

Isaiah 42:18-44:28

Overview

Like the last section, this one is a long alternation, with some embellishment. The overall pattern is:¹

	42:18-43:21	43:22-45:7
A. Servant Condemned	42:18-25	43:22-28
B. Servant Redeemed	43:1-7	44:1-5 44:21-23
C. Court Scene: God's Uniqueness	43:8-13	44:6-20
D. End of the Captivity ²	43:14-21	44:24-28

Schematically, the pattern is A BC D A BCB D, an alternation with the BC sequence in the first panel unfolded to a chiasm in the second.

Rhetorically, the point of this section, like that of the previous two, is the incomparability of יהוה. The defeat of Judah by Babylon does not mean that the Lord is inferior to Marduk, the high god of the Babylonian pantheon. The Lord is incomparable

- because of his power in creation (40:12-31)
- because of his ability to predict the future (41:1-42:17)
- because of the testimony of his Servant (this section)

Ironically, the one on whose testimony he calls is morally defective, even blind. So the Lord must first restore him before his testimony can be effective.

42:18-43:7 Servant

Here we see the servant, first in his natural state, blind and unable to bear witness to anything. Then God redeems him and makes him fit to be his witness in the next section (43:8-13).

42:18-25 The Servant Condemned

At the outset, the servant is incapable of bearing witness to anything.

Vv. 18-20 present a confusing shift of person and number, which can best be resolved by imagining that we are witnessing an energetic conversation involving Isaiah, the Lord, and the people.³ We can sort this out, assuming only two speakers (the Lord and Isaiah), alternately addressing one another, the people, and the Servant. We can code each clause: LI = the Lord to Isaiah, IP = Isaiah to the people.

¹ See structured text in notes for details

² Most of the way through the exposition, I called this section, "Fall of Babylon." But that is not nearly as prominent as the theme of Israel's deliverance.

³ An alternative approach is to recognize this paragraph as an instance of the covenant lawsuit, or ריב, as Harvey points out (*Le Plaidoyer Prophétique ...*, Studia 22, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967, pp. 58f, which explains the questions, but shifts in number and person are still confusing.

The general flow has three parts.

- In 18, Isaiah speaks to the people, to whom he had previously been sent on a mission of blinding and deafening, and calls them back to sight and hearing.
- vv. 19-20 give the Lord's verdict, delivered through Isaiah to the people, that the servant is in fact blind and deaf.
- In v. 21ff, Isaiah addresses himself once more directly to the people. He reminds them of their fathers' failure, and urges the remnant to learn from their example.

18, Isaiah's Invitation to the Redeemed

IP: 42:18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.--2pl is often used by Isaiah to address the people (e.g., 40:18, 21), so we'll understand it this way here.

Isaiah calls the people back from their deafness and blindness. This is not simply the blindness of the Gentiles without the law (42:1-4, 6), but the deafness and blindness of Israel. Recall Isaiah's commission,

Isa 6:9-10 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Their sin and hardness of heart led them to reject Isaiah's message, and as a result they went captive into Babylon. Now Isaiah anticipates the reversal of this judgment, when their spiritual perception returns. Here as elsewhere in this paragraph, when he speaks to the people in the second person plural, he anticipates restoration of the remnant, while references in the third person plural are negative, describing the sinful generation that went into captivity in the first place.

19-20, The Lord and Isaiah discuss the Servant

Twice the Lord speaks (19a, about the servant; 20a, to the servant), confirming the blindness and deafness that Isaiah now seeks to reverse. Twice Isaiah speaks, echoing the Lord's statement, probably to the people.

LI: 19 Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent?--"My servant" indicates that the Lord is speaking. The third person reference means he is addressing Isaiah, not the Servant. This nation, for all its blindness, is the one that God has chosen as his servant, the messenger to carry his message to the world.

We have observed that the title of "servant" shifts in its application between the nation as a whole and its representative in the Messiah. In 42:1-7 and ch. 53 the Servant is clearly not the nation, because he has a ministry toward the nation (42:6 "I will give the for a covenant of the people"). But other times the focus zooms out to the righteous remnant, or even (as here) to the nation as a whole.

The title "messenger" reminds us of Israel's original duty to carry the knowledge of the Lord to all the earth (Deut 20).

IP: who is blind as he that is perfect in a covenant of peace, and blind as the LORD'S servant?--

The Lord would say “my servant,” not “the Lord’s servant,” so Isaiah is speaking. If he were speaking to the Lord, he would say, “thy servant,” so he is probably addressing the people. Having received the indictment from the Lord, now delivers it to the people.

Isaiah introduces a third title, alongside “servant” and “messenger.” This title is **קִשְׁלִים**, translated in the AV as “perfect.” The root **קִשַׁל** does indeed mean “complete,” but often in the sense of an interpersonal relationship, and the title here makes more sense if we understand it to describe someone who is in a covenant of peace with God. In spite of his blindness, the Servant is still bound to God by covenant.

By describing “the Lord’s servant” in the third person, even in speaking to the people, Isaiah forces his hearers to think about just who that servant is. Are they really fulfilling their calling? Do they really deserve this title?

Now the Lord directly rebukes the Servant’s blindness:

LS: 20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not;--2s pronouns are the Lord’s standard way to address the Servant (v. 20).

The Servant has received ample evidence of God’s power. The Lord is recalling Moses’ exhortation to the people in Deut 4:23-36. Moses anticipates a time when they worship idols (v. 25), and as a result are sent into captivity (v. 27). When this happens, they are to recall all that they have seen:

Deu 4:33-36 Did ever [a] people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, **as thou hast heard**, and live? 34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt **before your eyes**? 35 **Unto thee it was shewed**, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. 36 Out of heaven **he made thee to hear his voice**, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth **he shewed thee** his great fire; and **thou heardest** his words out of the midst of the fire.

In spite of these testimonies, the Servant does not recognize the truth.

IP: opening the ears, but he heareth not.--The shift from first to third person reference to the servant suggests that, as in v. 19, Isaiah is reporting to the people what he learns from his position of prophetic privilege. “Look, in spite of all that God is doing, the Servant still doesn't hear.”

21-25, Isaiah Continues his Exhortation

After this interchange, Isaiah picks up an extended exhortation to the people.

IP: 21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law⁴, and make it honourable.--Consider first the syntax of the verse, then its rhetorical role within the section, and finally its broader implications for our understanding of the role of the law.

Syntactically, the last two clauses are best understood as explaining the object of God’s good pleasure.⁵

4 cf. 42:4, the law given to the Gentiles

5 Joüon-Muraoka §157b, p. 556; GKC §120c, p. 385

he delights to exalt his own word.

Psa 138:2 thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

This is how he promotes his righteousness. The fault for the people's failure to understand does not lie with the Lord for hiding his truth. On the contrary, he delights to magnify it, exalt it, make it prominent, as the standard for the righteousness that he desires in his subjects.

Rhetorically, Isaiah is picking up where he started in v. 18, reversing the curse of ch. 6 and leading them back to sight. In doing so, he starts by reminding them of God's attitude toward his law. The restoration of an erring people always begins with the Word of God. The Psalmist wrote,

Psa 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Recall the mission of the Servant in 42:1-4 to bring judgment to the Gentiles, summarized in the promise in v. 6 that he would be "for a light of the Gentiles." So now, in reversing the judgment of ch. 6 and calling the remnant back to sight and hearing, he begins with the law. This approach is remarkably like the role of the law that Paul presents in Gal. 3:24,

the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

Theologically, the value that God places on his law in this verse is helpful in our discussions about the role of the law in our lives today. The NT emphasizes how the Lord Jesus did for us what the law could not do (Rom 8:3-4). Specifically, the law cannot justify us (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16). Sometimes, this truth tempts us to demean the law and look down on it.

But there is nothing wrong with the law. This verse reminds us that it is the object of God's delight. Paul declares it "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). We often contrast the law with the Spirit, but Paul says that "the law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14). True, the law indeed can make nothing perfect (Heb 7:19), but only because the law is "weak **through the flesh**" (Rom 8:3). That is why **it** cannot justify **us**: the failing is not in **it**, but in **us**. It can condemn the flesh, but never improve it.

That takes a new birth, a new creature, indwelt by the Spirit. Now, being made partakers of the new covenant, we find that "the righteousness of the law [can] be fulfilled in us" if we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). As God here delights in his law, so does the believer (Rom 7:22). And one day, the law will go forth from Zion (Isa 2:3) when the Servant of the Lord brings judgment to the nations and thus enlightens them (42:1, 6).

In spite of this precious heritage, look at the people's condition, pictured here in their captivity. In addressing the remnant on the verge of return, Isaiah builds a picture of the desolation of their fathers in three steps.

22 But this is a people robbed and spoiled;--The third person reference is to the generation that went into captivity. In the first snapshot of their sad condition, their most precious possessions have been taken from them. Their land and their city are now controlled by others; their glorious temple is burned to the ground, leaving them no way to offer the sacrifices that God commanded to deal with their sin.

they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses;--The second picture is more severe. Not only have they lost their possessions, but they themselves have been trapped, like an animal in a pit trap. Returning to the image of v. 7, they have lost their freedom.

they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.--The third picture returns to the vocabulary of the first, where “prey” and “spoil” are nouns from the two verbs in 22a. It adds an additional element, the lack of deliverance. “Deliver” נצל and “restore” שׁוּב *Hifil* appear together only three other places in the OT, two before Isaiah.

- In Gen 37:22, Reuben urged his brothers to cast Joseph into a pit rather than slaying him, “that he might rid נצל him out of their hands, to deliver שׁוּב him to his father again.” Like Joseph, the people are “snared in holes,” but there is no Reuben to deliver them and send them home.
- In Num 5:25, in the legislation concerning the avenger of blood, “the congregation [of the city of refuge] shall deliver נצל the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore שׁוּב him to the city of his refuge.” Like the refugee, they are confined to the city of refuge, “hid in prison houses,” but there is no congregation to hear their case and vindicate them.

In fact, the Lord himself will remedy this situation as we move through the section. But from the perspective of the first generation of captives, doomed to die in captivity, there is no hope.

23 Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?--The remnant must take a lesson from their parents, as they prepare to return to the land. Compare Paul’s observation concerning the sins of Israel in the wilderness:

1Co 10:6, 11 Now these things were our **examples** ... all these things happened unto them for **ensamples**: and they are written for our admonition.

