

Sunday School Lesson
Isaiah 43:1-28
 by Lorin L. Cranford
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Trusting God



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I. Context

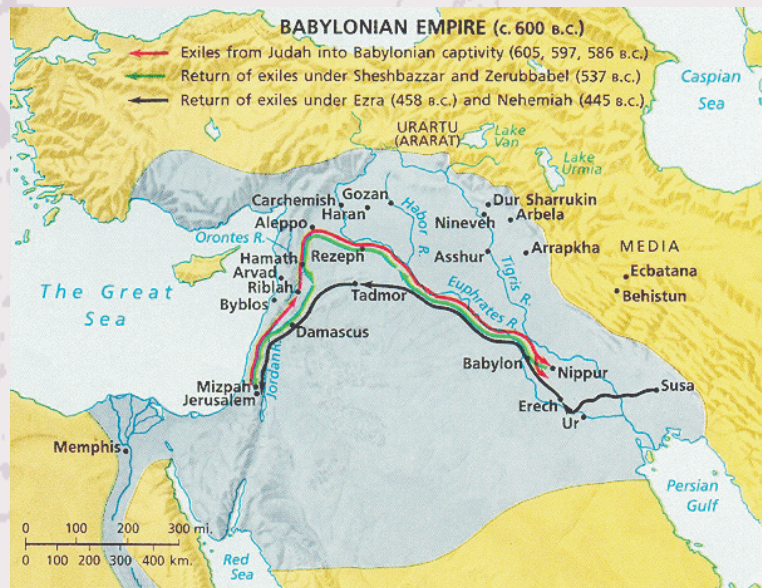
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Times come along in life when all we can do is turn everything over to God. The present looks bleak; the past seems a faded memory. Nothing positive looms out there in the future -- so far as our eyes can see.

When the Israelites first went to Babylon in successive waves as captives from the 590s to the 580s BCE, their homeland increasingly lay in ruins. By 582 BCE, Jerusalem was torn down and the temple of God was destroyed. Many had mistakenly thought that God would never allow this to happen, no matter how wayward the people might become to God's laws. Some of the prophets such as Jeremiah had sought to warn them against such thinking, but many other (false) prophets had supported this popular belief. But the last invasion of the Babylonians in the 580s had brought that belief crashing down when the Babylonians overran the city and destroyed everything. Those who survived the warfare, among the aristocratic and well educated, found themselves now as slaves in a foreign land hundreds of miles from home and everything familiar. Although not realizing it, they were beginning a 70 year exile in which this beginning generation would mostly spend the remainder of their lives in Babylon. The next generation would face the challenge of hanging on to their ethnic and religious heritage as Jews. Also the lingering question would be over whether they would ever be able to return to Judea and rebuild their country or not.



Second Isaiah was called of God in the tradition of Isaiah of Jerusalem almost two centuries before to be one of God's spokesman to this group of exiled Israelites. His task was to explain why these Jewish exiles were in captivity and to provide hope for the future in convincing them that their God had not abandoned them.

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I Context

As with [previous studies in Isaiah](#) the background material developed in the beginning studies will be used in this study where relevant.

a. Historical

External History. The modern discussion about the origin of the book of Isaiah revolves around the issue of the literary unity of this lengthy document. Central to this discussion is the question of a single or multiple origin. That is, do the contents of the entire document go back to the prophet Isaiah, who preached (742-701 BCE) in the southern king-

dom of Judah during the critical years of the Assyrian crisis? Or, do only chapters 1-39 relate to this Isaiah of Jerusalem? That leaves chapters forty through sixty-six. The question of the origin of these chapters is somewhat divided over whether they come from a single prophet, deutero-Isaiah, or whether two prophets or prophetic traditions account for the origin of these chapters. If so, then chapters forty through fifty-five trace back to a "Isaiah of the exile" (546-538 BCE), and chapters fifty-six through sixty-six go back to a "Isaiah of the restoration" (538-520 BCE).

Barry L. Bandstra (*Reading the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., pp. 316ff) effectively summarizes this latter view: The book of Isaiah is a collection of Isaiah's many sayings, and provides a fine illustration of the growth of prophetic traditions. The entire book of Isaiah is attributed to Isaiah ben-Amoz (not to be confused with

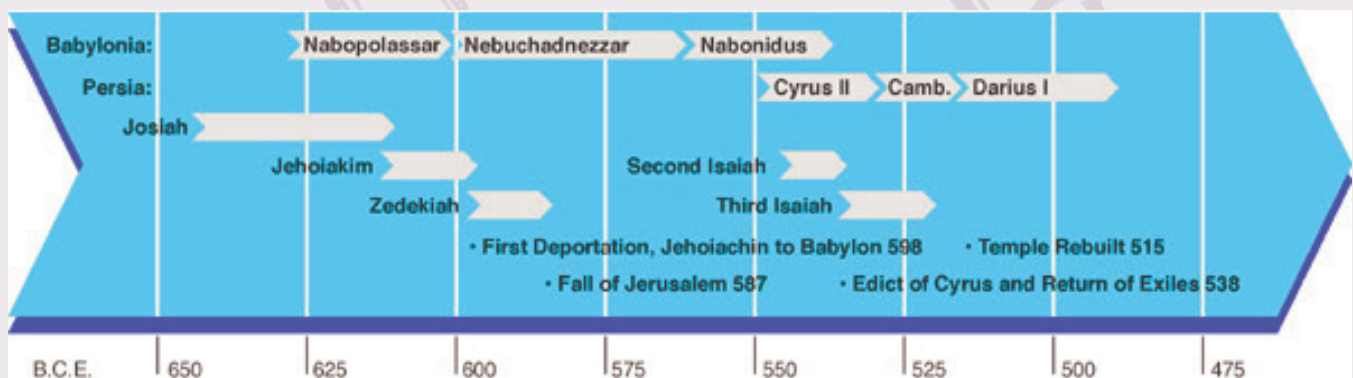
Table 10.1 The Three Isaiahs (from Bandstra)

Chapters	Book	Title	Period	B.C.E.
1-39	First Isaiah	Isaiah of Jerusalem	Assyrian	742-701
40-55	Second Isaiah	Isaiah of the exile	Babyloneian exile	546-538
56-66	Third Isaiah	Isaiah of the restoration	Restoration of Judah	538-520

Most contemporary Old Testament scholars will see the discussion as revolving around this latter issue, and that Isa. 40-66 come from the period of the exile and restoration, which was some two hundred years after the ministry of the prophet Isaiah who worked in Jerusalem. Whether this material comes from a single or multiple traditions is the focal point of the discussion. That is, is there a twofold source for the book, or a threefold origin?

the prophet Amos) by the editorial superscription in 1:1. But in fact, the book contains prophetic material spanning more than two hundred years. A nucleus of materia is attributable to **Isaiah of Jerusalem**, a citizen of Jerusalem in the eighth century B.C.E. The remainder comes from a series of anonymous disciples (see 8:16, which mentions his followers) and prophets who saw themselves, or were seen by editors, as coming out of the Isaiah mold.

The book of Isaiah is widely recognized to consist of three sub-collections (see Table 10.1). Chapters 1-39 make up **First Isaiah**. The core of this collection is prophecies from the namesake of the book who lived in the eighth century B.C.E. In this period Israel and Judah were threatened by the Assyrian empire. Chapters 40-55 make up **Second Isaiah**, also called Deutero-Isaiah. This collection consists largely of salvation oracles applying to the situation of exile in Babylonia dating to the mid-sixth century B.C.E. Chapters 56-66 make up **Third Isaiah**, which also is called Trito-Isaiah and which applies to the late sixth century in Judah where the Jewish community was struggling to rebuild itself.



