

TOVIA SINGER—LEVITE GONE AMUCK

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I have no desire to fight windmills and Tovia Singer is a windmill gone amuck. Setting himself up as an authority on messianic texts in the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible minus the New Covenant, i.e. the Old Testament) Singer, who has a high profile anti-Yeshua organization, comes against Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) with twisted and dishonest interpretations of the Hebrew text that are designed to ensnare the novice.

I am writing this article because Singer has led many Jewish believers to renounce Yeshua and has kept countless others from entering the Kingdom (Mt. 23:13). It's my hope that many who are enticed by Singer's writings will see another side of the issue and be able to judge rightly about Messiah Yeshua.

The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees that Yeshua spoke of was their corrupt teaching (Mt. 16:6, 12). Interestingly enough, right after Yeshua speaks of their teachings He asks His followers who they thought He was. Simon proclaimed, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God' (Mt. 16:16). Here in Matthew 16 is both Singer and his teachings in the form of his spiritual ancestors, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the very One whom Singer denies—Yeshua the Messiah.

Actually, Singer also has Levitical lineage from his father's side. The name 'Singer' comes from the job description given certain Levites at the time of King David¹ when he arranged for them to *sing* praise before Yahveh. Hundreds of years later when 'last names' were being assigned to everyone, these descendants of Levi choose their ancestors' job description—singer. That's how we know that Jews with the last name of Singer come from the Tribe of Levi.

As a rabbi, Singer represents not only an anti-Messiah Pharisaic or rabbinic false teacher (Mt. 15:1-9, 12-14; 23:1-33), but also the Levitical priesthood whose High Priest was the chief authority of the Sanhedrin. He and they would condemn Yeshua to death for 'blasphemy' upon Yeshua's affirmation to the High Priest's question if He were the Son of God or not (Mt. 26:62-68). Singer has quite a lineage and proudly walks in it.

The object of this paper is not to dissect each and every poisonous teaching of Singer's, but to expose his perverse methodology from a significant 'teaching' of his. If this teaching is patently false, it's not unreasonable to assume that most, if not all, of Singer's teachings fall into this same category—half-truths which are full lies, expressly designed to lure the unsuspecting and unlearned Jewish person away from their Messiah.

The teaching of Singer's that we'll look at has to do with his eight page writing about Isaiah 53.² He states that Is. 53 is 'a vital part of' the 'textual arsenal used against'³ the Jewish people by believers. It should be. Isaiah 53 is the primary text about God's Suffering Servant.

Singer first presents *contemporary* Jewish thought on Isaiah 53 as pointing to the Jewish people as the Suffering Servant. With two thousand years behind the Rabbis of rejecting Yeshua as the Messiah contemporary thought on the subject is not appropriate nor the final word on the matter. What did the ancient Jewish sages have to say about the Messiah before Yeshua was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; 5:1 in Hebrew)?⁴

¹ 1st Kings 10:12; 1st Chron. 6:13; 9:33; 15:16, 19, 27; 23:5; 2nd Chron. 5:12, 13; 7:6; 8:14; 9:11; 23:13; 29:28; 35:15; Ezra 2:41, 70; 7:7, 24; 10:24; Neh. 7:1, 44, 67; 7:73; 10:28, 39; 11:22, 23; 12:28, 29, 45, 46, 47; 13:5, 10.

² Singer's teaching, *Who is God's Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, can be found at <http://www.outreachjudaism.org/sin.html>.

³ Tovias Singer, *Who is God's Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, p. 3.

The Stunned Kings

Isaiah 52:13-15 is part of a three verse summary that precedes Isaiah 53. Isaiah 52:14-15 has the Gentile kings being astonished at the maligned figure of the Suffering Servant of God and wondering what it could mean. Singer's interpretation is that the Gentiles will ultimately be saved by God's elevation of Israel, but this, only after (righteous) Israel has suffered unbearable pain at the hands of the Gentiles.

Singer takes this mention of 'many nations' and 'kings' in Is. 52:15 and says that it's these 'stunned kings'⁵ of the world who will be speaking the entire text of Isaiah 53, acknowledging that they were wrong in abusing Israel (Is. 53:3, 4, 6). The problem with this is that nowhere in the text does it say that those kings are speaking, but this will allow Singer, and others like him, to use the text for their own goal—to take the suffering of the Servant Messiah and place it upon Israel, thus nullifying a major prophetic text in the Tanach that directly points to the suffering that Yeshua of Nazareth went through that culminated in his crucifixion to provide atonement and redemption for both Jew and Gentile.

Isaiah 52:15 does not have the Gentile kings, which it speaks of, speaking in verse 15, let alone being the ones who are speaking the entire text of Is. 53. All verse 15 says, among other things, is that the Gentiles will 'shut their mouths.' It seems like it would be hard for them to say anything:

“So shall He sprinkle many nations. *Kings shall shut their mouths at Him* for what had not been told them they shall see and what they had not heard they shall consider” (Is. 52:15).

How one can interpret from this verse that these kings are the speakers of Isaiah 53 begins to show us how unethical Singer's methodology is. These Gentile kings don't speak here and are not mentioned anywhere else in Isaiah 53:1-12, but this is the foundation for Singer's teaching. By having the Gentiles speak the words of Isaiah 53, and not the prophet Isaiah, Singer can present his teaching that Isaiah's Suffering Servant is none other than the nation of Israel.

Who is the Servant?

