

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 52:13-53:12, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, PART 1

Many people would argue that the revelation contained in these verses may be the most important revelation in the Old Testament. That is an overstatement, of course, because all of the Old Testament is important and much of the rest of it relates to the revelation of the Suffering Servant, also known as the Messiah, the restoration of Israel and the Israelites, and the Messianic Kingdom. It is a truth that has been, to some degree, progressively revealed. On the other hand, the importance of the Suffering Servant doctrine is difficult to overstate. Inasmuch as this relates to the work of the Savior on the cross, there is no other doctrine that overshadows it.

The biggest issue concerning this Scripture is the difference between how the Rabbis understand it and how Christians understand it. It is worthwhile to understand some history concerning the interpretation of these verses.

The issue is this: is the prophet speaking of himself, or the Servant identified earlier in Isaiah 50, or of Israel the nation? The Ethiopian eunuch, reading from Isaiah 53:7-8, asked this very question of Philip in Acts 8.

Acts 8:32–35 <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: “HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. <sup>33</sup>“IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.” <sup>34</sup>The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?” <sup>35</sup>Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

As Philip preached here, the New Testament clearly reveals that these Scriptures in Isaiah are about Christ Jesus.

Prior to Christ Jesus, Jewish interpreters consistently understood that these Scriptures were revealing the Suffering Servant of God, who was the Messiah, and that view is apparently the position still held among the Orthodox rabbis; they just don't believe that Christ Jesus was, and is, the Suffering Servant in question.

Christian apologists insist that there are numerous examples of rabbinical writings that verify the Suffering Servant, Messianic interpretation of Isaiah's prophecy. However, we also have to understand that modern Judaism vehemently disputes the fact that some early rabbis and their writings refers to anything other than the nation. Some of them maintain that even if the earlier rabbis thought Isaiah was referring to a Messianic figure, that does not mean they were right.

“[I]t should be noted that even if some Jews did view the passage as referring to a suffering, dying Messiah Ben David before the time of Jesus, that does not prove that it is a valid interpretation.... [S]o we have a very old (probably the oldest Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53 that reached us) interpretation, that was mainstream enough to be read in

the Synagogue. That explains this chapter as having two separate subjects. The first, receives all the exaltation, that is the Messiah. The second, who suffers, is the nation of Israel. It is more of a traditional Jewish version of the Messiah. He is an exalted king, he returns the exiles, he causes the dominions of the Gentiles to cease, he rebuilds the temple, and he reinstates, keeps, and defends the law....

[<https://www.tapataalk.com/groups/messiahtruth/reflections-on-targum-jonathan-on-isaiah-53-t7242.html>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

Another problem in going to the ancient Jewish sources is that many of them recognize the fact of an exalted Servant, but they go on to say that the Scripture is also a reference to the suffering of the Jewish people in exile. The problem for us as exegetes is that we can fall into the trap of "cherry picking" what we want to find out of this and disregard that which does not uphold the result we want to get out of what they have written.

There is an exegetical problem with going to ancient Jewish rabbinic sources because what they have written is not in the form of exegetical commentary. Instead, their writing is in the form of opinions and theological teaching tools. We have to be careful about the conclusions we reach when using them to try and argue against the Jewish understanding of any particular Scripture including Isaiah 53. Having said that though, they are useful for informing us of their thoughts on any particular Old Testament Scripture.

