



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

“Wait, What? WHO Is the Arm of ADONAI?”

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (JPS)

¹³ “Indeed, My servant shall prosper, Be exalted and raised to great heights. ¹⁴ Just as the many were appalled at him— So marred was his appearance, unlike that of man, His form, beyond human semblance— ¹⁵ Just so he shall startle many nations. Kings shall be silenced because of him, For they shall see what has not been told them, Shall behold what they never have heard.”

Isaiah 53: ¹ “Who can believe what we have heard? Upon whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For he has grown, by His favor, like a tree crown, Like a tree trunk out of arid ground. He had no form or beauty, that we should look at him: No charm, that we should find him pleasing.

³ He was despised, shunned by men, A man of suffering, familiar with disease. As one who hid his face from us, He was despised, we held him of no account. ⁴ Yet it was our sickness that he was bearing, Our suffering that he endured. We accounted him plagued, Smitten and afflicted by God; ⁵ But he was wounded because of our sins, Crushed because of our iniquities. He bore the chastisement that made us whole, And by his bruises we were healed. ⁶ We all went astray like sheep, Each going his own way; And the Lord visited upon him The guilt of all of us.”

⁷ He was maltreated, yet he was submissive, He did not open his mouth; Like a sheep being led to slaughter, Like a ewe, dumb before those who shear her, He did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppressive judgment he was taken away, Who could describe his abode? For he was cut off from the land of the living Through the sin of my people, who deserved the punishment. ⁹ And his grave was set among the wicked, And with the rich, in his death— Though he had done no injustice And had spoken no falsehood.

¹⁰ But the Lord chose to crush him by disease, That, if he made himself an offering for guilt, He might see offspring and have long life, And that through him the Lord's purpose might prosper. ¹¹ Out of his anguish he shall see it; He shall enjoy it to the full through his devotion. “My righteous servant makes the many righteous, It is their punishment that he bears; ¹² Assuredly, I will give him the many as his portion, He shall receive the multitude as his spoil. For he exposed himself to death And was numbered among the sinners, Whereas he bore the guilt of the many And made intercession for sinners.”

(The Jewish Study Bible, Adele Berlin and Mac Zvi Brettler, Eds., *Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation*. Oxford University Press, 2004).

Introduction:

Isaiah's call begins with a wake-up: *"Awake, awake, clothe yourself in your strength, Zion... shake off the dust... loose the bonds from your neck, captive daughter of Zion"* (Isa 52:1–2, TLV). ADONAI promises a day when His people will know His Name and hear Him say, *"Hineni—Here I am"* (52:6). We can almost feel the camera pan to a lone runner, feet slapping the ridgelines, shouting, *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news... who announces shalom... who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"* (52:7). Peace. Goodness. Salvation. But Isaiah keeps us in holy suspense. What exactly brought this victory about?

Many of us grew up hearing the Haftarah portions of consolation leading up to Rosh Hashanah. Traditionally, those readings pause at Isaiah 52:12—right before the most startling explanation, and the following week pick up at Isaiah 54:1, entirely bypassing Isaiah 53. So you could attend faithfully for years and rarely hear Isaiah 52:13–53:12 read aloud. Yet here Isaiah quietly answers the question: how will ADONAI bare His holy arm so that *"all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God"* (52:10)?

What follows doesn't push you; it invites you. It doesn't argue you into a corner; it opens a door. Let's let Isaiah speak in his own voice, and simply ask: could it be that the "Arm of ADONAI" is revealed in the Servant who suffers, saves, and is then exalted?

1. THE ARM REVEALED IN A SURPRISING SERVANT (Is. 52:13-53:3)

Isaiah begins with triumph: *"Behold, My Servant will prosper; He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted"* (52:13). The Hebrew idea isn't "successful" like rich or famous, but acting with the wisdom that accomplishes God's purpose. Before we can settle into that comfort, the next verse jolts us: *"Just as many were appalled at You—His appearance was disfigured more than any man"* (52:14). Kings will shut their mouths, Isaiah says, because what they never heard, they will suddenly see (52:15). The Arm of ADONAI is indeed revealed—but in a way no one anticipated.

