

TTB - Isaiah 40-54

Background

- **[SLIDE - Timeline]** Isaiah served as prophet during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh (739-685 BCE)
- He was alive during the destruction of Samaria and the exile of the Northern Tribes
- He was alive when the Assyrians defeated the Babylonians, and when they later destroyed Babylon.
- **[SLIDE - Map]** Here is the world of his day.
- The book of Isaiah is situated into two books by the prophet, Book 1 is chapters 1-39 and Book 2 is chapters 40-66.
 - There are minimalist scholars who say that Book 2 was written by someone other than Isaiah, maybe by his disciples. There are a few issues with this idea, which I'd like to point out here:
 - 1. The other prophetic books are all written by their named authors. This is especially important when considering the other major prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which are similar to Isaiah in length and breadth of prophecy.
 - 2. There is extensive textual evidence that the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah quote from both Book 1 and Book 2 of Isaiah in multiple places, but especially from Book 2, showing that they had the entire book in their possession. If later authorship of Book 2 were true, those quoted passages would not be possible.
 - 3. The same language and style is used in the two parts of Isaiah, indicating that the writer is the same person.
 - Besides these three points, there's the question of the authentic witness of the Scriptural text itself, which declares the same prophet Isaiah as the author of both parts and declares the prophecies in Book 2 as prophecies of future events, not as backward-looking history.
 - Regardless of how one views the authorship of Isaiah, we are at least compelled to recognize that God gave the book to us as one whole book, so He must have a reason for doing that.
- In our teaching on Isaiah 13-39 I mentioned five themes that we see in the book of Isaiah. I'd like to bring those out again.
 - **[SLIDE]** 1. The Jewish People are God's chosen people.
 - 2. God does not break His covenants.
 - 3. He will always bring them back to their land.
 - 4. The future reign of King Messiah will be a time of peace and prosperity.
 - 5. In that future age, the nations will join with the Jewish People to worship King Messiah.
- The overall theme of Book Two is the comforting announcement of coming deliverance and a summons to repentance. The language in Book Two is more finished, more elevated than the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, as if the prophet has been transported into a distant, almost ethereal future.

- [SLIDE] Book Two is further broken into three parts, each made up of 9 addresses
 - Part 1, Chapters 40-48, which contrasts between the LORD, and idols and between Israel and the heathen nations. It talks about the deliverance from Babylon, when the LORD's prophecy is fulfilled.
 - Part 2, Chapters 49-57, which contrasts the current suffering of the Servant of the LORD (who we will talk about later) with his future glory. The path of suffering of the Servant of the LORD through deep humiliation to exaltation and glory coincides with the exaltation of Israel to the height of its worldwide calling.
 - Part 3, Chapters 58-66, which contrasts between two parts of Israel: The hypocrites, the depraved, and the rebellious on one side, and the faithful, the mourning, and the persecuted on the other. This part sets up the conditions for participation in the future redemption and glory of Israel.
- In their commentary, Keil and Delitzsch point out that these chapters feel like they are growing to a crescendo.
 - [SLIDE] "The promise rises higher and higher in the circular movements of the 3 x 9 addresses, until at length it reaches its zenith in chapters 65 and 66, and links time and eternity together."
- Book Two has been called the "New Testament section" of the book of Isaiah. Part 1 is the source of John the Baptist's message of repentance, Part 2 contains the sufferings and exaltation of the Messiah, and Part 3 is almost as apocalyptic as the book of Revelation, with its own predictions of the new heavens and the new earth.

Chapter 40

- We can actually see this structural outline of Book 2 in Isaiah 40:1-2.
 - "Comfort, comfort My people," says your God.
"Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, [**the end of the Babylonian captivity**]
That her guilt has been removed, [**the expiation of guilt by the Servant of the LORD**]
That she has received of the LORD's hand
Double for all her sins." [**the assurance that the sufferings will be followed by what Paul calls (in 2 Corinthians 4:17) "a far more exceeding weight of glory."**]
- The word "comfort" we see in verse 1 is uncommon in the prophets. The Hebrew word here is used about 45 times in the prophets, but is only translated as "comfort" about 12 times, 6 of which are found in the second part of Isaiah.
 - Remember, a main focus of Book 2 is the comfort of Israel, telling the Jewish people in captivity to Babylon that they will be redeemed from the exile, brought back to their land, and set up again as a sign to the nations of the faithfulness of God.
- "Speak kindly to Jerusalem" in Hebrew is דַּבְּרוּ עַל-לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם, which literally means "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem."
- [READ Isaiah 40:3]

