

*The Servant of Jehovah:
The Sufferings of the Messiah and
The Glory That Should Follow*

by
David Baron

APPENDIX

"THE SUFFERING MESSIAH OF THE SYNAGOGUE"¹

THE TARGUM

The oldest testimony we possess that Isa. liii. was by the Synagogue applied to the Messiah is found in the Targum on the Prophets ascribed to Jonathan ben Uzziel (first century. A.D.). Although the Targum in the form we now possess it has been edited in Babylonia in the fourth century A.D., yet there is no doubt that the material it contains is derived from sources more ancient, and that as a whole it is of Palestinian origin. The paraphrase--for it is not a literal translation--of the chapter begins with the words:

"Behold my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper; He shall be high, and increase, and be exceedingly strong."

This is almost a literal translation. But in what follows the Targum, though ascribing to the Messiah a central place in Israel's redemption, contrives by a method singularly strange to us to make Israel the real sufferer, naturally at the hands of the Gentiles, but for her own sins, the modern Jewish idea of Israel suffering for the sins of the nations being entirely foreign to the Targum. In this way the Targum succeeds in purging the Messiah from any taint of personal suffering and humiliation. Verses 3 and 4 are therefore thus paraphrased:

3. "Then He will become despised (*i.e.* by the nations), and will cut off the glory of all the kingdoms; they (Israel) will be prostrate and mourning, like a man of pains and like one destined to sickness; and as though the presence of the Shekhinah had been withdrawn from us, they will be despised, and esteemed not.

4. "Then for our sins He will pray, and our iniquities will for His sake be forgiven, although *we* were accounted stricken, smitten from before the Lord, and afflicted."

The Targum pictures the Messiah as a man of imposing, holy and awe-inspiring appearance (ver. 2). He makes intercession for the sins of His people, and they are forgiven for His sake (vers. 4, 6, 11, 12).

¹ After the MS. of this little work was already completed I asked my friend and fellow-worker in the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, Mr. J. I. Landsman, to copy for me a few of the most striking passages from the Talmud and Midrashim which speak of a suffering Messiah, thinking it might interest Christian readers if they were added as an appendix. Mr. Landsman has kindly done more than I asked, for some of the passages are, as will be observed, already either quoted or alluded to in the first part of this book. I think it well, however, to give the whole of his collection here, as these extracts (most of which he has translated from the original sources) represent in orderly form the different sections of Rabbinic literature, and follow in chronological sequence.

His prayers are answered, and before opening His mouth He is accepted (v. 7). He is a great teacher. By His wisdom He holds the guilty free from guilt, makes the rebellious subject to the Law (vers. 11, 12); by His instruction peace increases upon His people, and on account of its devotion to His words it obtains forgiveness of sin (ver. 5). From subjection to the nations, from chastisement and punishment, He delivers the souls of His people (vers. 8, 11), builds the Holy Place (ver. 5), and wondrous things are done to Israel in His days (ver. 8). He overthrows the kingdoms of the nations (ver. 3), scatters many peoples (ver. 15), the mighty of the peoples He delivers like sheep to the slaughter (ver. 7), causes the dominion of the Gentiles to pass away from the land of Israel, and transfers on them the sins Israel had committed (ver. 8), Israel looking on the punishment of those that hated her, and is satisfied with the spoils of their kings (ver. 11). But the Messiah is also judge of His own people. He delivers the wicked to Gehenna, and those who are rich in possessions into the death of utter destruction (ver. 9).

With the advent of the Messiah a glorious time dawns for Israel. The purified remnant looks on the kingdom of the Messiah, their sons and daughters multiply, they prolong their days, and those who perform the Law of the Lord prosper in His good pleasure (ver. 10). The righteous grow up before Him like blooming shoots, and like a tree which sends forth its roots to streams of water they increase--a holy generation in the land that was in need of Him (ver. 2).