Then comes the honest question: *"Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of ADONAI revealed?"* (53:1). We expected spectacle—regalia, war horses, instant political deliverance. Instead, Isaiah points to humility: *"He grew up before Him like a tender shoot... He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, nor beauty that we should desire Him"* (53:2). The Servant doesn't attract by flash. He's easy to overlook in a crowd. This is not our default picture of divine strength.

The LORD is naming our shared tendency: we prize surface splendor. We look for charisma, magnetism, domination. But God often conceals His glory under humility so we will seek His heart instead of the show. The Servant is *"despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief... and we did not esteem Him"* (53:3). "Despised" here is less about hatred and more about being counted as nothing—dismissed, waved off. Isaiah's gentle challenge is simple: would we be willing to look again—beneath what impresses us—to see ADONAI at work where we did not expect Him?

For our Jewish brothers and sisters, this is not a call to abandon heritage; it's an invitation to revisit our own prophet and ask if God might be doing something deeper than our expectations. If the Arm of ADONAI appears in humility first and only then in exaltation, would we allow our own prophet Isaiah to guide us?

2. SUBSTITUTION THAT HEALS THE MANY (53:4-9)

Isaiah now explains the Servant's suffering with priestly language. *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our pains"* (53:4). We misread His suffering at first—*"we esteemed Him stricken, struck by God, and afflicted"*—but Isaiah corrects us: *"He was pierced because of OUR transgressions, crushed because of OUR iniquities; the chastisement for our shalom was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed"* (53:4-5). The vocabulary is Levitical. He "bears," He "carries," He stands in for us. Not suffering merely with us, but FOR us.

This is where the imagery of Pesach and Yom Kippur echoes. On Yom Kippur the high priest confesses Israel's sins over the goat, symbolically transferring iniquity (Lev 16). The goat carries them away so the people do not. Isaiah dares to say ADONAI has done something like this on a grand scale: *"We all like sheep have gone astray... and ADONAI has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (53:6). Not "they" or "those people"—*we all (kulanu)*. Each of us has turned to our own way. And the Servant shoulders it.

Isaiah also insists on the Servant's innocence: *"He was oppressed... yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter... He did not open His mouth"* (53:7). He is not dragged to death in rage; He yields in submission. *"By oppressive judgment He was taken away... He was cut off from the land of the living—for the transgression of my people, the stroke was theirs"* (53:8). The blow belonged to us. He took it. And then the enigma: condemned among the wicked, yet *"with a rich man in His death,"* though He had done no violence and no deceit was in His mouth (53:9). Isaiah lays markers that would only make sense when fulfilled—so we could say, "Ah...so that's what ADONAI meant."

If you're cautious about Yeshua, may I offer this gentle possibility? Read Isaiah's lines as if for the first time. Ask: who fits this priestly, substitutionary pattern—innocent, silent in suffering, cut off for others, yet honored in burial? You don't have to accept anyone's conclusion today. Simply let God's words through Isaiah have their say.

3. A WILLING OFFERING AND A CERTAIN VINDICATION (53:10-12; 52:13)

Now Isaiah says something almost unthinkable: *"Yet it pleased ADONAI to crush Him; He made Him sick. If He makes His soul a guilt offering, He will see offspring, He will prolong His days, and the will of ADONAI will prosper by His hand"* (53:10). Why would this please God? Not because God delights in pain, but because through the Servant's willing offering (his very *nephesh* as an *asham*, a guilt offering), many would be reconciled. The pathway is costly love. The result is life.

Notice the vindication: *"He will see [the result] and be satisfied... By His knowledge My righteous Servant will make the many righteous, for He will bear their iniquities"* (53:11). The Servant does not remain in death; He "prolongs His days." He sees "offspring"—a

global family of redeemed people. And He does for us what we could not do for ourselves: He *makes* the many righteous. Not by ignoring justice, but by satisfying it on our behalf.

