

PSA Examined**Article Series:**

Article #13:
Does Isaiah 53
Support PSA?



PSA Series â?? Does Isaiah 53 support PSA? (verse-by-verse, with context)

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Article #13:
Does Isaiah 53
Support PSA?



Welcome to the 13th article in this [series on PSA](#) (*Penal*

Substitutionary Atonement). Today, weâ??ll march verse-by-verse through what is the go-to passage for many PSA adherents: Isaiah chapter 53. And really, itâ??s the end of Isaiah 52 through the end of 53 for reasons thatâ??ll become obvious soon. Anyway, this is the passage for PSA, especially in the Old Testament.

Fair warning, this article is about 30k words because context, nuance, and deep study take time/space.

You can, of course, skip to the conclusion at the end of the article, but I suggest you donâ??t because I donâ??t want you to take my word for it. This website is called â??Berean Patriotâ?• because Iâ??m a â??patriotâ?• of the idea that we should be like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, and search the scriptures to see if the things being taught are so. The article includes the searching, the conclusion is merely a summary.

So, perhaps make yourself a nice cup of tea (*or coffee if you prefer*) and settle in for a long study.

Here we go.

The four â??servant songsâ?• of Isaiah

While Isaiah 53 gets most of the attention, it doesn't exist in a vacuum without context. It's actually the fourth in a list of "Servant Songs" in Isaiah. The website "Got Questions" has a reasonable summary:

There are four "Servant Songs" of Isaiah that describe the service, suffering, and exaltation of the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah. All four songs show the Messiah to be God's meek and gentle Servant. He is a royal figure, representing Israel in its ideal form; He is the high priest, atoning for the sins of the world. Isaiah predicts that this Servant of the Lord would deliver the world from the prison of sin. In the royal terminology of the ancient Near East, a servant was a "trusted envoy," a "confidential representative," or "one who is chosen." The Servant Songs are found in Isaiah 42:1-9; Isaiah 49:1-13; Isaiah 50:4-11; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

Isaiah initially identifies God's servant as Israel (41:8; 44:1-2), who serves as God's witness (43:10) and as a light to the Gentiles. Yet Israel could not fulfill this mission: Israel was deaf, blind (42:19), and in need of God's forgiveness (44:21-22). Israel failed again and again. By contrast, God's Servant, the Messiah, faithfully completes all the work He is given to do (cf. Luke 13:32; John 17:4). The Servant of the Lord is God's faithful and true witness to humanity.

[Source.](#)

Now, ideally you would read all of Isaiah chapters 40 through 54 if you want to get the full context, which is what I did. (*Isaiah 40 starts a new section of Isaiah.*) You can read those chapters [here](#) (*link opens in a new tab*), but I realize not everyone wants to do that. However, before we look at the 4th servant song, we should look at the preceding three servant songs.

Additionally, some points of context are more important than others, so I've highlighted those below.

The First "Servant Song"

Before we get to the first servant song, it's worth noting how Isaiah 40 opens:

Isaiah 40:3

3 A voice is calling,
Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

This is referenced by the New Testament and applied to John the Baptizer, so we're clearly coming into a messianic passage.

With that covered, here's the first "servant song":

Isaiah 42:1-9

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.

2 He will not cry out or raise *His voice*,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed He will not break
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice.

4 He will not be disheartened or crushed
Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.

5 Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,

6 I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,

7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

8 I am the LORD, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you.

There are clear messianic overtones in the passage, which is why it's called the first servant song. Many parts are alluded to in the New Testament and applied to Jesus as well, making it even more clear.

Now, there's a complete absence of any PSA language in this passage, unless you conflate Justice with PSA. I realize the PSA adherent will, so I won't make this a point to dwell on because it depends on presuppositions you bring to the text (*whether PSA is just or not*) and not the

text of the passage itself.

However, notice that liberation is clearly mentioned.

Verse 7 is very similar to Luke 4:18, where Jesus states the reason He came by quoting another portion of Isaiah.

Luke 4:18-19

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
 Because He has anointed Me
 To preach the gospel to *the* poor;
 He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
 To proclaim liberty to *the* captives
 And recovery of sight to *the* blind,
 To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. •

With that covered, we'll look at the next one after a brief aside.

A Quick Aside

While reading through Isaiah chapters 40-54, this verse jumped out at me because it relates to PSA.

Isaiah 43:24-25

24 You have bought Me not sweet cane with money,
 Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;
 Rather you have burdened Me with your sins,
 You have wearied Me with your iniquities.
 25 I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,
 And I will not remember your sins.

PSA could maybe get around "wipes out your transgressions", but the "I will not remember your sins" part is much harder to get around. It's central to PSA that God can't forget sins because He must make a full accounting of them and punish them. However, to steel man this, PSA could perhaps say that God "will not remember your sins" after they have been fully punished. That would work and be internally consistent.

Anyway, here's the next servant song.

The Second "Servant Song"

Here it is, and I've highlighted anything that seems relevant to PSA or the understanding we covered in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#).

Isaiah 49:1-13

1 Listen to Me, O islands,
And pay attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called Me from the womb;
From the body of My mother He named Me.

2 He 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.

3 He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory."

4 But 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."

5 And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him
(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
And My God is My strength),

6 He 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."

7 Thus 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."

8 Thus says the LORD,
"In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages;

9 Saying to those who are bound, *Go forth,*
 To those who are in darkness, *Show yourselves.*

Along the roads they will feed,
 And their pasture *will be* on all bare heights.

10 They will not hunger or thirst,
 Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;
 For He who has compassion on them will lead them
 And will guide them to springs of water.

11 I will make all My mountains a road,
 And My highways will be raised up.

12 Behold, these will come from afar;
 And lo, these *will come* from the north and from the west,
 And these from the land of Sinim.

13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth!
 Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains!
 For the LORD has comforted His people
 And will have compassion on His afflicted.

There's nothing here that clearly points to PSA, but that's not an anti-PSA argument because even if PSA is true, most verses in the Bible won't weigh in on it. (*Just like most verses don't weigh in on most other important topics either.*)

There's also comparatively little pointing specifically to the alternative we've been covering in this series. Verse 9 of course, but little else.

The Third Servant Song

Here it is.

Isaiah 50:4-11

4 The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples,
 That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.
 He awakens Me morning by morning,
 He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear;
 And I was not disobedient
 Nor did I turn back.

6 I 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.

7 For 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.

8 He 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.

9 Behold, 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.

10 Who is among you that fears the LORD,
That obeys the voice of His servant,
That walks in darkness and has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
Who encircle yourselves with firebrands,
Walk in the light of your fire
And among the brands you have set ablaze.
This you will have from My hand:
You will lie down in torment.

There isn't much to comment on as it relates to PSA. However, it's worth noting that the focus of this Servant Song is the Servant's (*Jesus's*) obedience during adversity. As a minor teaching point, that's a good lesson for us. The enemy and our own sinful desires will often try to sway us from obeying God. Our responsibility is to follow God even when it's hard. We all fail at this, and I definitely include myself in that, but that's the goal.

Isaiah 52:9-12

This is immediately before the 4th Servant Song, so we'll look at it for context.

Isaiah 52:9-12

9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,
 You waste places of Jerusalem;
 For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD has bared His holy arm
 In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, go out from there,
Touch nothing unclean;
 Go out of the midst of her, **purify yourselves,**
 You who carry the vessels of the LORD.

12 But you will not go out in haste,
 Nor will you go as fugitives;
 For the LORD will go before you,
 And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard.

Nothing here points to or away from PSA clearly. The redemption language in verse 9 would point away slightly, but not enough to matter. Likewise, the purification language in verse 11 makes slightly less sense in the PSA model, but not enough to make more than a passing comment.

The Fourth â??Servant Songâ?•

This fourth one is the one weâ??ll focus on. It starts in chapter 52 and goes through the end of chapter 53. Here it is below in its entirety, and weâ??ll go through it verse-by-verse soon. Iâ??ve highlighted the portions that PSA typically uses to support their position.

Isaiah 52:13 â?? 53:12

13 Behold, My servant will prosper,
 He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

14 Just as many were astonished at you, *My people,*
 So His appearance was marred more than any man
 And His form more than the sons of men.

15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
 Kings will shut 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.

Chapter 53

1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no *stately* form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

(BP Note: The NASB 95 uses "fall on" to mean "attack" in other places, which is consistent with the Hebrew word's definition. We'll recap lower down, but we covered this at great length in my article: [How To Do a Word Study of a Greek or Hebrew Word in the Bible.](#))

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10 But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it* and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

Thatâ??s the full passage that weâ??ll go through verse-by-verse.

Isaiah 52:13 â?? 53:12; Verse-by-verse study

Despite how rich this passage is, Iâ??ll mostly restrain myself from doing any teaching on non-PSA elements. Iâ??ll say a little, but Iâ??ll try to keep the main thing (*PSA*), the main thing.

Isaiah 52:13

13 Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

For those who donâ??t know, â??lifted upâ?• was an idiom in the 1st century referring to crucifixion.
For example:

John 12:31-34

31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. **32** And I, if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. **33** But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. **34** The crowd then answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, The Son of Man must be **lifted up**? Who is this Son of Man?

Now, I'm pretty sure it wasn't an idiom for that when Isaiah 52 was written because Rome hadn't risen to prominence then. However, it does seem like this is a reference to the cross in hindsight. (*Honestly, it seems like extremely subtle foreshadowing from God about how Jesus would die.*) This doesn't touch directly on PSA, but seemed worth mentioning.

Isaiah 52:14

14 Just as many were astonished at **you, My people,**
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.

There's some clear parallelism here. The other nations were astonished at how badly things had gone for Israel and how badly the nation had been beat up. Likewise, Jesus had a truly horrible day, was beat up, and might've looked nigh unrecognizable by the end:

Matthew 27:26

26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after **having Jesus scourged**, he handed Him over to be crucified.

From the BibleHub lexical page on the Greek word translated "scourged":

The verb represented by Strong's Greek 5417 is a Latin loanword that passed into Koine Greek to describe **the brutal Roman act of flogging with a flagellum, a multi-thonged whip often weighted with bone or lead.** While Greek had its own term for scourging, this borrowed word underscores that the punishment carried distinctly Roman legal authority and severity.

!

Roman scourging was more than corporal punishment; **it was preparatory torture designed to weaken the victim before crucifixion.** The condemned was stripped, tied to a post, and **beaten by soldiers trained to push the victim to the brink of death without immediately killing him. The procedure tore flesh and exposed muscle,** producing the "stripes" that Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 53:5). Scourging was illegal for Roman citizens (Acts 22:25), underscoring the shameful injustice of Christ's treatment.

[Source.](#)

And they weren't done, the next verse continues the story.

Matthew 27:27-31

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole *Roman* cohort around Him. **28** They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. **29** And **after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head**, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" **30** **They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.** **31** After they had mocked Him, they took the *scarlet* robe off Him and put His *own* garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

Let me emphasize something: They beat Him on the head while he was wearing a crown of thorns. That would've resulted in the thorns being driven into His skin, lots of bleeding, and massive bruises all over his face and head. And that was after they scoured him.

Yikes!

If you've seen Mel Gibson's The Passion, this description from Isaiah 52:14 will make sense.

Now, a PSA adherent will often say that this brutal beating demonstrates God's wrath against sin. They will often quote Isaiah 53:5 to establish this, but we haven't gotten there yet, so we'll deal with it then. What we can say is that regardless of your model of how Jesus saved us, He was willing to undergo something that brutal to save us. He is so good!

Now, the most important part of this verse for our study of PSA is the first line:

Just as many were astonished at *you, My people,*

In the line above, it's clearly God speaking. I doubt anyone will dispute that. The "you" is His people, which means Israel, and this is made clear by the use of "you" throughout Isaiah 52. We won't go back and look at that right now because it's not important for this verse, but we will look at it later.

The important part is the following:

Who is speaking *changes* during the Servant Songs. Sometimes it's God (*My people, My servant*), and sometimes it's Israel (*we did not esteem Him*)

This isn't particularly important now, but it will become important later, so please keep it in mind.

Isaiah 52:15

15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
 Kings will shut 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.

Before we go on, we need to look at the word translated "nations". It's the Hebrew word גוֹי (goy), though you're probably more familiar with the plural form, goyim. From the topical lexicon summary:

גוֹי most commonly denotes a sociopolitical entity or nation or people with boundaries, customs, and a shared destiny. It ranges from small tribal groups (Genesis 25:23) to large empires (Isaiah 14:12).

So you could also translate it "peoples", as in "people groups", which is why it's translated "nations". While it occasionally refers to Israel, it most commonly refers to pagan nations. This reference to "sprinkle many nations" is almost certainly a reference to Jesus's salvation being offered to not just Israel, but also to the world at large as well. (*Which PSA would agree on.*)

However, PSA will disagree on what the sprinkling accomplishes.

Here's Mike Winger expressing the PSA position below in his video on Isaiah 53.

Okay, there's a lot here but I'm focusing on the PSA kind of elements, penal substitutionary atonement, and there's one in particular that stands out and it's this word sprinkled; it's this word sprinkle. This, this is kind of a big deal. **That word sprinkle in the context of it, consistently and constantly in the Old Testament, that word is used to refer to sprinkling, like, like when you sprinkle water or oil or blood on something in the Levitical law and relation to sacrifices,** and we'll see Isaiah 53 is all about the Levitical law and sacrifices. It's all connected in relation specifically to the law and sacrifices. **The term sprinkle is used to refer to when they would say, sacrifice an animal and take the blood and sprinkle it on the altar, sprinkle it on the tent, sprinkle it over here, sprinkle it over there, and it was meant to be covering the sins or dealing with the sins of the people.** So the significance of this, if, if we're interpreting it right, sprinkle is referenced to a sacrificial thing and we'll see later Isaiah 53 that we have a lot of support for this. Then this sprinkling of the suffering servant of Jesus is gonna sprinkle not just Israel, but many nations. It's gonna be a atoning thing for lots of nations around.

[Source](#). (*Starting at about 8:40*)

Now, if you have read [the article in this PSA series on the Levitical sacrificial system](#), or [the article on sin offerings and the Day of Atonement](#), you'll know that Mike Winger doesn't have all the data.

The offering that he's referring to is almost certainly the "sin offering". However, as we saw after some exhaustive study, the "sin offering" was actually a "purification offering" whose

purpose was to cleanse sacred space of the contamination of sin. Thus, the ~~sin~~ purification offering was about cleansing sin's effects, not dealing with God's wrath, or His justice, or punishment for sin. (And my source for this is a scholar who believes PSA. You can check out his podcast on Leviticus for details [here](#), and the Leviticus series starts at episode 63.)

Mike Winger is clearly unaware that the "sin offering" is actually a purification offering, which is a shame because his PSA series has been seen by a lot of people.

Obviously I can't summarize two whole articles and the supporting evidence and scholarship in a paragraph or two, so you can read those two articles for the full story. (The [one on the Levitical sacrificial system](#) would be a better choice if you only read one of them.)

Mike Winger unintentionally supports this purification offering understanding because he mentions other translations of the verse. In the quote below, he's responding to others claiming it should read "astonish" instead of "sprinkle".

They note that other ancient translations also translated as sprinkle. Specifically the Greek versions of Aquila and Theodosia, they render it sprinkle not astonish. The Vulgate, the Latin Vulgate, renders it as sprinkle, and then the author's judgment, they're like: "Hey these guys aren't being influenced by theological concerns, they're just translating." **The Peshitta, an ancient translation of the work itself, also renders it as purified.** And so we have multiple translations that affirm this. They also go on to say "hey the word itself in Hebrew really should be sprinkled. That's how it is handled throughout the rest of the text of the Old Testament it's always as a sprinkle term".

[Source](#). (Starting at about 12:00)

Notice that "purified" fits the "sin purification offering" understanding far better than the PSA understanding, since the PSA understanding is about wrath and judgement. However, "purified" doesn't fit those contexts very well at all.

But there's more.

"Sprinkling" has another context that relates to Jesus that's often overlooked.

Context first:

Exodus 24:3-8

3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" **4** Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. **5** He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. **6** Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he **sprinkled** on the altar. **7** Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they

said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" 8 So Moses took the blood and **sprinkled** it on the people, and said, "Behold **the blood of the covenant**, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Covenants were made/sealed with blood. That's part of the function of blood when used in a covenant. Hebrews picks up on this:

Hebrews 9:18-20

18 Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. 19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU."

