
ISAIAH 53: 1 Who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

This chapter foretells the sufferings of the Messiah, the end for which he was to die, and the advantages resulting to mankind from that illustrious event. It begins with a complaint of the infidelity of the Jews, Isa 53:1; the offense they took at his mean and humble appearance, Isa 53:2; and the contempt with which they treated him, Isa 53:3. The prophet then shows that the Messiah was to suffer for sins not his own; but that our iniquities were laid on him, and the punishment of them exacted of him, which is the meritorious cause of our obtaining pardon and salvation, Isa 53:4-6. He shows the meekness and placid submission with which he suffered a violent and unjust death, with the circumstances of his dying with the wicked, and being buried with the great, Isa 53:7-9; and that, in consequence of his atonement, death, resurrection, and intercession, he should procure pardon and salvation to the multitudes, insure increasing prosperity to his Church, and ultimately triumph over all his foes, Isa 53:10, Isa 53:11. This chapter contains a beautiful summary of the most peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity.

That this chapter speaks of none but Jesus must be evident to every unprejudiced reader who has ever heard the history of his sufferings and death. The Jews have endeavored to apply it to their sufferings in captivity; but, alas for their cause! they can make nothing out in this way. Allowing that it belongs to our blessed Lord, (and the best men and the best scholars agree in this), then who can read Isa 53:4, Isa 53:5, Isa 53:6, Isa 53:8, Isa 53:10, without being convinced that his death was a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of mankind? On the first and second verses of this chapter I have received the following remarks from an unknown hand.

Verse 1

Who hath believed our report? - The report of the prophets, of John the Baptist, and Christ's own report of himself. The Jews did not receive the report, and for this reason he was not manifested to them as the promised Messiah. 'He came unto his own, but his own received him not.' Before the Father he grew up as a tender plant: but to the Jews he was as a root out of a dry ground. 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.'

ISAIAH 53: 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no good looks or majesty. When we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Verse 2

For he shall grow up - Supposes something to have preceded; as it might be asked, what or who shall 'grow up before him,' etc. As the translation now stands, no correct answer can be given to this question. The translation then is wrong, the connection broken, and the sense obscured. זרוע zeroa, translated the arm, from the root zara.

1. To sow, or plant; also seed, etc.
2. The limb which reaches from the shoulder to the hand, called the arm; or more properly beginning at the shoulder and ending at the elbow.

The translator has given the wrong sense of the word. It would be very improper to say, the arm of the Lord should grow up before him; but by taking the word in its former sense, the connection and metaphor would be restored, and the true sense given to the text. זרע zera signifies, not only the seed of herbs, but children, offspring, or posterity. The same word we find Gen 3:15, where Christ is the Seed promised. See also Gen 22:17, Gen 22:18; Gen 26:4; Gen 28:14. Hence the Seed of the woman, the Seed promised to the patriarchs is, according to Isaiah, the Seed of the Lord, the Child born, and the Son given; and according to St. John, 'the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' זרע then, in this place, should be understood to mean Jesus Christ, and him alone. To speak here of the manifestation of the arm or power of God would be irregular; but to suppose the text to speak of the manifestation of Jesus Christ would be very proper, as the whole of the chapter is written concerning him, particularly his humiliation and sufferings, and the reception he should meet with from the Jewish nation. "The first verse of this chapter is quoted Joh 12:38, and the former part of the same verse Rom 10:16. But no objection of importance can be brought forward from either of these quotations against the above explanation, as they are quoted to show the unbelief of the Jews in not receiving Christ as the promised Messiah."

He hath no form nor comeliness "He hath no form nor any beauty" - Ουκ ειδος αυτω, ουδε αξιωμα, ινα ειδωμεν αυτον· ουδε θεωρια, ινα επιθυμωμεν αυτον. "He hath no form, nor any beauty, that we should regard him; nor is his countenance such that we should desire him."

Symmachus; the only one of the ancients that has translated it rightly.

ISAIAH 53: 3 He was despised, and rejected by men; a man of suffering, and acquainted with disease. He was despised as one from whom men hide their face; and we didn't respect him.

Verse 3

Acquainted with grief - For וידוע vidua, familiar with grief, eight MSS. and one edition have ירע veyada, and knowing grief; the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read it ויודע veyodea.

