

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 52:13-15, THE SUFFERING SERVANT, PART 3

The Suffering Servant is introduced by the prophet in 52:13-15. The reference is to "My" Servant, i.e., God's Servant. Again, this Scripture is clearly identifying the Servant as an individual Person; it cannot be interpreted and forced into identifying either Israel or the believing Remnant as the Servant. We cannot, however, completely disassociate the Suffering Servant from the nation Israel, because "there is a real link between national Israel and the suffering servant of God. Both Israel and her Messiah were called to be God's servant, but Israel failed to accomplish her divine mission; whereas, the Messiah, the obedient servant of God, did accomplish the mission which the Father entrusted to Him" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 410]. Another issue concerning the Messiah that muddies the waters just a bit and confuses things between Messiah and the nation is that He was, in fact, born a Jew; He is an Israelite. He is Israel's Messiah, but we have already noted that God has a plan for the salvation of the world, and Israel's Messiah is the world's Messiah as well. Israel the nation is saving no one, and the nation, in fact, rejected the Messiah when He first came to them and not only did they reject Him, they subjected Him to the intense suffering the Suffering Servant song reveals.

By way of review, let's read the Scriptures in which Isaiah has already revealed the Servant and assured his audience that He would fulfill His assignment.

Isaiah 42:1 ¹"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

Isaiah 49:2-3 ²He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. ³He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory."

Isaiah 50:7-9 ⁷For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. ⁸He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.

The torture the Suffering Servant was going to experience was also predicted by the prophet.

Isaiah 50:6 ⁶I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

In the introduction to the Suffering Servant song (Is. 52:13-15), there are three issues revealed. The Servant will be exalted (v. 13), the Servant will be disfigured and people will be horrified at His appearance (v. 14), and the nations will see and understand what they had not seen and heard before (v. 15). Note that there is not a timetable in these three verses. All of it is in the future from Isaiah's point of view, and it will be fulfilled over the

course of history. The disfigurement revealed here occurred on the cross, but the exaltation, the seeing, and the understanding did not begin until after the cross when the apostles began revealing the truth of the Suffering Servant to Israel and the world. Even at that, the fullness of exaltation, seeing, and hearing will not occur until the Second Coming. Some of what we will discuss in relation to these verses is known to us because of the blessing we have that we call progressive revelation. This is a prophecy, which, by definition, means it is looking to fulfillment at some time in the future.

Isaiah 52:13 ¹³Behold [הִנֵּה], My servant will prosper [שָׁכַל], He will be high [רָם] and lifted up [נִשָּׂא] and greatly [מְאֹד] exalted [גָּבַהַ].

Behold, הִנֵּה, means Here! There! Look! Now! which is used as a marker to liven a narrative, change a scene, emphasize an idea, or call attention to a detail. The word adds vividness and emotional involvement for the reader. It is frequently used to point out people, which is the context here, and as such, the exclamation “behold” is used as a marker to attract attention, to let the audience know that what follows is very important, and they should seriously take note of it. This is a very important Person who is doing very important work. He is, after all, the Savior of the entire world and that fact has been made clear by Isaiah in the text that precedes the Suffering Servant song! The full attention of everyone hearing and/or reading Isaiah’s prophecy should be firmly fixed on the revelation of the Suffering Servant.

Prosper, שָׁכַל, has a range of meanings. It primarily means to be prudent. In this verb form, it means to understand, to comprehend, to have insight, to make wise, and to achieve success. The concept of success is the most appropriate meaning in this context. This is what the word “prosper” is conveying in English, that is, “to make successful,” although that use of the word is now considered to be a somewhat archaic use of the word [s.v. “prosper,” *The Oxford American College Dictionary*]. However, we still use the word that way at times. For example, “His business has prospered” is a way of saying that his business has been successful. Nevertheless, we still attach monetary value to the word and that is not what is being conveyed here; success as opposed to failure is the issue.

“Although translated that the Servant will prosper, the Hebrew is literally stating that He will ‘act wisely.’ This is a metonymy of cause for effect, indicating that He will be successful or prosper” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1293].