As he later writes to the Romans,

Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written **for our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The lesson that they are to hear takes the form of a chiasm: judgment, cause, cause, judgment, reinforced by the use of the singular (designating the Servant) in the outer members, and the plural (emphasizing the people) in the inner ones. Both forms of the plural (3rd person and 2nd person) appear. So the nation appears here in all three roles that we have seen: the idolatrous generation that went into captivity, the remnant who return, and the nation in its designated role as the Servant.

24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?--He repeats the sad judgment that has befallen them. How did the nation fall into this condition?

did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned?--Their captivity was not just an accident of history, but the deliberate judgment of God, because of their sin.

for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.--Now, working back out of the chiasm, he amplifies what it means to sin. His definition of sin is one later adopted by Paul and John:

Rom 3:20 by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom 7:7 I had not known sin, but by the law:

1 Jn 3:4 sin is the transgression of the law.⁶

25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle:--This “therefore” is the counterpart to v. 21. Because God is so zealous for his word, his wrath burns especially hot against those who do not submit to it. Isaiah is speaking *to* the generation that returns, *about* the generation that went into captivity. The singular pronoun, shifting from the plural at the end of 24, recalls the nation’s vocation to be God’s Servant, blinded judicially for its disobedience.

We do well to remember this warning. It is as applicable today as it was in Isaiah’s age. Because God delights in his law, his wrath is against those who do not obey it. If we are his children, the Holy Spirit within us will cause us to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them (Ezek 36:27). But if we despise his law, we give evidence that we are in fact not his children, and we have nothing to look forward to but his fury.

Heb 10:26-31 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.--The nation, destined to be the Servant of the Lord, in fact was consumed by God’s wrath, and yet was so blind that it did not recognize what was happening. Perhaps, like us, it attributed its misfortunes to random bad luck or unfortunate circumstances, not to the judgment imposed by a righteous lawgiver.

It is bad enough to have departed so far from the Lord that we fall under his wrath. It is even worse to be so calloused that we do not recognize our misfortune as his chastisement. Paul speaks of those who are “past feeling” (Eph 4:19). He warns of those who

in the latter times ... shall depart from the faith, ... having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim 4:1, 2).

When we sin, we grieve the Spirit of God within us (Eph 4:30), who rebukes us to set us straight. God forbid that should ever quench the Spirit (1 Thes 5:19), silencing his reproof and drifting into the same deadly spiritual torpor that doomed Israel’s ministry as the Servant of the Lord.

43:1-7, The Servant Restored

Here we see the blind and deaf servant restored.

⁶ Modern versions insist on translating ἀνομία as “lawlessness,” rather than AV’s “transgression of the law.” But Trench p. 225 notes, “ἀνομία is never [*sc.*, in the NT] the condition of one living without law, but always the condition or deed. of one who acts contrary to law It will follow that where there is no law (Rom. v. 18), there may be [other offenses], but not ἀνομία.”

Follow Motyer's analysis of these verses as a chiasm:

The Creator and his People	1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine.	7 Even every one that is called by my name : for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.
The Journey	2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.	5 Fear not: for I am with thee : I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;
Redemption • 3-fold relation • price paid	3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee .	4a Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: 4b therefore will I give men for thee , and people for thy life.

1, The Creator and his People

43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel,--The singular pronouns show that he is thinking of the nation here in its role as his Servant.

The association of “create” ברא and “form” יצר in the same verse is very rare. It appears first in Amos (4:13), who was contemporary with the start of Isaiah's ministry, then four times in Isaiah (here, v. 7, 45:7, 18). Only here and v. 7 do the verbs refer to the nation. Elsewhere they describe what God does with light and darkness (45:7), heavens and earth (45:18), mountains and wind (Amos).

These elements had no role in their origin. They were the result of God's sovereign, unilateral action. Now God claims the same role with respect to his Servant. The Servant is God's creation, apart from any action or merit on the part of the Servant.

Fear not:--This encouragement reminds us of the first Servant song, in 41:8-16, where three times God said, “Fear not” (41:10, 13, 14). Here, as there,⁷ the encouragement is grounded in God's past activities.

He gives three short reasons for the Servant not to fear:

I have redeemed thee,--Isaiah uses this verb more often (25x) than any other book in the OT, and all but one (35:9) are in ch. 40-66. This is the verb for the kinsman redeemer, responsible for delivering his family members from bondage or for avenging their murder. God used the verb to describe the delivery of Israel from Egypt:

Exo 6:6 I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and **I will redeem** you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

But before then, Jacob recognized God's role as his redeemer from a much broader array of threats:

Gen 48:15-16 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which

⁷ See exposition on those verses; AV has the verb tenses wrong.

redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

God takes the role toward his servant of one who has both the obligation (as a family member) and the means to deliver from any threat.

I have called ~~thee~~ by thy name;--This idiom, קרא בשם, is more common in Isaiah (10x) than in any other book. It is often used of people who make proclamation in the name of the Lord, and is introduced in that sense five times in Genesis. Here, the Lord is the one doing the crying out. The meaning is not to assign a name to someone, but to call out the name publicly.

Imaging children choosing teams for a ball game. Each captain in turn calls out the ones he wants on his team. The early picks are the best, and the captain can hardly wait to claim the best batter, or the best fielder.

So here, God is laying claim to his Servant. We should omit the supplied “thee,” and understand this with the following statement:

thou art mine.--In other words, God loudly cries out Jacob’s name, and says, “I’ve got dibs on you. You’re mine.”

2, The Journey

God has created his Servant, redeemed him, and publicly claimed him. We might think that all will now be pleasant and comfortable for the Servant, but this is not God’s way with his people. They must endure a difficult pilgrimage before they reach their home.⁸

Years before, the Psalmist⁹ wrote,

Psa 66:12 we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*.

God is pleased to lead his people through trials on the way to their final blessing, so that they will recognize his powerful intervention in preserving them. The objective of the drama of salvation is not our comfort, but his glory, and we are simply implements with which he exalts himself. Here the Lord amplifies this principle.

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:--In the days before bridges, crossing a river could be a dangerous proposition. People had to find a shallow spot (a “ford”) and wade across, and if the current were swift, you could be swept away and drowned. But God can bring his people safely across.

Raging waters are often a picture of God’s judgment. Recall the first universal judgment, the flood, and Israel’s experience at the Red sea. Who can doubt that the current global economic, geopolitical, and environmental troubles are God’s judgment upon a sinful nation? The world might well declare with the Psalmist,

⁸ This interpretation of the sufferings in this verse is supported by the structural parallel with vv. 5-6, which emphasize the destination.

⁹ Probably David; see Hengstenberg.

Psa 88:7, 16-17 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

But God promises to be with us and protect us when he pours out his wrath on the wicked.

when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.--Another form of God's judgment is fire, as we just read in 42:25. As the water recalls Israel at the Red Sea, so the fire recalls Lot at Sodom, and anticipates the three Israelite children in the fiery furnace. In both cases the flames destroyed the ungodly, but the righteous were spared.

The water and fire are symbols of God's judgment, from which the righteous are delivered. Peter reminds us of this principle, using both fire and water:

2Pe 2:4-9 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Fire and water carry another message as well. Though we are saved, we still need purification. The same elements that destroy the wicked also serve to purge us from impurity. Water certainly serves this role in the temple ceremonies. The ceremonies for purification from uncleanness repeatedly require the use of "running water" מים חיים: Lev 14:5, 6, 50, 51; 15:13; Num 19:17, an expression that elsewhere denotes flowing water from a fountain or stream rather than stored water from a cistern (Gen 26:19; Sol 4:15; Jer 2:13; Zech 14:8). A mighty river will drown the wicked, but to a penitent like Naaman, it offers cleansing:

2Ki 5:10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

Similarly, fire destroys the wicked, but purges out the dross from the believer. The Psalmist wrote,

Psa 66:10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

Solomon recognized this:

Pro 17:3 The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

So God promises in Isaiah,

Isa 1:25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

Isa 4:4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Isa 48:10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

And so Peter and James encourage the believers in the midst of suffering,

1Pe 1:6-7 ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ

Jam 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

3-4, Redemption

Having just promised to protect them through the water and fire, the Lord now gives them the reason that they can have confidence. The center of 43:1-7 is an ABAB alternation. The Lord twice proclaims his triple devotion to the nation (A), and his sacrifice of others for them (B).

3 For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:--The first triplet emphasizes who the Lord is to Israel: “thy God,” “of Israel,” “thy Savior.”

- As “YHWH thy God,” he is in covenant relation with them. He has bound himself to them in a solemn covenant, and their security is as good as his Word.
- “The Holy One” emphasizes his separateness, the ineffable distinction between the creator and the creature. Yet he has chosen to reveal himself to “Israel.” It’s one thing to be in covenant with another nation, subject to all the frailties that we experience. It’s quite another to be in covenant with the creator of the heavens and the earth.
- “Thy Savior” emphasizes how the power implicit in the second title is applied through the covenant of the first. As “Holy One,” he is **able** to save. As “YHWH thy God,” he is **willing** to save. And in fact, he **does** save.

I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom [atonement], Ethiopia and Seba for thee [in thy place].--Repeatedly, the Lord has sacrificed other nations to spare Israel.

- At the Exodus, he killed the firstborn of Egypt and destroyed Pharaoh’s elite army so that the nation could be released.
- In 2 Kings 19:9, he sent Tirhaka of Ethiopia against Sennacherib to distract him from Jerusalem. Under Ashurbanipal (ca. 667 BC), Assyria subdued Egypt and Ethiopia.¹⁰ The association of Seba and Ethiopia in the same clause suggests that we are to understand them as

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurbanipal>

involved together, not as two separate incidents.

4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been ~~honourable~~ honored, and I have loved thee:--The second triple reverses the perspective of the first, and describes what Israel means to the Lord.

- “Precious” יקר is applied elsewhere to precious stones and other valuable things (Prov 20:15; Jer 20:5; 2 Sam 12:30). The idiom reminds one of Mal 3:17, “they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Those whom he has redeemed are precious to him.
- “Honored,” that is, in God’s eyes. The expression does not indicate that they have behaved in an exemplary fashion, but that God has valued them.
- “I have loved thee.” Much is made of the love of God in contemporary Christianity. But it is not an indiscriminate, general love. Love is by its very nature discriminatory. If you love everybody, you love no one. God here declares his love toward those who are his covenant people, whom he has redeemed.

therefore will I give men for thee, and peoples for thy life.--The sentiment is the same as at the end of v. 3, but the verbs turn from perfect to imperfect. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were not the last to be decimated for the sake of God’s people. He will not hesitate to wipe out entire nations for the sake of his people. Rev 19 describes the Lord’s return in fulfillment of the promise in Zech 14 to deliver Jerusalem. Combining these prophecies gives us a vivid picture of what this verse describes:

Zec 14:2-3 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

Rev 19:19-21 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

5-6, The Journey

Now we return to the image of a journey. In the first panel, the emphasis was on the trials along the way, but now the focus is on the return home.