This is important because earlier in Hebrews 8-10 is primarily concerned with contrasting the old covenant with the new covenant, and the cleansing from sin:

Hebrews 10:12-17

12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, 13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. 14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

16 "THIS IS THE **COVENANT** THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"

He then says,

17 "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."

So when Isaiah 52:15 says that the suffering servant (*Jesus*) will "sprinkle many nations," it's more than just the cleansing from sin; it's also about their inclusion in the new covenant.

That's good news!

However, it's not so good for PSA because it doesn't provide any support for it, though it doesn't argue against PSA either. Again, if you properly understand the Levitical sacrificial system, especially the Day of Atonement/Purification, it gives no support whatsoever to PSA. (As we've covered in exhaustive length before in this series.) Thus, saying that "sprinkling" is a reference to the Levitical sacrificial system doesn't help the case for PSA at all.

Further, don't ignore the "covenant" component. That's important, and it'll become even more important in an article later in the series. (*Not as it relates to PSA, but rather, the actual mechanics of how salvation by faith occurs.*)

Isaiah 53:1

53:1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

This verse is quoted by John and Paul. **Now, one of the most important rules in Bible interpretation is that when a New Testament writer tells us what an Old Testament passage means, that's what it means.** I doubt anyone will disagree with this rule in theory, though, many will deny it in practice. (*The first two lines of Isaiah 53:4 for example, which we'll look at soon.*)

Here is the quote from John's gospel:

John 12:37-41

37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. **38** *This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: **LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?*** **39** For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, **40** *HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.* **41** These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

And Paul in Romans:

Romans 10:14-17

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? **15** How will they preach unless they are sent? **Just as it is written, HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!** **16** However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, **LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?** **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

The first bit I highlighted is a quotation of Isaiah 52:7, the second is of Isaiah 53:1. Neither passage appears to weigh in on whether PSA is true or not, so we'll move on after a quick note.

Sometimes, it doesn't matter how true the message is or how brilliant the speaker is; sometimes, people just won't listen. Jesus, God Himself, walked and taught on the Earth and while many people accepted Him, rather a lot of people didn't, even though Jesus did miracles in front of them.

Now, we should endeavor to ensure that unbelievers can't attack our character or actions because they are beyond reproach. However, even if you are the sinless incarnate God, some people will still reject the truth. I suggest that you remember that when you talk to anyone about anything, especially unbelievers about the faith.

Further, we should also endeavor to consider new ideas on their merits based on scripture like the Bereans of Acts 17:11 to avoid falling into that trap ourselves.

Anyway, moving on.

Isaiah 53:2

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no *stately* form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

This doesn't weigh in on whether PSA is true either, so I'll just point out two quick things.

First, He (*Jesus*) grew like a root out of parched ground. He came out of Israel at a time when *this people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me* (Matthew 15:8), and Jesus called them an *evil and adulterous generation* in Matthew 12:39. That was the soil out of which Jesus came. Dry, cracked, barren soil. And yet God chose to save the world in that condition. If He can do that, then He can deal with whatever you're facing in your life that seems dry, cracked, and/or barren.

Secondly, Jesus wasn't a fashion model; He was a regular-looking guy and that was part of the point. The goal was to emphasize the message, not the appearance of the messenger. I think the modern church would do well to remember that.

Isaiah 53:3

3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Notice the word *we*.

It's not very important for this verse, but will be very important for the next verse.

Now, anyone who has read the account of the crucifixion will understand this description. His disciples abandoned/forsook Him, the pain was unimaginable, and the onlookers mocked and ridiculed Him. Again, He was willing to go through all that to save us. He is so good!

Isaiah 53:4

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
 And our sorrows He carried;
 Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
 Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Now, this verse breaks neatly into two parts; the first half consisting of the first two lines, and the second half consisting of the second two lines. Both are important for PSA, so we'll look at them separately before we look at them together.

The first half of the verse

The first half is the first two lines:

53:4a Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
 And our sorrows He carried;

I said this above:

Now, one of the most important rules in Bible interpretation is that when a New Testament writer tells us what an Old Testament passage means, ***that's what it means***. I doubt anyone will disagree with this rule in theory, though many will deny it in practice. (*The first two lines of Isaiah 53:4 for example, which we'll look at soon.*)

I'm sure you figured out that this section is quoted by the New Testament, and here's where it's quoted with some context.

Matthew 8:14-17

14 When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. **15** He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. **16** When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. **17** *This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.*

According to what God Himself inspired in the New Testament, the first half of Isaiah 53:4 had its fulfillment in Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick.

Now, I'm aware that PSA adherents will say that this refers to Jesus bearing our sins on the cross in a penal substitutionary fashion. However, that's not what scripture says. Scripture says this was fulfilled by Jesus casting out demons and healing the people. To claim it's anything else is to ignore what God Himself said about what He meant.

That's a bad idea.

Further, we've examined this in some detail before.

In [the article on sin offerings and the Day of Atonement](#), we covered this in some detail. I don't want to recap everything here because we already covered it. But for those who didn't read that article, or if it was long enough ago that you don't remember, I'll recap **briefly**. If you want the full understanding with all the evidence, please see that article.

In context with the other biblical passages that apply this to Christ or the sacrificial system, the meaning is always to bear away or to carry away. It does not mean to take into yourself.

This is confirmed by Matthew 8:17

Matthew 8:17

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.

Jesus didn't take the sicknesses (*infirmities*) and demons into Himself when He took/carried them away.

That would be absurd.

Jesus didn't get sick from healing the sick, nor did He become demon-possessed when He cast out a demon. (*The latter one seems blasphemous*) Quite beside all the evidence in the other article that the intended sense is take/bear/carry **away**, just looking at God's own commentary on the verse should clear it up. Jesus took and carried away in the sense of elimination. The sicknesses just disappeared and the demons were forced to leave. Jesus didn't take them into Himself, He just got rid of them.

If you'd like more detail, including the cross references and word studies, again, please see [the article on sin offerings and the Day of Atonement](#).

Anyway!

Now, I suppose **PSA adherents could say that it does refer to Jesus healing and casting out demons, but then say that it also refers to Jesus bearing our sins on the cross in a penal substitutionary fashion.** However, that flies in the face of the clearly stated meaning of the passage that God Himself explained in Matthew 8:17.

Now, if you would like to ignore what God said the passage means, I suppose you could make the claim that PSA makes. However, as we saw in the other article, **all the places where the bearing language refers to sin, it refers to that sin being taken away in the sense of elimination, not in the sense of the bearer taking them into Himself.** (Yes, even the Day of Atonement) Thus, the PSA claim must be made without any scriptural support.

Of course it's possible that I missed a verse, and if you can think of one after reading that article, then please leave a comment below and I'll look into it. But as of now, I see no scriptural evidence for it. (This idea of bearing comes up again in verse 11 as well, using the same Hebrew word.)

The second half of the verse

The second half is the second two lines, but I've included the next verse for context, and to point out a bad argument against PSA that's probably true, but also uncertain.

53:4b-5

Yet **we ourselves** esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

The Hebrew word translated "ourselves" in that first line is אנחנו ([anachnu](#)), and it means:

ourselves, us, we
Apparently from אנכי ; we ourselves, us, we.

No shocker there because that's how it's translated. However, a better lexicon gives more detail that we'll need.

אנחנו pronoun 1 plural **we** see below
 אנחנו pronoun 1 plural common **we** (the plural corresponding to אני , as אנחנו ; to אנחנו ; see WSG p. 100; Phoenician anchn CISi. 3, 16.17, Aramaic anchn , anchn also anchn , Syriac , , ,) Genesis 13:8; Genesis 29:4; Genesis 37:7; Genesis 42:11,13;

Numbers 9:7; Deuteronomy 1:28,41; Joel 2:17,18, etc. Like *שׁוֹמֵר*, following a participle as its subject Genesis 19:13; Numbers 10:29; Judges 19:18; 2 Kings 18:26; **appended to a verb for emphasis** Judges 9:28; 2 Kings 10:4; Isaiah 20:6.

Unlike in English, Hebrew verbs have person embedded in them. For example, you might say *אנחנו רצים* in English. However, in Hebrew, the *אנחנו* part is part of the verb itself; it's only one word. *רצים*. So you could say *אנחנו רצים* in Hebrew, and by changing the form of the word *רצים*, the listener would know that you meant *אנחנו רצים*, *הם רצים*, *אני רצים*, etc. Thus, you don't need to use the word *אנחנו* in Hebrew very often. You'd normally only use it for **emphasis**, like the lexical definition says.

Thus, God wanted to emphasize that the *אנחנו* (*Israel*) thought the following.

The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges commentary reinforces this: (*Red emphasis mine, the rest is original*)

yet we did esteem &c.] Rather, while **we accounted him stricken** &c. **The subject *אנחנו* is strongly emphasised**, and the clause is circumstantial, introducing **the people's false estimate of the Servant** as a concomitant of the main statement of the verse.

Thus, that leads to an important conclusion:

The two lines *Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted* aren't about the objective truth of what's happening; they are about what the *אנחנו* (*Israel*) **thought was happening.**

This particular verse doesn't state whether what the people thought was true or false. The verse is simply an accurate prediction of what the people *thought* was true. **That's important.** If we want to see if it's true, then we need to look a little further. Specifically, the first word of the next verse.

Please read it again with that context, and notice the first word of the next verse.

53:4b-5

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

Now, there's a bit of complication because, to put it bluntly, Hebrew is a very imprecise language. The word translated "but" at the beginning of verse 5 is "waw" (waw, or "vav" in modern pronunciation), and it's a conjunction. A conjunction is a word that joins two or more elements of a sentence. For example, in English, we have "and", "yet", "but", etc. as conjunctions. Hebrew can be very confusing because those three conjunctions (and many more) are all expressed by a single Hebrew conjunction.

Yes, Hebrew can be confusing.

This is called the "waw" or "vav" conjunction, depending upon the way you pronounce the letter "w". e.g., when I took Hebrew, the "w" was called the "waw", but today in more recent, Hebrew grammars, it is called the "vav". However, regardless of how you pronounce it, it functions as the Hebrew conjunction, and **its primary translation is "and", but there are instances where it is translated as "but"**!

- "but" (e.g., "But" (w) a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground" Genesis 2:6);
- "now" (e.g., "Now" (w) the LORD spoke to Moses, saying," Exodus 14:1);
- "then" (e.g., "Then" (w) the LORD spoke to Moses, saying," Leviticus 5:14);
- "when" (e.g., "When" (w) the woman saw that the tree was good for food," Genesis 3:6);
- "so" (e.g., "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way? So" (w) she went to inquire of the LORD" Genesis 25:22).

[Source.](#)

Context determines its usage, so **in the Old Testament, whenever you see the words "and", "yet", and "but", they are all the same Hebrew word.**

No, I'm not kidding.

Thus, if you see a verse with "but" but you think that "and" captures the idea better, it would be hard to say you're wrong.

That leaves us with two basic understandings of the first word of verse 5, which is relevant to the meaning of verse 4.

53:4b-5

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

Or:

53:4b-5 (*modified*)

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 And He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

I don't know of anyone who takes the second position because if you did, then you would also have to say that the *we* (Israel) knew what Christ was doing on the cross to save us.

However, scripture tells us that they didn't know.

1 Cor 2:7-8

7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, *the hidden wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; **8** *the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;*

The *we* in Isaiah 53:4 did not know why Jesus was really on the cross. Scripture states this quite plainly.

Thus, the proper understanding of the conjunction at the beginning of Isaiah 53:5 is *but*, which is how basically every translation translates it.

I know, you're shocked. ð???

However, it was important to cover that because it's crucial to understanding what the verse means.

What this means for Isaiah 53:4

Fundamentally, it means that God is drawing a contrast:

- In verse 4, God prophesies what Israel will think
- In verse 5, God corrects Israel's misconception and explains what is actually happening

This isn't a unique take either, nor did I come up with it. In fact, we already saw a commentary that agreed with this assessment.

yet we did esteem &c.] Rather, while **we accounted him stricken** &c. **The subject "we" is strongly emphasised**, and the clause is circumstantial, introducing **the people's false estimate of the Servant** as a concomitant of the main statement of the verse.

There are other commentaries that say the same thing as well, including those that espouse PSA. Here are those two lines again:

Isaiah 53:4b

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Let me remind you that this section is stating an **incorrect** view of what was happening.

We already looked at that.

But there's more.

The Hophil verb

The phrase "smitten of God" is two words in Hebrew. One of them is simply "God", so nothing complicated is going on there. (*Well, nothing that's relevant for this PSA series anyway.*) However, the Hebrew verb for "smitten" there is very interesting because it's a "hophil" verb. (*Sometimes spelled "hofil"; same thing.*)

The **Hophal stem is the passive form of the Hiphil**, and it generally expresses the passive voice of the meaning of a verb in the Hiphil stem.

[Source.](#)

We should recap what the Hiphil stem means in Hebrew, though we have covered it before in this series.

The Hiphil stem is generally used to express causative action in active voice. In many cases the noun derived from the same root is the object or result of the hiphil verb associated with that root. **For example, the Hiphil verb "x'x'x'x'" means "to cause to rain down"; the noun "x'x'x'" means "rain".**

[Source.](#)

Yes, Hebrew can be a bit odd with its verb forms that are radically different than English, but that's what it means. Using their example of a verb that means "rain" for all three forms, you have something like this:

- Active verb: He **rained down** destruction on them
- Hiphil verb: He **caused** destruction **to rain down** on them
- Hophal verb: He **caused** destruction **to be rained down** on them

Please don't get too tied up in the difference between Hiphil and Hophal verbs; the important part is the causative action, which both share.

Both stems indicate that the active agent God in Isaiah 53:4 caused something to happen. I'll paste that verse again with this understanding included.

Isaiah 53:4b (modified)

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
caused by God to be smitten, and afflicted.

Again, let me remind you that scripture records that the we ourselves (Israel) were wrong about what they thought.

The we (Israel) in Isaiah 53:4 thought that God had caused Jesus to be smitten, which was an incorrect assessment that God then corrects in the next verse.

Think about that in the context of PSA for a moment.

Really, please do.

!

!

Scripture states that Israel thought that God caused Jesus to be smitten, and that Israel was wrong. **I'm trying to think of a worse deathblow to PSA, but I'm not sure I can.** Possibly the fact that PSA ignores the definition of the Greek and Hebrew words translated "forgive" is a worse deathblow (as we covered in previous articles), but that's about it.

Now, of course PSA adherents will say that God definitely caused Jesus to die, and they'll point to verses like the following to support that:

Acts 2:22-23

22 Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know **23** this Man, **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.**

Here's the thing, it's important to read the text *carefully*. It was God's plan and He knew in advance that it would happen. However, I might have a plan and know in advance that something will happen without directly causing it, and I'm merely a man. (*And yes, I know this bleeds quickly into a discussion of God's sovereignty vs. man's free will. I'm actually looking into that, and it will likely be the topic of the next article series after PSA. This verse will probably play an important part in that series.*)

When read carefully, this verse creates a distinction between God's planning and who actually did the crime, which was the people Peter is addressing in this verse. (*The "you"*)

The verse is clear that while God planned it and knew in advance that it would happen, He didn't do the deed itself. Here's an example of that:

In a war, you might put some troops in a position where you know the enemy will react. You have a predetermined plan and you know how the enemy will react. However, that doesn't mean that you caused the reaction. Yes, this is splitting hairs a bit, but when Scripture tells us that God didn't cause something but also tells us that He had a predetermined plan and foreknowledge of that thing, that's the only way I currently see to harmonize those two things.

Men on earth do it, so why not God?

Regardless, unless I'm missing something major and I might be it seems like the clear teaching of scripture in Isaiah 53:4 is that God did not cause Jesus to be smitten.

That's very nearly a deathblow to PSA.

I don't know how else to put it.

The foundational premise of PSA is that because of God's wrath against sin, Jesus suffered the punishment for our sin vicariously in our place as our substitute on the cross. But if Jesus wasn't smitten by God or even more strongly, if He wasn't caused by God to be smitten then how could it be God pouring out His wrath against sin?