Some translators believe that “prudent” is the appropriate translation because the Servant’s “sterling and unflinching obedience to the will and purpose of the LORD” causes Him to “‘act wisely, circumspectly’” which presumably leads to His success [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1293]. The KJV and the NKJV use the word “prudent.” The phrase ‘deal prudently’ means ‘to be successful in one’s endeavor’ [Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Prophets*, 59]. Others think the appropriate translation is to act “wisely” (ASV, CSB, ESB, YLT, LSV). “Act wisely: *sākal* is wisdom to know exactly what to do in a given situation so as to bring the intended result. This wise and successful action will bring the Servant a threefold exaltation ...” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 332].

Oswalt maintains that the appropriate translation is to “accomplish his purpose.” I think the intent of that interpretation is correct, but I’m not so sure the Hebrew word itself necessarily lends itself to that particular English translation. The reasoning for his conclusion is sound. “*skl* is usually translated ‘be wise’ or ‘prosper,’ but neither of those translations gathers up the full sense of the context here: to act with such wisdom that one’s efforts will be successful. Thus the text is not saying that the Servant will be a rich man. Rather, it is saying that he will both know and do the right things in order to accomplish the purpose for which he was called. Whatever the intervening intimations of failure might be (49:4), the Servant and the world should know that he will not fail” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 378].

Isaiah 49:4 ⁴But I said, “I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice *due* to Me is with the LORD, And My reward with My God.”

Note that no matter how it is translated—prudent, wisely, or success—the ultimate idea being expressed here ends up being the Servant’s success. My opinion is that if that is the idea the Hebrew word conveys, and if “to achieve success” is an appropriate translation of this word in this context, which it is, then why not use “achieve success” (LEB) or “will succeed” (NET Bible)? That makes the idea the text is conveying much clearer in English than the other options. I personally find the word “prosper” a little confusing in this verse; it is too easy for those of us who speak modern English to identify the use of this word with material matters, i.e., with wealth and its attendant prosperous life. The success of the Suffering Servant’s mission is the issue, not material wealth.

Isaiah 52:13 ¹³Look, my servant shall achieve success ... (LEB).

Isaiah 52:13 ¹³“Look, my servant will succeed! ... (NET Bible).

What will success look like? Success will result in the fact that the Suffering Servant is “high and lifted up and greatly exalted.” These three words are synonyms. “This piling up of synonyms emphasizes the degree of the servant’s coming exaltation” [*The Net Bible*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Isaiah 53:13,” 1306, n. i]. The Literal Standard Version translates all three words similarly: Isaiah 52:13 ¹³... He is high, and has been lifted up, And has been very high.

There is a tremendous amount of significance attached to the truth concerning being high, lifted up, and exalted that will become more apparent as the Suffering Servant song unfolds. This language is used only in Isaiah where it is used four times (Is. 6:1, 33:10, 57:15, 52:13). The other three verses all explicitly refer to God and there is no reason not to apply that truth to this verse. It is only God who is said to be exalted and that truth is contrasted with the fate of mankind which is to be humbled and abased.

Isaiah 2:17 ¹⁷The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,

The concept of God exalted was applied to Christ Jesus by Paul which serves to confirm that interpretation here in Isaiah.

Philippians 2:9–11 ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In a Jewish Midrash, the author of which recognizes the fact that the Messiah is the subject of the exaltation that is revealed in these verses, wrote: "this servant of the Lord identified with the Messiah, will be 'greater than the patriarchs ... higher than Abraham ... lifted up above Moses ... and loftier than the ministering angels'" [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, quoting Yalqut Simoni 2:571, following Midrash Tan-chuma].

High, רם, means to be high, to be exalted, to rise. In this context, it refers to being exalted, to be great, to have triumph, honor, i.e., to have elevation of status. Some translations use the word "exalted" for this word (KJV, NKJV, ASV, LEB).

Lifted up, נָשָׂא, means to lift up, to take up. The primary meaning is to lift something up. Ultimately, in this context, it is referring to bearing or carrying and is used especially in reference to the bearing of guilt or punishment of sin, but that will not be explicitly revealed until Is. 53:4-6. The concept of "lifting up" could also be a reference to His ascension, perhaps both. This verb form may be either passive or reflexive. All the translations suggest the passive sense. If it is translated in the reflexive sense, it would read, "lift Himself up," but the passive sense "indicate(s) that someone else will raise him up, an idea that is consistent with God's promise 'to give him a portion with the great/many' in 53:12.... [A] passive [voice] seems more appropriate in light of the rest of the passage. Exalting oneself usually has the negative connotations of prideful exaltation, which God hates" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66* 436, 436, n. 322].