5 Fear not:--A recurring reassurance: 41:10, 13, 14; 43:1

for I am with thee:--As in v. 2 and 41:10 before that, he promises the assurance of his presence.

I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of

the earth;--Once again, we have the theme of a journey. It may lie through fire and water, but it will be under God's protection, as he regathers his scattered people from the ends of the earth.

This is a vision that we have seen before:

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

7, The Creator and his People

7 *Even every one that is called by my name: ~~for I have created him~~ whom¹¹ I have created* for my glory, **I have formed him; yea, I have made him.**--Rounding out the chiasm of the servant's restoration, we once again hear, as in v. 1, that the Lord has "created" and "formed" him. Note the shift from the plural implicit in "every one" to the single individual in "whom" and "him," reflecting the dual nature of the Servant as the nation and the Messiah.

In v. 1, the emphasis was that God called out the name of the Servant to set him apart from the other nations. Now we learn that the Servant receives a new name: he is "called by [God's] name."

The idea that God's people are called by his name is pervasive in the Bible.¹² The earliest references are in the Pentateuch:

Num 6:27 And they [the priests] shall **put my name upon the children of Israel;** and I will bless them.

Deut 28:10 And all people of the earth shall see that **thou art called by the name of the LORD;** and they shall be afraid of thee.

The idea extends all the way to the Revelation:

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and **his name shall be in their foreheads.**

Isaiah himself gives us an important clue to the meaning of this expression. In 3:1-4:1, he describes God's judgments against the powerful leaders and pampered ladies. One consequence is that there won't be enough husbands to go around:

4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: **only let us be called by thy name,** to take away our reproach.

The idea that the Servant is called by God's name is akin to the metaphor of Israel as the wife of the Lord. When a man and woman are joined in marriage, the two become one, and the wife takes the name of the husband, whom Scripture calls her head (1 Cor 11:3). Now she represents her husband.

It is helpful to link this notion to two other texts.

¹¹ GKC §116x

¹² See notes.

The first is God's purpose in Gen 1:26 to "make man in our image." The human race's role on the planet is like the king's statue in a town, representing his authority. Now that the race as a whole has fallen from this lofty objective, it is up to the Servant to be God's image, to bear his name.

The second is the third commandment, Exod 20:7, "thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." While this command certainly encompasses any inappropriate use of the Lord's name (cf. Lev 24:10-22), it is particularly apt with reference to the notion that God's people are called by his name. Anything we do reflects on his reputation. Compare the Lord's analysis of the impact of the captivity, and his motive for restoring the nation, in Ezek 36.

Eze 36:20-23 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, **they profaned my holy name**, when they said to them, These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. 21 But I had pity for **mine holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for **mine holy name's** sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23 And I will sanctify **my great name**, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Like Israel of old, we bear the name of the Lord. Since apostolic times (Acts 11:26), believers have been known as "Christians," bearing the name of our Lord. James (2:7) laments that some in society "blaspheme **that worthy name by the which ye are called.**" We should be exercised to bear the name of Christ worthily, and bring honor to him by everything that we say or do.

43:8-13, Witnesses to God's Uniqueness

The shift from singular to plural pronouns shows a new section here. The members of the nation are summoned as witnesses (עֲדִים vv. 9, 10, 12) to God's uniqueness. The point here, as in the prediction contests in ch. 41-42, is the supremacy of God over the idols.

8-9, Convening the Witnesses

First we meet the witnesses for the two sides, then the case at question is presented.

8-9a, The Witnesses

8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.--First he calls his sinful but restored people. As we met them in 42:18-20, they were blind and deaf. They could not perceive the very things that they experienced. But as a result of the redemption described in 43:1-7, they now have perception.

9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled:--As is usually the case, AV's "people" in parallel with "nations" is plural. He summons the opposition.

9b, The Challenge

The challenge in this first panel is the ability to predict the future.

who among them can declare this, and shew us former things?--As we saw in 41:22 and 42:9, the “former things” are half of the evidence for God’s predictive power:¹³

Isa 41:22 Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the **former things**, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

Isa 42:9 Behold, the **former things** are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Isa 48:3 I have declared the **former things** from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.

They represent previous predictions that have now been fulfilled. Predictive prophecy is woven into the very fabric of God’s dealings with his people. What other nations can produce comparable evidence? What other gods reliably make predictions that are fulfilled?

let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.--In our modern vernacular, God says to the pagans and their gods, “Put up or shut up.” They must either match his evidence, or acknowledge his sovereignty.

10-11, Testimony of God’s Witnesses

Now he presents the testimony of his witnesses. We first learn who they are, then their purpose, and finally the content of their testimony.

10a, Their Identity

10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen:--Note the change in number. “My servant” in Isaiah is always associated with singular pronouns. This observation enables us to resolve an ambiguity in the grammar of the verse.

One alternative is to take “my servant” as parallel to “my witnesses”: “Ye are my witnesses; ye are my servant.” But this would be an exception to the use of the singular everywhere else for the servant.

Thus it is better to understand “servant” to be parallel to “ye,” thus: “You are my witnesses, and so is my chosen servant.”¹⁴ When the nation falls short in their responsibility to bear witness, the Servant steps in and fills the gap.

The nation has been through the “former things.” They are in the best position to confirm the challenge that the Lord has placed before the court. Before, in their blindness, they could not appreciate what was happening to them, but now, redeemed and guided by the Servant, their testimony can be forceful.

¹³ Thus also Haran, M. (1963). “The literary structure and chronological framework of the prophecies.” *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 9, 127-155.

¹⁴ The LXX rendering, though loose, also supports this view, naming three witnesses: the people, the Lord himself, and the Servant.

10b, Their Purpose

What is the purpose of the witness that they are to bear? Ordinarily, witnesses bear their testimony to persuade someone else, but the objective of these witnesses is first of all to persuade the community of which they are a part, “that ye may know ... believe ... understand.” This persuasion has three steps:

that ye may know.--The verb has no explicit object.¹⁵ He wants them to come to a full, settled assurance. Compare Paul’s description of the objective of the ministry of the gifted men in the church:

Eph 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

and believe me,--Knowledge *about God* by itself is not enough. He wants us to believe, to trust *in him*. The second objective of their witness is this reposing of the heart upon him.

and understand that—Content is not the only element of faith, but it is an important part. He wants them to understand, to be able to wrap their heads around the most important characteristics of their God.

We’ll consider the content of this understanding in a moment. First, though, note that the means for this growth in knowledge, belief, and understanding is the testimony of the people and the Servant. It is not just an external teacher (the messianic Servant), nor is it just an internal matter of self-encouragement (the people). The two work together. Compare the mechanism that Paul envisions for reaching this state in Eph 4:11-16. It is the result of the operation of the who body under the influence of the head:

Eph 4:15-16 But speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even Christ*: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

There, as here, it is the joint ministry of the Servant and the people that leads to knowledge, belief, and understanding.

10c-11, The Content

The joint witness emphasizes two aspects of the Lord’s uniqueness. Each is introduced by an “I am” statement.

The titles by which the Lord identifies himself here are picked up in the NT to describe the Lord Jesus. We’ve already observed a certain dualism in the one Isaiah describes, looking forward, as “the Servant of the Lord.” At times it represents the nation, and at other times the promised Messiah. When we get to the NT and look back, we see a similar dualism in the Messiah himself. At times he is indeed the Servant of the Lord, completely subject to his Father. At other times he appears as the Lord of the Servant, fully divine and authoritative over his subject people.

¹⁵ It cannot govern “me,” for that is bound with a preposition ל, which never governs the object of ידע (Ps 69:5, v. 6 ET, means “with reference to,” see Hengstenberg). And with האמין and its object interposed, it cannot govern the object of בין.

	"I am"	Exclusive claim
Unique in who he is	10 I <i>am</i> he:	before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.
Unique in what he does	11 I, <i>even</i> I, <i>am</i> the LORD;	and beside me <i>there is</i> no saviour.

I am he:--As we discussed in 41:4, this echo of Deut 32:39 emphasizes the absolute uniqueness of the Lord. It also anticipates our Lord's appropriation of this title to himself throughout the gospel of John, one of the many ways in which he asserts his claim to be not only the personal Servant of the Lord, but indeed the Lord of the nation that is the Servant. The ultimate purpose of this witness is to bring the nation to an understanding of this truth.

before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.--The first aspect of God's uniqueness is his eternity. Isaiah repeatedly emphasizes this characteristic:

Isa 41:4 I the LORD, **the first, and with the last**

Isa 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; **I am the first, and I am the last**; and beside me there is no God.

Isa 48:12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; **I am the first, I also am the last.**

In these other verses, Isaiah uses the distinctive terms "the first" ראשון and "the last" אחרון, terms that our Lord Jesus applies to himself in the Revelation (1:17; 2:8). Here, instead of this absolute statement, the Lord describes his eternity in relative terms, compared with other gods. With a touch of irony, he characterizes other gods with the verb "formed" יצר, which the Lord uses throughout Isaiah to emphasize the contrast between idols, whom a man must "form" (44:9, 10, 12), and his own ability to form Israel (43:1, 7, and elsewhere). "Before me, there were no idol workshops, no clever artisans carving trees and overlaying them with gold." All other claimants to deity are creatures, ultimately dependent on him for their existence.

Now we turn from the uniqueness of his being to the uniqueness of his action.

11 I, even I, am the LORD;--The introductory "I am" statement changes subtly. Now it emphasizes, not his deity, but his position as the covenant God, who reveals himself to his people.

and beside me there is no saviour.--Other nations may have their gods, but Israel's YHWH is the only one who can deliver his people. The reason is the first characteristic, that he is the first and the last.

- Sometimes in the movies the cavalry arrives too late, but no threat can get the jump on the Lord: he is the first.
- Sometimes the hero leaves, thinking all is well, but the enemy creeps in at the end, but no threat can outlast the Lord.

Again, the claim to uniqueness echoes in the NT, with the frequent use of "savior" to describe our Lord Jesus.

12-13, Conclusion of the Trial

The progression of verb tenses moves our attention from past historical events to the future, which will unfold in the next section.

- 12a uses perfects (suffix forms) to describe what God has done in past history.
- 12b-13a are all verbless clauses, emphasizing timeless truths.
- 13b uses imperfects, looking forward.

