

## Isaiah 41:1-42:17

### Overview

See structured text in the notes. From 41:1 through 42:17 is one long alternation, ABA'B'.

- The A sections (1-7, 21-29) pit the Lord in a contest of prediction against the pagan nations and their gods.
- The B sections (8-20, 42:1-17) emphasize the Lord's care for his Servant and his people.

In both cases, the elements of the second panel are elaborated beyond those of the first panel, as is often the case.

We will consider the correspondences as we come to the second member of each element. But you should recognize at the outset that the analysis of each section is supported by the parallels.

### 41:1-7, Challenge to the Nations (A)

vv. 1-7 and 21-29 challenge the nations and their idols to a contest of predicting the future. Both panels have four elements: an invitation to the contest, the Lord's prediction of the coming conqueror (Cyrus), a challenge to the opponents to predict the future, and a dismissive depiction of the opponents.

#### 1, Call to Contest

God calls the nations to the contest, in a way that asserts his authority.

**1 Keep silence before me, O islands;**--He summons the coastlands before him. They are not to speak until spoken to. He, not they, defines the terms of this engagement. Compare

Isa 52:15 the kings shall shut their mouths at him

**and let the peoples renew their strength:**--Their strength fails them in the presence of the Lord. Compare Daniel's response to the angelic vision in 10:8,

Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

So they must get new strength—if they can. The previous paragraph (40:30-31) asserted that only the Lord can reinvigorate people who have exhausted their strength.

**let them come near; then let them speak:**--Once they have obeyed him in approaching silently, he will permit them to speak.

**let us come near together to judgment.**--After asserting his authority in setting the rules for the engagement, the Lord now invites them to a context. They do not come to God for judgment: they and God come together to bring their claims, for a watching universe to decide.

## **2-3, God raises up Cyrus**

Having summoned the nations to a contest, the Lord makes the first move, offering a prophecy of the coming of Cyrus the great, who will ultimately destroy Babylon.

The translation can be improved.

- The usage of the noun צדק "righteousness" elsewhere in Isaiah strongly suggest that "righteousness" here is a personified attribute of the Lord, not a title for the coming invader.
- The Hebrew accents associate "righteousness" with "called," not with "raised up."
- All the verbs in vv. 2-3 except the first are imperfects, and should be translated as present or future tense. This is a prophecy of what will happen.

It is smoother to see the first clause as the question, answered in the second. Then the second half of the verse describes the mission that righteousness has given to the one whom it has summoned.

**2 Who raised up [one] from the east?**--We will repeatedly hear throughout these chapters of a coming conqueror, one who will overthrow Babylon. In addition to short references in 41:2-3, 25; 46:11; 48:14-15, the main prophecy is 44:28-45:13, which actually names Cyrus.

Cyrus the Persian is the ruler whose armies conquered Babylon in 540 BC. He allowed captive nations to return to their own territory:

Ezr 1:1-3 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. 3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem.

Thus he is the human instrument whom God used to return the Jews to their land, and thus deliver them from their bondage. This return, and the greater eschatological restoration of which it is the foreshadow, is one of the main themes of the second half of Isaiah.

This prophecy is main motivation for humanistic scholars to date the second half of Isaiah after the captivity, to a time when Cyrus has already appeared on the stage of history. But the whole force of the Lord's challenge to the idols is that he alone can predict the future. If Cyrus is already known and his threat already apparent, the Lord's argument is very weak. He is claiming to do the very thing that unbelievers seek to deny.

**Righteousness will call him to his foot.**--Here is the answer to the previous question. Who has raised up Cyrus? God's righteousness has. Cyrus is not righteous. But God, to accomplish his righteous purposes, summons Cyrus, who comes as a servant to his foot. Compare 1 Sam 25:42, describing Abigail's handmaidens as "going at her feet," following her every step to be ready to attend to her commands. Even today we say that a dog "heels" its master.

**It will give the nations before him, and make *him* rule over kings. It will give *them* as the dust to**

**his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.**--With respect to God's personified righteousness, Cyrus is just a lowly footman. But with respect to the kings of the earth, that Righteousness makes him overpowering.

In the final three clauses of the prophecy, the subject changes from personified Righteousness to Cyrus.

**3 He will pursue them,**--He exploits the opportunity that Righteousness give him.

**and pass safely;**--While he dominates other nations, no one can harm him.

~~even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.~~ **he will not come on the way by foot.**--The idiom probably refers to the speed of his advance. Compare the image of Alexander as a he-goat in Dan 8:5, moving so rapidly that "he touched not the ground."

#### **4, Ability to predict the future**

Having offered his prophecy, the Lord now calls attention to the ability to which it attests, his ability to forecast the future.

**4 Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?**--The question "Who" recalls v. 2. No one else can command the conquerors of the earth. No one else can predict in advance what will happen. God alone can proclaim the generations, the successive rounds of earth's history, from the beginning.

**I the LORD, the first, and with the last;**--Here is the answer to both questions. The mover of history, and its predictor, is the Lord. He is "the first," there at the outset, but at the same time present with the last generation. He sees all together.

**I am he.**--Five times in Isaiah God says this of himself.<sup>1</sup> The only other instance of the phrase in the OT is in Deuteronomy:

Deu 32:37-39 And he shall say, Where *are* their gods, *their* rock in whom they trusted, 38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, *and* drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, *and* be your protection. 39 See now that I, *even I, am he*, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.

The point of Deut 32 is the same that the Lord makes in Isaiah, and we should see Isaiah's use of the phrase as recalling the song of Moses.

The phrase looks in another direction as well. The LXX consistently translates אֲנִי הוּא with the Greek expression εγώ εἰμι "I am." This is the title that the Lord Jesus takes to himself 24 times throughout the fourth gospel. The first instance is his claim to the woman at the well,

4:26 Jesus saith unto her, **I am** that speak unto thee.

To the Pharisees in John 8, he warns,

---

<sup>1</sup> The absolute expression appears only here, 43:10, 13; 46:4; and 48:12. In three other cases (43:25; 51:12; 52:6) it takes a participle as a predicate nominative, "I am the one who ...." The absolute expression always uses the pronoun אֲנִי, while two of the longer constructions ( 43:25; 51:12) use אֲנֹכִי .

8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that **I am**, ye shall die in your sins.

And in the garden, at his arrest, he charges his captors,

18:8 I have told you that **I am**: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

In this echo of Isaiah, our Lord claims to be the sovereign God, supreme above all idols.

### **5-7, The Pagans and their Idols**

The Lord summons Cyrus, and thus is able to predict his devastating advance. What can the pagans and their gods do? Not only can they not predict the future, but when they see the Lord's prediction beginning to unfold, they will react in terror.

**5 The isles saw it, and feared;**--God causes the future and predicts it. The coastlands see it unfold and tremble.

**the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.**--They assemble to plan their response, which takes two forms. Both forms have modern analogs when unbelievers seek to cope with disaster.

**6 They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.**--Their first response is to encourage one another. "It's OK, we'll survive this. Don't be worried." We see here the ancient This ancient tendency to try to talk a problem away persists in our modern political discourse. Our leaders seldom call us to repentance and prayer. Instead, they remind us of what a strong people we are, and urge us to "be of good courage."

**7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.**--In stark contrast with the God of Israel, who foretells the disaster and commands it, the idols are a response to disaster. They represent mankind's second humanistic response to a catastrophe: the fashioning of impotent attempts to block the problem. In antiquity, this response took the form of making more idols. But, as the customer reminded the craftsman in 40:20, one must be careful to secure the idol so that "it should not be moved" or fall over. Our feeble attempts are powerless to block the sovereign counsel of the Almighty.

### **8-20, Consolation to Israel**

vv. 8-20 and 42:1-17 offer the second set of correspondences, B in our ABAB structure, describing God's care for his Servant (marked by singular pronouns) and his people (plural pronouns).

#### **8-16, Thou: the Servant**

The first half of each B member uses singular pronouns and refers to the Lord's servant.

This poem has intricate internal structure. It falls into two halves.

- vv. 8-9 recall the Servant's **past election** by God. It begins and ends with three titles based on the patriarchal history, and in the middle describes how the servant gained these titles.

- 10-16 looks to God's **past and future deliverances** of the Servant, and is structured around three instances of the clauses “fear not” and “I helped thee.” The first and last introduce extended descriptions of the servant's future victory over his foes.

## 8-9, Titles of Past Election

He begins (v. 8) with three titles of the Servant, and ends (9b) with three statements about the Servant, two of which correspond to the first two titles. In the center, he recalls the event that established the Servant's relation to himself.

### 8, *First round of titles*

The titles are on an ascending scale, even as the names reach backward in time, from Israel (the name given Jacob at Penuel on his return to the land), to Jacob (his earlier, fleshly name), to Abraham (his grandfather).

**8 But thou, Israel, art my servant,**--In explaining the year of Jubilee, God motivates calling Israel his servants<sup>2</sup> by explaining,

Lev 25:42 For they *are* **my servants**, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen.<sup>3</sup>

The Torah often describes the deliverance from Egypt as a purchase:

Deu 7:8 the LORD ... **redeemed** you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

They were Pharaoh's slaves. God bought them. So now they are his slaves. Thus this relationship depends on God's initiative.

**Jacob whom I have chosen,**--A major dynamic of Genesis is God's repeated choice of one brother over his siblings: of Abel over Cain, of Shem over Ham and Japheth, of Abraham over Nahor and Haran, of Isaac over Ishmael, of Jacob over Esau. The last is the most striking, because the two, as twins, were most similar in their initial conditions. The election of Jacob over Esau is a common example of God's election (Mal 1:2, 3; Rom 9:10-13).

In addition, Jacob is the culmination of the selection process. God does not choose among his sons, but includes all of them in the nation.

**the seed of Abraham my friend.**--Israel is God's Servant because God redeemed the nation from Egypt. Jacob's distinctive position is due to God's sovereign election. Both cases emphasize what God has done to them.

Abraham's title is different. “Friend” is an active participle.<sup>4</sup> It emphasizes Abraham's love for God, not the other way around: “Abraham, the one loving me.”