We hid as it were our faces from him "As one that hideth his face from us" - For וכמסתיר וכמסתיר uchemastir, four MSS. (two ancient) have ומסתיר umastir. For פנים panim, two MSS. have פניו panaiu; so likewise the Septuagint and Vulgate. Mourners covered up the lower part of their faces, and their heads, 2Sam 15:30; Eze 29:17; and lepers were commanded by the law, Lev 13:45, to cover their upper lip. From which circumstance it seems that the Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus, and the Jewish commentators have taken the word נגוע nagua, stricken, in the next verse, as meaning stricken with the leprosy: εν αφη στυα, Sym.; αφημενον, Aq.; leprosum, Vulg. So my old MS. Bible. I will insert the whole passage as curious: -

There is not schap to him, ne fairnesse,

And we seegen him, and he was not of sigte,

And we desiriden him dispisid; and the last of men:

Man of souaris and witing infirmitie;

And he hid his cheer and despisid;

Wherfor ne we settiden bi him:

Verili our seeknesse he toke and our sorewis he bair,
 And we helden him as leprous and smyten of God, and meekid;
 He forsoth wounded is for our wickednesse,
 Defoulid is for our hidous giltis
 The discipline of our pese upon him,
 And with his wanne wound we ben helid.

ISAIAH 53: 4 Surely he has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering; yet we considered him plagued, struck by God, and afflicted.

Verse 4

Surely he Bath borne our griefs "Surely our infirmities he hath borne" - Seven MSS. (two ancient) and three editions have חללינו cholayeynu in the plural number.

And carried our sorrows "And our sorrows, he hath carried them" - Seventeen MSS. (two ancient) of Dr. Kennicott's, two of De Rossi's, and two editions have the word הוא hu, he, before סבלם sebalam, "carrieth them," in the text; four other MSS. have it in the margin. This adds force to the sense, and elegance to the construction.

ISAIAH 53: 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed.

Verse 5

The chastisement of our peace "The chastisement by which our peace is effected" - Twenty-one MSS. and six editions have the word fully and regularly expressed, שלמינו shelomeynu; pacificationum nostrarum, "our pacification;" that by which we are brought into a state of peace and favor with God. Ar. Montan.

ISAIAH 53: 6 All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Verse 6

The Iniquity of us all - For עון avon, "iniquity," the ancient interpreters read עוונות avonoth, "iniquities," plural; and so the Vulgate in MS. Blanchini. And the Lord hath הפגיע בו hiphgia bo, caused to meet in him the iniquities of us all. He was the subject on which all the rays collected on the focal point fell. These fiery rays, which should have fallen on all mankind, diverged from Divine

justice to the east, west, north, and south, were deflected from them, and converged in him. So the Lord hath caused to meet in him the punishment due to the iniquities of All.

ISAIAH 53: 7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he didn't open his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he didn't open his mouth.

ISAIAH 53: 8 He was taken away by oppression and judgement; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living and stricken for the disobedience of my people?

Verse 8

And who shall declare his generation "And his manner of life who would declare" - A learned friend has communicated to me the following passages from the Mishna, and the Gemara of Babylon, as leading to a satisfactory explication of this difficult place. It is said in the former, that before any one was punished for a capital crime, proclamation was made before the prisoner by the public crier, in these words: *עליו יבא וילמד עליו* col mi shioda lo zachoth yabo vayilmad alaiv, "whosoever knows any thing of this man's innocence, let him come and declare it." Tract. Sandhedrim. Surenhus. Part 4 p. 233. On which passage the Gemara of Babylon adds, that "before the death of Jesus this proclamation was made for forty days; but no defense could be found." On which words Lardner observes: "It is truly surprising to see such falsities, contrary to well-known facts." Testimonies, Vol. 1 p. 198. The report is certainly false; but this false report is founded on the supposition that there was such a custom, and so far confirms the account given from the Mishna. The Mishna was composed in the middle of the second century according to Prideaux; Lardner ascribes it to the year of Christ 180.