Singer presents the Servant as Israel by quoting six texts from the book of Isaiah,⁶ but none from Is. 53, where it states that Israel was the servant of the Lord, but he steps out of bounds with his quote of Is. 49:3. Yes, there are times when Isaiah speaks of Israel as God's Servant, but it's not in Isaiah 49 nor 53. In those chapters the Servant is the Messiah, not Israel. By just quoting Is. 49:3, as Singer does, one could think that the prophet was speaking of Israel, but here we come to another statement of Singer's that does not bear up under scrutiny:

“And He said to me, ‘You are My servant, Oh Israel, in whom I will be glorified’” (Is. 49:3).

⁴ For how the ancient Jewish sages understood the text of Isaiah 53 see the Jewish Newsletters beginning with *A Three Day Old Bagel* (Jewish Newsletter #28) at <http://seedofabraham.net/A-Three-Day-Old-Bagel.pdf>. Jewish Newsletters 29-32 and 34 continue the teaching on the text of Isaiah 53. Also, any *italicized* or **emboldened** words in this article are the author's unless otherwise stated.

⁵ Singer, *Who is God's Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, p. 1: 'stunned kings of nations...world leaders;' page 2: the 'world leaders will cry aloud,' and the "humbled kings of nations (52:15) will confess that *Jewish suffering occurred as a direct result of 'our own iniquity,'* (53:5) i.e., depraved Jew-hatred, rather than, as they previously thought, the stubborn blindness of the Jews."

⁶ Ibid., p. 1: Is. 41:8-9; 44:1, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3.

It will become plain to see that ‘this Israel’ must be another term for the Messiah because it states of *this* Israel that God made him in the matrix of his mother (not *mothers* as we might expect of the Seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), and that his mouth was not only ‘like a sharp sword,’ but that God had ‘hidden’ him in His quiver:

‘Listen, Oh coastlands, to me, and take heed, you peoples from afar! Yahveh has *called me from the womb*, from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name and He has made My mouth like a sharp sword. In the *shadow of His hand He has hidden Me* and made Me a polished shaft. In His quiver He has hidden Me’ (Is 49:1-2).

Who is the ‘me’ who says that God called him ‘from the womb, from the matrix of’ his mother? How can this be a nation? Could it be Abraham? Could it be said of Father Abraham that he had a mouth ‘like a sharp sword’ or that he was hidden in God’s quiver? No. Can it be Israel speaking or is it the Messiah? When was Israel ever *hidden* in the shadow of God’s hand? Why would Isaiah speak of Israel saying that, ‘from the matrix of my mother He has made mention of my name’? The nation of Israel came about by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the mothers of Israel—Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Bilha and Zilpa. How can only ‘mother,’ in the singular, be mentioned if Isaiah is speaking of the nation of Israel?

The passage gets much more specific and reveals that it’s not the nation of Israel whom the prophet is speaking about, but the Messiah. It says that this person *will gather Israel to God* and that this Servant will be raised up to ‘*restore*’ the ‘*Tribes of Jacob*’ and to be a light to the Gentiles that God’s salvation would reach to the ‘ends of the Earth.’ Can Israel restore Israel? It’s not possible biblically for Israel to redeem herself. This is the nature of those in need of redemption. They need a Redeemer to redeem them. The passage clearly has the Messiah as the Servant-Redeemer who will restore Israel:

“And now Yahveh says, *who formed me from the womb* to be His Servant, *to bring Jacob back to Him* so that Israel is gathered to Him, for I shall be glorious in the eyes of Yahveh and My God shall be My strength. Indeed 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* give You as a light to the Gentiles that *You should be My salvation* to the ends of the earth’ (Is 49:5-6).

Note how the phrase, ‘who formed me from the womb’ connects it to v. 1 (Yahveh has *called me from the womb*). One would be hard pressed to say that the Servant is Israel for how could Israel bring Jacob back to God? How could Israel raise up Israel?! It makes absolutely no sense, yet Singer uses Is. 49:3, and only that verse, out of context, as a support for his position that Isaiah is speaking of Israel. As for those passages that speak of Israel as the Servant, there’s no reason to deny that, but there’s no reason to assume that because they do, Isaiah 53 must also, especially when Singer’s ‘Servant Songs’ aren’t the Servant Songs at all.

Also in this conceptual field, Singer presents chapters before and after Isaiah 53 to say that they spoke of Israel, therefore, Is. 53 must, too, but because a chapter before or after Is. 53 speak of Israel as the Servant of God doesn’t mean that Is. 53 has to, also.

Singer presents a number of quotes from Isaiah which he says are from the Servant Songs, but he is quite mistaken. The Servant Songs are fairly common knowledge and one has to wonder how Singer could present his quotes, saying that they were from the ‘renowned Servant Songs’⁷ when in fact five out of his six quotes weren’t from them at all. He quotes from Is. 41:8-9; 44:1, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3. Only Is. 49:3 would be part of the Servant Songs of Isaiah and as we’ve seen, doesn’t support Singer’s assertion that Isaiah is speaking about Israel as the Servant. Wikipedia lists Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9 and 52:13-53:12 as the Servant Songs, which are well worth reading for insight into the Messiah of Israel and

⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

says this about the Songs:

The First Song

‘The first poem has God speaking of His selection of the Servant who will bring justice to earth. Here the Servant is described as God’s agent of justice, *a king* that brings justice in both royal and prophetic roles, yet justice is established neither by proclamation or by force...Isaiah 42:1-7’

The Second Song

‘The second poem, written from the Servant’s point of view, is an account of his pre-natal calling by God *to lead both Israel and the nations*. The Servant is now portrayed as the *prophet* of the Lord equipped and called *to restore the nation to God*. Yet, anticipating the fourth song, he is without’ (apparent) ‘success...Isaiah 49:1-6’

