

**THE SUFFERING SERVANT:
Moshe Reiss**

Abstract:

It is common today to recognize that Jesus was thoroughly embedded in the 'Judaisms' of his day. One very important Christian theology understands Jesus' death as a vicarious suffering servant – the 'Lamb of God' - representing humanity. Is that a Jewish concept?

Christian interpretation of the Suffering Servant as representing a foreshadowing of Jesus lends itself more easily to the Christian context than perhaps any other section of the Hebrew Bible. In fact the author a Jewish Rabbi believes if he were a Christian he would find it reasonable.

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THE SUFFERING SERVANT:

He [the *servant of the LORD*] ‘was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering . . . [who] wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities . . . by his bruises we were healed’ (Isa. 53:3-5).

INTRODUCTION:

It is common today to recognize that Jesus was thoroughly embedded in the Judaism¹ of his day. One very important Christian theology understands Jesus’ death as a vicarious suffering servant – the ‘Lamb of God’ (John 1:29).² Is that a Jewish concept? It is clear that many Jewish and Christian commentators consider this a major difference between the two religions.³

Christian interpretation of the Suffering Servant as representing a foreshadowing of Jesus lends itself more easily to the Christian context than perhaps any other section of the Hebrew bible. The *servant of the LORD who* ‘was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering . . . [who] wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities . . . by his bruises we were healed (Is. 53:3-5) was construed as Jesus crucified.⁴ For Christians Jesus became an atoning vicarious suffering servant. John Sawyer, a well-known Christian commentator authored a book in which he defined Isaiah’s Suffering Servant sections (Is. 52:13- 53:12) as ‘The ‘Fifth Gospel’.⁵

The suffering servant has to be taken as an ‘innocent person in place of and as an acceptable substitute for the guilty’. It is clear that for Christians the suffering servant vicariously took upon himself the sins of the guilty in the world; thus the Lamb of God. Christians assume that the vicarious nature of the servant is clear. Can these concepts be found in Jewish theology or would as one modern Jewish commentator suggests it would ‘supersede the covenant’?⁶ As God responded to Moses during the Golden Calf incident those ‘who sinned against Me, him only, will I erase from the record’ (Ex. 32:33). Each person must do repentance on his own.

A paucity of possible references to an atoning vicarious suffering servant existed prior to Christianity in ancient Jewish documents; in Daniel (chapters 11-12⁷) in the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Self-Glorifications Hymn - 4Q491 1-1⁸), the Testament of Moses (10:9-10) and The Book of Wisdom (chapters 2 and 5)⁹. These references might possibly explain how, despite its rareness¹⁰ and well after Jesus’ death Christians did attribute the concept of a vicarious suffering servant to him.¹¹

Nevertheless as noted by Hengel and Bailey despite this one could still argue reasonably enough as Christians, that Jesus represents a sacrificial lamb proxy at least by analogy. Paul stated that ‘Christ died for our sins in

accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3b); Hengel responded 'there is nothing from a historical point of view which stands in the way of deriving it [the soteriological interpretation of Jesus' the death] from the earliest (Aramaic-speaking) interpretation from the earliest (Aramaic-speaking) interpretation community.'¹²

A lamb, in ancient Jewish theology can be sacrificed conferring benefits on the person such as purification from defilement of a sin, propitiation of the deity, blessing, cleansing and atonement; the lamb can be seen as a repentance proxy. Can Jesus be such a proxy? James Dunn states that in Isaiah 53 it is not clear that Jesus is referred to nor is it necessary.¹³ He further believes it is a Hellenistic notion.¹⁴

BIBLICAL SOURCES:

We are told that Aaron, the high priest '*may bear off any guilt from the holy offering that the people consecrate as their holy gifts, and it shall be on his forehead perpetually for their acceptance before the Lord*' (Ex. 28:38). It appears that the high priest, in this instance, can carry the people's guilt. The sin offering in the Temple '*bears the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord*' (Lev. 10:17). In the Talmud Rabbi Simlai quoting Isaiah 53:12, explains how Moses '*poured out himself to death*' and '*bore the sin of many*' when he offered his life (Ex. 32:32) to atone for his people after the Golden Calf incident (BT Sotah 14a).

More broadly one could define the idea of a scapegoat in Judaism and other ancient kingdoms¹⁵ as representing the guilt of the people and is used as perhaps the most particular rite commanded for Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. Two goats were taken to the High Priest, one inscribed for the LORD and the second for 'Azazel'¹⁶. He lays his hands of each goat conferring an element of his identity onto them as Moses did when laying his hands onto Joshua commissioning him (Num. 27:18,23).

The goat for Azazel¹⁷ '*shall be set alive before the LORD, to make atonement over him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness . . . And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land which is cut off; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness*' (Lev. 16:8,10,22)¹⁸. The goat inscribed for the LORD shall be sacrificed, the blood is taken by the High Priest into the holy of holies and other parts of the temple. '*On this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Eternal (One)*' (Lev. 16.30).¹⁹

The contamination of the people purged by the High Priest with blood of goat is transferred to him and he then transferred it to Azazel.²⁰ This transfer is called 'I'kapper' the same root word from which comes Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. This suggests that in the days of the

Temple the key event on Yom Kippur was the Azazel goat and the scapegoating of the vicarious goat. The purpose of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16 is seemingly to carry the confessed sins of the Israelites into the desert with Azazel.²¹

POST-BIBLICAL

The passage when Joseph's brothers kill a goat (Gen. 37:31) and dip their brother's coat of many colors in its blood in order to provide an explanation for the disappearance of Joseph when they return without him is a form of scapegoating. The author(s) of the book of Jubilees places the brothers' action as the ritualized origin of the Yom Kippur ritual placing it on the tenth day of the seventh month (the date of Yom Kippur) (Jub. 34:12, 18). The brothers by killing the goat and using its blood are transferring their offence to it.²² This suggests that this is not part of an ancient pagan ritual as seen by many commentators but inherently Israeli, although from a pre-Sinaitic era.²³