Now, I realize that PSA adherents will object that the very next verse is one of the strongest PSA verses in the entire Bible, and many will likely say that it's the strongest. Well, let's take a look.

Isaiah 53:5

**5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.**

Weâ??ll look at the first two lines together first, then the 3rd line, then the 4th line, then put it all together.

Isaiah 53:5a-b

PSA says that the word *for* here means exchange and/or substitution. PSA says that Jesus was pierced/crushed *in exchange for* our transgressions, meaning that He was punished instead of us. **But even if PSA is 100% right about that, that's not what the verse says.** If we assume for a moment that PSA has the correct understanding of *for*, it doesn't say that Jesus was pierced/crushed in exchange for us, which is what PSA teaches.

The following assumes that *for* means *in exchange for* as PSA claims:

- **PSA says that it means this:** Jesus was pierced/crushed in exchange for **[us because of]** our transgressions/iniquities
- **But the text actually says this:** Jesus was pierced/crushed in exchange for our transgressions/iniquities

Now, I don't want to dwell on this for very long because there are cases in scripture where such additions are the clear implication of the text. They're rare, but they happen. I don't think that's the case here, but it's not outside the realm of possibility. Because of that, we'll move on.

Importantly, PSA needs the preposition *for* here to mean *exchange/substitution*.

But does it?

The Hebrew preposition that's translated *for* in the first two lines is *min*. However, the third line doesn't use that preposition, and *for* was added by translators for *clarity*. We'll come back to that soon. Anyway, here's the relevant lexical entry for *min* from the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, and I copy/pasted the entire relevant entry, even though only the first half is truly relevant:

f. is not always clearly defined): Exodus 2:23 they sighed *on account of* the bondage, Exodus 6:9; Exodus 15:23; Deuteronomy 7:7 not *through*, **by reason of**, your numbers did J. set his love upon you, Joshua 22:24 to do a thing *out of* carefulness, 2 Samuel 23:4 *on account of*, 1 Kings 14:4; **Isaiah 53:5 wounded on account of our transgressions, bruised on account of** **Isaiah 53:8**; Job 4:19; Obadiah 10; Habakkuk 2:17; Psalm 6:8 *because of* *from* vexation (compare Job 17:7: Psalm 31:10 *because of*), Psalm 31:12; Psalm 38:19 I am concerned **on account of** my sin, Proverbs 20:4 *because of* the winter, Job 22:4 *on account of* thy fear of him? Songs 3:8; Ruth 1:13 *because of* you: see also Deuteronomy 28:34,67; Deuteronomy

32:19; Judges 2:18; Isaiah 65:14; Jeremiah 12:4; Jeremiah 24:2 לְעוֹלָם , Jeremiah 50:13; Jeremiah 51:5 b (Ew Ke), Ezekiel 7:27 (but read probably with לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם Co לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם), Ezekiel 16:61; Ezekiel 35:11 (AV out of), Ezekiel 45:20; Micah 2:12; Micah 7:13; Psalm 5:11; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 107:17; Psalm 119:53; Genesis 49:12 red of eyes לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם , and white of teeth לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם . Often also in לְעוֹלָם from the abundance of, absolute for abundance, with many different verbs, as Genesis 16:10 לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם Joshua 9:13; 1 Samuel 1:16, etc. Similarly in לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם , לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם (pp. 35, 115, 117); and before an infinitive (7a), and in לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם (p. 84).

Did you notice a pattern?

I invite you to go to that page, hit $\text{CTRL}+\text{F}$ (or select *find in page* on mobile) and search for *substitute*, or *exchange* or *transfer*, or any other word that PSA wants this preposition to mean. **You won't find them.**

Why?

Because that Hebrew preposition cannot mean substitution or exchange. Let me say that again in big bold letters.

The Hebrew preposition לְעוֹלָם (*min*) used in Isaiah 53:5 and translated *for* cannot mean substitution or exchange

But you will ask: *Then why is it translated for?!?*

I'm glad you asked. We'll look at that now.

The many meanings of the English word *for*

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, there are at least 10 uses for the English word *for*, not counting sub definitions. I highlighted the ones that are relevant for this article.

- 1
 - a *for* used as a function word to indicate purpose
 - a grant for studying medicine
 - b *for* used as a function word to indicate an intended goal
 - left for home
 - acted for the best
 - c *for* used as a function word to indicate the object or recipient of a perception, desire, or activity

- now for a good rest
 - run for your life
 - an eye for a bargain
- 2
 - a : as being or constituting
 - taken for a fool
 - eggs for breakfast
 - b ? used as a function word to indicate an actual or implied enumeration or selection
 - for one thing, the price is too high
- 3: because of
 - can't sleep for the heat
- 4
 - ? used as a function word to indicate suitability or fitness
 - it is not for you to choose
 - ready for action
- 5
 - a
 - : in place of
 - go to the store for me
 - b(1)
 - : on behalf of : REPRESENTING
 - speaks for the court
 - b(2)
 - : in favor of
 - all for the plan
- 6
 - : in spite of ? usually used with all
 - for all his large size, he moves gracefully
- 7
 - : with respect to : CONCERNING
 - a stickler for detail
 - heavy for its size
- 8
 - a ? used as a function word to indicate equivalence in exchange
 - \$10 for a hat
 - , equality in number or quantity
 - point for point
 - , or correspondence or correlation
 - for every one that works, you'll find five that don't
 - b ? used as a function word to indicate number of attempts
 - 0 for 4
- 9
 - ? used as a function word to indicate duration of time or extent of space
 - gone for two days
- 10

- : in honor of : AFTER
 - named for her grandmother

[Source.](#)

For clarity, I'll repeat the most relevant ones:

- **because of**
 - can't sleep **for** the heat
- used as a function word to indicate equivalence in exchange
 - \$10 **for** a hat
- in place of
 - go to the store **for** me

That's why the Hebrew preposition *min* (*min*) is translated *for*: because *for* can indeed mean *because of*.

We already saw the lexical definition, so we'll just look at one scripture to show this usage:

Exodus 2:23

23 Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed **because of** (*min*) the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help **because of** (*min*) their bondage rose up to God.

There are plenty more verses, but that verse and the lexical quote should suffice to prove the point. That leads to an important point:

Translating *min* (*min*) in Isaiah 53:5 as *for* is not technically wrong because *for* can mean *because of*!

!but translating it *for* is misleading because *for* can also mean substitution, while *min* (*min*) cannot mean substitution.

The NASB and all the other translations that translate it *for* aren't technically wrong. However, they aren't translating well either. Part of the job of a translator is to consider how their translation might be misinterpreted into a sense that the original text didn't mean. Every translation that translates it *for* gets a big old *F* in that category for this verse. However, some translations don't make that mistake, and I'm not talking about obscure ones either.

Some examples:

Christian Standard Bible

But he was pierced **because of** our rebellion, crushed **because of** our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

Holman Christian Standard Bible

But He was pierced **because of** our transgressions, crushed **because of** our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds.

Good News Translation

But **because of** our sins he was wounded, beaten **because of** the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.

And importantly, this next one has a footnote:

Isaiah 53:5 (NET Bible)

5 He was wounded **because of**(15) our rebellious deeds,
crushed **because of** our sins;
he endured punishment that made us well;
because of his wounds we have been healed.

And the footnote:

The preposition $\times\ddot{O}'\times$ (min) has a causal sense (translated $\hat{a}??\text{because of}\hat{a}?\bullet$) here and in the following clause.

Now, I wouldn't recommend any of those translations for other reasons, but they do translate more accurately to the intended sense for this word in this verse than the best translations do.

Notably, the Jewish translations tend to all have $\hat{a}??\text{because of}\hat{a}?\bullet$. Not all, but most. According to some looking that I did, the following is the most popular translation for Jews and the closest to being $\hat{a}??\text{standard}\hat{a}?\bullet$.

Isaiah 53:5 (JPS Tanakh, 1985 edition)

But he was wounded **because of** our sins,
Crushed **because of** our iniquities.
He bore the chastisement that made us whole,
And by his bruises we were healed.

This is the normal understanding of the word as well. For example, the Latin Vulgate translated it this way:

Isaiah 53:5 (Latin Vulgate)

Thus, the unanimous testimony of the original language and every major Christian translation of Isaiah 53 is that the intended nuance is "because of" explaining the cause, not "for" indicating exchange or substitution.

The only way you get exchange/substitution (as PSA insists) is via an unclear translation into English.

Thus, according to that unanimous testimony, the correct understanding of this verse is as follows:

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced through **because of** our transgressions,
 He was crushed **because of** our iniquities;
 The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
 And by His scourging we are healed.

Now, this isn't an anti-PSA argument, nor should it be used as one. **No Christian will deny that Jesus died to solve man's sin problem, the disagreement is how Jesus solved it.** The fact that Jesus died to save us because we are sinful isn't in dispute. Every Christian will agree with that. Again, the debate is how He saved us. This verse doesn't support PSA, and so it shouldn't be a part of the debate.

The first two lines of Isaiah 53:4 simply do not weigh-in on the PSA debate at all.

It simply shouldn't be part of the discussion, much like Genesis 1:1 and most other passages in the Bible don't weigh in on the debate. *(Most passages don't weigh in on most debates. Most debates have a relatively small number of passages used by the various sides to argue for their positions.)*

Isaiah 53:5c

5 But He was pierced through because of our transgressions,
 He was crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
 And by His scourging we are healed.

Now, there are two basic ways of understanding this line of this verse, but the NASB 95 sort of muddies the waters by taking something of a middle ground that isn't very helpful to explain the two positions. Thus, we'll look at this line in two other translations that better represent the two ways that this passage can be legitimately understood.

And by the way, I do mean the two ways that this passage can be legitimately understood

Christians like to get dogmatic about a verse and say that "It must mean ____". However, sometimes it's not that simple. Translation is more an art than a science, and there are sometimes several ways to understand a passage that are legitimate. That's why we like to look at multiple passages on the same topic to ensure we understand a passage correctly.

PSA does have a valid interpretation of this line. It just doesn't have the only valid interpretation of this line.

With that said, we'll look at the two basic options for how to translate/understand the verse. And by the way, the JPS Tanakh is as close to a "standard" translation as the English-speaking Jews have. The Tanakh is what the Jews call their Bible which is identical to the 49 books of the Protestant Old Testament.

Isaiah 53:4c

Berean Standard Bible: the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him (*BP Note: The Berean Standard Bible has no connection to this website whatsoever.*)

NASB 95: The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

JPS Tanakh (1985): He bore the chastisement that made us whole,

As you can see, the NASB 95 treads something of a middle ground between the two, but it definitely leans more toward the Jewish understanding of the verse. We'll look at the underlying Hebrew text now.

Textual analysis

In Hebrew, this line is composed of only three words. (*Which you can confirm [here](#)*). Now, the third word is undisputed in meaning, and it simply means "upon Him" when literally translated, indicating who took the chastisement/punishment.

The other two words are "musar" (musar), translated "chastisement" or "punishment"; and "shalom" (Shalom), translated "peace" or "whole".

Before we look at those words, we need to talk about how they are associated. The two words are associated in Hebrew because the one that comes first is in the "construct" state.

The construct state serves a unique function in Biblical Hebrew to grammatically link a word to the following word(s), making a single grammatical unit called a construct chain. Words in a construct chain are often translated into English with the word "of" between them. Construct chains can consist of two words (for example, "the king of Israel") or more than two words (for example, "the son of the king of Israel").

[Source](#).

There are a few ways that the construct state can be used, and I'll copy/paste the relevant entry from the link above:

Purpose/Result

An absolute noun can indicate an intended purpose/result for the construct noun.

[Source.](#)

Thus, the purpose or intended result of the chastisement/punishment is peace or wholeness.

The NASB has *The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him*. Now, *for* can indeed indicate purpose or intended result as we just saw, but it's less clear than the BSB above. The BSB has *the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him*, which gets the idea across significantly more clearly and accurately while also avoiding the misunderstandings that *for* fosters.

Anyway, we'll look at the words used now, starting with *Shalom*.

Shalom

You likely recognize this Hebrew word and think it means *peace*. That's true, but it's also incomplete because there's a **lot** more to the Hebrew concept of *shalom* than simply *peace*. The Bible Project has a fantastic video on this that I've embedded below. If you can't watch it right now, then I recommend you go to YouTube and expand the description under the video so you can read the transcript. The video is short, less than 4 minutes, and well worth your time.

This is the best, most concise explanation of the Hebrew word *shalom* and thus the concept of peace/wholeness that I've seen.

Please watch it if you can.

I'll pull out a few quotes from the video to highlight them:

The most basic meaning of shalom is *complete* or *whole*. The word can refer to a stone that has a perfect, whole shape with no cracks. It can also refer to a completed stone wall that has no gaps and no missing bricks. **Shalom refers to something that is complex with lots of pieces that is in a state of completeness. Wholeness.**

!

In fact, that is the basic meaning of shalom when you use it as a verb. **To bring shalom literally means to make complete or to restore.**

â?!

So peace takes a lot of work because it is not just the absence of conflict. **True peace requires taking what is broken and restoring it to wholeness,**

So â??shalomâ?• does indeed mean â??peaceâ?•, and thus the PSA understanding isnâ??t wrong. But it also means â??completenessâ?• and â??wholenessâ?•, so the PSA understanding doesnâ??t have to be the intended nuance either.

Like I said, thereâ??s more than one valid way to understand this verse. If a PSA fellow wants to insist that his way of translating this line is correct, thereâ??s little that concretely says heâ??s wrong. There is one good argument based on context, but weâ??ll get to that later.

Thus, both PSA and the cleansing model of salvation that we discussed in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#) fit perfectly. PSA would focus more on the â??peaceâ?• aspect, and the cleansing model would focus more on the wholeness aspect.

Weâ??ll look at the other word now, and that one will take significantly longer.

â??x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x"â?• (musar)

This word is used 50 times in the Old Testament, and 30 of them are in the Book of Proverbs.

Now, the PSA school says that the word means â??punishmentâ?• here, and in fact insists on it.

However, if you go to the lexical page [here](#), and hit â??CTRL+Fâ?• to search the page (or â??find in pageâ?• on mobile), you discover something odd: the word â??punishâ?• only appears on the page three times. Two of those three times are simply mentioning that the NASB translates it â??punishmentâ?• (twice), and I copy/pasted the third place below:

x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" brings together the ideas of discipline, correction, chastening, rebuke, and formative instruction. It may be administered by parents (Proverbs 1:8), sages (Proverbs 8:33), kings (Proverbs 29:15), or by the LORD Himself (Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12). **Always implicit is the goal of shaping character toward covenant fidelity and reverent wisdom rather than mere punishment.**

Hmm.

Interesting, no?