Casaubon has a quotation from Maimonides which farther confirms this account: - Exercitat. in Baronii Annales, Art. lxxvi. Ann. 34. Numbers 119. Auctor est Maimonides in Perek 13 ejus libri ex opere Jad, solitum fieri, ut cum reus, sententiam mortis passus, a loco judicii exibat ducendus ad supplicium, praecederet ipsum חכרוז קטקטק, praeco; et haec verba diceret: Ille exit occidendus morte illa, quia transgressus est transgressione illa, in loco illo, tempore illo, et sunt ejus ret testes ille et ille. Qui noverit aliquid ad ejus innoentiam probandam, veniat, et loquatur pro eo. "It was customary when sentence of death was passed upon a criminal, and he was led out from the seat of judgment to the place of punishment, a crier went before, and spoke as follows: - 'This man is going out to suffer death by - because he has transgressed by - such a transgression, in such a place, in such a time; and the witnesses against him are - . He who may know any thing relative to his innocence let him come and speak in his behalf.'"

Now it is plain from the history of the four Evangelists, that in the trial and condemnation of Jesus no such rule was observed; though, according to the account of the Mishna, it must have been in practice at that time, no proclamation was made for any person to bear witness to the innocence and character of Jesus; nor did any one voluntarily step forth to give his attestation to it. And our Savior seems to refer to such a custom, and to claim the benefit of it, by his answer to the high priest, when he asked him of his disciples and of his doctrine: "I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them who heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said," Joh 18:20, Joh 18:21. This, therefore, was one remarkable instance of hardship

and injustice, among others predicted by the prophet, which our Savior underwent in his trial and sufferings.

St. Paul likewise, in similar circumstances, standing before the judgment seat of Festus, seems to complain of the same unjust treatment; that no one was called, or would appear, to vindicate his character. "My manner of life (την βιωσιν μου, דורי dori, 'my generation') from my youth, which was at the first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, who knew me from the beginning, if they would testify; that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee;" Act 26:4, Act 26:5. דור dor signifies age, duration, the time which one man or many together pass in this world, in this place; the course, tenor, or manner of life. The verb דור dor signifies, according to Castell, *ordinatam vitam sive aetatem egit, ordinavit, ordine constituit*. "He passed a certain course of life, he ordained," etc. In Arabic, *curavit, administravit*, "he took care of, administered to."

Was he stricken "He was smitten to death" - The Septuagint read *למות* *lemaveth*, *εις θανατον*, "to death." And so the Coptic and Saidic Versions, from the Septuagint; MSS. St. Germain de Prez. "Origen, "(*Contra Celsum*, lib. 1 p. 370, edit. 1733), after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Messiah, "tells us, that having once made use of this passage in a dispute against some that were accounted wise among the Jews, one of them replied, that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were smitten of God and dispersed among the Gentiles for their conversion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy to show the absurdity of this interpretation, and that he seemed to press them the hardest by this sentence, *απο των ανομιων τ ο υ λαου μου ηχθη εις θανατον*, 'for the iniquity of my people was he smitten to death.'" Now as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, must have understood Hebrew, we cannot suppose that he would have urged this last quotation as so decisive if the Greek Version had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that these wise Jews would have been at all distressed by this quotation, unless their Hebrew text had read agreeably to *εις θανατον*, "to death," on which the argument principally depended; for, by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him, and reprobated his Greek version. This, whenever they could do it, was their constant practice in their disputes with the Christians. Jerome, in his Preface to the Psalms, says, *Nuper cum Hebraeo disputans, quaedam pro Domino Salvatore de Psalmis testimonia protulisti: volensque ille te illudere, per sermones fere singulos asserebat, non ita haberi in Hebraeo, ut tu de Ixx. opponebas*. "Lately disputing with a Hebrew, - thou advancedst certain passages out of the Psalms which bear testimony to the Lord the Savior; but he, to elude thy reasoning, asserted that almost all thy quotations have an import in the Hebrew text different from what they had in the Greek." And Origen himself, who laboriously compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the necessity of arguing with the Jews from such passages only as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew: *ινα προς Ιουδαιοις διαλεγομενοι μη προφερωμεν αυτοι τα μη κειμενα εν τοις αντιγραφοις αυτων, και ινα συγχρησωμεθα τοις φερομενοις παρ' εκεινοις*. See *Epist. ad African.* p. 15, 17. Wherefore as Origen had carefully compared the Greek version of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text, and speaks of the contempt with which the Jews treated all appeals to the Greek version where it differed from their Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews by urging upon them the reading *εις θανατον*, "unto death," in this place; it seems almost impossible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument and the silence of his Jewish adversaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had *למות* *lemaveth*, "to death," agreeably to the version of the Septuagint. - Dr. Kennicott.

