

# The Forbidden Chapter Isa 52-53

by Jacob Prasch

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*The sermon explores the forbidden chapter of Isaiah 52-53, which is about the Messiah's suffering and death for the sins of others, and how it's been misunderstood and omitted in synagogue liturgy.*

**Duration:** 13:38

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53:3-5, Daniel 9:26, Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:9

**Topics:** "Messiah"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the omission of Isaiah 52 and 53, which is often referred to as the 'Forbidden Chapter,' from synagogue liturgy. The speaker reads from Isaiah 52 and 53, highlighting the description of a servant who will prosper and be highly exalted, but also suffer greatly. This servant is described as bearing the iniquities and sorrows of the people, being despised and rejected, and ultimately being pierced for their transgressions. The speaker draws parallels between this description and the life and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, emphasizing that many Jews believed in Jesus based on the prophecies in Isaiah 53.

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## Transcript

Hello dear friends, this is Yaakov Kraft speaking to you today on Korah Tikvah, a special message for all of our Jewish friends. I'd like to speak to you today about what we sometimes call the forbidden chapter. In the parakash of hua, when we read in the synagogue liturgy in the annual election, have you ever noticed when we get to the ha-korah and the prophets and the deans that we skip over Isaiah 52 and 53? We omit it.

Why is it that we omit Isaiah chapter 52 and Isaiah 53? Let me read from the forbidden chapter. Behold, my servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

Just as many were astonished at you, my people, so his appearance was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. Thus he will sprinkle many nations. King will shut their mouths on account of him.

For what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand. Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a tender shoot, a root out of posh crowns. He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to him.

He was despised and rejected, forsaken of men, a man of sorrows equated with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faith. He was despised and we did not esteem him. Surely our griefs he himself bore, our sorrows he carried.

Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgression. He was crushed for our iniquity.

The chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each has turned to his own way, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon him.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth like a lamb that fled to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearer. So he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and as for his generation who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.

His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet he was with a rich man in his death. Because he had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth. But the Lord was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief if he would render himself a sin offering.

He will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand. As a result of the anguish of his soul he will see it and be satisfied, and by his knowledge the righteous one my servant will justify the many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allow him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong.

Because he poured out himself to death, he was numbered with the transgressors, yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for these transgressors. And the Hebrew idea of intercession, *lehavdi*, after intercede, is to be bruised on behalf of others. From the Hebrew root *Now* we're told not to read this in the synagogue.

We skip over it annually. Why? Well because as Rabbi Abraham Barisell admitted, it has an incredible, incredible parallel with Jesus of Nazareth. Someone who came who was innocent, utterly innocent.

Jesus was executed by the Roman government, rejected by most of his own people. After the religious leadership of the day, the Sanhedrin incited the people against him. It was the Romans of course who killed him, both Jew and Gentile.

But not all Jews. Many believed in him, and they believed in him to a large extent on the basis of Isaiah 53. The Messiah would come and bear the iniquities of the people.

He would be a *korban*, a sin offering, a trespass offering, even more than a sin offering. He would take their sin. To God, one man without sin is worth more than all the men with sin.

But as Isaiah said, all we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has sin. Isaiah tells us we cannot be saved by the *misvot*, for all of our righteousness is a filthy rag.

How can we save ourselves? asked Isaiah. Well, Judaism teaches, if you were to question the rabbis today, that this is not about Jesus at all. Oh, it may look like him.

A man who was innocent, who was executed, who was even pierced, in verse 5, as Jesus was crucified with a nail. That God put our sin on him, as Christianity teaches. And that, after he was killed and cut off, in verse 8, he seems to come alive again.

God will allow him a portion with the great, the resurrection. But the rabbis say, no, it's not about Jesus. Since Rashi, in the year 1010 CE, most rabbinic opinion has said it's rather about the Jewish people.

Well, there's a number of problems with this. The first problem is that Isaiah himself repeatedly, repeatedly warns that the Jewish people need to repent, because they are sinners. They have sinned, and could not possibly have atoned for their own, given the fact that they were sinners themselves.

More importantly was this. A very ancient Jewish source, Toglum Yonatan, says, my servant, the Messiah. Again, the Toglumian tell us this is about the Messiah.

In Tashita, Bom-Bom, Moses Maimonides, tells us this is about the Messiah. In Sanhedrin 92B, Isaiah 52, verse 14 of Yalkut, volume 2, on page 536, and in Shemot 15-19, we read in these rabbinic tractates and Talmudic passages that Isaiah 52 and 53 is about the Messiah. So too, Sanhedrin 98B, and the Midrash on Samuel, in the Lemberg edition, page 45A, and the Toglum on the Kingdom of the Messiah.