The Third Song

‘The third poem has a darker yet more confident tone than the others. Although the song *gives a first-person* description of how the Servant was beaten and abused, here the Servant is described both *as teacher and learner* who follows the path God places him on without pulling back. Echoing the first song’s ‘a bruised reed he will not break,’ he sustains the weary with a word. His vindication is left in God’s hands. Isaiah 50:4-9’

The Fourth Song

The last, longest, and most famous Servant poem, is a speech by’ God ‘announcing the destiny of the Servant. Isaiah 53 declares that the Servant *intercedes* for others, *taking the punishments and afflictions of others*. In the *end*, he is rewarded with an exalted position...Posthumously, then, the Servant is vindicated by’ God. ‘Because of its references to the vicarious sufferings of the servant, many Christians believe this song to be among the Messianic prophecies of Jesus. Isaiah 52:13-53:12’⁸

The Servant Songs of Isaiah present a man, not the Jewish people, as the Suffering Servant of the Lord. Yes, Isaiah will call Israel God’s Servant, too, but not in the messianic Servant Songs listed above. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* under ‘Servant of God’ states:

“In the following passages (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13 to 53:12) Israel’s destiny and duty, rather than its previous conduct, is indicated. In the four passages indicated, *the ‘national’ interpretation is not admissible*. The descriptions in them of the attitude and conduct of the’ Servant of Yahveh ‘seem to be idealizations of the character of an *individual* rather than of the whole of Israel. *This is especially true* of 52:13–53:12, the exaltation of the ‘man of suffering.’ In this a prophetic anticipatory *picture of the Messiah* has been recognized *by both Jewish and Christian tradition*.”⁹

The Servant Songs of Isaiah present a person as the Servant, not the nation of Israel or the Jewish people. Singer, in misrepresenting the Servant Songs by quoting other sections of Isaiah, presented Israel as the Servant, but this didn’t have anything to do with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

⁸ The Servant Songs of Isaiah: Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Isaiah#Servant_Songs.

⁹ *Who is the Servant of Isaiah 53?* at <http://www.outreacht Judaism.com/07.html>.

Clear as Mud

Singer presents *Berachos* 5a from the Talmud as an example of the Servant of Isaiah 53 being the Jewish people, but note well that nowhere in the talmudic quote does it actually say that:

“Rava said in the name of Rav Sachorah who said it in the name of Rav Huna: ‘Whomever the Holy One, blessed is He, desires, He crushes with afflictions as it is stated, ‘And the one whom Hashem desires He crushed with sickness (Isaiah 53: afflictions).’ Now, one might have thought that this applies even if he does not accept [the afflictions] with love. Scripture therefore states in the continuation of the verse “if his soul acknowledges his guilt.””

“And if he accepts [the afflictions with love] what is his reward? He will see offspring and live long days. Moreover, he will retain his studies, as it is states ‘and the desire of Hashem will succeed in his hand.’”

How Singer insists that this passage speaks of Israel as the Servant that Isaiah 53 presents is hard to fathom. The Jewish sages, linking their concept of affliction with Is. 53, do not begin to suggest that they thought the Servant of Is. 53 was the nation of Israel. Their concept of affliction was supported by some verses in Isaiah 53, but it doesn’t say that they thought those verses spoke of Israel as the Suffering Servant.

Singer also quotes *Midrash Rabba* on Numbers 23 saying it, too, ‘refers to the nation of Israel’:

“I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey” (Song of Songs 5:1): because the Israelites poured out their soul to die in captivity, as it is said, ‘Because he poured out his soul to die’ (Isaiah 53:12).

Here we find something of a possible connection to what Singer is speaking about, but did Israel actually pour out their soul to willingly die in captivity? Isn’t that what Isaiah 53 reveals about the Suffering Servant?

‘He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter* and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth’ (Is. 53:7).

‘Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong because *He poured out His soul unto death* and He was numbered with the transgressors and *He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors*” (Is. 53:12).

Was Judah *oppressed* and *afflicted* (v. 7) or was the nation paying for their sins of idolatry and rebellion against God (Is. 1:1-31)? Was Judah *silent* and *led as a lamb to slaughter* when the King of Babylon besieged the city? Or did they resist the Babylonians?

Being *numbered with the transgressors* (Is. 53:12) implies that the nation (in Singer’s interpretation) wasn’t a transgressor, but Judah was destroyed and went into captivity for his sins. Where is Judah interceding for the Gentile oppressors? If Jewish suffering brings the Gentiles to worldwide redemption and God Almighty, where is that seen during or after Judah was exiled and returned? To place Jewish suffering as a means of Gentile redemption shows us that Singer’s thinking is as clear as mud.

Nowhere in Scripture does God speak of using the Jewish people to redeem the Gentiles. It’s just the opposite. We Jews went into Babylonian captivity because of our own sins against God and each other.¹⁰

¹⁰ 1st Kings 9:1-10; Is. 1:1-9; 2:5; 9:13-17; 10:10-11; 17:9-10; 2nd Chron. 29:1-9; 34:23-28; 36:14:21; Jer. 5-9;

Singer is in fantasy land when he states that Jewish suffering will redeem the Gentiles. He has absolutely no Scripture to support him.

Something else to consider in terms of our suffering and who the Suffering Servant of Yahveh is in Is. 53. The Babylonian captivity lasted 70 years.¹¹ In 135 A.D. we were thrown off of our land by the Romans and we wandered the face of the Earth for more than 1,800 years, until 1948. If idolatry and rebellion to God caused us to be in Babylonian captivity for 70 years, what could possibly have caused us to be without a homeland for more than 1,800 years? Could it have been because we rejected our Messiah (as Psalm 118:22 and Is. 53:3-4 state)?!