Now, I donâ??t usually do this, but the lexical entry is short enough that I can reasonably copy/paste the whole thing into this article. The **bold** emphasis is original, the **red** was added by me. I donâ??t expect you to read all of it, but feel free if you like.

x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" noun masculine Proverbs 15:10 **discipline** (of the moral nature), **chastening, correction**; â?? x³x? Jeremiah 2:30 31t. (Ezekiel 5:15 strike out Co); construct x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" Deuteronomy 11:2 14t. (for Job 12:28 see x•x;x"); suffix x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x"Ö´x? Proverbs 8:10; x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,Ö½x"Ö°x?Ö, Isaiah 26:16; x?Ö¹x;Ö,x"Ö,x• Job 33:16 (for x?Ö»x;Ö,x"Ö,x• Di SS); â?? **discipline, correction, of God**, Deuteronomy 11:2 x³x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" x? **the discipline of x³x?** (of Y.â??s wonders, as **exercising a disciplinary, educating influence upon Israel**, compare Dr); x³x?x§x? x? Jeremiah 17:23; Jeremiah 32:33; Jeremiah 35:13; Zephaniah 3:2,7; Psalm 50:17; Job 33:16; Job 36:10; x?Ö°Ö¼x?Ö´x?Ö,Ö¼xªÖ´x? x³x? **the correction of (i.e. which lead-eth to) my shame** Job 20:3.

b. x?x?x?x?x• xçÖµx¥ x?x?Ö¼x• x³x? **the discipline of unreal gods is wood** (is like themselves, destitute of true moral force) Jeremiah 10:8; Ezekiel 5:15 = warning example (?) Ew Sm (â??â?• x©Ö°x•x?Ö,x?Ö,x?; strike out áµ•5 CO).

c. **in Proverbs, discipline in the school of wisdom**: x³x?x?x?x? x?x? Ezekiel 1:2,7; Ezekiel 23:23; x?x?x?x? x³x? **discipline of wisdom** Ezekiel 15:33; x?Ö,x©Ö°x?x?ÖµÖ¼x? x³x? Ezekiel 1:3; x³xªx?x?x?xª x? Ezekiel 6:23; x?Ö´x?Ö¶Ö¼Ö?x?Ö, x³x?Ö,x?Ö´x?x•Ö,x? x?Ö,x?Ö¼ Ezekiel 23:12 apply thy mind to discipline; x³x§x?Ö¼x? x? Ezekiel 19:20; x³x?x§x? x? Ezekiel 1:3; Ezekiel 8:10; Ezekiel 24:32 (compare Jeremiah above); x§x x? x³x? Ezekiel 23:23; x³x©x•x?xç x? Ezekiel 8:23; Ezekiel 19:27; x³x©x•x"x" x? Ezekiel 10:17; x³x•x?x? x? Ezekiel 12:1; x³x?x?x?x§ x?x? Ezekiel 4:13; the reverse x³x©x?x x• x? Ezekiel 5:12; xªx"xç x³x? Ezekiel 13:18; Ezekiel 15:32; x³x?x?x? x? Ezekiel 1:7; x³x?x• x?x? x? for lack of discipline Ezekiel 5:23 (â??â?• x?Ö°Ö¼x"Ö¹x? x• Ö´x?Ö,x?Ö°xªÖ¼x?Ö°); x•Ö±x?Ö´x?Ö´x?x• x•Ö´x?Ö¶Ö¼x?Ö¶xª x³x? Ezekiel 16:22 **the discipline of fools is folly; of paternal discipline, correction**, Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 4:1; Proverbs 13:1.

2 more severely, chastening, chastisement: a. **of God**, x?x?x?x? x³x? Proverbs 3:11 chastening of Yahweh; x©x•x?Ö°Ö¼x? x³x? Job 5:17; x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,Ö½x"Ö°x?Ö, Isaiah 26:16; x©Ö°x•x?x?Ö°x?Öµx x?Ö¼ xçÖ,x?Ö,x?x? x³x? **Isaiah 53:5 chastisement of (i.e. leading to) our peace was upon him**; x³x?x§x? x? Jeremiah 2:30; Jeremiah 5:3; Jeremiah 7:28; x•Ö,x?Ö°x?Ö,x"Ö´x? x³x? Jeremiah 30:14 **chastisement of a cruel one**, áµ?0, but read x³x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" x• **cruel chastisement**, Gf and especially Gie; x?Ö°x?Ö»x?Ö,Ö¼x• x³x•x x? Hosea 5:2 **I am a chastisement for them all**.

b. **of man**, Proverbs 15:5; Proverbs 23:13; x³x©Ö´x•x?Ö²x"x?Ö° x? Proverbs 13:24; x³x©Öµx•x?Ö¶x? x? Proverbs 22:15; x•x?x?x? x³x? Proverbs 7:22 chastisement of a fool; x?x?Ö¼x;Ö,x" x"Ö,xç Proverbs 15:10 grievous chastisement.

Again, itâ??s notable that â??punishmentâ?• isnâ??t mentioned.

That seems odd given PSAâ??s stance is that it must mean punishment here. (*Though, weâ??ve seen all throughout this series that PSA has a habit of redefining words, so this might be another example of that.*)

But as always in language, and especially in Hebrew, context determines meaning. **Thus weâ??ll look at every occurrence of the word. Every single one. All 50 of them.** Iâ??m sorry because itâ??ll take a

lot of space, but thereâ??s simply no other way to truly understand whatâ??s going on other than to do the work. If we want to be precise and correct in our understanding, we need to do the work. Thankfully for you, Iâ??ll be doing most of the heavy lifting.

Iâ??ve divided the uses up by category.

Category #1: instruction or reproof

Job 20:3 â??I listened to the **reproof (musar)** which insults me, And the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.

Job 36:10 â??He opens their ear to **instruction (musar)**, And commands that they return from evil.

Proverbs 1:2 To know wisdom and **instruction, (musar)** To discern the sayings of understanding,

Proverbs 1:3 To receive **instruction (musar)** in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and **instruction. (musar)**

Proverbs 1:8 Hear, my son, your fatherâ??s **instruction (musar)** And do not forsake your motherâ??s teaching;

Proverbs 4:1 Hear, O sons, the **instruction (musar)** of a father, And give attention that you may gain understanding,

Proverbs 4:13 Take hold of **instruction (musar)**; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.

Proverbs 5:12 And you say, â??How I have hated **instruction (musar)**! And my heart spurned reproof!

Proverbs 5:23 He will die for lack of **instruction (musar)**, And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And **reproofs (musar)** for discipline are the way of life

Proverbs 8:10 â??Take my **instruction (musar)** and not silver, And knowledge rather than choicest gold.

Proverbs 8:33 â??Heed **instruction (musar)** and be wise, And do not neglect it.

Proverbs 10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds **instruction (musar)**, But he who ignores reproof goes astray.

Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the **instruction (musar)** for wisdom, And before honor comes humility.

Proverbs 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and **instruction (musar)** and understanding.

Proverbs 24:32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received **instruction (musar)**.

Jeremiah 32:33 "They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive **instruction (musar)**."

Jeremiah 35:13 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive **instruction (musar)** by listening to My words?" declares the LORD.

Zephaniah 3:2 She heeded no voice, She accepted no **instruction (musar)**. She did not trust in the LORD, She did not draw near to her God.

Zephaniah 3:7 "I said, "Surely you will revere Me, Accept **instruction (musar)**." So her dwelling will not be cut off According to all that I have appointed concerning her. But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.

All of these uses seem to clearly mean "instruction". Though, again, a word can have multiple nuances depending on context. Thus, just because it means "instruction" quite often doesn't mean it always means "instruction". Thus, we'll look at the next group.

Category #2: Discipline

Deuteronomy 11:2 "Know this day that I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the **discipline (musar)** of the LORD your God His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm,

Job 5:17 "Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, So do not despise the **discipline (musar)** of the Almighty.

Psalms 50:17 "For you hate **discipline (musar)**, And you cast My words behind you.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not reject the **discipline (musar)** of the LORD Or loathe His reproof,

Proverbs 7:22 Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as one in fetters to the **discipline (musar)** of a fool,

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves **discipline (musar)** loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid.

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son accepts his father's discipline (musar), But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 13:18 Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline (musar), But he who regards reproof will be honored.

Proverbs 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines (musar) him diligently.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool rejects his father's discipline (musar), But he who regards reproof is sensible.

Proverbs 15:32 He who neglects discipline (musar) despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

Proverbs 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, But the discipline (musar) of fools is folly.

Proverbs 19:20 Listen to counsel and accept discipline (musar), That you may be wise the rest of your days.

Proverbs 19:27 Cease listening, my son, to discipline (musar), And you will stray from the words of knowledge.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline (musar) will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 23:12 Apply your heart to discipline (musar) And your ears to words of knowledge.

Proverbs 23:13 Do not hold back discipline (musar) from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

Jeremiah 5:3 O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth? You have smitten them, But they did not weaken; You have consumed them, But they refused to take correction (musar). They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to repent.

Jeremiah 7:28 You shall say to them, This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God or accept correction (musar); truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.

Jeremiah 10:8 But they are altogether stupid and foolish In their discipline (musar) of delusion their idol is wood!

Jeremiah 17:23 Yet they did not listen or incline their ears, but stiffened their necks so as not to listen or accept discipline (musar).

These all seem to clearly mean discipline, in the sense of punishment inflicted to correct someone for that person's good.

Category #3: Chasten/chastise

Hosea 5:2 The revolters have gone deep in depravity, But I will **chastise (musar)** all of them.

Isaiah 26:16 O LORD, they sought You in distress; They could only whisper a prayer, Your **chastening (musar)** was upon them.

Isaiah 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The **chastening (musar)** for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Jeremiah 2:30 In vain I have struck your sons; They accepted no **chastening (musar)**. Your sword has devoured your prophets Like a destroying lion.

Notably, Isaiah 26:16 could mean "punish" and make sense in context. However, there is a Hebrew word that more properly and clearly means "punish" that's used in verses 14, 16, and 21, though the use in verse 16 means "visit", not "punish" because of the context.

Hosea 5:2 might mean punishment, but the whole chapter is about what God will do to restore Israel, and the last verse says this:

Hosea 5:15 I will go away and return to My place **Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face**; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.

So it seems like the nuance of "discipline" was intended in Hosea 5:2.

Category #4: The uncommon ones

Jeremiah 30:14 All your lovers have forgotten you, They do not seek you; For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, With the **punishment (musar)** of a cruel one, Because your iniquity is great And your sins are numerous.

Proverbs 15:10 Grievous **punishment (musar)** is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates reproof will die.

Job 12:18 He loosens the **bond (musar)** of kings And binds their loins with a girdle.

Ezekiel 5:15 So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a **warning (musar)** and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken.

Now, Job 12:18 and Ezekiel 5:15 are clearly not related to punishment, so we'll skip them for time/space. (There's some cool nuance there, but it's not related to PSA.)

For Jeremiah 30, some context from the following verses helps:

Jeremiah 30:14-24

14 All your lovers have forgotten you,
They do not seek you;
For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,
With the **punishment (musar)** of a cruel one,
Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous.

15 Why do you cry out over your injury?
Your pain is incurable.
Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous,
I have done these things to you.

16 Therefore **all who devour you will be devoured;**
And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity;
And those who plunder you will be for plunder,
And all who prey upon you I will give for prey.

17 **For I will restore you to health**
And I will heal you of your wounds, declares the LORD,
Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
It is Zion; no one cares for her.

18 Thus says the LORD,
Behold, **I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob**
And have compassion on his dwelling places;
And **the city will be rebuilt on its ruin,**
And the palace will stand on its rightful place.

19 **From them will proceed thanksgiving**
And the voice of those who celebrate;
And **I will multiply them and they will not be diminished;**
I will also honor them and they will not be insignificant.

20 **Their children also will be as formerly,**
And **their congregation shall be established before Me;**
And I will punish all their oppressors.

21 Their leader shall be one of them,
And their ruler shall come forth from their midst;

And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me;
For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me? declares the LORD.

22 You shall be My people,
And I will be your God.

23 Behold, the tempest of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
A sweeping tempest;
It will burst on the head of the wicked.

24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back
Until He has performed and until He has accomplished
The intent of His heart;
In the latter days you will understand this.

Especially with the context of verse 24, it seems like the purpose of the cruel *musar* was to bring the people back. **In Jeremiah 30, God did something extremely unpleasant to the people so they would stop sinning; that's almost the very definition of discipline.** However, *punishment* seems out of place if you read the passage in context.

For Proverbs 15, here's the passage in a few other translations:

Proverbs 15:10

NASB 95: Grievous *punishment (musar)* is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates reproof will die.

NASB 77: Stern *discipline (musar)* is for him who forsakes the way; He who hates reproof will die.

NKJV: Harsh *discipline (musar)* is for him who forsakes the way, And he who hates correction will die.

ESV: There is severe *discipline (musar)* for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.

I find it interesting that the 1977 edition of the NASB has *discipline* instead of *punishment*. The NASB 95 is an outlier with *punishment*. In fact, of the 30+ translations on the Bible translation comparison page for Proverbs 15:10, only 5 have *punishment* (4 if you count the NASB 95 and 2020 together)

Notably, if you look at the commentary page, the word *punishment* only appears 3 times, and one of them to say:

first of all, *punishment for the sake of correction*

[Source.](#)

Granted, that's just a commentary, but it does point out something that's relevant:

Punishment doesn't have to be retributive in nature. Some punishment is corrective in nature.

My father punished me when I misbehaved as a child, but it wasn't retributive, it was corrective.

One commentary says something quite similar when commenting on Isaiah 53:5

the chastisement of our peace] i.e. the chastisement needful to procure peace or well-being for us. **Chastisement is pain inflicted for moral ends and with remedial intent** (Proverbs 3:11 f. &c.). **Cheyne's assertion that the notion of punishment is the primary one in this word is not borne out by O.T. usage.**

[Source.](#)

Thus, there really is another way to take it even if you insist on "punishment" as a translation. It could mean punishment intended to correct, not retributive punishment.

We've now gone through literally every single usage of the Hebrew word "musar", and haven't found a single use that clearly means "retributive punishment". Some could mean that, but "discipline" seems to fit those passages just as well, if not better.

With that in mind, I'll re-quote a small portion of the topical lexicon:

"**musar**" brings together the ideas of discipline, correction, chastening, rebuke, and formative instruction. It may be administered by parents (Proverbs 1:8), sages (Proverbs 8:33), kings (Proverbs 29:15), or by the LORD Himself (Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12). **Always implicit is the goal of shaping character toward covenant fidelity and reverent wisdom rather than mere punishment.**

Thus, according to the usage and definitions, the point of the word seems to be either (1) instruction, or (2) discipline that is intended to bring about good.

Notably, it doesn't seem to include retributive punishment. Corrective punishment for the good of the one being punished, yes. But not retributive punishment. Again, there's even a commentary quote above about that, so I'm not the only one who holds that opinion. Even more importantly, "punishment" wasn't a part of the lexical definition for the word; it wasn't even a possible meaning.

Now, back to Isaiah 53:5c

After that long detour, here's the verse again.

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced through because of our transgressions,
He was crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

We saw at the beginning of this section that there are two basic approaches to understanding this passage. Rather than keep copying the other translations, I'm going to standardize to just the parts that are disputed for clarity. I'll also add a third translation option that I do not think is correct, but it'll illustrate an important point nicely.

- The **punishment** that gave us **peace** was upon Him,
- The **discipline** that made us **whole** was upon Him.
- The **instruction** that made us **whole** was upon Him.

The reason that the last option isn't legitimate is because of poetic parallelism with the following line. Thus, we'll look at the following line and then come back and look at this line.

Isaiah 53:5d

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced through because of our transgressions,
He was crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

Now, the Hebrew word translated "scourging" is **chabburah**, and the topical lexicon gives a decent overview.

chabburah evokes the visible mark left by a blow—stripe, bruise, welt, or festering wound. The word therefore speaks of inflicted damage, whether as the natural consequence of violence, the measured result of lawful punishment, or the symptomatic evidence of deeper moral or spiritual disorder. In Scripture the vocabulary of wounding becomes a powerful metaphor that ranges from interpersonal vengeance to national apostasy and, ultimately, to redemptive suffering.

Okay, so the typical/common translations of stripes, wounds, or scourging make sense. I think scourging makes less sense than the other two, but it works. Regardless, no one really disputes the meaning.

Now, notice the last two lines again.

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced through because of our transgressions,
He was crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

Those two lines are intended to be poetic parallels.

Hebrew does this very, very often. The first two lines of the verse do the same thing. **Hebrew poetry loves to say the exact same thing two different ways, one right after the other.** You see this all over the Old Testament, especially in poetic books.

Thus, when there's Hebrew poetry with this kind of parallelism and one line is unclear, we can use the clear line to help us understand the unclear line.

We'll apply this to the third line in a moment, but first we'll establish what line 4 means.

Now, the word translated healed in line 4 is quite interesting. It's the word רָפָא, rapha (rapha), and again, the topical lexicon has a good summary:

The verb רָפָא occurs about sixty-seven times in the Old Testament and **always carries the idea of bringing wholeness where damage, disease, or disorder have intruded. It is used for mending water, land, cities, personal bodies, broken hearts, and covenant relationships.** The subject of the verb is nearly always the Lord, underscoring His unique prerogative to restore what has been marred.

Now, it's in the niph'al form (basically the passive form for Hebrew) in Isaiah 53:5, and here's the lexical entry for that form

1 literally, of person 1 Samuel 6:3; + accusative of disease Deuteronomy 28:27,35; subject disease Leviticus 13:18,37; Leviticus 14:3,48; of (bad) water 2 Kings 2:22, salt waters (prediction), i.e. be made fresh, Ezekiel 47:8,9,11; of (broken) pottery, i.e. be made whole, Jeremiah 19:11 (in simile).