From Barry Bandstra, [Reading the Old Testament](#), p. 325

Of course, this issue diminishes in importance with the realization of the work of editors who took earlier traditions from both written and oral sources and reworked the material into the form that we know today. The impact on interpretation will largely revolve around whether the “Isaiahs” were ministering to the people of their own day, or addressing issues related only to future generations of the Jewish people. The first view is more consistent with the prophetic materials generally in the Old Testament.

Internal History. In the adopted view of “multiple Isaiahs” above, the historical understanding for chapter 43 is the early stages of the 70 year long [exile in Babylon](#). Certainly the historical allusions inside the chapter fit this understanding much more naturally than other possible scenarios. Second Isaiah is fulfilling his calling by God in both providing hope for the future and in rendering a scorching denunciation for the people’s sinful tendencies.

The allusion to Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba in 43:3 anticipates the westward expansion of the Babylonian empire accomplished by [Cambyses II](#) (530 - 522 BCE), the son of [Cyrus I](#) (559 - 530 BCE), the Persian ruler over the old Babylonian Empire. It would be [Darius I](#) (530-485 BCE) who would extend this

influence fully into these territories mentioned in 43:3 when the [Achaemenid Empire](#) (Old Persian Empire, 559 - 330 BCE) reached the zenith of its influence around 500 BCE.

The Jewish exiles lived in captivity as long as the Babylonian rulers prevailed during the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](#), also known as the Chaldean Era (appx. 627 - 559 BCE). When Cyrus I conquered Babylon in 559 BCE, one of his official actions was to issue a decree (538 BCE) allowing captured exiles, including the Jews, to return to their homeland to begin a process of rebuilding. For him this was an act of legitimizing his reign over the Babylonians and also it sought to begin developing a larger economic base of increasing revenue for his government. Second Isaiah is looking forward to this era in our passage.

Thus the historical setting for chapter 43 appears to be sometime between 582 and 559 BCE. The exiles were still in “shell shock” over the destruction of their homeland and the future appeared gloomy as they faced the harsh reality of being captives in a foreign land. They were the first generation of exiles, who would, for the most part, live out the remainder of their lives as exiles in Babylon.

b. Literary

Genre. The literary shape of chapter 43 is that of prophetic oracle or sermon. Thus the literary form of this material is poetic in the style of [ancient Hebrew poetry](#). The lines of expression are going to make use of the varieties of [Hebrew parallelism](#). The only non-poetic material in chapters 40-48 is 44:9-20, as reflected in the NRSV translation format. It was inserted into a condemnation of idolatry in 44:6-8 and 21-23 as a narrative satire on those who make and worship idols.

The use of parallelism will be treated as it occurs in the exegesis of the text itself.

Literary Setting. This passage comes as a part of Second Isaiah, chaps. 40 - 55 of the book of Isaiah; cf. above **Internal History** for historical details

Barry Bandstra ([Reading the Old Testament](#)) outlines the content of this section as follows:

[Second Isaiah consists almost entirely of poetic](#)

[passages, with little of the narrative type material found in First Isaiah. Many scholars have tried to determine the boundaries of these poems, and the logic and flow of chapters 40-55 as a whole, with varying success. The most recognizable division within the text is between chapters 40-48 and 49-55. The first subsection addresses its audience as Jacob and Israel. It deals with the fall of Babylon and the new exodus. The second subsection addresses its audience as Zion and Jerusalem, and deals with the issue of social justice. Beyond this basic division though, little else is agreed upon.](#)

Often these chapters, 40-48, are labeled “The Book of Consolation” by scholars reflecting the dominate emphasis of the calling of the prophet to minister to the captives in Babylon (cf. 40:1-11). As they adjusted to the new reality in their lives, they had to come to grips with the past as well as find hope for the future. Helping them accomplish this was the task of Second Isaiah.

II. Message

Literary Structure. The internal literary structure of the chapter revolves around either three or four poetic strophes. Most commentators that I checked will tend to see the material split into three sections: (1) verses 1-7, promising Israel’s redemption as an “oracle of salvation”; (2) verses 8-21, Israel as God’s witness to restoration; and (3) verses 22-28, the worthlessness of empty ritual. A judicial court backdrop is foundational to most all the material, especially vv. 8-28.

a. God's salvation, vv. 1-7

LXX

¹ καὶ νῦν οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας σε Ἰακωβ ὁ πλάσας σε Ἰσραηλ μὴ φοβοῦ ὅτι ἐλυτρώσάμην σε ἐκάλεσά σε τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐμὸς εἶ σύ ² καὶ ἐὰν διαβαίνης δι' ὕδατος μετὰ σοῦ εἰμι καὶ ποταμοὶ οὐ συγκλύσουσίν σε καὶ ἐὰν διέλθης διὰ πυρός οὐ μὴ κατακαυθῆς φλόξ οὐ κατακαύσει σε ³ ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεός σου ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσραηλ ὁ σώζων σε ἐποίησά σου ἄλλαγμα Αἴγυπτου καὶ Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ Σοήνην ὑπὲρ σοῦ ⁴ ἀφ' οὗ ἔντιμος ἐγένου ἐναντίον μου ἐδοξάσθης κἀγὼ σε ἠγάπησα καὶ δώσω ἀνθρώπους πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ ἄρχοντας ὑπὲρ τῆς κεφαλῆς σου ⁵ μὴ φοβοῦ ὅτι μετὰ σοῦ εἰμι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν ἄξω τὸ σπέρμα σου καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν συνάξω σε ⁶ ἐρῶ τῷ βορρᾶ ἄγε καὶ τῷ λιβί μὴ κάλυε ἄγε τοὺς υἱοὺς μου ἀπὸ γῆς πόρρωθεν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας μου ἀπ' ἄκρων τῆς γῆς ⁷ πάντα ὅσοι ἐπικέκληνται τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐν γὰρ τῇ δόξῃ μου κατεσκεύασα αὐτὸν καὶ ἔπλασα καὶ ἐποίησα αὐτόν

NASB

1 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! 2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. 4 Since you are precious in My sight, *Since* you are honored and I love you, I will give *other* men in your place and *other* peoples in exchange for your life. 5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give *them* up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold *them* back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, 7 Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

NRSV

1 But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. 5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; 6 I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth? 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

NLT

1 But now, O Israel, the LORD who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. 2 When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as a ransom for your freedom. 4 Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you. 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west 6 and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. 7 All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them."

Notes:

The prophet introduces the declarations with the typical prophetic note:

But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

These words are not the speculation of a prophet. Instead, they are presented as God's message to His people. This introductory phrase "thus says the Lord" is standard as [the 314 instances](#) just in the major prophets section of the NRSV transition re-

flects. The beginning “but now” places these words of hope in contrast to the previous words of God’s wrath in [42:14-25](#). The mingling of the past and the future in terms of God’s wrath and God’s deliverance is foundational to the theology of Second Isaiah.

The rebellion of God’s people brings divine punishment; the repentance of God’s people brings His blessing and deliverance.

The words of hope come in verses 1b-7 and have particular significance to the exiled Israelites. Twice, the admonition “Do not fear” shows up (vv. 1b, 5). The basis of the admonition rests upon God’s redeeming Israel out of Egyptian bondage (vv. 1b-4) and upon God’s continuing presence with Israel (vv. 5-7).

In the first section, a mingling of images from the Exodus with the present situation of the exiles takes place: passing through the waters, walking through fire etc. God’s past action of delivering the ancestors of these people from Egyptian slavery becomes assurance of His continuing commitment to these exiles to deliver them from their present slavery to the Babylonians. Although some press these images of water and fire as predictions of how the exiles would be delivered, caution should be followed here. The deliverance promised to the exiles would have similar dramatics but not necessarily involve a passing through literal water and fire.