‘The Stone which the Builders rejected Has become the chief Cornerstone’ (Ps. 118:22).¹²

‘He was *despised and rejected* by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we did not esteem Him. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted’ (Is 53:3-4).

Singer also tries to support his position on Jewish suffering and redemption by bringing in liberal theologians who speak of the Servant as Israel, but this is like asking one thief to vouch for another thief. Liberal theologians are notorious for distorting the Word of God (e.g. they deny all the miracles of Moses and the Messiah, and also, Messiah’s virgin conception).¹³ As a ‘witness’ for Singer they fail miserably the test of biblical veracity.

Jewish Suffering and the Messiah

Singer then pits the suffering of the Jews against the suffering of Messiah Yeshua. He says that the Church regards the latter as a ‘cornerstone of Church doctrine,’ while the former ‘plays no essential role in Christian theology.’ As accurate as that is, the reason for Jewish suffering is totally different from why the innocent and sinless Messiah suffered (Is. 53:8-10). Messiah was sacrificed for the sins of Israel. The nature of substitutionary sacrifice is that the one being sacrificed must be blameless and pure (i.e. sinless) and that’s the reason why animals were used on the Day of Atonement for the sins of Israel (Lev. 16).

Messiah was sinless whereas we Jewish people, since the day that Moses came to redeem us from Egypt, have been rebellious to God, His authorities (like Moses and the prophets) and His Way (His Law). *This* is the reason for Jewish suffering and it is plainly seen in things like the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah. We suffered at the hands of the Gentiles because we were worshipping other gods, desecrating God’s Sabbath day, and not loving our Jewish neighbors as we should have and so God punished us according to His Word (Lev. 26:1-46; Dt. 28:1-68).

Yeshua suffered for both Jews and Gentiles so that we could all be forgiven. Contrary to Singer’s view of what he would call the (righteous remnant of) Jewish people, speaking of them as the ‘unwavering Jew...all this time’ being ‘faithful to the true God,’ God sees Israel as a whole...if one Jew sins it adversely affects all of us. We only have to look at Achan in Joshua’s day to see that if there’s a rotten apple

15:13-14; 16:1-18; 19:1-15; 32:23-24, 26-35; 35:16-17; 36:30-31; 40:1-3; 44:1-6, 21:23; Ezk. 16:50; 20:1-23 (esp. vv. 18-22, 24), 22:1-31; 24:1-14; 39:22-39; Ezra 5:11-12; 9:1-7; Dan. 9:1-19, etc.

¹¹ Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2; Zech. 1:12; 7:5.

¹² The Rabbis proudly call themselves ‘the Builders of Israel.’ The Stone is a name for Messiah (Ps. 118:22; Dan. 2:31-45).

¹³ For more on why Yeshua was conceived within the virgin womb of Miryam (Mary), which was prophesied in Is. 7:14 see *Recognize this Man?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Recognize-This-Man.pdf>.

in the barrel it taints the whole barrel (Josh. 7:1-26; 22:20).

As for Singer's theme of Jews being abused by the Gentiles so that the Gentiles can be saved, we are left to wonder why the God of Israel would abuse His own people in order to save or redeem the very people that were abusing them? This wouldn't fare well with the likes of Joshua or King David, but Singer is silent on this major theme; of God destroying Israel's enemies, not saving them by sacrificing His own people. Singer doesn't address this nor the more important question of how God could use an historically stubborn, rebellious and sinful people—we Jews—to redeem another historically stubborn, rebellious and sinful peoples—the Gentiles, for only a sinless sacrifice, exemplified in the sacrifices of animals, could atone for the sins of Israel. Since when was Israel sinless? It also doesn't tell us how God could retain the concept that He, and He alone, is the Savior of Israel, if Israel's sufferings *saved* the Gentiles:

'I, even I, am Yahveh and besides Me there is no savior' (Is. 43:11).

'Yet, I am Yahveh your God ever since the land of Egypt and you shall know no God but Me, for there is no savior besides Me' (Hos. 13:4; see also Is. 45:21; 49:26; 60:16).

Concerning worldwide salvation, we already have a prototype in the salvation of Israel from Egyptian slavery: God sent Moses to deliver Israel, not Moses and the Hebrew slaves. This is an important distinction. Who set Israel free from Egyptian slavery? Was it God through Moses or God through Moses and the Hebrew slaves? If the latter, then Singer has a platform from which to espouse that the Messiah, as the head of righteous Israel, will redeem the world. Unfortunately for Singer, that is not the case. If anything, the Hebrew slaves were not righteous¹⁴ and unwilling to be set free when Pharaoh made their tasks harder! In fact, the Hebrew slaves cursed Moses for going to Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1-21)! The Hebrew slaves were not used by God to set themselves free nor was their suffering used to redeem the Egyptians: God destroyed Egypt. Singer's concept is outside the bounds of God and His Word.