ISAIAH 53: 9 They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Verse 9

With the rich in his death "With the rich man was his tomb" - It may be necessary to introduce Bishop Lowth's translation of this verse before we come to his very satisfactory criticisms: -

And his grave was appointed with the wicked;

But with the rich man was his tomb:

Although he had done no wrong,

Neither was there any guile in his mouth.

Among the various opinions which have been given on this passage, I have no doubt in giving my assent to that which makes the ב beth in בְּמוֹתָיו bemothaiv radical, and renders it excelsa sua. This is mentioned by Aben Ezra as received by some in his time; and has been long since approved by Schindler, Drusius, and many other learned Christian interpreters.

The most simple tombs or monuments of old consisted of hillocks of earth heaped up over the grave; of which we have numerous examples in our own country, generally allowed to be of very high antiquity. The Romans called a monument of this sort very properly tumulus; and the Hebrews as properly בְּמוֹת bamoth, "high place," for that is the form of the noun in the singular number; and sixteen MSS. and the two oldest editions express the word fully in this place, בְּמוֹתָיו bemothaiv. Tumulus et collem et sepulchrum fuisse significat. Potest enim tumulus sine sepulchro interpretatione collis interdum accipi. Nam et terrae congestio super ossa tumulus dicitur. "Tumulus signifies a sepulcher with a hillock of earth raised over it. The word is sometimes restrained to the bank of earth; for the heaping up of the earth over the bones is named the tumulus." - Servius, Aen. 3:22. And to make the tumulus still more elevated and conspicuous, a pillar or some other ornament was often erected upon it: - Τυμβὸν χευσάντες, καὶ ἐπὶ στηλῆν ἐρυσάντες, Πηξάμεν ἀκροτάτῳ τυμβῷ εὐήρες ἐρετμόν.

Odyss. sii. 14. "A rising tomb, the silent dead to grace,

Fast by the roarings of the main we place;

The rising tomb a lofty column bore,

And high above it rose the tapering oar."

Pope

The tomb therefore might with great propriety be called the high place. The Hebrews might also call such a tomb בְּמוֹת bamoth, from the situation, for they generally chose to erect them on eminences. The sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea, in which the body of Christ was laid, was upon a hill, Mount Calvary. See Isa 22:16 (note), and the note there. "It should be observed that the word בְּמוֹתָיו bemothaiv is not formed from בְּמוֹת bamoth, the plural of בְּמָה bamah, the feminine noun, but from בְּמוֹתִים bamothim, the plural of a masculine noun, בְּמוֹת bamoth. This is noted because these two nouns have been negligently confounded with one another, and absurdly reduced to one by very learned men. So Buxtorf, lex. in voc. בְּמָה bamah, represents בְּמוֹתֵי bamotey, though plainly without any pronoun suffixed, as it governs the word אֲרָץ arets following it, as only another form of בְּמוֹת bamoth; whereas the truth is, that בְּמוֹת bamoth and בְּמוֹתִים bamothim are different words, and have through the whole Bible very different significations; בְּמָה bamah, whether occurring in the

singular or plural number, always signifying a place or places of worship; and במוֹתִים bamothim always signifying heights. Thus in Deu 32:13; Isa 58:14; Amo 4:13; and Mic 1:3, במוֹתֵי אֶרֶץ bamothey arets signifies 'the heights of the earth;' Isa 14:14, עַב במוֹתֵי עַב bamothey ab, 'the heights of the clouds;' and in Job 9:8, יָם במוֹתֵי יָם bamothey yam, 'the heights of the sea,' i.e., the high waves of the sea, as Virgil calls a wave praeruptus aqua mons, 'a broken mountain of water.' These being all the places where this word occurs without a suffix, the sense of it seems nearly determined by them. It occurs in other instances with a pronoun suffixed, which confirm this signification. Unluckily, our English Bible has not distinguished the feminine noun בַּמָּה bamah from the masculine singular noun בַּמוֹת bamoth; and has consequently always given the signification of the latter to the former, always rendering it a high place; whereas the true sense of the word appears plainly to be, in the very numerous passages in which it occurs, 'a place of worship,' or 'a sacred court,' or 'a sacred inclosure;' whether appropriated to the worship of idols or to that of the true God, for it is used of both, passive. Now as the Jewish graves are shown, from 2Chr 32:33, and Isa 22:16, to have been in high situations, to which may be added the custom of another eastern nation from Osbeck's Travels, who says, vol. 1 p. 339, 'the Chinese graves are made on the side of hills;' 'his heights' becomes a very easy metaphor to express 'his sepulcher.'" - Jubb.