God did love Abraham (Deut 4:37, “he loved thy fathers”), but that's not what this title emphasizes. The

---

2 See note.

3 Note the plural. Here, the Lord personifies Israel as “thou,” a single servant..

4 See the notes for further discussion.

first instance of the active participle, and a very common one throughout the OT, is in the expression found in Exod 20:6,

them that love me, and keep my commandments.

In the OT as in the new (John 14:15),

If you love me, keep my commandments.

Abraham is God's friend because he kept God's commandments, leaving Ur of the Chaldees, letting Lot have the cities of the Arabah, and ultimately offering Isaac on Mt. Moriah.

### **9a, God's Election of the Servant**

But even Abraham's love for God is in response to God's initiative:

**9 Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the ~~chief-men~~ corners thereof,**--God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, which was far away from the perspective of Jerusalem, where Isaiah writes.<sup>5</sup> "Taken" has the sense "seized hold of, held tightly." The image is of God reaching down firmly and decisively to lay hold on Abraham and his descendants.

### **9b, Second round of titles**

**and said unto thee,**--Now the Lord repeats two of the titles, and makes a contrast with the third.

**Thou art my servant;**--He repeats the title he gave Israel in v.8a.

**I have chosen thee,**--He repeats the action by which he distinguished Jacob in v.8b.

**and not cast thee away.**--He does not repeat the third title, which emphasized Abraham's obedience. By the time of Isaiah, the nation had ceased to obey the Lord, and could not be described as God's friend, the one who loves God (and keeps his commandments). But their sin cannot negate God's election and redemption. God has firmly seized his Servant (9a); he will not now cast him away.

## **10-16, Past and Future Triumphs**

Three times, God declares, "Fear thou not; I helped thee." These encouragements all look back to God's past deeds of deliverance, as evidence that his care will continue.

The first and third are extended with an encouragement about the future destruction of those who oppose Israel and her God. The first encouragement describes the enemies' disappearance without saying how this happens. The second reveals that the Servant is the implement of their removal.

### **10-11, Israel's enemies destroyed (passive)**

God often tells his people, "Fear not."<sup>6</sup> He gives two motives: his presence ("I am with thee"), and his action ("I helped thee"). Whenever he reminds them of his presence, he always associates it with his

---

<sup>5</sup> If this is written by a second Isaiah from Babylon, the expression is much less applicable, and might have to be applied to Egypt as the origin of the exodus. But that would be inappropriate to the patriarchs named in v. 8.

<sup>6</sup> See notes

action. Here, he expands each of the two statements, “fear not” and “I helped thee,” with parallels.

The promise of his presence has two facets.

**10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee:**--The order of the Hebrew phrase places the emphasis on “with thee,” not “I.” The first facet tells us **where** God is. He is not far off, but near to us. This promise continues in our Savior's final promise:

Mat 28:20 lo, **I am with you** always, *even* unto the end of the world.

Four times in the OT, the Lord strengthens this assurance with the negative that is cited in Heb 13:5,

Heb 13:5-6 for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and **I will not fear** what man shall do unto me.

**be not dismayed; for I am thy God:**--Now “I” is emphasized. The second facet tells us **who** is with us. This exhortation anticipates the Lord's words to his disciples when he appears in power: “Fear not, it is I” (and not a demon of some sort). We hear these words

- when the Lord appeared to the disciples walking on the Sea of Galilee,
- when he appeared to them after the resurrection,
- when he appeared to John in the Apocalypse.

In all these cases, people were terrified, thinking that they were in the presence of a evil spirit, but the Lord assured them, “It is I.” So here, the one who is with us is **our** God. To unbelievers he is terrible and fearful, but he has chosen us for his people, and made himself our God, and he will care for us.

As we move from God's presence to his action, note two things about the next three clauses.

1. The verbs are perfects, not imperfects. There is no reason to translate them as future. They refer to God's past acts of delivering his chosen people, which give evidence of future help.<sup>7</sup> So we will try to identify the past acts in view in each case.
2. The particle “yea”  $\eta\kappa$  before the second and third clauses has an additive force (Muraoka), indicating that each verb builds on and expands the one that goes before. So we will try to identify the progress in the verbs.

**I will strengthened thee;**--“I have strengthened thee, and will continue to do so.” 2 Chr 24:13 speaks of workmen strengthening the temple, so that it can stand on its own. Similarly, God gives the Servant strength so that he can be strong and robust.

How did God do this in the past? Ps 80:15, 17 uses the verb to speak of God's past enabling of Ephraim, in the context of a prayer for help in a later time of need (v. 2):

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us. ... 14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou **madest strong** for thyself. ... 17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou **madest strong** for thyself.

---

<sup>7</sup> This is the same point that Ross showed from Ps 72 last summer. Compare the logic of Paul's exhortation in Rom 8:32.

The reference may be to their remarkable numerical growth during the wilderness wanderings, when they went from 35,400 to 45,600, an increase of 29%, the same as Asher and more than any other tribe except Manasseh, who increased by 64%.

More generally, God strengthened the entire nation in Egypt. Recall Moses' exhortation to the people:

Deu 10:22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

This insight was at the heart of the prescribed confession for the offering of the firstfruits,

Deu 26:5 And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:

God strengthened the nation in the past by multiplying them. He will continue to strengthen and multiply his Servant.

yea, **I will help thee**;--“I have helped thee, and continue to do so.” The verb is often used of military assistance, such as Israel sought from Egypt against Assyria (30:7; 31:3). The picture is of an ally who comes alongside to reinforce and assist in the conflict. Now God does not just strengthen the Servant and leave him to do his work alone, but labors alongside him.

Again, God did this in the past. One of the most memorable cases is the Battle of Mizpeh in 1 Sam 7, just before Saul took the throne in 1050 BC, when Israel was victorious over the Philistines after Samuel led them in confession and worship to the Lord. After the battle,

1Sa 7:12 Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD **helped** us.

Around 900, the righteous king Asa was challenged by an Ethiopian army.

2Ch 14:11-12 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to **help**, whether with many, or with them that have no power: **help** us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee. 12 So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

His son Jehoshaphat, about 860 BC, entered an ill-advised campaign with Israel's Ahab against Syria.

2Ch 18:31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It *is* the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD **helped** him; and God moved them *to depart* from him.

And when the Assyrians approached Jerusalem in 701 BC, Hezekiah encouraged his people,

2Ch 32:7-8 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him: 8 With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to **help** us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

God has helped his Servant Israel in the past, in the face of military opposition. He will continue to



help him when nations rise against him.

**yea, I will upheld thee**-- "I have upheld thee, and continue to do so."

This verb represents a step beyond strengthening and helping.

- God strengthens his Servant by endowing him to act on his own.
- God helps his Servant by coming alongside and fighting with him.
- God upholds his Servant by actively maintaining him during the conflict. This support is neither an initial equipping followed by leaving him on his own, nor a separate reinforcement, but the ongoing supply of divine power during the conflict.

The verb means to hold firmly, to maintain, to guard from failure. It is used in 42:1, again of God's Servant. Like "strengthen," its past examples are from the Psalms, in this case, from psalms of David.<sup>8</sup> Both of these were written in times when he faced personal opposition.

Psa 41:12 And as for me, thou **upholdest** me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. [Context: slander by his enemies, betrayal by his friends]

Psa 63:8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand **upholdeth** me. [Context: flight from Absalom, see Hengstenberg]

God upheld his Servant David in the past in the face of personal opposition. He will continue to hold his Servant him firmly and keep him from slipping.

**with the right hand of my righteousness.**--This Hebrew idiom means "my righteous right hand." The "right hand" indicates strength:

Psa 20:6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving **strength** of his **right hand**.

It is called "righteous" to emphasize that the mighty work he does with it is in keeping with his law. Thus our hymn paraphrases it correctly: "upheld by thy righteous, omnipotent hand."

The phrase probably is an echo of Ps 48:10, celebrating the deliverance of Jerusalem from foreign adversaries:

Psa 48:10 According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: **thy right hand is full of righteousness.**

That psalm is usually ascribed to one of two great deliverances: either Jehoshaphat, about 860, against the kings of Moab, Ammon and Edom in 2 Chr 20, or Hezekiah against Assyria. In both cases, God upheld the nation in the face of powerful opposition, manifesting his righteous right hand.

**11 Behold,**--The AV obscures the underlying symmetry of this verse and the next, which contain four descriptions of the Servant's opposition. In each case, the opponent is described at the end of the poetic line, the first time as "all that were incensed against thee" and the next three times as "the men of thy X," where X is some kind of opposition. We can see the first as a summary and the next three as amplification. I've reordered the lines here to emphasize this symmetry. In each case, observe

---

<sup>8</sup> Ps 17:5, also by David, uses the verb in a request.

- the description of the opposition and
- the judgment that falls on them

**they shall be ashamed and confounded, all they that are incensed against thee.**--The most general line emphasizes their inner attitude. They were “incensed,” that is, angry with you. At the end, they shall be ashamed and confounded.

**they shall be as nothing and shall perish, the men who strive with thee.**--“Striving” is the Hebrew word *ריב* that refers to a lawsuit, a legal complaint. Their anger leads them to take action against the servant, but they will disappear. “Nothing” recalls God's assessment of the nations in 40:17,

All nations before him *are* as **nothing**; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

**12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, the men who contend with thee:**--The noun describing the adversaries appears only here in the OT, but the verb from which it is derived describes a physical brawl, and is used of the two Israelites whom Moses attempted to separate in Egypt (Ex 2:13). The accusations of 11b have overflowed into a physical struggle.

When you're grappling with someone, you cannot miss noticing them. When God destroys them, you won't even be able to find them.

**They shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought, the men who war with thee.**--Now the opposition reaches its highest level, full warfare between peoples.

Yet they will amount to nothing, this time using the first two of the three terms in 40:17.

### **13, Repetition of the Theme**

Now we return to v. 10, repeating three themes.