Man Made Theology that Opposes God

Singer reveals his rabbinic indoctrination and blindness in understanding God's Word when he states that the Talmud *trumps* the Word of God. In order to introduce his distorted and twisted idea about Gentile redemption through Jewish suffering, Singer takes us to the Talmud, the words of the Rabbis, most of whom were not familiar with, let alone had dwelling within them, the Spirit of the Living God to help them truly understand and interpret God's Word:

"Moreover, while Ezekiel warned that the righteous can never suffer or die as a sacrificial atonement for the wicked, the Talmud teaches that, 'Whosoever weeps over the [suffering] of the righteous man, all his sins are forgiven.'"¹⁵

Here we have a classic statement from an institutionalized rabbi: if the Word of God and rabbinic thought clash, rabbinic thought *overrides* the Word of God. Who is the authority: the Rabbis or God? The Word of God is authoritative over any and all of Man's words that are contrary to it. The Scriptures declare the will of God on any subject that it speaks about. Here, though, at the crucial juncture of how one can be *atoned* for or redeemed, Singer relegates God's Word to the trash bin in favor of the Talmud. This is nothing less than rebellion against God disguised as rabbinic scholarship.

¹⁴ The Rabbis claim that the Hebrew slaves in Egypt were on the 49th rung of the ladder, there being only 50 rungs to it. They say that if Israel had fallen to the 50th rung not even God could have saved him. Such *hut:pah!* (Arrogance and ignorance on the part of the Rabbis.)

¹⁵ Singer, *Who is God's Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, p. 5. Quote from the Talmud taken from *Shabat* 105b.

Next, Singer qualifies the ‘Israel’ that he speaks of, saying it’s the *righteous* remnant whom Isaiah 53 is referring to. This would mean that ‘all Israel’ needn’t be holy, but what does that do for the secular Jew if ‘righteous Jewish suffering’ only avails salvation for the Gentiles? It seems that there’s no hope for the secular Jew in Singer worldwide redemption.

Once he ‘establishes’ righteous Israel as his entity for the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, Singer, with slight of hand that any magician would envy, conveniently places the Messiah *within* that righteous remnant. Therefore, any ancient Jewish sage that spoke of the Messiah as the Servant was doing so, according to Singer, only because Messiah was the head of the righteous remnant. He states,

‘The final heir of David’s throne *is an integral member* of the pious of Israel...In other words, *the messiah will bring about an age* when the most important feature of Isaiah 53 will materialize: the worldwide repentance of the gentiles...Consequently, although various rabbinic literature highlights numerous biblical saints whose lives exemplify the Suffering Servant of Israel in Isaiah 53, *the future messiah is held up more frequently and prominently than any other pious Jew.*’¹⁶

According to Singer the ancient Jewish authorities who did speak of ‘Messiah’ as the individual of Is. 53 were only doing so because Messiah was the head of Israel: *this* is the reason that Messiah is mentioned so frequently as the individual spoken of by those Jewish authorities.

Singer uses two more quotes to support his absurd position. The first quote is from Targum Yonatan ben Uziel on Is. 52:14 and is as nebulous as a fog:¹⁷

‘As the house of Israel look to him during many days, because their countenance was darkened among the people, and their complexion (darkened) beyond the sons of men.’¹⁸

If Singer hadn’t written that this passage ‘identifies Israel as the long-suffering and humiliated servant,’¹⁹ looking to the ‘him’ (the Messiah), we might not have come to that realization. With this kind of scholarship he again quotes from the same Targum commentary, but now on Isaiah 53:10, to show us that Isaiah was speaking about Israel all along:

‘But it’s the Lord’s good pleasure to refine and cleanse the remnant of His people in order to purify their souls from sin; they shall see the kingdom of the messiah, they shall increase their sons and daughters, they shall prolong their days; and those who perform the Law of the Lord shall prosper in good pleasure.’²⁰

This is an extremely poor quote to use as identifying the ‘suffering servant as the nation of Israel’ because if Isaiah is speaking about the Messiah as the Suffering Servant (and not Israel, too) it stands to reason that Messiah’s redemption will cause Israel to ‘see the kingdom of the messiah’ and that their sons and daughters will increase and prolong their days, etc.

Interestingly enough, the Targum on Isaiah 52:13, which introduces the passage, expressly declares that the Suffering Servant is the Messiah: ‘Behold my servant Messiah shall prosper; he shall be high, and increase, and be exceeding strong.’

One cannot arbitrarily place ‘Israel’ alongside the Messiah as the Redeemer of Israel and the Gentiles at either Is. 53 nor any other place in Scripture. Israel is in no position to redeem anyone, *especially* itself.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹⁷ The Targum is an Aramaic translation-commentary of the Prophets written about two thousand years ago.

¹⁸ Singer, *Who is God’s Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Israel needs the Messianic Redeemer to transform Israel's nature into that which is acceptable to God (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Dt. 9:6, 13; 10:16; see also Dt. 30:6; Ezk. 36:24-27).

The Final Straw

Singer, though, is adamant that Is. 53:8 supports his theological position on Jewish suffering. He states that the verse gives the *reason* why we Jews suffered so long at the hands of the Gentiles (in order to redeem them). It also has a plural pronoun, which Singer says, undeniably reveals the nation of Israel being the sufferer rather than the Messiah. He states,

“Therefore, Isaiah 53:8 concludes with their stunning confession, ‘for the transgressions of my people [the gentile nations] they [the Jews] were stricken.’ *The fact* that the servant is spoken of in the third person, plural...illustrates *beyond doubt* that the servant is a nation rather than a single individual.’²¹

The Jewish Publication Society's *The Holy Scriptures* doesn't use ‘they were stricken,’ but,

‘he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.’²²

Instead of the phrase suggesting that the Jews were stricken it seems that the Jews should have been stricken, but that the Servant took their punishment upon himself. This is very different from the way Singer presents the phrase. Also, Singer would have us to believe that the ‘gentile nations’ or kings are saying, ‘for the transgression of my people,’ but if the kings of the world are speaking in this passage, shouldn't they be saying, for the transgressions of ‘our people(s)’ instead of ‘*my* people’?! Shouldn't it have been written:

‘he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of *our* people.’