The exact completion of this prophecy will be fully shown by adding here the several circumstances of the burial of Jesus, collected from the accounts of the evangelists: - "There was a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, a member of the sanhedrin, and of a respectable character, who had not consented to their counsel and act; he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus: and he laid it in his own new tomb, which had been hewn out of the rock, near to the place where Jesus was crucified; having first wound it in fine linen with spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury the rich and great."

It has been supposed that קִבְרוֹ kibro, his grave, and בְּמֹתָיו bemothaiv, in his death, may have been transposed, as also the prefix בְּ be originally placed before רְשָׁעִים reshaim, the wicked. Thus: - מֹתָיו מֵתִיו מֵתִיו מֵתִיו
את ברשעים ויתן mothaiv eth bireshayim vaiyitten ואת kibro עשיר veeth

Yea, his death was appointed among the wicked,

And with a rich man, his tomb.

By these alterations it is supposed the text would be freed from all embarrassment. But see the preceding notes of Bishop Lowth, and the various readings of De Rossi, in loc.

ISAIAH 53: 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him. He has caused him to suffer. When you make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Verse 10

To grief "With affliction" - For הַחֲלִי hecheli, the verb, the construction of which seems to be hard and inelegant in this place, the Vulgate reads בְּחֲלִי bocholi, in infirmity, "with infirmity."

When thou shalt make his soul "If his soul shall make" - For תַּשִּׁים tasim, a MS. has תַּשֵּׂם tasem, which may be taken passively, "If his soul shall be made" agreeably to some copies of the Septuagint, which have δωτα See likewise the Syriac.

When thou shalt make his soul an offering - The word נפש dro nephesh, soul, is frequently used in Hebrew to signify life. Throughout the New Testament the salvation of men is uniformly attributed to the death of Christ.

He shall see his seed - True converts, genuine Christians.

He shall prolong his days - Or this spiritual progeny shall prolong their days, i.e., Christianity shall endure to the end of time.

And the pleasure of the Lord - To have all men saved and brought to the knowledge of the truth.

Shall prosper in his hand - Shall go on in a state of progressive prosperity; and so completely has this been thus far accomplished, that every succeeding century has witnessed more Christianity in the world than the preceding, or any former one.

ISAIAH 53: 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light and be satisfied. My righteous servant will justify many by the knowledge of himself; and he will bear their iniquities.

Verse 11

Shall be satisfied "And be satisfied" - The Septuagint, Vulgate, Sryiac, and a MS. add the conjunction to the verb, וישבע vaigisba.

Shall my righteous servant justify "Shall my servant justify" - Three MSS., (two of them ancient), omit the word צדיק tsaddik; it seems to be only an imperfect repetition, by mistake, of the preceding word. It makes a solecism in this place; for according to the constant usage of the Hebrew language, the adjective, in a phrase of this kind, ought to follow the substantive; and צדיק עבדי tsaddik abdi, in Hebrew, would be as absurd as "shall my servant righteous justify," in English. Add to this, that it makes the hemistich too long.

ISAIAH 53: 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the plunder with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Verse 12

He bare the sin of many - רבים rabbim, the multitudes, the many that were made sinners by the offenses of one; i.e., the whole human race; for all have sinned - all have fallen; and for all that have sinned, and for all that have fallen, Jesus Christ died. The רבים rabbim of the prophet answers to the οἱ πολλοι, of the apostle, Rom 5:15, Rom 5:19. As the πολλοι of the apostle means all that have sinned; so the רבים rabbim of the prophet means those for whom Christ died; i.e., all that have sinned.

And made intercession for the transgressors - For הפגיע yaphgia, in the future, a MS. has הפגיע hiphgia, preterite, rather better, as agreeable with the other verbs immediately preceding in the sentence.

He made intercession for the transgressors. - This was literally fulfilled at his death, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" Luk 23:34. And to make intercession for transgressors is one part of his mediatorial office. Heb 7:25, and Heb 9:24.

In this chapter the incarnation, preaching, humiliation, rejection, sufferings, death, atonement, resurrection, and mediation of Jesus Christ are all predicted, together with the prevalence of his Gospel, and the extension of his kingdom through all ages.