"The first issue we need to examine is what type of a commentary this Targum is. We shall see that this is a key issue to understanding the Targum, and also Jewish eschatology. Targum literally means 'translation', but not all Targums are the same.... Dr. Michael Brown in his work 'Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus' states: 'Talmudic citations are not meant to be precise interpretations of the biblical text but are often based on free association and wordplays.' In his 'Introduction to the Talmud' by Moses Mielziner he states: 'Where the Midrash does not concern legal enactments and provisions, but merely inquires into the meaning and significance of the laws or where it only uses the words of Scripture as a vehicle to convey a moral teaching or a religious instruction and consolation, it is called a 'Midrash Agadah' Interpretation of the Agadah, homiletical interpretation.' In essence a Midrash is NOT a translation or literal commentary, but a pedagogical style of teaching theological concepts that is not strictly dependant [sic] on the text it is using. The well-known scholarly translation of the Targumic Messianic texts, by Samson H. Levey, 'The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation; The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum' says with regards to the Targum on Isaiah 53: 'This is an excellent example of Targumic paraphrase at its best. It is not a translation, nor is it loose meaningless commentary, but a reworking of the text to yield what the Targumist desires it to give forth.' ... From this we see that the Targum is a Midrashic commentary, and not a literal one. The Targum is not strictly telling us what the verses say, but what Judaism teaches. It is painting for us a picture of the end-times and Jewish eschatology" [Moise Shulman, *judaismsanswer.com*, <https://judaismsanswer.com/targum.htm>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

During the First Advent, the Israelites thought that there would be "a personal Messiah at whose appearance the kingdom of peace would commence, with Israel again at the head of the nations" [Louis Goldberg, *God, Torah, Messiah: The Messianic Theology of Dr.*

Louis Goldberg, 301]. This Jewish thinking of the first century explains the nature of the question the disciples asked the Lord immediately before His ascension.

Acts 1:6 “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

This personal Messiah would be both the suffering One and the triumphant One. The suffering One cannot be the nation. The sacrifices for sin must be without blemish (Dt. 17:1). The metaphor of a lamb (Is. 53:7) is a reference to innocence and sinlessness. Israel's history is a history full of sin resulting in temporal discipline and the suffering that accompanies God's discipline. They cannot suffer in any way as a sacrifice for their national sin; that is insufficient. The nation is not qualified to be a sacrifice of any sort on behalf of anyone or for the nation. We will see that the iniquity of the nation falls on a Person, “Him” (Is. 53:6) and not on the nation. The sins of the nation were consistently and persistently recorded in Scripture.

Isaiah 59:2–4, 8 <sup>2</sup>But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear. <sup>3</sup>For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness. <sup>4</sup>No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly. They trust in confusion and speak lies; They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.... <sup>8</sup>They do not know the way of peace, And there is no justice in their tracks; They have made their paths crooked, Whoever treads on them does not know peace.

Furthermore, the nation cannot die and be buried (Is. 53:8-9); people die and are buried. We could say as a figure of speech that the nation dies if every single Israelite in the world is murdered, but we can't physically bury a nation. We may figuratively refer to a defeated nation as being buried, “it was buried in bombs” and so on, but that does not necessarily mean total destruction, although it may refer to total defeat.

One of the earliest Targums written around the first or second century was written by Yonatan ben Uzziel and is known as Targum Jonathan. In it, he explained that Isaiah 52:13 was a reference to “my servant Messiah ...” However, in Isaiah 52:14, he also saw the Servant as Israel. In Isaiah 53:8, the nation suffering in exile is the subject according to ben Uzziel, and so on. Obviously, he was more than a bit confused. [Moise Shulman, *judaismsanswer.com*, <https://judaismsanswer.com/targum.htm>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021]. It was not unusual for these early Rabbis to understand our Scripture as a reference to the Messiah. “Rabbi Yitzhak Abravanel who lived centuries ago admitted that ‘Yonatan ben Uzziel's interpretation that it was about the coming Messiah was also the opinion of the Sages (of blessed memory) as can be seen in much of their commentary’” [Eitan Bar, *One for Israel*, <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/inescapable-truth-isaiah-53/>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

“The prayers for Yom Kippur, the ones we all know also relates Isaiah 53 to the Messiah. The prayer added for Yom Kippur by Rabbi Eliezer around the time of the seventh century: ‘Our righteous Messiah has turned away from us we have acted foolishly and there is no one to justify us. Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions he bears and he is

pierced for our transgressions. He carries our sins on his shoulder, to find forgiveness for our iniquities. By his wounds we are healed.' The deeper we go into this prayer for Yom Kippur the more significant it gets. The prayer brings the sense that the Messiah left his people. 'The righteous Messiah turned [away]'. That is to say, the Messiah has already come and left. Also, the Messiah suffered in the place of the people, and the sins of people were put on him then after the Messiah suffered, he left them that was the reason for their concern and so the people are praying for his return. A large part of this prayer is taken straight out of Isaiah 53, so from this we can prove that up to the 7th century the Jewish perception – also among the rabbis – was still that Isaiah 53 was about the Messiah" [Eitan Bar, *One for Israel*, <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/inescapable-truth-isaiah-53/>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

