the more palpable, since each differed from the rest in the subject to whom he supposed it to refer, some expounding the Parashah of the congregation of Israel as a whole, and others, in one way or another, of the King Messiah, who will speedily be revealed in our days. This, in fact, is done by Rabbis, who, in the section *Heleq*, on the words *To the increase of government* (Is.ix.7), expound as follows:- The Holy One sought to make Hezekiah the Messiah; and [to make] Sanherib, Gog and Magog: and the heretics explain it of *their* Messiah, by their method of interpretation discovering in it arguments relating to his passion and death, and their false belief in him, which, however, have been refuted oftentimes with unequivocal proofs by learned Jews. One of these, R. Joseph ben Kaspi, was left so far as to say that those who expounded it of the Messiah, who is shortly to be revealed, gave occasion to the heretics to interpret it of Jesus. May God, however, forgive him for not having spoken the truth! Our Rabbis, the doctors of the Thalmud, deliver their opinions by

the power of prophecy, possessing a transition concerning the principles of interpretation, so that their words are the truth. The principle which every expositor ought to rest upon is never to shrink from declaring the truth in order that such as are foolish may not err: for our God will not destroy anything out of his world for the sake of fools who worship his creatures. And now I will make known what has been communicated to me from heaven, known namely, the Parashah was originally uttered with reference to Hezekiah, king of Judah and Israel, but being 'a word spoken deftly (Prov. Xxv. li), nevertheless alludes covertly to the King Messiah. In this respect the Parashah Balaam (Num. xxii.i-xxv.9) forms a parallel to it, speaking, as it does, ostensibly of king David, but alluding covertly to the Messiah. *He shall be high*, etc. Our Rabbis expound this in a Midrash of the King Messiah, saying, 'He shall be higher than Abraham, exalted above Moses, and loftier than the ministering angels.' Similarly it is said of Hezekiah that he was the Messiah of his generation, because the miracle wrought for him at the destruction of the Assyrian camp was greater than the battle of Abraham against the four kings, when he said, 'I raise *high* my hand unto the Lord' (Gen. xiv. 22). Greater, too, than the battle of Moses against Sihon and Og, when the Holy One *exalted* him by smiting them, saying (Deut. li. 25), 'This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee before the face of all nations.'

H.

O. 15 b) RABBI MOSHEH EL-SHEIKH

I therefore, in my humility, am come after them; not with any sense of the wisdom that I am about to utter, but merely with the object of applying to its elucidation a straightforward method, in accordance with the literal sense of the text, such as ought to be chosen by one who would rightly unite the several words and periods, and determine what view is legitimate and what not. I may remark, then, that our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of the King Messiah, and we shall ourselves also adhere to the same view: for the Messiah is of course David, who, as is well known, was 'anointed,' and there is a verse in which the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, says expressly, '*My servant David shall be king over them*' (Ezek. xxxvii. 24). The expression *my servant*, therefore can be justly referred to David: for from what is explicit in one place we can discover what is hidden or obscure in another. Although now we shall not call attention to everything in the text that might deserve it (since much is already before the eyes of all). No one will fail to notice, how in the introduction the prophet says at once, *Behold, my servant shall prosper*, instead of employing the phrase, 'Thus saith the Lord,' as at the beginning of every other Parashah. Our Rabbis say that of all the suffering which entered into the world, one third was for David and the fathers, one for the generation in exile, and one for the King's Messiah. If we examine the meaning of this saying, we shall see that there are punishments for iniquity, and also punishments of love,

and latter being endured by the righteous for the wickedness of his own generation. Now those who do not know how far the reward of the righteous for the wickedness of his own generation. Now those who do not know how far the reward of the righteous really extends fell surprised at this, asking, it is the Lord's pleasure that either one man should sin, or a whole generation? And wondering whether it can be true that he will be wroth with a just and perfect man who never sinned, and heap on him the iniquities of all wrong-doers, in order that they may rejoice, and he, the just, be pained; that they may be 'stalwart in strength,' while he is stricken and smitten; that they may exult at his calamity, and mock during their feasts at his distress, while he is smitten for their sakes. In order to put an end to the 'fear from this thing,' God declares in these verses how far the merits of those who thus suffer for the sins of their own age extend their effects, adducing a proof from the case of the Messiah who bore the iniquities of the children of Israel, 'and behold his reward is with him.'

P. RABBI SH'MUEL LANYADO

My servant, i.e. the King Messiah, *shall be high and exalted, and lofty exceedingly* – He shall be higher than Abraham, of whom it is written, 'I raise high my hand to the Lord' (Gen. xiv. 22)' lifted up above Moses, of whom it is written, '*Lift it up* in they bosom' (Num. xi. 12); and loftier than the ministering angels, of whom it is said, 'Their wheels were *lofty*' (Ezek.i.18): and so again it is said, Thou art the 'great mountain' (Zech. iv. 7), which is greater than the patriarchs. R. Yizhaq Abarbanel was unable

to comprehend how the Messiah could be lifted up above Moses, of whom it is said that 'there arose no prophet in Israel like him' (Deut. Xxxiv.10); and still more how he was to be greater than the angels, who are spiritual beings, whereas the Messiah is born of a woman: it is, in fact, upon that expression that the idolaters [Christians] rest the chief article of their faith, the Divinity of the Messiah. Abarbanel rejects also the opinion of the learned En Bonet, who explains it of the doctors; 'for how,' he asks, 'could it enter into any one's mind to speak of the doctors as exalted above Abraham or Moses? Besides, such a view has no support from the passages adduced in proof of it, for the verse from Ezekiel is admitted to refer to the host of heaven, how then can it be used to establish the application to the Rabbis?' The author of the *Aqedah* writes as has been stated above in chap. Xxviii, and carries En Bonet's view still further, supposing that Messiah will be higher than Abraham in respect of his nobility, more exalted than Moses in lavishing all things needful upon Israel, loftier than the angels in the learning of the Law. Thus he himself applies the expression to the perfection procured by the agency of Messiah our righteousness. This he conceives to include, 1. The reality of faith, which was attained first by Abraham, when he 'believed in the Lord,' and made his people to believe likewise; it is said that in this respect the Messiah will be *higher than Abraham*, because through him the true faith will promulgated even more than by Abraham, who 'raised his hand on *high* to the Possessor of heaven and earth': and 2. Acquaintance with the

Law which was given by Moses for us to walk in; the command, “Lift it up in thy bosom, as a nurse,” etc., not referring to any bodily guidance, but being an injunction that he should teach and lead them to true knowledge and doctrine, like infants ‘weaned from milk and removed from the breast,’ which are carried by their nurse. This indeed was what Moses did, the Law which he set before the children of Israel being as a spread table; and therefore it is said that the Messiah will lead his people in the understanding of the Law, and *lift them up* even more than Moses.