The Mishnah (Yoma 6:4) and Talmud (BT Yoma 66b) state that the Azazel goat had the sins of Israel on its head. Further according to the Talmud (Yoma 39a) the high priest then fastened a scarlet thread to the head of the goat Azazel; and recites the following confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness:

'O LORD, I have acted iniquitously, trespassed, sinned before You; I, my household, and the sons of Aaron Your holy ones. O LORD, forgive the iniquities, transgressions, and sins that I, my household, and Aaron's children, Your holy people, committed before You, as is written in the law of Moses, Your servant, for on this day He will forgive you, to cleanse you from all your sins before the LORD; you shall be clean.'

A priest was selected to take the goat to the precipice in the wilderness; and he was accompanied part of the way by the most eminent men of Jerusalem. These men had been constructed at intervals along the road leading from Jerusalem to the steep mountain. At each one of these the man leading the goat was formally offered food and drink. When he reached the tenth booth those who accompanied him proceeded no further, but watched the ceremony from a distance. When he came to the precipice the priest divided the scarlet thread into two parts, one of which he tied to the rock and the other to the goat's horns, and then pushed the goat down (Mishna Yoma 6:1-8). The cliff was so high and rugged that before the goat had traversed half the distance to the plain below, its limbs were utterly shattered. Men were stationed at intervals along the way, and as soon as the goat was thrown down the precipice, they signaled to one another by means of kerchiefs or flags, until the information reached the high priest, whereat he proceeded completing the ritual.

Furthermore continues the Talmud:

‘During the forty years that Simon the Just was high priest, the thread actually turned white as soon as the goat was thrown over the precipice: a sign that the sins of the people were forgiven. In later times the change to white was not invariable: a proof of the people’s moral and spiritual deterioration that was gradually on the increase, until forty years before the destruction of the Second Temple, when the change of color was no longer observed.’

The goat Azazel seems to be a metaphor for the high priest and as a vicarious atonement symbol. ‘Suffering is more apt than sacrifice to win God’s favor and to atone for man’.²⁴ ‘Particularly the death of the righteous atones for the sins of the people’;²⁵ ‘for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life’ (Lev. 17:11).

The Talmud comments on this verse ‘there is no atonement except with blood’ (BT Yoma 5a).²⁶ Of course the Talmud is referring to an animal in the place of the death of the sinful person; the Azazel goat on Yom Kippur. However among Semites ‘we find many cases in which the worshipper sheds his own blood at the altar, as a means of recommending himself and his prayers to the deity.’²⁷ The blood (of the lamb) placed on the doorpost during the Passover holiday is another example of the value blood as a form of protection.²⁸ In a non-Jewish Arabian rite there is an atonement for a non-lethal assault; the offender would cut his head and wipe the blood at the door of the injured person.²⁹

It is not clear how the ritual defined in the Leviticus text (sending the goat into the wilderness) changed to the Mishnah description (throwing him over a cliff). The latter was based on the second temple. ‘The worship of the second temple was an antiquarian resuscitation of forms which had lost their intimate connection with the national life and therefore had lost the greater part of their original significance’.³⁰ The Jewish Encyclopedia similarly suggested that ‘the original idea of the atonement offering had become lost and instead of the offending person (God) the offense or guilt became the object of the Atonement’.³¹ It is possible to speculate that the people needed to see the scapegoat Azazel actually die rather than simply sent off into the wilderness to presumably die.

Maimonides (1134-1204) states that the Azazel goat ‘served as an atonement for all serious transgressions more than any other sin-offering of the congregation. . . . these ceremonies are of a symbolic character’. They are intended to induce repentance.³²

MODERN JEWISH VIEWS

Early medieval Jewish scholars noted that there was a high probability that a second (deutero) Isaiah (D.I.) wrote the latter parts of the book included under his name. The first to recognize this radical suggestion was Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167); he recognized how radical this was for his Orthodox Jewish readers and thus wrote this commentary enigmatically.³³ His Jewish contemporaries then and even some today assume Isaiah being a Prophet was privy to knowledge about the future and the emergence of the end of days.³⁴

The complexities of this enigmatic text is known to all scholars, Jewish and Christian. Julian Morgenstern states 'no single section of the Old Testament presents more immediate and cogent problems than those passages of Isa. XI-LXVI dealing with the figure of the suffering servant of the LORD.'³⁵ Brevard Childs notes that 'this passage is probably the most contested chapter in the Old Testament'.³⁶ It is notorious that [Servant passages] have suffered through detachment from their contexts, their similarity of style and content and their alleged non-relatedness to foregoing and following sections being held up in justification.³⁷

David Clines notes the problematic nature of this cryptic poetic text. He has stated 'it is 'unforthcoming, its refusal to be precise and to give information, its stubborn concealment of the kind of data that critical scholarship yearns to get its hands on as building-blocks'.³⁸ It may be that D.I. had disciples who composed parts of these texts; even different parts of the 'Songs'³⁹ section. Perhaps he died and his disciples completed his work. As Claus Westermann has noted the poet does not intend to tell us who the servant is.⁴⁰ Clines states 'No communication occurs. No verbal message is conveyed from one person to another'.⁴¹

Luis Alonso Schokel says of the text it is a 'collection of collections, like a lake into which the waters of various rivers and tribulations flow',⁴² Roger Whybray says 'D.I. impresses the reader with a massive religious and theological unity'.⁴³

A well known commentator on Isaiah (S.R. Driver) apparently resigned himself to the futility of a projected commentary.⁴⁴ Driver and others have noted the defective nature of the text.⁴⁵ The servant's death itself is highly ambiguous (Is. 53:8,9,12) and many deny that he actually died.⁴⁶

Harry Orlinsky (Professor of Biblical Literature – Hebrew Union college)⁴⁷ states that the servant depends on the context; the term 'servant' in D.I. actually is found first in chapter 40 and continues through chapter 66. He claims there is no reason to assume it is intended homogeneously in all cases.⁴⁸

Orlinsky asks three questions: (1) Is the personage described in chapter 53 an individual or the people of Israel? (2) Is there a suffering servant in Isaiah 53? (3) Does the suffering servant become a vicarious suffering servant? Orlinsky appears to be vehemently concerned to reject the entire concept of a vicarious suffering servant and considers it as post-biblical.

