THE DEVELOPMENT OF A JEWISH EXEGETICAL TRADITION REGARDING ISAIAH 53

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Isa 52:13-53:12 has long served Jews and Christians as a source for the resolution of questions resulting from seemingly inexplicable human suffering and death. The fact that such suffering affected the primary links between God and humankind, the people Israel for the Jew and Jesus of Nazareth for the Christian, proved to be an especially perplexing problem that could have undermined fundamental religious beliefs. From the patristic age\(^1\) Isaiah 53 was interpreted so as to provide a rationale for Jesus' suffering on the cross. Medieval and modern Jewish exegetes saw in this prophecy an explanation for the tragedies which the Jews experienced in the exile.\(^2\) Interestingly, in adapting the so-called Suffering Servant passage for their own purposes, Jewish interpreters, of both the medieval and the modern periods, incorporated certain Christian concepts into their exegesis. This study will trace the transference of elements of a Christian exegetical tradition regarding Isaiah 53 into medieval and modern Jewish biblical interpretation.

I

The trial and death through crucifixion of Jesus, as presented in the gospel accounts, posed severe problems for Christian apologists in the first Christian centuries. Among the questions that had to be dealt with were: If Jesus were God, how could he have allowed himself to undergo such suffering and such a shameful and humiliating death? If Jesus were the messiah, should he not have reigned in glory rather than having been treated as a lowly criminal? Undoubtedly, the ancient perception of the penalty of crucifixion as one of the most ignoble and demeaning forms of punishment helped motivate the Christians' antagonists to raise such issues.

\(^1\) The issue of the understanding and use of Isaiah 53 in the New Testament is not within the purview of this article. The underlying assumption of the present study is that, whatever the treatment of the Servant chapter in the Christian Scriptures, it is with the church fathers that this Isaianic passage is explicitly defined as a single prophecy specifically relating to Jesus' suffering.

\(^2\) See n. 46 below.
The notion of a god dying and being resurrected was an accepted part of ancient mythology, but the idea of a crucified god must have appeared to many as blasphemous and atheistic. For Christians Isaiah 53 proved to be a useful tool in responding to such challenges. Asserting that the Bible was a source of legitimate prophecy, churchmen proceeded to demonstrate that the Servant chapter represented a divinely revealed adumbration of Jesus' passion. This prophecy was understood as indicating that Jesus' death represented the fulfillment of the will of God and served a divinely ordained and necessary purpose. Isaiah 53 was also viewed as a vehicle for comprehending that Jesus' human nature, and not his divinity, experienced the anguish of the passion. And, finally, the Suffering Servant foretold the first coming of Jesus the messiah, while his second coming would be in "glory and kingship" (Dan 7:14).

The meager treatment of Isaiah 53 in rabbinic sources is striking when compared to the patristic interest in the chapter and to

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3 On the theological problems associated with the crucifixion of Jesus, see Martin Hengel, Crucifixion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). Crucifixion as the ultimate humiliation is noted in the New Testament in Phil 2:6-11, and in Justin Martyr's 1 Apology 13 and Dialog with Trypho 131; see Demetrius Christ Trakatellis, The Pre-existence of Christ in Justin Martyr (HDR 6; Missoula: Scholars, 1976) 175. Justin's preoccupation with the cross has been noted by E. R. Goodenough, The Theology of Justin Martyr (reprint ed., Amsterdam: Philo, 1968) 159-60, 251-52, 257-61; L. W. Barnard, Justin Martyr, His Life and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 123-25; F. Osborn, Justin Martyr, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 47 (Tübingen, 1973) 51-53, 63; and Trakatellis, Pre-existence of Christ, 175-77. Trakatellis' comments notwithstanding, Justin's suggestion of such a variety of types for the cross from both pagan and biblical sources (pagan: cf. 1 Apol. 55 and 60: a ship's sail, tools, a human form, a Roman banner, the X shape of Plato's world soul in Timaeus 36; biblical: cf. Dial. 40, 90, 91, 94, 97: the roasted lamb, Moses' outstretched arms, the horns in Moses' blessing of Joseph's descendants, the pole of the brazen serpent) indicates that he felt the need to demonstrate and justify the legitimacy of the cross as a symbol of power and salvation. The issue of the crucifixion is also raised by Celsus, the second-century pagan critic of Christianity, in his Alethes Logos, apud Origen Contra Celsum 2.31. This may be a response to Justin's interpretation of Timaeus 36.

4 Among the important early church writers to contribute to the development of the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53 are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen. See, e.g., Justin's 1 Apol. 43, 50, 51 and Dial. 10-12, 32, 89-90, 97; Tertullian's Adversus Judaeos 9, 10, 13, 14, and Origen's Contra Celsum 1.54-56; 2.44, 58-59; 4.14-16; 7.14-16. The tradition flows into the works of later writers, such as Augustine, cited by B. Blumenkranz, Die Judenpredigt Augustins (Basel: Halbing & Lichtenhahn, 1946) 102, and Nicolas de Lyra, cited by H. Hailperin, Rashi and the Christian Scholars (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1963) 173-75. De Lyra responds to Rashi's collective understanding of the Servant figure and to Andrew of St. Victor, one of the few medieval Christian commentators to incorporate the collective interpretation into his commentary on Isaiah 53. See also the literature cited by Christopher R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah (Oxford: Oxford University, 1963) 26 nn. 3 and 4. North (pp. 218-19) finds this interpretation most compelling.

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the extensive commentaries on the passage found in medieval European Jewish exegetical works. This paucity in talmudic and midrashic literature has been discussed elsewhere. A major factor in this difference is the simple fact that the commentators of the Middle Ages generally wrote comprehensive and systematic commentaries on the complete Bible or on complete books or sections. Thus, a commentary on the book of Isaiah would automatically include a treatment of chapter 53. The non-legal midrashic works of the rabbinic period were primarily oriented toward homiletical purposes, were not as focused as the medieval works, and were hardly systematic. The only complete interpretation of the Servant passage to come from the talmudic age is the Aramaic Pseudo-Jonathan translation. Here, too, the completeness is a function of the literary genre. Most of the ancient Jewish sources treat selected segments of Isaiah 53 and reflect no interest in seeking a unifying concept for the entire passage.