The first section affirms God’s presence and love

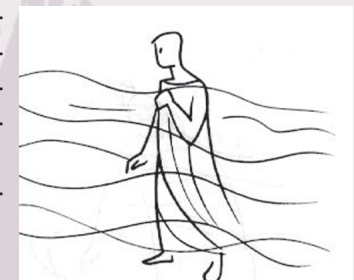
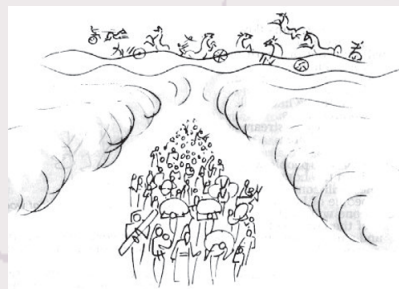


The words of hope come in verses 1b-7 and have particular significance to the exiled Israelites.

for this initial group of exiles. The second section, vv. 5-7, affirm the divine commitment to bring the descendants of these exiles back together in the land of promise from everywhere.

What connection do these verses have to us today? While some will try to read into these verses, especially vv. 5-7, a prediction of the establishment of the modern state of Israel in the late 1940s, one should reject such twisting of these words of scripture. Such ideas would have had no meaning to the original readers, much less have become words of assurance to them. Instead, the prophets message to the exiles had to do with the promised restoration and return of the captives to their homeland -- something that began happening after the ascension of Cyrus I to power in 559 BCE. In [successive waves](#) beginning in 538 BCE, the Israelites would begin returning back to their homeland. Under Darius I (530-485 BCE) the number would increase dramatically.

This historical realization of the promises in these verses connects to us in the sense of reminder that our God always keeps His promises to His people. We may become rebellious like the ancient Israelites and have to undergo divine punishment. But this doesn’t mean God’s abandonment. God’s “tough love” program remains in tact today. And His wrath is an expression of His love and enduring commitment.



b. God holds court, vv. 8-21

LXX

⁸ καὶ ἐξήγαγον λαὸν τυφλὸν καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ εἰσιν ὡσαύτως τυφλοὶ καὶ κωφοὶ τὰ ὦτα ἔχοντες ⁹ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη συνήχθησαν ἅμα καὶ συναχθήσονται ἄρχοντες ἐξ αὐτῶν τίς ἀναγγελεῖ ταῦτα ἢ τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τίς ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν ἀγαγέτωσαν τοὺς μάρτυρας αὐτῶν καὶ δικαιώθητωσαν καὶ εἰπάτωσαν ἀληθῆ ¹⁰

NASB

8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears. 9 All the nations have gathered together So that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them

NRSV

8 Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! 9 Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them declared this, and foretold to us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, and let them

NLT

8 Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. 9 Gather the nations together! Which of their idols has ever foretold such things? Can any of them predict something even a single day in advance? Where are the witnesses of such pre-

γένεσθέ μοι μάρτυρες κάγω μάρτυς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός καὶ ὁ παῖς ὃν ἐξελεξάμην ἵνα γνῶτε καὶ πιστεῦσητε καὶ συνῆτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι ἔμπροσθέν μου οὐκ ἐγένετο ἄλλος θεὸς καὶ μετ' ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔσται ¹¹ ἐγὼ ὁ θεός καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πάρεξ ἐμοῦ σῶζων ¹² ἀνήγγεila καὶ ἔσωσα ὠνείδισα καὶ οὐκ ἦν ἐν ὑμῖν ἀλλότριος ὑμεῖς ἐμοὶ μάρτυρες κάγω μάρτυς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός ¹³ ἔτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν μου ἐξαιρούμενος ποιήσω καὶ τίς ἀποστρέψει αὐτό ¹⁴ οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ λυτρούμενος ὑμᾶς ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσραηλ ἔνεκεν ὑμῶν ἀποστελῶ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα καὶ ἐπεγερῶ πάντας φεύγοντας καὶ Χαλδαῖοι ἐν πλοίοις δεθήσονται ¹⁵ ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ ἅγιος ὑμῶν ὁ καταδείξας Ἰσραηλ βασιλέα ὑμῶν ¹⁶ οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ διδοὺς ὁδὸν ἐν θαλάσῃ καὶ ἐν ὕδατι ἰσχυρῶ τρίβον ¹⁷ ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν ἄρματα καὶ ἵππον καὶ ὄχλον ἰσχυρόν ἀλλὰ ἐκοιμήθησαν καὶ οὐκ ἀναστήσονται ἐσβέσθησαν ὡς λίνον ἐσβεσμένον ¹⁸ μὴ μνημονεύετε τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ ἀρχαῖα μὴ συλλογίζεσθε ¹⁹ ἰδοὺ ποιῶ καινὰ ἃ νῦν ἀνατελεῖ καὶ γνῶσεσθε αὐτά καὶ ποιήσω ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὁδὸν καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀνύδρῳ ποταμοὺς ²⁰ εὐλογῆσει με τὰ θηρία τοῦ ἀγροῦ σειρήνες καὶ θυγατέρες στρουθῶν ὅτι ἔδωκα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὕδωρ καὶ ποταμοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀνύδρῳ ποτίσαι τὸ γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτόν ²¹ λαόν μου ὃν περιποιησάμην τὰς ἀρετὰς

present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, "It is true." ¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. ¹¹ I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me. ¹² It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange *god* among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And I am God. ¹³ Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" ¹⁴ Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice. ¹⁵ I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King." ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together *and* not rise again; They have been quenched *and* extinguished like a wick): ¹⁸

hear and say, "It is true." ¹⁰ You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. ¹¹ I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. ¹² I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the Lord. ¹³ I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it? ¹⁴ Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars, and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation. ¹⁵ I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. ¹⁶ Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ¹⁸ Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. ¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in

dictions? Who can verify that they spoke the truth? ¹⁰ "But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the LORD. "And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be. ¹¹ I am the LORD, and there is no other Savior. ¹² First I predicted your deliverance; I declared what I would do, and then I did it? I saved you. No foreign god has ever done this before. You are witnesses that I am the only God," says the LORD. ¹³ "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do. No one can reverse my actions." ¹⁴ The LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: "For your sakes I will send an invading army against Babylon. And the Babylonians will be forced to flee in those ships they are so proud of. ¹⁵ I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and King. ¹⁶ I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea. ¹⁷ I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses. I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned, their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick. ¹⁸ "But forget all that? it is

μου διηγεῖσθαι



Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. 19 Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. 20 The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people. 21 The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.

Notes:

These verses take the form of a court setting where God conducts court and invites the nations beginning with Babylon to appear to argue for the existence and power of their gods over that of God Himself. Joseph Blenkinsopp (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd edition) summarizes these verses well:

8-15: A judicial process is set up (as in 41.1-5, 21-29) in which deities of other lands, and in the first place Babylon, are challenged by the Lord to demonstrate divine status by their ability to predict the future and bring it about. Both sides are invited to call witnesses. Even though blind and deaf, the people of Israel can witness to the Lord's claim. All other gods fail the test; they are impotent and, in effect, nonexistent (see 40.18-20n.). The contest ends with an announcement of release from Babylonian captivity by the Lord, Israel's Redeemer (54.5; 49.20) and *Holy One* (41.14; 48.17; 49.7).

The invitation to come to court is issued in vv. 8-9. God's self declaration with Israel as witness is in vv. 10-17. The conclusion with the prediction of God's future deliverance comes in vv. 18-21.