Thus the Targum succeeded in reading into this chapter the whole Jewish Messianic hope, in which there was no place for a suffering Messiah. The words, "because He delivered up His soul to death," in verse 12, do not mean that the Messiah actually died, but rather, that He for the sake of His people, like Moses of old, was ready to give His life.

But the Targum, in spite of the high esteem in which it was held, found no imitators. Its method was too drastic, and the violence done to the sacred text too apparent to be imitated. We find, therefore, in early Rabbinic literature not a few passages which speak of a suffering Messiah; but they all belong to the time after the Mishna was edited, *i.e.* after 200 A.D.

THE TALMUD

1. THE NAME OF THE MESSIAH

In the Bab. Talmud, Sanhedrin 98^b, we read: "The Messiah--what is His name? . . . The Rabbis say, The leprous one of the house of Rabbi is His name, as it is said, 'Surely He hath borne our griefs . . . yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.'" The name, "The leprous one of the house of Rabbi," is very obscure. Dr. Pusey² has called attention to the better reading of this passage found in the *Pugio Fidei* by Raymundus Martini, where it reads: "The Rabbis say, The leprous one is His name; those of the house of Rabbi say, The sick one is His name," etc. In Isa. liii. 4 the word "stricken" [*nagua*'] is taken by the Rabbis as meaning stricken with leprosy, hence they give the name, "The leprous one." The house of Rabbi (*i.e.* R. Jehuda the saint, the editor of the Mishna) based their name, "The sick one," on the words "our griefs," lit. our diseases, having in mind their teacher, R. Jehuda, who had voluntarily taken upon himself bodily sufferings for thirteen years for the sake of the whole people, for during this period no pregnant woman died, nor did any miscarriage take place.³

2 Cf. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah, according to the Jewish interpreters, vol. ii. *Translations*, p. 34. The Jewish scholar, A. Epstein, in his *M'kadmonioth Ha-yehudim*, p. 109, defends Martini's reading.

3 Cf. Jer. Talmud, Kil'ayim 32^b and Kithuboth 35^a.

2. B. Sanhedr. 93^b: "It is written (in Isa. xi. 3), And His delight (*harichō*) shall be in the fear of the Lord. R. Alexandri said, This indicates that He (God) will load Him (*i.e.* the Messiah) with commandments and sufferings as with millstones (*rechayim*)." It is not said here for what purpose the many sufferings will be laid on the Messiah, but the idea of a suffering Messiah is here expressed, although it has no connection with the Scripture quoted.

3. B. Sanhedr. 98^a. Here we read: "R. Joshua, the son of Levi (third cent. A.D.), met Elijah standing at the door of the cave of R. Simeon ben Yochai. . . . He said to him: When shall the Messiah come? He answered: Go and ask Him personally.--And where does He abide?--At the gate of Rome.--And what is His sign?--He abides among the poor who are stricken by disease. And all unbind, and bind up again, the wounds at the same time, but He undoes (*viz.* the bandage) and rebinds each separately, saying: Perhaps I am wanted, and I would not be detained. He went to meet Him and said: Peace be to Thee, my Master and my Teacher. He replied to him: Peace be to thee, son of Levi. He said to Him: When wilt Thou come, my Lord? To-day, He replied. Then he returned to Elijah, who said unto him: What has He said unto thee? He said to me: Son of Levi, peace be unto thee. Elijah said unto him: He has assured thee and thy father of the world to come. He said unto him: But He has deceived me in that He said: I come to-day, and He has not come. Elijah answered him: It was so He meant--'To-day, if you will hear My voice.' "

To understand this legend one must remember that, according to the Rabbis, Messiah was born on the very day Jerusalem was destroyed, and is now living in obscurity. According to this passage His place is at the gate of Rome where He, though suffering, is waiting every moment to be called to deliver His people.