12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed,--First he recalls what he has always done throughout their history, using perfect verbs to point back to their experience. In this panel, the emphasis is on his ability to predict the future. (In the second panel, he will turn to the nature of idols.) Throughout Israel's history, he has done these three things, over and over again:

1. First, he declared what he would do.
2. Then he did it, bringing salvation.
3. Finally, he called their attention to the salvation that he achieved.

Recall God's words to Abraham,

Gen 15:13-16 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full.

Or his promise to Moses,

Exo 3:19-22 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. 20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. 21 And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: 22 But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Exo 3:12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

Or his warning to Ahab through Micaiah,

1Ki 22:17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

In every case, God declared, and acted, and then (by recording the account in Scripture) claimed credit for what he had done. Now Isaiah addresses a generation who will recall the warnings of captivity as

punishment for idolatry that go as far back as Moses in Lev 26 and Deut 28, and more recently in the prophecies of Isaiah and his contemporaries:

Amo 5:26-27 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. 27 **Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus**, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts.

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

Israel, now in captivity and finally understanding what God has been saying to them, can bear witness to his ability to predict the future.

when *there was no strange god among you*:--It was he and he alone who did this. Note the italics: no stranger, God or human, was among them.

Next, he shifts to verbless clauses, emphasizing timeless truths that applied both then and now.

therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God.--Better, “ye are my witnesses, and I am God.” He contrasts two roles: they watch, and he acts.

Their role is to bear witness, in every age, to what he has done.

The last clause, describing his role, is better understood as an introduction to what follows.

And I am God. 13 Yea, before the day *was I am* he; and *there is none that can deliver out of my hand*:--The two clauses from “I am he” on are a quotation from Deut 32:39:

39 See now that I, *even I, am he*, and *there is* no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: ***neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand***.

From of old, God has been sovereign. No other god can challenge him.

They correspond to the two kinds of uniqueness that God has claimed:

- “I am he” is the summary of the uniqueness of his being
- The lack of any who can oppose him summarizes the uniqueness of his action.

By quoting Deuteronomy, he emphasizes that this has been true “from the day,” from ancient times.

I will work, and who shall let it?--Now we come to the third temporal division, in which imperfect verbs look forward. In Deut 32, his claim to unique and sovereign power emphasized the futility of Israel’s trust in other gods:

Deu 32:37-39 And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, 38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

Those gods whom Israel foolishly worshipped were the gods of other nations. By judging Israel, the Lord showed that those gods had no power. He now continues the demonstration by destroying the

nations who originally served them. The final element of the panel shows that the gods of Babylon are powerless before the one to whom the Servant bears witness.

43:14-21, End of the Captivity: The Doomed City

Each of the two panels of this section looks ahead to the defeat of Babylon by Cyrus. In the first panel the emphasis is on the fall of Babylon; in the second, on the divinely-enabled conqueror. In Isa 40-66 these two key characters are named for the first time in these two panels.

The report of Babylon's fall is beautifully structured, using the Exodus as a template. At the center (16-17), we have a reminder of two aspects of the Exodus: Israel's path through the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army. On either side we have the corresponding elements of the future deliverance: the conquest of Babylon (14-15), and the return of the nation (18-21). The structure is a combination of alternation and chiasm, bEeB, where

- lower case is defeat of the enemy, upper case is the deliverance of God's people;
- B(abylon) looks to the future, while E(gypt) looks to the past.

Let's start with the center, the historical record of what happened in Egypt, then consider the outer elements that look forward to the future.

16-17, Past: Deliverance and Destruction in Egypt

Note the play of verb tenses. The first two are participles, emphasizing the Lord's characteristic actions. The enclosing paragraphs describe how he will exercise these in the future:

16 Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;--He recalls how he brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea.

17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power;--He brought Israel safe through the Red Sea, but destroyed the Egyptian army that tried to follow them.

they shall lie down together, they shall not rise:--Now he turns to imperfects. The first imperfect should be understood as vivid present: "Look, they are lying down." The second continues to be true to this day: "They shall never rise."

they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.--"Tow" is lint left after the processing of flax. It was rolled into wicks for lamps. The imagery is the same as in 42:3, "the smoking flax will he not quench." A flickering flame on an oil lamp is a fragile thing, readily extinguished.

The shift from imperfects to perfects emphasizes the final and irreversible destruction of the Egyptians.

14-15, Future: Defeat of Babylon

Triple titles in 14a and 15 bracket the description.

14 Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;--Compare the triple title in v. 3,

“the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” The double title “the Lord, the Holy One of Israel” is common in the first half of the book, but only in the second half, and frequently there, these are joined with a title indicating the Lord as the Saviour or Redeemer of his people.¹⁶

For your sake I have sent to Babylon,--The object of “sent” is not specified, but it is Cyrus, as we will learn in the corresponding element in the second panel

and have brought down all their nobles fugitives,--This is the more natural translation of the word, as in 15:5. The proud city of conquerors, who led other nations captive, now itself becomes a pathetic band of refugees.

and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.--Or “in the ships of their rejoicing.” They were proud of their merchant fleet, which had access to the Persian Gulf by way of the Euphrates. Now they seek to flee in these vessels.

15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.--Another multiple title, this time emphasizing (as in 45:17) his power as creator. Together with the triple title in 14a, this sets off the first paragraph.

18-21, Future: Deliverance from All Nations

18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.--In comparison with what he is about to do, that earlier victory is nothing. “Forget about all that. I have something even greater to show you.”

When I showed this to Anita, she asked how the return from Babylon could be greater than the Exodus. The answer lies in a verse of Jeremiah that expands on Isaiah’s promise.

Jer 23:7-8 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Jeremiah’s expansion shows that this promise extends far beyond the return from Babylon. It encompasses the complete return of Israel to her land, something that has yet to happen, and he applies it to the messianic age (vv. 5-6). This complete restoration of the nation is certainly far greater than the Exodus.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?--As often throughout Isa 40-66,¹⁷ “former things,” referring to God’s past mighty deeds, is parallel to “a new thing,” his future acts.

I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons [jackals] and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.--In the exodus, God made dry land in the middle of the Red Sea. Now he will provide water in the midst of the desert to provide for the people as

¹⁶ See notes

¹⁷ 41:22-23; 42:9; 44:7-8

they make their way back from exile to the land. The only witnesses will be the wild animals that inhabit the wilderness, but they will praise God for what they see. Note the chiasm, with repeated reference to water in the wilderness and desert surrounding the references to the wild beasts.

This promise points back to chapters 34-35. Recall the significance of these chapters. They summarize God's judgment on the nations (34) and his restoration of Israel (35), after the extended burdens (13-23) and woes (28-33). Key phrases in 19b-20 take us back to those chapters.

Let's note first the theme of a road and water in the wilderness.

Isa 35:6-8 **in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.**¹⁸ 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 And an highway shall be there, and a **way**, and it shall be called The **way** of holiness;

As here, there the way was prepared for God's people returning to Zion:

Isa 35:9-10 but the redeemed shall walk there: 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads:

How about the jackals and owls who watch this transformation? This is one of three places in Isaiah that we meet jackals and owls. One of the others is in the burden on Babylon,

Isa 13:20-22 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. 21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and **owls** shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. 22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and **dragons [jackals]** in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The other is in the summary picture of judgment in ch. 34.

Isa 34:11-17 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. ... 13 And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be **an habitation of dragons [jackals], and a court for owls**. 14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15 There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. ... 17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

The gentile nations abused Israel, and God gave them over to wild beasts in judgment. When the future time of restoration comes, those wild beasts will praise God for the restoration of the wilderness and the return of his people.

In the second panel, this promise of physical water for the return is made the emblem of an even greater

¹⁸ There are subtle differences in vocabulary that merit attention. 35:6 has flowing wadis in the Arabah, while 43:19-20 has continually flowing rivers in the dry wilderness, an extension and generalization of the earlier promise.

spiritual blessing, the New Covenant gift of the Spirit:

Isa 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.--Why does God do all this for the sinful nation? Not, first of all, in order to bless them, but to magnify himself, as Ezekiel recognizes when he recalls this promised deliverance in the midst of the captivity.

Eze 36:21-22, 31-32 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. ... 31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. 32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

Over and over Scripture encourages us to take courage for the future from the evidence we have in the past:

Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

This principle explains the otherwise paradoxical commands of Paul to give thanks in every circumstance,¹⁹

1Th 5:18 **In every thing give thanks:**

Phi 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but **in every thing** by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Whatever trials we may face, we should approach them with thanksgiving for what God has already done for us, and that will strengthen our minds for the conflict that lies ahead.

Now we turn to the second panel, where we have the same elements, though with replication of the report of the Servant's redemption.

43:22-44:5, Servant (singular)

Again, we encounter the Servant, first condemned but then redeemed. The Lord goes through two cycles of condemnation and forgiveness. The central two elements are much shorter than the outer ones, so the first cycle focuses on condemnation, and the second on forgiveness. The repetition of the notion of remembering in the two central elements links them together as a transition.

¹⁹ We are also told to give thanks *for* everything, Eph 5:20 ("giving thanks always for all things"). This reflects a different spiritual dynamic, recognition that God uses suffering for our good, as in Rom 5:3-5; 1 Pet 1:7; Jas 1:2-4; etc.

43:22-25, Focus on Condemnation

Each element in the first cycle begins with an emphasis on the centrality of the Lord.

- 22, “it’s not me on whom you have called.” Their worship has not been focused on him. They have been preoccupied with form, and neglected the relationship.
- 25, “I, even I” (and nobody else).

43:22-24 Condemned for Defective Worship

The paragraph condemns the Servant for his defective worship. It is an alternation between the cultid defect (unacceptable worship) and the reason (weariness).²⁰ v. 22 summarizes the two themes, which the subsequent two verses amplify.

Verse	Defect: Unacceptable Worship	Reason: Weariness
22	But thou hast not called upon me , O Jacob;	but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.
23	Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.	I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.
24	Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:	but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;--Better, “It is not me upon whom thou hast called, O Jacob.” As Motyer notes, the emphasis demanded by the word order persists throughout the paragraph. The Lord is not saying that Israel had no cultic activity, but that it was misdirected,²¹ and thus unacceptable to him. The argument is the same as in chapter 1,

Isa 1:1 11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

They were doing many things, but not for the right reason. They may have done them to impress their neighbors, or to reinforce their link with their culture, or to satisfy their own sense of self-righteousness, but their hearts were not directed to the Lord. The Lord’s warning to his Servant should serve as a challenge to us, to examine our motives for our spiritual exercises.

but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.--The second element of each panel can be understood as

²⁰ The strong parallels between across the verses make this preferable to Motyer’s chiasmic arrangement.

