

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 53:1-3, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, PART 4

In these three verses of chapter 53, we discover that there are questions concerning the revelation of the Servant message, His origin and His appearance are described, and He will be despised rather than esteemed.

In Isaiah 53:1, the immediate question is, who is the one speaking?

Isaiah 53:1 ¹Who has believed [אִמַּן] our message [שְׁמוּעָה]? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

The Rabbinical tradition since at least the commentaries of Rashi, who was a revered Rabbi of Middle Ages Europe, is that this question is being asked by the Gentile nations and kings spoken of in Isaiah 52:15 when they see the exaltation of the Jews in the last days. Rashi is actually Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105, and Rashi is an acronym of Rabbi Sholom Yitzchaki.

The first answer to this is that we know that the Israelites, the people and the nation, are not being or going to be exalted in the way the one spoken of in Isaiah 52:13 will be exalted. The nation will be redeemed and restored to the position Israel was created to fill from the beginning of their creation as a people and a nation, but they will not be exalted to the extent the Suffering Servant being revealed here will be exalted. They will be the lead nation of the world they were created to be (Dt. 28:13), but that falls short of the exaltation revealed here. Throughout the nation's history, the people have been spiritually blind and deaf (Is. 6:9-10, 42:19-20). They have a history of operating not in truth and righteousness, but in untruth and unrighteousness (Is. 48:1), and they have continually engaged in stubborn rebellion (Is. 1:5, 48:4) and sin (Is. 1:4).

There are grammatical reasons for refuting the idea that Israel is speaking in this verse. "As Hugenberger observed, 'throughout Isaiah whenever the pronouns ""we,""" ""our,""" or ""us"" are introduced abruptly, as in 53:1ff (that is, without an explicit identification of the speakers ...), it is always the prophet speaking on behalf of the people of Israel with whom he identifies ... Accordingly, if the ""we"" or ""us"" in 53:1ff is the prophet speaking on behalf of Israel, then the ""he"" or ""him"" of these same verses cannot also be a reference to Israel' and the 'we' cannot be the kings of the nations. This also means the prophet cannot be speaking of himself in the verse that follows" [Michael L. Brown, "Isaiah 52:13-53:12, The Substitution of the Servant of the Lord" in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, also quoting Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord," 110].

"Whenever we find a 'we' introduced abruptly in the midst of a prophecy, it is always Israel that speaks, including the prophet himself" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, volume 7, 7:504].

The lament here is an expression of sorrow that so few people actually believe what has been revealed. Throughout history, very few Israelites have responded in faith to the revelation they were so privileged to receive. We have to remember that prior to Christ, very few Gentiles ever heard the revelation provided Israel. The world's people knew God (Rom. 1:18-20), but very few Gentiles responded to that revelation. If they would have responded, they would have been given more information, but they refused to do that. That is why they will be so astonished and shut their mouths when they finally hear and see.

It is not an unusual circumstance for a prophet to identify with his people, and we should expect nothing less from a Jewish prophet. Jeremiah (Jer. 14:7-9) and Daniel (Dan. 9:15-20) also spoke in the same way.

Daniel 9:15 ¹⁵“And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked.

Jeremiah 14:7–9 ⁷“Although our iniquities testify against us, O LORD, act for Your name's sake! Truly our apostasies have been many, We have sinned against You. ⁸“O Hope of Israel, Its Savior in time of distress, Why are You like a stranger in the land Or like a traveler who has pitched his *tent* for the night? ⁹“Why are You like a man dismayed, Like a mighty man who cannot save? Yet You are in our midst, O LORD, And we are called by Your name; Do not forsake us!”

Who is this group of Israelites for whom the prophet is speaking? It must be the believing remnant who have come to know God's program for history. Remember, from the time Isaiah penned these words until their fulfillment is far into the future. These Israelites are the ones on whose behalf the report is given as evidenced by the use of “we,” “our,” and “us” pronouns that are used in verses 1-8. The prophet is speaking for a group of believing Israelites who have been exposed to the truth, believed it, but only now fully grasp the significance of who He is and what He has done on their behalf. In other words, the restoration of the nation is a process; it is not a singular event at a moment in time until it reaches the climax.

“[T]he only reasonable answer to the question, ‘who has believed in the message which we have heard?’ is that it is asked by repentant Israel or by their godly remnant when they will finally recognize their past rebellion against God and against His servant, the Messiah. In reality the sense of the question is a self-accusation by the people that so few of them have believed” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 413]. I don't think this is a question asked by either repentant Israel or the nation's godly remnant as Buksbazen suggests as though there is a choice between the two, but it is a question asked by both when the moment of truth arrives at the Lord's return to save the nation from annihilation.