Abarbanel himself, therefore, adheres to its literal meaning, supposing that the Messiah will be higher than Abraham, inasmuch as Abraham served the Lord for love, forsaking, ‘his land and his kindred and his father’s house,’ in order to follow after him, who received the seal of a holy covenant, and proceeded to bind his only son in order to fulfil the command of his God, and who after the victory over the kings was not penetrated by any feeling of pride, or a thirst for the glory achieved by their conquest, or any desire of their spoil, but said, ‘I raise high my hands unto the Lord that I will not take,’ etc.; because the glory which he loved was not carnal or material. The King Messiah, however, will be high in the fear of the Lord, and ‘righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,’ etc. In the second place, in relation to the people, whom the Messiah, being ‘mighty to save,’ will redeem and rescue, it is said that he will be *lifted up above Moses*; for while the redemption of Moses only brought the nation out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, the Messiah will gather all Israel together

from the four quarters of the world. In the third place, in relation to the Gentiles, that he will prevail and rule over them; for although their heavenly princes (Dan. X. 13) will pour down all blessings upon them, the Messiah will still bow them down and overcome them: what is meant by *higher than the angels*, then is this, that the Almighty will 'visit the host heaven,' so that their forces will be of no avail to the nations over which they preside, and that the Divine abundance will be shed down upon the Messiah directly, which is not the case with the angels, to whom it is only transmitted through a series of intermediate agencies.

The opinions of our wise men on the interpretation of this verse have now been discussed: but we do not gather clearly from their language whether they are speaking of Messiah son of Ephraim, or of Messiah son of David.

I believe that they mean to assert that the verse speaks solely of Messiah son of David, to whom all the gorgeous language in it will apply. The prophet next addresses the people of Messiah son of Ephraim, and encourages them not to be afraid of the myriads which were against them, assuring them that the degree of his future exaltation will be proportionate to the amazement with which they had previously contemplated him; that even though the son of Ephraim were slain, the Almighty would avenge him by the hand of Messiah son of David, who would *sprinkle the blood of many nations*. The words mean then, as, when thou, O Messiah son of Ephraim, wentest forth into the world, *many were astonished at thee*,

wondering how it could possibly be that his *countenance* was so *marred beyond men*, and his form beyond the sons of men, whether also such was the usual appearance of a conquer-as they thus mocked thee without measure, so *will* Messiah son of David *sprinkle* the blood of many nations: the fact is that the prophet here uses the third person, in order to shew that he means some one different from Messiah son of Ephraim, who had been mentioned just before, and one who will shed the blood of his enemies. Then kings too will put their hand upon their mouth (as he says, *At him kings shall shut their mouth*), since, so he adds, besides what was told them before the coming of Messiah son of David, *they now see more terrible things still, even that which had never been told them, and perceive that which they had never heard*: in other words, things which they were now for the first time perceiving, in virtue of spirit of understanding, which enabled them to discern one thing hidden within another, were now increased manifold. After this, the Almighty, speaking for himself and the congregation of Israel (or for himself and the two Messiahs), enquires *Upon whom*, in days gone by, *was the arm of the Lord revealed* that they might be able to compare one thing with another? For although, as it is written, he 'laid it bare' against the Egyptians, and 'wrought with the arm of his might' (cf. Is. Lii.10), still he has not manifested it so openly now in the second Deliverance. The reply is, Upon Messiah son of Ephraim, who will come up *before him*, and in comparison

with Messiah son of David (who will follow after him) be as a sucker of small branch, and as a root out of the *dry ground*, which is very small.

Q. RABBI MOSHEH BEN MAIMON

What is to be the manner of Messiah's advent, and where will be the place of his first appearance? He will make his first appearance in the land of Israel, as it is written, 'The Lord, whom ye seek, will come suddenly to his temple' (Mal.iii.1); in the words of Isaiah, when describing the manner in which the kings will hearken to him, *At him kings will shut their mouth; for that which had not been told them have they seen, and that which they had not heard they have perceived.*

R. MIDRASH KONEN

The fifth mansion in Paradise is built of onyx and jasper, and set stones, and silver and gold, and fine gold, surrounded by rivers of balsam: before the entrance flows the Gihon; a pavilion (?) is there of 'all trees of frankincense' (Cant.iv.14), with sweet odours, and beds of gold and silver, and richly-variegated garments: there dwell Messiah son of David, and Elijah, and Messiah son of Ephraim; there also is the 'litter of the wood of Lebanon' (ib.iii.9), like the tabernacle which Moses made in the wilderness; all the furniture thereof and 'the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold, the seat of purple, ; and within it, Messiah son of David who loveth Jerusalem. Elijah takes him by his head, lays him down in his bosom, holds him, and says, 'Bear thou the sufferings and wounds

wherewith the Almighty doth chastise thee for Israel's sin;' and so it is written, *He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,* until the time when the end should come.

S. ASERETH MEMROTH

The Messiah, in order to atone for them both [for Adam and David], will make his soul a trespass-offering, as it is written next to this, in the Parashah Behold my servant: *asham* i.e. cabbalistically, Menahem son of Ammiel. And what is written after it? *He shall see seed, shall have long days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

T. SEPHER HA-GILGALIM

You must know also that the soul of celestial splendor no created being in the world has ever yet been worthy to obtain: the King Messiah, however, will receive it: it is accordingly said of him, "He shall be higher and exalted, etc. or, as our Rabbis say, 'He shall be higher than Abraham, exceedingly above Adam!'

U. YALQUT R'EUBHENI

Who is it that carried our sicknesses and bare our pains? Man himself, who first brought death into the world. Now learn what is secret from that which is revealed: Because he carried our sicknesses-for man himself by the rotation [of souls] is Adam, David, and the Messiah - therefore he suffered in order to atone for the sin of our first parent who brought death into the world.

V. YALQUT HADASH

The souls of the righteous wander to and fro in the world; and when they see amongst the sons of men those who are crushed by the sufferings undergone by them for the honour of God, and when they see also those wicked members of the generation who are the cause of the exile being prolonged, they come and announce it to the Messiah. Forthwith the Messiah proceeds into one of the palaces in Paradise called the Palace of the children of sickness; he enters thither and invites all the pains and sufferings of Israel to come and rest upon him. And did he not in this way lighten them off Israel, there would be no man in the whole world able to bear the penalties incurred for transgression of the Law; while Israel were in their own land they freed themselves from such sicknesses and other punishments by means of offerings, but now the Messiah frees them from them, as it is written, *He was wounded for our transgressions.*

W. HERZ HOMBERG

This prophecy is disconnected with what precedes it. According to the opinion of Rashi and 'Ibn 'Ezra, it relates to Israel at the end of their captivity; the term 'servant' and the use of the singular number referring to the individual members of the nation. But if so, what can the meaning of the passage, 'He was wounded for our transgressions,' etc.? Who was wounded? Who are the 'transgressors? Who 'carried' the sickness and 'bare' the pains? And where are the sick? Are they not the same as those who are 'smitten' and who 'bear?' And if 'each turned to his own way,' upon whom did 'the Lord lay the iniquity of them

all?' The Ga'on, R. Sa'adyah, explains the whole Parashah of Jeremiah: And there are indeed numerous parts of Scripture in which we can trace a great resemblance to what befell Jeremiah while persecuted by the false prophets. But the commencement of the prophecy, 'He shall be high and exalted and lofty exceedingly,' and similarly the words 'with the mighty he shall divide spoil,' will not admit of being applied to him. The fact is, that it refers to the King Messiah, who will come in the latter days, when it will be the Lord's good pleasure to redeem Israel from among the different nations of the earth.