²¹ Young, following Alexander, understands the first clause in the sense of John 15:16. But note that this contrast is suggested by the emphatic position of “you.” The emphasis here on “not me” indicates that the contrast is not what he has done vs. what they have done, but rather whether the object of their devotion is him or someone else.

the cause that leads to this defective worship: They were bored with God. They viewed the time spent in worshiping him as tedious, boring, wearying.

Even after their return, this problem persisted.

Mal 1:12-13 But ye have profaned [my name], in that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* polluted; and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible. 13 Ye said also, **Behold, what a weariness *is it!*** and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts;

In our high-speed, over-active culture, this condemnation is also a strong rebuke to us. We laugh when a child says, in the middle of the meeting, “Is it over yet?” But in our hearts are we asking the same thing? We sing of the “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” but when we’re on our knees with the Lord, do we excuse ourselves after 32 seconds? Do we delight to spend time with the Lord, or has it become a wearisome duty? Every married couple knows how devastating it is to a relation when one member seems to grow tired of the other. Here the Lord complains that his Servant has grown tired of him. A worshiper without a passion for the Lord can never offer acceptable worship.

Let’s emphasize that point. Worship without passion is unacceptable to God. Going through the motions doesn’t count. This point rests on one of the cornerstones of the OT faith,

Deu 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Worship offered with an attitude of my-this-is-boring-I-can’t-wait-to-get-it-over is not being offered with all the heart, all the soul, and all the might.

So worship is defective if it is offered in a spirit of weariness. But where does the spirit of weariness come from? The next two verses will consider alternative diagnoses. At this point, we should humbly examine our own hearts to see whether we may sense this weariness in ourselves. Do we find spiritual exercises tedious? Do we find other demands crowding out our times of private devotion with the Lord, or public fellowship with his people? If we do, we should attend carefully to what follows.

The next two verses continue these two themes. To emphasize these, let’s unwind the alternation and treat the corresponding members together.

23a Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. ... 24a Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:--In the first element in each panel, the Lord enumerates various components of the Mosaic ritual. Following the clue in the summary, these statements do not deny that they made offering, but that they offered them truly to the Lord. Yes, they went through the motions, but those motions were empty and ineffective. Going through the motions without the underlying attitude of heart is never acceptable to the Lord.

23b I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.--In the second element in each panel, Isaiah examines the cause of their malaise. The first panel claims that it is not God’s fault. He has not made them weary.

We can understand how an Israelite might blame God for his malaise. After all, God did command the nation to bring sacrifice. The book of Leviticus specifies many details for those sacrifices, and the occasions when they needed to be offered. One can imagine a worshiper saying, “The temple worship

is so ritualistic. And all that blood is so sombre. It just kills my love for the Lord. If only we had a more joyful, positive way to worship.”

23b deflects this line of thinking. The problem does not lie in the worship that God commanded, even though he did command it. The point of 23b is that he never intended the sacrifices to be a burdensome task whose completion brings some kind of merit. If the people are weary in their devotion, it is not God’s fault.²² The sacrifices were meant not to be a hurdle that the worshiper had to overcome in order to merit salvation, but object lessons to stimulate the worshiper’s thoughts.

- The sin offering reminds him of his rebellion,
- the burnt offering reminds him of the worship due to God,
- the various free-will offerings remind him of his gratitude for God’s gifts.

The Lord’s statement here responds to an implied criticism of the OT ritual. Some were suggesting that if only it were more contemporary, more “worshiper friendly,” perhaps people would come with more enthusiasm. The Lord rejects this claim. He turns their attention away from the form of worship entirely, and at the end of v. 24, urges them to look elsewhere.

24b but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.--

Note the repetition of the two verbs from 23b. It is God, not they, who should complain of weariness. Their sin is a burden to him. He is the one who should complain of boredom in their worship. The reason is not the form of worship, but their personal sin.

22b establishes the fact of their weariness. 23b rejects an external explanation for that weariness. Now 24b offers an internal diagnosis. They find worship tiring because of their sin. Compare the effect of the same two offenses, “sins” and “iniquities,” later in Isaiah:

Isa 59:2 your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

If we grow weary on our knees before God, perhaps it is because we sense that he is not listening. And if he is not listening, perhaps we should examine our own hearts to see where the barrier lies.

Let’s summarize this condemnation of the servant. The servant is condemned for his inadequate worship. His worship is unacceptable because it is offered without a passion for God. 23b suggests that he excuses his weariness by the boredom and tedium of the sacrificial system, which no doubt was creaking with rigidity after 700 years of tradition. This attitude is reflected three hundred years later in Mal 1:13. God rejects this diagnosis. Weariness in worship is not the fault of the ritual. It points to an obstacle in the heart. The root of spiritual malaise is sin in the worshiper.

22 The specific offering here (the מנחה with frankincense) was a voluntary offering, according to the Jewish interpretation of נָפֶשׁ in Lev 2:1. Gill writes, “This word is used because the Minchah, or meat offering here spoken of, was a freewill offering, and was offered up with all the heart and soul; and one that offered in this manner, it was all one as if he offered his soul to the Lord.” He cites Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Baal Hatturim on the passage. But the general flow of the passage suggests that the Lord does not mean to say, “this particular sacrifice should not weary you, even if the others do.” Do we really believe he is saying, “OK, I’ll grant you that most of it is boring, but at least the meal offering is voluntary,” as though he is ready to bargain with them for a more acceptable cultus. The argument rather is that they cannot blame God for their boredom, and he cites this particular sacrifice as an example that reminds them of the others as well.

43:25 Restored by God Alone

Worship without passion is unacceptable to God. The remedy is not to go through the motions, regardless of how we feel. God alone is the appropriate motive for our worship, and he alone is the remedy when we are alienated from him.

25 I, even I, am he—Just as v. 22 began by emphasizing the centrality of God (rather than ritual) in proper worship, this verse begins by emphasizing that only he can repair the problem when it arises.

The rest of the verse states in two different ways the remedy that God alone can apply.

25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.--This expression is repeated in the parallel element, 44:22. It is a striking one.

In the early books of the OT, “blotting out” is something that God does to sinners: initially the sinful people of Noah’s time (Gen 6:7; 7:4, 23), then the Amalekites (Exod 17:14; Deut 25:19). It is described as the appropriate treatment for sinners in general (Exod 32:33; Ps 69:28).

It is not a common expression for forgiving sin. The usual way to say that God forgives sin in the OT is that God “carries” or “bears” sin, נשא, anticipating the sacrifice of the Messiah. The effect of the OT sacrifices is described as “atonement,” a covering over, but the very repetition of those sacrifices showed that they had no permanent effect (Heb 10:1-4), again leading us to look ahead to the full redemptive work of Messiah.

The first time the verb מחה “wipe out” or “blot out” is ever applied to sin²³ appears to be Ps 51:3, 11, in David’s prayer of confession.²⁴

Psa 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies **blot out my transgressions.**

Psa 51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and **blot out all mine iniquities.**

David, overwhelmed by a sense of his guilt, realizes that he needs more than a covering. Casting himself on the Lord, he boldly asks that instead of wiping him out as a sinner, God would just as thoroughly wipe out his sin.

Now the Lord affirms that he does indeed do this for his people. Furthermore, he is the only one who can do it, “I, even I, am he.” We cannot do this for ourselves.

He goes a step further in asserting his sovereignty over the process of forgiveness:

for mine own sake,--Having our sins forgiven, and enjoying passionate fellowship with the Lord, is a great blessing to us. But God’s motive for forgiving us is not first of all our blessing. It is his own glory. Compare our discussion of God’s name in 43:7, and the emphasis of Ezek 36; note as well the concluding verse of the first panel, 43:21. God formed his people for himself, to bring praise to him. When we sin, we deprive him of that praise. He will not tolerate this deprivation. If he were to wipe us out, he would still not receive our praise, so instead, he chooses to wipe out our sin and make us fit

²³ Num 5:23 refers to blotting out curses from a book, that is, the writing of the curses. It is not talking about forgiving the underlying sin; in fact, the whole process is to identify such sin for divine punishment.

²⁴ Once the idiom is established, others pick it up. David himself denies such treatment to his adversaries in Ps 109:14. Isaiah adopts it here and in 44:22, and Neh in 3:37 and 13:14.

instruments to bring him glory.

and will not remember thy sins.--This is another characterization of forgiveness that appears for the first time in David's psalms:²⁵

Psa 25:6-7 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old. 7 **Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:** according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

God often promises to remember his covenants (Ps 25:6; Gen 9:15; Lev 26:42). David recognizes that his sin is in tension with being in covenant with God, and he prays that the Lord will not remember it.

The Lord has just said (24b) that their sin wearies him, but now he offers to forget it. It will no longer weary him, he will no more be inaccessible to them, and they will once more find joy in their spiritual exercises.

43:26-44:5, Focus on Forgiveness

The second cycle is joined to the first by the linked keyword "remember." This time, the condemnation section is shorter than the description of the coming forgiveness.

43:26-28 Condemned for Outright Sin

26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.--

God has just claimed to be the only source of forgiveness. If Israel thinks otherwise, he invites them to make their case. "I have offered to stop remembering your sin," God says. "Perhaps you think I am overlooking your righteous deeds. Why don't you remind me of them, if you think that you are innocent?" He then summarizes their sin in a brief chiasm. The first panel states the offense, and the second the resulting judgment. The pairing and the vocabulary are drawn from the parallel in 42:24, emphasizing the correspondence between the various sections condemning the Servant.

Isa 42:24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.--In fact, in every generation the nation has fallen short of the Lord's standards.

By itself "thy first father" might be Adam, or Abraham (called Israel's father in Jos 24:3 and Isa 51:2), but in the second panel this element corresponds with "Jacob," whose title as father of the nation is preserved in the liturgy of the first-fruit offerings,

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

²⁵ David may draw inspiration in this case from Moses' account of his intercessory prayer in Deut 9:27, "Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin." Interestingly, David in Ps 109:14 combines both of these expressions, negatively in a curse on those who oppress the righteous. Is Isaiah somehow drawing on that conjunction?

Jacob's very name, "supplanter," recalls his personal moral defects.

"Thy teachers" are the priests and prophets, those who mediated between God and the people. If the messengers are flawed, how can the people claim to be righteous?

28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary,--Corresponding to "thy teachers" are those in charge of the temple (as the title is used in 1 Chr 24:5). "The profanation referred to was the fact that they were ruthlessly hurried off into a strange land, where their official labours were necessarily suspended."²⁶

and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.--As for their first father, he and his descendants are now exposed to other nations for cursing and reproach, a fate that has attended the Jewish people in every generation.

