

ISAIAH LESSON 35

At Play in the Courts of the Lord^a
(Isaiah 41:1-29)

Isaiah 41:1-29 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Israel Assured of God's Help

41 Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;
let the peoples renew their strength;
let them approach, then let them speak;
let us together draw near for judgment.^b

² Who stirred up one from the east
whom victory meets at every step?
He gives up nations before him,
so that he tramples kings under foot;
he makes them like dust with his sword,
like driven stubble with his bow.^c

³ He pursues them and passes on safely,
by paths his feet have not trod.^d

⁴ Who has performed and done this,
calling the generations from the beginning?
I, the Lord^e, the first,
and with the last; I am He.^f

⁵ The coastlands have seen and are afraid,
the ends of the earth tremble;
they have drawn near and come.^g

⁶ Every one helps his neighbor,
and says to his brother, "Take courage!"^h

⁷ The craftsman encourages the goldsmith,
and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil,
saying of the soldering, "It is good";
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.ⁱ

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;^j

⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off";^k

¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you,
be not dismayed, for I am your God^l;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.^m

¹¹ Behold, all who are incensed against you
shall be put to shame and confounded;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish.ⁿ

¹² You shall seek those who contend with you,
 but you shall not find them;
 those who war against you
 shall be as nothing at all.^o
¹³ For I, the Lord your God,
 hold your right hand;
 it is I who say to you, "Fear not,
 I will help you."^p
¹⁴ Fear not, you worm Jacob,
 you men of Israel!
 I will help you, says the Lord;
 your Redeemer^q is the Holy One of Israel.^{r, s}
¹⁵ Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge,
 new, sharp, and having teeth;
 you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,
 and you shall make the hills like chaff;^t
¹⁶ you shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away,
 and the tempest shall scatter them.
 And you shall rejoice in the Lord;
 in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.^u
¹⁷ When the poor^v and needy seek water,
 and there is none,
 and their tongue is parched with thirst,
 I the Lord will answer them,
 I the God of Israel will not forsake them.^w
¹⁸ I will open rivers on the bare heights,
 and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
 I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
 and the dry land springs of water.^x
¹⁹ I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
 the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
 I will set in the desert the cypress,
 the plane and the pine together;^y
²⁰ that men may see and know,
 may consider and understand together,
 that the hand of the Lord has done this,
 the Holy One of Israel has created it.^z

The Futility of Idols

²¹ Set forth your case, says the Lord;
 bring your proofs, says the King^{aa} of Jacob.^{bb}
²² Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen.
 Tell us the former things, what they are,
 that we may consider them,
 that we may know their outcome;
 or declare to us the things to come.^{cc}
²³ Tell us what is to come hereafter,

that we may know that you are gods;
do good, or do harm,
that we may be dismayed and terrified^{dd, ee}
²⁴ Behold, you are nothing^{ff},
and your work is nought;
an abomination is he who chooses you.^{gg}
²⁵ I stirred up one from the north, and he has come,
from the rising of the sun, and he shall call on my name;
he shall trample on rulers as on mortar,
as the potter treads clay.^{hh}
²⁶ Who declared it from the beginning, that we might know,
and beforetime, that we might say, “He is right”?
There was none who declared it, none who proclaimed,
none who heard your words.ⁱⁱ
²⁷ I first have declared it to Zion,
and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good tidings.^{jj}
²⁸ But when I look there is no one;
among these there is no counselor
who, when I ask, gives an answer.^{kk}
²⁹ Behold, they are all a delusion^{ll};
their works are nothing;
their molten images are empty wind.^{mmm}