2 figurative, be healed:

a. of national hurts, subject city Jeremiah 51:8,9; involving forgiveness and $\times^3 \times$'s blessing, impersonal with \times of people, $\times \ddot{O} \acute{x} \ddot{O} \times \ddot{O}, \ddot{O} \frac{1}{4} \times \times \ddot{O}, \ddot{O} \acute{x} \times \ddot{O} \frac{1}{4}$ **Isaiah 53:5** i.e. **healing** has come to us.

b. of personal distress, subject person Jeremiah 17:14, subject the distress Jeremiah 15:18.

So, it properly means healing that brings wholeness. That might sound familiar if you watched the video on $\hat{a}??\text{shalom}\hat{a}??$ embedded above. Notably absent from the definition is any mention of $\hat{a}??\text{peace}\hat{a}??$. That $\hat{a}??$ ll be important in a minute.

Now, this line is referenced by Peter in the New Testament.

And in fact, that section of 1 Peter is full of allusions to Isaiah 53.

1 Peter 2:21-25

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, **22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;** **23** and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; **24** and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds you were healed**. **25** For **you were continually straying like sheep**, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

The Greek word translated $\hat{a}??\text{healed}\hat{a}??$ there is $\hat{a}??\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$ ([iaomai](#)), and it means:

heal, make whole.

Middle voice of apparently a primary verb; **to cure (literally or figuratively) $\hat{a}??$ heal, make whole.**

And the full lexical quote from Thayer $\hat{a}??$ s:

$\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$, $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$; (perhaps from $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$, Lob. Technol., p. 157f; cf. Vanicek, p. 87); a deponent verb, whose present, imperfect $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2}$, future $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$, and 1 aorist middle $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2}$ have an active significance, but whose perfect passive $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$, 1 aorist passive $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} - \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2}$, and 1 future passive $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$ have a passive significance (cf. KrÄ¼ger, Å§ 40, under the word; (Veitch, under the word; Buttmann, 52 (46); Winers Grammar, Å§ 38, 7 c.)); (from Homer down); the Sept. for $\times \ddot{O}, \times \ddot{O}, \times$; **to heal, cure**: $\acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2} \acute{\iota} \pm$, Luke 4:18 R L brackets; (here T WH omit; Tr brackets the accusative), Luke 9:11, 42; Luke 14:4; Luke 22:51; John 4:47; Acts 9:34; Acts 10:38; Acts 28:8; passive, Matthew 8:8, 13; Matthew 15:28; Luke 7:7; Luke 8:45; Luke 17:15; John 5:13 (Tdf. $\acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \mu \frac{1}{2} \acute{\alpha} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2}$); and Acts 3:11 Rec.; $\acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \frac{1}{2} \acute{\iota} \pm \acute{\alpha} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \acute{\chi} \frac{1}{4} \acute{\iota} \hat{a}??$, **to cure (i. e. by curing to free) one of (literally, from; cf. Buttmann, 322 (277)) a disease**: passive, Mark 5:29; Luke 6:18 (.) **tropically, to make whole i. e. to free from errors and sins, to bring**

about (one's) salvation: Matthew 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27 (from Isaiah 6:10); passive, 1 Peter 2:24; James 5:16; in figurative discourse, in passive: Hebrews 12:13.

Interestingly, the lexicon defines *to make whole* as being *free from errors and sins*, which it then equates with salvation. That's a very interesting comment and aligns perfectly with the cleansing model of salvation that we covered in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#). However, it doesn't align with PSA very well at all.

The Greek word translated *wounds* ([ἡλίσθη/ἰῆ/ἰσθη](#)) means exactly that, with almost the same nuance as the Hebrew word. Since it's not contentious, we won't look at it more deeply. (*You can at the link if you'd like to though.*)

Now, PSA will insist that *healed* in line 4 refers to spiritual healing, which they define as reconciliation to God.

However, if we again consider the context, physical healing seems more likely. Why? Two reasons. First, because of verse 4. If you remember, the Holy Spirit clearly states in the New Testament that verse 4 is about physical healing, and there's no indication that the notion of physical healing has changed in the very next verse. None. (*It might seem like it's far away because this article is so bloody long though.*)

Second, all the words used, including in 1 Peter, point to physical healing. It's not impossible that they have a metaphorical application, but it does seem less likely in this particular context.

With all of that said, we'll move on to an analysis of what the verse means.

Analysis of Isaiah 53:5

Now, looking at the last two lines of Isaiah 53:5, there are a few applications to make.

- *Shalom* at the end of the third line could be understood as *peace* (*with God, the PSA position*), or *wholeness*
- The fourth line is a poetic parallel with the 3rd line.
- The fourth line uses a Hebrew word that means healing/wholeness.
- Line 4 is quoted by Peter, who uses a Greek word that means healing/wholeness.
- **Thus, to keep the poetic parallel intact, *shalom* at the end of the third line should be understood as *wholeness*, not peace.**

Another application to make.

- *Musar* in the beginning of the third line could be understood as *instruction*, *discipline*, or *punishment*, though the *punishment* understanding would be to bring about a positive/corrective result.
- The fourth line is a poetic parallel with the 3rd line.
- The fourth line indisputably refers to *wounds*.
- Line 4 is quoted by Peter, who uses a Greek word that means *wounds*

- Thus, regardless of whether *discipline* or *punishment* is chosen, the focus seems to be the physical impact (*wounds*).
 - It is possible given the nuance of *musar* the intent could be *wounds* for the betterment of. If that is the case, it fits both the PSA and cleansing models, though it fits the latter slightly better.
- Additionally, *Musar* cannot mean *retributive punishment* in this context because the reason for the *musar* is explicitly stated to be *shalom*, which means *wholeness* in this context.
 - This has obvious implications for PSA.

Now, with all the context we've collected, it seems that the verse should read like this:

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
 He was crushed because of our iniquities;
 The discipline that made us whole was upon Him,
 And by His wounds we are healed.

The strongest *legitimate* way that PSA can understand the verse would be the following. (Notice the absence of *for*.)

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
 He was crushed because of our iniquities;
 The discipline that brought us peace was upon Him,
 And by His wounds we are healed.

Again, the *discipline* would be for the welfare of the one being disciplined, and *peace* makes less sense in context for the reasons we've already discussed.

Regardless, *The discipline that made us whole was upon Him*, seems like the translation that best respects the word definitions, context, and New Testament cross references.

This perfectly fits the cleansing model of salvation that we saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#). The PSA understanding of *The punishment that gave us peace was upon Him* isn't *technically* impossible, but it does ignore the context. Additionally, *punishment* must be understood as intended for the good of the one being punished, making it a misleading translation.

Anyway, we'll move on to the next verse after one quick comment.

PSA says it means *peace*, but peace with whom?

Among PSA believers, it's held as an axiomatic truth that the peace in Isaiah 53:5 is peace with God. I've literally never heard anyone question that. However, even if PSA is correct that "peace" is the intended nuance, why must it be peace with God? **This is a genuine question.** Seriously, why must it be that? Why can't it be something else?

As just one example, why can't it be internal peace? Or perhaps worldwide peace? (*Like on the New Earth, which is only possible because of Jesus.*) Jesus certainly brought us peace, as Zachariah prophesied:

Luke 1:78-79

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.

And Jesus Himself said this:

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.
Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

So even if "peace" is the proper understanding of Isaiah 53:5, why must it mean peace with God?

Anyone?

That's an assumption that PSA must bring to the text because it's not explicitly stated by the text, nor even implied. Be careful about bringing your presuppositions to the text because it's rarely a good idea and can lead you astray.

Isaiah 53:6

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
**But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.**

I've already written an entire article examining the highlighted portion of this verse. That article is: [How To Do a Word Study of a Greek or Hebrew Word in the Bible](#), and I do the full word study on the two relevant words. Please see that article for the full details and evidence, but I'll recap it briefly below.

Most translations mistranslate this verse.

The NASB is a bit better than most, and to give you a flavor for how most translations mistranslate the verse, here's the Extremely Substandard Version (*ESV*, see [my article on Bible translations](#) for why it's so bad) showcasing a typical mistranslation of the last two lines of the verse with the NASB 95 for comparison.

Isaiah 53:6

ESV: and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

NASB 95: But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on (paga) Him.

You might remember the Hophil form from above, which indicates passive causative action. Well, in this verse, the phrase "caused to fall" is correctly translated by the NASB 95 because it's the Hiphil form, which indicates active causative action. That is, God didn't directly do something, but He did directly cause something to happen. (See the quotes in a previous section for details.)

Now, that might sound like a distinction without a meaningful difference, but once you understand how the NASB 95 uses "fall upon", you'll see why it's important. It's the Hebrew word פָּגַע (paga), and it means to "meet", sometimes with the nuance of "to meet with a request", or "to meet with hostile intent". (Again, see [this article](#) for evidence and the word study.)

Here are just a few places that "paga" is used:

1 Kings 2:25 So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he **fell upon (paga)** him so that he died.

Judges 18:25 The sons of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will **fall upon (paga)** you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household."

1 Samuel 22:18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and **attack (paga)** the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and **attacked (paga)** the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.

Notice that the NASB 95 uses "fall upon" to mean "attack" because that's what it means in that context.

There are many more examples, and again, see [this article](#) for all of them because we do go through all of them in that article. So, let's look at the NASB 95 again with this understanding:

Isaiah 53:6 (modified)

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
**But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To attack Him.**

Does that seem a little nonsensical? Itâ??ll make much more sense in a moment, but first, I want to point out that lâ??m not alone in this translation. The NET Bible (*New English Translation*) translates it almost identically:

Isaiah 53:6 (NET)

6 All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but **the LORD caused the sin of all of us to attack him.**

Thatâ??s a good and correct translation of â??pagaâ?• there.

Now, the word translated â??iniquityâ?• in the NASB 95 and â??sinâ?• in the NET Bible is â??xçÖ,x?Ö¹x?â?• ([avon](#)). In the article where we did the complete word study on it, we saw that it means â??moral crookednessâ?•, making both â??iniquityâ?• and â??sinâ?• reasonable translations.

Now, â??avonâ?• has three clear and undisputed meanings:

1. â??moral crookednessâ?•/sin/iniquity
2. The guilt of â??moral crookednessâ?•/sin/iniquity
3. The consequences of â??moral crookednessâ?•/sin/iniquity

(Note: some also say that â??avonâ?• can also mean â??punishmentâ?•, and/or â??punishment for moral crookedness/sin/iniquityâ?•. However, this meaning isnâ??t included in many lexicons, and the ones that do include it say that other lexicons doubt it. Additionally, that meaning is explicitly contradicted by its biblical usage; please see [this article](#) for the evidence.)

Now, you might be wondering what the verse means if it doesnâ??t have the usual PSA understanding. The difficulty completely disappears if you translate â??avonâ?• as â??wickednessâ?•.

Isaiah 53:6 (modified)

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
**But the LORD has caused the wickedness (avon) of us all
To attack Him.**

That the â??weâ?• (*Israel*) attacked Jesus is undisputed in the Gospels. Even before the Jewish leaders got Pilate to crucify Him, they tried to catch Jesus in His words every chance they got. This actually makes a lot more contextual sense because the previous two lines talk about the people going their own way, and the previous verse outright says this.

The idea is that the people attacked Jesus because they were wicked, and God caused this to happen.

(Almost certainly via Jesus provoking them with the truth; more on that in a moment.)

This has strong contextual support from verse 5, which says *“He was crushed because of our iniquities (avon)”*. That’s very strong contextual support.

Now, you might say that this conflicts with what we saw in verse 4, where Israel thought God caused Jesus to be stricken, but they were wrong. However, remember that Israel thought the source of Jesus’s suffering was the judgement of God, but verse 5 says it was their own wickedness.

Understanding the interplay here requires nuance.

Probably the best place to start is with a proverb:

Proverbs 9:8

Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

It is a good, righteous, and just thing to show a man who’s sinning the error of his ways. Matthew 18 on church discipline, Galatians 6:1, and several other verses establish this as true. However, most importantly, **their response is up to them**. Jesus constantly pointed out the sin of those around Him. Many repented, but others didn’t. Jesus provoked the men who ultimately killed Him, especially in Matthew 23 where Jesus publicly called the leaders of Israel followers of Satan (*“offspring of serpents”*). They could’ve responded well, but instead, they responded badly.

- Jesus behaved righteously when he confronted the ones who killed Him with their sin.
- They responded wickedly, by killing Him
- God knew this would happen.

Thus, God *“caused their wickedness to attack Him”* by calling out their sin. However, **their response is up to them**. If they were not wicked, they would’ve repented, or at least gone away ashamed like the rich young ruler did in Matthew 19. However, instead, they attacked Him and ultimately killed Him. God righteously and appropriately confronted them with their sin, and He knew how they would respond. However, again, **their response was their own fault**.

So yes, there’s a sense where God did cause Jesus’s suffering, but only by doing the right thing and calling out their sin. But if His killers were righteous, they wouldn’t have attacked Him. **Thus, ultimately, Jesus was killed because of the wickedness of His killers, not because God forced them to do something**. Their response is still their own fault, and thus God didn’t cause Jesus to be stricken the way Israel thought in verse 4.

Hopefully that makes sense.

Again, it requires nuance.

Moving on.

Now, you might object to the *“But the LORD has caused the wickedness (avon) of us all To attack Him”* understanding because of the *“but”* at the beginning of verse 6. However, as we already covered, you could translate it *“and”* 100% legitimately. In fact, the ESV does exactly that:

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Now, I’m not saying we should look to the ESV for what constitutes a good translation. We really shouldn’t because the ESV is *“as I like to call it the “Extremely Substandard Version”*. (Details on why in [my article on Bible translations](#); the short version, it intentionally mistranslates, and it even removed a word that refers to transgenderism in one of the New Testament’s *“sin lists”*.)

Thus, it’s perfectly legitimate to translate it this way:

Isaiah 53:6 (modified)

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD has caused the wickedness (avon) of us all
To attack Him.

That’s 100% legitimate, and seems to fit the surrounding context perfectly.

Thus, far from saying that God put our sins on Jesus, Isaiah 53:6 says that God caused our wickedness to attack Jesus.

Thus, the verse can’t be used to support PSA.

It doesn’t argue strongly against PSA either though. I think it leans slightly away from PSA, but the lean is slight and honestly, not worth mentioning because it’s so close to neutral on the topic.

A return to Isaiah 53:5

Yes, I know, it’s the verse that doesn’t stop. Regardless, now that we’ve looked at verse 6, there’s some additional context for verse 5 we’ve picked up. Here are the two verses together:

And the CSB translates it this way. (*Though the final two lines are badly translated.*)

Isaiah 53:5 (CSB)

But he was pierced because of our **rebellion, (pesha)**
 crushed because of our iniquities; (avon)
 punishment for our peace was on him,
 and we are healed by his wounds.

So, what's the connection between transgression and rebellion?

Now, the lexicon lists the primary definition as transgression, meaning an intentional and willful break in faith or trust with someone or something, as we saw above.

When that's done against a legitimate authority like God Himself it's sometimes translated rebellion.

(Since this isn't disputed, I'll omit all the lexical quotes for space's sake, but you can look the word up yourself [here](#). The Bible Project also has a good video on pesha [here](#), but the section on the New Testament Greek word [ἁμαρτία/paraptōma](#) is just flat out wrong; they're Hebrew experts, not Greek.)

Again, since most Christians only know that transgression is a synonym for sin, that nuance is usually lost. That's why some more modern translations opt for rebellion or rebellious deeds to get across the nuance of intentional and willful choice to break faith or trust. Israel had a covenant with God, but they chose to break the covenant by disobeying Him. Honestly, treachery isn't a bad translation either.

So, let's look at pesha as rebellion, consistently translate avon as wickedness, and include verse 4 to see what the passage looks like.

Here it is:

Isaiah 53:4-6 (modified)

4 Surely our griefs He Himself took away,
 And our sorrows He carried away;
 Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
 Caused by God to be smitten, and afflicted.

5 **But** He was pierced because of our **rebellion, (pesha)**
 He was crushed because of our **wickedness; (avon)**
 The discipline that made us whole was upon Him,

And by His wounds we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD has caused the **wickedness (avon)** of us all
To attack Him.