44:1-5 Restored

44:1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:--He repeats the double designation "Jacob and Israel." Unlike the titles used alone, this title is most common in the servant sections (ch. 40-57), is used overwhelmingly of a singular entity, and four times is explicitly called "my servant." It appears to be a distinctive designation of the nation as the Servant.

We saw it in the condemnation section in 43:28 and its parallel 42:24. Now, turning from condemnation to forgiveness, the Lord adds the titles "servant" and "chosen." This verse grows directly out of the previous paragraph.

- They are unable to respond to the demand in 43:26 with any reason for God to justify them.
- In spite of this, God has chosen the nation as his servant, in keeping with the principle of unmerited favor already stated in 43:25.

The next verse makes three points: a past statement, a future promise, and a command.

2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb,--In the past, the Lord brought the nation into existence. The verbs are participles, in order to serve as titles for the Lord: "the Lord thy maker, the one forming thee" Recall that Jacob's birth was miraculous. Rebekah was barren, and conceived only after Isaac prayed for her (Gen 25:21). From the start, the nation has been the object of God's miraculous attention. Similarly, the perfect Servant, the Messiah, was the object of a miraculous birth.

which will help thee;--Now the verb is an imperfect, offering a future promise. The Lord who miraculously brought the Servant into existence in the past, promises to help him in the future.

Fear not,--These two pillars, God's past care and his strong promise, uphold this command. So we, as members of God's perfect Servant, need not fear, drawing our assurance from God's past mighty acts on our behalf, and the certainty of his promise of future care.

This triple links back to two previous commands not to fear.

In the near context, in the first panel of the present structure and the section describing the Servant's

²⁶ Delitzsch

redemption, God twice tells him not to fear, linking it with the historical statement that God has formed him:

Isa 43:1, 5 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and **he that formed thee**, O Israel, **Fear not**: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. ...

5 **Fear not**: for I *am* with thee:

How about the statement about God's help? That is linked three times with the command not to fear in the first poem about the Lord's Servant in 41:8-16. There, three times, the Lord exhorted the nation three times not to fear, because of his help.

Isa 41:8-14 But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9 Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. 10 **Fear thou not**; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, **I have helped thee**; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. ... 13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, **Fear not; I have helped thee**. 14 **Fear not**, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; **I have helped thee**, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

There is, though, an important advance from that passage. There, the assurance about God's help was (contrary to the AV), consistently in the perfect, "I have helped thee," referring to God's past mighty acts. Here it really is future. We have noted before how the Lord recalls his past blessings as grounds for their confidence, but here he adds something else, his future promise. The argument anticipates that of Heb 6,

Heb 6:17-18 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.--He repeats the two-fold address from v. 1, but with a slight change, replacing the name "Israel" with "Jesurun." This name for the nation appears elsewhere only in Moses' song (Deut 32:15) and his final blessing on the nation (33:5, 26). The meaning of the title is "upright one," but its first occurrence shows that from the beginning the nation fell short of this calling:

Deu 32:15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered *with fatness*; then he forsook God *which* made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Yet by the Lord's sovereign intervention, it will be upright, and a source of blessing.

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground:--We have repeatedly seen the promise that God would bring water to the parched land:

Isa 30:25 And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

Isa 35:6-7 for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the

parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Isa 41:17-18 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

As marvelous as that restoration will be, it is a symbol of an even greater one:

I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:--The true restoration of Jeshurun awaits not only the renewal of the land, but the coming of God's Spirit. Our Lord may have had this passage in mind when he cried out at the feast of tabernacles,

Joh 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Isaiah here anticipates the more detailed promise of the new covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-34) in Ezek 36:25-27 (which also associates "clean water" with "a new spirit").

The promise of water in the first half of the verse is not just a metaphor for the gift of the Spirit in the second half, but a real, physical blessing that illustrates the gift of the Spirit. We see this in Ezek 36 as well, where after the promise of the Spirit, the Lord goes on to promise physical prosperity:

Eze 36:28-30 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

The full promise of the New Covenant is both physical and spiritual. The spiritual portion was inaugurated on Pentecost, but the physical restoration (what Peter called the "times of refreshing" in Acts 3:19, and considered as still future) awaits the Lord's return.

4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.--A striking feature of the landscape of Bible lands is the concentration of vegetation along the streams. The Psalmist sings of "a tree planted by the waters" (1:3), and Jeremiah contrasts such lush vegetation (17:8) with "the heath in the desert" (17:6), the briar and tumbleweed that are all that can grow away from the stream. Watered by the Spirit, Jeshurun becomes truly upright.

5 One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with his hand* unto the LORD, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel.--In the first description of the redeemed servant (43:7), he is called (passive) by the Lord's name. This verse recalls that one, but with two changes.

First, it describes not a passive naming, but someone eagerly seeking out the name.

Second, a variety of people are claiming this name. It would make no sense for a Jew to "call himself

by the name of Jacob ... and surname himself by the name of Israel.” We see here Gentiles turning to the Lord and desiring to be associated with him.

Zec 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that God is with you*.

The repeated “one ... another ... another” (Heb. “this one ... this one ... this one”) recalls the anticipation of a mixed congregation of worshipers in Ps 87,

Psa 87:4-5 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. 5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

44:6-20, Witnesses to God’s Uniqueness

The keyword “witnesses” that we saw in 43:9, 10, 12 reappears here, in vv. 8, 9. In the first panel, the nations were invited, but the emphasis was on people and the Servant as witnesses to the Lord. Here, both the Lord and his witnesses, and the pagan gods and their witnesses, are described. Each part consists of a summary and a more detailed section, in each case an alternation of two themes.

Methodological note: recognizing these structural indices helps us to identify the key themes that the author is trying to bring to our attention. In this case, when we recognized the two themes, we are struck by a contrast between them. The claims in the first panel, concerning the Lord, both focus on the Lord. The people are only there as witnesses. The claims in the second panel include both the vanity of the idols and the shame and blindness of their worshipers.

We began this larger section (42-44) with a description of the Lord’s blind witness, whom he redeemed so that it could bear witness to him. Now we see that the idols’ witnesses are also blind—blinded by the same Lord who restored his own Servant’s sight.

6Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts;--6a introduces the entire section. Note the piling up of four titles into two pairs, describing two facets of God’s relation to his people.

- As the LORD, יהוה, he is in covenant with them. The basic form of the Deuteronomic covenant is a suzerainty treaty, binding vassals to their lord, and so it is appropriate for him to call himself Israel’s king. In this relation he imposes laws on them and exacts sanctions when they disobey those laws.
- In the phrase “LORD of Hosts” יהוה צבאות, the word “hosts” means “armies.” Israel is called the Lord’s army in Exod 12:41 and throughout the exodus account,²⁷ but so are the heavenly bodies (Deut 4:19) and the angels in his heavenly council (1 Kings 22:19). The association of the title here with the function “redeemer” suggests that Isaiah is emphasizing the resources that the Lord has to back up his redemptive work: he brings forth all the host of heaven (cf. 40:26) to

²⁷ Cf. 1 Sam 17:45. But wherever the epithet appears to refer to the armies of Israel, one must consider the possibility that the earthly and heavenly armies are to be seen as working in parallel, and יהוה צבאות might indeed refer consistently to the heavenly host.

restore his people and defeat their adversaries. Compare Elisha's angelic bodyguards at Dothan in 2 Kings 6:17.

6-8, *The True God*

Both summary and exposition make the same two points: God's timelessness, and his uniqueness.

6, Summary

I am the first, and I am the last;--We saw these same two characteristics of the Lord in the first court scene, 43:10.

Isa 43:10 before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Here, he teases out two propositions from that statement:

1. The Lord's temporal domination: from "before ... after" to "first ... last"
2. His uniqueness as God: not only was there no God before or after, but now absolutely, "beside me there is no god."

We also see this language in 41:4 and 48:12. Among OT authors, Isaiah is the only one to characterize the Lord this way, and this title, "the first and the last," is his way to emphasize the absolute uniqueness of the Lord among all gods. That makes it all the more amazing that in the Revelation, the glorified Lord Jesus takes this title to himself:²⁸

Rev 1:17, 18 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am **the first and the last**: 18 I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev 2:8 unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith **the first and the last**, which was dead, and is alive;

The one who predicts the future, who delivers Israel from her bondage, and stands above every one who claims to be God, is identified as the one who "was dead and is alive," the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

and beside me there is no God.--Here is the second element of the summary: No one can contend with him for the title of God.

7-8, Exposition

Because God is first and last, he stands above time and can predict the future. As elsewhere (41:22, 26-27; 42:9; 43:18-19; 45:21-23; 46:9-10; 48:3-7, 14-16),²⁹ he does this in two directions, looking back to his past mighty acts, and forward to things to come.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the

²⁸ The Revelation is *not* quoting the LXX; the LXX in each case paraphrases the term, "the last," but the Lord translates it directly from the Hebrew, using εσχατος, the standard Greek equivalent for אחרון.

²⁹ See Haran, SVT 1953, pp. 135, 137ff for exposition of this motif.

ancient people?--The “ancient people” probably points to the antediluvians. Even before calling Abraham, God demonstrated his predictive power, warning Adam accurately of the consequences of sin, and warning Noah of the coming flood.³⁰

and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.--Now he turns to things that have not yet come to pass: “Show us the future, and that which shall come.”

In the next verse, notice the alternation of plural and singular, as in 43:10,

Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and [so is] my servant whom I have chosen:

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid:--These two commands are plural, to the nation viewed as a mass of individuals. Since ch. 40, we have often hear the Lord tell the Servant (singular), “Fear not” (41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2), but this is the first time the Lord tells the nation as a whole not to fear.³¹

have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*?--This reference is singular, focusing on the Servant, who is encouraged to remember the Lord’s ability to predict the future.

ye *are* even my witnesses.--Now we move back to the plural, probably encompassing, as in 43:10, the whole ensemble, nation and Servant. They are to join in witness to the Lord.

Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is no God*; I know not *any*.--As at the end of v. 6, he emphasizes his uniqueness.

9-20, The False Gods

This time the summary-detail pattern is extended into three panels rather than two. The alternation in the panels highlights two themes: the uselessness of man-made gods, and the judicial blindness and shame of the worshipers. On this second point, we will note in each panel a purposefulness in their blindness that reflects God’s judgment.

9, First Panel: Summary

The *athnax* marks the dividing point between the two themes: useless idols, and blinded and shamed worshipers.