Another difference between the ancient and medieval Jewish handling of the Suffering Servant prophecy can be seen in the thematic development in the respective exegetical traditions. The Servant as messiah is the dominant theme in the rabbinic sources. 8

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5 See R. Loewe, in Samuel R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer, eds., The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters (hereafter: Driver-Neubauer) (reprint ed., New York: Ktav, 1969) Prolegomenon, 2.17-22. The sparseness of the extant rabbinic treatment of Isaiah 53 becomes even more striking when compared to the midrashic exegesis on other Isalianic chapters; see A. Hyman's index to rabbinic midrash on biblical passages, Torah ha-Ketuvat ha-Mesura (Tel Aviv, 1938) 2.167-68, for the sources that interpret Isa 52:13-53:12, and passim for the interpretations of other Isalianic material. It is reasonable to view this relative silence as a form of Jewish self-censorship in the face of the Christian emphasis on the Christological meaning of such passages and as an attempt to control messianic movements and speculation among Jews. Efforts at such control in the early rabbinic period are discussed by Michael Avi-Yonah, The Jews of Palestine (New York, 1976) 68-70. However, see Efrain Elimelech Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975) 649-92. Urbach demonstrates how complex the rabbinic reaction to messianic speculation was and how an anti-Christian polemical motive cannot be assumed to be an ever-present factor in the rabbinic thinking on this matter. Regarding the notion of a suffering messiah, see Urbach, Sages, 685-89. The tension between apocalyptic and rationalistic speculations as they relate, respectively, to more developed and to more controlled messianic thinking is discussed by Gershom G. Scholem in The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1972) 1-36; regarding the interpretation of Isaiah 53 and similar sources, see esp. p. 33. The rabbinic pericopes are brought forward in Driver-Neubauer, 1. 6-9; 2. 7-11.


7 Driver-Neubauer, 1. 4-5; 2. 5-6.

8 Loewe in Driver-Neubauer, 2. 17-18, 22; see also H. A. Fischel, "Die deuterojesajanischen Gottesknechtlieder in der juedischen Auslegung," Hebrew Union College Annual 18 (1944) 53-76, for a helpful survey of Jewish handling of the so-called Servant songs.
In the Middle Ages, Jewish exegetes tended to view the Servant as the Jewish people suffering in exile. In explaining this shift in the emphasis of the Jewish interpretation, a number of factors must be noted. One such factor is Christian anti-Jewish propaganda that pointed to the Jewish exile as proof of God's punishment and abandonment of the Jewish people. Confronting such challenges, Jews had to rationalize their status and affirm their covenantal relationship with God. In the process certain Jews came to view the Jewish people as the Suffering Servant of God functioning in exile as "a light unto the nations."

In the Middle Ages, Jews also found themselves responding to—what had become by then—the standard Christian understanding of Isaiah 53. Given the fervor of medieval Christian preachers and controversialists and the frequency of disputation among scholars in general during this period, Jews were often confronted by Christians who were trying to convince them of the legitimacy of the Christological meaning of the Servant prophecy. Most Jews responded by avoiding the messianic interpretation altogether, so as not to give their adversaries even the slightest pretext for arguing their point. Instead, they developed a collective-

9 Loewe in Driver-Neubauer, 2. 22-23; see n. 46 below.
11 See Urbach, Sages, 545-47. Origen (Contra Celsum 1.55) knows of Jews who developed a similar idea. For medieval and modern linking of Isaiah 53 with this idea, see Driver-Neubauer, 1. 46, 50, 53, 170, 223-24, 257; 2. 65; and nn. 39 and 96 below. The notion of the Jewish people serving as teachers of the nations is also expressed in a Maimonidean tradition cited by Maimonides' son, Abraham, in his Commentary on Genesis and Exodus (ed. E. Wiesenberg; London, 1958; Hebrew) 302; for a discussion of this idea, see H. H. Ben-Sasson, "The Reformation in Contemporary Jewish Eyes," Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 4/12 (Jerusalem, 1970) 242-44. A similar idea, with a reference to Isa 53:10, expressed by Hayim ben Besalel, is cited by Ben-Sasson, "Reformation," 297-98.
13 See Driver-Neubauer, passim, for numerous references to the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53 by Jewish exegetes; see also many of the sources in n. 46 below.
14 See North, Suffering Servant, 18, and Loewe in Driver-Neubauer, 2. 22-23. See also the discussion preceding n. 62 below.
national understanding of the passage that, in essence, contra­dicted the Christological interpretation and provided the Jews of the medieval Christian world with answers for certain very pro­found questions.

This brings us to a third reason why the collective-national treatment of Isaiah 53 acquired such currency in medieval European Jewry. The First Crusade symbolizes a confluence of two signifi­cant and interrelated trends in Western Europe: first, a heightened religious zeal affecting Jew and Christian alike; and, second, an expression of belligerent intolerance toward the non-believer that also manifested itself in adherents of the two faiths. The dif­ference was, however, that the Christian majority had the where­withal to implement these attitudes, while the Jewish minority could not as effectively translate such feelings into actions. Consequently, when the cauldron of religious and social tensions boiled over in 1096, Jewish communities felt the blows of the Christians' "first-strike capability" but could not retaliate in kind. This one-sided struggle, resulting in the loss of many hundreds of Jewish lives, left Jews searching for explanations for their predicament. The ensuing questions touched on matters of theodicy and the nature of God's covenant with His chosen people. Refusing to ascribe any qualities of injustice to God and seeking to refute the Christian claim that the covenant between the "Old Israel" and God was no longer in force, the Jews formulated other solutions. It became clear that they were waging a war in the name of God and that their suffering and death had meaning for both the present and the future. For the present their deaths and their clinging to their faith in the face of adversity demonstrated to their assailants that the bond of God, Torah, and Israel was not only extant but also the highest expression of religious truth.

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16 The Jews' initial effort to defend themselves from the Crusaders' attacks was to seek the protection of the bishops and others in the towns. When this step failed, numbers of Jews took up arms and fought their attackers in hand-to-hand combat, only to be overwhelmed; see Abraham Habermann, *Sefer gezerot 'ashkenaz ve-gorefat* (reprint ed., Jerusalem, 1971) 30. See also H. H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976) part 5, "The Middle Ages," 413-20; Eidelberg, *Jews and the Crusaders*, 11-13, 145 n. 29, 149 n. 67.
For the future, they believed that their martyrdom, their dying "for the sanctification of The Name," guaranteed them a place in the 'World to Come' and enabled them to participate in cosmic processes which were the expressions of the will of God.17

In the context of this coming to grips with the reality of suffering on a national scale, the image of the Servant of Isaiah 53 took on new significance. The Servant was the people Israel suffering in exile. Far from being rejected by their God, the Jews had been singled out by Him to fulfill a variety of functions, in the process of which they were to undergo extreme travail. Because their suffering, like that of the Servant, was part of the divine plan, it had meaning, and, as was the case with the Servant, the great rewards of salvation awaited the people in the end.18

Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, France (ca. 1100; hereafter Rashi), appears to be the first to seek such a meaning in the Isaianic passage. It has been suggested, with good reason, that Rashi wrote his commentary on Isaiah 53 after the massacres of the First Crusade became known to him.19 In light of the effects of that event,