X. LEVI BEN GERSHOM

It follows necessarily from this verse (Deut. Xxxiv. 10) that no prophet whose office was restricted to Israel alone could ever arise again like Moses: but it is still quite possible that a prophet like Moses might arise among the Gentile nations. In fact the Messiah is such a prophet, as it is stated in the Midrash on the verse, *Behold my servant shall prosper, etc.*, that he will be 'greater than Moses,' which is explained to mean that his miracles will be more wonderful than those of Moses: Moses, by the miracles which he wrought, drew but a single nation to the worship of God, but the Messiah will draw all nations to the worship of God, as it is written (Zeph. lii. 9), 'Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord,' etc. And this will be effected by means of a marvelous sign, to be seen by all nations even to the ends of the earth, viz. the resurrection of the dead.

Y. RABBI LIWA OF PRAGUE

The Messiah, who is the perfection of the world, will be *high and lofty and exalted*: now, inasmuch as he is the perfection, he is also the consummation, and the consummation is above all things, for all tends thereto: and this is why it is said of this Messiah that he will be *high and exalted and lofty*.

‘A star shall proceed out of Ja’quob, and there shall arise a scepter in Israel;’ the king Messiah is here spoken of as a star, for (as we have explained above) his position and dignity will be of the highest, since it is said of him, *He will be high and exalted and lofty exceedingly*. He is here, therefore, compared to a star, because a star is elevated over all things.

II. THE TENTH CENTURY INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL INTERPRETATION

The Rabbi who first introduced the nationalistic interpretation that the Servant represents the people or nation of Israel and that the confessors are Gentiles was Rabbi Shl'omoh Yizchaqi (RASHI) who was followed by two of his disciples: Rabbi Abraham Ibn 'Ezra and Rabbi David Qamchi.

A. R. SH'LOMOH YIZHAQI (RASHI)

Behold in the latter days my servant Jacob, i.e. the righteous who are in him, *will prosper. as many peoples were amazed* at you when they saw your depression, and said one to another, see how their form is dark and worn beyond that of other men, so marred, viz. as we see with our own eyes, so now will his hand also be mighty, and Israel shall ‘cast down the horns of the nations which

have scattered them' (Zech.ii. 4), and *kings shall close their mouths* in amazement, for glory *which has not been told them* concerning any man *will they have seen in him and observed. Most despised and forlornest of men.* This prophecy speaks constantly of the whole people as one man, as xliv. 1, 2, and above lii.13. Israel suffered in order that by his sufferings atonement might be made for all other nations. The sickness which ought to have fallen upon us was carried by him. We indeed *thought* that he had been hated of God: but it was not so; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of the peace that was for us fell upon him; he was chastised in order that the whole world might have peace. All we like sheep have gone astray" it is now revealed how all the Gentiles have erred. *Yet the Lord* let himself be entreated by him (*asprier*, in French), and propitiated for the iniquity of us all, in that he refrained from destroying his world.

The prophet here publishes the glad tidings of Israel's release, representing the Gentiles as announcing it in the latter days when they see him taken from the confinement in which he had been kept by their hands, and from the judgement or sentence which he had hitherto borne. *His generation*, i.e. the years of weariness and toil which has passed over him, who could declare? For from the first he had been *cut off* and exiled from the land of the living, i.e. the land of Israel; because *for the transgression of his people the stroke* of exile had fallen upon the just who were among them. He gave himself over to whatever burial the wicked Gentiles might decree: for the Gentiles used to condemn the Israelites to be murdered and then buried like asses in the bellies of dogs. He

agreed, then to be buried according to the judgment of *et* the wicked, refusing to deny the living God; and according to the judgment of *et* the ruler he gave himself up to any form of death which has been decreed upon him, because he would not deny God by perpetrating violence and doing evil, like all the nations amongst whom he was a sojourner: *neither was there any deceit in his mouth*, sc. In consenting to worship of idols as though they had been God.

B. RABBI ABRAHAM IBN 'EZRA

This Parashah is an extremely difficult one. Our opponents say that if refers to their God, supposing the “*servant*” to signify his body: This, however, is not possible, for the body cannot ‘understand’ even during a man’s lifetime. Moreover, if their view be correct, what will be the meaning of ‘seeing seed?’ for he (their God) saw no son; or of prolonging days,” which is equally untrue of him; or of ‘dividing spoil with the strong?’ The proof of its proper meaning lies in the passages immediately before (lii.12, where ‘you’ signifies Israel), and immediately before (lii.12, where ‘you’ signifies Israel), and immediately afterwards (liv. 1, where ‘the barren one’ designates the congregation of Israel; similarly *my servant* means each individual belonging to Israel, and consequently God’s servant, who is in exile. But many have explained it of the Messiah, because our Rabbis have said that in the day when the Sanctuary was laid waste, the Messiah was born, and that he was bound in fetters (Jer. XI. 1)

In fact, he is simply speaking of each one of God’s servants who is in exile; or, which is more probable, ‘my servant’ may mean Israel as a whole, as in xli. 8

The phenomenon alluded to is well known: How many nations are there in the world who think that the features of the Jew are disfigured and unlike those of other men, and ask whether a Jew has a mouth or an eye! This is done, for example, in the countries of Ishma'el and 'Edom.

For what had not been told them they will then have seen, because it never entered into the heart of the nations to suppose that they could ever be deliverance for Israel.

Each of God's servants belonging to Israel (or the whole of Israel) *was springing up before him like a sucker (Hos.xiv.7), or like a root out of the dry earth* which produces no fruit. The expression pains and sickness allude to the distress occasioned by exile. *And it was as though one hid his face from him* for the purpose of saving him: even to this day there are non-Israelites who when they see a Jew, hide their faces from him; the phrase meaning that they will not look at him for the purpose of saving him. By *our transgressions* are meant the sufferings inflicted on Israel by the nations, for which, as Joel says (iv.21).