**13 For I [am] the LORD thy God,**--In v. 10, the Lord said, “I am thy God.” Now he adds the covenant title, additional reassurance that he is “their God.”

**will holding thy right hand,**--The verb is the same as in v. 9, “whom I have taken,” snatched, grabbed, tightly held. This can also be seen as a refinement of “I am with thee,” the promise of God's presence.

**the one saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.**

### **14-16, Israel destroys God's Rivals (active)**

The third time, we hear the promise.

**14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel;**--Jacob, in his own strength, is nothing but a maggot.<sup>9</sup> Yet we are about to hear that he will do great things.

<sup>9</sup> “Men” *מתים* is problematic in two ways. First, it is plural, while the rest of the passage is singular. Second, it is often used of fighting men, but that makes sense here only as a sarcastic contrast (“you mighty fighting men, who are nothing but worms”). It is tempting to see the form as the Qal participle of *מות*, with Aquila, Theodotion, and Jerome, which requires emending *shewa* to *tsere*. This provides a good parallel to “worm” and background for describing the Lord as a

**I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.**--In moving from the first panel to the second, we went from “thy God” to “the LORD thy God,” introducing his covenant role. Now we go a step further: as the covenant Lord, he acts as the kinsman-redeemer, the one who purchases his Servant from bondage and takes vengeance on his murderers.

**15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth:**--The reference is to a threshing sledge, a board that is dragged by oxen over harvested grain to break the kernels and cut up the stems, allowing winnowing (see pictures). The bottom side of the board is set with stones or iron blades, the “teeth.”

**thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.**--Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, uses the image of threshing to describe the destruction of Israel's enemies:

Mic 4:11-13 Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. 12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

So it is often suggested that the mountains and hills are a picture of many nations. But I can't find examples of this imagery elsewhere in the OT. There are two other possibilities:

- Mountains are a symbol of something high and lofty that will be put down, e.g.,

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isa 2:12, 14 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low: ... 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up,

It is particularly appealing to see here an allusion to the promise of 40:4,

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low:

Perhaps the Servant's work here is to implement this humbling.

- Mountains are places where the pagan gods were thought to dwell, and where their idols were worshipped. Then the language here describes Israel's destruction over the pagan gods, e.g.,

Ezek 6:3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

These two can be merged. The humbling of the mountains before Jerusalem, like the shaming of the moon and sun before the Lord enthroned on Mount Zion, carries overtones of the humbling of the

---

“redeemer” in the sense of an avenger of blood, but leaves the plural. It is even more tempting to emend the final *tseré* to *hiriq*, yielding the affectionate term “my deceased” from Gen 23:4, 8, 13, which solves the problem of the plural as well. But such emendations leave the usual problem of how the text could have been corrupted in the first place.

deities who were thought to dwell there, and who were worshipped there.

The parallel with vv. 11-12 reminds us that the nations who opposed Israel are motivated by the spiritual conflict between their pagan gods and the true God. Geopolitical conflict is ultimately spiritual conflict, an insight that comes into full focus in Dan 10:11, 20-21.

**16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them:**--Continuing the image of threshing. After the grain is cut into pieces by the sledge, it is tossed up into the air, and the wind blows away the chaff. So the Servant destroys the mountains.

**and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.**--Having destroyed the high places of the other deities, the Servant focuses exclusively on the Lord.

**17-20, They: God's care for the needy**

Now the Lord shifts from the singular pronouns (describing the Servant) to the plural (describing the people). The last verse here (v. 20) uses the same two titles for God as the last verse of the Servant portion (v. 16), and both verses refer to the attitude of the Servant/people to the Lord.

This passage offers some very close parallels to ch. 35.

	Isa 35	Isa 41
<b>Miserable state of the people</b>	3-6 ... weak hands, ... feeble knees. 4 ... a fearful heart ... 5 ... the blind ... the deaf ... 6 ... the lame ... the dumb	17 <i>When</i> the poor and needy seek water, and <i>there is</i> none, and their tongue faileth for thirst,
<b>Rejuvenation of the wilderness</b>	1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. ... 6 for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, <i>shall be</i> grass with reeds and rushes.	18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:
<b>Response of people to the Lord</b>	2 they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.	20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

Chapter 35 is, together with 34, the conclusion to 28-33. Chapter 34 summarized the woes with gruesome images of hell. But chapter 35 looked forward to the blessing to come on the people of God. So here, after the Servant's victory over his adversaries in vv. 10-16, we focus on the blessing of the people of God.

But there is an important difference in emphasis. In ch. 35, the wilderness changes, but the Lord's role is in the background. Here, the Lord directly claims responsibility, emphasizing his role as the creator, in contrast to the false gods.

**17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst,**--

Twice, this challenge faced Israel in the wilderness, once at the start of their wanderings, and again toward the end:

Exo 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

Num 20:2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

They complained against Moses and Aaron, but it was the Lord who instructed Moses what to do, and who opened the rock and gave them drink. So it is whenever God's people are in need:

**I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.**

His care has two aspects.

**18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.**--First, he provides the water that they seek. Notice how supernatural it is. One never finds "rivers in high places." They're always down low. But he will bring water out of the dry heights. Cf. 30:25,

And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

**19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:**--Not only will he provide water, but he will turn the wilderness into a garden, with beautiful, valuable trees.

**20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.**--The purpose of his gracious work is, as always, to bring glory to himself. Note the sequence of awareness that they experience:

- **see.**--First, they will sense the change. Their thirst will make them all the more aware of what God is doing. Sometimes he lets us suffer so that when his blessings come, we will notice them.  
Isa 26:9 when thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
- **know.**--Their experience of the change will lead to the knowledge that God is in control.
- **consider.**--The single word וישמר is an abbreviation for the full phrase שימ לב, which means literally "set one's heart on," and thus "pay attention." We don't think deeply about all the knowledge that we have, but through the experience that God gives them, his people are led to such meditation on the fact of his deliverance.
- **understand.**--The verb describes insight that leads to success. In Gen 3:6, this is what the woman saw that the tree was able to do: "a tree to be desired to **make one wise.**"

## 21-29, Challenge to the Idols (A')

We now return to the challenge that we first encountered in vv. 1-7. There, the address was to the nations. Now the Lord also addresses the false gods. Note the correspondences in the themes.

The shift in order in the elements is an instance of unfolding. The correspondents to the third and fourth elements from the first panel are duplicated and wrapped around the correspondent to the second element to form a chiasm.

This final call to judgment has the same elements as the first, but arranged chiastically, ABA, with Cyrus at the center. The first A is addressed *to* the idols; the second speaks *of* them in the third person.

Formal Challenge	1	21	
The coming of Cyrus	2-3	25	
Ability to Predict	4	22-23	26-28
Idols	5-7	24	29

### 21, Call to Contest

**21 Produce your cause ריבכם, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.**--“Cause” is a legal case. We are still in the legal setting envisioned by “judgment” in v. 1. As in v. 1, he is addressing the “coastlands” and “peoples.”

In v. 1, the Lord does not identify himself. Now, after declaring his care for his Servant and his people, he identifies himself as “King of Jacob.”

### 22-23, Prediction Challenge

**22 Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen<sup>10</sup>:**--The third person refers to the gods in whom the summoned nations trust.

Then he addresses the false gods directly. “Shew the former things” is imperative, not jussive. He presents the false gods with three challenges, each followed by a purpose clause.<sup>11</sup> In fairy tales, an adversary often poses three challenges to the hero. That is what the Lord does to the false gods.

**let them shew the former things, what they be,**--“The former things” are past events. Before asking for a prediction, he invites an explanation of the true nature of what has already happened.

**that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them;**--If you can really explain the nature of past actions, you can tell how they will turn out. Such an assessment is notoriously difficult. For example, when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, both they and he thought it would be a disaster for him. Yet years later, he proclaimed,

Gen 50:20 ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

<sup>10</sup> The feminine plural verb reflects the common use of the feminine for situations or actions, Waltke-O'Connor 6.6d.

<sup>11</sup> Each challenge has two parts, the second with no conjunction. The second and third challenges are introduced by a conjunction to set them apart.

The Jewish authorities thought that by having our Lord crucified, they would end his influence. In fact, they fulfilled God's plan to redeem a people who have gone on to glorify the Lord:

Act 4:27-28 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Today, we can't agree in this country whether the stimulus program actually preserved jobs or not.

Explanation is difficult because men can't say what *would* have happened if the past event had *not* occurred: if Joseph had not been sold, if the Lord Jesus had not died, if there had been no stimulus. Assessing the true impact of things requires knowing counterfactuals, and without a repetitive experimental environment, these are inaccessible.

The next challenge spans the verse division.<sup>12</sup>

**or declare us things for to come. 23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter,**--The second challenge is the one that we find repeated throughout these chapter: predict the future. Tell us something now that we can recognize when it happens.

**that we may know that ye *are* gods:**--The ability to predict is the critical test of a deity. The world's dynamics are chaotic, intrinsically unpredictable. Only a God who stands outside of history and controls it can *tell* what will happen, because he can *make* it happen.

Many false gods pretend to make prophecies, but their prophecies are ambiguous riddles. Croesus, king of Lydia (western Turkey), consulted the oracle at Delphi in Greece about whether he should make war with Cyrus of Persia. The Delphi replied with a prophecy: "If you attack, you will destroy a mighty kingdom." Croesus did attack, but the kingdom that was destroyed was his own, not that of Cyrus. Pagan prophecies are nothing like God's promise that a deliverer named Cyrus will set free captive Israel and send them home from Babylon. That is a specific, testable prediction, so much so that humanistic scholars are forced to conclude that it was given after the event.

**yea, do good, or do evil,**--His final challenge is that they would do something, anything at all. The opposition of good and evil is a merism, in which two extremes are used to include everything in between. Just act! Get up off your smooth pedestal and walk across the room. Kill somebody, or cure somebody, or turn a somersault. The serious demand for a prediction turns into mockery.

The ability to predict depends on the ability to control. Unless you can act, the chaotic world is unpredictable. So the ultimate challenge for a wooden idol is to take action in the world.