Singer also fails to tell us is that in the very same verse the Servant is spoken of in the singular, third person (he) three times:

“By oppression and judgment *he* was taken away, and with his generation who did reason? For *he* was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due” (Is 53:8).²³

The verse in Isaiah says, ‘who will declare *his* generation?’ *His* is singular. One generation, not all generations of Jews who have suffered. Then it states, ‘For he was cut off,’ which means that he would die.²⁴

²¹ Ibid., p. 2.

²² תורה ונביאים וכתובים (*Torah, Nivi'im OuKtuvim: The Law, Prophets and Writings*): *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, vol. II (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), p. 1079.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Cut off* may mean the person was totally removed from Israel. This would be tantamount to one losing their identity. We might not think too much of this, but to an ancient people, their identity was wrapped up in their family-society. In other words, they would feel alienated and annihilated.

Cut off is also a euphemism for being destroyed or killed (Ex. 31:12-15; Lev. 20:1-5). There's no mention of possible repentance for the sin with a ‘high hand’ (rebellion) or any of the sins listed below:

Feasts: Lev. 23:26-29: A person was cut off from among his people if he didn't afflict himself on the Day of Atonement.

Num. 9:6-13: Anyone ceremonially able to observe Passover and was not far

Does that mean that there shouldn't be any Jews left because they would all die for the redemption of the Gentiles? Some Gentiles would like that enough to 'hasten' Singer's worldwide redemption.

The very next verse (v. 9) speaks of the Servant's *grave* being made with the wicked. Does this imply the death of all the Jewish people? How, then, will there be any Jews around to walk in this great redemption of Israel being exalted?

Not only are there a number of singular pronouns (he) in the very verse that Singer tells us is a 'fact' that Isaiah is speaking about Israel, the entire chapter is overladen with the singular pronoun 'he' when referring to the Suffering Servant. One can only wonder as to why Singer failed to note that for his readers. Perhaps after reading of all the he's in the chapter one might come away thinking that it just might possibly refer to a single individual?

The following reveals the overwhelming use of the singular pronoun 'he' in the passage that speaks of an individual servant:²⁵

- He will be exalted52:13
- He will be lifted up52:13
- He will be very high52:13
- He will sprinkle52:14

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- from the Tabernacle, but doesn't observe or keep the Passover:
 - Rebellion: Num. 15:30: A person was cut off from among his people if he did anything 'with a high hand' (rebellion).
Num. 15:30-31: Someone who despised God's Word, broke His commandment; sinned with the sin of presumption.
 - Sacrifice: Lev. 7:20-21: A person was cut off from among his people if he ate of the Peace sacrifice when unclean.
Lev. 7:22-25: A person was cut off from among his people if he ate of the fat of any animal.
Lev. 7:26-27: A person was cut off from among his people if he ate of the blood of any animal.
Lev. 17:10-14: For eating the blood of the sacrifice.
Lev. 17:1-9: When living around the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, for sacrificing in a place other than the Tabernacle.
Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5: For sacrificing their children to Molech.
Lev. 19:5-8: For eating the peace sacrifice on the third day.
 - Sexual: Lev. 18:1-30: For uncovering the nakedness of a close relative (which may mean sexual relations).
Lev. 20:17: For a man having sexual relations with his sister.
Lev. 20:18: For a man having sexual relations with a woman in her menstrual period.
 - Sorcery: Lev. 20:6: Anyone who was a medium or had familiar spirits.
 - Tabernacle: Lev. 22:1-3: For any descendent of Aaron that went near (ate of?), while they were unclean, the holy things dedicated by Israel to Yahveh.
Num. 19:11-22: Anyone who touched a dead body, a human bone, or a grave, and who didn't have the waters of purification sprinkled upon them on the third and seventh days.

²⁵ Sanford R. Howard, *L'Chayim: Finding The Light of Shalom* (Thorsby, AL: Sabbath House, Inc., 1999), p. 226. Most of the cites listed come from Howard's book.

He grew up	53:2
He was despised	53:3
He was a man of sorrows.....	53:3
He has borne our griefs.....	53:4
He was smitten	53:4
He was wounded.....	53:5
He was bruised	53:5
He was oppressed	53:7
He was cut off.....	53:8
He did no violence.....	53:9
He made His grave with the wicked.....	53:9

Singer’s presentation of Isaiah’s ‘stunning confession’ in verse 8, with the alleged use of a third person masculine plural for ‘he was stricken’ illustrating ‘beyond doubt’ that the servant is the nation of Israel, fails to convince. In contrast, the first person plural ‘we’ is listed by Sanford Howard and speaks of the nation of Israel rejecting God’s CornerStone (Ps. 118:22) the Messiah:

We did not desire Him.....	53:2
We esteemed Him not	53:3
We hid our faces	53:3
We did not esteem Him	53:4
We thought Him smitten	53:4
We thought God afflicted Him	53:5
We like sheep have gone astray.....	53:6
We have turned...to our own way	53:6
We were like sheep ²⁶	53:6

How could the Gentiles, as Singer would have us to understand the phrase pertaining to, ‘have gone astray’ like sheep (Is. 53:6) when they never had the God of Israel nor His Torah to place them on the straight and narrow to begin with?! Howard goes on to reveal the nature and work of the Suffering Servant, some of which would categorically exclude the nation of Israel, e.g. a voluntary sufferer, a silent sufferer and an innocent sufferer:

A human personality.....	53:1
A voluntary sufferer	53:4, 11
A redemptive sufferer	53:5
A substitutionary sufferer	53:6, 8, 10, 11, 12
A silent sufferer	53:7
A sufferer who dies	53:8, 10, 12
An innocent sufferer	53:9, 12

²⁶ Ibid.