Orlinsky sees chapter 53 as being unrelated to the last three verses of chapter 52. The theme ending with chapter 52 is the proclamation that Jerusalem is about to be triumphant and the exiles return. He believes the person in 52:13 represents the people of Israel; In chapter 53 he is an individual, probably Deutero Isaiah himself.

A problem arises with Orlinsky's thesis of attempting a separation of chapter 52 from chapter 53. In the ancient text scrolls no delineation existed between verses and chapters. This was introduced by Christians in the middle ages. There were however spaces between sections of Bible which still exist in today's scrolls. Given that the Masoretic text makes a space before 52:13 and does not make for a chapter space between the end of 52:15 and the beginning of 53:1 it seems likely that originally 52:13 continued into chapter 53. In addition the Haftorah reading on the fourth Shabbat after Tisha B'Av is 51:12-23 through 52:1-12 suggesting again that 52:13 begins a new section. As Brevard Childs has stated 'there is wide agreement going back to the first century A.D. that the unit extends from 52:13-53:12'.⁴⁹

The author (or authors) of Targum Pseudo Yonatan proclaim a triumphant individual Messiah who is more congruent with Jewish belief than the Christian suffering messiah. He translated verse 52:13 as 'Behold My servant Messiah shall prosper; he shall be high, and increase, and be exceeding strong'. The Hebrew reads '*Hineh yoskil avdi*'; Orlinsky reads 'Behold My servant will prosper' as representing Israel. For him '*yoskil*' is a word play for Israel, just as '*yeshurun*' is a word play for Israel in the those verses (53:1-2) and as '*meshullam*' is similarly meant to be Israel (53:18-19).

⁵⁰

However the next verse (52:14) seems to immediately identify a second 'person' -- the Jewish People -- as the 'one' who's doing the suffering 'as the house of Israel looked to him during many days, because their countenance was darkened among the peoples, and their complexion beyond the sons of men. This also seems more consistent with the later sections of chapter 53 (verses 3-9). This sort of interpretation keeps recurring up throughout the rest of the passage: the Messiah is elevated and prospers; the Jewish People are suffering.

This Targum was probably concluded the third century and the authors knew very well of the disastrous Bar Kokhba war and many were aware of the Christian vicarious suffering servant thesis.⁵¹

Orlansky's second question is whether the central person in chapter 53 suffered and was punished despite having committed no transgression 'although he had done nothing sinful and had spoken no deceit' (53:9) can indeed be compared to Job (as noted by Orlansky). That is a question of theodicy and not of vicariously suffering. But the servant defined as such cannot be compared to Israel; both the destruction of Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah including the Temple as well as exile of the people were the greatest disasters to befall the Jewish people before the dawn of the common era. These events are directly related to clear transgressions as noted by First Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. One of the main themes of D.I. is God speaking to 'comfort, oh comfort My people', the people of Israel. Cyrus will destroy the Babylonians, despite their serving God's purposes, for the sake of God's name and for Israel. Orlansky claim is that 'Israel cannot be the central personage in Isaiah 53'.⁵² Despite that, as noted above, the majority of Jewish commentators consider that the personage does represent Israel.

The third question is the vicarious nature of the suffering. If that were the case the suffering servant has to be taken as an 'innocent person in place of and as an acceptable substitution for the guilty'.⁵³ It is clear that for Christian theologians the suffering servant – representing Jesus – vicariously took upon himself the sins of the guilty of the world. He is the Lamb of God. Christians assume that the vicarious nature of the servant is obvious. However there is a problem, this concept cannot easily be found in Jewish theology; as Orlansky said it might 'supersede the covenant'.⁵⁴ As God responded to Moses during the Golden Calf incident 'He who has sinned against Me, him only, will I erase from the record' (Ex. 32:33). Persons such as Jeremiah and Job were innocent and suffered in the Bible, but it was never suggested that their suffering was a vehicle or scapegoat for others sins. Each person must do repentance on his own.

We do not find Orlansky's answer to his own questions satisfactory.⁵⁵ If it does not represent Israel Orlansky does not tell us who it might represent. His separation of chapters 52 from chapter 53 is simply not acceptable.

Is suffering a requirement for repentance in Jewish theology or is this part of the Christian theology of asceticism? A guilt offering of a lamb in Jewish theology can be a sacrificial or at least a repentance proxy. Nevertheless as noted above by Hengel and Bailey despite no real parallel one could still argue reasonably enough as Christians have done that Jesus represents a sacrificial lamb proxy by analogy. Suffering as an ingredient for repentance

– a form of asceticism – can be seen as a Jewish concept; fasting is conducive to atonement, for it tends to precipitate contrition (Joel, 2:12–18). The Bible requires fasting on Yom Kippur. During hardship and difficult times fasting is often undertaken by the community or by individuals to achieve atonement and avert catastrophe (Esther 4:3,16; Jonah 3:7), even today; during a drought as an example.

The two most obvious suffering Hebrews in the canon are Jeremiah and Job did not suffer in peace but were reluctant and argued their innocence in front of God as He was considered by them the final and ultimate Judge. Their response to God was analogously to ‘My God, my God, why did you abandon me’ (Mark. 15:34; Matt. 27:46) rather than the Lukan statement (Luke 23:34).