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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^a **At Play in the Courts of the Lord** – After Isaiah, Judah would have 100 years of ill-rule and trouble before finally falling to Babylon in 586 B.C. After that, there would be 70 years of exile until Babylon itself fell in 539 B.C. and its new Persian ruler permitted the Exiles to return to the Land in 538 B.C. The second half of Isaiah would include many words of comfort and hope for the Jewish people in their Exile. Chapters 40–55 are viewed by some scholars as having been written by Second Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah), an anonymous prophet living the end of the Babylonian Exile. Isaiah, who is named frequently in Chapters 1–39, does not appear in these chapters by name. The Assyrians, the great threat during the eighth century, hardly appear at all. The Jews are in Babylon, having been taken there by the victorious Babylonians. Cyrus, the Persian king, is named. He will defeat Babylon and release the Exiles. The Prophet, who sees this not as a happy circumstance but as part of God’s age-old plan, exhorts the Jews to resist the Babylonian religion and provides hope of an imminent return to Judah, where the Lord will again be acknowledged as King (Is 52:7). Because the Prophet proclaimed the triumph of Persia over Babylon, his message would have been considered seditious if written during the Exile. If it were composed during the Exile, it would likely explain why the collection would have circulated anonymously. Under this theory, these chapters were later appended to Isaiah 1–39 and considered the work of Isaiah or perhaps his disciples. However, if these chapters were first written and circulated during the later years of Exile, and if they contain the name of Babylon’s conqueror before the conquest, there would be no reason that the original Isaiah, author of Chapters 1-39, could not have predicted what would happen during the Exile as well. Indeed, since all of Isaiah, and particularly the second half, are considered to be a primary prophecy regarding the coming Messiah, there would be no reason to exclude the Isaiah of Chapters 1-39 as the author of the remainder of the Book merely because it speaks of events that were not known to Isaiah’s contemporaries. Nor does the mere fact that Isaiah himself, or Assyria, are not mentioned in these chapters dispositive since they were written about a later time period in which neither of these were actors. Whether written by Isaiah, Isaiah’s disciples or Second Isaiah, the author of these chapters works within the tradition of Isaiah and develops themes found in the earlier chapters, such as the holiness of the Lord (Is 6:1-8) and his lordship of history (Is 7:14, 14:24-27, 26:4).

These chapters also develop other themes common in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the Lord as Israel's redeemer or deliverer (Ex 3:8, 6:6, 15:13, 18:8). Chapters 40-55 are frequently referred to as the Book of the Consolation of Israel and contain the so-called "Servant Songs" which Christians interpret as speaking of the coming Messiah. The initial chapters of this section also contain predictions concerning the role of Cyrus II, the Great (559-530 B.C.), the founder of the Persian Empire, in the return of the Exiles to the Land who is referred to in Chapter 41 as "**one from the East**" and mentioned by name later (Is 44:28). God was thus able to use a pagan ruler to protect and care for His people, just as He had used the Assyrians to punish Judah for its sins. The Hebrew in Chapter 41 is in many places difficult, particularly in the first four verses. Chapter 41 paints a picture of a courtroom in which God challenges first the nations, and then the gods of the nations, to prove their power. This continues the theme of Chapter 40 in which the power of God is demonstrated.