- This verse begins a new portion of the text. After saying that consolation is coming, the prophet answers the question, “What kind of salvation is coming?”
- The Hebrew text reads קול קורא “The voice of a crier!” (like a town crier).
- We are not told who this crier is. He appears here, then disappears again. Just coming to cry out to prepare the way for the King, the LORD.
- The Jewish sages (and the Septuagint) read the text as combining the words קול קורא במדבר “The voice of the crier in the wilderness” into one phrase. Why does the crier cry in the wilderness? Think of it as a call back to the LORD’s deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. Just as He led the people out of Egypt through the desert, He now calls the people to make a road in the desert for their salvation.
- Remember what we learned from Jeremiah 23:7–8:
 - “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when they will no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought the sons of Israel up from the land of Egypt,’ 8 but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up and led the descendants of the household of Israel back from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil.”
- **[READ Isaiah 40:9]**
 - The focus changes to the time after the deliverance is complete.
 - The text here says מְבַשְׂרֵת יְרוּשָׁלַם, “Jerusalem, good news bringer.”
 - The word מְבַשְׂרֵת *mevaseret* is the root of the Greek word εὐαγγελίζω *euogelizo*, where we get the word evangelize, good news.
 - Zion, the city of Jerusalem is told to be come the messenger of the LORD, saying to the other cities of Judah that God can be found in Jerusalem again.
 - The LORD will come with might for deliverance. He will shepherd His people with gentleness.
- Isaiah 40:12-26 reminds me of God’s description of himself in the book of Job.
 - **[READ Isaiah 40:12]**
 - Job 38:4–5 — “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the measuring line over it?”
- **[READ Isaiah 40:28]**
 - The LORD does not become tired

Chapter 41

- Chapter 41 continues the LORD’s explanation of his own nature.
- Then he turns to Israel, who is under duress, and gives them some of that comfort he talked about in the last chapter
- **[READ Isaiah 41:8-9]**
 - Note how he describes Israel here.
 - “My servant” — Israel serves as the chief servant of the LORD on the earth
 - “Jacob whom I have chosen” — The descendants of Jacob are chosen by the LORD.

- “Descendants of Abraham my friend” — This is where James, the brother of Jesus and author of the book of James, got the idea that Abraham was the friend of God. (James 2:23)
- God took the descendants of Jacob from the ends of the earth, he bought them from slavery in Egypt and made them his servants.
- “I have chosen you and have not rejected you.” How much more clear does it need to be?
 - Paul reiterates, “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.” (Romans 11:2)
- **[READ Isaiah 41:10]**
 - Isaiah 41:10 is an oft-quoted verse. It is encouraging and uplifting, and it is common to interpret it as being directed at us individually.
 - That’s understandable, and not necessarily wrong in some sense. However, it is imperative that we understand the original context first and apply it to the original intended hearers before taking it for ourselves
 - This is God’s promise to Israel.

Chapter 42

- This is our first introduction to the Servant of the Lord.
- **[SLIDE Servant of the LORD]** The servant here is not Israel. While Israel has been called God’s servant, the description here is not of the people as a whole. It is also not a description of the Remnant of Israel. It is a single person.
 - We can see that in verse 6 when God says to the Servant, “And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
 - As a light to the nations.” That last part is לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם — *am* here is singular, referring to the People of Israel. Israel cannot be the servant and also be a covenant to itself.
- What will the servant do?
 - **[READ Isaiah 42:1-4]**
 - 1. He will bring forth justice to the nations.
 - 2. He will not cry out nor raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street.
 - 3. A bent reed He will not break off And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.
 - 4. He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice on the earth;
 - 5. (v. 4) “the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.” The word there is תּוֹרָה Torah, the Law, the instructions of God. God is saying that the Gentiles, even on islands far away from Israel, already wait expectantly for the Torah. When the servant comes, he will bring the Torah to the nations.
 - There is a consciousness in the non-believing world that they need the instructions of God. They are waiting expectantly for true justice. That consciousness will find it’s fulfillment when Messiah returns.