This is in keeping with our contention that Israel and the world will not recognize these things until the Second Coming, and until that time, the majority of Israel in particular, and the world as well, will remain in rebellion and unbelief.

John 12:37–38 ³⁷But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

Romans 10:16 ¹⁶However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"

We know that part of Israel's divine temporal disciplinary program involves rendering their ability to see and hear spiritual truth dull (Is. 6:8-10). However, there will come a time when this condition will end and they will be enabled to understand spiritual truth (Is. 6:11-13). The provisions of the Land Covenant (Dt. 30:6) and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33) reveal that at some point in the future, all the Israelites will be enabled to understand spiritual truth.

Isaiah 32:3–4 ³Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, And the ears of those who hear will listen. ⁴The mind of the hasty will discern the truth, And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.

Many of the things revealed are very hard for the mind of sinful man to comprehend. They cannot see their need, and they cannot see the truth of the remedy for what they need. That's why people are astonished at what they see and are rendered speechless when they finally realize the truth of the remedy that is right before their eyes.

The first question is rhetorical; it seems to demand the answer that few, if any, have believed the message. That is a truth applicable to the world as well as to Israel; people need to believe the revealed truth.

Believe, אָמַן, means to believe, to put faith in, trust, have confidence, that is, to have faith as a believer in what God has revealed. The primary, basic meaning of the word is that of providing stability, confidence, and even certainty. As a metaphor, the word conveys the concepts of faithfulness and trustworthiness thus relating to certainty, assurance, and belief. Then the sense of the word is the acceptance of something as true and sure. "In the Hiphil (causative), it basically means 'to cause to be certain, sure' or 'to be certain about, 'to be assured.' In this sense the word in the Hiphil conjugation is the biblical word for 'to believe' and shows that biblical faith is an assurance, a certainty, in contrast with modern concepts of faith as something possible, hopefully true, but not certain" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "אָמַן," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 51].

Message, שְׂמוּעָה, means a message, a report, a revelation, or news referring to information that may be positive or negative and which is from another geographical area or from a divine source and which is then announced to other people. Its most literal sense refers to what is heard. In this context, it refers to the revelation the nation has received. "Exclusive to this form of the root [שָׁמַע], and theologically significant, is the meaning '(prophetic) message,' i.e., the message which the prophet himself hears from God and which he then transmits to the people. This use emphasizes the divine origin of his message" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "שָׁמַע," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 938-939]. Some theologians believe this refers to the cumulative prophetic message the nation received and is therefore not restricted to Isaiah's message.

The reference to the arm of the Lord is a metaphor revealing the power that He is able to exercise in order to accomplish His will. Some people, the believing remnant, have seen and believed the saving power of God, and Isaiah, as their representative prophet who identifies with the Israelites, is representing them in verses 1-8. The information is meant to be further revelation about the Servant, in this case, the revelation concerning the Suffering Servant who died for their sins and who justifies the many. In Isaiah 52:10 (see also Is. 40:10, 48:14, 51:5), the promise is made that through the arm of the Lord salvation is going to extend to the ends of the earth. This pericope furthers our understanding of that earlier statement.

“God revealed the ‘arm of the Lord,’ his miraculous saving power, to the ‘us’ (the Israelites) who have believed what God has said. These are the ones who are now giving the report in 53:2-12. They are sharing what they understand in order to convince more people to believe what God has revealed to them about the Servant” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 444]. For the most part, however, the Israelites do not believe, and what they heard in Isaiah 52:13-15 is very surprising to them, even incomprehensible.

The arm of the Lord was used to represent the power Yahweh exercised when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. 6:6, 15:16; Is. 51:9). It is also used to represent the power He will exercise when His divine temporal disciplinary program for Israel culminates in the Tribulation judgments at the end of which all Israel will be saved (Ezek. 20:33-34; Rom. 11:26). Babylon was defeated by the mighty arm of God (Is. 48:14) in the past and that will happen again in the future when the Babylonian world system is destroyed (cf. Ezek. 20:33-34 when the Babylonian system will once again be used as God's instrument of judgment on Israel). This pericope is going to lay out the method that will be used to eventually make the restoration of Israel a possibility.

The next two verses describe the Suffering Servant's humble beginnings. In terms of outward appearance, there was nothing special about Him, yet He was despised and forsaken.