They all tell us it's about him, the Mashiach. The overwhelming weight of ancient rabbinic Jewish sources says it is not about the Jewish people, but Messiah. In the year 1650 CE, Rabbi Naftali ben Asher was amazed that Rashi and David Kinti, two other rabbis, did not apply it to Messiah, given the weight of the Talmudic literature saying it's about the Messiah.

Indeed, Rabbi Moshe Avsheikh also says it is about the Messiah, and Rabbi Elijah Bedidi says the Messiah suffers for our iniquities, and those not admitting this will suffer for their own. This is a frightening, frightening thought. You know, friends, during the Middle Ages, the Hebrew liturgy, the Maschvor, the Sesto liturgy for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, that was composed by Eliezer HaKadir, had Isaiah 53 part of the synagogue liturgy for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

For the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is identified with the one the rabbis call Venefraim, the suffering servant manifestation of the Messiah. Read the ancient verses. Read the Talmud from Yonatan.

Read Phanhedron 97. Read Phanhedron 98. Read the Midrash on Samuel.

Listen to our ancient pages. Listen to Rabbi Moshe Avsheikh. Listen to Ivid Maimonides.

Listen to our rabbis. They all tell you it is about the Messiah, a suffering servant. No, friends, in no primary sense can it be about Israel and the Jewish people.

No one believed that until the Middle Ages. They all believed it was about the one who would come and suffer vitalliously for his people. The Messiah was to do just that.

Again, all we like sheep have gone astray. But the Lord has caused the iniquity, the sin of us all to fall upon him. Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb.

Jesus was silent before his accusers at his trial. Jesus was the one who was here. Jesus is the one who was scourged.

Jesus is the one who rose from the dead and was allotted a portion with the grace because he made himself a korban, a sin offering. He died for the sins of Israel. He died for the sins of the Jewish people.

Some rabbis are trying to argue the idea of human sacrifice is pagan, not Jewish. And they will go back to the Akedah where Abraham was stopped from sacrificing his only son. Well, it is true.

The Akedah is indeed a polemic against paganism. God told men, do not sacrifice your sons, for he would sacrifice his. Is the idea of one person becoming a human sacrifice for another un-Jewish? If that's the case, not only is Christianity wrong, but so is Judaism.

For Rashi and the other rabbis have said that this is about the Jewish people becoming a human sacrifice for the goyim, the Gentiles. Thus, if we were to reject the idea of the Messiah coming and becoming a human sacrifice for the sins of others, we'd have to reject what the rabbis say about the forbidden chapter as well. The very fact that the chapter is forbidden, that it's omitted, that we skip over it in the synagogue year after year after year, when the overwhelming weight of Jewish sources and rabbinic authority say it's about the Messiah, tells us something in itself.

It is much like Daniel chapter 9. In Daniel chapter 9, we are told in the Talmud, there's a curse on anyone who reads it. Why? Because the time of the Messiah's coming is foretold in it. 33 AD, according to the Talmudic literature.

You see, when the rabbis have a problem they can't answer, and they say a text points to the Messiah being Jesus. They simply forbid it. They simply skip over it.

Friends, the Tanakh is the word of God, not the word of men. We cannot omit or delete what God has given us. It is all His word, including the forbidden chapter of Isaiah 52 and 53, including Daniel 9, that says this Messiah had to come and die before the second temple would be destroyed.

Well, this chapter may be forbidden by our rabbis, but it's not forbidden by our God to neither Jew nor Gentile. There is a true Judaism. It is the Judaism of the Tanakh, of Moses and the prophets.

And that Judaism is fulfilled in the Jewish Messiah, who says He had to come already. He had to come before 70 AD. He had to come and be the Benethraim, the suffering servant of Isaiah 52 and 53.

Well, He has come. Dear friends, don't be misled by the false ideas of Christianity that are practiced by many people who think they're Christians, but frankly they are not. They're only culturally Christians, but they don't believe in the true God of Israel or His true Son.

They've not become new spiritual creations. They've not been, as Yeshua said, nor Lodmin Hadash born again. But for both Jew and Gentile, the Messiah has come.

You know, just as much of the Christian world is too strong about Jesus, so are most of the rabbis. I don't always agree with the rabbis. I agree with the rabbis to the extent they agree with the Tanakh.

But the rabbis agree that Isaiah 52 and 53 is about the Messiah. I agree. The Talmudic literature agrees.

The question is, do you agree? Shalom v'lehitraot.

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