THE MIDRASHIM

4. In Ruth Rabba 5, 6 (on ch. ii. 14) we read: "'Come hither'--this refers to the King Messiah. 'Come hither,' draw near to the kingdom; 'and eat of the bread,' that is, the bread of the kingdom; 'and dip thy morsel in the vinegar,' this refers to the sufferings, as it is said, 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.' "

5. Midrash Tehillim on Ps. ii., and Midrash Samuel ch. xix. (with the readings of the Yalkut, ii. 620): "R. Hunā in the name of R. Achā says: The sufferings are divided into three parts: one for David and the fathers, one for our own generation, and one for the King Messiah, and this is what is written, 'He was wounded for our transgressions,' etc. And when the hour comes, says the Holy One--blessed be He!--to them: I must create Him a new creation, as even it is said, 'This day have I begotten thee.' This is the hour when He is made a new creation."--So many and great are Messiah's sufferings and afflictions that God must create for Him a new body. It is not said in what way, perhaps by raising Him from the dead. Psalm ii. 7 is here used almost in the same way as it is used by Apostle Paul in Acts xiii. 33.

6. Pesiktha Rabbathi, chs. xxxiii.-xxxviii.⁴ Nowhere in Rabbinic literature are the sufferings of the Messiah so graphically described and so expressly stated that He is suffering for the sins of His people as in this Midrash. Apart from this, we have here a vague conception of the pre-existence of the Messiah, for the transaction between God and Messiah takes place at the beginning of creation, when man was not yet created.

Chapter xxxvi. is based on Isa. lx. 1, 2. Ps. xxxvi. 10 is quoted, and the question is asked, "What mean the words, *In thy light we see light?*"

4 Friedmann's edition, Vienna, 1880.

"Which light is the congregation of Israel looking for? This is the light of Messiah, as it is written: And God saw the light, that it was good. This is intended to teach us, that the Holy One--blessed be He!--foresaw the Messiah and His works before the world was yet created, and He hid the light for the Messiah and His generation under His throne of glory. Said Satan before the Holy One--blessed be He!--Lord of the world, the light hidden under Thy throne of glory--for whom is it prepared? And He said to Him: For Him who in the future will conquer thee, and cover thy face with shame. Said he: Lord of the world, show Him to me. Come and see, was the Divine answer; and when he saw Him, he began to tremble, and fell on his face, saying: Surely, this is Messiah, who in the future shall cast me and the (angelic) princes of the nations of the world into Gehenna, according to Isa. xxv. 8. . . ."

Messiah's Willingness to suffer for His People

"And the Holy One began to make an agreement with Him, saying, Those who are hidden with Thee---their sins will cause Thee to be put under an iron yoke, and they will make Thee like this calf whose eyes are dim, and they will choke Thy spirit under the yoke, and on account of their sins Thy tongue shall cleave to Thy mouth. Art Thou willing to do this? Said Messiah before the Holy One: Perhaps this anguish will last many years? And the Holy One said to Him: By Thy life, and by the life of My head, one week only have I decreed for Thee; but if Thy soul is grieved I shall destroy them even now. But He said to Him: Lord of all the worlds, with the gladness of My soul and the joy of My heart I take it upon Me, on condition that not one of Israel shall perish, and not only those alone should be saved who are in My days, but also those who are hid in the dust; and not only should the dead be saved who are in My days, but also those who have died from the days of the first Adam till now; and not only those, but also those who have been prematurely born. And not only those, but also those whom Thou hast intended to create, but who have not yet been created. Thus I agree, and thus I take all upon Me. In that hour the Holy One--blessed be He!--orders for Him four creatures to carry the throne of glory of the Messiah."