**that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.**--Here's an appropriate challenge for Halloween. God says to the idols, "Do something to scare us."

## **24, Verdict: Idols are nothing**

**24 Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought:**--Note how often Isaiah calls the idols and those who follow them "nothing."



<sup>12</sup> The conjunction before the first command, the lack of one before the second, and the following purpose clause, show that these are a pair, like the first and third.

**an abomination is he that chooseth you.**--“Abomination” is an extremely strong word for the things that the Lord hates. It's used in the OT to describe such activities as idolatry, witchcraft, and sexual perversion, and reflects a deep emotional revulsion. Those who follow after idols make themselves detestable to him.

## **25, God raises up Cyrus**

**25 I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun**--In vv. 2-3, Cyrus is said to be “from the east,” but here he is also “from the north.” Cyrus was head of the Medio-Persian empire, which extended from eastern Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) to Afghanistan. It thus lay both to the north and to the east of Israel.

**shall he call upon my name:**--At first glance this statement seems peculiar. It seems to say that Cyrus relies on the Lord for help, though in Isa 45:4, 5 God twice says to Cyrus, “thou hast not known me.”

The action, “call upon the name of the Lord,” is elsewhere done by godly people: Abraham (Gen 12:8), Isaac (Gen 26:25), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), and the restored nation in Isa 12:4. We naturally take it to indicate trust in the Lord. But that's not its primary meaning. When we studied this expression in Gen 4, we saw that its distinctive meaning is “making proclamation *with* the name of the Lord,” uttering the Lord's name in a loud and public way. In fact, Cyrus did this.

Ezr 1:1-2 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.

This is clearly a public proclamation, and he clearly names YHWH, the God of Israel. The Lord's prediction is not that Cyrus himself will consciously rely on the Lord for help, but that he will magnify and exalt the God of Israel.

**and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.**--Potters would use their feet to mix the dry clay with water. “Mortar” may refer to a similar custom for masons. Or it may simply describe the mud of the streets, as God says of the Assyrian in 10:6,

against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

The point of the image combines the lowly nature of the conquered (nothing more than mud or clay) and the absolute superiority of the coming conqueror (bringing them completely underfoot).

## **26-28, Prediction Failure**

Coming out of the chiasm, we return to the crucial demonstration of deity, prediction. The failure of the idols at this task (26, 28) surrounds God's use of this power in comfort to his people (27).

**26 Who hath declared shewed from the beginning, that we may know?**--This recalls the first challenge from v. 22, to interpret the former things (הראשונות, from ראש “beginning”). “Declare” is the



same verb as “show” in “show the former things.” If an idol could explain the true significance of what has already happened, we would know that it is indeed a god.

**and beforetime, that we may say, *He is righteous?***--This is the second challenge, from vv. 22b-23, to show something before it happens. At first, the characterization “righteous” seems overdrawn. One can imagine predictive power being possessed by a malevolent deity. But remember the setting: the Lord calls the idols into judgment (v. 1); they are invited to present their legal case (v. 21). In this setting, if they succeed in predicting the future, the court will issue a favorable judgment on them; they will be declared “righteous,” and the Lord's accusation against them would be false.

In fact, they fail utterly. Three parallel statements highlight their inability.

**yea, *there is none that sheweth,***--that is, that can answer the first challenge, explaining former things.

**yea, *there is none that declareth,***--This verb is from the second challenge, “Declare us things for to come.” No one can predict the future.

**yea, *there is none that heareth your words.***--Sarcastically, the Lord adds, “In fact, I can't even hear you at all. Is anyone there? Hello?”

**27 The first *shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them:***--The verse is extremely terse.

The first word is just ראשון, which we saw in v. 4, the challenge about prediction in the first panel of ch. 41-42a. There and two other times in Isaiah (44:6, 48:12), it is a title for the Lord, “the first one,” and it is most natural to understand it in this way here.<sup>13</sup> He is the first, before all the other gods, the one who was “in the beginning” בראשון, and through all of time he has been in control of both “the former things” and “the things to come.” He can predict because he is the first and the last.

The expression “Behold, behold them” is clearly a statement. In the context of a statement, “to Zion” designates the addressee. Once we realize that “the first” is a divine title, it is natural to supply “to say” as the AV does. The elision reminds us of the abbreviated form of some modern communications: “NASA to shuttle, come in please.” In contrast to the absolute silence of the idols, the Lord, the Alpha, who stands before all history, announces to Zion, “Behold them.”

The “them” (masculine plural) is most naturally understood of the returning captives.<sup>14</sup> The theme of the regathering of the scattered nation is a common one in Isaiah:

Isa 11:10-12 10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. 11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

---

13 This word appears 19 times in Isaiah out of 182 in the whole OT. Most of the time it is adorned with a conjunction, preposition, article, or suffix. Only seven times does it appear in its bare form, as here. Four of those are in Isaiah, and in the other three it is a title for God.

14 NET Bible understands the pronoun to refer to things: “Look, here's what will happen.” But then one would expect the feminine plural, as in 41:22 (where see note) and 42:9.

Isaiah 41:1-42:17

Isa 27:12-13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Isa 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isa 43:6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

Isa 49:11-12 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

Isa 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

So the meaning of the first half of the verse is, “The First, the one who controls history and who can thus predict it, will announce to Zion: 'Look, look at the captives as they return.'”

**and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.**--Amplifying the first half of the verse, the Lord promises to provide a herald to Jerusalem to convey this message of good news.

The herald here is probably to be identified with the one described in 40:1-8

Isa 40:2, 3 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, ... 3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD,

As we saw, the NT applies this prophecy to John the Baptist, but its ultimate fulfillment awaits the return of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

**28 For I beheld, and *there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.***--Now our attention turns back to the idols. In contrast to the Lord's joyful prediction of the return, they continue silent. “Counsellor” refers to a court advisor, and recalls 40:13,

Isa 40:13-14 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him? 14 With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

No one shares his glory in bringing Israel back, least of all the false gods.

**29, Verdict: Idols are nothing**

**29 Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing; their molten images *are* wind and confusion.**--This parallel to v. 24 sums up the outcome of the competition.

God's Servant (singular pronouns)	8-16	42:1-7
God > Idols		8-9
God's People (plural pronouns)	17-20	42:10-16
God > Idols		17

Israel's Lord predicts the coming of Cyrus and the subsequent return, and challenges the idols to make a comparable prediction. But they say nothing (vv. 26, 28), they do nothing (v. 23), in fact they are nothing. (2/1/11: parallel with 44:9 suggests first two clauses describe the worshipers, rather than the idols.)

## 42:1-17, Consolation to Israel

Again, 8-20 and 42:1-17 correspond, describing God's Servant and his people. Again, the second panel is embellished with respect to the first, in two ways.

1. It concludes each paragraph (the Servant, the People) with distinctive elements from the A sections.
2. In the first panel, the nations appeared only as enemies to be destroyed, Throughout this second panel, they are included among those drawn to the Lord.

### 1-7, God's Servant

Vv. 1-4 speak of the servant in the third person, while in 5-7, the Lord addresses him directly.

This passage is quoted of our Lord in the NT, and also understood Messianically in Jewish tradition.<sup>15</sup>

### 1-4, The Servant brings Judgment (Third Person)

First, the Lord announces to the world his Servant, and his mission. Three times we are told that he will bring judgment. The first two of these three paragraphs are applied to our Lord in Matt 12:18-20 (notable because Matthew translates directly from the MT rather than quoting the LXX). The third is not, and thus looks ahead to our Lord's coming kingdom.

In the first cycle, God does three things for his servant:

**42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold;**--Recall 41:10,

I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, **I will uphold thee** with the right hand of my righteousness.

**mine elect,**--Again, recalling the earlier reference to the servant,

Isa 41:8 But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob **whom I have chosen,**

**in whom my soul delighteth;**--God is thrilled with the one whom he has chosen. He focuses his attention on him and rejoices in his virtues. God bore testimony to this delight at the baptism and again at the transfiguration:

Mat 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom **I am well pleased**<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See Gill for citations from Kimchi and Abarbinel. Delitzsch and Gill claim that the Targum renders v. 1 "Behold my servant the Messiah," but none of the BW targumim includes "the Messiah." Oswalt lists two Targum mss that he claims do use the title.

<sup>16</sup> Εὐδοκᾶω, the standard LXX translation of רָצָה (both dedicated and dominant, which Matt, but not LXX, uses of 42:1).

Mat 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom **I am well pleased**; hear ye him.

**I have put my spirit upon him:**--In the first reference to the servant (41:8-16), the Lord said (v. 10), "I am with thee." God's Spirit is the means by which he is present with his Servant.

What does the Servant, thus chosen and equipped, do?

**he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.**--In the most common idiom, bringing "judgment" משפט *משפט* refers to the statute itself, rather than the resulting action, and the idea is that God provides his righteous laws to people.<sup>17</sup> This meaning fits the context well. The Psalmist recognized that the knowledge of God's judgments was a privilege for Israel, not originally accessible to the Gentiles:

Psa 147:19f He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and **as for his judgments, they have not known them.**

The Servant extends this knowledge to all nations, as prophesied in the Messianic vision of ch. 11,

Isa 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

---

The second paragraph emphasizes that the Lord, unlike pagan rulers, does not promote himself. This aspect is in focus in Matthew, who quotes vv. 1-3 to explain the Lord's behavior:

Mat 12:15-17 great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; 16 And charged them that they should not make him known: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, ...

Matthew describes the Lord as a) healing people and b) charging them not to make him known. Each of these has its counterpart in the prophecy.

**2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.**--This verse explains why "he ... charged them that they should not make him known." The Savior did not promote himself, or try to generate "buzz." He did not come to promote himself:

Joh 7:16, 18 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ... 18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh **his own glory**: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Joh 8:50 And I seek not **mine own glory**: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Unfortunately, many who claim to represent this Savior do not follow his example of humility.

