

“We can well imagine, therefore, the deep contrition and *heartbrokenness* of repentant Israel when their eyes are at last opened by the Spirit of God to the true character of this holy Sufferer, and when they perceive that it was for them and in their stead that He endured it all. ‘In that day’ of weeping and mourning over Him whom they have pierced, we can hear, as it were, the sob which will accompany their confession: How base was our ingratitude! How intense was our ignorance! How thick our darkness! How profound our blasphemy against that Holy One, who in His love and compassion condescended to bear *our* griefs and to be laden with *our* sorrows! ‘Yet we regarded Him as plagued, smitten of God, and afflicted’” (Baron 1922: 87-88).

	<b>The Servant’s Part</b>	<b>The People’s Part</b>
53:4	he took he carried	our infirmities our sorrows
53:5	he was pierced he was crushed his punishment his wounds	for our transgressions for our iniquities brought us peace we are healed
53:6	laid on him	the iniquity of us all (Beyer 2007: 207)

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Read the passage again, substituting “Jesus” for “he” and “my/I” for “our/we.”

Is your life characterized by peace and healing? If not, why not?

Does it offend you that someone else would suffer in your place?

If this passage is true, what implications does it have for your life?

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## ISAIAH 53:4-6: THE SACRIFICE OF THE SERVANT

### OUTLINE OF THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG (52:13-53:12)

- A The **paradox** of the servant (52:13-15)
  - B The **rejection** of the servant (53:1-3)
    - C The **sacrifice** of the servant (53:4-6)
      - B The **death** of the servant (53:7-9)
        - A The **triumph** of the servant (53:10-12)

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 53:4-6

- The **cause** of the Servant’s suffering (v. 4)
- The **severity** of the Servant’s suffering (v. 5a)
- The **result** of the Servant’s suffering (v. 5b)
- The **ones responsible** for the Servant’s suffering (v. 6)

### THE LOGIC OF THE STANZA

Main idea: the Servant was punished by God for our sins

1. The Servant suffered great infirmities and sorrows.
2. We thought he suffered because God was punishing him.
3. We realized that he suffered and died because of our sins.
4. We are all guilty; we have all rebelled against the Lord.
5. His suffering brought us peace and healing (because he paid the price for our sin).

## NOTES

The notion that the Gentiles are speaking (as “we”) and Israel is the servant (“he”) just will not work. There is nothing in Scripture to support the idea that Israel suffered for the benefit of the nations. There is nothing to suggest that Israel was righteous and thus could suffer for sinners. There’s nothing in this whole book that has the Gentiles speaking in the first person. Truly such an identification is a desperate attempt to escape the obvious because of undesired conclusions. The Servant must be an individual who suffers for a sinful people.

“The indeterminacy of the ‘we’ is perhaps intentional. It is almost certainly the prophet identifying himself with his people and speaking for the whole. But the Servant’s ministry is not limited to the ‘people.’ He is also to be a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6), establishing the rule of God among them (42:1, 4). Thus all persons who recognize that their sin has caused the Servant to suffer may include themselves in the all-inclusive ‘we’” (Oswalt 1998: 384n4).

“It is only through substitution that fellowship between humans and God is possible. But can a sheep die for a man? Can a goat die for a woman? Micah speaks for every thoughtful Israelite when he raises that question (6:6–7). Surely the answer is no. So what is the meaning of the sacrificial system? Is it only metaphorical? No, for just as surely as Micah captured the thought of his compatriots, John the Baptist spoke for his when he cried out, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). A lamb cannot die in a human’s place, but a perfect human could; and if that human is also God, he could die for every human’s sin (Heb. 9:11–14)” (Oswalt 1998: 385).

### 53:4 – THE CAUSE OF THE SERVANT’S SUFFERING

“Part of the shock of recognition is due to the typical ancient Near Eastern understanding of the source of suffering: if a person is suffering, it is because he or she has done something to deserve it (the book of Job is the classic example in the OT). Thus if a person is smitten, it is because he or she is a sinner. But this man has been stricken because *we* are sinners” (Oswalt 1998: 386).

“The Talmud calls Jesus a transgressor, and the renowned 12th century scholar, Maimonides, states that Jesus deserved the violent death which he suffered” (Buksbazen 1971: 417).

### 53:5A – THE SEVERITY OF THE SERVANT’S SUFFERING

“The words *pierced* and *crushed* in verse 5 indicate a violent death” (Webb 1996: 211).

“The metaphors of vv. 4–5 are precisely those of 1:5–6. As a result of its rebellion, the nation is desperately ill, a mass of open sores and unbandaged wounds. What is to be done? Not more hypocritical worship (1:10–15)! No, what is needed is just and righteous living (1:16–20). But can that atone for the past, cleanse the wounds, destroy the infection? No, writing new words over the old ones will not blot out the old ones. Someone must come to wipe the slate clean (4:4). Someone must take the disease and give back health, must bear the blows and give back wealth (in its original sense of “well-being”)” (Oswalt 1998: 387–88).

### 53:5B – THE RESULT OF THE SERVANT’S SUFFERING

“Where there was no peace (48:22) there will be, through the Servant’s peace-making work (53:5), a covenant of peace (54:10)” (Motyer 1993: 431).

### 53:6 – THE ONES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SERVANT’S SUFFERING

“Instead of emphasizing or expanding on all the positive benefits of peace or healing from v. 5, the text reemphasizes the guilt of the speakers.... The focus on his victory will come later (53:10–12). Right now it is time for the speakers to humble themselves and confess that ‘they went astray’ like wandering sheep that follow their own path. They deliberately “turned aside” (not accidentally) from the path that God their Shepherd provided for them. This admission of guilt is made by ‘all of us’” (Smith 2009: 451–52).

“The Servant is . . . is the provision and plan of God, who himself superintends the priestly task (Lv. 16:21) of transferring the guilt of the guilty to the head of the Servant, giving notice that this is indeed his considered and acceptable satisfaction for sin” (Motyer 1993: 431).

“*We all* at the beginning is matched by *us all* at the end: the perfect equivalence of remedy to need. *All ... each*: common culpability, individual responsibility” (Motyer 1999: 378–79).