The audacity of the God of Israel is high lighted here. He is the God of captives, not of the Babylonian victors. How can He be more powerful than their gods? And especially, how can He be the only existing God? Such claims demand evidence.

That evidence comes from both the past and the future. And Israel is His witness. The foreign deities might claim witness through the military victories of their worshippers but such is not credible.

the desert. 20 The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, 21 the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

nothing compared to what I am going to do. 19 For I am about to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness for my people to come home. I will create rivers for them in the desert! 20 The wild animals in the fields will thank me, the jackals and ostriches, too, for giving them water in the wilderness. Yes, I will make springs in the desert, so that my chosen people can be refreshed. 21 I have made Israel for myself, and they will someday honor me before the whole world.

How God has dealt with the Israelites is the only credible evidence of His existence and superiority.

God's purpose in all this is especially asserted in v. 10b: "so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he." These Israelite captives needed this reminder about their God as an affirmation of belief and commitment to Him.

Quite interestingly, the prophet affirms the strict monotheism of later Israelite and Jewish belief here: "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me." In a polytheistic religious world such insistence on one God alone made the Israelites stand out dramatically from other groups of people. Second Isaiah took a strong stance against idolatry as is reflected not just here but also in 40:18-20; 41:6-7, 29; 42:17; 44:9-20; 45:16,20; 46:1-7). The prophet Jeremiah who ministered during this same period took a similar stance; cf. Jer. 10:1-10. For the Israelites to adopt the religious traditions of their captors would be crazy. They would be abandoning commitment to the only existing God and aligning themselves with nonexistent deities who would utterly powerless to help them.

God's power is unchallenged:

I, I am the Lord,
and besides me there is no savior.
I declared and saved and proclaimed,
when there was no strange god among you;
and you are my witnesses, says the Lord.

I am God, and also henceforth I am He;
there is no one who can deliver from my hand;
I work and who can hinder it?

No other deity can interfere with or disrupt God's plan and actions. At this period the prophet identifies the growing weakness of the Babylonian rulers who would soon fall to the rising power of the Persians beginning with Cyrus I. This pattern was a part of God's plan to raise up rulers who would accomplish God's intention of bringing His people back to their homeland once their punishment was complete. Thus, the old gods of the Babylonians were helpless to interfere with this. Not the gods of the Persians but the God of the Israelites would bring new rulers to power. The Israelites needed to understand this reality in the face of the coming chaos in Babylon. To anyone living in Babylon before 560 BCE such would not have seemed likely or possible. [Cyrus I](#) at that time was an insignificant Persian ruler of Anshan east of Babylon and was overshadowed by the more powerful Medes. Only the living God who both saw and determined the future could affirm what was going to happen.

In verses 14-21 the focus shifts to the future using past imagery as the vehicle of expression. God is presented both as Redeemer and the Holy One of Israel. R.B.Y. Scott (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1994 edition) calls attention to the significance of this:

The apposition of Redeemer (v. 1; 54.5; 59.20, Jer 50:34) and Holy One (41.14; 47.4; 48.17) is noteworthy. Second Isaiah refers to God as Redeemer more often than do other Old Testament writers. God redeems Israel not for its merits, but because of his covenant relationship with Israel. Other nations have kings, but God is Israel's *King* (1 Sam 8.4-9).

The two instances of "Thus says the Lord" (vv. 14,16) provide the organizing structure for these verses. First God identifies Himself as the foundation for His coming action.

Thus says the Lord,
your Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel:

For your sake I will send to Babylon
and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be
turned to lamentation.

I am the Lord,
your Holy One,
the Creator of Israel,
your King.



The predicted overthrow of the Babylonians, here the Chaldeans, results from God's action. God's ability to do this comes out of who He is, which brackets this prediction before and after. No one but God, at this point, could see how this would take place through the actions of Cyrus the Great. Second Isaiah proclaimed this promise to the captives living in an uncertain future, seemingly completely at the mercy of rulers and powers totally beyond their control.

The second "Thus says the Lord" (vv. 16-21) details the prediction in verse 14b. The ultimate "new thing" coming out of the anticipated fall of the Chaldeans would be the restoration of Israel in Judea. The destruction of the Chaldeans will open the door of opportunity for the Israelites to return home.

The destruction of the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds becomes the paradigm for God's destruction of the Chaldeans (vv. 16-17). But this is not the important thing. Instead, the captives should anticipate a miracle from God in resurrecting the homeland from the ashes of the Babylonian destruction (vv. 18-21). It will be a path in the wilderness, rivers flowing in the desert and the honoring of God by wild animals. God will nourish His people out of this restoration. They then will become praise to Him as the undeniable witness to His greatness and power.

Thus God's unique existence and power ultimately will rest on His ability to deliver His captive people from their bondage in Babylon, just as it happened previously when He delivered their ancestors from Egyptian bondage.

What we sense here is God's willingness to stake His reputation on being able to demonstrate His commitment to and care of His people, particularly in the worst times of their lives. God is not some nonexistent deity who only takes from his worshippers. The God of Abraham cares about His people and gives himself to take care of them. For us as Christians the ultimate expression of this can be seen at Calvary when God gave up His only Son in order to take care of our sins. In times of great difficulty and temptation to despair we should always remember this unshakable principle of scripture: God cares and His care is action, not just feeling.

Central to our spiritual health is the emphasis here on the overwhelming sense of God's greatness. With this image of God burned into our hearts we

can face the harshest of circumstances with courage and confidence. Without it, we are left vulnerable not only to doubt and despair, but also to the whims of every man-made idea that comes along,

no matter how screwballish they may be. The Israelites needed a strong sense of their God if they were to resist adopting the theologies of the bankrupt Babylonians. And so do we!

c. God charges His people, vv. 22-28

LXX

²² οὐ νῦν ἐκάλεσά σε
Ἰακωβ οὐδὲ κοπιᾶσαί σε
ἐποίησα Ἰσραηλ ²³ οὐκ ἔμοι
πρόβατα τῆς ὀλοκαρπώσεώς
σου οὐδὲ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις
σου ἐδόξασάς με οὐδὲ
ἔγκοπον ἐποίησά σε ἐν
λιβάνῳ ²⁴ οὐδὲ ἐκτήσω μοι
ἀργυρίου θυμίαμα οὐδὲ τὸ
στέαρ τῶν θυσιῶν σου
ἐπεθύμησα ἀλλὰ ἐν ταῖς
ἀμαρτίαις σου καὶ ἐν ταῖς
ἀδικίαις σου προέστην σου
²⁵ ἐγὼ εἶμι ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ
ἐξαλείφων τὰς ἀνομίας σου
καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθήσομαι ²⁶
σὺ δὲ μνήσθητι καὶ κριθῶ
μεν λέγε σὺ τὰς ἀνομίας
σου πρῶτος ἵνα δικαιωθῆς
²⁷ οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν πρῶ
τοι καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες αὐτῶ
ν ἠνόμησαν εἰς ἐμέ ²⁸ καὶ
ἐμίαναν οἱ ἄρχοντες τὰ
ἅγια μου καὶ ἔδωκα
ἀπολέσαι Ἰακωβ καὶ Ἰσραηλ
εἰς ὄνειδισμόν

NASB

22 Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel. 23 You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings, Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, Nor wearied you with incense. 24 You have bought Me not sweet cane with money, Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; Rather you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities. 25 I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins. 26 Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together; State your *cause*, that you may be proved right. 27 Your first forefather sinned, And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me. 28 So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary, And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.

NRSV

22 Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel! 23 You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. 24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities. 25 I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. 26 Accuse me, let us go to trial; set forth your case, so that you may be proved right. 27 Your first ancestor sinned, and your interpreters transgressed against me. 28 Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary, I delivered Jacob to utter destruction, and Israel to reviling.