9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity;--Earlier, God said of idol-worshipers,

Isa 41:29 Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing: their molten images *are* wind and confusion.

Our translation overlooks an important relation between the verses. “Vanity” in 44:9 is תהו, the word for the unrefined earth in Gen 1:2, “without form.” In 41:29, “vanity” is a different word, meaning “sin,

30 As several brothers have pointed out, the reference to the “ancient people” may serve not only to date God’s earlier predictions, but also to point to their channel (e.g., Noah as one who conveyed the warning of the flood to his contemporaries; the early generations as preserving God’s first revelation until the time of Moses).

31 The command not to fear appears only twice in the first half of Isaiah, once singular (7:4, to Ahaz), and once plural (35:4, to the redeemed). These are parallel to the promises to the Servant and the multitude in the second half, but with an important distinction. In the first half of the book, the Lord commands Isaiah to encourage his audience, speaking of God in the third person (35:5; in ch. 7, the direct word from God does not come until v. 7). In ch. 40-66, it is the Lord himself who urges his people, “Fear not.”

iniquity, deceit.” תהו does appear in 41:29, but at the end of the verse, “confusion,” where it describes the idols. We see a progression in the condemnation of the idolaters. In 41:29, they are described as sin for following after empty idols. In 44:9 they have become like the objects of their worship.

and their delectable things shall not profit;--“Delectable things” are the things that were the objects of their desire, the things they lusted after. Here, it probably refers to the idols and their sanctuaries; see the comparable use of חמד in 1:29 “the oaks which ye have desired,” in reference to the sacred groves. This brief verse is a warning to us about the futility of every substitute for God that we might pursue. Compare Israel’s experience with the quail in the wilderness,

Psa 106:15 he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

and they are their own witnesses;--That is, the makers of the graven images bear witness for the images.

Now we turn from their actions in making gods to their own condition. The summary highlights two characteristics: blindness, and shame. The expository panel picks up on the second of these, while the parody picks up on the first.

they see not, nor know;--Recall the Servant’s condition before God redeemed him, not only blind, but also deaf (42:19). Again, the idolaters have become like their gods, as in Ps 115,

Psa 115:4-8 Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 **They that make them are like unto them;** *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

that they may be ashamed.--We are ashamed when that in which we had confidence fails us.

Throughout Isaiah (see Notes), shame comes to those who trust in other saviors, whether foreign nations (20:5; 30:3, 5), or (1:29; 42:17; 44:9; 44:11; 45:16) idols. Those who wait on the Lord are never ashamed (29:22; 45:17; 49:23; 50:7; 54:4), but those who reject him will be (the plurality of references in Isaiah: 19:9; 23:4; 24:23; 26:11; 37:27; 41:11; 45:24; 61:7; 65:13; 66:5).

The final conjunction “that” למען unambiguously expresses purpose. Whose purpose is in view? Since this is a summary, we expect the following exposition to make the answer clear, and it does, in v. 18. Their persistent sin has made them the objects of God’s fearful act of judicial blinding. In the light of v. 18, and within the scope of the negative particle בל,³² we might almost render the previous clause, “Let them neither see nor know.”

10-11, Second Panel: Exposition

10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image—v. 10 picks up the first point of the summary, about “they that make a graven image.”

that is profitable for nothing?--As v. 9 summarized, “their delectable things shall not profit.”

The construction of this clause suggests not just a description of the image, but purpose, “that it should

³² Waltke-O’Connor 34n6 (cf. Ps 10:18).

be profitable for nothing” (Young, consistent with use of לַבְלִית with finite verbs). This syntax suggests why people are attracted to idols. They like the sense of control they have over a man-made god. Yes, they think it is powerful, but they conceive of its power as we conceive of the power of a machine, invented by us, formed by us, and ultimately under our direction. By making their gods, rather than confessing themselves to be made by God, the idolaters attempt stay in control.

11 Behold, all his its fellows shall be ashamed:--Now we turn to the second point, the characteristics of those who worship what they make. The summary identified two such characteristics: blindness and shame. This panel focuses on their shame.

The suffix in “his fellows” refers to the image. The “fellows” or associates of an idol are its worshipers (compare the use of the verb in Hos 4:17). As v. 9 anticipates, they are all to be ashamed.

This clause in turn summarizes the rest of the verse.

and ~~the~~ they are workmen, ~~they are~~ of men³³:--v. 10 spoke of the craftsman who makes an idol, and 11a speaks of its associates, its worshipers. This clause identifies the two, and reminds us that they are only human.

One could almost excuse a simple-minded population who is misled into worshipping idols by a separate priestly caste who makes them and then lies about their origin. The statement here rules out any such excuse. The very workmen are the worshipers. They know that the idol is nothing more than a human creation. Yet they persist in worshipping it.

let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.--The verbs are all asyndetic imperfects. Translate them all in parallel, either as descriptive imperfects or as jussives. They form a stark, rhythmic crescendo of the verdict that the Lord will impose on the idolaters. Their witness leads to their own condemnation. The Lord gathers them, calls them to stand for the verdict, and decrees upon them fear and shame as their just reward.

12-20, Third Panel: Parody

The third panel again begins with the dependence of the dead god on the work of a human. The Lord takes us into the workshop where the idols are manufactured. Oswalt suggests that the description concerns a single idol, a wooden core with outward metal covering or adornments, and works backward through three stages of its manufacture. Each stage

- emphasizes the diligence and skill of the workman,
- but ends with a sarcastic comment that emphasizes the weakness and impotence of the deity.

12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms:--The final stage is forming the metal adornments of the idol. The shape and beauty depend entirely on the strength and skill of the workman.

yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.--The sarcastic observation is that this god, on whom he labors so diligently, can do nothing to refresh or strengthen him. Contrast God’s promise a few chapters earlier:

³³ Cf. Pr 30:14 as example of singular used in generic sense.

Isa 40:31-1 they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Just the opposite is true of those who wait on idols. Their service tires and exhausts them.

13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass,--Now we turn to the wooden core of the idol, skilfully measured and shaped.

and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man;--Again, the report of the workman's skill ends with a sarcastic criticism. He cannot conceive of a deity that is qualitatively different from himself. Not only does the idol depend on human strength for its existence, its form and beauty cannot rise above that of man.

Isaiah's words are particularly timely in our humanistic day. Man is the highest power that humanism can conceive. Ultimately, the unbeliever worships himself. The core of biblical faith is recognizing the distinction between God and man, the bright line of separation between the creature and the creator.

that it may remain in the house.--Like a man, the idol requires shelter and protection from the elements. Contrast our God:

Isa 66:1-2 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD:³⁴

14 ~~He heweth him~~ To cut down cedars for himself,³⁵ and he taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest:--Now we move yet one step further back in the process of making an idol. Before one can shape the metal adornments, and before one can carve the wooden form on which they are placed, one grow the tree from which the idol will be made. The craftsman diligently selects and nurtures the tree that will become his god.

he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.--Once again comes the sarcastic observation of the workman's limits. Yes, he can plant the tree, but it won't grow unless the rain comes, and what control does he have over that?

Up to this point, the sarcasm has been tongue-in-cheek, but now it bursts forth without restraint. The very same tree that he worships, also cooks his food. Why should he serve one end of the log, while the other end serves him? To make sure we don't miss the point, the Lord repeats it in an alternation between the two uses of the tree, as fuel and as deity.

15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread;--He has complete control over it when he cuts it, ignites it, and uses it to cook.

yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.--Yet he turns the same material into something that he professes to revere.

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:--Again, the

³⁴ Quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:49-50

³⁵ I follow Oswalt's interpretation of the infinitive here as giving the purpose for the following actions. The subsequent *waw* relative with imperfect is not an obstacle to this; in addition to his references, see GKC 111h.

tree serves the lowly purpose of fuel.

17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.--Yet the workman claims that it can deliver him. Note the added sarcasm in “the residue thereof.” He ends up burning most of the log, and the deity is made from the scraps.

Now, for the third time, we turn from the impotence of man-made gods to the inadequacy of those who make them. The summary identified two characteristics of the idolaters: blindness, and shame. The exposition focused on their shame; now we return to the blindness.

18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.--Modern versions adopt passive renderings, based on the unusual form of the verb, which appears only here.³⁶ But the closest cognate requires an active sense, which fits the purpose clause at the end of verse 9 (the near context). Isaiah’s emphasis elsewhere (the remote context) shows that the Lord is behind the blinding:

6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

29:10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?--Isaiah spells out in great detail just what the blindness consists of, recalling the climax of the parody in vv. 15-17.

20 He feedeth on ashes:--He might just as well worship the ashes of his cooking fire as the beautiful god he has made for himself from the same log.

a deceived heart hath turned him aside,--What vv. 9, 18 described as blindness and lack of understanding is now called a “deceived heart.” This verse does not tell us what has deceived him, but consistent with v. 18, we see this as a divine judgment.

2 Cor 4:4 attributes the blindness of the unbeliever to “the god of this world,” Satan, but the two are not inconsistent. Recall Micaiah’s insight into the deception of Ahab in 1 Kings 22:

1Ki 22:19-23 And [Micaiah] said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead?

And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

36 Oswalt candidly admits that the passive is motivated by theological concerns rather than philological evidence.

And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.

And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?*--As a result of this judicial blinding, he is without hope. He cannot see that the idol he holds in his hand is a lie; he cannot save himself from the further judgment of a jealous God on those who worship their own likeness.

44:21-23, Servant (singular); Restored

In this brief paragraph, the Lord summarizes two points that he has made before about the Servant:

- He created the servant (v. 21)
- He redeemed the servant (v. 22).

Then Isaiah calls on all creation to praise God for this latter action, of redemption.

This joint emphasis on creation and redemption appears for the first time in 43:1, the first section describing the Servant's restoration.

Isa 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that **created** thee, O Jacob, and he that **formed** thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have **redeemed** thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.

Here it reminds us of that theme.

21, The Servant Created

He presents his claim as creator with a beautiful chiasm:

Remember these,	thou shalt not be forgotten of me.
O Jacob and Israel;	O Israel,
for thou <i>art</i> my servant:	thou <i>art</i> my servant:
I have formed thee;	

21 Remember these [things],--The chiasm sets this clause in parallel with the promise that God will not forget them. So the most likely exhortation is that they are to remember him. "These things" probably refers to the extended testimony of vv. 6-20, God's claim to uniqueness and his vivid mockery of those who claim his prerogatives. If they keep this testimony in mind, they will not be drawn away from their proper allegiance.