A vicarious sufferer53:10

A sufferer who is resurrected²⁷53:11

These next two quotes reveal that Singer's presentation of Is. 53:8, as being in the plural, is not only questionable, it's inaccurate and unethical:

'The issue is whether' the Hebrew word '*lamo* is third person singular, meaning, to or for *him*, or whether it is third person plural, to or for *them*. The usual Hebrew words are *lo* (to him) and *lachim* (to them). *Lamo* is an old poetic form which actually looks like a lengthening of the singular form *lo*, though its meaning is generally plural. Analytical dictionaries are divided as to whether it is plural, singular or both.'

'Benjamin Davidson says 'that the singular is justified in Is. 53:8, not only because all the nouns and verbs are singular, but because some ancient manuscripts, including the Ethiopic, actually read *lo* instead of *lamo* in' Isaiah '44:15 and 53:8.'²⁸

The text from Is. 53 that Singer presents that 'illustrates *beyond doubt*' that the Suffering Servant is Israel, fails to prove beyond doubt that it is the way Singer would have us to understand it. Again and again we are seeing the questionable scholarship and unethical tactics of Singer.

Three Verbs of Exaltation

What about the actual text of Isaiah 52:13–53:12? Singer never mentions the text except to point out that Is. 53:8 allegedly speaks of the 'Jews being stricken.' He speaks of the Targum's rendering of Is. 52:13 to show that believers use it to try and convince Jews that Isaiah is speaking of Messiah:

"Behold, My Servant (the Messiah) shall deal prudently. He shall be *exalted* and *extolled* and be *very high*" (Is. 52:13).

Three verbs are used to describe what will happen to this Servant. The Servant will be (literally) 'raised up, lifted up, and very high.' Do these verbs pertain to Israel? Our ancient sages wrote,

'Messiah shall be more exalted than Abraham...more extolled than Moses...and be very high; that is, higher than the ministering angels.'²⁹

What can this mean about the Messiah? What were our ancient Jewish sages wanting us to understand about the Messiah? Our sages saw the Messiah as greater than Abraham, Moses, and the angels. In Judaism there isn't anyone greater than *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham our Father) because of his faith in God. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his beloved Isaac (Gen. 22). Abraham truly loved Yahveh more than his most precious earthly possession. That's why Abraham is called the Father of our faith. He trusted God when it didn't make any sense to him. Who could honestly say that Israel would be greater than Father Abraham?

Was there anyone like *Mosheh Rabbeinu* (Moses our Teacher) who knew God 'face to face' (Num. 12:8; Dt. 34:10). Yahveh chose Moses to deliver (redeem/save) Israel from Egyptian slavery, bring us God's

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 230-231.

²⁸ *Is Lamo the Smoking Gun?* at <http://www.outreacht Judaism.com/08.html>.

²⁹ Rachmiel Frydland, Author, Elliot Klayman, Editor, *What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah* (Cincinnati, OH: Messianic Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 53, 55, note 18. 'See Midrash *Tanhuma* (KTAV Publishing, 1989) & *Yalkut*, vol. 2, para. 338, cited in Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Eerdmans, 2000), p. 997 under verse 13.

Torah and shepherd Israel for forty years in the Wilderness. This makes Moses a figure the likes of which would be nigh impossible to equal, let alone surpass. Would all of Israel exceed the glory that was Moses? Yet our ancient Rabbis believed that Messiah would be greater than Moses.

The sages thought that Messiah would be greater than even the angels. The only one ‘higher than the ministering angels’ is God. *Who is this Messiah that they saw in Isaiah 53?* Who is ‘between’ God and His angels? Are there any beings or creatures that exist who are greater than the angels, yet lesser than God? No, but our ancient rabbis placed the Messiah there.

Messiah Yeshua has Atoned for our Sins

This is not a paper on the full text of Isaiah 53, but I would like to comment on 53:5, 10 because they clearly present the Messiah, and the Messiah alone, as atoning for our sins:

‘But He was *pierced through* for our open rebellion, He was *crushed* for our perverse heart. The punishment for our peace (with Papa God) was upon Him and by His stripes *we are healed*’ (Is. 53:5 my translation).

‘Yet it pleased Yahveh to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief when You make His soul *an offering for sin*. He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of Yahveh shall prosper in His hand” (Is. 53:10).

As Singer himself notes,³⁰ one must take the *pshat*, the ‘plain meaning of the text’ first. He states:

“In Jewish thought, the *pshat* conveys the foundational understanding of any text in Tanach; this is the commentary which elucidates the clear and basic meaning of a verse. As the sages declare in the Talmud, ‘A verse cannot depart from its plain meaning” (Shabbat 63a; Yev. 11b, 24a).³¹

In both verses the singular pronoun (he) is used and although Singer could say it also speaks of Israel, I’ll show that it doesn’t. As the opening verse for the passage on the Suffering Servant spoke of the Messiah, it would seem that these verses also speak of Him and Him alone. Isaiah 53:5 speaks of Messiah being *pierced through*, which lines itself up with another messianic text in Zechariah:

““And I will pour out upon the House of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and supplication. Then *they will look on Me whom they pierced*. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