NLT

22 But, my dear people, you refuse to ask for my help. You have grown tired of me! 23 You have not brought me lambs for burnt offerings. You have not honored me with sacrifices, though I have not burdened and wearied you with my requests for grain offerings and incense. 24 You have not brought me fragrant incense or pleased me with the fat from sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults. 25 I, yes, I alone, am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. 26 Let us review the situation together, and you can present your case if you have one. 27 From the very beginning, your ancestors sinned against me, all your leaders broke my laws. 28 That is why I have disgraced your priests and assigned Israel a future of complete destruction and shame.

Notes:

In this final strophe of the chapter, the judicial scene still prevails but with a different thrust. Now God becomes the prosecuting attorney bringing charges against His people.

They are again addressed as Jacob and Israel in the antithetical parallelism of verse 22.

Yet you did not call upon me,
O Jacob;
but you have been weary of me,
O Israel!

The people are charged with not seeking God and the flip side of that spiritual coin is becoming weary

of God. John D.W. Watts (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) effectively summarizes the play on words in the underlying Hebrew text in vv. 22-24:

Note the contrasts: Yahweh is calling Israel (v 1), but Israel has *not called* on him. Israel is *weary* (יגע) of Yahweh, though Yahweh has *not burdened* (hiph of עבד) or *wearied* (hiph of יגע) the Israelites with demands for sacrifices, but they have *burdened* (hiph of עבד) and *wearied* (hiph of יגע) Yahweh by their sins. The references to cultic offerings and sacrifices are unique in a book that usually emphasizes spiritual attitude and commitment instead. The emphatic opening אֲנִי לֹא "but not me," however, sets the tone for all three verses by claiming that Israel's worship was not directed to Yahweh. The underlying issue, then, is not cultic laxity but once again idolatry.

In verses 22-24, God affirms His mercy toward them in their indifference to Him. He has not placed harsh burdens upon Him, but their sins have become a heavy burden for Him.

In verses 25-28 God challenges the people to demonstrate that He is unreasonable in His relationship with the covenant people.

Their captivity reflects a consistent principle that has governed God's relationship with His covenant people from the beginning. Sin brings accountability. This has been true in God's dealings with both Kingdoms. The people's wicked ways brought down the northern kingdom (722 BCE) and then brought down the southern kingdom (582 BCE). God dealt consistently with sinfulness.

The reference to "sweet cane" alludes back to Exod. 30:23 and Jer. 6:20, as a part of the required spices used in sacrifice. Although the meaning of the line "*your interpreters transgressed against me*" is not absolutely clear in the Hebrew, it seems to be an accusation against the false prophets who failed to warn the people of the impending doom of the southern kingdom.

But in this "new thing" that God is going to do for the captives, a part of it is the offer of forgiveness of their sins (v. 25). Thus His mercy to this generation of Israelites is unquestionable. Once they have completed the time of exile, they will be granted forgiveness and then be allowed to return home. Therefore any complaint of injustice by God against these

people is utterly unfounded and without basis. To the contrary, they have every reason to praise God and to be thankful to Him for being willing to bless them when they did not deserve it at all.

One should also note that this same theme continues in [44:1-8](#) with much of the same imagery dominating.

1 But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! 2 Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you: Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. 4 They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams. 5 This one will say, "I am the Lord's," another will be called by the name of Jacob, yet another will write on the hand, "The Lord's," and adopt the name of Israel. 6 Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. 7 Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them

declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. 8 Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.

What a powerful affirmation of God's loving care of His people. Just as these Israelite captives, we do not deserve the loving care of our God that comes through Jesus Christ. We haven't done anything to merit or earn it. Yet God reaches out to us in loving kindness to guide our steps, to chart the course of our lives, to protect us from our wicked ways, and to lead us ultimately

home to spend eternity with Him.

Dare we complain that God isn't loving or that He is not doing enough for us? We would sound as unreasonable as these Jewish captives. Our God is just in His treatment of us. Yes, more than just. He is merciful and loving. He therefore deserves nothing but our praise and adoration. And just as the prophet admonished these ancient captives, "hold on to your seat belts for you haven't seen anything yet!" What God has in store for his people is, as the apostle Paul framed it ([1 Cor. 2:9](#)), "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.'"



LXX

¹ καὶ νῦν οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας σε Ἰακωβ ὁ πλάσας σε Ἰσραηλ μὴ φοβοῦ ὅτι ἐλυτρώσάμην σε ἐκάλεσά σε τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐμὸς εἶ σύ ² καὶ ἐὰν διαβαίνης δι' ὕδατος μετὰ σοῦ εἶμι καὶ ποταμοὶ οὐ συγκλύσουσίν σε καὶ ἐὰν διέλθης διὰ πυρός οὐ μὴ κατακαυθῆς φλόξ οὐ κατακαύσει σε ³ ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς σου ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσραηλ ὁ σώζων σε ἐποίησά σου ἄλλαγμα Αἴγυπτον καὶ Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ Σοήνην ὑπὲρ σοῦ ⁴ ἀφ' οὗ ἔντιμος ἐγένου ἐναντίον μου ἐδοξάσθης καὶ γὰρ σε ἠγάπησα καὶ δώσω ἀνθρώπους πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ ἄρχοντας ὑπὲρ τῆς κεφαλῆς σου ⁵ μὴ φοβοῦ ὅτι μετὰ σοῦ εἶμι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν ἄξω τὸ σπέρμα σου καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν συναΐξω σε ⁶ ἐρῶ τῷ βορρᾶ ἄγε καὶ τῷ λιβί μὴ κώλυε ἄγε τοὺς υἱοὺς μου ἀπὸ γῆς πόρρωθεν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας μου ἀπ' ἄκρων τῆς γῆς ⁷ πάντα ὅσοι ἐπικέκληνται τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐν γὰρ τῇ δόξῃ μου κατεσκεύασα αὐτὸν καὶ ἔπλασα καὶ ἐποίησα αὐτόν ⁸ καὶ ἐξήγαγον λαὸν τυφλόν καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ εἰσιν ὡσαύτως τυφλοὶ καὶ κωφοὶ τὰ ὦτα ἔχοντες ⁹ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη συνήχθησαν ἅμα καὶ συναχθήσονται ἄρχοντες ἐξ αὐτῶν τίς ἀναγγελεῖ ταῦτα ἢ τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τίς ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν ἀγαγέτωσαν τοὺς μάρτυρας αὐτῶν καὶ δικαιωθήτωσαν καὶ εἰπάτωσαν ἀληθῆ ¹⁰ γένεσθέ μοι μάρτυρες καὶ γὰρ

NASB

1 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! 2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. 4 Since you are precious in My sight, *Since* you are honored and I love you, I will give *other* men in your place and *other* peoples in exchange for your life. 5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give *them* up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold *them* back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, 7 Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." 8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears. 9 All the nations have gath-

NRSV

1 But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. 5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; 6 I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth? 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." 8 Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! 9 Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who

NLT

1 But now, O Israel, the LORD who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. 2 When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as a ransom for your freedom. 4 Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you. 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west 6 and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. 7 All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them." 8 Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. 9 Gather the nations together! Which of their idols has ever foretold such things? Can any of