17 See Ben-Sasson and Eidelberg in nn. 15 and 16 above, and see Katz, Exclusiveness, 67-92.
18 See the sources in n. 46 below.
19 H. H. Ben-Sasson, Peraqim be-toledot ha-yehudim be-yemei ha-beinayim (Tel Aviv, 1962) 258-59; see also Y. Baer, "Rashi ve-ha-megiut ha-historit shel zemano," in Y. L. Hacohen-Malmon, ed., Sefer rashi (Jerusalem, 1956) 494, 495-96, 497, and see 493-502 on Rashi's general reactions to the First Crusade and the apocalyptic spirit of the times. Eidelberg (Jews and the Crusaders, 166 n. 3) has noted that there is no explicit reference to the Crusade in Rashi's writings. Still, the following circumstantial evidence pointing to Rashi's awareness of the events must be taken into consideration: (1) the French Jewish community, itself touched by the crusaders' fury, warned the German communities of the danger that was soon to confront them; see Habermann, Sefer, 93; and see Baer, Rashi, 494, on the crusader attacks on French Jewry. (2) Rashi was trained in the communities of Mainz and Worms, and he remained in contact with those centers after he returned to France; see E. M. Lipschütz, R. shlomo yishaki (Warsaw, 1912) 17-19, 129, 132 (see also p. 194 on Rashi's reactions to the events of 1096); M. Liber, Rashi (trans. A. Szold; reprint ed., New York, 1970) 45-52, 57-59, 160; and I. A. Agus, "Rashi and His School," in Cecil Roth, ed., The World History of the Jewish People, 2d Series 2: The Dark Ages (New Brunswick, 1966) 215-19. (3) Rashi's sons-In-law also studied in the Rhineland after Rashi returned to France; see Agus, "Rashi," 218-19. (4) Rashi's school immediately filled the void created by the destruction of the Rhenish academies, and Rashi revised his Talmud commentaries to meet the needs of the numbers of students who came to study with him; see Agus, "Rashi," 233. (5) Rashi, in commenting on the text of the Babylonian Talmud, Sanh. fol. 98a, associates the messiah with passages from Isaiah 53, and Raymundus Martini (Pugio Fidei fols. 311, 429) cites a comment by Rashi in which a similar association is made; see Driver-Neubauer, 1. 39-40. The discrepancy between this understanding of the Servant and the collective-national interpretation espoused by Rashi in his Bible commentary has led some to conclude that the latter was, indeed, formulated as a reaction to the 1096 events and may represent a rethinking of the subject on Rashi's part; see J. Rosenthal, Meḥgarim u-megorot (Jerusalem, 1967)
discussed above, it can be suggested that he had a dual purpose in his comments: (1) to refute the Christian claim that Jesus was the Servant of God; (2) to comfort Jewish readers with the knowledge that the Jews' suffering served a sacred function.

In his comment on the very first verse of the prophecy, Rashi asserts that the Servant is the Jewish people. He interprets the term 'eved ('servant') in 52:13 to mean "Jacob," noting that the righteous among the Jews "will prosper" in the end of days. He continues this idea by explaining "(were amazed at) you" in 52:14 as a plural and by associating "He shot up like a tender plant" in 53:2 with "this nation," that is, the Jews. This collective idea is made explicit in Rashi's comment on 53:3. In regard to the term "men" in that verse he remarks:

This prophet customarily refers to all Israel as one man... and even here he said, "Behold my servant shall prosper" in reference to the house of Jacob.

Similar allusions to a collective are expressed in the comments on 53:4, 8 and 9.

According to Rashi, the people, because of their transgressions, were "cut off from the land of the living" (53:8), that is, exiled from the land of Israel. Even the righteous among them suffered this punishment for the people's communal guilt. Rashi distinguishes between the corporate sin and the suffering of certain individuals because of what he senses to be a differentiation in 53:8 between the nation's transgression (pesh'a 'ami) and someone else's wound (neg'a lamo). Such an interpretation may simply be the commentator's understanding of the plain meaning of the text. However, it is possible that Rashi is also responding to a Christian understanding of the passage, already expressed by Origen, that viewed this as a reference to Jesus' suffering on the cross.

113 (see also p. 104 on Rashi's comments on Isaiah 53 and their relevance to the First Crusade).

21 Maarsen, Parshan-data, 120; Driver-Neubauer, 1.37; 2.37.
22 Maarsen, Parshan-data, 120-21; Driver-Neubauer, 1.38; 2.38.
23 Ibid.
24 Rashi's concern with the plain meaning of the biblical text is well known; see the literature cited in n. 19 above. Lipschütz (R. shlomo, 163-64) suggests that Rashi's emphasis of the peshat may have been a response to the allegorizing of traditional Christian Bible exegesis. See also n. 32 below.
25 Origen Contra Celsum 1.55.
Isa 53:10 serves Rashi as a means of finding hope for the people Israel in their travail. He sees this passage as indicative of God's afflicting the people to give them an opportunity to make amends before Him. By consecrating their souls to the sanctification of God, they compensate Him for their transgressions and, thus, make satisfaction to Him. Their self-sacrifice is seen as a ransom to God, an 'asham ('guilt offering') as used in 1 Samuel 6:3, paralleling the medieval, feudal concept of amenda. One is struck by the similarity of Rashi's conceptualizing of this aspect of the Jews' self-sacrifice to Anselm of Canterbury's notions regarding Jesus' sacrifice. Rashi concludes his discussion on this point with the statement that as compensation for this satisfaction to God, Israel would merit great reward in the future.

Rashi, however, was not satisfied with this explanation of Jewish suffering. He seeks and finds an additional dimension in the sacrifice of the Servant: the Jewish people suffer to atone for the sins of all humanity. This idea is expressed in Rashi's comments on Isa 53:4-6, and 12 (the biblical passages appear in parentheses):

(4 Yet is was our sicknesses that he bore, and our pains that he endured; Though we for our part thought of him as stricken, terribly smitten and afflicted.)
4 Yet—such is always the signification of 'akhein yet now we perceive that this was not merely a consequence of their own depression. Israel suffered in order that by his sufferings atonement might be made for all other nations; the sickness which ought to have fallen upon us was carried by him. We indeed thought that he had been hated of God, but it was not so; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.

(5 But he was grievously injured because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; The punishment which brings us peace fell upon him, at the cost of his wounds healing has come to us.)
5 The chastisement of the peace that was for us fell upon him; he was chastised in order that the whole world might have peace.

(6 We all like sheep had gone astray, each one of us had followed his own path; While the Lord laid upon him the punishment due to us all.)
6 We all like sheep have gone astray: it is now revealed how all the Gentiles have erred. Yet the Lord let himself be entreated by him.