The problem with that thinking is twofold. First, the Messiah can do things without sin, either in deed or in motive, that sinful man cannot do without sinning. In other words, He could raise Himself up without that act being a prideful sin. Second, the Messiah did, in fact, say that He voluntarily laid down His life and He took it up again. This means the word may well be reflexive in this situation rather than passive.

John 12:32 ³²"And I, if [when] I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

John 10:11, 17-18 ¹¹"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.... ¹⁷"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

The passive sense of this verb is perfectly acceptable, but I don't think it is out of line to translate it in the reflexive sense either as Keil and Delitzsch do. "... and that נָשָׂא [lifted up], according to the immediate and original reflexive meaning of the *niph'al* [reflexive (or

passive) verb form, here considered reflexive], signifies to raise one's self [reflexive verb form], whereas *gābbah* [exalted] expresses merely the condition, without the subordinate idea of activity, we obtain this chain of thought: he will rise up, he will raise himself still higher, he will stand on high. The three verbs consequently denote the commencement, the continuation, and the result or climax of the exaltation ..." [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, volume 7, 7:501]. All the English translations indicate the passive form, but the reflexive sense, as seen here, is valid and entirely possible.

Exalted, *נָבַח*, means to be high, to be exalted referring to assigning or giving high status to an object as an extension of being spatially high in elevation. It has the sense of being elevated in nature. It is used figuratively to refer to persons or things of high or great dignity, which is the context here in Isaiah. Most English translations use "very high" here.

The Suffering Servant will not just be exalted, He will be greatly exalted. Greatly, *מְאֹד*, means muchness, abundance, exceedingly, in the highest degree referring to a high point on a scale of intent. This refers to an exceeding great exaltation of this Person. It is an exaltation to which no mere man can aspire. Certainly, the nation Israel cannot qualify to be exalted to the extent revealed here.

This is in contrast to the state of idols revealed in Isaiah 46:1 where "Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over." The Suffering Servant is exalted and the idols are defeated.

There is an argument among theologians over whether or not this threefold proclamation of the Suffering Servant's exaltation is a prophecy of the Messiah's ascension, resurrection, and seat at the right hand of God the Father. Most say there is no textual support here in Isaiah for that concept, but we also have to remember that this is a prophecy; none of it is going to begin to take place for about 700 years. It is all future. I think Unger makes a good case for understanding these things as the result of the Suffering Servant's work that is being revealed in this verse.

"Since the Servant's exaltation began only *after* His atoning death, His resurrection must be reflected, though *not* specifically indicated (and certainly not excluded) in the words 'be exalted.' The words 'extolled' and 'be very high,' expressing final state and condition, likewise reflect Christ's ascension and His being raised above all heavens, installed at the Father's right hand" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1294].

I actually think Unger's reasoning may itself be a bit shortsighted in terms of future fulfillment. I see no reason why His exaltation is not considered as part of a continuum that understands it as occurring from the revelation of the Suffering Servant during His First Advent, His resurrection, and His position now seated at the right hand of the Father, through the King's reign during the Messianic Kingdom, and on into eternity. All of this contributes to the ultimate expression of His exaltation.

Psalm 2:6–8 ⁶"But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." ⁷"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have

begotten You. ⁸‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

I would not get dogmatic about any of this, but as a prophecy of future events concerning the Suffering Servant, the concept that His exaltation encompasses His life from the cross on into eternity seems to be at least reasonable.

Young presents the opposing argument. “Yet the prophet’s purpose seems not so much to present the actual details of our Lord’s life as to set forth a picture of the suffering servant as such. Whereas man’s kingdom perishes and its idols fall ... [the] ruler of redeemed mankind receives the highest exaltation” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, 336]. This is true, but these particular words are prophetic in this context, and that fact cannot be marginalized.

The next verse reveals the results of the treatment the Suffering Servant was going to experience. It not only reveals the world’s reaction to His disfigurement, but to His exaltation afterwards.

Isaiah 52:14 ¹⁴Just as many [רַב] were astonished [שָׁמַם] at you [עָלִידָה], My people, So His appearance was marred [מְשַׁחַת] more than any man And His form [תֹּאֵר] more than the sons of men.