If I might summarize and condense the last two lines of verse 4 and the first two of verse 5:

We thought God did it, but actually, we did it because weâ??re wicked.

Now, thatâ??s only one possible interpretation, and it should be noted that â??peshaâ?• and â??avonâ?• are both plural there. Thus, â??transgressionsâ?• and â??iniquitiesâ?• would be ideal translations if Christians knew that â??transgressionsâ?• meant an intentional break of faith. Sadly, besides rebellion/treachery, we donâ??t have good words in English for that.

That leaves two possible meanings:

- **PSA view:** The people thought that God was punishing Jesus (*which is true in PSA*), but Jesus was being punished vicariously in our place as our substitute
- **Non-PSA view:** The people thought that God was punishing Jesus, but actually, He was being attacked by the people because they were wicked.

Given that the Hebrew conjunction used there *cannot* mean â??in exchange forâ?•, I think the latter view fits the passage better and the former view is explicitly contradicted.

Moving on to the next verse

Isaiah 53:7

Iâ??ll include some context for this one.

Isaiah 53:4-7 (*modified*)

4 Surely our griefs He Himself took away,
And our sorrows He carried away;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Caused by God to be smitten, and **afflicted**.

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
He was crushed because of our wickedness;
The discipline that made us whole was upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD has caused **the wickedness of us all**
To attack Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was **afflicted**,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

The obvious implication of verse 4 is that the people's impression was that the Suffering Servant (Jesus) was afflicted by God for what He had done, which we saw was false. That was the people's impression, and again it was an incorrect impression.

This brings up a point of ironic parallelism.

In verse 4, the people thought that God was afflicting Jesus. However, verses 5 and 6 make it clear that it was the people's wickedness that was afflicting Him. Notably, the word translated "afflicted" in verse 4 is the same word translated "afflicted" in verse 7. ([xÖ,xÖ,x?/anah](#)) **That makes the mention of "He was afflicted" in verse 7 ironic because the people thought that God was afflicting Jesus, when in reality, it was the people's own wickedness afflicting Jesus.**

Like I said, ironic.

There would be a lot more to cover about this verse if I was teaching through the passage normally. However, there isn't much else in this verse that's relevant to PSA, so I'll have to restrain myself.

Isaiah 53:8

Here's the verse, but you should know up front that the NASB 95 is way off in left field here.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

Rather than try to unravel everything wrong with this translation like the complete absence of "to whom", which you can confirm in an interlinear Bible [here](#) I'll quote from a few others that are both more accurate and more literal in the relevant lines.

Isaiah 53:8

NKJV He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

NET He was led away after an unjust trial
but who even cared?
Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living;
because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded.

The NET Bible is incredibly loose in the first half of the verse, but quite literal in the second half, arguably surpassing even the NKJV. Why? Because of the "for vs. because of" issue that we saw in verse 5.

Here again we see the "for vs. because of" difference in translation, and with the exact same Hebrew conjunction.

While "for" isn't *technically* wrong because "for" can mean "because of" in some contexts, "because of" avoids the possibility that readers will think that exchange or substitution is in view. That's a good thing because again, the Hebrew conjunction cannot mean substitution.

Now, obviously "cut off from the land of the living" is a reference to His death.

The next line tells us why he was "cut off from the land of the living", and it's effectively a restatement of the first half of verse 5. (*pierced because of our transgressions/crushed because of our iniquities*) All of the commentary on that verse applies here. Obviously this verse doesn't have the immediate context of verse 4, but the reason that Jesus was "cut off from the land of the living" was that the people were wicked and attacked Him.

(Note: there's actually a textual variant on this verse. It's not very relevant to PSA though, so we won't discuss it in detail. If you want more information, I'd recommend [this video](#). However, the bit at the beginning about "meticulous sovereignty" has logical consequences like making God the author of evil that I cannot stand behind because scripture explicitly teaches against them! but that's a discussion for another article series.)

Isaiah 53:9

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

This is one of the very few verses in Isaiah 53 that no one uses to weigh in on the PSA debate. It predicts his burial in a rich man's tomb, and it underscores that the Suffering Servant was innocent, but doesn't weigh in on PSA. Thus, we'll move on.

There's only one place where it might mean grief, and it's below in several different translations:

Psalm 77:10

NASB 95: Then I said, "It is my **grief (chalah)**, That the right hand of the Most High has changed."

NKJV: And I said, "This is my **anguish (chalah)**; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

ESV: Then I said, "I will **appeal (chalah)** to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High."

NET: Then I said, "I am **sickened (chalah)** by the thought that the sovereign One might become inactive."

So yeah, there isn't any kind of agreement on how that verse should be translated. (*Though, perhaps something like: "And I said: 'I'm sickened [to imagine] that the years of the right hand of the Most High [could end] would be a good translation.*) Only the NET Bible respects the meaning of the word in the form that's used in the verse.

Now, if you do the full word study, then Amos 6:6 will likely jump out at you:

Amos 6:6

6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not **grieved (chalah)** over the ruin of Joseph.

That makes sense, but there's another way to take it:

Amos 6:6 (modified)

6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they **were not sickened (chalah)** by the ruin of Joseph.

That's perfectly consistent with the Hebrew, and arguably more consistent with the lexical entry that mentions Amos 6:6:

Niph'al **Amos 6:6); of sickness of the mind** in 1 Samuel 22:8 followed by xö-x?

A "sickness of the mind" could be feeling sick in the mind in the sense of disgust, or it could possibly mean grief.

Now, there's one use that the PSA crowd will probably like a lot, and it fits their understanding of the word translated "crush" quite well.

that can be used as either a modifier (*adjective*) or a verb, that verb form is called a participle.

Importantly, ***only*** participles can be used as modifiers like this. No other verb form can be used like this ***by definition***. If itâ??s a verb form that can be used as an adjective, itâ??s a participle ***by definition***.

Thatâ??s important.

The problem is that **chalah** in Isaiah 53:10 is ***not*** in a participle form, and thus it ***cannot*** be used as a modifier like the lexicon suggests.

You can confirm that itâ??s not in a participle form by looking at an interlinear bible [here](#). Notice the parsing under the word which gives the word form. Simply hover your mouse cursor over the abbreviation if youâ??re on a desktop. If youâ??re on mobile, you can click [here](#) to see what the parsing would look like for a hifil participle form of that word in a different verse.

Because it canâ??t be used as a modifier because itâ??s not in a participle form, the lexicon seems to be mistaken here. *(As a side note, have you noticed how often weâ??ve seen similar issues where the lexicons seem oddly biased toward a PSA understanding, even when that understanding is impossible? Weâ??ve seen that a lot in this series and itâ??s becoming almost predictable. Thatâ??sâ?! interesting.)*

Now, thereâ??s one last common use we should look at for this rather confusing word:

Judges 16:6-7

6 So Delilah said to Samson, **â??Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you.â??** 7 Samson said to her, **â??If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I will become weak (*chalah*) and be like any other man.â??**

Itâ??s used this way pretty often throughout the Old Testament as well, and itâ??s one of the wordâ??s primary definitions.

1 **be or become weak**, Samson Judges 16:7,11,17; feel weak Isaiah 57:10 (Che) Ezekiel 34:4,16.

And hereâ??s the topical lexiconâ??s summary of the word:

Appearing about seventy-six times across the Old Testament, **chalah describes the condition of being weakenedâ??physically, emotionally, or spiritually**â??and the related action of softening or entreating another. These nuances cluster around four main themes: bodily sickness, emotional languishing, urgent intercession, and the softening of wrath.

Now we can look at our translation options:

1. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, **putting Him to grief**; ??? This has essentially no lexical support, unless you take it in the sense of mental anguish, like below.
 - But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, **causing Him mental anguish**;
2. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, **wounding Him**; ??? This has precedent from 1 Kings 22:34 and 2 Chronicles 35:23, and agrees with ???crush? quite well. It's a less common usage, but possible.
3. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him **grievously**; ??? This makes it a participle, which it isn't here.
4. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, **making Him sick** ??? This seems like an odd translation option since we have no record of Jesus ever being sick.
5. But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, **making Him weak**; ??? This might sound odd now, but the word translated ???crush? can mean to ???humble? as well, and this fits very well with ???humble? (*i.e. ???to humble Him, making Him weak?*)

Now, we'll come back to these after we've looked at the other relevant words, since we'll need them to make sense of it.

???Ö,Ö¼x?Ö,x? (Crush)

This is the Hebrew word ???x?Ö,Ö¼x?Ö,x? ([daka](#)), and I'll copy/paste a short definition, then the whole lexical entry for the word form that it's in in Isaiah 53:10.

Here's the short definition:

A primitive root (compare dakah); **to crumble**; transitively, to bruise (literally or figuratively) ??? beat to pieces, break (in pieces), bruise, **contrite**, **crush**, destroy, **humble**, oppress, smite.

A literal usage typically means to ???bruise? or ???crush?. However, a figurative use means ???humble? or ???contrite?. Here's an example of both uses so you can see them.

Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV)

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: ???I dwell in the high and holy *place*, With him *who* has a **contrite** (*Dakka, the noun form of the verb*) and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the **contrite** (*daka*) ones.

That's the figurative usage of course, and notice that it's just a few chapters after Isaiah 53. Now, here's a literal use:

Psalm 89:10

You Yourself **crushed (daka)** Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.

Another use that seems literal is important:

Isaiah 53:5 (modified)

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
He was **crushed (daka)** because of our wickedness;
The chastisement that made us whole was upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

In Isaiah 53:5, a literal meaning seems obvious.

I suppose someone could argue that itâ??s figurative, but looking at the context, it likely wouldnâ??t be convincing.

With all that in mind, weâ??ll return to verse 10.

- The non-PSA crowd typically interprets â??dakaâ?• as figurative in verse 10, with the meaning of â??humbleâ??
- The PSA crowd interprets â??dakaâ?• as literal in verse 10, and they prefer â??crushâ?• as itâ??s translated.

Now, a PSA fellow could make the argument that â??dakaâ?• in verse 5 should inform our understanding of â??dakaâ?• in verse 10.

Thatâ??s a good argumentâ?| or would be if the lexicon didnâ??t weigh in. Weâ??ll look at the full lexical quote below. Importantly, in Isaiah 53:10, itâ??s in the Piel stem, infinitive construct. You can confirm this in an interlinear Bible [here](#) using the parsing guide. (*On a desktop, just hover your cursor over the abbreviation â??Vâ??Pielâ??Inf | 3msâ?• under the word to see this.*)

Importantly, itâ??s in the infinitive form in Isaiah 53:10, which matters.

Piel Perfect x?Ö´Ö¼x?Ö¼x• Psalm 143:3; 2masculine singular x?Ö´Ö¼x?Ö´Ö¼x•x^aÖ¼, Psalm 89:11; Imperfect x?Ö´x?x?Ö-x?Ö¼x• Psalm 72:4; 2masculine singular x^aÖ¼x?Ö-x?Ö¼x• Proverbs 22:22 (juss); x?Ö°x?Ö-x?Ö°Ö¼x•x?Ö¼ Psalm 94:5, x^aÖ¼x?Ö-x?Ö°Ö¼x•x?Ö¼ Isaiah 3:15; suffix x?Ö´x?x?Ö-x?Ö°Ö¼x•Ö¼x Ö´x? Job 6:9, x?Ö°x?Ö-x?Ö°Ö¼x•x?Ö¼x• Job 4:19; 2masculine plural x?Ö¼x^aÖ°x?Ö-x?Ö¼x• x?Ö¼x Ö¼x Ö´x? Job 19:2 (so Baer, see his edition p. 44, compare Norzi); **Infinitive** x?Ö´x?Ö-x?Ö¼x• Lamentations 3:34; suffix x?Ö¼x?Ö°Ö¼x•x?Ö° **Isaiah 53:10**; â?? crush, (**figurative**) with accusative oneâ??s life to the earth Psalm 143:3, Egypt Psalm 89:11 (compare De Che; x³x? subject), **servant of Yahweh Isaiah 53:10** (x³x? subject), Job 6:9 x³x?Ö°x?Ö¼x•Ö¼x? x•Ö±x?x?Ö°x?Ö¼x? x?Ö´x?x?; oppressor Psalm 72:4,

God's people Psalm 94:5 (אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו, Isaiah 3:15, compare Proverbs 22:22 illegally in tribunal, Lamentations 3:34 אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו (in all human oppressor subject); crush me אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו (Job's friends, subject; אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו); never literal, not even Job 4:19 (אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו, with indefinite subject), for suffix reference not to אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו, but rather to אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו, i.e. men inhabiting the clay houses, bodies, compare Di.

The lexicon specifies a figurative meaning in Isaiah 53:10.

Now, I'm not married to a lexicon's interpretation. I have, on *extremely* rare occasions, found mistakes in lexicons before and realized that some aspect of the word definition was wrong after doing a serious word study on that word. (*In fact, that was the case in Isaiah 53:6, as we saw in [this article](#), and the word אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו as we saw above.*) However, I see no reason to doubt the lexicon here.

Arguing against that, there's the contextual argument from verse 5, so we'll look at that.

The context of verses 4-5

When we're dealing with poetry, we should always be aware of parallelism. That is, the same words being repeated in different places to create additional links between verses.

Isaiah 53:4-5 & 10 (*modified*)

4 Surely our griefs He Himself took away,
And our sorrows He carried away;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
He was **crushed (daka)** because of our wickedness;
The chastisement that made us whole was upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

אֲנִי!

10 But the LORD was pleased
To **crush/humble (daka)** Him, putting *Him* to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

The PSA crowd will argue that we should understand אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו in verse 10 the same as אֲנִי אֶמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר־עָרַב אֶת־פָּנָיו in verse 5 because of the poetic parallelism.

That's a great argument.

It's not ironclad, but it's a very good argument.

Now, the counter-argument from the non-PSA crowd will also be contextual, focusing on verse 4 instead of verse 5. As we saw when we looked at verse 4, it was not God causing the suffering servant to be smitten. Thus, they would say that the context dictates that we should not understand verse 10 as *the LORD was pleased To crush (daka) Him* because that understanding is explicitly repudiated in verse 4.

Thus, the non-PSA crowd will say that since verse 4 repudiates the idea that God was smiting Him, we shouldn't understand verse 10 to be God crushing Him either.

Again, both have contextual claims to their interpretation.

With all that context in place, here are the two basic understandings of verse 10:

Isaiah 53:10

PSA version: But the LORD was pleased **To crush Him, wounding Him**

Non-PSA version: But the LORD was pleased **To humble Him, making Him weak**

The PSA version is, of course, referring to God punishing Jesus vicariously in our place as our substitute on the cross. The non-PSA version would point either to the incarnation or the cross, supported by the following verses:

Hebrews 2:9

9 But we do see **Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus**, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

(Note: PSA adherents might jump on the phrase "taste death for everyone", but the word translated "for" there cannot mean substitution and more properly means "for the benefit of" in that context.)

And regarding His death:

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but **emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. **8** Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

There's also Jesus washing the disciples' feet, His teaching on servant leadership, etc. It's a valid interpretation/translation of the verse, though we'll look at it with more context soon. Anyway, both interpretations/translations have their strengths and weaknesses.

PSA version

- Strengths:
 - *דָּכָא* is consistently translated
- Weaknesses:
 - It appears to violate the context of verse 4
 - It uses a rare meaning of *חָלָה*

Non-PSA version

- Strengths:
 - Consistent with verse 4
 - Uses normal/common definitions for all words
- Weaknesses:
 - Doesn't translate *דָּכָא* consistently with verse 5

I would say that purely on the basis of the points above, it leans maybe 60/40 in favor of the PSA version if we don't consider verse 4. If we include verse 4, that seems to strike hard against the PSA version, and lean 90/10 toward the non-PSA version.

Now, there's another bit of context that the non-PSA crowd tends to use that looks back to the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:14-15

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,
 "Because you have done this,
 Cursed are you more than all cattle,
 And more than every beast of the field;
 On your belly you will go,
 And dust you will eat
 All the days of your life;

15 And I will put enmity
 Between you and the woman,
 And between your seed and her seed;
 He shall bruise you on the head,
 And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The non-PSA argument goes that Genesis 3:15 tells us that the serpent *bruised* Jesus (*the woman's seed*), not God. Based on that, non-PSA Christians say that we shouldn't look at the disputed or unclear parts of Isaiah 53 as if God was bruising/crushing Jesus because Genesis 3:15 specifies that Satan does that, not God.