Isaiah closes with a fourfold reason the Servant inherits the many: *He poured out His soul to death; He was numbered with the transgressors; He bore the sin of many; and He interceded for the transgressors* (53:12). This answers the promise back in 52:13: “*My Servant will prosper... high and lifted up and greatly exalted.*” Exaltation comes, but only after substitution. Majesty comes, but through meekness. The Arm of ADONAI is bared—and it looks like love.

If the Servant’s mission stretches to *goyim* as well—“*so shall He sprinkle many nations*” (52:15)—then Isaiah is harmonizing with Israel’s calling from the start: “*in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” This is not a departure from Jewish hope; it is its flowering. The question before us isn’t whether we betray our people by believing Isaiah. The question is whether we will let Isaiah lead us all the way to ADONAI’s Servant.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 52–53 doesn’t coerce; it bears witness. The Servant suffers for our sins, secures our shalom, rises to prolong His days, and makes the many righteous. If your image of Messiah has never included the Suffering Servant, would you consider Isaiah’s portrait? Read it in your own Bible (JPS). Ask the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: “Is Yeshua the One You promised—the Arm of ADONAI revealed?” No one can answer that for you. But Isaiah has given you more than enough to ask Him yourself.

And remember Jeremiah’s promise: the New Covenant is *with the House of Israel and the House of Judah* (Jer 31:31–34). Trusting ADONAI’s Servant isn’t a step away from our people; it’s a step into God’s ancient mercy for our people—and through us, for the nations.

“*We all like sheep have gone astray... and ADONAI has laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isa 53:6). If today your heart is stirred, consider turning to ADONAI and entrusting yourself to the Servant who bore your iniquity. You don’t have to have every question answered to begin.

You can pray simply: God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I have gone astray and turned to my own way. Thank You that You laid my iniquity on Your Servant. I believe He was pierced for my transgressions, crushed for my iniquities, and that by His stripes there is healing for me. I turn to You and place my trust in Your once-for-all atonement. Write Your Torah on my heart, and help me walk with You all my days. In Yeshua’s Name, amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

For Personal Reflection (5)

1. Where do I most expect God to show power—in spectacle or in humility? How does *“high and lifted up”* (52:13) reframe my expectations after reading 53:2–3?
2. Isaiah says I initially misread the Servant’s suffering (53:4). Where might I be misreading God’s work in my own life right now?
3. What does *“the chastisement for our shalom was upon Him”* (53:5) mean for the places in me that feel fractured or anxious?
4. If the Servant bore *my* iniquity (53:6), what guilt or self-reliance am I still carrying that I could hand over to ADONAI today?
5. Isaiah claims the Servant will *“make the many righteous”* (53:11). How is receiving righteousness different from trying to achieve it?

For Group Conversation (5)

1. Why do you think Isaiah’s Servant is easy to overlook (53:2–3)? Share a time when God met you in an unexpected, humble way.
2. How does the Yom Kippur imagery help you understand *“He has borne... He has carried”* (53:4, 11)? What resonates—or troubles—you about substitution?
3. Discuss the tension in 53:10: *“It pleased ADONAI to crush Him.”* What might “pleased” mean in light of the outcome—offspring, prolonged days, prospering of ADONAI’s will?
4. Isaiah marks specific details (silent before accusers, cut off, with a rich man in death, innocence). How do these “identifying marks” function for you—as hints, hurdles, or both?
5. If Isaiah 52:15 hints that the Servant’s work “sprinkles many nations,” how does that align with Israel’s calling to bless the nations (Gen 12)? What does that mean for how we carry this message

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for baring Your holy Arm not in spectacle but in saving love. Open our eyes to see the Servant as You reveal Him. Where we have misread, correct us gently. Where we are broken, bring shalom. Make us a people clothed in strength and beautiful garments who proclaim, “Your God reigns!” (Isa 52:7). Draw the children of Israel to Yourself, and through us let the nations see Your salvation.

B’Shem Yeshua, In Yeshua’s Name, Amen.