μάρτυς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός
καὶ ὁ παῖς ὃν ἐξελεξάμην
ἵνα γινώτε καὶ πιστεῦσητε
καὶ συνῆτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι
ἔμπροσθέν μου οὐκ ἐγένετο
ἄλλος θεὸς καὶ μετ' ἐμὲ
οὐκ ἔσται ¹¹ ἐγὼ ὁ θεός
καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πάρεξ ἐμοῦ
σώζων ¹² ἀνήγγεila καὶ
ἔσωσα ὠνείδισα καὶ οὐκ
ἦν ἐν ὑμῖν ἀλλότριος ὑμεῖς
ἐμοὶ μάρτυρες καὶ ἐγὼ
μάρτυς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός
¹³ ἔτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ οὐκ
ἔστιν ὁ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν μου
ἐξαιρούμενος ποιήσω καὶ
τίς ἀποστρέψει αὐτό ¹⁴
οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός
ὁ λυτρούμενος ὑμᾶς ὁ ἅγιος
Ἰσραὴλ ἔνεκεν ὑμῶν
ἀποστελῶ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα καὶ
ἐπεγερῶ πάντας φεύγοντας
καὶ Χαλδαῖοι ἐν πλοίοις
δεθήσονται ¹⁵ ἐγὼ κύριος
ὁ θεός ὁ ἅγιος υἱῶν ὁ
καταδείξας Ἰσραὴλ βασιλέα
ὑμῶν ¹⁶ οὕτως λέγει
κύριος ὁ διδοὺς ὁδὸν ἐν
θαλάσῃ καὶ ἐν ὕδατι
ἰσχυρῶ τρίβον ¹⁷ ὁ
ἐξαγαγὼν ἄρματα καὶ ἵππου
καὶ ὄχλον ἰσχυρόν ἀλλὰ
ἐκοιμήθησαν καὶ οὐκ
ἀναστήσονται ἐσβέσθησαν
ὡς λίνον ἐσβεσμένον ¹⁸
μὴ μνημονεύετε τὰ πρῶτα
καὶ τὰ ἀρχαῖα μὴ
συλλογίζεσθε ¹⁹ ἰδοὺ ποιῶ
καινὰ ἃ νῦν ἀνατελεῖ καὶ
γνώσεσθε αὐτά καὶ ποιήσω
ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὁδὸν καὶ ἐν
τῇ ἀνύδρῳ ποταμοῦς ²⁰
εὐλογῆσει με τὰ θηρία τοῦ
ἀγροῦ σειρήνες καὶ
θυγατέρες στρουθῶν ὅτι
ἔδωκα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ὕδωρ
καὶ ποταμοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀνύδρῳ
ποτίσαι τὸ γένος μου τὸ
ἐκλεκτόν ²¹ λαόν μου ὃν
περιποιησάμην τὰς ἀρετάς
μου διηγεῖσθαι

ered together So that the
peoples may be as-
sembled. Who among
them can declare this
And proclaim to us the
former things? Let them
present their witnesses
that they may be justified,
Or let them hear and say,
"It is true." ¹⁰ "You are My
witnesses," declares the
LORD, "And My servant
whom I have chosen, So
that you may know and
believe Me And under-
stand that I am He. Be-
fore Me there was no
God formed, And there
will be none after Me. ¹¹ I,
even I, am the LORD,
And there is no savior
besides Me. ¹² It is I who
have declared and saved
and proclaimed, And
there was no strange
god among you; So you
are My witnesses," de-
clares the LORD, "And I
am God. ¹³ Even from
eternity I am He, And
there is none who can
deliver out of My hand; I
act and who can reverse
it?" ¹⁴ Thus says the
LORD your Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel,
"For your sake I have
sent to Babylon, And will
bring them all down as
fugitives, Even the
Chaldeans, into the ships
in which they rejoice. ¹⁵ I
am the LORD, your Holy
One, The Creator of Is-
rael, your King." ¹⁶ Thus
says the LORD, Who
makes a way through the
sea And a path through
the mighty waters, ¹⁷
Who brings forth the
chariot and the horse,

among them declared
this, and foretold to us the
former things? Let them
bring their witnesses to
justify them, and let them
hear and say, "It is true."
¹⁰ You are my wit-
nesses, says the Lord,
and my servant whom I
have chosen, so that you
may know and believe
me and understand that
I am he. Before me no
god was formed, nor
shall there be any after
me. ¹¹ I, I am the Lord,
and besides me there is
no savior. ¹² I declared
and saved and pro-
claimed, when there was
no strange god among
you; and you are my wit-
nesses, says the Lord.
¹³ I am God, and also
henceforth I am He; there
is no one who can deliver
from my hand; I work and
who can hinder it?
¹⁴ Thus says the
Lord, your Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel:
For your sake I will send
to Babylon and break
down all the bars, and the
shouting of the
Chaldeans will be turned
to lamentation. ¹⁵ I am
the Lord, your Holy One,
the Creator of Israel, your
King. ¹⁶ Thus says the
Lord, who makes a way
in the sea, a path in the
mighty waters, ¹⁷ who
brings out chariot and
horse, army and warrior;
they lie down, they can-
not rise, they are extin-
guished, quenched like a
wick: ¹⁸ Do not remem-
ber the former things, or
consider the things of

them predict something
even a single day in ad-
vance? Where are the
witnesses of such pre-
dictions? Who can verify
that they spoke the truth?
¹⁰ "But you are my wit-
nesses, O Israel!" says
the LORD. "And you are
my servant. You have
been chosen to know
me, believe in me, and
understand that I alone
am God. There is no
other God; there never
has been and never will
be. ¹¹ I am the LORD,
and there is no other Sav-
ior. ¹² First I predicted
your deliverance; I de-
clared what I would do,
and then I did it? I saved
you. No foreign god has
ever done this before.
You are witnesses that I
am the only God," says
the LORD. ¹³ "From
eternity to eternity I am
God. No one can oppose
what I do. No one can
reverse my actions."
¹⁴ The LORD your
Redeemer, the Holy One
of Israel, says: "For your
sakes I will send an in-
vading army against
Babylon. And the Baby-
lonians will be forced to
flee in those ships they
are so proud of. ¹⁵ I am
the LORD, your Holy
One, Israel's Creator and
King. ¹⁶ I am the LORD,
who opened a way
through the waters, mak-
ing a dry path through the
sea. ¹⁷ I called forth the
mighty army of Egypt
with all its chariots and
horses. I drew them be-
neath the waves, and

²² οὐ νῦν ἐκάλεσά σε
Ἰακωβ οὐδὲ κοπιᾶσαι σε
ἐποίησα Ἰσραηλ ²³ οὐκ ἔμοι
πρόβατα τῆς ὀλοκαρπώσεώς
σου οὐδὲ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις
σου ἐδόξασάς με οὐδὲ
ἔγκοπον ἐποίησά σε ἐν
λιβάνῳ ²⁴ οὐδὲ ἐκτίσω
μοι ἀργυρίου θυμίαμα οὐδὲ
τὸ στέαρ τῶν θυσιῶν σου
ἐπεθύμησα ἀλλὰ ἐν ταῖς
ἀμαρτίαις σου καὶ ἐν ταῖς
ἀδικίαις σου πρόεστην
σου ²⁵ ἐγὼ εἰμι ἐγὼ εἰμι
ὁ ἐξαλείφων τὰς ἀνομίας
σου καὶ οὐ μὴ μνησθήσομαι
²⁶ σὺ δὲ μνήσθητι καὶ
κριθῶμεν λέγε σὺ τὰς
ἀνομίας σου πρῶτος ἵνα
δικαιωθῆς ²⁷ οἱ πατέρες
ὑμῶν πρῶτοι καὶ οἱ
ἄρχοντες αὐτῶν ἠνόμησαν
εἰς ἐμέ ²⁸ καὶ ἐμίαναν οἱ
ἄρχοντες τὰ ἄγιά μου καὶ
ἔδωκα ἀπολέσαι Ἰακωβ καὶ
Ἰσραηλ εἰς ὄνειδισμόν

The army and the mighty
man (They will lie down
together *and* not rise
again; They have been
quenched *and* extin-
guished like a wick): 18
Do not call to mind the
former things, Or ponder
things of the past. 19
Behold, I will do some-
thing new, Now it will
spring forth; Will you not
be aware of it? I will even
make a roadway in the
wilderness, Rivers in the
desert. 20 The beasts of
the field will glorify Me,
The jackals and the ostriches,
Because I have
given waters in the wil-
derness And rivers in the
desert, To give drink to
My chosen people. 21
The people whom I
formed for Myself Will
declare My praise.