^b (1) The Prophets had spoken of the Assyrians (Is 7:20, 8:7, 10:5-6, 10:15, 23:13; 2Ki 19:25) and Babylonians (Is 39:1-8; Jr 21:7, 22:25, 27:6, 43:10) as the Lord's instruments for the punishment of Israel's sins. Now in verses 1-4, the Lord is described as raising up **one from the East**, identified later as Cyrus II, the Great, of Persia (Is 44:28, 45:1), to deliver the Jews from Babylonian Exile. Cyrus (c. 600-530 B.C.), was King of Anshan in Persia, and subject to Babylon. He rebelled against Babylonian in 556 B.C. and led a victorious campaign which culminated in his conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C. In 538 B.C. he allowed the Jewish Exiles to return to Jerusalem (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezr 1:1-4). For Isaiah, the rapid Persian conquest of all of the old civilizations of the Middle East must have been the work of the Lord to accomplish the deliverance promised by the Lord for His people. Much of the language of Chapters 40-48 is like the language that one would hear in courts of law (Hos 4:1; Mi 6:1-8, etc.). In this verse, God calls the court to order, calling all the nations (here referred to as islands or **coastlands**, יַם, *I*, indicating the places bordering the Great Sea) together (Is 34:1, 43:9, 48:16, 57:3; Jl:3:10-11), to listen (Is 34:1, 48:16) in silence (Is 49:1; Ps 37:7, 46:10; Hab 2:20; Zec 2:13; Zep 1:7), to challenge and debate (Is 1:18, 43:26, 50:8; Jb 23:3-7, 31:35-36; Mi 6:1-3) them and to invite them to acknowledge God as God (Jr 2:35; Rm 1:18-23). **Silence** and reverence are the only ways to approach God, particularly on the occasion of **judgment** (מִשְׁפָּט, *mishpat*), as here. Although some commentators see the nations as pronouncing judgment, the better reading is that God will pronounce the judgment. The Hebrew is difficult, with translators disagreeing as to whether the nations are being called to gather their strength for the debate (e.g. "Listen in silence before me, you lands beyond the sea. Bring your strongest arguments. Come now and speak. The court is ready for your case." NLT; Is 8:9-10; Jb 38:3, 40:7-10) or, following the LXX, being invited to approach God and "renew their strength" by acknowledging Him ("Hold a feast to Me, you islands; for the princes shall renew their strength; let them draw near and speak together; then let them declare judgment." CAB; 1Sm 2:4). Most translations are similar to the RSV and ambiguous with respect to this point indicating only that the nations will regain their strength. A literal translation of the Hebrew might read, "Keep silence/before me/you coastlands/let people/renew strength/let them come near/let them speak/together/for judgment/let us come near." The repetition of the Hebrew for renew (חָלַף, *chalaph*) and strength (כֹּחַ, *koach*) in this verse, identical to their use at the end of chapter 40 in which God invites the faithful to restore their strength (Is 40:31), suggests that the CAB, with its invitation to the gentiles, is closer to the intended meaning. In that reading, God has already told the Jews that He would get them out of Exile. Now He offers the same relationship to the gentiles if they would only acknowledge God and give up their idols. Certainly there will be good news, and an invitation, to the gentiles in Chapter 42. In all events, God invites the nations to a council because He has some issues to settle with them which center upon their refusal to give up idol worship.

^c (2) In a rhetorical question, God asks the nations who has **stirred up one from the East** (Is 13:17-18, 42:6, 45:1, 46:11), that is the place of sunrise (מִצְרָח, *mizrach*), to overturn the political situation (Is 13:4, 48:14; Jdg 4:10; Jr 25:9, 50:3, 51:11; Rv 7:2, 16:12). By 545 B.C. Cyrus II had rapidly conquered Media, Lydia and the Greek speaking cities of the Levant (Is 44:28, 45:1-8) and was closing in on Babylon. While the description certainly fits Cyrus, it might also refer to Abraham (as he followed God's direction to leave Ur and go west into the Land; Gn 11:31, 12:1-3, 15:8, 17:1; Ac 7:3; Heb 11:8-10), Moses (as he returned from the Sinai desert to Egypt to lead the people out of slavery), Joshua (as he led the Jews west over the Jordan) or perhaps to someone else who has stirred up history or brought salvation to the Jewish people (Is 9:1-7; Zec 3:8). The *Targum of Isaiah* sees the verse as referring to the call of Abraham from the east, "the chosen of righteousness," and that God "delivered nations before him." This may perhaps refer to the military action Abraham took against Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer and Tidal to rescue his nephew Lot from captivity (Gn 14:1-16; Heb 7:1-2). In each case there is a sense in which the one from the East will deliver God's people from captivity to their proper place. In this verse, the person is coming from the east, which means the vantage point is in the west, perhaps Jerusalem, or Babylon. In verse 25 the Prophet describes this person as coming from the North, the direction from which Cyrus captured Babylon. The Hebrew for this verse is also difficult, and could be literally translated, "Who/raised up/from the east (a man)/the righteous/called/to his feet/gave/on the face of/the nations/over Kings/rules/gave/as dust/sword/as wind driven chaff/driven/to his bow." The translators have taken several approaches to this verse (e.g. "Who has aroused one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers up nations before him And subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow." NASB; "Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow." NIV; "Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings underfoot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow." ESV; "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow." KJV; and "Who has aroused