And that this desire arose indeed from their distress is shewn by what follows, *because he did no violence*, etc., for the Gentiles ill-treated Israel gratuitously, and not on account of any evil deed or word of which they had been guilty. The prophet speaks here of the generation which will return to the law of God when the end, the advent of the Messiah, has taken place. And the Lord's pleasure shall prosper in his hand, alluding to the Law, when the nations are converted to the true religion. *For the travail of his soul*, i.e. as a reward for what he has endured, *he will see* - either, that is, his desire or prosperity generally-until

he is *satisfied*, because *by his knowledge he will justify many*, viz. the nations whom Israel will teach to fulfil the law. And the meaning of his *bearing their iniquities is that Israel*, acting in a different manner from that in which the Gentiles had acted towards them, will share in the pain suffered by the latter for their sins. Thus Israel *was numbered* with those who had transgressed against God, *and carried the sin of many*, because through his pains the Gentiles had peace; and the sin which they ought to have carried was borne by him. He also *interceded for the transgressors*, i.e. the Gentiles; as it is said, Jer. xxxix. 7, 'And seek ye the peace of the city whiter I have caused you to be carried way captives.' I have now explained for you the whole Parashah: in my opinion the expression *my servant* (lii.13,Liii.11) denotes the same person who is the subject of xlii.1, xlix.3; cf.1.6; and the mystery is to be understood as I hinted in the middle of the book (ch.xl). Thus all these Parashas are connected intimately together.

C. RABBI DAVID QAMCHI

This Parashah refers to the captivity of Israel, who are here called 'my servant', as in xli. 8; the prophet says, 'Behold the time will come when my servant will prosper says, 'Behold the time will come when my servant will prosper, and be high, and exalted exceedingly. *Yaskil* means *to prosper as 1 Sam. xviii. 14*, and as the word is interpreted by Yonathan. And because the exaltation of Israel is to be very great, the prophet uses a multiplicity of terms to express the idea: *Yarum ve-nasa ugavah*.

I will now proceed to expound the Parashah as it is expounded by my father of blessed memory in the Sepher hag Galvy and the Sepher hab-B'rith, composed by him in answer to the heretics.

Then the Gentiles will say Who was there that believed the report which we heard concerning him from the prophets' lip, or from those who spoke in their name? We never believed what we are now seeing with our own eyes.

In my opinion, however, the allusion is rather to Israel's coming up out of exile, which was as surprising and wondrous as for a sucker to spring up out of the dry ground, or for a tree or herbage to flourish there.

The *pains and sickness* spoken of are the sufferings of exile' and *yadua* means that he was *taught* and accustomed to have the yoke of exile pass over him. *And we were like men hiding their faces from him*; we would not look at him because of the loathing we felt for him, and we accounted him for nought.

Here, then, they ask, what can be the cause of the pains endured by Israel in captivity? They cannot be attributed to their own iniquity, for they adhered to the truth, whereas we who enjoyed peace and tranquility, quietude and security, were adhering to falsehood; it follows, therefore, that the sickness and pain which ought to have fallen upon us has fallen upon them, and they are our ransom and the price of our atonement. While they were in exile, however, *we thought* that they were *smitten* by the hand of God for their iniquity; but now we see that it was not for their iniquity but for ours, as it is said, 'He suffered pangs for our transgressions.' 'Stripe' like 'stroke' ver. 8 is used metaphorically of the suffering in exile. Or the phrase may be explained thus: in exile he was really considered to

have been cut off from the land of the living, how then were we to think that such greatness as this would ever be his? *For the transgression of my people*. Each nation will make this confession, saying that in consequence of their own transgression, and not Israel's, had the stroke fallen upon them. They were ever killing Israel while in exile, just as though he had done wrong, classing him with the wicked whom men put to death on account of their wickedness, although he had done no violence, and although there was no word of guile in his mouth. At this point the words of the Gentiles cease, and those of God begin. *For the travail of his soul* which he bore in exile, his reward shall be that he will *see and be satisfied*, i.e. he will see prosperity so as to be satisfied therewith. "My servant" here still means Israel, as we said at the beginning of the Parashah; and *daato* denotes his knowledge of the Lord, as xi. 9, Jer. Xxxi. 33. *My servant* Israel, who will be *righteous* and know the Lord, *will, by his knowledge, make righteous* many nations, as it is written, Is. li. 3, "He will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths;" and by his righteousness will *bear the iniquities* of the Gentiles, for by it there will be peace and prosperity in the whole world, even for the Gentiles. And *he carried the sin of many*: this may be supposed to refer to the time of captivity; he means to say that Israel *bore the consequences of the sin of many*; i.e. of the Gentiles when they sinned against him, and he bore the sufferings which their sin occasioned; cf. Ex. V. 16.

III. Rabbinic Response

However, this new interpretation was largely rejected by the rabbinic community since it contradicted the traditional interpretation that was accepted during the previous millennium. The following are just a few examples.

A. RABBI MOSHEH KOHEN IBN CRISPIN

...with the reaching of our Rabbis, of the King Messiah, and will be careful, so far as I am able, to adhere to the literal sense: thus, possibly, I shall be free from the forced and fa-fetched interpretations of which others have been guilty. In the course of my exposition, I shall allude to the phrases in it which will convince the man of intelligence that it cannot (as is done by our opponents) be explained with reference to God; thus, in addition to the exposition itself, I shall be enabled to offer a reply to their objections.

B. RABBI SA'AYADYA IBN DANAN

...which sees throughout allusions to the King Messiah (who is assuredly to be speedily revealed in our own days). And in the same sense it is expounded by our Rabbis: we cannot, however, interpret each individual detail in it of the Messiah, because we do not know all the incidents of his advent, or the precise manner of the redemption which he will then accomplish for Israel. Still, what our Rabbis teach in this respect, we must accept, for like all their other opinions, it will be true and right; but any one who imagines himself able to apply every single particular in the Parashah to the Messiah, is in error, and feeling after darkness rather than light, as is the case with the heretics who struggle vainly to

refer it to their Messiah in detail. We see then their error and delusion, which has already more than once been sufficiently replied to by our wise men. May God, for his name's sake, lighten our eyes with the illumination of the Law, and bring us forth out of darkness into light, and redeem us with a perfect redemption!

C. RABBI NAPHTHALI BEN ASHER ALTSCHULER

I will now proceed to explain these verses of our own Messiah, who, God willing, will come speedily in our days! I am surprised that Rashi and R. David Quamhi have not, with the Targum, applied them to the Messiah likewise. The prophet says he shall be 'high and exalted and lofty,' expressing the idea under various forms, in order to indicate that his expressing the idea under various forms, in order to indicate that his exaltation will be something extraordinary. It is a proof that the Parashah refers to our Messiah, that, alluding to the future Deliverance, the prophet had said before, 'Break forth into joy, ye waste places of Jerusalem' (lil. 9), and 'How beautiful on the mountains,' etc. (ver. 7), and immediately afterwards continues, 'Behold my servant shall prosper,' etc. As *many nations were astonished* when they saw Israel's depression, saying to one another, how marred is the countenance of each one of them! See, how, 'their form is black' (Lam. lv. 8) beyond other men! For the Gentiles think that the features of a Jew are disfigured and unlike those of other men, so that there are even amongst and unlike those of other men, so that there are even amongst them those who ask whether a Jew has moth or eye, as, for example, in the country of Persia (Ibn 'Ezra). So will the King Messiah *scatter many nations; at this kings will shut their mouth*, in wonder at the glorious and God-sent

successes which will attend him. *For that which was not told them will they have seen*, - it had never, namely, entered into their minds that our Messiah was still to come, for they believe that he has appeared already, but both their memory and their expectation will perish! The parallel, *and that which they had not heard*, is added for the sake of emphasis.