26 Maarsen, Parshan-data, 121; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 39; 2. 39. See Ben-Sasson, Peraqim, 258-59.
27 On Anselm's ideas concerning Jesus' sacrifice and its functioning as satisfactio to God, see George Huntston Williams, Anselm: Communion and Atonement (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960) and his discussions of the relevant sections of Anselm's Cur Deus Homo and other works. See also J. M. Colleran, ed., Why God Became Man, by Anselm of Canterbury (Albany: Magi Books, 1969) 42-53, and esp. 45-46, where a link is made between Anselm's 'satisfaction' idea and the feudal notion of compensation to an overlord for impugning his honor.
(asprier, in French), and propitiated for the iniquity of us all, in
that he refrained from destroying his world.

(12 Therefore I will give him the mighty as his portion, and the
powerful shall he divide as spoil; Because he gave himself to the
uttermost, and let himself be numbered with transgressors, Though
it was he who had borne the punishment of the many, and had inter­
posed on behalf of the transgressors.)

12 Therefore, i.e. because he did this, I will divide him an inheri-
tance and a lot among the great, with the early patriarchs, because
he poured out (as "poured out her pitcher," Gen. 24:20) his soul to
die, and was numbered with the transgressors, i.e. endured punishment
as though he had been a sinner or transgressor himself, and for the
sake of others bore the sin of many. And in virtue of his suffer­
ings—because through him the world received prosperity—he interceded
for the transgressors.28

Rashi explicitly states that Israel atoned for "all the nations"
and that the Servant suffered so the "whole world might have peace"
and "prosperity." Because of the Servant-nation's intercession,
God "refrained from destroying the world." Thus, the suffering of
the people moves beyond the limits of expiation for its own trans­
gressions and becomes the vehicle for the continued well-being
and the very existence of all humanity and the world.

This is a new explanation in that it presents a concept of
universal vicarious expiation found nowhere in earlier Jewish
sources. The classical sources of Talmudic Judaism express the
notion of righteous Jews expiating the transgressions of their
sinning coreligionists,29 an idea that also manifests itself in
the Jewish crusade chronicles.30 Furthermore, the rabbinic works
preserve the idea of the Jews' responsibility for saving the
world.31 While concepts such as these may have directed Rashi's
thinking toward the suggestions he made in his Isaiah 53 com­
mentary, they in no way approach the universality of his notions.32

28 Driver-Neubauer, 2. 37-38, 39. For the translation of the Isaiah passages,
see ibid., Prolegomenon, 2. 5, 6. Some minor changes in the translations have
been made. For Hebrew originals, see the appendix to this paper.

29 See the discussion of atonement through the suffering of the righteous in
George Foot Moore, Judaism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1954) 1. 546-52,
and see the comment of Moses Hadas, The Third and Fourth Books of Xaccabees

30 See Habermann, Sefer, 25, 42-43. For a similar notion regarding the mean­
ing of Jewish suffering in exile, see Shem Tov ibn Shaprut's comments on Isaiah
53, in Driver-Neubauer, 1. 92.

31 See Urbach, Sages, 531-32 and 506-7 on the righteous who sustain the
world. However, the concept of atonement for the world is not present in these
traditions.

32 One might be inclined to suggest that Rashi's unique interpretation simply
flowed out of the plain meaning of the Isalianic passage (see n. 24 above). How­
ever, the language of Isaiah 53 is sufficiently obscure so as to lend itself to
a variety of interpretations, and, in fact, most Jewish commentators who, like
Rashi, were sensitive to the peschat of the Bible, chose not to understand the
We return to the suggestion made above that in formulating his interpretation, Rashi reacted to two issues: (1) the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53; (2) the problems posed by the tragedies of 1096. Rashi's use of his commentaries to respond to Christian Bible exegesis and ideology has been demonstrated elsewhere.\textsuperscript{33} Living in Troyes he was in close proximity to churchmen and scholars who gathered at the institutions of what was an important center of Christian learning.\textsuperscript{34} It can be suggested that Rabbi Solomon became aware of and, consciously or otherwise, adapted elements of the classical Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53 as related to Jesus' suffering and applied them to the suffering of the Jewish people. Thus, according to Rashi, the Jews, and not Jesus, suffered as a sacrifice to God and atoned for humanity. It was the Servant-nation Israel that maintained its guiltless qualities in the face of great pain, and not the Christian messiah. And it was the Jewish people who would be rewarded for accepting God's death decree. Rashi presents the Jewish people as a human sacrifice necessary for the maintenance of the world. Again, we hear echoes of the renewed emphasis on Jesus' human sacrifice in the Christian thinking of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, thinking that was crystallized in Anselm's \textit{Cur Deus Homo}.\textsuperscript{35} With these ideas Rashi blunts the force of contemporary Christian ideology.

Because of his perception of the enormity of the 1096 tragedies, Rashi was moved to develop a novel interpretation of Jewish suffering. He asked questions similar to those found in other Hebrew literary works, prose and poetry alike, written in response to the First Crusade:\textsuperscript{36} Why did so many Jews die? Why were the Rhenish communities with their scholars and pious leaders annihilated? This loss of life transcended traditional explanations. Were the Jews, past or present, so evil that such a great sacrifice had to be made on their behalf by these righteous saints?


\textsuperscript{34} Rosenthal, \textit{Mehqarim}, 104-5; see also A. Marx, "The Life and Works of Rashi," \textit{Rashi Anniversary Volume}, 20.

\textsuperscript{35} See n. 27 above.

\textsuperscript{36} See, e.g., Habermann, \textit{Sefer}, 27, 32, 44, 68-69, 75.
Even the sin of the golden calf did not warrant such suffering. In fact, the Jews of medieval Europe often looked upon themselves as a morally superior people, especially in comparison to the nations who waged wars and killed the innocent. The conclusion that Rashi reached was that because the Jews were innocent and the mass of Gentile humanity guilty, the Jews had to serve the ends of a loving God by going, "as a sheep that is led to the slaughter" (53:7), to their deaths, thereby atoning for mankind's sins. Rashi was not suddenly filled with concern for the salvation of his people's perpetrators. As a Jew trying to cope with a Jewish predicament, he found in the Christian ideology of his generation not only a response to the Jews' tormentors but also a synthesis for his Jewish dialectical problem. It is precisely because the idea of an innocent human sacrifice affording universal atonement and reconciliation of humanity with God became so prominent in early twelfth-century France that Rashi was moved to incorporate it into his Isaiah 53 exegesis.

II

Given the ongoing perplexity generated by the Jews' perceptions of their continued exile and suffering, interpretations of Isaiah 53 similar to that of Rashi were offered by Jewish writers from the twelfth through the twentieth centuries. A. Funkenstein has suggested that, in their attempts to find meaning in their suffering in exile, Jews developed three distinct interpretations of their experience: (1) the 'cathartic'; (2) the 'missionary'; and (3) the 'soteriological'. According to the 'cathartic' justification, the suffering is a means of expiating Israel's own transgressions. The 'missionary' understanding defines the exilic dispersion as a means of exalting Israel's own transgressions. The 'missionary' understanding defines the exilic dispersion as a necessary stage in God's plan to bring Torah to


38 S. Spiegel (The Last Trial [Philadelphia, 1967] 119-20) has suggested that the medieval Jewish interest in the sacrificial qualities of the 'aqedah may have been influenced by the Christian environment.

the nations. The 'soteriological' theodicy conceives of Israel's suffering as affording atonement for the very nations who are Israel's persecutors. Funkenstein has correctly noted that a distinctly Christian coloration can be seen in this third notion and that it is present in the Jewish exegesis of Isaiah 53.