The Sufferings of the Messiah

"In the week when the Son of David comes, they bring beams of iron and put them (like a yoke) on His neck, until His stature is bent down. But He cries and weeps, and His voice ascends on high, and He says before Him: Lord of the world, what is My strength, the strength of My spirit, of My soul and of My members? Am I not flesh and blood? In view of that hour David wept, saying: 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd.'⁵ In that hour the Holy One--blessed be He!--says to Him: Ephraim,⁶ My righteous Messiah, Thou hast already taken this upon Thee from the six days of creation, now Thy anguish shall be like My anguish, for from the time that Nebuchadnezzar, the wicked one, has come and destroyed My house, and burned My Sanctuary, and sent My children into exile among the nations of the world, by Thy life and the life of My head, I have not sat down upon My throne. And if Thou wilt not believe Me, see the dew which is on My head, as it is said: 'My head is filled with dew.'⁷ In that hour the

5 Ps. xxii. 16. Here the Editor has a note in which he calls attention to the fact that this psalm deals with the exile of the congregation of Israel, the sufferings of the Messiah and the future redemption, and that only on account of "the seditious talk of the heretics" (*i.e.* the Christians) the Rabbis explained it as referring to Esther.

6 The Messiah is in these chapters called Ephraim, but not the Messiah, the son of Joseph, is here meant, as Dr. Edersheim thinks, but the Son of David, as can be seen from the words with which the passage begins (*viz.*, "In the week when the Son of David comes"). I believe that they called the Messiah Ephraim on account of Jer. xxxi. 20, which passage they applied to the Messiah.

7 Cant. v. 2.

Messiah answers Him: Lord of the world, now I am quited, *for it is enough for the servant that He is as His Master.*"⁸

Chapter xxxvii. describes Messiah's triumph and the glory which He receives as a due reward for His humiliation and sufferings on behalf of Israel. It is based on Isa. lxi. 10.

"The fathers of the world (the patriarchs) will rise again in the month of Nisan and will say to Him: Ephraim, our righteous Messiah, though we are Thy fathers, yet Thou art greater than we, because Thou hast borne the sins of our sons, and hard and evil measure has passed upon Thee, such as has not been passed either upon those before or upon those after. And Thou hast been for laughter and derision to the nations for the sake of Israel, and Thou hast dwelt in darkness and in gloominess, and Thine eyes have not seen light, and Thy skin was cleaving to Thy bones, and Thy body was as dry as wood, and Thine eyes were darkened through fasting, and Thy strength was dried up like a potsherd. And all this on account of the sins of our children. Is it Thy pleasure that our sons should enjoy the good things which the Holy One--blessed be He!--has poured out so abundantly upon Israel? Or, perhaps, on account of the anguish which Thou hast suffered so much for them, and because they have chained Thee in the prison-house,⁹ perhaps Thou art not pleased with them?

"Says He to them: Fathers of the world, whatever I have done I have only done for your sakes, and for the sake of your children, for the sake of your honour and that of your children, that they may enjoy the goodness which the Holy One--blessed be He!--has poured out over Israel. Then say to Him, the fathers of the world: Ephraim, our righteous Messiah, let Thy mind be at rest, as Thou hast put the mind of Thy Maker at rest and also our mind."

Messiah's Glory

"R. Simeon, the son of Pasi, said: In that hour the Holy One--blessed be He!--exalts the Messiah to the heaven of heavens, and spreads over Him the splendour of His glory. . . . And at once He makes for the Messiah seven canopies of precious stones and pearls. And from each canopy issue four streams of wine, honey, milk, and pure balsam. And the Holy One--blessed be He!--embraces Him in the presence of all the righteous ones and conducts Him into the Sanctuary,¹⁰ and all the righteous ones see Him. And the Holy One says unto them: Ye righteous ones of the world, Ephraim, the Messiah of My righteousness, has not yet received even the half for all He had suffered. But I have still one reward with Me which I will give unto Him, which no eye hath ever seen. In that hour the Holy One commands the North wind and the South wind, saying unto them: 'Come ye, and do honour and lie down before Ephraim, My righteous Messiah, fully loaded with all the perfumes from the Garden of Eden,' as it is said: 'Awake, O North wind; and come, thou South: blow upon My garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let My Beloved come into His garden, and eat His precious fruits.'"¹¹

A MESSIANIC HYMN

*"As a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland."*¹²

8 pp. 161, 162.

9 This would indicate that He also suffered at the hand of His own people.

10 The word "chuppah," canopy, means here the "seat of the Divine Majesty, Sanctuary." See Jastrow, *Talmudical Dictionary*, i. 437.