There is a Day of Atonement liturgical prayer written by Eliezer Ha-Kallir in the 8<sup>th</sup> century that clearly reveals he thought the Messiah had come and was coming back one day. "We are shrunk up in our misery even until now! Our rock hath not come to us; Messiah, our righteousness, hath turned from us; we are in terror, and there is none to justify us! Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions he will bear, for he was wounded for our transgressions: he will carry our sins upon his shoulder that we may find forgiveness for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed. O eternal One, the time is come to make a new creation, from the vault of heaven bring him up, out of Seir draw him forth that he may make his voice heard to us in Lebanon, a second time the hand of Yinnon" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 403]. This prayer certainly borrowed a lot from Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Notice also that this prayer acknowledges a First Advent of Messiah and is asking for His return.

It seems to be clear that for a very long time, Rabbinical Judaism acknowledged the fact that Isaiah 52:13-53:12 was about a Person who was sacrificed to pay for the iniquities of Israel. I doubt that was a unanimous rabbinical opinion at the time, but many of them apparently held it. It is also fair to say that some Rabbis still believe that interpretation; they just don't believe it applies to Jesus.

What happened? Why do they no longer believe that the Person, the Messiah, is identified in this Suffering Servant passage? The Crusades happened and along with them came Roman Catholic Church persecution of the Jewish people. The Roman Catholic Church considered the Jewish people to be "Christ-killers." As the Crusader armies moved through Europe to the Middle East they raped, robbed, and killed many of the Jews they encountered along the way. "Encouraged by their fanatical leaders and frequently incited by high-ranking clerics, the Crusaders committed massacres of the Jews, especially of those who lived in France, Italy, and Germany. Thousands were butchered, their synagogues burned and their possessions pillaged. This horrible experience, which lasted for almost two centuries, left a traumatic impact on the Jews comparable only to their later experience under Hitler. From that time on, their revulsion against everything that the Christians believed or represented, became more violent and hostile than ever before" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 402].

Here is an example of the preaching against the Jewish people by a Roman Catholic Cardinal working in France. "The Jews are slayers of the Lord, murderers of the prophets,

adversaries of God, haters of God, men who show contempt for the law, foes of greats, enemies of their father's faith, advocates of the devil, brood of vipers, slanderers, scoffers, men whose minds are in darkness, leaven of the Pharisees, assemblies of demons, sinners, wicked men, stoners, haters of righteousness" [<https://www.jewishhistory.org/the-first-crusade/>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021, quoting from Xavier Malcolm Haye, *Europe and the Jews: The Pressure of Christendom on the Jewish People for 1900 Years*].

To be fair, not all the Catholic authorities during the time of the Crusades supported the persecution of the Jews. Some bishops and cardinals protected them and some even lost their own lives doing it. For example, they tried to protect the Jews in Cologne, but some priests extorted protection money from the Jews and then turned them over to the Crusaders anyway. The First Crusade consisted primarily of Frenchmen, and they killed an estimated 25,000 Jews along the way to the Middle East particularly in Speyers, Worms, and Mainz.

One of the hallmarks of Jewish persecution promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church was the forced conversion of Jews. This was at least partly born of the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Obviously, no one was truly converted by means of water baptism. Baptism does not save anyone because the new birth only results from belief. Forced conversions as a church practice carried over from the Crusades into the Spanish Inquisition which was an absolutely horrifying period of persecution against the Jews living in Spain that lasted 350 years with torture, forced conversions, daily indignities, confiscation of property, expulsion from Spain, and murder resulting in 30,000 executions. It is disgusting and horrifying to even read about it. [Yosef Eisen, *Chabad.org*, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2430792/jewish/The-Spanish-Inquisition.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2430792/jewish/The-Spanish-Inquisition.htm), accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

Is there little wonder why the Jews are so skeptical of what they think is Christianity? I would argue that Roman Catholicism is not Christian, but instead is a faith plus works perversion of Christianity, but the Jews don't know that. The Jewish people have no theological basis for differentiating between the Gospel of Grace and a false gospel of faith plus works. To them, everyone is a Christian who is affiliated with Jesus and the visible church, whether those churches are Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, or a cult.