victory from the east, and has summoned it to his service, and has handed over nations to him? Who brings down kings, and turns them into dust with his sword, into windblown stubble with his bow?" ISV). Some translations render the last phrases as God making the swords and bows of the nations useless, while others see this as God enabling the one from the East to destroy the nations like dust or chaff (Is 40:23-24; 2Sm 22:43; 2Ki 13:7; Ps 1:4). The Hebrew for **victory** in the RSV, or "saving justice," "righteousness to his service," "summoned" or "commissioned" in other translations (קִדְדָה, *tsedeq*) most commonly means justice and righteousness (Is 45:13) and implies a restoration of God's proper order, of vindication and of victory (Is 54:17). The LXX equivalent (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaïosynē*) also means righteousness, in the sense that things are the way they should be, so that the entire verse reads, "Who raised up righteousness from the east, and called it to His feet, so that it should go? Who shall appoint it as an adversary of Gentiles, and shall dismay kings, and bury their swords in the earth, and cast forth their bows and arrows as sticks?"

^d (3) The one from the East passes through the region pursuing his enemies in peace (שְׁלוֹמִים, *shalom*) and without being harmed (Is 57:2; Jb 5:24; Dn 8:4). The phrase on paths **his feet have not trod** in the RSV is a literal translation of the Hebrew (לֹא יָבֹא, *yabo*, lit. he does not come). It and similar phrases in other translations imply that these are new paths that the person God called has not travelled before. Tiglath-Pileser and other Assyrian kings boasted in their inscriptions that they had led their armies by paths that none had gone before. Isaiah records some of these boasts (Is 37:24; 2Ki 19:23) which may imply traveling paths that armies find difficult much as Hannibal is remembered for taking his Carthaginian army across the Alps during the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.) (see note on Is 27:34 in Lesson 32). The Hebrew has also been translated by phrases such as "scarcely touching" in the NJB or "without touching" the ground, referring to the rapid speed of Cyrus' advance which makes it appear that his feet never touch ground. The ideas of pursuit and speed are connected giving some support to this latter meaning. The Hebrew for foot (רֶגֶל, *regel*) also appears in verse 2 making clear the connection in the two thoughts. The LXX reads, "And he shall pursue them; the way of his feet shall proceed in peace."

^e **Lord - Yahweh**, or **Jehovah** (יהוה, YHWH), written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears here and in verses 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, and 21.

^f (4) The Lord answers his own question, that it was He who stirred up the one from the East. Not only that, He ordered the generations (דֹרִים, *dor*; in the LXX, γενεαί, *genea*; Ac 17:26) from the beginning. God is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega (Is 41:26, 43:10-13, 44:6-7, 46:10, 48:12; Gn 1:1; Rv 1:8, 1:17, 2:8, 21:6, 22:13). He was here before anything was created, and after the heaven and earth pass away, God will remain (Is 46:3-4, 48:3-7; Dt 32:7-8, 32:39; Mt 28:20; Ac 15:18). Throughout this time, God never changes (Is 40:26, 43:13; Ex 3:14-15, 6:3; Ps 102:27). Each person, each generation or group, gets caught up in its own problems and concerns, but God's plan is for all men at all times and places. Believers, unlike others, can bring their problems to the Lord and begin to understand the problems of the day as part of the divine plan and that we can trust in God for our ultimate salvation (Is 43:7).

^g (5) The nations have been invited to come to, and trust in, the Lord, and they have seen God's mighty acts in the form of Cyrus, and are afraid (Is 11:11-12; Ex 15:14; Dt 30:4; Jsh 2:10, 5:1; Ps 65:8, 66:3, 67:7; Ezk 26:15-18), but they do not acknowledge God. Instead, in verses 6 and 7 they make more idols (1Sm 5:1-5). There is very little the nations of the world agree upon, but one thing they can agree upon is that they will not acknowledge God. Though King Herod and Pilate detested each other, the one thing they could agree upon is a rejection of the Messiah (Lk 23:7-15; Jn 19:12-16).

^h (6) The people of the nations help each other with construction of idols (Is 40:19, 44:12; 1Sm 5:3-5; Dn 3:1-7; Ac 19:24-28), and try to buck up each other's courage (Is 35:4; 1Sm 4:7-9; Jl 3:9-11). Some commentators have suggested that verses 6 and 7 are an interpolation belonging to Is 40:18-20, though it fits logically here as the response of the nations to God's invitation.