This humility was distinctly associated with his first advent. He will behave differently on his return:

Luk 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come **in his own glory**, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

**3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench:**--The other behavior

---

<sup>17</sup> See notes for discussion of the use of ל with משפט. The derivative notion of invoking the law to condemn or vindicate is also attested.

that Matthew cites is that “he healed them all.” His first advent was marked by gentleness and kindness to those in need, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, encouraging the poor.

**he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.**--The prepositional phrase is curious. Modern translations render this, “faithfully, truthfully,” but this idiom requires a different preposition (באמת rather than, as only here, לאמת).

In a derivative meaning of bringing judgment **to** somebody, the recipient is often a poor or oppressed person. Bringing judgment to such a one means to exercise the law on their behalf, to vindicate them.

Ps 103:6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

Here, “truth” is personified as the one for whom judgment is being brought forth. The Servant comes to correct a situation that Isaiah later decries,

Isa 59:14-15 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 15 **Yea, truth faileth;**

Recall the Lord's words to Pilate,

Joh 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, **that I should bear witness unto the truth.** Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

Worldly rulers twist the truth to advance themselves. The Servant refuses to compromise for the sake of personal glory. In doing so, he makes the law of God known to all around him.

---

The third paragraph, unlike the previous two, is not quoted in the NT. Compare 61:1-2, which the Lord quoted in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19), through “the acceptable year of the Lord” (“the year of the Lord's favor”), but stopping before “the day of vengeance of our God.”

**4 He shall not fail be quenched nor be discouraged break,**--The Lord repeats the two verbs describing weakness from v. 3. While the second paragraph indicates his gentleness toward those who are weak, the third reflects his strength toward those who might try to overcome him.

**till he have set judgment in the earth:**--This is the standard idiom for establishing a law: Ex 15:25; 21:1; Josh 24:25; 1 Sam 30:25, etc. The day will come when all the earth will be governed by God's law.

**and the isles shall wait for his law.**--The most distant lands will come under his rule.

## **5-7, The Servant brings Deliverance (Second Person)**

Now the Lord turns directly to the Servant and charges him, based on God's place as the creator of the world, and of man. God has authority over the Servant because he has created the Servant.

### **5, Review of Creation**

Isaiah brings us back to the creation account of Gen 1.

**5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out;**--Recall 40:22,

Isa 40:22 It is he ... that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

This claim recalls the second day (Gen 1:6-8), in which the Lord creates the Heaven.

**he that spread forth the earth,**--The verb is used of the earth elsewhere only in Ps 136:6,

To him that **stretched out the earth above the waters:**

The earth is “above” the waters in the sense described in Ps 24,

Psa 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 2 **For he hath founded it upon [above] the seas,** and established it upon the floods.

That is, it stands above the sea, so that it is habitable. This claim corresponds to the first part of the third day of creation (Gen 1:9, 10), separating the dry land from the sea.

**and that which cometh out of it;**--This is the second half of the third day. The noun אֲרָצָה is derived from the verb in Gen 1:12,

Gen 1:12 And the earth brought forth אֲרָצָה grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind:

**he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:**--Now Isaiah brings us down to the sixth day, the creation of man. “Breath” is what God breathed into Adam's nostrils in Gen 2:7.

Isaiah, like the NT, recognizes the Servant as “the last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45), “the second man” (1 Cor 15:47; compare Rom 5:12-21). The first Adam ignored God's creation authority over him, disobeyed his command, and brought upon himself and upon his descendants God's wrath. The last Adam is obedient to his creator's commands and brings upon his people God's blessing.

## **6-7, Charge to the Servant**

Now the Lord charges his servant, in three steps. First (6a) he recalls what he has done for him, then (6b) he tells what he will do, and finally (v. 7) he gives the purpose of the Servant's ministry.

### **6a, What God *has done* for the Servant**

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness,--To call “in righteousness” is to be righteous in the act of calling. We see this idiom in 59:4,

Isa 59:3-4 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4 None calleth ~~for~~ in justice, nor any pleadeth ~~for~~ in truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

That is, when they summon people to court, and lodge their complaint, they do not summon justly or plead truly, but pervert justice with lies.

God's call of the servant is a manifestation of God's righteousness. The fundamental meaning of "righteousness" is conformity to a standard, as we see in the description of weights and measures as "just,"

Lev 19:36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have:

That is, they must conform to the accepted standard.

So we naturally ask, "What does it mean for God to act in righteousness? To what standard does God hold himself?" There is no standard beyond himself. He does according to his will, answering to nobody (Dan 4:35). The only constraint upon himself is his own promise.

Throughout the OT, starting with the seed of the woman in Gen 3, God has been promising a deliverer. When he calls the servant "in righteousness," he does so in fulfillment of these promises. "I have called thee," he explains, "in order to satisfy the constraint that I have placed upon myself."

### **6b, What the Lord will do for the Servant**

Next, the Lord describes three things that he will do for the Servant:

**and will hold thine hand,**--This recalls the center of the three-fold "fear not" promise in 41:8-16,

Isa 41:13 For I [am] the LORD thy God, **will** hold[ing] thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I **will** have help[ed] thee.

The Servant is assured of his Lord's encouragement.

**and will keep thee,**--The verb refers to what a watchman does, in protecting something. The Lord will not only encourage his Servant, but protect him. Thus our Lord tells Pilate,

Joh 19:11 Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above:

**and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;**--Usually, when Isaiah associates "people" (either עַם or לְאֻם) with "nations" or "Gentiles" (גוֹי), both are plural, and refer to all of the world's population, with "people" emphasizing their cultural and ethnic identities and "nations" their political organization.<sup>18</sup> This passage is one of only three places where Isaiah uses singular "people" alongside plural "nations."<sup>19</sup> When this happens, it is reasonable to understand "people" of an individual nation, in contrast with the rest of the nations.

Noting this contrast, we recognize this prophecy behind the words of righteous Simeon in the temple, when he saw the infant Messiah,

Luk 2:28-32 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 **A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.**

Simeon understands the singular "people" to refer specifically to the covenant nation, in contrast to the Gentiles. Based on Isaiah's prophecy, he realizes that the Messiah comes for both.

---

18 2:4; 11:10; 14:6; 17:12; 25:7; 30:28; 33:3; 34:1; 43:9; 49:22; 61:9

19 The other two are 13:4; 25:3.

So the Servant's mission is twofold.

- To “the people,” Israel, he is a covenant. He is not just one who makes the covenant; he is the covenant. The reference may be to the covenant sacrifice. The common phrase, “to cut a covenant,” refers to the killing of the covenant sacrifice. He is the sacrifice that is cut.
- To the Gentiles, he brings light. Vv. 1-4 say that the Servant makes God's judgment, his law, known to those who had not known it before. He thus illumines their darkness.

## 7, The Purpose for which the Servant Comes

**7 To open the blind eyes,**--This expression is a restatement of bringing light to the Gentiles. Our Lord may have this passage in mind when he says, after healing the blind man in John 9,

Joh 9:39 For judgment I am come into this world [recall Isa 42:1-4], that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

There is a second part to his purpose:

**to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.**--Blindness can be organic, or it can be the result of being held in a dungeon. The deliverance of Israel from Babylon was the first stage of this deliverance, but that had no effect on Gentiles. The NT shows that it goes much further. It describes both our blessing, and our ministry.

It describes first the **blessing** that we receive in our salvation.

- Our Lord, quoting Isa 61:1, combines the pictures of blindness and imprisonment when he describes his mission as “to preach **deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.**”<sup>20</sup>
- Hebrews 2:15 reminds us that our Lord came to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”
- Peter may have this verse in mind when he reminds his readers,  
1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you **out of darkness into his marvellous light:**

But it also describes our **ministry**. In Acts 26, when Paul tells Agrippa of how the risen Lord commissioned him as an apostle, he draws heavily on this passage. On the road to Damascus, the Lord promised to be with him, applying to Paul expressions very much like those that he gives to his Servant, with only slight alterations in order:

Isa 42:6-7 I the LORD have called thee ... and give thee	Acts 26:16-18 I have appeared unto thee ... to make thee a minister and a witness ... now I send thee,
and will keep thee,	17 Delivering thee
for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;	from the people, and from the Gentiles,

<sup>20</sup> The linkage is actually made in the LXX, which understands the last clause of 61:1 to refer to opening blind eyes.



<b>7 To open the blind eyes,</b>	<b>18 To open their eyes,</b>
<b>for a light of the Gentiles;</b>	<b>to light,</b>
<b>to bring out the prisoners from the prison,</b>	<b>and from the power of Satan unto God,</b>
<b>and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.</b>	<b>and to turn them from darkness</b>

In claiming these words for himself, Paul doesn't deny their primary application to the Messiah. He goes on to assert,

Act 26:22-23 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, **and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.**

Paul's example confirms the Messianic reference of the passage. It shows something else as well: the Messiah's mission is continued in the ministry of his people. By incorporating us in the body of Christ, God now calls us in righteousness. He promises to hold our hand and to protect us, and charges us to bring the light of the gospel to those who are in darkness. When we get to Isaiah 49, we will see that Paul also appropriates v. 6, a similar prophecy of the Messiah, in Acts 13:46-47.

Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.**

Act 13:46-47 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.**

What we have found by careful comparison of Isaiah and Acts, the Lord Jesus in fact states outright:

Joh 20:21 as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

We are the body of Christ. We enjoy his privileges and share his responsibilities. Consider Paul's claim to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake" (Col 1:24). We are sent as the Father sent him, because we are his representatives.

## **8-9, Echo of Challenge**

In the second panel, the Lord concludes each of the two sections following the challenge, the section about the Servant and the section about his people, with a reminder of his preeminence over the idols.

**8 I am the LORD: that is my name:**--This declaration of God's identity is very common in Isa 40-66 (21 times), but only appears once in the first half of the book (27:3, the concluding aria in the cantata of praise that ends the burdens). Before Isaiah, the expression is common only in the Pentateuch. We can get some idea of its associations by considering the first three places where it occurs.