Who might qualify as the author of D.I. - of the Suffering Servant - and whom might he consider as his model?

Jewish interpretations of the concept of suffering servant differ than their Christian counterparts. In Jewish commentary he may be the personification of all Jews or a group of Jews. Jewish personification is certainly not unique; the Patriarchs, Prophets and elders fill that role in the canon. He can be an individual person who lived in the past or will live in the future or even perhaps a fictitious person legendary even mythological. D.I.’s expectations may be accurate or not.⁵⁶ Sheldon Blank considered that the surrogate ‘Israel in the guise of a martyr prophet – of a prophet after the pattern of Jeremiah’.⁵⁷

The suffering servant’s potential victories are not attributed to his warrior status or his political status or charisma but through the power of God. Could the author be writing autobiographically or about a leader; possibly a prophet.

Traditional exegesis is that the servant represents the people of Israel. The traditional text that includes all the Jewish interpreters was written by Driver and Neubauer in the mid nineteenth century states that ‘most modern Jewish scholars . . . will hold, as do a substantial number of non-Jewish scholars also, that the servant is not a specific individual but Israel as a people, or possibly some minority group within Israel’.⁵⁸ However Driver notes that ‘a minority of Jewish exegetes did, down the centuries, continue to maintain the messianic interpretation of the chapter.’⁵⁹ We are part of that minority. He appears to us from the text as an individual, a common person.

Driver notes a significant number of exceptions to the majority position. Among these figures is the Saadya Gaon (882-942) who interpreted the servant as the past prophet Jeremiah.⁶⁰ Ibn Ezra believed the servant was

the D.I. himself. ⁶¹ Abarbanel (1437-1508) notes that one could conceive of it representing the past reforming King Josiah, ⁶² (as does a modern Christian exegete Antii Latto ⁶³); although Abarbanel himself rejects that thesis. He also notes that Midrashim ⁶⁴ and the Targum Yonatan ⁶⁵ believed the servant (at least in some verses) was the future Messiah. His explanation for their commentary is that they believe that verse 52:13 indeed refers to the Messiah but beginning with 53:1 the connotation shifts to the people of Israel. ⁶⁶ His concern as he states it is that 'the heretics come and shelter themselves beneath it', ⁶⁷ I believe Abarbanel is concerned about Christians interpreting the servant/messiah as Jesus.

Abarbanel himself believed the servant represented Israel. He explains his view by dividing this key poem (52:13-13; 53:1-12) into three parts: chapter 52, followed by chapter 53:1-9 and finally 53:10-12. The first part refers to the people of Israel, the second as a reference to a confession by gentiles of their sins toward the people of Israel and the third being the personal words of the prophets as to the Messiah. ⁶⁸

THE BINDING (AKEDAH) OF ISAAC

Abraham's relationship with God is based on his covenant. ('I shall maintain My covenant with him [Isaac], a covenant forever, and to his descendants after him' (Gen. 17:19). Yet Abraham can only keep the Isaac of the promise by killing him. What is Abraham to do with this paradox; it eliminates his future?

The Akedah text is not only of enormous importance to Rabbinic Judaism but to the Judaic matrix of Christianity. As noted by Levenson both religions seem 'founded upon a father's willingness to surrender his beloved son'. ⁶⁹ It is a transformative act for Abraham and Isaac.

In *Biblical Antiquities* by the first century C.E. Pseudo-Philo the author tells us that Isaac was 'born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me' (Bib. Ant. 32:3). Later on 'he [Isaac] did not refuse him but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready . . . (Bib. Ant. 40:30). Later in the same century Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* states about Isaac 'he deserved never to have born at all were he to reject the decision of God and of his father and not readily resign himself to what was the will of both . . . ' (JA 1:232).

In *4 Maccabees* (written around the turn of the common era) an old priest is tortured; he compares his death and pain to be 'like that of Isaac' (4 Mac. 7:1-42). Similarly a woman (sometimes named Hannah, sometimes Miriam) allows her seven children to be sacrificed. She tells them 'Go and tell Father Abraham: Let not your heart swell with Pride! You built one altar,

but I have built seven altars and on them have offered up my seven sons. What is more: Yours was a trial: mine was an accomplished fact!⁷⁰

Another midrash states that Isaac said 'Father, I am a young man and I am fearful that my body will tremble out of fear of the knife and cause you sorrow, so that the slaughter will be rendered unfit . . . Therefore bind me tightly. . . (Can one bind a man thirty-seven years old (another version; twenty six years old) without his consent? (Gen. Rab. 56:8). 'The eyes of Abraham were turned to the eyes of Isaac, but the eyes of Isaac were turned to the angels of heaven. Isaac saw them but Abraham did not see them In that hour the angels of heaven went out and said to each other: Let us go and see the only two just men in the world. The one slays, and the other is being slain. The slayer does not hesitate, and the one being slain stretches out his neck' (Targum Neofiti).⁷¹

By now the focus of attention is on Isaac rather than Abraham. Rabbi Meir cites Rabbi Akiba 'You shall love the Lord your God . . . with all your heart like Isaac, who bound himself upon the altar' (Sifre – Deut. 32).⁷²

Rabbi Eleazer ben Pedat stated 'Although Isaac did not die, Scripture regards him *as though* he had died and his ashes lay piled on the altar.'⁷³ This was based on numerous midrashim about Isaac being wounded and even dying.