Concerning Isaiah 53 and Jewish evangelism, that chapter of the Old Testament was, and still is, a primary Scriptural argument that Christians use to try and convince the Jewish people that Jesus is the Messiah. That, in turn, forced a reaction from the Rabbis in which they came up with an alternate explanation of the chapter that refuted the Christian interpretation of it. The alternate explanation was that the Suffering Servant was not the Messiah, but the nation in exile. That interpretation is accepted among many Jewish people, but not all. Once they actually read the chapter, some of the Jewish people become believers.

"And since the Christians in their frequent disputes with the Jews used Isaiah 53 as one of their main arguments for the Messiahship of Jesus, the Jews felt impelled to reinterpret this prophecy in such a way as to blunt the Christian argument. Since that time the question

of Isaiah 53 took on a heated polemical and emotional character.... [S]ince 1096 A. D. Jewish interpreters began to teach that Isaiah's suffering servant was not the Messiah but persecuted and suffering Israel 'who was led to the slaughter like a sheep and opened not his mouth (Isa. 53:7)'" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 402].

A 13<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi named Moshe Kohen ibn Crispin wrote that Isaiah 53 was a prophecy that must be used as the standard to examine any person thought to be the Messiah so that His actions could be measured against this Suffering Servant Scripture. "'This prophecy was delivered by Isaiah at the divine command for the purpose of making known to us something about the nature of the future Messiah, who is to come and deliver Israel ... in order that if any one should arise claiming to be himself the Messiah, we may reflect and look to see whether we can observe in him any resemblance to the traits described here: if there is a resemblance, then we may believe that he is the Messiah Our Righteousness; but if not, we cannot do so'" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 409, quoting S. R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer, *The Suffering Servant of Isaiah*, 199f].

Using Isaiah 53 to evangelize the Jews was, and still is, an apparently a successful evangelism tactic. Buksbazen's historical research revealed that using Isaiah was, in fact, a very successful evangelism tactic that alarmed the Rabbis to no small extent which led them to revising Isaiah 53 to reflect the interpretation that the Scripture was about the nation. "[M]any Jews themselves became convinced that there is a cogent and strong argument for the Christian position [of Isaiah 53]. In fact many Jews actually converted to the Christian faith as a result of the Christian-Jewish disputations during the Middle Ages. During that period the outstanding Jewish scholar, R. Joseph Ben Kaspi (1280-1340 A. D.) warned the rabbis that 'those who expounded this section of the Messiah give occasion to the heretics (Christians) to interpret it of Jesus'" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 402].

Mitch Glaser, a Messianic believer in Christ Jesus, relates that Isaiah 53 played an important role in convincing him that Jesus was, in fact, the Jewish Messiah. "One of the powerful experiences of the conference on Isaiah 53 that I attended in Dallas was the consistent testimonies of the impact of Isaiah 53 in bringing people to salvation. This was especially the case with some from Jewish backgrounds. I particularly recall the testimony of Dr. Mitch Glaser, president of Chosen People Ministries. Isaiah 53 was one of the first passages that God used to show him that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel. To him the passage seemed to be one of the clearest prophecies in the Old Testament of the person and work of the Messiah, and to him it pointed directly to Jesus of Nazareth" [Michael J. Wilkins, "Isaiah 53 and the Message of Salvation in the Gospels" in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, 110].