The first issue to discuss in this verse is the insertion into the text of “My people” by the NASB translators; those words are not in the text as indicated by the italic font used to spell them. The reason for this seems to be a mystery, at least to me. No other English translation that I routinely consult places these “explanatory” words into the text. The way the NASB reads, it sounds as though “you” is an address to Israel, God’s people. We already know that Israel is not the Servant; therefore, that seems to be a solution in search of a non-existent problem. I could not find any explanation for this anywhere in all the resources at my disposal except one, and that was very minimal. Unger simply reported that the NASB understood “you” to be a reference to “My people” without further elaboration [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1294]. My advice is to disregard the explanatory insertion into the text in this instance. It only confuses the issue and adds nothing to understanding the actual written Word that we have in this verse. Furthermore, it is counterproductive and simply incorrect.

The first clause of the sentence is a direct address to the Suffering Servant indicated by the use of the second person personal pronoun “you.” The change to the third person personal pronoun “His” twice in the rest of the verse confuses people and some translations therefore change the text in the first clause to read “Him” as well (cf. NIV, RSV). The Masoretic Text clearly reads “at you” [עָלִידָה], and I don’t think we should be emending (changing) the text.

The most likely answer to this situation is that the Suffering Servant is being directly addressed in a very brief manner and then the focus shifts to talking about Him rather than directly to Him. “In essence, it is as if for a moment the Lord stopped describing the Servant and instead spoke directly to Him.... Many ancient Hebrew manuscripts have the word ‘Him’ ... [which] would make more sense in the context” [Michael Rydelnik and

James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1087]. "Some witnesses read 'him,' which is more consistent with the context, where the servant is spoken about, not addressed. However, it is possible that the Lord briefly addresses the servant here. The present translation [NET Bible] assumes the latter view and places the phrases in parentheses" [s.v. "Isaiah 52:14," *The Net Bible*, 2nd ed., 1306, n. j].

It could also be that the prophet is simply switching from the second person to the third person personal pronouns. "[A]t times to heighten the drama in Hebrew poetry, the speaker can begin to address directly the individual being described throughout in the third person" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1087].

There is a third option that seems highly unlikely and that relates to a textual error or, worse, to a deliberate change in the text wherein it was changed from "Him" to "you," but the error theory is suspect because it would mean completely changing the pronoun which essentially eliminates at least the scribal or copying error as the source. That would involve a change from הוּ (his [its]/him [it], masculine) to אַתָּ (your/you, masculine), which could really only occur as the result of a deliberate change. I think a mistake is unlikely, but I would not rule out a deliberate change in the text at some point in history.

The Suffering Servant will suffer such severe injuries that people will be shocked and appalled, even horrified, at His appearance. There is quite a contrast presented here between the highs of the Suffering Servant's exaltation and the lows of His disfigured appearance.

Astonished, אֲשׁוּי, means, in this context, to be appalled or astonished which is describing a person's reaction upon seeing desolation and destruction. It refers to being appalled, horrified, terrified, or dismayed relating to the emotion or attitude of horror and great fear implying also dismay and discouragement. The reason for that reaction is due to the extent of the damage that results in a destroyed and ruined state which implies that the object, person, or area is now abandoned from all help, deserted, or in personal poverty. It expresses the inner response of a person who is horrified and shocked upon seeing immense damage to a person or a place. This is a very strong word. "The Servant's sufferings brought such a disfigurement that those who saw said not only, 'Is this he?' but 'Is this human?'" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 332]. "By saying that His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men, Isaiah was saying in a very strong way that His sufferings would be very great" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah," in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:151]. In English, astonished means to "surprise or impress (someone) greatly" [s.v. "astonish," *The Oxford American College Dictionary*]. In our English translations, "astonished" is the word most often used to translate this word, but "appalled" (CSB, LEB, NIV, TANAKH) and "horrified" (NET Bible) are also used, which I think are better words to use for the sake clarity and understanding in the English language.

The adjective "many" is a very important word as it is used in the Suffering Servant song, and it is used 4 times. It is the word that tells us that the substitutionary death of the Suffering Servant is efficacious for not just the Israelites, but for the world.