The prophet uses the singular, referring to the Messiah who is their king: thus the Messiah is termed 'despised' as representing Israel. Others think *yadua* signifies *broken*. And he was *as though we hid our faces from him*, for we would not look at him because of the loathing which we felt for him; *and we accounted him*, i.e. Israel, for nought. *But* now we see that this was not a consequence of his depression, but that he suffered in order that by his sufferings atonement might be made for the whole of Israel, as it is said of the prophet Micha, that the blood issuing from him made atonement for all Israel. The sickness which out to have fallen upon us was borne by him: the prophet means to say, when Messiah son of Joseph shall die between the gates, and be a marvel in the eyes of creation, why must the penalty he bears be so severe? What is his sin, and what his transgression, except that he will bear the chastisements of Israel, according to the words *smitten of God*? Other consider that the passage speaks of the Messiah who is smitten *now* with the pains of the world to come (as it stands in the *Gemara*), and endures so the sufferings of Israel. *And yet we* - it is Israel who are speaking - thought that he had been hated of God. But it was not so: he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement which was afterwards to secure our peace was upon him.

IV. The New Majority View

The Messianic View continued to be the majority view into the 1800's as the Jews of Europe were still largely forced to live in ghettos and where rabbinic law held strong on the Jewish communities. But once the Jews were liberated from the ghetto and were able to live in the larger Gentile community where they were often exposed to true believers who used this passage to win many Jews to the Messiah. This led the rabbis slowly to adopt the national view and often included a rejection of Jesus having fulfilled any of this prophecy. The following are just some examples.

A. RABBI YOSEPH BEN NATHAN

Behold, my servant shall prosper. He means Israel, who is called God's servant, as xliii.10, xliv.1, xlix 3. *Yaskil is to be prosperous*, as Deut. Xxix 8, 1 Sam, xviii. 14. *He shall be high and exalted*, because their 'horn will be exalted in honour; (Ps. cxii. 9). *As many were astonished*, viz. at Israel's depression, as it is written, 'He hath broken the covenant,' etc. (xxxiii. 8) and *rightly so* (*kah* as Num. xxvii.7), *because his countenance was marred beyond man*, so he will conquer (cf. lxiii.3) many nations: at him kings will close their mouths (Job v. 16)' they will be dumb, and not know what to say; for what was not told them have they seen, as though to say, they only knew of the depression of Israel, they had not seen his greatness.

Rashi explains 'and can we desire him?' but has Isaiah intended this he would have written *venachmadhu nechmadhu* must mean the most desirable or lovely part of his body, which in Israel was disfigured and had no comeliness; as men say of a person who is plain, the most beautiful part of this man is ugly. *He*

was despised, and we esteemed him not; so speak the kings concerning Israel, because he *was a man of pains, and broken by sickness* (cf. *veyodea*) Judges. Viii.16), and because he was as *one hiding his face from us* by which is meant that he was ashamed of his depressed condition. *Yet we esteemed him smitten of God* - we were thinking that all these chastening had fallen upon him because of his own iniquity. *But he carried out sickness*: now we see that that was not the cause: the sickness which ought to have come upon us.

B. RABBI MOSHE KOHEN

And how can you assert that Jesus ‘poured out his soul to die,’ or met death voluntarily and without any coercion, for the redemption of his creatures, when your own Gospel testifies the verse? For it says that he was in fear and dread of death, *Tristis anima mea, luctavit* [?] *et timuit de morte*; and again, in the same place, that he prayed to his Father, saying, “Father, let this death pass from me, yet not my will but thine be done’ (Mat.xxvi. 37-39), as though it were not in his own power to cause it to do so. Besides, at the time of his crucifixion, it is said in the Gospel that he was ‘grieved even unto death,’ saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Etc., How then can you maintain that he gave up his *soul* died at all, when according to your creed, it was not his soul 9i.e. his Divinity) which was afflicted by death, but only his body.

C. RABBI JACOB BEN REUBEN (THE RABBANITE)

THE APOSTATE: *Behold my servant...and interceded for the transgressors.* You have in these verses, from their first letter to their last, a proof as clear and patent as noon-day that what we assert concerning our Messiah is incontrovertible; there is no need then to say more, and explain how each separate verse reveals some mystery in his life, and declares plainly all the principal actions which he accomplished, or how not a single word fell to the ground of all the testimony which the prophet here presents.

D. RABBI Y'SHA'YAH BEN MALI

Then (hineh) Israel shall prosper (yaskil as 1 Sam. xviii.14): as many were at first astonished at thee, amazed at the magnitude of they depression, and as the countenance of Israel was marred beyond man, etc. The hireq in mishchat is in place of shureq: for all the vowels are interchangeable. And his form beyond the sons of men: his form was altered from what it ought to have been toaru is pointed as the gutturals usually are; poalu (as though for peulo), Is. i. 31, is similar. So now will he shew himself mighty, and sprinkle many nations, i.e. expel and scatter them from his land, like a man sprinkling water, without one drop touching another. At him kings will close their mouth; they will have no pretext for speaking: for as it had never been told them by the prophets of their greatness have they now seen, and what they had not heard from any man, have they perceived and spleen of to one another.

E. AHRON BEN YOSEPH (THE ELDER)

Yaskil will be prosperous, as 1 Sam. xviii.30. *My servant*: some suppose that the prophet refers here to Israel collectively; but it is better to apply the word to those who are described in ver. 11 as 'bearing the vessels of the Lord:' because the 'wise; [p. 61] suffered more severely in captivity, and resigned themselves to death for the sake of God's holy name: The prophet addresses his consolations to the individual Israelites rather than to the nation as a whole. It is not consistent with the natural sense of the Parashah to refer it to the Messiah: for the Messiah cannot be termed 'forlorn of men.'

F. RABBI YITZCHAQ 'ELIYYAH KONEN

The prophet, speaking in God's name, calls Israel *my servant*, as above, xli.8, xlv.1, and as we often find him called elsewhere, both by Isaiah and by other prophets as well. Here he declares that, although at the time spoken of, Israel is in great depression, and his exertions unsuccessful, yet, the days will come when he will *prosper* (...as 1 Sam. xviii. 14) in all that he sets his hand to.

G. RABBI LIPMANN OF MUHLHAUSEN

These words are proof that by the 'servant' are designated the righteous in the days of the Messiah. *Because he poured out his soul to die*. An allusion to the righteous who died in captivity on behalf of the sanctity of God's name: because he 'keepeth mercy for thousands' (Ex. xxxiv. 7).

The Parashah is also allegorically expounded of the Messiah; but I have endeavored to explain it in its natural sense.

H. DON YITZCHAQ ABARBANEL

The thirtieth prophecy begins with the words, *Behold my servant...*, and extends as far as, *Shout, O barren one* (liv. 1), thus occupying an entire Parashah. I intend to ask six questions respecting it.