ⁱ (7) The cooperation in the building of idols continues in more details in this verse. Isaiah points out that the idols need to be fastened down so that they won't totter (מוֹת, *mot*) and cannot be knocked over (Is 40:19-20, 44:12-13, 46:7; 1Sm 5:3; Jr 10:3-5).

^j (8) [8-10] God chose the Jews, Abraham's descendants, as His servants not because he, or they, deserved it more than other peoples, but because it was His choice to do so (Dt 7:6-8, 9:4-6). **Abraham, my friend** is used here and elsewhere (2Ch 20:7; Jas 2:23). God often chooses the weak to accomplish His purposes just to demonstrate His own power. Again and again the Jews would disobey God, and suffer punishment as a result (Is 42:18-25). At this time they found themselves in Exile in Babylon. Yet the exiles are assured that they are still God's chosen people, that God is with them, and that they can be confident of God's power to bring them out of Exile. In the same way, we can be confident that God has won the victory over sin and death and that He will bring us home in the end. Verse 8 is the first appearance of one of the recurring themes of Chapters 40-55, that of the **servant**. The servant appears as applying to different people or persons in different places and contexts, but is always linked to God's choice (Is 43:10-20, 44:1-2, 45:4). That is, as here, God selects His servant to carry out His purposes just as He selected Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar II and Cyrus II to carry out His purposes, and called Abraham as ancestor for His people (Gn 12:1-3). In verse 8, the called servant is the Jewish people (Is 43:1-10, 44:1-8, 44:21, 45:4, 48:20) with its reference to Jacob as God's chosen over his brother (Gn 27:29; Is 43:10; Rm 9:10). Even though His people have been unfaithful (Is 42:19), God will

forgive their sins and redeem them from Exile (Is 44:1-5, 48:20). Other passages in Isaiah identify the servant with the Messiah (Is 42:1-12, 49:1-26, 50:4-6, 52:13-53:12; Ac 8:28-35). Although some commentators make reference to Israel/Jacob not being a slave (Is 14:2, 24:2; Gn 9:25; Lv 25:6, 25:39; Dt 6:21; Jr 2:1), but a servant (Is 20:3, 22:20, 36:9-11, 37:24, 37:35, 42:1, 53:1, 65:8; Gn 21:25; Dt 5:15; 1Sm 17:34; 1Ch 16:13; Jb 42:8; Ps 79:10; Jr 37:2; Ezk 34:24; Dn 9:17), the Hebrew (עֶבֶד, *ebed*) is used for both as well as for bondman i.e. bondservant (Dt 15:17; Ezr 9:9) and translations other than the RSV translate it all three ways depending on the context, often making a different choice. This might perhaps point to a difference between the nature of slavery in the ancient world compared with the chattel slavery practiced in different times and places. A different word (שָׂכִיר, *sakir*) is used for hired servant or employee (Is 16:14, 21:16; Ex 12:45, 22:15; Lv 19:13, 22:10, 25:6, 25:40, 25:50-53; Dt 15:18, 24:14; Jb 7:1-2, 14:6; Mal 3:5). The LXX uses a word (παῖς, *pais*) commonly used for a boy in training, an apprentice, but is translated, “But you, O Israel, are My *servant* Jacob, and he whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, whom I have loved . . .” The Greek (δοῦλος, *doulos*) more typically used for servant () is also sometimes translated as slave () depending on the context and the translator’s choice. After the gentile nations reject God, the scene shifts back to the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, my friend. The right hand is the hand of God’s power. The Jews should not fear because they are still part of the plan, the election. Israel belongs to God just as a slave/servant belongs to his master. And if you mess with the slave, you have to deal with the master. The empires that have oppressed the Jews over the years are all gone, but the Jews remain. Is 14:1, 27:11, 29:22, 42:1, 42:19, 43:1-7, 43:10, 43:20, 44:1-2, 44:21, 45:4, 49:7, 51:2, 52:13-53:12, 54:17, 63:16, 65:9, 65:15, 65:22; Gn 12:1-3; Dt 7:6, 10:15, 14:2; 2Ch 20:7; Ps 135:4, 136:22; Jr 30:10; Ezk 28:25, 37:25; Lk 1:54; Jas 2:23; 1Pt 2:9