Many, רַב, means many or a great many, a great deal, much, abundance, and numerous. It indicates much in amount, a large number of people, and an abundance of various things. This word "is a keyword in this passage for the beneficiaries of the Servant's suffering" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 332]. The word is used to refer to "many were astonished" (Is. 52:14), "sprinkle many nations" (Is. 52:15), "justify the many" (Is. 53:11), and "bore the sin of many" (Is. 53:12). We know from other Scriptures that Gentile salvation was part of God's plan for justification salvation (Is. 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6). Clearly, the Suffering Servant is suffering on behalf of not only Israel but of all mankind. "Many," plural, those who stand to benefit from the work of the Suffering Servant, stands in contrast to the singular "you," referring to the One who provides the benefit to the many.

Marred, מְשֻׁחָת, means disfigurement, marring, corruption, i.e., a state or condition of an object having a mutilated form and so to be ugly and repugnant. It refers to the terrible disfigurement or distortion of a person's appearance. The Suffering Servant was disfigured beyond description. This word is a *hapex legomenon* meaning that it is only used here in this verse in the Bible.

Because this word is used in only this verse, there are some who argue for a different root word that would result in translating the word as "anointed." Of course, we know the Messiah is anointed of God, and that is how a reading in the Targum understands this verse, but that does not fit the overall context and specifically within the context of Isaiah 53:2-3. If the root is שָׁחַת, which is the word used in the text, then it means ruined or disfigured, but if it is מָשַׁח then it means to anoint, but that word is not used in the Hebrew text. I cannot imagine, based on both the word used in Masoretic Text and based on the context, that "anoint" is the appropriate translation and no English version that I am aware of uses it.

The torture the Lord endured at the time leading up to the cross was absolutely brutal. He was beaten (Mt. 26:67, 27:30), he had a crown of thorns jammed into his skull (Mt. 27:29), and he was scourged (Mt. 27:26) which itself was seriously injurious enough to kill a man. Then, of course, the very act of crucifixion was one of the most barbaric ways to execute a man that fallen man has ever devised. The sense here is that as people look on the Suffering Servant, He no longer even represents what a man, a human being, looks like so devastating are his injuries.

Form, תֵּאֲרָה, means appearance, form, shape, visage, or what one looks like referring to that which distinguishes the way an object looks, usually implying a positive, attractive appearance. It refers to the contours and outward form of something; its most basic sense is that of shape or form. In this verse, the context indicates the meaning is just the opposite, that is, His form was so marred that he scarcely could be seen as a human being. This word may be emphasizing the extremely damaged form of His face, but it would not be out of line to apply it to the damage done to His entire body.

He was marred more than any man and His form was destroyed more than the sons of men. While the horrendous injuries suffered by the Lord were quite literal, this is probably a way of figuratively describing the horrendous extent of His suffering. "... His disfigurement was inhuman; He no longer looked like a man.... The inhumanity of Christ's physical treatment is more rationally defended than its uniqueness as far as severity is concerned,

for many other human beings have been abused physically in a crueller sense" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1294].

However, we must also take into consideration the fact that the Suffering Servant was taking upon Himself the punishment for the sin of the world at the same time He was undergoing this physical abuse. That alone must have been a crushing burden that could have seriously changed His countenance, although the people looking on would not have known that. "The uniqueness of Christ's sufferings lies not in the physical sphere; but in the combination of the physical sphere with the spiritual realm. But in this context only the brutality and inhumanity of the physical abuse heaped upon Him come into view" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1294].

Some theologians make a distinction between "man" and "sons of men." "He is more disfigured than an 'ish (the better class of man) and his form more than the sons of men (ordinary men)" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, 338].

Verse 15, where men finally recognize who He is and what He did on their behalf, contrasts with verse 14 where men were horrified at what happened to Him.

Isaiah 52:15 ¹⁵Thus He will sprinkle [נָזַח] many nations, Kings will shut [קָפְצוּ] their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.

Sprinkling nations seems to be an odd characterization of the Suffering Servant's work, but once His work is complete, His High Priest duties become operative and the meaning of this situation becomes clear.

Sprinkle, נָזַח, means to sprinkle or spatter referring to casting liquid onto an object in a random manner. In this causative verb form, it has the sense of casting this liquid on the object with a purpose, which is ritual cleansing. That being the case, the liquid is the blood that was shed as a result of the torture the Suffering Servant experienced in verse 14. That is the context here. His death was not just for the Jews, and it was not just for the Christian; it was for the whole world. We do not know that strictly from this verse, but we have the benefit of progressive revelation that sheds much light on this situation.