Gen 15:7 **I am the LORD** that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, **to give thee this land** to

inherit it. (Abraham)

Gen 28:13 **I am the LORD** God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: **the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it**, and to thy seed; (Jacob at Bethel)

Exo 6:2-8 2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, **I am the LORD**: 3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. 4 And I have also established my covenant with them, **to give them the land of Canaan**, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. 5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. 6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, **I am the LORD**, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that **I am the LORD** your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And **I will bring you in unto the land**, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: **I am the LORD**.

Clearly, the name emphasizes his special relation to the people and the land. It is particularly appropriate in Isa 40-66, which are written to encourage the Jews in Babylon concerning their eventual return to the land. We may paraphrase:

“I am the Lord. That was the name by which I brought Abraham out of Ur to the land. That was the name by which I brought Jacob home from Haran. That was the name by which I brought Israel out of Egypt, and that is the name by which I shall bring you back from dispersion.”

**and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.**--In his continued attack on the idols of Babylon, he insists that they will not be able to turn him from his purpose.

In support of his claim, he reminds them of the proof he offered in 41:1-7, 21-29, his ability to predict the future:

**9 Behold, the former things are come to pass,**--That is, the prophecies of the captivity, in particular Isaiah's words to Hezekiah,

Isa 39:5-7 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, **shall be carried to Babylon**: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, **shall they take away**; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

**and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.**--That is, the promise of a return to the land after the captivity.

## **10-16, God's People**

As in the first panel of 41-42, after focusing on the Servant, the prophet turns his attention to the people. There, he reported first God's mighty works (41:17-19), then the people's response (v. 20). Here, the order is reversed.

The charge to the Servant expanded from the first panel to the second to emphasize blessing to the nations. This expansion continues between the parallel sections about God's people. Again, Israel's blessing is now extended to the Gentiles.

## 10-12, Call to Praise

The Servant is sent not only to “the people,” but also to “the nations.” In line with the expansion of the second panel, the call to praise now goes to the Gentiles, as we see from “the end of the earth,” “the isles,” “Kedar,” and “Rock” (Petra).

**10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth,**--The “new song” is a very distinctive phrase in the Bible. Elsewhere it appears in only two books: the Psalms (6x), and Revelation. In most of these passages,<sup>21</sup> there is a clear emphasis on the Lord's dominion over the Gentiles, as in Isaiah's context. We have often seen how Isaiah draws freely from the Psalms. Compare in particular the opening to Ps 96, which is probably Davidic (as 1 Chr 16 suggests):

- 1 Psa 96:1-5 O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, **all the earth.**
- 2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory **among the heathen**, his wonders **among all peoples.**
- 4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised: he *is* to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the **nations are** idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

The references to his superiority over the idols fits beautifully in the present context.

The newness of this song is that it brings the Gentiles into the circle of divine worship. No longer is Israel alone to glorify the Lord. Now all nations are to bow before him.

Isaiah looks in three directions to encompass these nations.

**ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.**--

Amplifying “the end of the earth,” Isaiah looks west (to the coasts of the Mediterranean) and south (to the Red Sea), two channels of commerce through which Israel saw evidence of other cultures. By land she had contact with Egypt (to the south) and the empires of Mesopotamia (to the north), but nations much farther away were accessible by sea.

**11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit:**--Kedar was Ishmael's second son (Gen 25:13), and became the name for a coalition of tribes of the Arabian desert. So Isaiah turns his attention from the western watery sea to the eastern desert wastes.

**let the inhabitants of the rock [Sela] sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.**--Now Isaiah turns south. “The rock” is probably Petra, the Nabatean city in Edom. Living secure in their fortress canyon, they are to climb to the top of their cliffs to praise the Lord. Interestingly, the sanctuary at Petra is a long climb up out of the valley; the Lord now replaces their earlier gods.

**12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.**--All the nations, from the isles to the deserts, from the valleys to the mountaintops, are to praise the Lord.

---

<sup>21</sup> See Notes for more discussion

## 13-16, Cause for Praise

Why should all nations worship him? Isaiah reports two facets of God's future action: his judgment on those who oppose him, and his blessing on those who obey him.

### 13-15, Destruction of his Enemies

First Isaiah describes the Lord's attack with five clauses, then quotes the Lord's words.

**13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man,**--The verb describes a hero coming out of his camp to attack the enemy. It is used of Goliath as he confronts the armies of Israel:

1Sa 17:4 there **went out** a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath

Goliath proved not to be such a mighty man, but there is no David to defeat the Lord.

**he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war:**--We have here another instance of how the Lord is not subject to the moral rules he imposes on us. The Scriptures exhort us,

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

But here the Lord stirs up his zeal, and fans the embers of his wrath into flame. His judgment against his foes is not the measured chastisement of a loving parent, but anger burning at its hottest.

**he shall cry,**--This is what Joshua and the children of Israel did (Josh 6:16) on their last circuit of Jericho.

**yea, roar;**--A much rarer word (only here in the Hifil, and Zeph 1:14 in Qal).

**he shall prevail against his enemies.**--He is not just noise and fury, but overwhelms them with his might.

---

Now we hear the Lord speak. First, he expresses his wrath, but then transitions into his care.

**14 I have long time holden my peace;**--Scripture often depicts the Lord as waiting patiently, not responding immediately to people's sin:

Act 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

His silence does not mean all is well. It may mean that he is restraining his wrath.

**I have been still, and refrained myself**<sup>22</sup>:--He has a natural response to people's sin, but he is deliberately holding it back. This delay offers an opportunity for repentance:

Isa 30:18 And therefore will the LORD **wait**, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

---

<sup>22</sup> The verbs shift from the perfect with which the verse begins to imperfect, perhaps to be understood as present. I have kept my peace; I am restraining myself. Then the verbs after the *athnach*, again imperfect, would represent what is yet to come.

1Ti 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all **longsuffering**, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

But when that opportunity is rejected, wrath follows. Frequently the opportunity and the threat are set side by side.

Act 17:30-31 And the times of this ignorance **God winked at**; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained;

Rom 2:4-5 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and **forbearance** and **longsuffering**; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Rom 9:22-23 *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, **endured** with much **longsuffering** the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

2Pe 3:9-10, 15 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is **longsuffering** to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . 15 And account that the **longsuffering** of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

Rev 2:21-23 And **I gave her** ["Jezebel," a teacher of license in Thyatira] **space** to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Isaiah has in view the time when the opportunity of repentance has passed, and the judgment is falling.

**now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will ~~destroy~~ gasp and ~~devour~~ pant at once.**--The parallelism is better preserved if we take the most common meaning for the verb that AV renders "devour," and derive the *hapax* אָשַׁם from a verb אָשַׁם cognate to נְשָׁמָה "breath," rather than (as AV) from אָשַׁם "to be desolate." The whole line builds on the analogy of a woman with child. In human experience, we see very little while the child forms, but when the time comes, suddenly, with great turmoil, a new person enters the world. So will be the Lord's judgment. It is building, almost invisibly, but when it comes, it will be sudden and fierce. Delitzsch captures the point more directly, but not more forcefully than Isaiah: "something great, with which Jehovah was long pregnant, is to be born."

**15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.**--We have seen images of God's blessing in the watering of the wilderness:

Isa 35:6-7 for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water:

But when his judgment comes, it renders even the lush fertile areas dry and sere.

### **16, Gentle care of his people**

This new order that is to appear is not just one of wrath and judgment of God's enemies, but also one of blessing to his people.

**16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known:**--He returns to those who are the object of the Servant's mission in v. 7, those who were blind because of their years in the dungeon. Having brought forth his wrath upon his enemies, he sets his elect free. Note their complete dependence on his direction. Not only are they unable to see on their own, but even if they could, they would not know the way.

**I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.**--At first glance, this couplet appears to recall 40:4, "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." But the words for "darkness" and "crooked" are unusual. Both have moral overtones. Isaiah has previously used "darkness" **מחשך** of the place that people go to hide their wicked works, 29:15, and the particular word for "crooked" is derived from a root **עקש** that often refers to moral perversity.

The Lord thus looks beyond the nation's physical captivity to the problem of sin. The way that they know not, the paths that they have not known, are ways of righteousness. In themselves, they are lost in moral darkness and perversity. They do not reform themselves in order to come to him. He intervenes to deliver them from the dungeon of sin.

**These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.**--God claims all the credit for delivering them from their sin.

### **17, Echo of Challenge**

**17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.**--Cf. 41:24, "an abomination *is he that chooseth you.*" In his final challenge to the false gods in this section, he focuses, not on the humbling of the gods, but on the impact on their worshipers.

## Notes

### Parallel Text

Largely “ABAB,” but the second A portion is folded and rearranged.

Call to Contest	1 Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew <i>their</i> strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to <b>judgment</b> .	41:20 Produce your <b>cause</b> , saith the LORD; bring forth your strong <i>reasons</i> , saith the King of Jacob.	
God raises up Cyrus	2 Who <b>raised up</b> one <b>from the east</b> ? Righteousness called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and <b>made him rule over kings</b> . He gave <i>them</i> as the dust to his sword, <i>and</i> as driven stubble to his bow. 3 He pursued them, <i>and</i> passed safely; <i>even</i> by the way <i>that</i> he had not gone with his feet.	25 I have <b>raised up</b> <i>one</i> from the north, and he shall come: <b>from the rising of the sun</b> shall he call upon my name: and <b>he shall come upon princes</b> as <i>upon</i> mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.	
Ability to Predict the Future	4 Who hath wrought and done <i>it</i> , calling the generations <b>from the beginning</b> ? I the LORD, <b>the first</b> , and with the last; I <i>am</i> he.	22 Let them bring <i>them</i> forth, and <b>shew</b> us what shall happen: <del>let them</del> <b>shew the former things</b> , what they <i>be</i> , <b>that we</b> may consider them, and <b>know</b> the latter end of them; or <b>declare</b> us things for to come. 23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, <b>that we</b> may <b>know</b> that ye <i>are</i> gods: yea, do good, or do evil, <b>that we</b> may be dismayed, and behold <i>it</i> together.	26 Who hath <del>declared</del> <b>shewed from the beginning</b> , <b>that we</b> may <b>know</b> ? and beforetime, <b>that we</b> may say, <i>He is</i> righteous? yea, <i>there is</i> none that <b>sheweth</b> , yea, <i>there is</i> none that <b>declareth</b> , yea, <i>there is</i> none that <b>heareth your words</b> . 27 <b>The first</b> shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28 For I beheld, and <i>there was</i> no man; even among them, and <i>there was</i> no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, <b>could answer a word</b> .
Pagans and their Idols	5 The isles saw <i>it</i> , and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6 They helped every one his neighbour; and <i>every one</i> said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, <i>and</i> he that smootheth <i>with</i> the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It <i>is</i> ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, <i>that</i> it should not be moved.	24 <b>Behold</b> , ye <i>are</i> of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination <i>is he that</i> chooseth you.	29 <b>Behold</b> , they <i>are</i> all vanity; their works <i>are</i> nothing: their molten images <i>are</i> wind and confusion.