Isaiah 53:2 ²For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot [יִנְיָק], And like a root out of parched [צִיָּה] ground; He has no *stately* form [תִּצְרָה] or majesty [הִדְרָה] That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance [מְרֵאָה] that we should be attracted [תִּקְמָד] to Him.

This relates to the inauspicious beginnings of the Suffering Servant. We know that He was born in a manger in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20) and that He was the son of a carpenter from Nazareth (Mt. 13:53-58; Mark 6:3). He was not born a king; he was born poor and subject to the king in power at the time. He did not publicly announce that He was the Messiah, although He did that in a few face-to-face encounters (cf. Mt. 16:16-17; John 4:26, 11:25-27) and He did not establish an organized, public ministry. He simply started teaching as an itinerant Rabbi and that did attract some followers, but most people still rejected Him, although some took notice and were astonished at His brilliance and depth of His teaching.

Mark 6:2–3 ²When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? ³“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.

In the eyes of those who knew Him best, this man who had grown up among them was a common man; He was nothing special. “Despite His impressive words and deeds, He was too ordinary for them. The derogatory question, Isn't this the carpenter? implied ‘He is a common laborer like the rest of us.’ All His immediate family—mother, brothers, and sisters—were known to the townspeople, and they were ordinary people” [John D. Grassmick, “Mark” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 126]. There was nothing about His appearance that would suggest that He was the God-Man, the Messiah, sent to save the world. This simile certainly represents the unassuming appearance of the Servant, and even presents a picture of a man whose presence is less than desirable. He was exactly the opposite of what people expected their Messiah to look like when He appeared.

Shoot, יִנְקָ, means a sucker, a young plant, or a sapling. This form of the word is a *hapex legomenon*; it appears only in this verse in the Bible. Most Lexicons place the emphasis on the meaning of this word as a reference to young or tender plant or shoot, and all the translations reflect that situation, but that is far too benign. The emphasis on the word in this context is that of a sucker plant. A sucker is an undesirable element of plant growth; it is essentially a parasitic growth that deprives the primary plant of nutrients and generally produces nothing in return. “To men, the servant appeared as a shoot growing from the main stalk, to be pruned off since it sapped or sucked the strength from the main plant” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “יִנְקָ,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 383-384].

“Instead of appearing as a mighty oak or a flourishing fruit tree, the Servant would grow up before the Lord as a sucker, a normally unwanted shoot that sprouts up from a root.... Gardeners usually snip off such shoots as soon as they appear because they rob nourishment from the main plant” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Isaiah-Daniel, Volume IV*, 4:152].

While this is a reference to a shoot that is a sucker, this shoot will eventually become a completely productive plant, but that is unknown at the time Isaiah wrote His prophecy. This reference is obviously related to the earlier prophecy concerning a shoot and a branch that come from Jesse, David's father.

Isaiah 11:1, 10 ¹Then a shoot [יִנְקָ] will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.... ¹⁰Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples ...

Interestingly, this undesirable, unappealing picture of the Suffering Servant is opposite the appearance of King David.

1 Samuel 16:12 ¹²So he sent and brought him in. Now he [David] was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance....

The point to this is that there would be nothing about His appearance that would attract the attention of anyone encountering this man. There was nothing to differentiate Him from any other man walking down the street. That will not be the situation when He returns at the Second Coming as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, but at His First Advent nothing about His appearance was anything other than less than ordinary.

In the same way that He was compared to a sucker, He was likened to a root emerging out of dry ground. Parched, *הַצֵּיָה*, means dry or dry places, drought, arid, or desert. It refers to desert land which is a parched, dry region with a focus on it not having a reliable source of moisture from either rain or ground water which results in the area being very dry and parched. Ground that is devoid of water is not expected to be conducive to the germination of plant seeds nor for the plant to take root even if the plant germinates. Any roots that developed would therefore be unable to adequately nourish plants which would result in poor growth and low to no productivity. They would essentially be worthless.

There was nothing about the God-man at His First Advent that people would have noticed. He had no form or majesty that would grab people's attention and cause them to focus on Him.

Form, *תֵּצַר*, means form or shape, and it may be used as a reference to what one looks like. It is that which distinguishes the way an object looks, usually implying a positive, attractive appearance. In this context, it is negated rendering the meaning that of a negative, unattractive appearance.

Majesty, *הַדָּבָר*, means splendor, honor, glory, and, most often, majesty. It refers to what is beautiful and instills awe and ascribing high value or status to what is majestic. The word is often used to refer to the majesty of God. In this verse, the majesty of the God-man is veiled and no human being could observe it and realize His true identity in terms of His appearance.