The midrash and Targum tell us that Abraham sent Isaac to study at the School of Shem/Garden of Eden for three years.⁷⁴ Joseph ibn Caspi heard of a tale that Abraham sent Isaac to Gan Eden as a reward for all he had suffered when he was about to be slain.⁷⁵

Other midrashim expand what happened to Isaac – he was wounded. '[T]he angels bore him to Paradise, where he tarried three years, to be healed from the wound inflicted on him by Abraham on the occasion of the Akedah.⁷⁶ Isaac was being healed 'from the incision made in him by his father when he began to offer him up as a sacrifice?'⁷⁷

A further Midrash says "Isaac was bound on the altar . . . And reduced to ashes and his sacrificial dust was cast on Mount Moriah, the Holy One, blessed be He, immediately brought upon him dew and revived him. This Midrash goes on to say that this is the reason that the "ministering angels began to recite, Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who quickens the dead."⁷⁸ 'May his immolation take the place of immolation of his children' (Ex. Rabbah 44:5). In this case, it appears that Isaac was burnt and his body reduced to ashes; note however Abraham is not held responsible.⁷⁹

In another version Midrash Lekach Tob, and it is set down in connection with the verse (Gen 31: 42), "The God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac"-

"for Isaac was in the grip of fear as he lay bound on top of the altar, and his soul flew out of him, and the Holy One, blessed be He, restored it to him by means of the dewdrops for Resurrection of the dead."⁸⁰

Finally Abraham is seen as killing Isaac: 'When Abraham bound his son Isaac on the altar, and slew him and burned him, (the lad) was reduced to ashes, and his ashes were scattered on Mount Moriah; then the Holy One, blessed be He, brought down life-giving dew and revived him'.⁸¹ If Abraham had not subjected Isaac to the Akedah 'there would be no Resurrection of the dead'.⁸²

To expand this beyond the Jews we find a prayer noted several times on Rosh Hashahah and Yom Kippur 'Our Father our King, we have sinned before you'; the 'we' is not only our community but all human offenses'.⁸³ As noted in the Tanna debe Eliyahu Rabba 'God remembers the 'aqedah for the benefit of all men, Gentiles as well as Jews'.⁸⁴ Perhaps here is the fusion of the Akedah and the Servant of the Lord.⁸⁵

Abraham and Isaac become the 'transcendental perception of human sacredness'.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION:

Ancient documents from both religions show that there were many varieties of 'Judaisms' and 'Christianities' interrelating for a long time⁸⁷. It is unclear whether we can ever determine when the two religions and their theologies separated. According to John Collins and Daniel Harlow '[t]here is some evidence that Jews and Christians interacted with one another in social and even in liturgical contexts into late antiquity and beyond'.⁸⁸ We have attempted to show that the vicarious suffering service theology did come from some aspects of ancient Judaism even if today (and from the middle-ages when the distinction between the religions was clear) Jews rejected the concept, at least as it relates to Jesus. Current Jewish theology is not the same as existed in ancient Judaism and today's Christianity is not the same as accepted in ancient Christianity.

Moshe Idel begins his book on 'Ben' - Sonship as follows: 'The continuous existence of an open circuit between the divine and the human world is part and parcel of most religious worldviews. With movement between these worlds achieved either by human ascending to the divine realm or by divine intervention in the earthly world below, the belief in such open channels is vital in sustaining an intense religious life'.⁸⁹ His 'religious worldviews' include Judaism. He concludes there is parallelism although not symmetry between the Jewish and Christian views.⁹⁰

Kuichi states that ‘the lifestyle of Christ was compared with that of the Azazel-goat. Since Christ fulfilled the role of the Azazel-goat in a cosmic dimension, believers have no need to bear guilt, whether their own or that of others, in order to make atonement.’⁹¹ Kuichi’s thesis is that Paul (Romans 12:1) was encouraging believers to understand that Jesus’ suffering was Azazel-like. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it appears that Jesus represented both goats.⁹²

It would appear to this author that one can conceive of a vicarious atoning symbol of repentance in ancient Judaism. However Jews cannot readily see the connection in Jewish theology to Azazel, the messianic Jesus and the suffering servant.

What is clear is that while the Christians have a clear definition of who is the suffering servant; Jewish exegetes do not. He may represent some elite of the people of Israel, a martyred prophet, D.I. himself, a disciple of his - Jeremiah, the Teacher of Righteousness or a future messianic figure. Azazel as Jesus must have seemed almost irresistible to early Christians. I concede that were a Christian I would make that connection.