1. The *first* question is to ascertain to whom it refers: for the learned among the Nazarenes expound it of the man who was crucified in Jerusalem at the end of the second Temple, and who, according to them, was the Son of God, and took flesh in the virgin's womb, as is stated in their writings. But Yonathan ben Uzziel interprets it in the Thargum of the future Messiah; and this is also the opinion of our own learned men in the majority of their Midrashim, although one of the verses in it, 'Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many' (liii.12), is referred, as will be there shewn, to Moses our master. In the same way, I see in the exposition of R. Mosheh ben Nahman that he explains the prophecy of the King Messiah. And R. Abraham 'Ibn 'Ezra, as also R. Menahem [ben Sh'lomoh' Me'iri, speaks of this interpretation as 'excellent;' though what may be the goodness or excellence that they see in it, I do not understand. Rashi, however, and R. Jospeh Qamhi, and his sone, the great R. David Qamhi, all with one voice explain the entire prophecy of Israel. We ought, therefore, to ascertain at the beginning of our exposition the true purport of the prophecy, as regards the subject to whom it refers.

The opinion held by the learned among the Nazarenes, then, is that the prophecy refers to Jesus of Nazareth, who was put to death at the end of the second Temple: that to him the words apply, "He shall be high, and exalted, and

lofty exceedingly' - according to the Midrash, 'Higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, loftiest:' that of him it is said, 'He was stricken, smitten,' etc. because he was God, and was also stricken smitten, and afflicted: and that, because he cancelled the penalty resting upon human souls for the sin of the first man, he is spoken of as 'bearing their iniquities,' and 'carrying the sin of many,' and 'interceding for transgressors,' as is explained at great length in their commentaries. This opinion, however, if properly examined, possesses many weak points.

It will be clear now from these ten considerations, each drawn from the words of Isaiah themselves, to say nothing of other derived from the same source, that, in accordance with its simple and straightforward sense, and as rightly understood, this prophecy cannot possibly be interpreted as is done by Christian expositors. Such is the first part of the interpretation of the Parashah.

As regards the course taken by Yonathan and our other wise men, who interpret it of Messiah our righteousness, I do not know whether in saying this they mean Messiah the son of Joseph, who they believe is to come at the commencement of the deliverance, or whether they intend Messiah the son of David, who is to arrive afterwards. In either case, however, the natural sense of the words will not admit of such an explanation. Of Messiah the son of Joseph, who is to die at the outset of his career, it could not be said that he would be 'high and exalted, and lofty exceedingly;' such dignity as this he would never even acquire, still less maintain. The subject of this prophecy is further spoken of as having a countenance 'marred beyond men,' as being 'despised,' a man of

pains known to sickness: yet all this forms no part of the description of the Messiah as given by our own Rabbis: why, indeed, should it? The meaning of 'with the rich in his death; is also not to be ascertained. And how could it be said of him that he will 'lengthen days,' when he was to die at the beginning of his career? If, on, the other hand, our Rabbis have in the view Messiah the son of David, then a difficulty arises from the words 'marred beyond man,' 'without form or comeliness,' for Isaiah himself, so far from calling him 'despised; or 'forlorn of men,' describes him as God's 'chosen one, in whom his soul delights' (xlii. 1), and as the 'rod out of the stump' of Jesse, upon whom 'the spirit of the Lord rests' (xi. 2), and unto whom 'the Gentiles will seek' (ver. 10). Then again, how could he be said to have 'borne our pains,' or to be 'stricken and smitten? Rather he is to be a righteous king-not 'stricken and smitten?' But 'righteous and victorious' (Zech. ix. 9). And if this is the case, what can be the sense of the verses which teach how he will bear sufferings and death for Israel's sake? A further difficulty is caused by ver. 8; for Messiah, the son of David, will possess 'sovereignty and right' instead of being 'taken' from it: nor will he be 'cut off out of the land of life,' but rather reign there: the plural *lemo* 'upon *them*', ought also to be the singular *lo* 'upon *him*.' And lastly, the words, 'made his grave with the wicked,' are contradicted by what the prophet says above (xi.10), 'and the place of his rest shall be glorious.' In a word, the interpretation of Yonathan, and of those who follow him in the same opinion, can never be considered to be the true one, in a literal sense, because the character and drift of the passage as a whole will not bear it: these learned men were only concerned with allegorical or

adventitious expositions, and hence merely applied the transitions they have received respecting the Messiah to the present passage, without in the least imagining such to be its actual meaning. For although our Rabbis explain the first verse, 'behold my servant will deal prudently,' etc., of the King Messiah, yet the verses which remain they apply exclusively to Israel; and the same thing is done also by Yonathan, who interprets the first few verses of the Messiah, and the rest of the chosen just ones. This transition is the less difficult, since many of them expound the words, 'I will divide him a portion with many,' of Moses, our master, who died with the generation of the wilderness: but they do not on this account affirm that the whole Parashah relates to him. And R. Mosheh ben Naham, although he explains it of the King Messiah, states that his opinion it was uttered originally with reference to the congregation of Israel.

The opinion which ought to be adhered to, as being the true one, is to be found by one of two courses. The *first* is in harmony with the view which refers the prophecy of Israel, who is called God's servant, as xli. 8, xlv.4. This course is at once suggested by what is said above, 'For the Lord goeth before them' (lii.12), which must necessarily allude to Israel, and by what follows afterwards, 'Shout, O barren one' (liv. 1), which alludes to Israel likewise: this being so, the intermediately precedes and follows it. The Parashah may then be divided into three parts. In the *first*, extending from lii 13 to lii 15, the prophet describes the prosperity of the people of Israel, and explains how it will be one of the

consequences of their subjection and depression during captivity. The *second*, extending from liii. 1 to liii 9, contains the confession to be made by the Gentiles at the time of deliverance, of their transgression and sin for having, in many different modes, harmed and afflicted Israel. The *third*, from liii. 10 to the end, consists of the prophet's own words, explaining the cause why these sufferings had fallen on the nation, and leading them to hope confidently for the reward which would ultimately arrive for them. The *second* course is one which has suggested itself to me, of supposing the whole prophecy to have reference to Josiah, king of Judah. And now, the general purport of the Parashah having been ascertain, and our first question accordingly solved, I shall proceed to explain it literally, as well as I can, according to each of these two methods.

I. RABBI ABRAHAM FARISSOL

I have found, then, some expositors who suppose the Parashah to be an echo of the murmur of dissatisfaction expressed by the saying, "There is a just man and it goes ill with him.;" and others who apply it confidently to the King Messiah, who will be equally a servant of God and the Messiah - an opinion shared by our Rabbis in the Midrash, when they say, alluding to his dignity and greatness, 'He shall be higher than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, and loftier than the ministering angels.' We shall ourselves, however, with no less confidence, suppose that it refers properly to the congregation of Israel, which the prophet addresses by term *servant*, in the singular number, exactly as we have him doing, by habit and preference, in many of his previous prophecies. 'For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob.; Under these circumstances, it having

become clear from the prophet's own words that the subject of the Parashah is the congregation of Israel, we are necessarily bound to interpret it accordingly, in agreement with what was his real design. And so, when at the end he says, *My servant* shall justify many, we must not force ourselves to the belief that a different subject is referred to. Whatever justice there may be in the expressions of our wise men who applied the prophecy to the Messiah, it should be borne in mind that although they themselves and their words are both truthful alike, still their object was an allegorical one. But for ourselves we shall explain it wholly of Israel, who is called a *servant*, because their distress and the length of their captivity are the subject of complaint: we shall also discover in it the language of the Gentiles after the redemption has arrived, when they will begin to express the utmost amazement at the pains and calamities we had previously endured, saying that they, rather than Israel, ought to have undergone such penalties and punishments as those. In this way we shall succeed in avoiding a long exposition.