Isaiah 41:1-42:17

<p>Consolation: to Servant ("thou", "he")</p>	<p>8 But thou, Israel, <i>art my servant</i>, Jacob whom I have <b>chosen</b>, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9 <i>Thou</i> whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou <i>art my servant</i>; I have <b>chosen</b> thee, and not cast thee away. 10 <b>Fear thou not</b>; for I <i>am</i> with thee: be not dismayed; for I <i>am</i> thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, <b>I will help thee</b>; yea, I will <b>uphold</b> thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, <i>even</i> them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. 13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, <b>Fear not; I will help thee</b>. 14 <b>Fear not</b>, thou worm Jacob, <i>and</i> ye men of Israel; <b>I will help thee</b>, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat <i>them</i> small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, <i>and</i> shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.</p>	<p>42:1 Behold <b>my servant</b>, whom I <b>uphold</b>; mine <b>elect</b>, <i>in whom</i> my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth <b>judgment</b> to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth <b>judgment</b> unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set <b>judgment</b> in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. 5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, <i>and</i> them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.</p>
<p>Recap: Idols</p>		<p>8 I <i>am</i> the LORD: that <i>is</i> my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.</p>



Isaiah 41:1-42:17

<p>Consolation to Nation ("they," "you")</p>	<p><b>Deliverance</b>  17 <i>When</i> the poor and needy seek water, and <i>there is</i> none, <i>and</i> their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. <b>18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.</b> 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, <i>and</i> the pine, and the box tree together:</p> <p><b>Response</b>  20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.</p>	<p><b>Response</b>  10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, <i>and</i> his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up <i>their voice</i>, the villages <i>that</i> Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.</p> <p><b>Deliverance</b>  13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, <i>and</i> refrained myself: <i>now</i> will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. <b>15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.</b> 16 And I will bring the blind by a way <i>that</i> they knew not; I will lead them in paths <i>that</i> they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.</p>
<p>Recap: Idols</p>	<p>17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye <i>are</i> our gods.</p>	

## **God's Servant**

The exposition associates this title with God's redemptive work at the Exodus, but it is applied more broadly.

Some people call themselves God's servants before the Exodus, in settings of prayer.

- Eliezer, Abraham's servant, calls Israel's father, Isaac, God's servant in Gen 24:14.
- Jacob, pleading for protection against Esau, calls himself God's servant in 32:11.

These are likely just a gesture of courtesy, as in Jacob's use of the phrase to Esau in Gen 32:5, 19, 21.

Moses in Exo 32:13 and Deut 9:27 applies the title to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

People whom God calls “my servant” include Moses (often), Caleb, David (often), Eliakim, Zerubbabel, and even Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10).

## **Abraham the Friend of God**

The title is an active participle. Most naturally, it emphasizes Abraham's love for God, not the other way around: “Abraham, the one loving me.” But the LXX translates both references as though God were the lover and Abraham the beloved; here *ὁν ἠγάπησα*; 2 Chr 20:7 with a passive and subjective genitive *τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ σου*. Should we understand the suffix as subjective in Hebrew as well? 1 Kings 5:15 uses **ל** to designate the object of love, or at least the partner in a love relationship. But a personal suffix on the Qal ptc of **אהב** is elsewhere always objective, not subjective, genitive: Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Jdg. 5:31; 2 Sam. 19:7; Neh. 1:5; Est. 5:10,14; 6:13; Ps. 38:12; 122:6; 145:20; Prov. 8:17,21; 13:24; 18:21; Isa. 66:10; Jer. 20:4,6; Lam. 1:2; Dan. 9:4. Note in particular the frequent parallel between loving God and keeping his commandments (Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 19:9; 30:16; Jos. 22:5; Dan. 9:4), many of which are participial. Given the prominence of this expression, and the emphasis on Abraham's obedience throughout his pilgrimage, his title “friend of God” appears to emphasize that he responded to God in obedience.

Isaiah does identify one person as beloved by God: Cyrus.

Isa 48:14-15 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*? **The LORD hath loved him**: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans. 15 I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

**Fear Not, I am with you**

Red entries are in multiple cells

	By God	By someone on God's behalf	
God's presence	Gen 26:24 (Josh 1:9); Isa 41:10; 43:5; Jer 1:8; 42:11; 46:28; Hag 2:5f (7x)	Num 14:9; Deut 20:3-4; 31:6; 2 Ki 6:16; 1 Chr 28:20; 2 Chr 20:17; 32:7; Isa 40:9; Zep 3:16f (9x)	16x
God's nature	Gen 15:1		1x
God's action	Gen 26:24; 46:3; Num 21:34; Deut 3:2; Josh 8:1; 10:8; 11:6; Jud 6:23; 2 Ki 19:6-7; Isa 10:24ff; 41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2f; 51:7; Jer 1:8; 30:10; 42:11; 46:27, 28; Hag 2:5f; Zech 8:13, 15 (25x)	Gen 21:17; Ex 14:13; 20:20; Deut 1:21; 20:3-4; Josh 10:25; 1 Sam 12:20-22; 1 Ki 17:13-14; 1 Chr 28:20; 2 Chr 20:15; Isa 35:4; 37:6f; Joel 2:21f; Zep 3:16f (14x)	39x
Other	Isa 7:4ff; 54:4f; Jer 10:5; Ezek 2:6 (4x)	2 Ki 1:15; 1 Ch 22:13; Neh 4:14; Dan 10:12, 19 (5x)	9x
	37x	28x	65x

It's interesting that every time that God directly tells someone "I am with you," he also goes on to say "I will help you."

The motivation "I am with you" has two sides. On the one hand, it assures us that in the presence of hostile forces, we do not face them alone, but God is there with us, undertaking for us. Here the emphasis is on "with you." "I am with you, and have not abandoned you." On the other hand, especially in the NT, when the Lord appears in power, it takes the form, "Fear not, it is I." "It is I who am with you, and not someone hostile." Compare

- The Lord walking on the sea

Mat 14:26-27 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; **it is I; be not afraid.**

Mar 6:49-50 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: **it is I; be not afraid**

Joh 6:19-20 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20 But he saith unto them, **It is I; be not afraid.**

- At the resurrection

Luk 24:37-39 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, **Why are ye troubled?** and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that **it is I myself:**

- John in the Apocalypse

Rev 1:17-18 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, **Fear not;** I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and,

behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Four times in the OT, God strengthens “I will be with you” with the assurance, “I will not leave you nor forsake you.” Deut 31:6, 8; Jos 1:5; 1 Chr 28:20. It is this phrase that is echoed in Heb 13:5.

Note the word order in “I am with you.” Throughout Isaiah (41:10; 43:2, 5), and most commonly elsewhere (Jer 1:8, 19; 15:20; 30:11; 42:11; 46:28), the prepositional phrase precedes the pronoun. It is the **presence** of God, not the presence of **God**, that is in focus. Exceptions are Hag 1:13; 2:4.

### ***The Censuses in Numbers***

Here is a comparison of the number of fighting men in each tribe at the start of the wilderness wanderings, and then at the end. Note that Benjamin has increased more than any other tribe except Manasseh and Asher (with whom it is tied).

Tribe	Num 1	Num 26	Change	%	Rank
Reuben	46500	43730	-2770	-0.06	8
Simeon	59300	22200	-37100	-0.63	12
Gad	45650	40500	-5150	-0.11	9
Judah	74600	76500	1900	0.03	6
Issachar	54400	64300	9900	0.18	4
Zebulun	57400	60500	3100	0.05	5
Manasseh	32200	52700	20500	0.64	1
Ephraim	40500	32500	-8000	-0.2	11
Benjamin	35400	45600	10200	0.29	2
Dan	62700	64400	1700	0.03	6
Asher	41500	53400	11900	0.29	2
Naphthali	53400	45400	-8000	-0.15	10
	603550	601730			

### ***Mountains and Hills (41:15)***

What is the meaning of this metaphor?

### **Symbol of exaltation, to be put down in the day of the Lord**

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isa 2:12-17 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are* lifted up, 15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low:

Nah 1:5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Hab 3:6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

## Place where idols are worshipped:

Deu 12:2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

Isa 65:6-7 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, 7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

Jer 3:23 Truly in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills, *and from* the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel.