- ¹ Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green and Ernest Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs in the Beginning of Christianity*. (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity*. (Philadelphia, Fortress. 1983).
- ² The exact meaning of John's 'lamb of God' is controversial and need not concern us; that he used the term is clear. The Targum Jonathan and Targum Jerusalem refer to the merit of Isaac bound like a lamb (Lev. 22:27) quoted by Shalom Spiegel, 'The Last Trial: On The Legends and Lore Of The Command To Abraham To Offer Isaac As A Sacrifice' (Woodstock, VT, Jewish Lights, 1993) pg. 85; also Lev. Rabbah 2 and Vermes, Geza, 'Scripture and Tradition in Judaism' (Brill, Leiden, 1961) 223-225.
- ³ The other major theological difference between the two religions is Christology – Jesus as the Son of God/Son of Man - a divine-man.
- ⁴ Matt. 8:17; 12:15-21; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:32-35; Rom. 15:21. For a detailed Jewish rejection of this Christological interpretation see Stefan Schreiner article on 'Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham of Troki' in Bernd Janowski, and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds. 'The Suffering Servant', (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004) 418-449.
- ⁵ John, F. A. Sawyer, 'The Fifth Gospel' (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- ⁶ Harry M. Orlinsky 'The So-called "Suffering Servant" in Isaiah 53', Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College, 1964) 55.
- ⁷ The only reference in the canonized Hebrew Bible. Adela Yarbro Collins 'The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament' in John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), 73-90.
- ⁸ Esther Eshel, 'The Identification of the "Speaker" of the Self-Glorification Hymn' in Donald W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich, eds. 'The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls', (Leiden, Brill, 1990) 619-635. See also Moshe Idel, 'Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism', (London, Continuum, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem 2007) 20-21.
- ⁹ At the time of Jesus the Hebrew Bible had not yet been canonized; thus it was unclear whether the Testament of Moses and the Book of Wisdom would be canonized. The former book may have dated back to the time of Daniel (Martin McNamara, 'Intertestamental Literature' (Wilmington, Del, M. Glazier, 1983) 96), but others claim it was written in the first century CE, thus possibly after Jesus' death (Emil Schurer, *The Literature of the People in the Time of Jesus*, Trans. and edited, by Nahum N. Glatzer; New York, Schocken Books, 1972, 78-79). The later book was written in the first or second century BCE.
- ¹⁰ Orlinsky 'Suffering' claims it was completely unknown, 30.
- ¹¹ Martin Hengel with Daniel P. Bailey, 'The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period', in Janowski, Suffering Servant, 75-146.
- ¹² Hengel Martin, 'A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine of the New Testament' (London, SCM Press, 1981), 64.
- ¹³ James D. G. Dunn, 'When did the Understanding of Jesus' Death as an Atoning Sacrifice First Emerge' in David B. Capes, ed., *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (Waco, Tex., Baylor University Press, 2007), 170.
- ¹⁴ Dunn, 169,181.
- ¹⁵ Cecil Roth, Editor in chief, *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Keter, 1971) notes that scapegoating was customary in the ancient world, Vol. 3, 1001. Isidore Singer, Managing editor. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 'Atonement', (N.Y., Funk and Wagnall, 1902), Vol. II, pg. 275. See also Neo-Assyrian seventh century documents describing a

substitute king ritual in which ‘someone should sit on the throne and remove your evil’. John H. Walton, *‘The Imagery of the Substitute King Ritual, In Isaiah’s Fourth Servant Song’*, JBL, 2003, #122, 736 also see S. H. Blank, ‘Prophetic Faith in Isaiah’ (London, Adam and Charles, 1958) pgs. 87 f and J.G. Frazer, *The New Golden Bough: A New Abridgment of the Classic Work by Sir James George Frazer*, ed.T. H. Gaster, (N.Y., Criterion Books, 1959) pg. 235. In Babylonia festival ‘Akitu’ a ritual goat is substituted for a human being is offered to Ereshkigal, goddess of the Abyss; see Daniel C. Matt, Translator and Commentator, *‘The Zohar’* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004) Vol. 1, 73, ft. 546; . Another similar ritual found in South Anatolian/North Syrian tradition has a human being’s sins being transferred to an animal who is then sent to the open countryside freeing the person from the consequences of the guilt. See Dominic Rudman, *‘A Note on the Azazel-goat Ritual’*, (Zeitschrift Fur die Alttestamentlich Wissenschaft, 2004, #116, 397.

The near sacrifice of Isaac (‘akedah’ – the binding of Isaac) is never in Judaism considered a redeeming scapegoat; if God wanted a sacrifice to complete Abraham’s ritual of testing the goat seems quite sufficient. The Christian view is quite different.

¹⁶ The modern Hebrew word for scapegoat is ‘sa’er azazel’ - goat Azazel.

¹⁷ There is great controversy on the meaning of the term ‘Azazel’.

1: Some hold that it is the name of a supernatural entity (Mishna Yoma 6:1-4, BT Yoma 41b, 62a, 66a). In 1Enoch, Azazel is the tenth in the list of fallen angels and is the source of all evil and corruption starting in chapter 13). Ibn Ezra (1054-1138) hinted and Nachmanides (1194-1270) expressly stated (Lev. 16:8) that Azazel belongs to the class of "se'irim," goat-like spirits haunting the desert, to which the Israelites may have offering sacrifice. In Nachmanides’ view Azazel is the angel Samael or Satan, one of God’s servants, to whom God commands to give a portion of God’s own sacrifice (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap 46). Samael gets a bribe so as not annul the effect of Israel’s offerings. Judith M. Blair, *‘De-demonising the Old Testament : an Investigation of Azazel, Lilith, Deber, Qeteb and Reshef in the Hebrew Bible’* (Tubingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2009). This interpretation, most traditional in Jewish lore assumes the goat cannot be sacrificed since it is or represents a demon and consequently is impure and cannot pay a role in repentance or forgiving (Jacob Milgrom, *‘Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary’* The Anchor Bible, N.Y., Doubleday, 1991) 1021, 1071-1079.

2: Others seems to explain עֲזָזִיל as a place, a hard to access mountain precipice exploiting the biblical word ‘hadabrah’ – open country- and ‘al eretz gezerah’ – a cut off land from human habitation (Sa’adiah Goan – 892-942). Rashi (1040-1104), following the description in BT Yoma 67b, takes Azazel as a “precipitous place” or “rugged cliff,” reading עֲזָזִיל for עֲזָזִיל. Rashbam (1085-1158) understands that the scapegoat was sent to the desert where goats pasture.

3: Brown et al understand עֲזָזִיל as an abstract noun such as “destruction” or “entire removal.” F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *‘Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament’* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1955) 736. Rabbi J. H. Hertz (ed.) accepts in his translation of the Torah calls it ‘dismissal’, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, (London: Soncino Press, 1977) 481.

See also Aron Pinker, *‘A Goat to go to Azazel - The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures: Vol. 7, Article 8; <http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhsArticles>*

¹⁸ When Rebekah urges Jacob to fetch two goat kids from the flocks to make for his father (Gen. 27:9) she told him that two goats would in a future time bring blessings to his descendants, referring to the rites for the Day of Atonement found in Leviticus 16:5,

15-22, 30 (*Genesis Rabbah* 65.14); Matt, 'The Zohar', Vol. 2, 1:142b, 291.