The prophet, speaking in the name of God, says, *behold my servant*, i.e. my servant Jacob and the congregation of Israel, *shall prosper: he shall be high and lifted up*, viz. in the future exaltation.

J. RABBI SH'LOMOH LEVI

In other words, his meaning is this: *My servant* who obeys my command, not as though they were merely human precepts to be learnt by rote (Is.xxix.13) but intelligence and reason, will assuredly be high and exalted and lofty exceedingly. By this he, perhaps, intends to say that he will be elevated above all

the worlds. Our Rabbis, in the *Midrash Tanhuma*, have expounded the verse of King Messiah, saying, "He shall be higher than Abraham," etc: but although the righteous Don [Yizhaq Abarbanel] has given a correct explanation of this Midrash, it appears to me that its meaning is rather this, that, in spite of all Abraham's nobility of character, the Messiah will be more noble still: for although Abraham swore that he would not take 'from a thread even to a shoe latchet' (Gen. xiv.23), yet the same verse indicates a deficiency in his nobility, since he should not have added, 'Lest thou say, I have made Abraham rich.'

The prophet now adduces a proof in support of what God had said to him: At the beginning of our restoration, i.e. of the restoration of the people of Israel, who, at the time that we were making bricks in Egypt, resembled men in a condition of degradation, and sold in perpetuity as slaves, who delivered the *rumour* or fame us which went out into the world? *And for whose sake al mi* was stretched out *arm* and mighty hand of the Lord *revealed* in Egypt?

K. RABBI ABRAHAM OF CORDOVA

An exposition of Isaiah lii. 13-liii. 12

The third opinion, appropriated by the wise men of Edom, is that the Parashah is descriptive of the Messiah, i.e. of Jesus, whose 'foundation,' in the writings of Isaiah, rests securely upon God, according to the words, Who hath believed? Etc., the whole of which the Nazarenes assert that the prophet meant to apply to the Messiah, describing him, as he does, as 'without form comeliness.' They then affirm and believe that the person in whom all this language was fulfilled was Jesus of Nazareth, who was

stricken, smitten, despised, and killed through sickness of heart at the sins of the human race, and that this is what the prophet attests when he adds immediately afterwards, 'Surely he hath carried out sicknesses, and borne our pains,; etc. (verses 4-5). I shall reply first of all by pointing out how it is a recognized custom of Scripture to speak habitually of the whole nation by the name of Jacob, at another by that of Israel, and calling it on one occasion Zion, on another Jerusalem, and so forth. Isaiah, moreover, adheres to the same practice when announcing the redemption of Israel under the name of Zion, in the words, Lii. 7 'That saith to Zion, They God is king,; etc.; and shortly before (ver. 1) 'Put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, for henceforth,' etc., assuring us that after the true Messiah has entered in, Jerusalem will no more fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, as she fell, without being able yet to rise again, shortly after the days when Jesus appeared. In deed, this is an indication that Jesus was not the true Messiah, but a mortal. Isaiah, however, continues to employ the singular, saying, 'Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down O Jerusalem,' etc. (ver. 2) until, at the end of the chapter, he declares, *Behold my servant* (i.e. the whole of God's people, who are now spoken of as *Israel*) *shall prosper*, etc., to the end of ver. 15, using terms descriptive of our exile, wherein we who are here to-day have 'all like sheep gone astray' amongst the Gentiles. Now, however, that we have heard this, we see that the case is the reverse of what we thought" Israel was wounded for our transgressions, which we committed, at the

time when we smote him mortally, in order to force him to listen to us, and to follow our counsels and the 'stubbornness of our heart.' For the transgression of my people was there a stroke upon/him,' meaning to imply that the Messiah was smitten for the sin of the people? In conclusion, the prophet declares that Israel endured all these plagues and sufferings, *although he had done no violence, and there was no guile in his mouth:* and so, at the present day, when the truth is revealed, those who ravage and waste Israel admit that they hate him without cause, and injure him for nought, because even while in exile amongst the Gentiles he was content to fulfil the statutes and laws of the Lord.

L. RABBI ABRAHAM BEN Y'HUDAH HAZAN

Behold in the latter days, *my servant* Jacob, i.e. the righteous who are in him, *will prosper*, i.e. the Messiah; he shall be higher than Abraham, lifted up above Moses, and loftier than the angels.' *As many* peoples were amazed at them when they saw their depression, and said one to another in the exile, see *how* their *countenance is marred*, i.e. dark and worn, *beyond* other *men* - for there are many nations who think that the features of the Jew are disfigured and unlike those of other men, and ask (as, for example, in the countries of Ishmael and Persia) whether a Jew has a mouth or an eye- so now will his hand also be mighty, and Israel shall 'cast down the horns of the nations which have scattered him' (Zech. li.4). Qamhi, however, explains *yazah* as *meaning will make to speak*, for people in their amazement at his greatness will be talking of him

continually. *Yikpetzv* 'will open' though others render 'will *close*,' as Deut. Xv. 7: they may either *open* their mouth to tell of Israel's greatness, or *close* it by laying their hand upon it in astonishment at beholding it. Rashi: For their depression they hid their faces from us that we might not see them, like a person stricken with leprosy who is afraid to look up. Qamhi: We were as men kidding their faces from him; we could not look at him, because of the loathing we felt for him, and we accounted him for nought. But now we see that this was not merely a consequence of their depression: Israel suffered in order that by his sufferings atonement might be made for all the wicked yet we thought he had been hated of God, *stricken, smitten, and afflicted*.

The meaning is, that the Gentiles will express themselves thus when, hereafter, they see Israel *taken* and released from bondage. And his generation, etc., who ever said or suspected that his generation would thus rise to fame? (or, who would declare all the troubles which he underwent?) *For he was cutt off from the land of life*, i.e. from the land of Israel. Others, however, think the verse to mean that while in exile he was really considered to have been cur off out of the land of living; how then were we to expect that such greatness as this would ever be his? For the travail of his soul, he says, which he bore in exile, he shall see good so as to be satisfied with it; and my righteous servant, i.e. Israel, by his knowledge-for all of them will know me, as it is written, Is. xi. 9, ; And the

earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord' – *will make many righteous*, as it is said, 'And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up into the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways' (Mich. Iv. 2) ; and their iniquities he will bear, viz. by his righteousness, so that there will be peace and happiness throughout the whole world.