The Suffering Servant deliberately veiled or left behind His divine attributes; they were not visible to men while He was among them.

Philippians 2:6-8 ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

His divine majesty was put on display one time and that was in the company of only two of the disciples. No one else saw Him displaying His glory as God.

Matthew 17:2 ²And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

The NASB and the NET Bible both insert the word “stately” into the text in connection with the word “form;” the text in those two versions reads “stately form.” I suspect they did that as a way to make the word “form” be a complementary parallel to the word “majesty.” Both words would then be a reference to His veiled status as the God-man whereas “form” alone does not convey any thought of the majesty of God. In this context, and in most others where this word is used, “form” alone refers to the form and shape of a human being without any consideration of the glory of God. There is nothing about His form that would cause people to be attracted to Him and follow His lead. There is not a lot of lexical support for inserting the word “stately” into the text as an explanatory comment.

He was an ordinary, or even less than ordinary, man in terms of His appearance which suggests that, at least in terms of looks, He could move around in society without attracting any attention whatsoever. We might say He was just an “average Joe” in terms of appearance. The text seems to suggest that He was actually homely or undesirable in terms of looks which is a state that tends to be on the side of repulsive as opposed to attractive.

Appearance, מְרֵאָה, in this context, means appearance or form referring to the visual form that is seen. This word is synonymous with “form.” Some lexicons (cf. Willem A. VanGemeren, s.v. “ראה,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 1012) relate this to the Suffering Servant’s state after the physical torture He experienced, but the immediate context suggests this is a general statement concerning His presence living among the Israelites before the cross. He did not stand out among the people as someone with a striking appearance does and who commands attention just by being present. We could relate this word to the concept of fleshly appeal or attractiveness. We also have to remember that, in terms of Messianic expectations, that the Israelites were looking for a conquering king to free them from the yoke of Roman domination. The Suffering Servant did not meet their expectations concerning what that Person was supposed to look like. One of the things that attracted people to King Saul was the fact that he was much taller than the average Israelite (1 Sam. 10:23). Looks are deceiving and his reign did not work out so well.

Attract, הִמָּד, means to desire or to take pleasure in relating to taking a high degree of pleasure or mental satisfaction in. It suggests something that is very desirable and is worthy of being desired. The Israelites did not see Him in that way.

The Israelites were not only not attracted to Him, they despised Him and He was forsaken among them. This continues the thought of verse 2 which reveals that it is by the world’s standards that the Suffering Servant is being judged which results in His rejection by the leadership and by the people following their lead. When the leadership of Israel rejected Him (Mt. 12:30-32), they led the people into rejecting Him as well. “Immediately preceding the Olivet Discourse, the Messiah spoke the final words of His public ministry, found in Matthew 23:1-39, which contains the denunciation of the leadership of Israel, especially for their guilt in leading the nation to reject the Messiahship of Jesus” [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “Appendix V; The Olivet Discourse,” in *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed., 621].

Isaiah 53:3 ³He was despised [בְּזוּהַ] and forsaken [הֶדְדַל] of men [אִישִׁים], A man of sorrows [מְכַאֵב] and acquainted with grief [הָלִי]; And like one from whom men hide [מִסְתַּתֵּר] their face He was despised [בְּזוּהַ], and we did not esteem [הֶשְׁבַּ] Him.

Despised, בְּזוּהַ, means to despise, to show contempt for, to think lightly of referring to a feeling of contempt for an object because it is regarded to be bad and of little value which is often accompanied with behaviors toward the object which correspond to that contempt including speaking scorn and ridicule. "The basic meaning is 'to accord little worth to something.' While this action may or may not include overt feelings of contempt or scorn, the biblical usage indicates that the very act of undervaluing something or someone implies contempt" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "בְּזוּהַ," *Theological Word-book of the Old Testament*, 98]. This is the same word used in Daniel 11:21 where it is a description of Antiochus Epiphanes who was the type of antichrist. This word is in the form of a passive participle, meaning those around Him showered Him with contempt.

Some theologians, incorrectly, I think, believe this word in Hebrew lacks the emotional impact of belittling and contempt the word "despised" carries in English. If so, this means that they simply ignored Him as unimportant and insignificant. That does not seem to be the case; however, because He not only faced a lot of hatred and contempt, they even wanted to have Him killed (Mt. 26:3-5; John 7:1, 11:47-53).