- Remember, one of the themes of Isaiah is that in that future age of redemption, the nations will join with the Jewish People to worship King Messiah.
- v.6 — “I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,”
 - Recall our lesson from Jeremiah 31. The Messiah will bring the new covenant to Israel.
 - What does the New Covenant do?
 - It writes the Torah, the laws of God, on our hearts.
 - The Mosaic covenant, the covenant from Sinai, does not get replaced with the New Covenant. It is supported and enhanced. The Laws that God set down for Israel, and for those who join themselves to Israel, are still in force.
 - Even more, when the New Covenant is finalized in the Messianic Kingdom, we will all know the LORD.
- **[READ Isaiah 42:21]**
 - The value of the Law of God, the Torah is confirmed again

Chapter 43

- **[READ Isaiah 43:1–2]**
 - Another promise to Israel
- In the first part of the chapter the LORD talks again about his own nature, his own power. And he says that Israel is the witness of this power.
- Then he talks about the captives who are going to exile in Babylon, declaring that he will redeem them just like he did the Israelites from Egypt
 - Isaiah 43:19 — “Behold, I am going to do something new...”
- Starting in verse 22 he talks about what Israel is doing wrong.
 - Note verse 23, he says that they are not following the Torah, not offering sacrifices with honor.

Chapter 44

- The LORD again describes Israel as “Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen.”
- He promises redemption and help
- Isaiah 44:3 — I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring,
- **[READ Isaiah 44:22]**
- Note in all of this the reminder that the LORD is the redeemer of Israel. Just like he redeemed them from Egypt, he is promising to redeem them again from the exile.
- **[SLIDE Timeline]**

Cyrus the Great

- **[READ Isaiah 44:28]**
 - Isaiah wrote this prophecy sometime before the year 685 BCE. Cyrus the great released the Jewish people from the exile in 539 BCE, at least 150 years later.
- Chapter 45 continues with God’s discussion about Cyrus.

- In v. 1 he calls Cyrus “my anointed,” מְשִׁיחַ, the word we normally translate Messiah
 - Cyrus was anointed by God to do this one thing: to fulfill the prophecies that he would release the Jewish people from the exile he was sending them into.
- Why does God do all this for Cyrus?
 - Isaiah 45:3 — So that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.
 - But ALSO: Isaiah 45:4 — For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one,
 - But ALSO: Isaiah 45:6 — So that people may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me.
 - God’s own nature, his own reputation, is bound up in his promise to release Israel from Exile.

Chapter 45 (continued)

- After once again defending his own power and authority, God gives us more insight into his reasons for doing what he is doing.
- **[READ Isaiah 45:17]**
 - Israel’s deliverance is going to happen!
 - Exile and redemption are the overarching story in the Bible, the story of God’s plan for both Israel AND for the nations.
 - Isaiah 45:19 — “I have not spoken in secret” — He’s not hiding the ball!
- Something you’ll see throughout the prophets, but especially as we continue through Isaiah, is that the fate of the nations is bound up in the fate of Israel.
 - We can actually see that all the way back in Genesis 12, when God made a covenant with Abraham.
 - **[READ Genesis 12:3]**
 - The nations, the Gentiles, are called to bless the descendants of Abraham.
 - More than that alone, our redemption is tied up with theirs, and we are called to follow the God who calls himself the “Mighty One of Israel.”
- In verse 20, God addresses the nations.
 - “Gather yourselves and come; Come together, you survivors of the nations! “
 - **[READ Isaiah 45:22–24]**
- Isaiah 45:25 — In the LORD all the offspring of Israel Will be justified and will boast.”
 - Why? I think it’s because the nations will now be following the God that they have followed for so long. All the nations will come to the realization that He is the one true God, and that they were right.