Now, the PSA response would be that God could've done that through Satan, using what Satan meant for evil to bring about enormous good. One verse that PSA could use as a precedent for that is below.

Genesis 50:18-21

18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.** 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

So while the non-PSA crowd does have a solid argument here, there is an answer from PSA.

Ultimately, the PSA version of "To crush Him, wounding Him" versus the non-PSA version of "To humble Him, making Him weak" will likely hinge on your view of verses 4 and 5. If you think that verse 4 explicitly denies that God caused Jesus to be smitten, then you'll likely prefer the non-PSA version. Honestly, I'm not sure how to get around that understanding of verse 4.

If we set verse 4 aside for a moment, then the PSA version has a significantly stronger claim. However, it's a very bad idea to ignore the context, so the PSA position must contend with verse 4.

Anyway, we'll move on to the "guilt offering" part of the verse.

The "guilt offering"

Isaiah 53:10

10 But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Now, we covered the guilt offering in [the article that provided an overview of the Levitical sacrificial system](#). Thus, I'll give a very short recap below without most of the supporting scriptures, because we covered them at length in the article; please see the article for the full evidence.

Context: What is a "guilt offering"?

Now, Leviticus 5:5-7 makes it clear that the guilt offering was a specific type of sin offering.

Leviticus 5:5-6

5 So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. 6 He shall also bring his **guilt offering** to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a **sin offering**. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.

Other places indicate this as well, but this one is clear enough to move on with this short recap.

Importantly, all guilt offerings were sin offerings, though not all sin offerings were guilt offerings.

As we covered in the overview article linked above, a **guilt offering** was a **sin offering** that you brought because you were personally guilty of a sin that you committed. Notably, there were many reasons to bring a sin offering that had nothing to do with sin, again, as we covered in that article. (Like giving birth, or after healing from certain maladies, etc.) However, you only brought a guilt offering when you were personally guilty of a sin.

Now, here's a quick recap in bullet point style to avoid wasting time recapping fully:

- The phrase **sin offering** should be translated **purification offering** because its purpose was to purify sacred space from the sins of the people. (See the article for the full case and evidence)
 - Jesus is our **sin offering** because He purifies us from sin and sin's corruption in our corrupted mortal bodies, as we've covered extensively before in this series. (Especially in [this article](#).)
 - Also as covered extensively, the **sin purification offering** has no element of PSA at all, because its purpose was to purify sacred space, not to be a vicarious sacrifice in an Israelite's place as his substitute, even in pictorial form. (As we covered several times before, notably in [this article](#), [this article](#), and [this article](#).)
- The Hebrew word we translate **atonement** has a homonym (A word spelled the same way but with a different meaning), and that homonym means **to purify** or **to purge**, both in the sense of cleansing. Thus, when you see **atonement** in a Levitical sacrificial context, it refers to purification, not reconciliation of a broken relationship. (Again, see [this article](#) for the details/evidence)

The reason that this **cleansing** was needed is because God said that the people's sin polluted the land, including the sanctuary. We covered *many* verses about this in [this article](#), but we'll only look at one here because this is just a recap.

Numbers 19:13

13 Anyone who touches a corpse, the body of a man who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him.

(Note: *cut off from Israel*• here is almost certainly exile, not death.)

Now, it wasn't a sin to touch a corpse. It was a sin to touch one and then not purify yourself. Not purifying yourself defiled the tabernacle of the Lord. Other things were said to do this as well, I'm just quoting the most concise one in this recap. That was a problem because God said he would leave if they polluted it too much. (and again, there are more verses for this, I'm just quoting one in this recap.)

Ezekiel 5:11

11 So as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely, **because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw**, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare.

If Israel apostatized and rebelliously continued in sin, God would leave. That was the purpose of the Day of Atonement Cleansing/Purification, and this next passage is from Leviticus 16, which contains the instructions for that day:

Leviticus 16:15-16

15 Then he shall slaughter the goat of the **sin offering** which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and **sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat**. 16 He shall ~~make atonement for~~ **purify** the holy place, because of the **impurities** of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and **thus he shall do for the tent of meeting** which abides with them in the midst of their impurities.

This was the function of all the sin purification offerings, including the guilt offerings.

All of them.

Sin purification offerings existed to cleanse sacred space of the pollution of sin.

Guilt offerings were a specific type of sin purification offering that a person brought when he had personally committed a sin.

There's obviously more to it than this short recap, please see the previous articles in this series for more. However, that should be enough to make the application as it concerns Isaiah 53:10. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this fits perfectly with the cleansing model of how Jesus saves us that we saw in [this article](#).

The guilt offering of Isaiah 53:10

Did you notice that there was no mention of vicarious punishment in the explanation of the ~~sin~~ purification offering or guilt offering? As we've investigated in multiple articles in this series, there doesn't seem to be any element of PSA in the sacrificial system. Instead, it's all about cleansing from sin and sin's pollution/corruption.

Now, a PSA adherent might say that because Jesus (*the Suffering Servant*) is called a "guilt offering", that the guilty person's sins were laid on Jesus.

Now, I'm not going to quote the whole chapter of Leviticus 5, but you can read it [here](#). Basically, the guilty man was supposed to bring a lamb or a goat — yes, you could use a goat, which doesn't work so well for PSA — for the guilt offering. (*i.e., the sin purification offering brought because the man sinned.*) If you were too poor for a lamb or goat, you could bring two pigeons, and **if you were too poor even for that, you could bring a tenth of an ephah of fine flour**. (Leviticus 5:11) If the wrong act was against the LORD'S holy things, you brought a ram and then had to pay back the value of the holy thing you damaged/destroyed/defiled. The first part of the next chapter adds another situation in which a ram is offered and restitution is made.

Here's the problem, blood wasn't required for a guilt offering; for a poor man, flour would do.

Further, there's nothing in the passage about transference of sin.

Nothing.

PSA adherents make a fairly large deal about laying hands on the head of the animal to transfer sin. However, very notably, that wasn't done with the guilt offering. (*And we saw in previous articles that that wasn't what was happening anyway, but I'll omit that discussion here because we already covered it previously in detail.*)

In this series, we haven't seen even a single thing about the guilt offering that points to PSA. Nothing. Of course, I might've missed something in my research. I try to be thorough, but I'm a mere man and so I sometimes miss things. If you've read the rest of this series and still think I missed something, please drop a comment below or reach out via email; my email address is on the [contact page](#).

More translation issues

Ordinarily, I run to the NASB 95 because it's such a good translation. However, no translation is perfect and no translator is without bias. I don't think the NASB 95 translators did it intentionally, but it seems that some bias definitely did creep in, especially with this line.

Isaiah 53:10

NASB 95: If He would render **Himself** as a **guilt offering**,

NKJV: When **You make** His soul an **offering for sin**

Now, the NASB is correct that **guilt offering** is the proper understanding. The Hebrew word **asham** that's used here is the same one that's used in the **guilt offering** passages in the law. (*Which you can confirm [here](#).*)

However, the NASB's translation of Himself is indefensible. There simply is no reflexive construction (*himself, herself, themselves, etc.*) used in that part of the verse in Hebrew, which means that **Himself** simply isn't possible.

The NKJV is entirely correct with you make, though, you appoint would be fine as well.

(And for those who check the interlinear, it's listed as a 3rd person feminine verb. However, in that specific form, the 3rd person feminine {she will make} is identical to the second person masculine {You (male) will make}. An easy way to confirm this without learning Hebrew is to simply look at the number of translations that translate it you or add the phrase the LORD, which you can confirm [here](#). I sent an email to Biblehub about this, hoping they'll correct it.)

Now, nearly every translation makes the you here out to be God! but is that correct?

Remember, context.

There is only one second-person verb in Isaiah 53, but the 4th servant song doesn't begin in Isaiah 53; it begins in Isaiah 52. So we'll look at the whole of Isaiah 52 including the beginning of the 4th servant song to see who you refers to. (*And if you remember back to the beginning of this article, you might not need the recap.*)

Isaiah 52 (The whole chapter)

1 Awake, awake,
Clothe **yourself in your** strength, O Zion;
Clothe **yourself in your** beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Will no longer come into **you**.

2 Shake **yourself** from the dust, rise up,
O captive Jerusalem;
Loose **yourself** from the chains around **your** neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.

3 For thus says the LORD, **“You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.”** **4** For thus says the Lord GOD, **“My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5** **“Now therefore, what do I have here,”** declares the LORD, **“seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?”** **Again** the LORD declares, **“Those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long. 6** **“Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, “Here I am.”**

7 How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

8 Listen! **Your watchmen** lift up *their* voices,
They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes
When the LORD restores Zion.

9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You waste places of Jerusalem;
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD has bared His holy arm
In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, go out from there,
Touch nothing unclean;
Go out of the midst of her, **purify yourselves,**
You who carry the vessels of the LORD.

12 But **you** will not go out in haste,
Nor will **you** go as fugitives;
For the LORD will go before **you,**
And the God of Israel **will be your** rear guard.

(BP note: The 4th Servant Song begins here)

13 Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

14 Just as many were astonished at **you, My people,**
So His appearance was marred more than any man

And His form more than the sons of men.

15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut 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.

So, when read in context, who is the "you" being spoken of in Isaiah 53:10?

That's right, it's Israel.

It's not God.

It's Israel.

Now, let's modify the relevant line of Isaiah 53:10 in accordance with how the NASB translates Isaiah 52:14:

Isaiah 53:10 (modified)

10 But the LORD was pleased
To humble Him, making *Him* weak;
If you, My people, would make Him a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Context is important!

I'm honestly not sure why so many translations think that the "you" in Isaiah 53:10 refers to God when the immediate context of the 4th Servant Song clearly makes the "you" out to be Israel. That's not even mentioning the rest of Isaiah 52.

Importantly, this makes Israel the one who made Jesus into a guilt offering. That makes perfect sense because the one who committed the sin brings the guilt offering.

This perfectly fits the context that we've already seen so far, where it was the wickedness and rebellion of Israel that killed Jesus. Of course, this ultimately happened because Jesus provoked them with the truth — see Matthew 23 and basically every other interaction with the Pharisees — so God was indeed ultimately driving the events that led to Jesus's death, because, as verse 6 says: *God caused the wickedness of us all to attack Him*.

Isaiah 53:11

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will **justify** the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

We'll look at the two final lines separately, though we've already spent significant time on "bear their iniquities" earlier.

Justify

Now, the PSA position says this means that by His death, we are "justified" (i.e. "made righteous") because He took our punishment vicariously in our place as our substitute, and then His righteousness was transferred to us, making us righteous.

Now, setting aside that that's a lot of meaning to fit into one word, we'll look at how the word is used. The Hebrew word translated "justify" is *tsadeq* (tsadeq), and there it's in the hiphil form. As we covered earlier, the hiphil form expresses causative action. It's the difference between "he rained down destruction" versus "he caused destruction to rain down".

If this word sounds familiar, it's because we saw it briefly in [the article on PSA's second pillar](#).

There, we saw that in some contexts, it means "to acquit" in the sense of clearing the accused of charges brought against him in a judicial setting. We'll cover those same verses again in a moment.

Anyway, here's the lexical entry for the word in its hiphil form, since Hebrew words can sometimes mean different things in different forms.

Hiph'il Perfect 1singular suffix *tsadeq* 2 Samuel 15:4; 3masculine plural *tsadeq* Deuteronomy 25:1; Imperfect 3masculine singular *tsadeq* Isaiah 53:11; 1singular *tsadeq* Exodus 23:7; Job 27:5; Infinitive construct *tsadeq* 1 Kings 8:32 2Chronicles 6:23; Imperative masculine plural *tsadeq* Psalm 82:3; Participle *tsadeq* Proverbs 17:15, etc.;

1 **do justice, in administering law** 2 Samuel 15:4; Psalm 82:3.

2 **declare righteous, justify**, with accusative (*tsadeq*) Deuteronomy 25:1; 1 Kings 8:32 2Chronicles 6:23; *tsadeq* Exodus 23:7 (E) Isaiah 5:23; Proverbs 17:15; Justify accusers, by recognizing charge as just Job 27:5.

3 **justify, vindicate the cause of, save**, with accusative, Isaiah 50:8 (of God), with *tsadeq* of object **Isaiah 53:11** (of servant of *tsadeq*).

4 **make righteous, turn to righteousness**, Daniel 12:3, compare Aboth Daniel 5:26,27 Bev.

As usual, we'll go through those verses one at a time to be sure about how the word is used. I've sorted the verses by the definitions above to make things easier.

tsadeq definition #1

The lexicon has it as "do justice, in administering law" and cites the following verses.

2 Samuel 15:4 Moreover, Absalom would say, "Oh that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit or cause could come to me and **I would give him justice (tsadeq)**."

Psalm 82:3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; **Do justice (tsadeq)** to the afflicted and destitute.

Notably, Psalm 82:3 is about the rebellious members of the divine council (*angelic beings who fell*), and telling them to "do justice" on the earth. **Again, remember that this verb is in the hiphil form in both places and indeed all the ones we'll look at so a wordier but more literal understanding of both verses would be "cause justice to happen"**. That doesn't really change the meaning, but it's worth noting.

tsadeq definition #2

Definition #2 in the lexicon is: "declare righteous, justify"

Deuteronomy 25:1-2 "If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and **they justify (tsadeq, a few translations have "acquitt" here)** the righteous and condemn the wicked, **2** then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt.

1 Kings 8:31-32 "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this house, **32** then hear in heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and **justifying (tsadeq, a few translations have "acquitting" here)** the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.

2 Chronicles 6:22-23 "If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this house, **23** then hear from heaven and act and judge Your servants, punishing the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and **justifying (tsadeq, a few translations have "acquitting" here)** the righteous by giving

him according to his righteousness.

Exodus 23:7 *â??*Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not **acquit (tsadeq)** the guilty.

Isaiah 5:22-23 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, And valiant men in mixing strong drink, **23** Who **justify (tsadeq, several translations have *â??acquitâ??*• here)** the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

Proverbs 17:15 He who **justifies (tsadeq, several translations have *â??acquitsâ??*• here)** the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Job 27:5 (*Job speaking to his friends about their accusation that God was punishing him for his sin.*) *â??*Far be it from me that I should **declare you right (tsadeq)**; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.

With the possible exception of Job, all of these uses clearly have a judicial sense of acquitting someone of a crime in a courtroom context. **Again, these verbs are all in the hiphil form, and thus mean something like: *â??cause an acquittal to happenâ??*•.** That particular nuance is interesting because it would then go beyond a false judge to false witnesses as well.

***â??tsadeqâ??*• definition #3**

Definition #3 in the lexicon is: *â??*justify, vindicate the cause of, *saveâ??*•.

Isaiah 50:8 He who **vindicates (tsadeq)** 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.

Isaiah 53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, **will justify (tsadeq) the many**, As He will bear their iniquities.

Notice the phrase *â??the manyâ??*• that I highlighted because itâ??s important context for the next verse. Again, these verbs are hiphil in form, so for the first one, *â??causes me to be vindicatedâ??*• is more literal, though *â??causes me to be acquittedâ??*• makes more sense with the phrase *â??Who has a case against Me?â??*• at the end of the verse. For the second, weâ??ll get to that soon since itâ??s the verse weâ??re focusing on.

***â??tsadeqâ??*• definition #4**

The lexicon lists this one as: *â??*make righteous, **turn to righteousnessâ??**.

Daniel 12:3 Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who **lead** the many **to righteousness (tsadeq, the word is split here for readability in English)**, like the stars forever and ever.

Notably, the presence of the phrase "the many" here in Daniel seems like a direct connection to Isaiah 53:11.

(And by the way, this is why there's no substitute for simply doing the work. It takes a lot of time to check every instance of a word, but doing so is often where the real treasures are found. It allows you to take the whole of scripture into account, which is obviously important.)

It's also notable that the lexicon defines "make righteous" as convincing people to turn to righteousness.

If we translate with that understanding and include the fact that this is a hiphil form of the verb, we get something very similar to definition #1:

Daniel 12:3 Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and **will cause the many to turn to righteousness (tsadeq)**, like the stars forever and ever.