One of the interesting things of note in all of this concerning modern Judaism is that Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is not read in the synagogues in the regular course of reading through the Torah during their worship services. The average Jew has no knowledge of that Scripture. "Because of the striking parallel between the suffering Messiah of this amazing prophecy and its remarkable fulfillment in the person of Jesus, Isaiah 53 has been excluded from the Sabbath readings of the Prophets in the synagogue, known as the Haftorah. Some

have called Isaiah 53 'the secret chapter,' or 'the guilty conscience of the synagogue'" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 409].

"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 Haftarah 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" [Eitan Bar, *One for Israel*, <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/inescapable-truth-isaiah-53/>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021].

A holocaust survivor named Zvi lived in Israel after World War II until his death a few years ago. He became a believer and frequently engaged orthodox Jews in conversations that led to evangelistic discussions. He also wrote a column for the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry magazine, *Israel My Glory*, in which he wrote about these encounters. After engaging them in conversation, he would often have them read Isaiah 53, which, of course, they had never read before. Many, if not all of them, did not believe that chapter was even in their own Scriptures. That confused them greatly, and they often vowed to go talk to their Rabbi about the situation. Orthodox Jews don't study the Bible as much as they study what various Rabbis say about the Bible. I'm sure he had some people accept Christ, but probably not many simply because that is a tough group to reach.

The Rabbis have been keenly aware that there are two aspects of the Messiah revealed in Scripture. One is that of a conquering, reigning King and one is of a Suffering Servant.

"In Jewish literature, the Messiah whose life would resemble Joseph was referred to as the suffering servant or 'Messiah Son of Joseph' (*Mashiach Ben Joseph*), while the Messiah whose life and ministry would resemble David was referred to as warrior king or 'Messiah Son of David' (*Mashiach Ben David*). The Jewish sages came to this conclusion because when reading the messianic prophecies in the Tanakh they saw two different, even conflicting Messiahs whose roles were very different from each other. What was not known by the ancient Jewish sages, and was a subject of much debate, was which Messiah would come first, when he would come, would he be the same person or two different individuals, and how much time would separate the two comings" [<https://hoshanarabbah.org/blog/2013/11/22/two-messiah-to-come/>, accessed 1 Oct. 2021].

Among other Scriptures, Psalms 2 and 110 describe the King, and Isaiah 50:5-7 and 52:13-53:12 describe the Suffering Servant, and I would add Psalm 22:1-22 to those Scriptures as well.

In fairness to them, the Scriptures do describe a Suffering Servant and Conquering King. Their problem was they rejected Jesus; therefore, they did not have the complete revelation God provided explaining who He is, what He did and why, and what He will do in the future. Even the disciples were confused about how this was going to be finally worked out which explains their question about the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom immediately prior to the Lord's ascension (Acts 1:6-8). How did they reconcile this situation? They invented the concept of two Messiahs! Both redeemers are called *Mashiach*.

“Both are involved in ushering in the Messianic era. They are *Mashiach ben David* and *Mashiach ben Yossef*. The term *Mashiach* unqualified always refers to *Mashiach ben David* (*Mashiach* the descendent of David) of the tribe of Judah. He is the actual (final) redeemer who shall rule in the Messianic age.... *Mashiach ben Yossef* (*Mashiach* the descendent of Joseph) of the tribe of Ephraim (son of Joseph), is also referred to as *Mashiach ben Ephrayim*, *Mashiach* the descendent of Ephraim. He will come first, before the final redeemer, and later will serve as his viceroy” [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm), accessed 30 Sept. 2021].

*Mashiach ben Joseph* will be a political and military leader who goes to war against the forces of evil that persecute Israel, specifically against Edom, which is descended from Esau. Edom represents all the enemies of Israel, and they will be defeated by the son of Joseph (Obadiah 1:18) [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm), accessed 30 Sept. 2021].

“This ultimate confrontation between Joseph and Esau is alluded already in the very birth of Joseph when his mother Racer exclaimed, ‘G-d has taken away my disgrace’ (Genesis 30:23): with prophetic vision she foresaw that an ‘anointed savior’ will descend from Joseph and that he will remove the disgrace of Israel. In this context she called his name ‘Yossef, saying *yossef Hashem* – may G-d add to me *ben acher* (lit., another son), i.e., *ben acharono shel olam* – one who will be at the end of the world’s time,’ from which it follows that ‘*meshu’ach milchamah* – one anointed for battle’ will descend from Joseph” [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm), accessed 30 Sept. 2021].