^k (9) Abraham came from Ur in Mesopotamia. God’s servant, Israel, was to act as a chosen people, a Kingdom of Priests, to bless the world (Ex 19:5-6). At Sinai Israel is expressly called and empowered to take the truth of the One True God to the nations, and to become a mediator between them and God. From the uttermost parts recalls the Exodus, Abraham called from Ur and the return from Exile. Is 11:11-12, 20:3, 37:16, 42:1, 43:5-7, 44:1-2; Dt 7:6, 10:15, 14:2; Ps 135:4; Rm 11:1-2; 1Pt 2:9

^l Elohim here and in 13 and 17

^m (10) The right hand of God is the symbol of His power. With His left hand He will hold the right hand of his people (v. 13). God tells His people not to be fearful hundreds of times in the Scriptures (e.g. Gn 15:1, 26:24; Jsh 1:5-9). Is 8:10, 41:13-14, 43:1-5, 44:2, 49:8, 50:7-9; Gn 28:15; Ex 3:20, 15:6, 15:12; Dt 3:22, 20:1, 31:6; Ps 18:35, 27:1, 48:10, 63:8, 68:35, 89:13-14, 119:28, 119:117, 138:7, 139:10; Jb 40:14; Jr 1:19, 15:20, 30:10, 42:11, 46:27-28; Ezk 34:31; Rm 8:31

ⁿ (11) [11-20] God assures the Jews of His help. Though politically and militarily insignificant, the Jews will survive as a nation because of God’s help. Israel is often referred to as “Jacob” in Isaiah possibly harkening back to the exile of Jacob himself in Mesopotamia after cheating his brother (). Isaiah gives three concrete examples of how God will act (and aspects of His character) to protect the Jewish people. 11-13 (victorious servant, 16-16 transformer of the worm and 17-20, sustainer of the needy. In 11-13 God assures the Jews that He will get them out of Exile because their enemies will be no more. Is 17:12-13, 29:5-8, 29:22, 45:24, 54:17; Gn 28:13-16; Ex 23:22; Jr 2:3

^o (12) Is 17:14, 29:20, 34:12, 40:17; Ps 37:35-36; Jb 7:8, 20:7-9; Ps 37:10, 37:35-36

^p (13) When the Jews are released from Babylon to return to the Land, they have nothing, no city, no land that they own, no Temple, no walls. All they have is God’s promise that they need not fear. Is 41:10, 42:6, 43:3, 45:1, 51:18; Ps 73:23

^q Go’el – Redeemer

^r Qedosh Yisrael here and 16 and 20

^s (14) God raises up the godly from “worms.” Israel is likened to a worm because it is weak, despised and oppressed by the nations. But in the following verse, God will turn Israel into a threshing sledge to refine the nations. / Redeemer: in Hebrew, go’el, one who frees others from slavery and avenges their sufferings; cf. Lv 25:48; Dt 19:6, 12. Cf. note on Ru 2:20. / It is God, not Israel, that will bring about the transformation through the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah. The **Redeemer** refers back to the idea of the **Kinsman Redeemer** (גֹּאֵל, *gaal*), one who is our close family, usually the closest male relative, who is designated to fulfil our own obligations, redeem us from slavery or captivity, or avenge our blood (Nu 35:19; Ruth 2:20). God (Is 43:14, 44:6, 44:22-24, 47:4, 48:17, 59:20; Ps 19:14; Jr 30:34), and more specifically in the Messianic Writing, the Messiah, is pictured as the Redeemer. The Messiah is both God and man and designated to take our punishment in our place. Worm (see heb) indicates man’s low degree and that he cannot do anything to save himself. But God will turn the worm into a threshing sledge to file down the mountains and blow them away – that is, destroy any earthly opposition. The imagery of chaff is about judgment. Is 1:4, 1:27, 6:3, 35:10, 40:2, 43:3, 43:14, 49:7, 49:26, 54:5-8, 60:16, 63:16; Gn 15:1; Ex 6:6, 15:13; Ps 22:6, 78:35; Jb 4:19, 19:25, 25:6