Eze 6:2-7 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. 4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols. 5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. 6 In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. 7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Hos 4:13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills,

## משפט ל

Of course, in most cases the ל belongs to an associated verb, but there are many of these (highlighted in red)

## Having access to the judgments

Lev 24:22 Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: משפט אחד יהיה לכם

Num 15:16 One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you. תורה אחת ומשפט אחד יהיה לכם

Deu 4:8 And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all

this law, which I set before you this day? וּמִלִּי גְוִי גְדוֹל אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים צְדִיקִים כָּכֵל׃  
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת

Deu 17:9 they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: וְהִגִּידוּ לְךָ אֵת דְּבַר הַמִּשְׁפָּט׃

Deu 17:11 according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁפָּט  
אֲשֶׁר-יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ תַעֲשֶׂה

Deu 33:10 They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: יִזְרְוּ מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְיַעֲקֹב  
וְתוֹרָתְךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

Jos 24:25 So Joshua ... set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. וְהוֹשֵׁעַ ... וַיִּשֶׂם לָו  
חֻק וּמִשְׁפָּט בְּשֵׁכֶם׃

1Sa 8:9 shew them the manner of the king וְהִגַּדְתָּ לָהֶם מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ׃

1Sa 30:25 he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. וַיִּשְׁמְרֵהָ לְחֻק וּלְמִשְׁפָּט׃  
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה׃

2Sa 8:15 David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. וַיְהִי דָוִד עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט  
וּצְדָקָה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ׃

1Ch 18:14 So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people. וַיְהִי עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ׃

Neh 9:13 Thou ... gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: וַתֵּתְנֵנוּ לָהֶם מִשְׁפָּטִים יְשָׁרִים וְתוֹרוֹת אֱמֻת חֻקִּים וּמִצְוֹת טוֹבִים׃

Job 34:4 Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what *is* good. מִשְׁפָּט  
נִבְחָרָה-לָנוּ נִדְעָה בִּיגִינוּ מֵה-טוֹב׃

Psa 72:1 Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.  
אֱלֹהִים מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ תֵּן׃

Psa 81:4 For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob. כִּי חֻק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא  
מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב׃

Psa 147:19f He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. 20 He

hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. ( **מגיד** )  
דְּבָרוֹן (דְּבָרִיוֹן לִיעֲקֹב חֲקִיוֹ וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: לֹא עָשָׂה כֵּן | לְכָל-גּוֹי וּמִשְׁפָּטִים בְּלִי-יָדָעוֹם  
Eze 20:25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby  
they should not live; וְגַם-אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָהֶם ... מִשְׁפָּטִים לֹא יַחֲיוּ בָהֶם:

## Receive favorable judgment

Deu 21:17 the right of the firstborn *is* his. לֹו מִשְׁפָּט הַבְּכֹרָה:

Ps 103:6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. **עֲשֵׂה**  
צְדָקוֹת יְהוָה וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לְכָל-עֹשׂוֹקִים:

Psa 146:7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry.  
עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט | לְעֹשׂוֹקִים נָתַן לֶחֶם לְרָעִיבִים

Jer 32:7 Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*. כִּי  
לֵךְ מִשְׁפָּט הַגְּאֻלָּה

Jer 32:8 for the right of inheritance *is* thine, כִּי-לֵךְ מִשְׁפָּט הִירָשָׁה

Eze 21:27 until he come whose right it is עַד-בֹּא אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַמִּשְׁפָּט

## Receive unfavorable judgment

Isa 26:9 for when thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn  
righteousness. כִּי בִאֲשֶׁר מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְאָרֶץ צְדָק לְמַדּוֹ יִשְׁבִי תְבַל:

Jer 26:11 This man *is* worthy to die; מִשְׁפָּט-מוֹת לְאִישׁ הַזֶּה (cf. v. 16)

Hos 5:1 for judgment *is* toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread  
upon Tabor. כִּי לָכֶם הַמִּשְׁפָּט

## v. 6 "Call in righteousness"

Psa 145:18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him **in truth**.

Isa 59:4 None calleth **for justice in righteousness**, nor *any* pleadeth **for in truth**: they trust in  
vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

**אני יהוה**

**Distribution**

This expression is very unevenly distributed throughout the OT (see graph, plotting hits per words in book).

The introduction of the term is closely associated with the land. It appears only two times in Genesis, both times in a promise concerning the land:

Gen 15:7 **I am the LORD** that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. (Abraham)

Gen 28:13 **I am the LORD** God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; (Jacob at Bethel)

The next reference is a cluster at Exod 6 (vv. 2, 6, 7, 8, 29), where God commissions Moses to bring the the people back to Canaan.

The next major concentration is in Leviticus. Here the focus is not on the land, but on holiness. The only instances before ch. 18 are at the end of the chapter on unclean animals:

Lev 11:44-45 For **I am the LORD** your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 45 For **I am the LORD** that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

The big spike in Lev is ch. 19, where the first reference is

Lev 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for **I the LORD** your God *am* holy.

Then at the start of ch. 20,

Lev 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God.

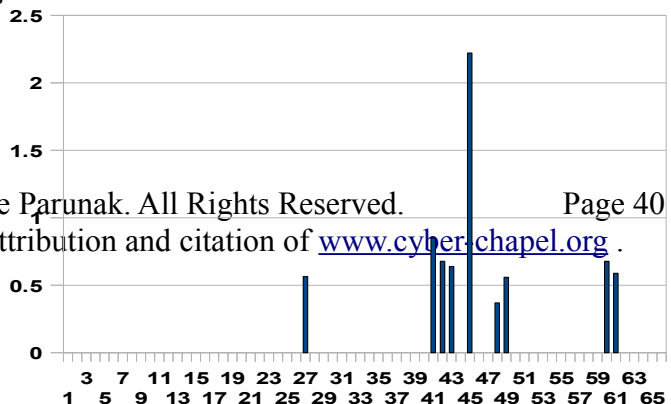
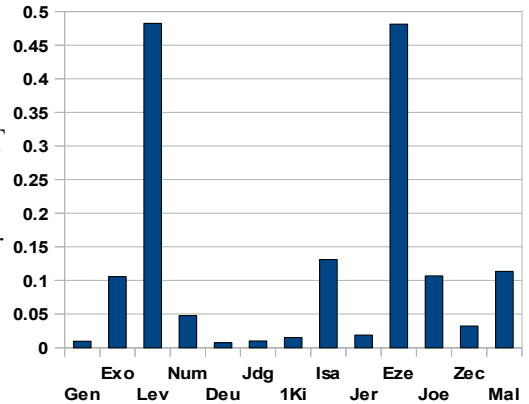
Concerning the priests, ch. 21 teaches

Lev 21:8 Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, *am* holy.

Lev 22:2 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name *in those things* which they hallow unto me: I *am* the LORD.

Routinely through ch. 18-26, the expression appears

It appears next in Isaiah, almost exclusively in ch. 41-60 (see chart). The only exception is in an eschatological passage, the final aria in the cantata





of praise that ends the burdens:

Isa 27:1-3 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea. 2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. 3 I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

Finally, it is prominent in Ezekiel, but only in ch. 1-39. Surprisingly, it is absent in the great vision of the restored temple in ch. 40-48. In the first 39 chapters, it repeatedly explains the judgments that God is bringing on the nation.

## Expressions

### With ידע

(י\*דע@v\*)(אני@p\* יהוה@np\*)

God wants people to know that he is the Lord. This construction appears 92x, and is common in Exodus, Isa 45:3, 5, 6; 49:23, 26; and Ezekiel: ידע כי אני יהוה . It is often associated with judgments.

### With יצא and ארץ

(אני@p\* יצא@v\* ארץ@n\* יהוה@np\*)

The point here is that the Lord has brought them out of a foreign land (usually Egypt, except in Gen 15:7 and Ezek 20:38), to return them to Canaan. Gen. 15:7; Exod. 29:46; Lev. 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38,55; 26:13,45; Num. 15:41; Ezek. 20:38. Although this combination does not appear in Exod 6, the theme is clearly prominent there. The expression does not appear in Isaiah.

### With קדש

(אני@p\* קדוש@v\* קדש@n\* יהוה@np\*)

This theme is especially prominent in Leviticus (14/26 hits, 7 more in Ezekiel). In Isaiah, the combination appears only when אני יהוה is joined with the name קדוש ישראל, in 43:3, 15; 48:17.

## Combinations

	ידע	יצא & ארץ	קדש
ידע	92 vv	3vv: Ex 29:46; Lev. 23:43; Ezek. 20:38	8vv: Ex 31:13; Ezek. 20:12,20; 28:22; 36:23; 37:28; 38:23; 39:7
יצא & ארץ		11 vv	None
קדש			26 vv

Note the places where the phrase appears twice in a single verse:

Exo 29:46 And they shall know that **I am the LORD** their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: **I am the LORD** their God.

Num 15:41 **I am the LORD** your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: **I am the LORD** your God.

### The New Song שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ

The “new song” appears elsewhere in the OT only in the Psalms (33:3; 40:4; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). The psalms differ in their authorship, whether the author states that he is singing a new song or commands one to be sung, the translation of שִׁיר used in the LXX, and whether the Psalm envisions the Lord's rule over the Gentiles. The table shows these features:

Ps	Author	Mode	LXX	Emphasis on Nations
33:3	Anon.	Impv	ασμα	8-10 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spake, and it was <i>done</i> ; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
40:4	David	Decl	ασμα	
96:1	David? <sup>23</sup>	Impv	ασμα	3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. 4 For the LORD <i>is</i> great, and greatly to be praised: he <i>is</i> to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the nations <i>are</i> idols: but the LORD made the heavens.
98:1	Anon.	Impv	ασμα	2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. 3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
144:9	David	Decl	ωδην	
149:1	Anon.	Impv	ασμα	6-9 <i>Let</i> the high <i>praises</i> of God <i>be</i> in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, <i>and</i> punishments upon the people; 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; 9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.

Of the unsigned ones, all but 149 emphasize the Lord's dominion over all the earth. The closest of these to our current text, with its emphasis on the gentiles and the Lord's victory over the idols, is 96:1.

Rev 5:9 and 14:3 refer to an ωδην καινην, and 5:9 certainly has the nations in view:

Rev 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

This is less clear, but still possible, in 14:3, if we understand the song as coming from the hosts in heaven, the same ones who sing it in 5:9.

The LXX reflex of שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ is ασμα καινον, not ωδην καινην, except in Ps 144:9.

Hypothesis: the novelty of the song is that it includes all the earth, not just Israel. This is possible for

<sup>23</sup> The Psalm is not attributed, but it is quoted entirely, with minor modifications in detail, in 1 Chr 16:23-33. One of these modifications is that the phrase “new song” is omitted.

Isaiah 41:1-42:17

David as well if he is singing in the consciousness of Ps 2