But note the changes and/or additions to the text the Rabbis did in order to arrive at this conclusion. It is correct to say that Rachel said Joseph removed her disgrace through his birth, but that was the disgrace of being barren in a culture that thought being barren was a curse from God. The context does not suggest the disgrace was the nation’s disgrace that He will remove. She also asked for another son (Gen. 30:24). But they added words to the Hebrew text in order to develop this end times doctrine. The text actually reads *בן אחר*, “another son.” They added the words to the text concerning the end. There is nothing about an end times war or battle in the context of Joseph’s birth.

“The immediate results of this war will be disastrous. *Mashiach ben Yossef* will be killed. This is described in the prophecy of Zechariah, who says of this tragedy that ‘they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child’ (Zechariah 12:10). His death will be followed by a period of great calamities. These new tribulations shall be the final test for Israel, and shortly thereafter *Mashiach ben David* shall come, avenge his death, resurrect him, and inaugurate the Messianic era of everlasting peace and bliss” [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm), accessed 30 Sept. 2021].

Here, the Rabbis connect *Mashiach ben Yossef* with the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10 that we know is applied to the Messiah for sure, but that Messiah is Jesus and not ben Yossef. Notice that their end times scenario sounds just like the Day of the Lord culminating with the return of Messiah. The difference is that we know the Messiah as the Son of David, Jesus. They do not recognize Jesus as *Mashiach ben David*. But they will!



“The essential function of Mashiach ben Yossef is to prepare Israel for the final redemption, to put them into the proper condition in order to clear the way for Mashiach ben David to come. Of that ultimate redemption it is said, that if Israel repent (return to G-d) they shall be redeemed immediately (even before the predetermined date for Mashiach's coming). If they will not repent and thus become dependent on the final date, 'the Holy One, blessed be He, will set up a ruler over them, whose decrees shall be as cruel as Haman's, thus causing Israel to repent, and thereby bringing them back to the right path.' In other words, if Israel shall return to G-d on their own and make themselves worthy of the redemption, there is *no need* for the trials and tribulations associated with the above account of events related to Mashiach ben Yossef. Mashiach ben David will come directly and redeem us”

[[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/101747/jewish/Mashiach-ben-Yossef.htm), accessed 30 Sept. 2021].

It is true that if Israel repented, the Kingdom would come in, but that will not happen until the end of the Tribulation when the Son of David does, in fact, return to save Israel. They describe the Tribulation and the antichrist, but they leave out Jesus. Otherwise, this is fairly accurate.

The other Messianic figure is Mashiach ben David.

The theology behind the concept of Mashiach ben David is quite biblical and true, but the Jews reject any doctrinal position that applies it to Jesus. “He will restore righteous government in Jerusalem (Isa 1:26). He shall judge the nations (Isa 2:4). All on earth shall worship him (Isa 2:17). He shall rule the earth and destroy the wicked (Isa. 11:4). Under his rulership, all Israelites will be restored to their homeland (Isa 11:12)” [<https://hoshanarab-bah.org/blog/2013/11/22/two-messiah-to-come/>, accessed 1 Oct. 2021].

In general, “The Messianic Redemption will be ushered in by a person, a human leader, a descendent of Kings David and Solomon, who will reinstate the Davidic royal dynasty. According to tradition, Moshiach will be wiser than Solomon, and a prophet around the level of Moses” [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm)].

“During the Messianic Era, the Moshiach will serve a dual role. He will be a monarch, ruling over all of humanity with kindness and justice, and upholding the law for the Torah—613 commandments for the Jews, and seven for the non-Jews. He will also be the ultimate teacher, the conduit for the deepest and most profound dimensions of the Torah which then be revealed by G-d”

[[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm)].