^t (15) A **threshing sledge** is formed from heavy timbers fastened together with sharp rocks or metal driven into the underside to separate grain from husks and stalks. As a metaphor here, it likens the destruction of the nations (Is 25:10) or enemies (2Ki 13:7; Am 1:3-5) to the way the grain is torn out of the waste product when the grain is threshed. There is a sense in which threshing also removes a remnant of useful material, or people, from the waste which is blown away, in the metaphor perhaps by God's breath (Is 40:___). Is 2:14, 10:5, 21:10, 28:27, 42:15, 64:1; Ex 19:18; Ps 107:33; Jb 41:30; Jr 9:10; Ezk 33:28; Mi 4:13; Hab 3:12

^u (16) Winnow (Ps 1:4) is a concept similar to threshing in that it separates the valuable grain from worthless chaff which is blown away, in this case by casting the mixed grain and chaff into the air. Once becoming again God's faithful servant, Israel will become an instrument through which God can bless the nations, drawing from them the valuable grain, the remnant who will bless the Lord (Is 43:10, 45:20-25, 48:20, 49:6, 52:10, 56:6-8, 60:1-3, 66:18-19). There is no doubt at all that Isaiah speaks in terms of the gentiles being included in the Messianic Kingdom (). Is 25:9, 35:10, 40:24, 51:3, 60:19, 61:10; Jr 15:7, 51:2; Dn 2:35; Mt 3:12; Mk 1:24

^v Poor, or afflicted.

^w (17) Isaiah revisits the imagery of the Exodus when God brought water out of a stone, reminding God's people that God saved them from Egypt, and will save them again. God promises to supply all of the needs of the Jews upon their return to the Land. (Heb. Barak?? For create?) 17-20 shows God as creator and sustainer of the world. There is exodus imagery here. God will bring water and shade to the most hospitable place. The tree is not an olive tree, and they do not all grow in the same spot, but they do supply shade.. There may be here an eschatological pointing to a new heaven and new earth. Is 30:19, 35:7, 40:3-5, 42:16, 43:20, 44:3, 49:10, 55:1, 62:12, 65:24; Ex 15:22-25, 17:1-7; Nu 20:2-13; Dt 31:6; Ps 27:9

^x (18) As Moses brought water from a rock (Ex 17:1-7), the return from Exile will be pictured as rivers flowing down from the mountains and turning the desert into a fertile plain. Even nature will obey God's commands. This prefigures the wonders of the Messianic age (Is 11:6, 35:6-7; Ezk 47:1-12). Is 30:25, 35:6-7, 43:19-20, 48:21; 2Ki 3:17; Ps 107:33-35, 114:8; Jb 38:26

^y (19) Is 35:1-2, 37:24, 44:14, 51:3, 55:12-13, 60:13; Ex 25:5-13

^z (20) Is 4:5, 29:24, 40:5, 43:3, 43:10, 43:14, 50:2, 51:9, 66:14; Ex 6:7; Ezr 7:6, 8:31; Jr 32:17; Jb 12:9

^{aa} Melek – King

^{bb} (21) [41:21–29] This indictment of Babylonian gods is patterned on a legal trial, in which they are challenged to prove power over events of history and so justify their status as gods (vv. 21–24). Israel's God, on the other hand, has foretold and now brings to pass Israel's deliverance (vv. 25–27). The accused are unable to respond (vv. 28–29). By such polemics (see also 43:12) the prophet declares that all gods other than the Lord are nonexistent; this implicit claim of monotheism later becomes explicit (see 43:10–11; 45:5–7, 14, 18, 21–22; 46:9; and note on 44:6). [21-24] The nations of the ancient Middle East all had their gods, claimed to have supernatural powers, but they all failed to deliver (Is 40:18-20). God puts them on trial and challenges them to speak, but they give no answer. This verse recalls verses 1-2 which also speak in terms of a court proceeding. Isaiah makes clear the Jewish concept of monotheism (Is 43:8-15, 44:6-8, 45:5). God proves His power by citing the "former things" which are prophecies that had come true (Is 42:9, 43:18, 46:9, 48:3). Now we are back to the court case, and this time the gods themselves will be called in to answer, but they must be moved in by others, they cannot move themselves. And they remain silent when challenged. In fact they can do nothing. Tohu. Is 43:8-13