All three of these justifications can be found in the Jewish commentaries on the Suffering Servant chapter, particularly in those that understand the Servant to be the people Israel in exile. Indeed, it is not unusual to find a single commentator incorporating more than one of these interpretations of Jewish suffering into his comments on Isaiah 53. Thus, we have seen that Rashi views the Jewish exile experience as a means of expiating both the people's own sins ('cathartic') and the sins of the nations ('soteriological'). As will be presently demonstrated, Ibn Ezra alludes to all three justifications in his commentary. Ibn Ezra refers to yet a fourth meaning that he and others find in the Jews' suffering at the hands of the nations: the nations' inflicting pain on the Jews is a transgression that justifies their being punished by God. We can term this view of the exilic suffering 'retaliatory'. Heinrich Graetz develops an interesting blend of the 'missionary' and the 'soteriological' justifications, as we will note below. While occasionally touching on such blendings of various theodicies, the survey that follows will primarily focus on the use of Isaiah 53 to provide a 'soteriological' explanation of Jewish suffering in exile.

From a selection of thirty-one authors who follow Rashi's lead in defining the Suffering Servant as the Jewish people suffering in exile, fourteen suggest that Israel suffers instead of the

40 See n. 11 above.
41 The 'cathartic' can be found in the sources cited in n. 46 below, nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 12, 16, and the Arabic Anonymous in Driver-Neubauer, 2. 65. The 'missionary' is found in the sources cited in n. 11 above. The 'soteriological' is found in the sources noted in n. 47 below.
42 See nn. 26 and 28 above.
43 Driver-Neubauer, 1. 44-46; see nn. 63-65 below. A review of the sources cited in n. 41 above will provide further evidence of this pattern of finding multiple meanings for Jewish suffering.
44 Driver-Neubauer, 1. 45; see n. 64 below. See also Driver-Neubauer, 1. 73, 125, 212-13, 335-36, 336-37, for other sources that take note of the transgression and/or punishment of the nations. Solomon Astruc (Driver-Neubauer, 1. 125) explicitly states that Israel, living among the nations, serves as a vehicle for enabling God to punish the nations for their sins as He had punished the Egyptians.
45 See nn. 89, 93, and 96 below.
46 In this note and nn. 47-49, volume and page numbers cited are to Driver-
Gentiles, bearing punishment due the nations and/or atoning for the nations' sins. The other seventeen writers avoid or even explicitly negate the idea of vicarious suffering. Four of the latter are aware of the suggestion that the Jews suffer in place of the Gentiles. They define this notion either as a misconception put in the mouths of the nations by the prophet to emphasize the Gentiles' awareness of their own iniquities as compared to Israel's relative guiltlessness or as a contemporary Gentile misunderstanding of how the Jews interpret Isaiah 53. Thus eighteen of the thirty-one commentators know of the interpretation first suggested by Rashi. While all of these writers may not be directly dependent on Rashi for this exegetical approach, the latter's influence cannot be categorically ruled out, given his universal influence in Jewish circles.

Among those exegetes who do accept the idea that the Servant is the people Israel suffering for the iniquities of the nations, a variety of expressions of this concept emerges. To illustrate


47 See no. 46, nos. 1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 30, 31.
48 See n. 46, no. 3 (1. 50); no. 24 (1. 356, 360-61); no. 27 (1. 7-8, 16, 20 [non-Hebrew section]). The comment of David Kimhi (no. 3) is paradigmatic in this case.
49 See n. 46, no. 12 (1. 164).
50 On the impact of Rashi's biblical commentaries, see Liber, Rashi, 133-34, 196-221; Lipschütz, R. shlomo, 189-93; Agus, "Rashi," 239-48.
the scope of this tradition, the following writers will be examined: Joseph Kara, Abraham ibn Ezra, Joseph Albo, Abraham Farissol, Isaac Troki, and Heinrich Graetz. This selection includes Bible commentators, philosophers, polemicists, and historians and spans the period from the twelfth through the nineteenth centuries. Not surprisingly, all were involved in confrontations with Christianity, a fact that may have influenced their interpretation of Isaiah 53.51

Joseph Kara (ca. 1100), a younger contemporary and colleague of Rashi, notes that, according to the prophet, the Servant—Israel—suffers in exile among the nations.52 The infirmities the Servant bears are not his own but those which the nations should have borne because of the sins they committed in following idolatrous practices.53 Israel, a righteous nation, was created by God to bear all the sins of the world so that the world would be at peace and continue to exist.54 Although Kara develops his own understanding of the Servant passage, his notion of Israel suffering for the nations' sins to bring peace to the world is quite close to Rashi's idea. Given the close association between the two men, the likelihood of a sharing of ideas is quite probable.55


52 On Kara and his relationship with Rashi, see Liber, *Rashi*, 197; Lipschütz, *R. shlomo*, 156–57, 190; Agus, "Rashi," 223.

53 Driver–Neubauer, 1. 41–42; 2. 41–42.

54 Ibid., 1. 42, 398; 2. 42. The contrast between Israel's true law and the error and folly of Gentile belief is developed in the comments in ibid., 1. 398–99.

55 Ibid., 1. 42; 2. 42, comment on 53:5.

56 See n. 52 above. Unlike Rashi, Kara does not explicitly refer to Israel's
Abraham ibn Ezra (ca. 1150) informs us, at the outset of his commentary on Isaiah 53, that "this section is very difficult." This statement could well be applied to Ibn Ezra's interpretation. In his comments on Isa 40:1, and especially 42:1, 49:3, 7 and 50:4-9, he suggests that the Servant is the prophet himself, living in the Babylonian exile and suffering while remaining loyal to God. And, in his concluding remarks on 53:12, he reaffirms this understanding. Yet, throughout his interpretation of Isaiah 53 he relates the personality and experiences of the Suffering Servant to either an individual Jew in exile or, more emphatically, to the entire people Israel in exile. Ibn Ezra seems to be following a pattern seen in other commentaries on the Suffering Servant prophecy, such as those of Nahmanides and Abrabanel, in which two alternative interpretations are offered. By de-emphasizing his preferred understanding of the Servant as an individual, a concept that is essential for Christian exegesis, and by stressing the collective interpretation, Ibn Ezra appears to be negating the Christological meaning of the passage to which he first alludes. This is another example of the Jewish tendency to avoid or de-emphasize certain interpretations of Isaiah 53 so as not to lend any credence to the Christian understanding of the prophecy.

atoning for the nations. Perhaps he is more closely adhering to the text's simple meaning.