Forsaken, הֶדְדַל, means to be rejected referring to being forsaken by people and so in a state of desertedness. It has the sense of being abandoned or left by others. Most translations use the word "rejected" in this verse. The TANAKH uses the word "shunned."

Men, אִישִׁים, in this context, refers to those of high rank rather than to men in general, although that is what it ultimately leads to as well because He ends up being forsaken of all men. "... of men (*ī-šim*, 'men of rank and eminence'), the hypocritical religionists of His day, and the worldly rulers who were offended by the truth He preached and the light in which He walked" [Merrill F. Unger, s.v. "Isaiah," in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1296]. "The Hebrew word for 'men' is *'ishim*,' the poetic form for the regular *'anashim*,' a reference not to the ordinary rank and file men (*hoi polloi*), but to men of stature" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 415]. "It is of significance to note that *'ishim* (men) is not a synonym of sons of men (*benei 'ā-dām*) but rather designates the better class of men" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:343]. "The predicate *chādāl īšim* [forsaken of men] is misunderstood by nearly all commentators, inasmuch as they take אִישִׁים [men] as synonymous with בני אדם [sons of Adam, i.e., mankind], whereas it is rather used in the sense of בני איש (lords), as distinguished from *benei 'ā-dām*, or people generally. The only other passages in which it occurs are Prov. 8:4 and Ps. 141:4, and in both instances it signifies persons of rank" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:506].

Sorrow, מְכַאֵב, means pain and suffering. It may relate to physical, bodily pain, or it may refer to anguish, grief, and mental suffering, that is, an emotion of anguish as the figurative extension of a physical pain of the body. "Although the root can be used to express physical suffering, it much more commonly has to do with mental anguish.... For the most part, however, it is impossible to separate the mental and physical anguish as far as this

word is concerned" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "כָּאַב," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 425]. In terms of the Suffering Servant, this word must refer to both physical and mental suffering; however, the physical suffering did not take place until the very end of His ministry, at least in terms of pain inflicted upon Him by others.

Grief, חָלַי, means disease, sickness. There is no record in the gospel accounts of the Lord's life that He ever suffered a physical illness. This word is also used in the next verse relating to the sickness of the Israelites that He bore on their behalf. This is the meaning here. He took the sickness of the nation on Himself, physical and spiritual, which was a tremendous burden. This word is introduced by the word acquainted which is the passive participle form of "to know," which could be translated, "and one knowing sickness." This relates to the fact that the sickness of Israel and the world were placed on Him; therefore, He was made to know them and suffered the pain of bearing them on Israel's behalf. "Nowhere is it said that Jesus suffered under physical sickness. His sufferings were infinite, because He bore the sin of the world as the cause of sickness (and of all other pain and woe), rather than the result of sin in its manifestation in mankind" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1296].

"The meaning is not, that He had by nature a sickly body, falling out of one disease into another, but that the wrath instigated by sin, and the zeal of self-sacrifice (Ps. 69:10), burnt like the fire of a fever in His soul and body, so that even if He had not died a violent death, He would have succumbed to the force of the powers of destruction that were innate in humanity in consequence of sin, and of His own self-consuming conflict with them" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:507].

"Since the Servant was not physically ill, it may be best to translate the term as 'suffering' [rather than as "sickness"] and understand it to refer to the physical pain of a tortured and disfiguring death that He endured" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 446].

He suffered on the tremendous weight of the mission He was sent to accomplish. He was poor with no place to lay His head (Mt. 8:20), and He had women following Him who ministered to His needs (Mark 15:41). He had no visible source of income and presumably lived off of donations (John 12:5-6, 13:29). In addition to all that, He was bearing the burden of His nation's rejection and His upcoming Suffering on their behalf (Mt. 23:37-38). He knew what was in store for Him and that was a heavy burden to bear (Mt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46). He also knew that as a man He was going to be forsaken by the Father during the time He was suffering the infinite penalty for mankind's sins (Mt. 27:46).

Men avoided Him, and even worse, they despised Him and had no consideration for Him at all. People are reluctant to engage with, or even look at, people and things they hate with a passion. The Israelites hid their face from Him, and since the cross, they have hated Him all the more. There is a historical frame of reference among the Jewish people that highlights the nature and depth of their hatred for Him that began during the First Advent.