^{cc} (22) Things of long ago...things to come: there are no predictions attributed to idols that have since been fulfilled. Second Isaiah makes frequent reference to "things of long ago," sometimes in conjunction with "things to come" or "new things" in connection with the Lord's activity (cf. 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9–10; 48:3–8); both the old things (e.g., creation, exodus) and the new things (release from exile) God brings to pass (cf. 51:9–11), which is why he can declare them beforehand. / God has a plan for the nations that will not be thwarted or taken back (Is 14:26-27). Is 43:8-9, 43:18-19, 43:26, 44:7-8, 45:21, 48:14, 65:17; Jn 13:19

^{dd} Terrified or see

^{ee} (23) If the gods cannot interpret history, the former things, or predict the future, what is to come hereafter, what good are they? Is 41:23, 42:9, 44:7-8, 45:3, 45:7, 45:21, 46:10; 2Ki 19:26; Jr 10:5; Jn 13:19

^{ff} Nothing.

^{gg} (24) Is 1:13, 37:19, 41:29, 44:9, 48:8; 1Sm 12:21; Pr 3:32, 28:9; Ps 109:7, 115:8; Jr 8:19, 10:5-8, 10:15; 1Co 8:4

^{hh} (25) This is a reference to Cyrus II, the Great, of Persia who will liberate the Jews from Babylon. None of the gods of the nations had predicted this, or caused this. Cyrus is also represented here as coming from the North as well as the East. As noted above, Cyrus came from the North to attack Babylon. The North is traditionally the direction of danger since Jerusalem has deep valleys in three sides and can only be easily invaded from the North and the armies of Babylon came from the North (Jr 1:13-14, 4:6). The formulation of calling a servant by name in this verse implies his choice for a particular mission (Ex 31:2; Nu 1:17) and an expression of a special relationship between the servant and God (Is 43:1, 45:3-4). After his conquest of Babylon, Cyrus said that “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (Ezr 1:2). God is stirring up someone from the North, who will have his way with the world. God declares this in advance so when it happens, people will know who brought it about. Isaiah here is putting down, making fun of, idolaters. Is 5:5, 10:6, 41:2, 46:11; 2Sm 22:43; Ezr 1:2-4; Ps 44:5, 44:28; Jr 50:3, 50:9, 50:41, 51:48; Mi 7:10; Nah 3:14; Zec 10:5

ⁱⁱ (26) Is 41:22, 44:7, 45:21, 52:6; 1Ki 18:26; Hab 2:18-19

^{jj} (27) Look in this verse, and see in verse 29, come from the same Hebrew word. Is 40:9, 44:28, 48:3-8, 48:16, 51:12, 52:7; Nah 1:15; Mt 4:23, 9:35, 23:34; Mk 1:14-15

^{kk} (28) The court case concludes when the gentile gods do not make answer, idols being only emptiness, or a wisp of fog, deluding the nations. The Lord remains as the only thing to trust, and the only means of salvation (Is 43:12, 50:2, 59:16, 63:3). This presents a terrible situation for people and nations who do not have God, go rely only on their idols, which are nothing. Is 40:13-14, 46:7, 63:5, 64:7, 65:12, 66:4; 1Ki 18:26; Ezr 22:30; Ps 22:11; Jr 25:4

^{ll} Delusion, nothing, false.

^{mmm} (29) The Hebrew/LXX look interesting here, especially as to nothingness/empty wind/confusion. Entering into joy is all about forgetting who we were and remembering into whom God is changing us. Even Israel in disbelief, is a covenant people. The nations rejected God, just as people today when invited respect God in favor of idols. Is 2:8, 17:8, 37:19, 41:24, 44:9; 1Sm 12:21; Ps 96:5; Jr 5:13