“The following are the criteria for identifying the Moshiach, as written by Maimonides: If we see a Jewish leader who (a) toils in the study of Torah and is meticulous about the observance of the mitzvot, (b) influences the Jews to follow the ways of Torah, and (c) wages the 'battles of G-d'—such a person is the 'presumptive Moshiach.' If the person succeeded in all these endeavors, and then rebuilds the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and

facilitates the ingathering of the Jews to the Land of Israel—then we are certain that he is the Moshiach" [[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1121893/jewish/Who-Is-Moshiach-the-Jewish-Messiah.htm)].

The person described here is just that—a person. In no way, does this describe the God-man which is clearly what the Scriptures reveal about the Messiah (cf. Is. 9:6). Notice how much this differs from the counsel of Rabbi Crispin who clearly stated that Isaiah 53 must be used to evaluate any future Messianic figure. That explains why so many Jews attempt to claim some person or Rabbi is the Messiah. Shimon (or Simon) ben Kokhba, better known as Bar Kokhba, led the second century revolt against Rome, and he was thought to be the Messiah.

"It was Rabbi Akiva who ascribed to Shimon bar Kochbe the famous messianic verse: 'A star will shoot forth from Jacob' (Numbers 24:17). That is how he got the name 'Kochba,' which means 'star.' In essence, Rabbi Akiva crowned him the Messiah. Rabbi Akiva was so widely respected among the people that if he saw in Shimon messianic qualities then the people immediately elevated him to the level of the Messiah" [<https://www.jewish-history.org/bar-kochba/>, accessed 1 Oct. 2021].

Some Ultra-Orthodox adherents thought that Menachem Begin Schneerson (1902-1994), AKA the Lubavitcher Rebbe or simply the Rebbe, was a Russian born, but eventually American Rabbi in the orthodox Lubavitch Hasidic line of Rabbis. He was the leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement which is a philosophical movement proclaiming wisdom, comprehension, and knowledge. This is a mystical philosophical movement among some of the Ultra-Orthodox.

[[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/36226/jewish/About-Chabad-Lubavitch.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/36226/jewish/About-Chabad-Lubavitch.htm), accessed 1 Oct. 2021]. Since he is dead and did not fulfill the requirements for the Messiah, I can only presume that he has largely fallen out of favor as a messianic figure.

Another Rabbi named Rav/Rabbi Sholomo Yehuda Beerli, AKA Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Shlita AKA 'Yenuka' and who is a Kabbala adherent, is thought by some Ultra-Orthodox Kabbalah adherents to be the Messiah today. This has come about because of some prophecies concerning the Messiah that involve the current political situation in Israel. That, of course, has no bearing on the identity of the Messiah.

[<https://beastwatchnews.com/jewish-messiah-appears-in-israel>, accessed 1 Oct. 2021].

The point to all this is that the Jews have set forth criteria for the Messiah that leaves out the God part of the Messiah's identity. It is also noteworthy that there is not a whole lot of Bible in their understanding of the Messiah's identity.

When the Jews are asked about this two Messiah concept, they can only respond with references to the Rabbis. "It's mentioned [the two Messiah doctrine] in the Gemara, Sukah 52a-b. The Gemara there explains that the mourning described in Zech. 12:10ff is for Moshiach ben Yosef's death; it further identifies the 'four smiths' (ibid. 2:3-4) as including 'Moshiach ben David and Moshiach ben Yosef'"

[<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/4454/messiah-ben-joseph-versus-messiah-ben-david>, access 1 Oct. 2021].

“[T]he Gemara understands the four craftsmen of Zechariah [1:20-21] as Moshiach ben Dovid and Moshiach ben Yosef, Eliyahu, and as the ‘Kohen Tzedek’ (Sukkah 52b)” [[<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/4454/messiah-ben-joseph-versus-messiah-ben-david>, access 1 Oct. 2021].

It should be apparent that the confusion among those who reject the truth of Jesus as the Messiah in both roles, i.e., Suffering Servant and Conquering King, is at the root of the issue concerning Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Some of them insert the Messiah ben Joseph into the Suffering Servant role in an effort to deny Jesus in the Scriptures, and others place the nation Israel into the Suffering Servant role for the same reason. Either way, it is incorrect.