22 Yet you have not
called on Me, O Jacob;
But you have become
weary of Me, O Israel. 23
You have not brought to
Me the sheep of your
burnt offerings, Nor have
you honored Me with your
sacrifices. I have not bur-
dened you with offerings,
Nor wearied you with in-
cense. 24 You have
bought Me not sweet
cane with money, Nor
have you filled Me with the
fat of your sacrifices;
Rather you have bur-
dened Me with your sins,
You have wearied Me with
your iniquities. 25 I, even
I, am the one who wipes
out your transgressions
for My own sake, And I
will not remember your
sins. 26 Put Me in re-
membrance, let us argue

old. 19 I am about to do a
new thing; now it springs
forth, do you not perceive
it? I will make a way in the
wilderness and rivers in
the desert. 20 The wild
animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in
the wilderness, rivers in
the desert, to give drink
to my chosen people, 21
the people whom I
formed for myself so that
they might declare my
praise.

22 Yet you did not call
upon me, O Jacob; but
you have been weary of
me, O Israel! 23 You have
not brought me your
sheep for burnt offerings,
or honored me with your
sacrifices. I have not bur-
dened you with offerings,
or wearied you with
frankincense. 24 You
have not bought me
sweet cane with money,
or satisfied me with the
fat of your sacrifices. But
you have burdened me
with your sins; you have
wearied me with your in-
iquities. 25 I, I am He who
blots out your transgres-
sions for my own sake,
and I will not remember
your sins. 26 Accuse me,
let us go to trial; set forth
your case, so that you
may be proved right. 27
Your first ancestor
sinned, and your inter-
preters transgressed
against me. 28 Therefore
I profaned the princes of
the sanctuary, I delivered
Jacob to utter destruc-
tion, and Israel to reviling.

they drowned, their lives
snuffed out like a smol-
dering candlewick. 18
"But forget all that ? it is
nothing compared to
what I am going to do. 19
For I am about to do a
brand-new thing. See, I
have already begun! Do
you not see it? I will make
a pathway through the
wilderness for my people
to come home. I will cre-
ate rivers for them in the
desert! 20 The wild ani-
mals in the fields will
thank me, the jackals and
ostriches, too, for giving
them water in the wilder-
ness. Yes, I will make
springs in the desert, so
that my chosen people
can be refreshed. 21 I
have made Israel for my-
self, and they will some-
day honor me before the
whole world.

22 But, my dear
people, you refuse to ask
for my help. You have
grown tired of me! 23 You
have not brought me
lambs for burnt offerings.
You have not honored me
with sacrifices, though I
have not burdened and
wearied you with my re-
quests for grain offerings
and incense. 24 You
have not brought me fra-
grant incense or pleased
me with the fat from sac-
rifices. Instead, you have
burdened me with your
sins and wearied me with
your faults. 25 I, yes, I
alone, am the one who
blots out your sins for my
own sake and will never
think of them again. 26
Let us review the situa-

our case together; State your *cause*, that you may be proved right. 27 Your first forefather sinned, And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me. 28 So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary, And I will consign Jacob to the ban and Israel to revilement.

tion together, and you can present your case if you have one. 27 From the very beginning, your ancestors sinned against me, all your leaders broke my laws. 28 That is why I have disgraced your priests and assigned Israel a future of complete destruction and shame.

Isaiah 43:1-28

וְעַתָּה כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה בְּרֹאֵךְ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּצְרָךְ

יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵל־תִּירָא כִּי גֹאֲלִיךָ קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁמֶךָ לִי־אֵתָה²

כִּי־תַעֲבֹד בַּמַּיִם אֶתְךָ־אֲנִי וּבַנְּהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטַפּוּךָ כִּי־תִלָּךְ

בַּמּוֹ־אֵשׁ לֹא תִכּוֹה וְלַהֲבֵה לֹא תִבְעַר־בְּךָ

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ נִתְּחִי כַפְרֶךָ

מִצַּרִּים כּוֹשׁ וּסְבֹא תַחֲתֶיךָ

מֵאֲשֶׁר יִקְרָתְךָ בְּעֵינַי נִכְבְּדֹת וְאֲנִי אֶהְבֵּתֶיךָ וְאַתָּן אָדָם

תַּחֲתֶיךָ וְלֵאמֹים תַּחַת נַפְשֶׁךָ

אֵל־תִּירָא כִּי אֶתְךָ־אֲנִי מִמְזֹרֵחַ אֲבִיא זְרַעֲךָ וּמִמְעַרְב־

אֶקְבְּצֶךָ

אֲמַר לְצַפּוֹן תִּנְי וּלְתִימֹן אֵל־תִּכְלָאִי הִבִּיאי בְנֵי מִרְחֹק

וּבְנוֹתַי מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ

כֹּל הַנִּקְרָא בְשֵׁמִי וְלִכְבוֹדִי בְרֹאתֶיךָ יִצְרָתֶיךָ אֶף־עֲשִׂיתִי

הוֹצִיא עִם־עוֹר וְעֵינַיִם יֵשׁ וְחַרְשִׁים וְאֲזָנַיִם לְמוֹ

כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ יַחְדָּו וַיֹּאסְפוּ לְאֲמֹיִם מִי בָהֶם יִגִּיד

זֹאת וְרֵאשֻׁנוֹת יִשְׁמִיעֵנּוּ יִתְּנוּ עֲדֵיהֶם וַיִּצְדְּקוּ וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אָמֵן

אַתֶּם עַדִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְעַבְדֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּי לְמַעַן תִּדְּעוּ

וְתֵאמְרוּ לִי וְתִבְיֵנוּ כִּי־אֲנִי הוּא לְפָנַי לֹא־נִוָּצֵר אֵל וְאַחֲרָי

לֹא יִהְיֶה ס

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה וְאִין מִבְּלַעַדִּי מוֹשִׁיעַ

אֲנֹכִי הַגִּדְתִּי וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי וְהִשְׁמַעְתִּי וְאִין בְּכֶם זֶר וְאַתֶּם

עַדִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְאֲנִי־אֵל

גַּם־מִיּוֹם אֲנִי הוּא וְאִין מִיַּדִּי מִצִּיל אֶפְעֵל וּמִי יִשִּׁיבְנָה ס

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה גֹּאֲלְכֶם קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעַנְכֶם שְׁלַחְתִּי

בְּבִלָּה וְהוֹרְדֹתִי בְרִיחִים פֶּלֶם וְכַשְׂדִּים בְּאֲנִיּוֹת רִנְתֶּם

אֲנִי יְהוָה קְדוֹשְׁכֶם בּוֹרֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ס

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַנּוֹתֵן בַּיָּם הַדָּךְ וּבַמַּיִם עֲזִים נְתִיבָה