57 On Abraham ibn Ezra, see Friedländer, Commentary, 1. ix-xxvii.
58 Ibid., 2. 64, 70, 83-84, 86; 1. 170-71 (nn.).
59 Ibid., 2. 93; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 47; 2. 48.
60 See Ibn Ezra's comments on Isa 52:13, 53:2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 12 in Friedländer, Commentary, 2. 90-93, and Driver-Neubauer, 1. 43-47; 2. 44-48. The MSS differ on Ibn Ezra's statement toward the end of his comment on 52:13. Driver-Neubauer (1. 43) prefers ve-hinei yidabber 'al kol 'eved 'adonai she-hu ba-galut yoi yihyeh 'avdi ha-navi ve-zeh qarov mi-zeh; Friedländer (Commentary, 2. 90) gives precedence to ve-hinei yidaber 'al kol 'eved 'adonai she-hu ba-galut yoi yihyeh 'avdi kemo yisra'el 'avdi ve-zeh qarov mi-zeh. The first version is more consistent with the comments cited in nn. 58-59 above; the second version is more in line with the comments cited above in this note. Nachman Krochmal, the nineteenth-century thinker and historian, has also noted Ibn Ezra's seeming ambiguity and his preference for the identification of the Servant with an individual, King Yehoyakhin, who was the source of these particular prophecies in the Babylonian exile. Krochmal operates on the assumption that underlying Ibn Ezra's apparent ambiguities there does lie a consistency of thought. See The Writings of Nachman Krochmal, Simon Ravidowitz, ed. (London, 1961; Hebrew) 114-18, 306 (Hebrew numbering). My thanks go to Amos Funkenstein for calling my attention to Krochmal's treatment of Ibn Ezra in Moreh nevuchei ha-zeman.
61 On Nahmanides, see Driver-Neubauer, 1. 74; on Abrabanel, see ibid., 1. 153. This issue is discussed by Fischel, "Gottesknechtlieder," 64-65.
62 Friedländer, Commentary, 2. 90; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 43; 2. 43; see n. 14 above.
Israel's suffering vicariously for the sake of the nations is expressed in Ibn Ezra's comments on 53:4-5, 12. Here he argues that, according to the prophet, the sickness and transgressions that should have befallen the Gentiles because of their false teachings were borne by Israel, whose Torah is true. Israel's suffering in exile brings temporary peace to the nations. The latter will be punished, however, because of the pain which they inflicted on Israel. Thus, the nations' ideological error is expiated by Israel's suffering, and, according to Ibn Ezra's interpretation of 53:6, Israel's experience leads the nations to a recognition of their error. The atonement theme is not as fully developed in Ibn Ezra's exegesis as it is in Rashi's. Given the popularity of his commentaries, Ibn Ezra's ascribing to the people Israel the role of the Servant who vicariously suffers for the other nations must be considered an important factor in perpetuating Jewish interest in this interpretation.

Joseph Albo (ca. 1400), a Spaniard, in a brief comment in his Sefer ha-<i>iqqarim</i>, addresses the issue of the suffering of the righteous. He invokes the talmudic conception that the righteous atone for the sins of others through their suffering and death. Albo elaborates upon this concept by citing Ezek 4:4-6 and by referring to the Suffering Servant passage. After identifying the Servant as Israel, he proceeds to expound upon Isa 53:4. He argues that when one sees righteous people suffering, one initially assumes that they suffer on their own account. In fact, he continues, one is surprised to learn that the righteous suffer not for their own sins; rather, they atone for the entire world or for a nation or a country. Albo does not clarify whether the atonement which was afforded by the Suffering Servant is due to the sufferings of the entire people Israel as a righteous collective or as a group of righteous within Israel. In any case, Albo finds meaning in

63 Friedländer, Commentary, 2. 91-92, 93; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 44-45, 47; 2. 45-46, 48. See also Ibn Ezra's comment on 'avon, 53:6; see n. 65 below.
64 See Ibn Ezra's comments on 53:5 and 8; Friedländer, Commentary, 2. 92; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 45; 2. 46.
65 Friedländer, Commentary, 2. 92; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 45; 2. 46.
66 On the popularity of Ibn Ezra's Bible exegesis, see The Jewish Encyclopedia 3. 169.
67 See Husik and Baer in n. 51 above and Husik, 'Ikkarim, 4/1. 112-13; Driver-Neubauer, 1. 330; 2. 384.
68 Babylonian Talmud, Mo<e>d qatan, fol. 28a.
69 Husik, 'Ikkarim, 113.
the notion of the Servant-people atoning for the whole world, and we can see that this idea penetrated the circles of the philosophically oriented Jews of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain.\textsuperscript{70}

A similar penetration of this conception into other groups of Jews who incorporated secular learning into their cultural pursuits is seen in the so-called \textit{Magen 'avraham} of Abraham Farissol (ca. 1500).\textsuperscript{71} Farissol, a native of Avignon who later lived in Italy, includes a discussion of the Servant chapter in his work, an anti-Christian polemic comprised of arguments raised in disputations held in Ferrara, Italy.\textsuperscript{72} Responding to a Christian understanding of the prophecy, Farissol argues in favor of the collective-national interpretation.\textsuperscript{73} Echoes of Rashi's commentary are evident in both Farissol's theme development and his linguistic analysis. Farissol views 53:4-6 as expressing the reaction of the nations when they witness Israel's ultimate redemption. They recognize that Israel did not warrant such suffering and that the Jews suffered for the sake of the nations, bearing the punishment due the Gentiles for their transgressions.\textsuperscript{74} Farissol further explains that the prophet sees Israel's acceptance of their suffering for the nations as resulting in great future rewards for the people.\textsuperscript{75}

Farissol concludes with a reference to Judah Halevi's metaphorical association of the Jewish people among the nations with the heart in the human body that bears disease since it is the strongest organ in the body. Halevi and Farissol share the idea that Israel, like the heart, bears sickness and, in so doing, generates positive results for the world. Farissol, however, goes beyond Halevi's

\textsuperscript{70} On Albo's philosophical background, see Husik, \textit{History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy}, 406-7.

\textsuperscript{71} On Farissol's broad range of cultural interests as well as other aspects of his life, see Ruderman, \textit{World of a Renaissance Jew}, passim.

\textsuperscript{72} The relationship between the polemic and the disputation is briefly discussed in Farissol's introduction to his work; see Driver-Neubauer, \textit{Introduction}, 1. xiii, and Preface, 2. xiii, where the different titles associated with the work are also discussed. See also Ruderman, \textit{World of a Renaissance Jew}, 57-84.

