**ISAIAH WEEK 12**

**ISAIAH 53**

This week we are exploring Isaiah 53.

This chapter focuses on Jesus, our Messiah and our Saviour.

But how did the Hebrews understand it, and what do Jews today say it means?

Often called the “Forbidden Chapter,” Isaiah 53 is a significant source of controversy. Not just between Judaism and Christianity, but even within Judaism itself. Up until Christ came, the Jewish sages and rabbis roundly agreed that Isaiah 53 was a prophecy about the Messiah. But once the Christian Gospel started to spread, this chapter in Isaiah began to cause problems within Judaism because of its overt resemblance to the life and work of Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah. According to Eitan Bar, a native Jewish-Israeli scholar:

The 17th-century Jewish historian, Raphael Levi, admitted that long ago the rabbis used to read Isaiah 53 in synagogues, but after the chapter caused “arguments and great confusion” the rabbis decided that the simplest thing would be to just take that prophecy out of the Haftarah1 readings in synagogues. That’s why today when we read Isaiah 52, we stop in the middle of the chapter, and the week after, we jump straight to Isaiah 54.2

—Eitan Bar

**Isaiah 53 in the NT**

**John 12:38**

**38**This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message  
    and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

# Romans 10:16

**16**But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

# Matthew 8:17

**17**This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“He took up our infirmities  
    and bore our diseases.”

**Acts 8:32-33**

**32**This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
    and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
    so he did not open his mouth.  
**33**In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.  
    Who can speak of his descendants?  
    For his life was taken from the earth.”

# 1 Peter 2:24-25

**24**“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” **25**For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**Isaiah 53**

Isaiah 53 contains a prophecy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Isaiah taught that the Saviour would be despised and rejected, smitten and afflicted; that He would carry our sorrows; and that He would be wounded for our transgressions.

**The Prophecies Jesus Fulfilled in Isaiah 53**

The prophecy technically starts at the tail end of Isaiah 52 but takes up the whole of Isaiah 53.

• Isaiah 53:2 talks about how this suffering servant had no beauty or majesty to attract others to him.

• Isaiah 53:3 Jesus’ audience rejected him because his message was too difficult to digest, and eventually killed him for it.

• Isaiah 53:4-5 Through his suffering, he takes our place and heals us. This applies to no one else, by Jesus’ wounds, we are healed.

• Isaiah 53:7 He doesn’t open his mouth in the face of execution. When on trial, Jesus doesn’t answer (Matthew 27:14) any of the charges.

• Isaiah 53:9 Assigned a grave with the wicked and in the rich with his death. He dies alongside two thieves (the wicked), but Joseph of Arimathea buried him in a tomb (the rich).

The passage goes on, each highlighting Christ’s life first, but Isaiah 53makes it clear that no one else fulfils the role of suffering servant quite like Jesus did.

List others aspects of this amazing chapter, which are clearly reflected in Jesus

**Could it Be Someone Else?**

Many Jewish scholars struggle with this passage because it clearly points to Jesus. Although they’ve offered other contenders such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, or even the Jewish people, no one else fits the description.