Obviously, this is speaking about the Jewish nation looking upon someone *whom they have pierced*. This is a direct reference to Yeshua being crucified by us and when God’s Spirit of Grace comes upon us as a whole people, we will see our terrible sin, repent and be forgiven and come into the Kingdom of Messiah. Another reference to Messiah being pierced through for us is found in Psalm 22.³²

Because Messiah Yeshua was used by His Father as a sin sacrifice for the Gentiles and for us (Is. 42:6; 49:6), we who believe have been declared ‘righteous’ by God because this is the Way that God has determined for all mankind to be forgiven and transformed into the Image of His Son. This is what Isaiah means when he writes that the Messiah took our just punishment (death) so that we could have *shalom* or

³⁰ Singer, *Who is God’s Suffering Servant? The Rabbinic Interpretation of Isaiah 53*, p. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³² See *Lion Hands* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Lion-Hands.pdf>.

peace with God. ‘By His stripes’ we have truly been healed of our affliction: our carnal rebellious nature against God.

Singer, as well as many Jews, might say that God forbids human sacrifice and this is very true (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5, etc.), but God is able to do whatever He desires and it was in His heart and the heart of His Son Yeshua *to show us how much they loved us* in a demonstrable way so that we could perceive that love in very human terms. God the Son gave us His life for us when most of us didn’t care that much about God. He is wooing us back to God, having laid down His life to the point of a horrible death so that anyone and everyone can see and know His love and come back home.

Yeshua became a sin sacrifice, as Isaiah speaks of in verse ten.³³ The phrase ‘make His soul an offering of sin’ uses the Hebrew word אָשָׁם *asham*. It means, ‘a sacrifice for guilt, trespass-offering.’³⁴ It’s not the common sin, the one of trying to ‘hit the bulls eye, but missing it (חָטָא *hah’tah*), but the one that speaks of open rebellion: doing our own thing in spite of knowing that God’s Law commands something else, and hence, the guilt within us that needs to be atoned for so that we can be healed.

The animals that God commanded Aaron the High Priest to sacrifice, in order for God to dwell in the Tabernacle of Moses in the midst of Israel’s uncleanness (Lev. 16:16, 19), pictured Yeshua as the Lamb of God (the lamb-ram that was a substitute for Isaac; Gen. 22:11-14).

It’s plain to see in Is. 53:10 that *someone* is going to be offered up as a guilt sacrifice. Is it all of Israel? Is it Messiah and all of Israel? Or is it just the Messiah of Israel as the Lamb of God? (John 1:29, 36)

A Living Witness

I, too, like Singer, have Levitical descent and I want to say to you, as a living Jewish witness, that I have found the Messiah that Isaiah and all our Prophets spoke of. Yeshua has given me life by His Spirit, just as the prophet Ezekiel spoke of (Ezk. 36:24-27) and God has circumcised my heart and given me a new nature, one like His, as Moses wrote of:

“And Yahveh your God will *circumcise your heart* and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahveh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Dt. 30:6).

Singer can ‘teach’ that Isaiah 53 and other messianic texts don’t speak of Messiah Yeshua, but he doesn’t know what he’s talking about! I have found the Messiah of Israel! I know our God and His Messiah King by His Word and by His Spirit. Messiah is sweet! He is the Rose of Sharon and He is *all together beautiful*. He has taken me out of the ash heap and set me on high, on a solid Rock. God speaks of through the prophet Jeremiah about us coming to know Him:

““Behold, the days are coming, says Yahveh, when *I will make a New Covenant* with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their Fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My Covenant *which they broke*, though I was a husband to them, says Yahveh, but *this is the covenant* that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says Yahveh: *I will put My Law in their minds and write it on their hearts* and I will be their God and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every

³³ If it’s true that God doesn’t want a human sacrifice how can Singer say that God is using Israel (as a sacrifice) to redeem the Gentiles?

³⁴ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 51.

man his brother, saying, “Know Yahveh!,’ *for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them*, says Yahveh. For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:31-34; in some Hebrew texts it’s 31:30-34).

This is the great redemption that God speaks of: cleansing from sin in order for His Spirit to dwell within so that we can really get to know our God. On top of that the Lord has made me Torah observant, just as He promised. It’s an incredible Joy to walk in Torah with Messiah Yeshua!

There is nothing in all the Heavens above or the Earth beneath that compares with our Father and our Messiah. Yahveh, God of Israel, has forgiven me of all my sins and cleansed me by the blood sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua His Son. Some might say that God has no son, but the Hebrew Scriptures speak otherwise:

“The kings of the Earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Yahveh and against His Anointed (Messiah), saying, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion” (Ps. 2:2).

“I will declare the decree: Yahveh has said to Me, ‘*You are My Son!* Today I have *begotten You*’ (Ps. 2:6-7).³⁵

“Who has ascended into the Heavens or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name and *what is His Son’s name* if you know?” (Prov. 30:4)

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government will be upon His shoulders and His name will be called Wonderful!, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Singer errs greatly against his own soul when he denies that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel.³⁶ Tovia Singer is a Levite gone amuck. The only thing that we can do for him is to pray that Messiah Yeshua opens his eyes. Then he would be faithful to his Levitical name and sing praises unto Messiah Yeshua for the great things that He has done!

³⁵ For how Yeshua is God the Son see Yeshua—God the Son at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-God-the-Son.pdf>.

³⁶ For more on Isaiah 53 and how it pertains to Yeshua, as well as other biblical texts concerning the Messiah of Israel see the Jewish Newsletters, starting at #28 at SeedofAbraham.net and move the cursor over JEWISH NEWSL.

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