\textsuperscript{73} Driver-Neubauer, 1. 197-98; 2. 222-23. References are to version A in Driver-Neubauer; see ibid., Introduction, 1. xiv no. 33, and Preface, 2. xiii no. 33, for information on versions A and B. Version B, with its parallels to version A, is given in ibid., 1. 202-7.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 1. 199-200; 2. 224.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 1. 201; 2. 226. For similarities in language analysis, cf. Farissol's and Rashi's comments on Isa 53:3, 4, 7, 8; see ibid., 1. 199-200 and 1. 37-38 respectively.
conception by asserting that the heart's ability to bear and withstand disease and bring healing to the rest of the body is paralleled by Israel's functioning as the healing factor for humanity. The idea of the heart healing the rest of the body is not in Halevi's conceptualization. Farissol has creatively merged the concept of healing through vicarious suffering as expressed in his interpretation of Isaiah 53 with Halevi's anatomical metaphor, thereby effecting a new interpretation of the Kuzari imagery. For Halevi, Israel suffers primarily for its own benefit, and only by inference can one suggest that Halevi has in mind the well-being of the rest of the world. For Farissol, Israel's suffering for the good of humanity is a notion that has major significance.

Another author who followed the exegetical tradition of Isaiah 53 begun by Rashi is Isaac ben Abraham of Troki (ca. 1550), a Lithuanian physician of broad cultural interests. Unlike the other commentators surveyed in this study, Isaac was a Karaite. Nevertheless, given his breadth of knowledge and the eastern Karaite absorption of Rabbanite teaching, his awareness and use of Rabbanite traditions is not surprising. Troki's interpretation of the Servant chapter is found in chapter 22 of the first part of his comprehensive critique of Christianity, Hizzuq emunah (Faith Strengthened). This book was widely circulated in both Jewish and Christian circles following Isaac's death.

Ibid., 1. 202; 2. 227-28; Judah Halevi, Kuzari, 2. 36-44, esp. 44. Halevi bases this idea on Isa 53:4. According to Halevi, Israel's suffering purifies the people, thereby enabling them to bring "God's presence" into the world. The words "God's presence" are used here only for convenience. The exact meaning of Halevi's phrase al-amr al-ilahiyy (Arabic) or ha-tinyan ha-elohi (Hebrew) cannot be so simply expressed in English. On the various meanings of the term, see H. A. Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," JQR n.s. 32 (1942) 355-70; and, more recently, H. Davidson, "The Active Intellect in the Cuzari and Halevi's Theory of Causality," REJ 131 (1972) 351-95, esp. 381-95.

On Isaac of Troki, see Waysbaum and Mann in n. 51 above. See also Moses Avigdor Shulvass, Jewish Culture in Eastern Europe (New York, 1975) 72, 137, 143, 151, 163, 165, 167-69, 170, 172.


Shulvass, Jewish Culture, 168-69; see also T. Weiss-Rosmarin, in Moses Mocatta, trans., Faith Strengthened (reprint ed., New York: Hermon, 1970) VI-XII. There appear to be Rabbanite interpolations in the Hizzuq emunah; see Shulvass, Jewish Culture, 168; see also Mann, Texts and Studies, 553 n. 2, and 682-85. This does not seem to be the case with regard to the Isaiah 53 passage, whose consistency is attested to by the following example. In discussing the superiority of Israel, Isaac (Driver-Neubauer, 1. 222) alludes to Judah Halevi's notion that Israel is mvhar ha-min ha-enoshei, the elect of the human race (see n. 82 below). Isaac uses the same term to express a similar idea in his
After his refutation of the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 53, Isaac first seeks to demonstrate that the prophets often call the Jewish people God's servant and that the Isaianic references to the Servant's illness can be understood as allusions to Israel's suffering in exile. He suggests that the prophet depicts the nations of the world as coming to the realization that Israel did not suffer to atone for its own sins but to atone for the sins which the nations incurred. Like Farissol, Isaac introduces aspects of Judah Halevi's thinking, as expressed in the Kuzari, into his interpretation of the Servant prophecy. He explains that Israel among the nations is like the heart within the body, suffering from all the ills of the other organs. As the heart, through blood-letting, brings healing to the rest of the body, so Israel brings healing to the other nations who follow Israel to God. Like Farissol, Isaac has added a healing function to Halevi's metaphor of the heart. In the second part of Isaac's handling of Isaiah 53, a line-by-line commentary detailing the points made in the first part, the influence of Rashi's commentary is in evidence. To be sure, Isaac raises many points that differ radically from those of Rashi. There are, however, enough thematic and linguistic similarities between the two to warrant the suggestion that Isaac not only continued in the spirit of Rashi's Suffering Servant exegesis but that he incorporated elements of Rashi's exegetical remarks into his own interpretation.

The medieval Jewish conceptualization of the Suffering Servant as the Jewish people suffering in exile for the well-being of the world, with its sacrificial and expiatio nal overtones, was given new meaning in the apologetics of the nineteenth-century historian Heinrich Graetz. Isaiah 53 served Graetz in his efforts to explain...
the meaning of Jewish suffering and existence. By addressing these issues in his writing, Graetz reaffirmed what has come to be known as the "lachrymose History of the Jews." The appearance of this "tearful" depiction of the Jews in the works of so renowned a historian lent it credence and influenced the interpretation of Jewish history into the twentieth century.

In his essay "The Rejuvenation of the Jewish Race," whose references to Isaiah 53 caused quite a stir in certain influential circles in Germany and Austria, Graetz adds new Christological overtones to the Jewish interpretation of the image of the Servant. Following the lead of his medieval predecessors, Graetz understands the prophecy as an allusion to Israel's suffering that reconciles the sinful pagan world with God. Like the medieval exegetes, Graetz uses the collective-national interpretation of the Servant to explain the Jews' experience and to criticize the Christians' identification of the Servant with Jesus. In so doing, however, he appropriates three Christological elements—messiahship, the crown of thorns, and the idea of resurrection—and associates them with Israel. Such adaptation of the opponent's symbols is typical of Graetz's polemical and apologetical methods.

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7-36, 37-51; Schorsch, Structure, 1-62.

86 On Graetz's emphasis on Jewish suffering, see S. W. Baron, "Heinrich (Hirsch) Graetz, 1817–1891," History and Jewish Historians (Philadelphia, 1964) 78, 267, 274–75, 278; and on the "lachrymose" conception of Jewish history, see History and Jewish Historians, 63–64, 88, 96.

87 On the readership of Graetz's historiography, see Michael, "Svi greg-toledot hayyav, 44–45; S. Ettinger, "Graetz, Heinrich," EncJud 7.847; Schorsch, Structure, 62, esp. n. 158.