¹⁹ See further the confusion about the released goat in the post biblical period.

²⁰ Baruch J. Schwartz, 'The Bearing Sin in the Priestly Literature' in D.P. Wright, D.N. Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz, 'Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom', (Winona Lake, Ind., Eisenbrauns, 1995) 17.

²¹ An early medieval custom of Jews is on the day before Yom Kippur to take a chicken to be used as vicarious sacrifice. The fowl is swung around the head three times while the right hand is put upon the animal's head. At the same time the following is thrice said in Hebrew: 'This be my substitute, my *vicarious offering*, my atonement. This chicken shall meet death, but I shall find a long and pleasant life of peace!' After this the animal is slaughtered and the money is given to the poor. Nahmanides and other Jewish commentators opposed this ritual as being based on pagan rites and superstition, however even today it is observed by most Orthodox Jews.

²² Calum Carmichael, 'The Origin of the Scapegoat Ritual', VT, 2000, L 2, 173-174.

²³ See E.E. Urbach, 'The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs', (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1975) Vol I, 521-523.

²⁴ From Mekilta Yitro, 10; Sifre, Deut. 32; BT Ber. 5a.

²⁵ Tanhuma. Wayakel 9; Midrash Ex. Rabbah 35:4; Midrash Lev. Rabbah ii; quoted in Matt, Zohar, Vol. 2, 279-280. For Christians this would apply to Jesus.

²⁶ 'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins' (Heb. 9:22).

²⁷ W. R. Smith 'Lectures on the Religion of the Semites', (Jerusalem, Ktav Publishing, 1969) 321.

²⁸ See Jon Levenson, 'The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son' (New Haven, Ct. Yale University Press, 1993), 177-180.

²⁹ Smith, Lectures, 337.

³⁰ Smith, Lectures, 316,

³¹ Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. II, 275.

³² Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed. Trans. Friedlander, M, (New York, Dover, 1956), 366.

³³ Uriel Simon, 'Ibn Ezra Between Medievalism and Modernism' The Case of Isaiah XL-LXVI' VT Congress Volume, Salamanca, (Leiden, Brill, 1983), 257-271. The first Christian commentators to recognize that a different prophet wrote the latter parts of the Book of Isaiah were Ioannes Godofridus in 1783 and Johann Ludwig Doderlein in 1789.

³⁴ Mordecai Schreiber has noted additionally that Rambam (1137-1204), Ramban (1194-1270), Ibn Gikatilla (1248-1305), and Abarbanel (1437-1508) all doubted that the same man wrote all the chapters within the Book of Isaiah. Jewish Bible Quarterly, Jan. 2009, 'The Real "Suffering Servant": Decoding a Controversial Passage in the Bible', 36.

³⁵ Julian Morgenstern, 'The Suffering Servant – A New Solution', VT 1961, Vol. 11, 292.

³⁶ Childs, 410.

³⁷ J.A. Motyer, 'Context and Content of The Interpretation of Isaiah; 7:14' Tyndale Bulletin, 21.1, 1970, 118

³⁸ David J. Clines, 'I, He, We, and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53', (Sheffield, University of Sheffield, 1976), 25.

³⁹ It is unclear why they are called 'songs'; they are poetic, but it is unlikely they were ever sung.

- ⁴⁰ Claus Westermann, *'Isaiah 40-66'* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1969), 20. In 1908 T.H. Weir stated 'The literature of the subject [who is Deutero-Isaiah] has grown to such an extent that no one can boast of having fathomed all the recesses of this sea'; (The Westminster Review, clxix, 1908, 309. In 1921 Sigmund Mowinckel in a well known article assumed the servant was prophet Deutero-Isaiah; see Christopher R. North, *'The Suffering Servant: Current Scandinavian Discussions'*, Scottish Journal of Theology, 1950, vol. 3, 363-379.
- ⁴¹ Clines, 43.
- ⁴² In Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *'The Literary Guide to the Bible'* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987) 165.
- ⁴³ Roger Norman Whybray, *'Isaiah 40-66'* (New Century Bible, London, Oliphants, 1975) 26.
- ⁴⁴ Noted in Christopher R. North, *'The Suffering Servant in Deutero Isaiah'* (London, Oxford University Press, 1956) 1.
- ⁴⁵ G.R. Driver, *'Isaiah 52:12 – 53:13: The Servant of the LORD'*; in Matthew Black, and George Fohrer, eds., *'In Memoriam of Paul Kahle'*, (Berlin, Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1968) 91, 97, 101
- ⁴⁶ See Clines 28-29, Driver, Isaiah 52:12 – 53:13, 93-94.
- ⁴⁷ Harry M. Orlinsky, *'Studies On The Second Part Of The Book Of Isaiah: The So-Called "Servant Of The LORD" And "Suffering Servant" In Second Isaiah'* (Leiden, Brill, 1967). Orlinsky is also a one of the translators of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible (1952), New Jewish Publication Society of America Version (NJPS, 1985), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989).
- ⁴⁸ Orlinsky, Studies, 17, particularly footnote 1, he does note several Christian commentators who rejected this homogeneous view.
- ⁴⁹ Childs, Brevard S., *'Isaiah'*, (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 411.
- ⁵⁰ Orlinsky, Studies, 18.
- ⁵¹ Chilton, Bruce, D., *'The Isaiah Targum'*, (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1987), XX-XXV.
- ⁵² Orlinsky, Studies, 51.
- ⁵³ Orlinsky, Studies, 55.
- ⁵⁴ Orlinsky, Studies, 55.
- ⁵⁵ As does David Kraemer, *'Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature'*, (N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1995) 229 ft. 19.
- ⁵⁶ John L. McKenzie, *'Second Isaiah'* Anchor Bible, (N.Y., Doubleday, 1968), XLV.
- ⁵⁷ Sheldon H. Blank, *'Prophetic Faith in Isaiah'* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999) 29.
- ⁵⁸ Driver, S.R. and A. Neubauer, *'The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters'*, Trans. E.B. Pusey, (N.Y., Ktav, 1969, originally published in 1866), in Prolegomenon, 12.
- ⁵⁹ Driver, 22.
- ⁶⁰ Driver, 18, 153, 164.
- ⁶¹ Simon, Ibn Ezra, 270-271.
- ⁶² Driver, 187-197.
- ⁶³ Antii Latto, *'The Servant of YWH and Cyrus'* (Stockholm, Almquist & Wiskell, 1992).
- ⁶⁴ Midrash Rabbah Ruth (2:14) called the Messiah 'wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our sins' – this repeated in the Yalqut (2:620) and the Siphre. See also the Talmudic discussion of the name of the Messiah 'And the Rabbis say 'the leper' ('hivra'). . . he has borne our disease and suffered our pains, and we thought him smitten, beaten by od and tortured' (from Isa. 53:4) (BT. 98b).