1 John 2:2 ²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

"The priestly idea of atonement sprinkling is suitable to this context, and the element of surprise that such blessed results of cleansing and atonement should follow such tortured suffering is what makes *kings shut their mouths*, i.e., be dumbfounded. New truth has come to them, formerly untold, unheard before, but now seen and understood" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 333].

The thing about ritual cleansing in terms of most aspects of the Mosaic Law is that it required a clean priest to do it which is why the laver for the washing of the priests was provided outside the Tabernacle (Ex. 30:17-21, 40:30-32). "Men regarded the servant as himself unclean and in need of purification, whereas he himself as a priest will sprinkle

water and blood and so purify many nations. He does this as a sufferer, whose suffering are for the sake of an expiatory purification and produce a profound change in the attitude of those who behold him. This is the work that he will prudently perform, and because of which he will be greatly exalted" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:338]. The treatment the Suffering Servant received was the treatment accorded those who need to be purified by a priest; therefore, it will surprise the kings and the nations of the world when He turns out to be the One who purified them.

The explanation of the meaning of this was not evident at the time Isaiah penned this prophecy, although Isaiah 53 begins to explain it. None of it began to be fulfilled until the First Advent, which furthered understanding, and it will not be fully explainable and understood until the Second Coming and perhaps even at the beginning of the eternal state. We have the benefit of time and progressive revelation which provides further information on the Suffering Servant song. Whatever this meant to people at the time in question, the sprinkling of the nations is fully understood at some point in the future.

Some translators (NET Bible, TANAKH) translate this word as "startle," but that relies on an Arabic word meaning to jump up (not startle), and it is not used in a causative sense as this word is used in verse 15. Furthermore, the word is almost always used in the Old Testament to mean ritual cleansing. "Startle" is not the appropriate translation of this Arabic word. "The major problem with this alternative is that the Arabic root does not mean 'to be startled' but 'stand up, leap up' ... North, *Second Isaiah*, 228, recognizes that the translations startle 'gives it an emotional content it never has in Arabic'" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 440; 440, n. 341].

"[I]n respect of Is. 52:14, it is certainly more acceptable to allow a minor [grammatical/syntax] adjustment of an *established* verb in its *established* meaning than to import an *unknown* verb in a meaning it does *not exemplify elsewhere*" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 333, n. 1]. The "minor adjustment" Motyer referred to here, relates to the fact that this word is always used with a preposition (for example, "sprinkled on") in all the other uses of it concerning ritual sprinkling, and no preposition is used here in Isaiah. Despite that fact, I think that "sprinkle" is the appropriate translation.

That lack of a preposition is the grammatical/syntactical reason the NET Bible uses "startle." "... others propose a homonymic root [a homonym meaning "each of two words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling," s.v. "homonym" *The Oxford American College Dictionary*] meaning 'spring, leap,' which in the Hiphil [causative verb form used in Isaiah 52:15] could mean 'cause to leap, startle and would fit the parallelism of the verse nicely" [*The NET Bible*, s.v. "Isaiah 52:15," 1306, n. o].

People, including very important world leaders, will be so surprised at the end result of the Suffering Servant's torture that they will be rendered speechless.

Shut, שָׁטַח, means to gather up, to shut, draw together, or to close referring to closing an object so as to not allow the passage of items or a mass. The sense is to close by moving something so that an opening or passage is obstructed; to make shut. In this context, the meaning relates to the drawing together, shutting or closing, of the mouth. This is an

indication of just how shocking the world is going to find all this when they are finally confronted with the truth of who He really is when He returns to earth alive as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16). This could have been the impact some people felt at the Resurrection, but that was unknown to most of the nations and kings at that time. When this prophecy is finally fulfilled, the world will be so shocked that people will be rendered speechless.

At the time, most of the world did not know of the Savior or of His brutal death. Their shock may be the result of such a Person appearing in glory to defeat the antichrist and his armies and realizing at that time who He is. He is not the humble Servant who came and died, but the conquering King who will be victorious. By the time this takes place, the world will realize exactly who He is and what He has done. This Person, who had been brutally savaged and despised, is going to be exalted above everything in creation as the Savior of the world.

People will suddenly realize what they have not been told and what they have never seen before. Through Isaiah, God previously revealed this situation in an earlier Servant song. The Servant would be a light to the nations and through Him they could be saved. The Suffering Servant song is going to reveal how that is going to come to pass.

Isaiah 49:6–7 ⁶He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” ⁷Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”