Again, this is nearly identical to definition #1 of "do justice", only it includes the nuance of getting people who weren't behaving justly/righteously to behave justly/righteously. **Thus, if we say that "justify" in the sense of "make righteous" is the intended sense of Isaiah 53:11, then definition #4 ("turn to righteousness") seems to make the most sense.** Again, the fact that the phrase "the many" is used seems like a direct link to Isaiah 53:11 and would seem to make that more sure.

However, we should look at all the possible understandings before making a decision.

Our translation options for "tsadeq"

Here's the verse again, and I'll list the legitimate translation options below it.

Isaiah 53:11

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will "tsadeq" the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

Here are the legitimate translation options, with the hiphil part of the verb expressed for accuracy and completeness, even though it'll be wordier and possibly harder to read. Such is life:

- **Definition #1:** My Servant, **will cause** the many **to do/behave justly**,
- **Definition #2:** My Servant, **will cause an acquittal for** the many,
- **Definition #3:** My Servant, **will cause vindication for** the many,
- **Definition #4:** My Servant, **will cause** the many **to turn to righteousness**

Effectively, we can collapse those four options into two options. **However, remember that if we want to understand "justify" as "make righteous", then definition #4 defines "make righteous" as "turn to righteousness".** The usage in Daniel chapter 12 confirms this. Thus, the strongest pro-PSA way to translate this that is consistent with the lexicon would be to make it refer to an acquittal.

Those two options look like this:

1. **PSA version:** My Servant, will cause an acquittal for the many,
2. **Non-PSA version:** My Servant, will cause the many to turn to righteousness

Now, both of those options are 100% legitimate and 100% accurate theology.

In fact, I think that most any Christian, even those who vehemently denounce PSA, will agree that both are correct because many have repented through the gospel, and that repentance means that God acquitted them of their sins. PSA-believing Christians will assuredly agree that many have turned from sin to righteousness because of Jesus.

The actual question is: which understanding fits Isaiah 53:11 better.

Honestly, without Daniel 12:3, it would be a complete toss-up.

However, once we consider Daniel 12:3 and its use of "the many", things become clearer. Look at how close the parallel is with these two verses:

Daniel 12:3 "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and **will cause the many to turn to righteousness (tsadeq)**, like the stars forever and ever.

Isaiah 53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, **will cause the many to turn to righteousness (tsadeq)**, As He will bear their iniquities.

Admittedly, that's with my modified translation of those two passages. However, you saw how I got to those translations. Even if you think they're wrong, I would wager that you at least understand why I translated them that way. Further, it seems like Daniel is a prophecy of the coming of the Christian age, which would make the parallelism even more striking.

Thus, because of the parallelism with Daniel 12:3, the proper understanding of Isaiah 53:11d seems to be:

â??My Servant, will cause the many to turn to righteousnessâ?•.

The more PSA-friendly position of â??My Servant, will cause an acquittal for the manyâ?• is a 100% legitimate translation. However, the other option simply has greater contextual support from Daniel.

Now, as previously mentioned, either translation works for both PSA and non-PSA positions.

The translation Iâ??ve settled on definitely doesnâ??t support PSA, however, it doesnâ??t argue against PSA either. Likewise, the more PSA-friendly translation â??will cause an acquittalâ?• doesnâ??t strongly argue for PSA. It leans in that direction, but certainly doesnâ??t require PSA. If PSA supporters want to insist on â??justifyâ?• in the sense of â??make righteousâ?•, then the definition that supports that understanding (#4) more accurately means to â??turn to righteousnessâ?•.

Next, weâ??ll look at the last line of this verse.

Isaiah 53:11e

We already talked about this when we discussed Isaiah 53:4, and also in [the article on sin offerings and the Day of Atonement Purification](#). But hereâ??s the verse, and Iâ??ve included verse 4 for context since it uses the same word.

Isaiah 53:4 & 11 (modified)

4 Surely our griefs He Himself **took away (nasa)**,
And our sorrows He **carried away (sabal)**;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Caused by God to be smitten, and afflicted.

â?!

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will cause the many to turn to righteousness,
As He will bear (sabal) their iniquities (avon).

First, we need to talk about the word â??asâ?• at the beginning of the 5th line. **It doesnâ??t belong there.** If you look at [the verse in an interlinear Bible](#), youâ??ll see that itâ??s a â??conjunctive wawâ?•, which we covered above. (*It means â??andâ?•, â??butâ?•, â??yetâ?•, etc.*) Most Bible translations render it â??andâ?•, which is correct. (*And you can confirm that [here](#).*)

Thus, it should say:

Isaiah 53:11 (modified)

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
 He will see *it and* be satisfied;
 By His knowledge the Righteous One,
 My Servant, will cause the many to turn to righteousness,
 And He will bear (sabal) their iniquities (avon).

With that clarified, we can now look at the phrase "He will bear (sabal) their iniquities (avon)"

As we covered before, Matthew 8:17 makes it clear that this refers to Jesus healing sicknesses and casting out demons.

Also as previously stated, Jesus didn't become sick when He "carried" (away) their sicknesses, nor did He become demon-possessed when He cast out demons. Thus, it doesn't make sense to say that when He "sabal" our iniquities, He took them into Himself either.

Further, the other word used in verse 4 is also used in a context where "removal" is the clear meaning. Also, notice that a sin purification offering is in view here, and Jesus is called a sin offering many times in scripture.

Leviticus 10:16-17

16 But Moses searched carefully for the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned up! So he was angry with Aaron's surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, saying,

17 "Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear away (nasa) the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD.

This aligns with Matthew 8:17, where removal is in view; i.e., not taking the sin into yourself. (*Further, in the example just above, there was no element of punishment, making the disconnect with PSA even clearer.*)

Thus, it seems clear that "bear their iniquities" means to take them away in the sense of eliminating them, not absorbing them in a penal substitutionary fashion.

Now, the word translated "iniquities" is אָוֹן (avon), and we spent an enormous amount of time defining it in the article: [How To Do a Word Study of a Greek or Hebrew Word in the Bible](#). Effectively, it has three relevant meanings:

1. Iniquity (*generally, in the sense of sin*)
2. Guilt from iniquity

3. Consequences of iniquity

Now, PSA will likely seize on the second meaning, while the cleansing model of salvation we saw in the article on why Jesus had to die would focus on definitions 1 and 3. Of course, Jesus also takes away our guilt from our sins as well. We could spend a lot of time dissecting which is the most likely, but ultimately, that will depend mostly on how you see the rest of the passage, and the Bible at large.

Thankfully, the next verse does provide some clarifying context

We'll look at it now.

Isaiah 53:12

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself **bore (nasa)** the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

Again, we just talked about **â??nasaâ?•** and bearing sin, so we won't repeat it again. However, the **â??bore the sinâ?•** phrase seems directly parallel with the previous verse, meaning that the primary definition of **â??iniquityâ?•** (*generally*) is almost certainly the intended meaning in the previous verse. John the Baptizer says something very like this.

John 1:29

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, **â??Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

*(Note: translations of this verse from Greek into Hebrew use **â??nasaâ?•** for **â??take awayâ?•** here. That's not strong evidence, but it's worth considering.)*

Now, in PSA, our sins aren't actually **â??taken awayâ?•.**

PSA says that Jesus's death allowed God to forgive us, and often that God sees us as being as righteous as Jesus was, but that doesn't actually take away the sin. PSA says that it covers the sin like it's being hidden, but it doesn't actually take it away. PSA says that it takes away the punishment for sin, but not our sin itself.

I went looking at a bunch of commentaries and they all followed the general theme of the quote below, which was the most concise I could find. (*It's commenting on the KJV.*)

The margin gives *beareth* as an alternative rendering for *taketh away*, and this union exactly expresses the force of the original. **He is ever taking away sin, but this He does by bearing the burden Himself.** (Comp. 1John 3:5.) **A reference to the words of Isaiah 53:4, above, fully establishes this.**

But if you look at Isaiah 53:4, it is indeed about removal in the sense of elimination, which is explicitly stated by Matthew 8:17. *(And it's quite interesting to read [the commentaries on that verse](#) as well, since they twist themselves into knots trying to explain what it means and end up with *took into Himself* language instead of *taking away* language.)*

So, here's a red flag for PSA:

PSA seems to have no mechanism for actually *taking away* our sins!
!but that's not necessarily fatal to PSA.

Now, while that's a weakness of the view, it's not a fatal weakness because there are ways around it. For example, a PSA fellow could simply say that PSA dealt with one aspect of our salvation, and the cleansing model we saw in [the article on why Jesus had to die](#) took care of the actual *taking away* of our sins.

That's a good response.

Because PSA has a good response, we'll move on to the final line of Isaiah 53.

And **interceded** (*paga*) for the **transgressors** (*pasha*).

This line doesn't weigh in on whether PSA is true or not. However, there's some poetic parallelism that's too cool not to share.

However, because it's not about whether PSA is true, I'm just going to teach it without all the proof. *(You can do the word study yourself if you doubt me.)* Anyway, you might remember the two words from earlier in this article. The word translated *interceded* (*paga*) is the same word that meant *attack* in verse 6.

No, I'm not kidding.

It has 3 primary meanings:

- To *meet* (*like, I'll meet you at church*)
- To *meet* with a plea/request (*which can mean intercede*)
- To *meet* with hostile intent (*i.e. attack*)

Now, the word that the NASB translates as *transgressors* is the verb form of the noun translated *transgressions* in verse 5. Though, we used *rebellion*, so *rebellious* would be the counterpart. That results in the following poetic parallels.

Isaiah 53:5a, 6c-d, 12f (*modified*)

5a But He was pierced because of our **rebellion**, (*pasha*)

6c-d And the LORD **has caused** the wickedness of us all
To attack Him. (*paga*)

12f And [He] **interceded** (*paga*) for the **rebellious** (*pasha*).

Notice:

- Verse 5: Jesus was *pierced* because of our **rebellion**, (*pasha*, *noun form*),
- Verse 12: *but* He *interceded* for the **rebellious** (*pasha*, *verb form*)

Notice the poetic contrast there.

There's another bit of poetic contrast as well:

- Verse 6: So *the* LORD *has caused* the wickedness of us all **To attack Him.** (*paga = meet with hostile intent*)
- Verse 12: But He **interceded** (*paga = meet with a plea*) for the transgressors.

Again, this doesn't affect whether PSA is true, but it was too cool not to share.

The Fourth Servant Song, complete

Now that we've gone through the entire Fourth Servant Song and examined it in detail, it's time to look at the whole thing with the modifications we've made based on what we've found.

Isaiah 52:13 & Isaiah 53:12 (*modified*)

13 Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

14 Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.

15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For they will see what had not been told them,

And they will understand what they had not heard.

Isaiah 53

1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no *stately* form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3 He was despised and forsaken by men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely He Himself took away our griefs,
And He carried away our sorrows;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
caused by God to be smitten, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
He was crushed because of our wickedness;
The discipline that made us whole was upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
And the LORD has caused the wickedness of us all
To attack Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away,
But who will declare *this* to His generation?
That He was cut off from the land of the living;
Because of My people's rebellion, He was struck

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,

Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10 But the LORD was pleased
To humble Him, making Him weak.
If you, *My people*, would make Him a guilt offering,
He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will cause the many to turn to righteousness
And He will carry away their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself took away the sin of many,
And interceded for the rebellious.

I'm guessing that you noticed the same thing that I did.

I don't see PSA in this passage, not when it's properly understood/translated.

In fact, Isaiah 53:4b-5a contains one of the most powerful arguments against PSA that I've ever seen.

Here's that section again:

Isaiah 53:4b-5a (*modified*)

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
caused by God to be smitten, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
He was crushed because of our wickedness;

Now, let's be as charitable as possible and say that the phrase with the hophil verb translated "caused by God to be smitten" is internal causation and should be understood as "smitten by God", as it's usually translated.

That doesn't help.

In fact, it almost makes it worse for PSA.

Isaiah 53:4b-5a

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced because of our rebellion,
 He was crushed because of our wickedness;

As we covered above, the "but" at the beginning of verse 5 is correcting the incorrect impression of the "we" (*Israel*) from verse 4. Israel thought that God was "smiting" the Suffering Servant (*Jesus*), but in reality, the Servant was suffering because the people were wicked and rebellious. PSA says that God "poured out His wrath" on Jesus, which sounds exactly like "smiting" to me. But Isaiah 53:5a corrects that impression to say that's not what was happening.

At the risk of repeating myself:

Isaiah 53:4b-5a seems to explicitly say that God did not "smite" Jesus; thus, how could PSA be true?

Far from teaching PSA, Isaiah 53 seems to explicitly contradict PSA.

At this point, Isaiah 53 seems right up there with PSA's twisting of the Greek and Hebrew words translated "forgiveness" in terms of how strongly they hammer PSA. I literally do not see a way around Isaiah 53:4-5. That seems to make PSA impossible all by itself.

Now, of course there are more verses to consider, and I'm aware that the PSA crowd will wonder when we'll finally get to 2 Corinthians 5:21, or 1 Peter 3:18, or Galatians 3:13. Those are coming up next, likely in that order, though I make no promises about the order.

Where I personally am right now

I'm sure you all have guessed that I've already looked into those next verses, and many more, even if I haven't done the full research on them yet. To summarize: None of them support PSA. Galatians 3:13 is the closest, but even that one can be taken another valid way. 1 Peter 3:18 literally cannot support PSA, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 requires ignoring the undisputed best Greek lexicon in the world to get it to support PSA.

That's a problem.

Iâ??m fast running out of places in the Bible that support PSA. So far and without exception, none of them mean what PSA needs them to mean.

Not one.

At this point, for reasons thatâ??ll become obvious when I go through those verses in detail, Iâ??m 98%+ sure that PSA is wrong. I simply canâ??t find a single passage that clearly teaches it, and I can find some that clearly argue against it. Isaiah 53:4 is a good example, as is literally every single verse in the Bible about God forgiving.

Thatâ??s a lot of verses.

Conclusion

The â??sprinkleâ? part of Isaiah 52:15 could either refer to sacrifice, or to the establishment of a covenant. Even if it refers to sacrifice, the blood of the sacrifices wasnâ??t about penal substitution, but rather cleansing, so that doesnâ??t support PSA.

The â??bearingâ? language in Isaiah 53:4 is interpreted for us by the Holy Spirit in Matthew 8, and it doesnâ??t refer to Jesus taking sin into Himself, but rather to Him eliminating diseases and demonic possession. The latter half of the verse says that the â??weâ? (Israel) thought that God caused Jesus to be smitten, but then Verse 5 corrects this impression. **This is one of the most powerful anti-PSA arguments Iâ??ve ever seen.**

Isaiah 53:5 should be understood as â??because ofâ?, not â??forâ? (*in the sense of exchange/substitution*). This is testified by the lexical definitions and also every Bible translation until the Reformation. The third line of verse 5 likely means â??The discipline that made us whole was upon Himâ?, though, â??*The discipline that gave us peace was upon Him*,â? is possible. The latter ignores the context, but itâ??s possible.

The latter half of verse 6 should be understood as â??And the LORD has caused the wickedness of us all To attack Him.â?, with the meaning that Jesus provoked the Jews into attacking Him with the truth, and they then attacked Him because they were wicked.

The latter half of verse 8 is simply badly translated in many translations, and is effectively a restatement of verses 5 and 6.

In verse 10, it could be validly translated â??To crush him, wounding Himâ?, but â??to humble Him, making Him weakâ? is also perfectly valid. The mention of the â??guilt offeringâ? is again a reference to the Levitical sacrificial system, which has no element of PSA in it. The â??guilt offeringâ? was a ~~sin~~ purification offering that was brought because the person committed a personal sin. Its purpose was to cleanse sacred space, not to be a penal substitutionary sacrifice.

â??Justifyâ? in verse 11 should be understood as â??will cause the many to turn to righteousnessâ?, and the â??bearingâ? language in this verse also refers to taking something away, not taking it into Himself. Itâ??s the same with verse 12.

I'll be back soon-ish with an article on one of the three verses mentioned above. Likely 2 Corinthians 5:21, but no promises on that.

See you then.

EDIT: That article is published, and you can find it [here](#).

God Bless,

Berean Patriot