11 Cant. iv. 16, pp. 162b, 163a.

12 Isa. lxi. 10.

"This teaches us that the Holy One shall clothe Ephraim, our righteous Messiah, with a garment, the splendour of which will be seen from one end of the world to the other end. And Israel shall walk in His light and say:

"Blessed is the hour when the Messiah was created!
Blessed the womb out of which He has come!
Blessed the generation whose eyes behold Him!
Blessed the eye that was waiting for Him!
For the opening of His lips is blessing and peace;
His whisper--a spiritual delight.
The thoughts of His heart are confidence and cheerfulness;
The speech of His tongue is pardon and forgiveness unto Israel.
His prayer is the sweet incense of offerings;
His petitions are purity and holiness:
Blessed are His fathers who obtained the eternal good hidden for ever!"¹³

THE LITURGY

The following remarkable hymn, by the famous hymn-writer, Eleazar ben Qualir, who, according to the Jewish historian, Zunz, lived in the ninth century A.D., is taken from the Service for the Day of Atonement.¹⁴ In it are gathered up the teachings of the Synagogue about a suffering Messiah.

"Before the world was yet created,
His dwelling-place and Yinnon¹⁵ God prepared.
The Mount of His house, lofty from the beginning,
He established, ere people and language existed.
It was His pleasure that there His Shekhina should dwell,
To guide those gone astray into the path of rectitude.
Though their sins were red like scarlet,
They were preceded by 'Wash you, make you clean.'
If His anger was kindled against His people,
Yet the Holy One poured not out all His wrath.
We are ever threatened by destruction because of our evil deeds,
And God does not draw nigh us--He, our only refuge.
Our righteous Messiah has departed from us,
We are horror-stricken, and have none to justify us.
Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions
He carries who is wounded because of our transgressions.
He bears on His shoulder the burden of our sins,
To find pardon for all our iniquities.
By His stripes we shall be healed--
O Eternal One, it is time that thou shouldst create Him anew!
O bring Him up from the terrestrial sphere,

13 p. 164a. See also Pesiktha d'rab Cahana, ed. Buber, p. 149, where the same hymn is quoted. There, however, the last line reads: "Blessed is Israel, for whom such has been prepared."

14 Cf. The Festival Prayers, with David Levi's English translation, vol. iii. p. 33. The translation has been revised by me.

15 "Yinnon" is, according to Bab. Sanhedrin 98^b, one of Messiah's names according to Ps. lxxii. 17, which the Talmud renders, "Before the Sun, Yinnon (Heb., shall flourish) was His name," the name indicating the pre-existence of the Messiah.

Raise Him up from the land of Seir,¹⁶
To announce salvation to us from Mount Lebanon,¹⁷
Once again through the hand of Yinnon."

THE ZOHAR (Vol. II. 212a)

"The souls which are in the garden of Eden below go to and fro every new moon and Sabbath, in order to ascend to the place that is called the Walls of Jerusalem. . . . After that they journey on and contemplate all those that are possessed of pains and sicknesses and those that are martyrs for the unity of their Lord, and then return and announce it to the Messiah. And as they tell Him 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,' etc. Then those souls return and abide in their own place.

"There is in the garden of Eden a palace called the palace of the sons of sickness: this palace the Messiah then 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 chastisements for transgression of the law: and this is that which is written, 'Surely our sicknesses He hath carried,' "¹⁸

16 Seir stands here for Edom, and by Edom the Talmud means Rome, where, as we have seen above, the Messiah already lives in deep humiliation and suffering.

17 Lebanon stands here for the Mount of the Temple, from which Messiah is to proclaim to Israel that the time of salvation has come.

18 The Zohar, the Bible of the Mystics, contains another tradition about the concealed existence of the Messiah preceding His Advent. He lives in Paradise, in a place called The Bird's Nest (Kān Tsippor), from whence He will appear to save Israel. *Cf. Zohar, 11 7b.*