"For hundreds of years, His name was not even mentioned among the Jews except by such circumlocutions as 'that man' or 'the hanged one.' The words 'he was despised' are repeated twice in this sentence to emphasize its intensity. The Hebrew name of Jesus,

'Yeshua' (Saviour), has been deliberately distorted into 'Yeshu,' the initial letters of which were supposed to spell out a Hebrew sentence which means, 'Let his name and his memory be blotted out.' This aversion to him has even increased with the passing of time" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 416].

Hide, *מִסָּתֵר*, means to hide, the act of hiding referring to turn or possibly hiding one's eyes or face from an object. "In context, it indicates an act of turning away, desiring not to look at someone, because of his pathetic situation (Isa. 53:3)" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "מִסָּתֵר," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 637]. "Perhaps its most significant use is in the idiom to 'hide the face,' symbolizing broken communion, such as between God and sinful Israel (Isa 59:2). The most tragic example of broken fellowship is man's rejection of Messiah (Isa 53:3 ...)" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "סָתַר," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 636].

The Hebrew text reads, for the second time which is a point of emphasis, that He was despised and adds that they did not esteem Him.

Esteem, *הֵשִׁיב*, means to value, to esteem, to regard, or to consider which refers to thought and thinking in a detailed, logical manner, considering various factors, which has some focus on the formulation of an opinion, or to making a judgment. "A positive judgment about an item leads to its being esteemed or valued.... With a negative the vb. means something has lost its esteem or is no longer valued as expected ... A wrong judgment may lead to something of value not being rightly esteemed.... In the portrait of the obedient servant who suffered vicariously, Isaiah adds the sad comment that those who observed the servant's sufferings failed to perceive their purpose; thus they did not esteem him (Isa 53:3)" [Willem A. Van Gemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "הֵשִׁיב," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 2:303-305].

"Esteemed is an 'accounting' word, a reckoning up of value. They saw ordinariness (2), the world would call him an 'unfortunate' (3b), so they did not choose to follow him (3a) but turned from him (3c). They appraised what they saw and it added up to nothing (3d) [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 334]. The call of the Servant, now the Suffering Servant, was not believed, and, in fact, He was despised and rejected despite the fact that His mission was to die for their sins, as we will see.

"Thus the revelation of the arm of the Lord that will deliver the Lord's people is met with shock, astonishment, distaste, dismissal, and avoidance. Such a one as this can hardly be the one who can set us free from that most pervasive of all human bondages: sin, and all its consequences. To a world blinded by selfishness and power, he does not even merit a second thought" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 384]. This will all be fleshed out as the Suffering Servant song continues with the revelation that begins here.

The Rabbis like to suggest that God is hiding His face from the Servant and rejecting Him; however, earlier Scriptures indicated that God was going to reward Him (Is. 49:4), give Him as a covenant to the people (Is. 49:8), and assist Him and vindicate Him (Is. 50:7-9). There is no support for this position. Others think it is the Suffering Servant who turned His

face from the Israelites, but that is not viable given that He said He would not turn back from the fulfillment of His role as God's disciple (Is. 50:5).

It is "we" who did not esteem Him, so who is "we?" That is the people speaking in this pericope which we earlier identified as people who came to believe the message when the arm of the Lord was revealed with Isaiah as their spokesman (Is. 53:1).

Beyond the fact that there was nothing extraordinary about him in a physical sense, He did not exude what we today call a command presence, but that was because His mission was not to assume command at His First Advent. He offered Himself as King, but He knew the leadership would reject Him as their King (Mt. 12:24); therefore, He hid this aspect of His nature from them. Once He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, He will have an amazing command presence (Rev. 19:11-21)! Furthermore, He was not a man who would have been picked out as a leader of other men based on the superficial qualifications of the world system most people would use to do so. Even beyond His appearance, His ministry was rejected by the leadership and as the nation's leadership went so went the people.

I think we can safely say that the fact is He was an extraordinary person. He was a leader and He was a brilliant teacher, but that was in a spiritual sense that Israel and the nation's religious leadership were unable to adequately comprehend because they were not spiritual. Therefore, Israel judged Him a failure according to the world's standards. The world judges based on outward, worldly characteristics that mean nothing in terms of the spiritual life the Suffering Servant so highly possessed. "The servant dwelt in the midst of his own people, and behind his physical form the eye of faith should have seen the true glory; but looking upon his outward appearance, Israel found nothing of beauty to delight the eye.... [T]he purpose is to show that the appearance of the servant was such that man, judging from a wrong perspective, would completely misjudge him" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:342].

To this day, the majority of the Israelites and the majority of the Gentile people of the world still despise Him, reject Him, and esteem Him not.