Chapters 46-47

- God turns his attention to Babylon, calling it out for idolatry.
- **[READ Isaiah 46:3–4]**
 - Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever

Chapter 48

- Why does God bring destruction on Israel? What is his reason for sending them into exile?
 - **[READ Isaiah 48:11]**
 - He is defending his own name.
 - It almost sounds to me like that's most of what God is doing in this part of Isaiah, and in other places in the prophetic books: Defending his own honor.
- **[READ Isaiah 48:17–18]**
 - “He that teaches you to do what is profitable, and leads you by the way that you should go.”
 - What is profitable? What is the way we should go? His commandments!

Chapter 49

- **[SLIDE Servant of the LORD]**
- Chapter 49 brings us back to the Servant of the LORD, as in Isaiah 42:1. Here, the Servant speaks, describing what God has called him to do.
 - As we discussed before, although the speaker is called “Israel” in Isaiah 49:3, he must not be regarded as either a collective person representing all Israel, or as the collective personality of the kernel of Israel, the remnant.
 - In verse 5 he is expressly distinguished from the nation itself.
 - This section also cannot refer to Isaiah the prophet himself, or to any other mortal human. What the speaker in this case says about himself is so unique, so glorious, that it reaches far beyond the ability of any single prophet, or, in fact, of any individual man subject to the limitations of human life and human strength.
 - This has to be a single person, the heart of Israel.
 - He in whom the true nature of Israel is concentrated like a sun
- **[READ Isaiah 49:5]** What is the mission of the Servant?
 - “To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him”
 - Salvation comes to the Jewish people first.
 - Matthew 15:24 — “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
 - Matthew 10:5-6 — “These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, “Do not go on a road to Gentiles, and do not enter a city of Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
 - Romans 1:16 — For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - But that's not enough! **[READ Isaiah 49:6]**
 - This was the plan from the beginning! The Gentiles are not an afterthought. They are part of the eternal plan.
 - **[READ Ephesians 3:3–6]**
 - The mystery that was revealed to the apostles, including to Paul, was “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the good news.”
 - God is using Israel's redemption to redeem the entire world!

- **[READ Isaiah 49:12-13]**
 - This is the return of the exiles to Israel.
- v. 13. note the repetition of comfort
- **[READ Isaiah 49:14-16]**
 - God cannot forget the Jewish people.
 - He has inscribed them on the palms of his hands.
- In the following verses, God talks about the redemption and return of the Jewish people to their land.
- They will be surprised at the redemption. **[READ Isaiah 49:21]**
- How is this going to be accomplished?
 - **[READ Isaiah 49:22-23]**
 - God accomplishes his redemption of Israel THROUGH the Gentiles. But not just generally, he does it through their humility and service to the people of Israel.
 - Again, go back to Genesis 12 — “I will bless those who bless you.”
 - Does this bowing mean that the Gentiles are lesser than the Jews? No. According to Isaiah 45:14, this adoration belongs to the God who is present in Israel, and points Israel itself away from all thought of her own merits and to the merits of the LORD, the God of salvation.
 - But it also does indicate humility. We have to be careful to put our own interests in the right position, and to be humble servants.
- In Isaiah 49:24, an objection is raised. God answers in vv. 25-26.

Chapter 50

- He continues that answer in chapter 50. Yes, he sent away the nation of Israel into captivity because of their disobedience.
 - However, “Is My hand so short that it cannot redeem? Or do I have no power to rescue?” (v. 2)
- **[READ Isaiah 50:4]** In verse 4, Isaiah speaks up. (Note, this is not the Servant.)
- **[READ Isaiah 50:6–7]** You might recognize these verses. The disciples saw them as a prophecy about what happened to Jesus.

Chapter 51

- **[READ Isaiah 51:1]** Who is the LORD talking about here?
 - The Remnant! They were cut from a quarry (Abraham), they pursue righteousness.
- Verse 4 — “For a law will go out from Me” == “For Torah will go out from me”
 - The result of that? Justice for the nations! See the connection again?
- **[READ Isaiah 51:6]** A vision of the future
- **[READ Isaiah 51:7]** The remnant of Israel again.

Chapter 52

- **[READ Isaiah 52:1–2]** Who is being called to awaken? Jerusalem

- “the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come into you” means that the city will no longer be under foreign rule.
- **[READ Isaiah 52:6]** On that day, the day of redemption
 - “Here I am” *הִנְנִי hineini*
- **[READ Isaiah 52:7]**
 - What is the good news? (peace, happiness, salvation, the reign of God, the redemption of Jerusalem)
 - Who is the good news being proclaimed to? (Jerusalem, the Jewish people)
- **[READ Isaiah 52:11–12]**
 - A call to repentance and return. Ritual purity is used here as a sign of that repentance.