M. RABBI YITZCHAQ LOPEZ

Our Rabbis offer two explanations of this Parashah,- some referring it to Messiah our righteousness, as for instance, Yonathan ben Uzziel, who is followed by many of our other doctors in the various Midrashim, and Nahmanides; while others, as R. Joseph Qamhi, and his son, R. David Qamhi, and Rashi, apply it to Israel, who, they say, is here called by the Almighty his 'servant,' as often elsewhere in the same prophet. And this explanation is the right one; for even those who interpret it as a whole of the Messiah (as Yonathan ben Uzziel), nevertheless admit that some parts refer to Israel.

I will therefore proceed to put before you the correct explanation, as it has been given by R. David Qamhi and Rashi and other expositors, which is to the effect that it alludes to Israel, and specially to the time when our exiles will be gathered together.

N. RABBI MEIR BEN SHIM'ON

Behold my servant, etc. This Parashah is applied by the Nazarnes to Jesus; such an explanation, however, is untenable even on the ground

of their own allegations. For example, they assert Jesus to be the son of God, and to be himself God, the whole being thus God, and at the same time one: but if so, how is he called *my servant*? Almighty God is not a servant; on the contrary, all are his servants. Let every man of intelligence, therefore, understand, on the question of this Parashah, that it refers to the people of Israel, who are oppressed for the truth of the Creator and his Law, being daily plundered and despised, murdered and burnt. But the Nazarenes, in spite of this, apply it to the Messiah, whom they contend to have been that man [Jesus], who they affirm was the Messiah and also God, whose servants they are, and whom they accept as divine: it may be objected, however, that if he was God, both in body and spirit, he could not be termed 'servant:' whose servant, indeed, could he, under such circumstances, have been?

O. WAYYIQRA RABBA

It is related in *Wayyiqra Rabba*, on Lev. Vii. 1, as follows: The Almighty said to Israel, My son, I am he who once declared to you that I had no pleasure except in joyfulness and in the man that was free from trespass: I have now changed; and I say that though a man commit countless trespasses, one upon another, yet if he repents, and humbles himself to the ground, and regards himself as only half pure - the other half of him having a trespass-offering hanging in suspense over it continually - 'lo, then I am with him in mercy,' and will accept his repentance, and will grant him sons who shall be diligent in the Law, and

keep the words of my commandments in their mouth, as it is written, *The Lord was pleased to bruise him; if his soul makes a trespass-offering, he shall see seed, have long life, and that which the Lord hath pleasure in shall prosper in his hand.*

P. MILCHAMOTH ADONAI

The expression 'cut off from the land of life' is an unsuitable one to be employed of God. – More- over, I can assure you generally that with respect to Messiah son of David, the Scriptures affirm consistently that he will be neither slain nor delivered into the hands of his haters: in fact, this is only said of Messiah son of Joseph, for reasons which we have already explained on the section *Heleq*. You should also bear generally in mind that upon the man appointed to be the true Messiah signs and token will converge such as have never yet been manifested on any of those who have claimed to be the messiah themselves: only remember that in truth the Parashah refers throughout to Israel and the Messiah, who will meet with extraordinary prosperity, so that all the nations wo have before been only acquainted with our humiliation will be astonished both at him and at us.

Q. BUCH DER VERZEICHNUNG

The fifty-third chapter they call the golden chapter, and say that it refers to their Messiah; we, on the contrary, can prove clearly that it refers to Israel; indeed, we see daily everything happening to them as is here

described: besides, chapters fifty-two and fifty-four cannot relate to their Messiah. They say that their Messiah is God, whilst this Parashah begins “My *servant* shall act prudently; but a servant cannot be God: Moses, again, is called the ‘servant of God,’ and Scripture says that ‘none arose like him; They say, further, that he gave himself up willingly as a sacrifice for their sins, whereas in St. John’s Gospel (viii. 59), when they threw stones at him, it is recorded that he went out of the way. At the end of the chapter it is written, *He shall see seed and prolong his days*; but how can God have ‘seed,’ and how long was his life? Much more might be adduced in order to shew that the Christians cannot go far with their arguments; but I prefer not to waste time by protracting the discussion further.

AN EXCEPTION:

R. RABBI YAQOB YOSEPH MORD'CHAI CHAYYIM PASSANI

I am much surprised at those commentators who have applied themselves to investigate the meaning of this Parashah. One, for example, maintains that it was the intention of the prophet to allude to Moses; another, that he referred to the Israelite people, a third applies it to king Josiah; a fourth swells much upon the King Josiah; a fourth swells much upon the King Messiah, and so brings the Midrash into the text: four ourselves, however, we know with certainty that Scripture never means any other than the simple and literal meaning; a different supposition will not enable us to ‘reply to Epicurus.’ Moreover, not one of the explanations mentioned is in the complete accordance with the language of the text, or succeeds in satisfying us, still less does the opinion of the disbelievers what make

these verses the foundation of their faith. And as regard the explanation which refers it to the Messiah, we may say, take heed, O wise men, in your words, even though the language be meant to be metaphorical and indirect. I have therefore been left to the conviction that the Parashah may after all be referred intelligibly and naturally to Hezekiah. For although, like all other prophecies, most of Isaiah's also point to the latter days, when the Messiah will have appeared, still there are particular ones which have reference to that monarch, and to the fall of Sanherib, which took place in his days and through his merits.

Behold my servant shall prosper, as it is said, 2 Chron. Xxxii. 30, 'And Hezekiah *prospered* in all his works:' he is rightly also called God's 'servant,' for he not only turned himself, but also brought back Judah, and a great part of Israel as well, to the service of God - an achievement which none of his ancestors, in spite of all their excellent intentions, ever contemplated. For he put away the high places, and 'sent letters into every tribe of Israel, saying, Turn ye to the Lord God of Abraham, 'etc. (ib. xxx.6), and restored the crown to its former state, entreating the favour of his princes and ministers, almost prostrating himself before them, while he said, :Hear me, ye Levites, now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the impurity form the holy place,' etc. (ib.xxix5f.) *He shall be high and exalted, and lofty exceedingly*; for so it is said (xxxii. 23), 'And many brought gits to the Lord, and presents unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and he was exalted in the eyes

of all the nations. 'The dangerous illness which attacked him made 'the strength of his face to change;' and 'the fatness of his flesh grew lean,' as he drew near to the 'gates of death.'

S. RABBI MANASSEH BEN ISRAEL

Isaiah liii.4. Verily he bare out sicknesses, and sufferings. 12. And he bare the sin of many. Ezekiel xviii. 20. The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. If this chapter is to be interpreted of the people of Israel, how comes Isaiah to day that it bare the sin of many, whereas everyone according to the testimony of Ezekiel) pays only for his own guilt?

M. 'Servant' was one of many titles of honour with which the blessed God honoured Israel (Is. xli. 8, Jer.xxx.10, Ezek. Xxxvii. 25, Ps. cxxxvi.22)