הַמוֹצִיא רֶכְב־וּסוּס חֵיל וְעֲזוּז יַחְדָּו יִשְׁכְּבוּ בְלִי־קוֹמוֹ

דַּעְכוּ כַּפְשֵׁתָה כָבוֹ

אֵל־תִּזְכְּרוּ רֵאשֻׁנוֹת וְקַדְמֹנִיּוֹת אֵל־תִּתְּבַנְּנוּ

19 הַנְּנִי עֲשֵׂה חֲדָשָׁה עִתָּהּ תִצְמַח הַלֹּוא תִדְעֶוּהָ אַךְ אֲשִׁים
 בַּמִּדְבָּר דְּרֹךְ בִּישְׁמוֹן נְהַרֹת
 20 תִּכְבְּרֵנִי חַיֵּת הַשָּׂדֶה תַנִּים וּבְנוֹת יַעֲנֶה כִּי־נִתְּתִי בַּמִּדְבָּר
 מַיִם נְהַרֹת בִּישְׁמוֹן לְהַשְׁקוֹת עַמִּי בְּחִירֵי
 21 עַם־זוֹ יִצְרְתִי לִי תִהְלֹתִי יִסְפְּרוּ ס
 22 וְלֹא־אֲתִי קְרָאתָ יַעֲקֹב כִּי־יִנְעֶתָ בִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 23 לֹא־הִבִּיאתָ לִי שֵׁה עֲלִיתִךָ וּזְבַחִיךָ לֹא כִבַּדְתָּנִי לֹא
 הֶעֱבַדְתִּיךָ בַּמִּנְחָה וְלֹא הוֹנַעְתִּיךָ בַּלְבוֹנָה
 24 לֹא־קִנִּיתָ לִי בַכֶּסֶף קִנְיָה וְחֶלֶב זְבַחִיךָ לֹא הִרְוִיתָנִי אֵךְ
 הֶעֱבַדְתָּנִי בַחֲטָאוֹתֶיךָ הוֹנַעְתָּנִי בַעֲוֹנוֹתֶיךָ ס
 25 אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מִחָה פִשְׁעֶיךָ לְמַעַן וְחֲטָאוֹתֶיךָ לֹא אֲזַכֵּר
 26 הַזְכִּירְנִי נִשְׁפָּטָה יַחַד סֵפֶר אֶתָּה לְמַעַן תִּצְדֹּק
 27 אָבִיךָ הִרְאִישׁוֹן חֵטָא וּמְלִיצִיךָ פִשְׁעוֹ בִּי
 28 וְאַחֲלִיל שְׁרֵי קֹדֶשׁ וְאַתְנֶה לְחֵרֶם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל לְגִדּוּפִים
 ס

Isaiah 43:1 - 28

BHT Isaiah 43:1 wə attā^h kō^h-²amar yhw(ʔādōnāy) bōraʔākā ya āqōb wəyōšerkā
 yiśrāʔel ʔal-tīrāʔ kī gəʔaltīkā qārāʔtī bəšimkā lī-²attā^h kī-ta ābōr bammāyim
²ittəkā-²ānī ūbannəhārōt lōʔ yištəpūkā kī-tēlēk bəmō-²ēš lōʔ tikkāwe^h
 wəlehābā^h lōʔ tib ar-bāk³ kī ʔānī yhw(ʔādōnāy) ʔelōhe^ʔkā qədōš yiśrāʔel
 mōšī ekā nātattī koprəkā mišrayim kūš ūsəbāʔ tahtē^ʔkā⁴ mēʔāšer yaqartā
 bə ēnay niqbādtā waʔānī ʔahabtīkā wəʔettən ʔādām tahtē^ʔkā ūləummīm
 tāhat napšekā⁵ ʔal-tīrāʔ kī ʔittəkā-²ānī mimmirāh ʔābīʔ zar ekā
 ūmīmma ārāb ʔāqabbəšekkā⁶ ōmar laššāpōn tēnī ūlətēmān ʔal-tiklāʔī hābīʔī
 bānay mērāhōq ūbənōtay miqəšē^h hāʔāreš⁷ kōl hanniqrāʔ bišmī wəlikbōdī
 bəraʔtīw yəšartīw ʔāp- āsītīw⁸ hōšīʔ am- iwwēr wə ēnayim yēš wəhərsīm
 wəʔoznāyim lāmō⁹ kāl-haggōyīm niqbəšū yaḥdāw wəyēʔāspū ləʔummīm mī
 bāhem yaggīd zōʔt wəriʔšōnōt yašmī unū yittənū ēdēhem wəyišdāqū
 wəyišmə ū wəyōʔmərū ʔemet¹⁰ ʔattem ēday nəʔum-yhw(ʔādōnāy) wə abdi
 ʔāšer bāhārtī ləmə an tēd ū wətaʔāmīnū lī wətabīnū kī-ʔānī hūʔ ləpānay lōʔ-
 nōšar ʔel wəʔahāray lōʔ yihye^h s¹¹ ʔānōkī ʔānōkī yhw(ʔādōnāy) wəʔēn
 mibbal āday mōšī^a ʔānōkī higgādtī wəhōšā tī wəhišmā tī wəʔēn bākem
 zār wəʔattem ēday nəʔum-yhw(ʔādōnāy) waʔānī-ʔel¹³ gam-miyyōm ʔānī

hû³ wə³en miyyādî maşşîl ³eṗ al ûmî yəšîbennā^h s ¹⁴ kō^h-³amar
yhwh(³ādōnāy) gō³alkem qəḏōš yisrā³el ləma ankem šillāhtî bābēlā^h
wəhōradtî bārîhîm kullām wəkaśdîm bā³ōniyyōt rinnātām ¹⁵ ³ānî
yhwh(³ādōnāy) qəḏōškem bōrē³ yisrā³el malkəkem s ¹⁶ kōh ³amar
yhwh(³ādōnāy) hannōtēn bayyām dārek ūbəmayim azzîm nətibā^h ¹⁷
hammōšî³ reḳeb-wāsūs ḥayil wə izzūz yaḥdāw yiškəbū bal-yāqūmū dā ākū
kappištā^h kābū ¹⁸ ³al-tizkərū rî³šōnōt wəqadmōniyyōt ³al-tiṭbōnānū ¹⁹ hinnî
ōse^h ḥādāšā^h attā^h tišmāḥ ḥālō³ tēḏā ūhā ³ap ³āsîm bammidbār dērek
bišîmōn nəhārōt ²⁰ təkabbəḏēnî ḥayyat ḥassāde^h tannîm ūbənōt ya ānā^h kî-
nātattî bammidbār mayim nəhārōt bišîmōn ləhašqōt ammî bəḥîrî ²¹ am-zû
yāšartî lî təhillātî yəsappērū s ²² wəlō³-³ōtî qarā³tā ya āqōb kî-yāgā tā bî
yisrā³el ²³ lō³-hēbē³tā llî sē^h olōte³kā ūzəbāḥe³kā lō³ kibbadtānî lō³
he ʿəbād³tīkā bəminḥā^h wəlō³ hōgā tīkā bilbōnā^h ²⁴ lō³-qānītā llî bakkéseṗ
qāne^h wəḥēleb zəbāḥe³kā lō³ hirwītānî ³ak he ʿəbād³tānî bəḥattō³wte³kā
hōgā tānî ba ʾwōnōte³kā s ²⁵ ³ānōkî ³ānōkî hû³ mōḥe^h pəšā e³kā ləma ānî
wəḥattō³te³kā lō³ ³ezkōr ²⁶ hazkîrēnî niššāptā^h yāḥad sappēr ³attā^h ləma an
tišdāq ²⁷ ³ābīkā ḥārî³šōn ḥātā³ ūməlīse³kā pāš ū bî ²⁸ wa³āḥalləl sārē qōdeš
wə³ettənā^h laḥērem ya āqōb wəyisrā³el ləgiddūpîm s