The Suffering Servant

- This is a well-known scripture. We talk about it all the time in the church.
- But try to put yourself into the mindset of someone who lived in Isaiah’s time. What could this mean? What might the average person reading this think?
- **[READ Isaiah 52:13-53:12]**
- Midrash Tanchuma (Toldot 14:1), an ancient book of Jewish teaching on the Torah, says this when discussing Psalm 121:1:
 - **A song of ascents. I will lift up mine eyes to the mountains** (Psalm 121:1). Scripture alludes here to the verse *Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain* (Zechariah 4:7). This verse refers to the Messiah, the descendant of David. Why was he called a great mountain? Because he will be greater than the patriarchs, as is said: *Behold, My servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high* (Isaiah 52:13). *He shall be exalted* above Abraham; *lifted up* above Isaac; and *shall be very high* above Jacob.
- The midrash is not alone in this connection. Here is a list of other places that I know of that say the Servant is the Messiah.
 - **Targum Jonathan** (4th Century) gives the introduction on Isa. 52:13: “Behold, my servant the Messiah...”

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b: Rav said: The world was created only on David’s account. Samuel said: On Moses account; R. Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah’s] name? - The Rabbis said: His name is “the leper scholar,” as it is written, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b: Messiah... what is his name? The Rabbis say, “the leprous one”; those of the house of the Rabbi say: “Cholaja” (the sickly), for it says, “Surely he has borne our sicknesses” etc. (Isa. 53:4).

Maimonides (1135-1204) wrote to Rabbi Jacob Alfajumi: Likewise said Isaiah that He (Messiah) would appear without acknowledging a father or mother: “He grew up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground” etc. (Isa.53:2).

Rabbi Moses Alschech (1508-1600) says: Our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of the Messiah, and we shall ourselves also adhere to the same view.

Abrabanel (1437-1508) says: This is also the opinion of our own learned men in the majority of their Midrashim.

Rabbi Yafeth Ben Ali (second half of the 10th Century): As for myself, I am inclined to regard it as alluding to the Messiah.

Abraham Farissol (1451-1526) says: In this chapter there seem to be considerable resemblances and allusions to the work of HaMoshiach and to the events which are asserted to have happened to Him, so that no other prophecy is to be found the gist and subject of which can be so immediately applied to Him.

Gersonides (1288-1344) on Devarim 18:18: In fact Messiah is such a prophet, as it is stated in the Midrash on the verse, “Behold, my servant shall prosper...” (Isaiah 52:13).

Yalkut Schimeon (ascribed to Rabbi Simeon Kara, 12th Century) says on Zech.4:7: He (the king Messiah) is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, “My servant shall be high, and lifted up, and lofty exceedingly” (Isa. 52:13).

Tanchuma: Rabbi Nachman says: The Word “man” in the passage, “Every man a head of the house of his father” (Num.1,4), refers to the Messiah, the son of David, as it is written, “Behold the man whose name is Zemach” (the Branch) where Jonathan interprets, “Behold the man Messiah” (Zech.6:12); and so it is said, “A man of pains and known to sickness” (Isa. 53:3).

Pesiqta Rabbati (ca.845) on Isa. 61:10: The world-fathers (patriarchs) will one day in the month of Nisan arise and say to (the Messiah): “Ephraim, our righteous Anointed, although we are your grandparents, yet you are greater than we, for you have borne the sins of our children, as it says: But surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of G-d and afflicted. But he was pierced because of our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him and through his wounds we are healed”(Isa.53:4-5).

Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai (2nd Century), Zohar, part II, page 212a and part III, page 218a, Amsterdam Ed.: There is in the garden of Eden a palace called: “The palace of the sons of sickness.” This palace the Messiah enters, and summons every sickness, every pain, and every chastisement of Israel: they all come and rest upon Him. And were it not that He had thus lightened them off Israel, and taken them upon Himself, there had been no man able to bear Israel’s chastisement for the transgression of the

law; this is that which is written, “Surely our sicknesses he has carried.” (Isa. 53:4) As they tell Him (the Messiah) 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.” (Isa.53:5)

Midrash on Ruth 2:14: He is speaking of the King Messiah “Come hither,” i.e. Draw near to the throne; “eat of the bread,” i.e., The bread of the kingdom. This refers to the chastisements, as it is said, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.” (Isa. 53:5)

Rabbi Elijah de Vidas (16th Century): The meaning of “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities” is, that since the Messiah bears our iniquities which produce the effect of His being bruised, it follows that whoever will not admit that Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities must endure and suffer for them himself.

Sifre: Rabbi Jose the Galilean said, “Come and learn the merits 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 generation, and upon those who followed them, till the end of all generations. Which attribute is greater, the attribute of goodness, or the attribute of vengeance?” He answered, “The attribute of goodness is greater, and the attribute of vengeance is the less.” - “How much more then, will the King Messiah, who endures affliction and pains for the transgressions (as it is written, ‘He was wounded,’ etc.), justify all generations. This is the meaning of the word, ‘And the Lord made the iniquity of us all to meet upon Him’” (Isa. 53:6).

Rabbi Eleazer Kalir (9th Century) is credited with writing the following Yom Kippur Musaf prayer, although there is some evidence that it dates back to the first century C.E.: Our righteous Messiah has departed from us. Horror has seized us and we have no one to justify us. He has borne our transgressions and the yoke of our iniquities, and is wounded because of our transgressions. He bore our sins upon His shoulders that we may find pardon for our iniquity. We shall be healed by His wounds, at the time when the Eternal will recreate Him a new creature. Oh bring Him up from the circle of the earth, raise Him up from Seir, that we may hear Him the second time.

Rabbi Moses, “The Preacher” (11th Century) wrote in his commentary on Genesis (page 660): From the beginning G-d has made a covenant with the Messiah and told Him, “My righteous Messiah, those who are entrusted to you, their sins will bring you into a heavy yoke” ... And He answered, “I gladly accept all these agonies in order that not one of Israel should be lost.” Immediately, the Messiah accepted all agonies with love, as it is written: “He was oppressed and he was afflicted.”

Pesiqta (on Isa. 61:10): Great oppressions were laid upon You, as it says: “By oppression and judgement he was taken away; but who considered in his time, that he was cut off out of the land of the living, that he was stricken because of the sins of our

children” (Isa. 53:8), as it says: “But the LORD has laid on him the guilt of us all”. (Isa.53:6)

- However, Modern Jewish commentaries, in an effort to distance themselves from the interpretation will try to say that the Servant of the LORD here in Isaiah is the nation of Israel.
 - Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz tries to make that case, stating, “the context of this prophecy indicates that above all, the servant represents the collective nation of Israel.”
 - However, even he can’t ignore the fact that the text clearly talks about an individual. His response is to say, “The persona of the Messiah as depicted here rests somewhere between reality and dream: On the one hand he is an individual, and on the other hand he represents the redemption of Israel. The prophet describes specific characteristics of a living individual, and at the same time depicts this individual’s role, and his community works among Israel and the world at large. Therefore, this servant is a personification of the entire nation.”
 - In a way, he’s not wrong. Jesus does represent the nation of Israel. As King Messiah, he is the key representative of Israel in the world.

Chapter 54

- Remember that chapter and verse breaks are not in the original Hebrew text. They were added later to make it easier to find content in the Bible.
- So, in the original text this section is a continuation of the previous.
- **[READ Isaiah 54:1–3]**
- Who is this directed to? Israel!
- The LORD is described here as Israel’s husband. (v. 5) This is a common description throughout the prophets, even so much that the LORD uses the marriage of one prophet, Hosea, as an illustration of his own faithfulness to Israel.
- **[READ Isaiah 54:10]** God again reiterates that he will not break the covenant he has made with Israel.
 - **[READ Jeremiah 31:35–37]**
- The final promise to Israel in our section is a powerful one.
 - **[READ Isaiah 54:17]**
 - Remember what the people have been dealing with until now.
 - Also, remember the message of this second book of Isaiah: Comfort is coming for the people of Israel