- ⁶⁵ Driver, 162-163, the Targum Yonatan was written by various unknown writers in the first – third century CE; the final editor or redactor time period is unknown, see Chilton, Targum, XX-XXV.
- ⁶⁶ Driver, 165-167; in this author's opinion Abarbanel is not as clear as he usually is in this explanation; perhaps as the case with Ibn Ezra his concern about the reaction of his Jewish Orthodox compatriots.
- ⁶⁷ Driver, 165
- ⁶⁸ Driver, 164-165.
- ⁶⁹ Levenson, Jon, 'The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son', (New Haven, Ct. Yale University Press, 1993) 174-175.
- ⁷⁰ Yalkut, Deut. 26, #938 and Lam. Rabbah p.85, quoted in Spiegel, pg. 15.
- ⁷¹ Geza Vermes, 'Scripture And Tradition in Judaism' (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1973) Pg. 194-195.
- ⁷² Vermes, Scripture, pg. 197.
- ⁷³ Spiegel. Op cit, pg. 3-4, Midrash ha-Gadol, ad Gen. 22:19, M. Margulies (ed.) (Jerusalem, 1947) p. 360 (italics in Spiegel), on 22:19.
- ⁷⁴ Midrash ha-Gadol op cit, Targum Jonathan on 22:19, quoted in Spiegel pg. 4.
- ⁷⁵ Mishna Kesef on Pentateuch, pg. 63, quoted in Spiegel, pg. 7
- ⁷⁶ Yalkut Reubeni, Wa-Yera (Maggid, Toledot), quoted in Spiegel pg. 6-7.
- ⁷⁷ Hadar Zekenim 10b (Bet ha-Midrash, ed Jellinek, V. p 157) and Minhag Yehudah, Toledot, Gen 25: 27; cf. Hizkuni ad Gen 22:19, quoted in Spiegel pg. 6-7.
- ⁷⁸ 'When Isaac was sacrificed on the altar, his soul which was in him in this world departed. But when it was said by Abraham 'Blessed is He who quickens the dead,' his soul of the world to come came back to him.' Zohar, Tosefta 60a, Spiegel, pg. 33.
- ⁷⁹ Shibbole ha-Leket, Inyan Tefillah 18, quoted by Spiegel pg. 29, 35, 41-42.
- ⁸⁰ Lekah Tov ed. S. Buber (Recension), Midrash Tanhuma, Trans. John T. Townsend, (Ktav Publishing, Hoboken, N.J., 1989) pg. 161, quoted by Spiegel, pg. 130.
- ⁸¹ Spiegel pg. 32.
- ⁸² Various midrashim quoted by Spiegel pg. 111 also footnote 78.
- ⁸³ Hannah Arendt, 'Essays in Understanding' (New York, Harcourt Brace, Weissberg, 1994) pg. 131.
- ⁸⁴ Quoted by Hans Joachim Schoeps, 'The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul's Theology', JBL 65 (1946) pg. 390.
- ⁸⁵ In an article Roy A. Rosenberg noted that Isaac was considered to have died and resurrected in the Pirke de Rabbi Eleazer 31, and suggested that he be considered the Suffering Servant; in "Jesus, Isaac and the "Suffering Servant", J.B.L. 84, 1965, pgs. 381-388.
- ⁸⁶ Natan Sznajder 'Jewish Memory and the Cosmopolitan Order, (Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 2011) pg. 34.
- ⁸⁷ See footnote 1 and Hal Taissig, ed., 'A New New Testament' (New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2013).
- ⁸⁸ John J. Collins, and Daniel C. Harlow, 'Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview', (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2012) 392.
- ⁸⁹ Idel 'Ben Sonship'', 1.
- ⁹⁰ Idel, pg. 585.
- ⁹¹ Nobuyoshi Kuichi, 'Living like the Azazel-goat in Romans 12:1b', Tyndale Bulletin, 2006, #57.2, 260.
- ⁹² The sacrificed goat in Hebrews 9:12; 13:11-12. See Margaret Barker, 'Atonement: The Rite of Healing', Scottish Journal of Theology, 1996, #49, 14. 'The Epistle of Barnabas (late first or early second century – non-canonized letter) also uses both

goats as Jesus analogies. Likewise Justin Martyr (Writings of Saint Justin Martyr, (vol. VI of *The Fathers of the Church* Washington D.C., Catholic University of America, 1948, 209 and other ancient fathers of the Church. One inconsistency is that in Judaism only one goat is called Azazel the goat of evil. The same Epistle to Barnabas also equates the Red Heifer with Jesus (8:1). Some in the Jewish tradition associated the red heifer sacrifice with the messianic days. In its origins it is associated with impurity coming with associating with death (Num. 19:5-13).