88 The attack on Graetz from Christian circles included not only criticism but also litigation. The criticism was not limited to Christians, however. Orthodox Jews also repudiated Graetz's collective interpretation of Isaiah 53 with its emphasis on the "Messiah-nation," viewing it as a rejection of the traditional Jewish belief in a personal messiah. See Michael, "Svi greg-toledot hayyav, 47 and Schorsch, Structure, 309 n. 4. I thank David Ellenson for calling my attention to the fact that Esriel Hildesheimer was one of the most vehement of Graetz's Orthodox Jewish critics. This criticism was motivated, in part, by Graetz's Isaiah 53 interpretations. See Ellenson, "Continuity and Innovation: Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1981) 14–16, 26–27. Was Hildesheimer unaware of the dominant medieval Jewish understanding of the Suffering Servant prophecy? Or was he, like Graetz and many of his predecessors, selectively adopting an interpretation that suited his polemical purposes?

An earlier echo of the notion that the people Israel, in its travail, is a collective Suffering Servant was expressed by Graetz in his introduction to vol. 4 of his History of the Jews (1853); see Schorsch, Structure, 125. For a discussion of the significance of this suffering in Graetz's thinking, see ibid., 55–57.

89 Ibid., 148–49. Graetz quotes Isa 53:10, 12.

90 Similar associations of Christological imagery with Jewish suffering can
If Rashi subtly introduced a Christian-like notion into the Jewish exegesis of the Servant prophecy, Graetz carried that notion to its conclusion with these explicit allusions to Jesus symbolism.

In his "Correspondence of an English Lady on Judaism and Semitism," arguing that the continuity of Jewish existence defies "the natural laws of national development," Graetz cites Isa 53:1-3 and 7 to emphasize the amazement of people who have witnessed the ongoing presence in history of the persecuted Servant nation. In "The Rejuvenation" Graetz defined the prophecy in terms of the Babylonian exile. Here he expands the scope of its relevance, noting that "the [2400-year-old] description still fits today to the last detail." The Suffering Servant image is further expressed in his remarks on the meaning of both the agony and the continuity of Jewish existence:

The designated missionary to the nations should not preach death and destruction in the stentorian voice of a Capistrano... but rather he is to accomplish his Messianic work by means of his extraordinary suffering. He is to dedicate himself as a sacrificial offering and to be brought like a lamb to the slaughter, never opening his mouth. The bringer of good tidings is to be both a priest and a sacrifice.

The allusions to Isa 53:7 and 10 are clear. Moreover, Graetz continues to paint his picture of the Jews in Christological tones by linking messianic and priestly functions with suffering and sacrifice that have universal implications. The Jews, in carrying out their divinely ordained mission, are more Christ-like than the zealous fifteenth-century friar John Capistrano, who fomented much anti-Jewish feeling and activity. While elaborating upon

be found in Graetz's "The Correspondence of an English Lady on Judaism and Semitism," ibid., 203-4, 239. Graetz, in his apologetics, does not hesitate to give a positive meaning to anti-Jewish stereotypes and images; cf. the Wandering-Jew and Jew-badge imagery in the introduction to vol. 4 of the History of the Jews, ibid., 125-27.

91 This appears to be a reformulation of Halevi's notion that Israel's national experiences, be they positive or negative, are not the results of natural laws, as is the case with other nations. Rather, Israel's fate is dependent solely upon the will of God, and, therefore, in spite of any evils that befall the people, they need not fear national destruction; cf. Kuzari, 1.109; 2.32-34. See n. 96 below.


93 Ibid., 225-26.

94 The idea that Jesus, the messiah, was also a sacrifice and a priest has its roots in the New Testament; see esp. Hebrews 3-10.

95 Graetz devotes considerable space to his discussions of Capistrano's anti-Jewish activity in the Geschichte der Juden (Leipzig, n.d.) 8.187, 193-99, 203, 205, etc.; and see Graetz, History, 4. 249, 253, 257-63, 265-66, 268, etc. See also Baron, History, 9. 30, 233, 254-55 n. 32.
the Jesus-like features of the Jewish people, Graetz, in the "Correspondence," has moved away from an emphasis on the expiational quality of the people's suffering toward the conceptualizing of a didactic function. In developing the idea that the Jews, by their example, teach the world justice, mercy, and morality, he is harking back to a theme that recurs in medieval Jewish Isaiah 53 exegesis and that represents a traditional Jewish understanding of Jewish existence.\(^{96}\)

III

The continuous interfacing between Judaism and Christianity has resulted in a constant process of ideological cross-fertilization. Through this process, an idea gleaned from the rival tradition has often served to reinvigorate and perpetuate the rivalry. The Jewish interpretations of Isaiah 53 surveyed above, with their emphases on universally efficacious, vicarious suffering and atonement, exemplify this ironic fact of history. The Christian Church, with its stated purposes regarding the ultimate conversion of the Jews, provided Jews with an understanding of the Servant prophecy that helped Jews make some sense out of predicaments in which they found themselves, thereby reinforcing the Jews' will to persevere. Born out of the Church's need to explain the suffering of Jesus, its Christ, and its Son of God, this interpretation provided Jews with an explanation of how they, God's chosen people, could undergo suffering on a national scale. At the same time, an exegetical tradition that has had profound socio-religious implications for Jews contributed to the development of a "collective" understanding of Isaiah 53 widely accepted among modern Christian Bible scholars.\(^{97}\)

\(^{96}\) Schorsch, Structure, 224–27, 237–39; see also n. 11 above. In his discussion of the superiority of Jewish morality, Graetz alludes to Halevi's Kuzari, 2.32–34, 36, where the dispersed people Israel is presented as being ill, but still far better off than the other nations who are "dead." Israel, according to Halevi, will not die. See also n. 91 above. Graetz has modified Halevi's notion of the relation between the nations' emulating Israel and the possibility of this emulation improving their lot. Graetz assumes that the suffering Israel can show the nations how to achieve moral health. Halevi, however, suggests that the nations cannot help themselves by emulating Israel; see Kuzari, 2. 32; 3. 8–9. In this universalizing of a Halevian notion that was, originally, narrow in scope, Graetz is using Halevi in a manner similar to that of Parissol and Isaac of Troki; see nn. 76 and 80 above. Judah Halevi's thinking had a profound influence on Graetz; see Ettinger, Svi greq, 12, 35, 250 and J. E. Rembaum, "The Influence of Judah Halevi on the Thought of Heinrich Graetz" (abstract of a paper read at the Ninth Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, December 1977), in Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter 23 (September 1978) 15.

\(^{97}\) For a summary of the modern opinions relevant to this understanding of
The Hebrew original of Rashi’s comments on Isa 53:4-6, 12 is found below. The Isaiah text is included in parentheses.

םַעָלַי הָאָדָם מִשְׁפָּר הַשָּׁפָר הָאָדָם מִשְׁפָּר

The Hebrew original of Rashi’s comments on Isa 53:4-6, 12 is found below. The Isaiah text is included in parentheses.