O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant:--As shown in the notes, the double title is most often associated with the designation of the nation as God's servant. If it is to fulfill this role, it must remember the lesson of vv. 6-20.

I have formed thee;--At the center of the chiasm is the foundation for God's claim over Israel, and

indeed over everything: he is the creator. In direct contradiction to the pagan's claim to be able to make his own gods, the Lord asserts that he makes his worshipers.

43:1 thus saith the LORD that **created** thee, O Jacob, and he that **formed** thee, O Israel,

43:7 I have **created** him for my glory, I have **formed** him; yea, I have **made** him.

43:21 This people have I **formed** for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

44:2 Thus saith the LORD that **made** thee, and **formed** thee from the womb, *which* will help thee;

44:24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that **formed** thee from the womb

45:11-12 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his **Maker**, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. 12 I have made the earth, and **created** man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

thou art my servant: O Israel,--The clause is slightly different from that in the first panel of this chiasm: the possessive is represented by ם, "for me," rather than simply as a genitive suffix. The first instance of the phrase simply states the fact that the servant belongs to the Lord. This repetition, building on the statement that God has formed the servant, asserts that the *purpose* of the servant is to serve the Lord.

thou shalt not be forgotten of me.--Because he has formed the nation for his purposes, he will not forget it.

22, The Servant Redeemed

Because God has created us, he has authority over us. He expects us to keep his law. But we are all sinners. We have all rebelled against him, and deserve his wrath. So God's claim to have formed us is actually pretty scary, unless it is joined with the next claim, which he presents here:

22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins:--The Lord repeats the striking image from the first restoration section in this panel,

43:25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Instead of blotting out the sinner, he blots out the sin.

return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.--Note the order. He does not save them because they turn to him. Rather, for his own sake (43:25), he redeems them, and then calls them back to himself. Like his role as creator, this is also a very common theme throughout our section.

41:14 I will help thee, saith the LORD, and **thy redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel.

43:1 Fear not: for **I have redeemed thee**,

43:14 Thus saith the LORD, **your redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel;

44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and **his redeemer** the LORD of hosts;

47:4 As for **our redeemer**, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.

48:17 Thus saith the LORD, **thy Redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel;

48:20 The LORD **hath redeemed** his servant Jacob.

49:7 Thus saith the LORD, **the Redeemer** of Israel, and his Holy One,

49:26 all flesh shall know that I the LORD am **thy Saviour and thy Redeemer**, the mighty One of Jacob.

54:8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD **thy Redeemer**.

60:16 thou shalt know that I the LORD am **thy Saviour and thy Redeemer**, the mighty One of Jacob.

He does not say simply that he forgives them, but that he redeems them. Redemption requires the expenditure of wealth and strength. It costs the redeemer something, whether he buys back a slave or kills a murderer. God does not simply overlook Israel's sin. He overcomes it by his own great strength.

23, Praise to the Creator and Redeemer

In response to the Lord's description of how he creates and redeems Israel, Isaiah now calls on all creation to give him glory. The verse is an alternation between a command to the elements of creation to praise the Lord and the reason. The second panel of the alternation is doubled: AB AA BB.

23 Sing, O ye heavens;

for the LORD hath done *it*:

shout, ye lower parts of the earth:

break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein:

**for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob,
and glorified himself in Israel.**

Consider first the object of praise

23 ... for the LORD hath done *it*:--This verb עָשָׂה is one of three that frequently describe God's creation of his people (the other two being בָּרָא and יָצַר). Given the reference to redemption in the second panel, and the emphasis of the two themes in vv. 21-22, we should translate here, "The Lord hath made." The heavens recognize God's creative power, and praise him for it.

for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.--The second ground for praise is the redemption of the Servant, both immediately (from captivity in Babylon) and eschatologically (in the coming Day of the Lord). But note how the Lord characterizes that redemption: it is to "glorify himself." The objective of our salvation is not first of all our blessing, but God's glory.

Eze 36:22 ... Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Now note the three places from which praise is commanded. Our verse is parallel to a later one with the same three divisions:

Isa 49:13 Sing, O **heavens**; and be joyful, O **earth**; and break forth into singing, O **mountains**: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

23 Sing, O ye heavens;--We expect those in God's presence to recognize his mighty works. The Lord reminds Job of such a response at the time of creation:

Job 38:4-7 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

shout, ye lower parts of the earth:³⁷--The expression takes us to the other extreme, to the very lowest parts of the earth. It appears two other times in the OT, both in Psalms of David.

In Ps 63 it anticipates God's judgments on his enemies:

Psa 63:9 those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

Here a reference to the grave seems appropriate. The other reference is

Psa 139:15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

This may have a similar meaning; compare Job's use of the womb as a metaphor for the grave,

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither:

The command for the dead to praise the Lord shows just how remarkable the future deliverance is, for as a general rule, the Psalmist argued,

Psa 6:5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? (David)

Psa 88:10-12 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah. 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? (Heman)

But God has granted to Isaiah, three centuries after these poets, an understanding that the dead will rise, and can be called upon to praise the Lord:

Isa 25:6-8 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off

³⁷ 4 July 2011: This verse is repeated almost verbatim in 49:13, also at the end of a paragraph about God's restoration in connection with his Servant. There, the parallel phrase is simply "the earth," which may suggest that here we should understand the genitive as appositional rather than partitive.

all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Isa 26:19 Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

So it would appear that Isaiah invokes all creation, from the highest heaven to the departed spirits, to join in praise to God. And having cited both extremes, he naturally includes what lies between them,

break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein:--Between the heavens and the grave, he invokes the mountains with their canopy of forests to join in the praise.

Isaiah draws on the Psalms for this vertical summary of the entire creation:

Psa 36:5-6 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the **heavens**;
and thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the **clouds**.

6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great **mountains**;
thy judgments *are* a great **deep**: (David)

Psa 139:7-10 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into **heaven**, thou *art* there:

if I make my bed in **hell**, behold, thou *art there*.

9 *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the **uttermost parts of the sea**;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

This verse may lie behind Paul's declaration,

Phi 2:10-11 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; 11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

v. 11 clearly depends on 45:23,

I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

so it would not be at all out of place for v. 10 to come from 44:23.

44:24-28, End of the Captivity: The Victorious Conqueror

The first panel predicted the end of the captivity, signaled by the first reference to Babylon in ch. 40-66. Now the second panel, on the same theme, names (again for the first time) the conqueror, Cyrus.

24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb,--The association of God's work as creator and redeemer is a link to the previous section.³⁸

I am the LORD.--He names himself, and then give a long list of his acts. There are some clues to the syntax of this section that are not apparent in English.

Each act is introduced with a participle. Through 26a, the participles are indefinite (anarthrous), but the three in 26b, 27, and 28 have the article, and use the same verb, "that saith." This pattern suggests that

³⁸ This time (and only here), he begins with the reference to redemption. We deal now, not with the historical order, but looking back from the standpoint of the redeemed.

we should read 24b-26a as an extended subject, with 26b-28 as the predicate. The effect is to move the understood “am” from v. 24 to v. 26:

“I, the LORD, who does all the things in 24b-26a, am the one who issues these three great decrees.”³⁹

24b-26a, The Subject: God’s Background Characteristics

I, the LORD.--The heart of God’s self-identification is as YHWH, the covenant God. The one who introduced himself to Moses at the burning bush to lead the nation out of Egypt now speaks to them again to lead them out of Babylon.

Two groups of participles modify the subject. The first three are single clauses. The next three pair the initial participle with an imperfect clause. Each group has a distinctive theme that builds confidence in the claims of the predicate.

24b, Single Participles: God as the Only Creator (past)

The first three characteristics all emphasize God’s role as creator.

that maketh all things;--Here is the same action, with the same verb עָשָׂה, for which the heavens praise him in v. 23, his role as creator. He amplifies this in the next two clauses, each of which emphasizes that he shares this role with no one. These qualifiers pick up ch. 40:12-31

that stretcheth forth the heavens alone;--Thus the Lord introduced his uniqueness in ch. 40,

40:22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; **that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain**, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

The heavens appear so firm to us, but he sets them up takes them down as a Bedouin would a tent.

that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;--This creative act also comes from earlier in Isaiah, where it is again paired with spreading out the heavens:

42:5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

When we studied this verse, we saw that the combination of these actions is a summary of Gen 1. Here, as there, the foundational truth is that God is the absolute and ultimate creator.

25-26a, Double Clauses: God as the Only Predictor (present)

God is not just a first mover, but he also gives meaning to the creation. As emphasized often in ch. 41-42, he alone can predict the future.

³⁹ Remarkably, none of the commentators or translations appears to take any note of the shift from anarthrous to arthrous participles, or the implications for the rhetoric of this sentence. They all treat it as a long list of participles. Motyer comes closest to making some distinction, between Past, Present, and Future, but still does not capture the force of the overall predication.

He begins by denying that anyone else can speak authoritatively on the meaning and future of the world (v. 25). There are two classes of potential advisors.

25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars,⁴⁰ and maketh diviners mad;--First he considers the court soothsayers who were so popular in Babylon. Isaiah will later amplify this prediction:

47:9 But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection **for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.**

47:12-14 Stand now with **thine enchantments**, and with the multitude of **thy sorceries**, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. **Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators,** stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee. 14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: ...

The history of Daniel shows how God carried out this promise repeatedly, posing questions that the false gods could not answer.

that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;--Another category of advisor relies on human wisdom and reasoning. The Lord frustrates them as well. This is the category of advisor among whom Daniel and his fellows were reckoned:

Dan 2:17-18 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with **the rest of the wise men** of Babylon.

Most of the wise men were unable to tell Nebuchadnezzar's dream. God "turned [them] backward, and made their knowledge foolish," but the next verse describes what he did for Daniel:

26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers;--Throughout Isaiah, when the word is plural,⁴¹ it always refers to ambassadors between nations. The nation, in its role as servant, bears his word (Rom 3:2, "unto them were committed the oracles of God"). In particular, the individual ambassadors, Daniel and his fellows, by his power overwhelm the magic of the diviners and the knowledge of the wise men.

26b-28, The Predicate: God's Decrees

God first decrees the final objective, then the means that lead up to it. Thus these decrees move backward through time. They are sure and certain, because the One who utters them is the unique Creator (24b) and Predictor (25-26a).

40 The word "liars" בָּדִים is not the usual term for a liar, and the meaning is uncertain. In Jer 50:36 it is in parallel to "mighty men," as it is here to "diviners." The same form does mean "lies," so perhaps we should understand it as an appositional genitive to "tokens," "the lying tokens," that is, those that come from the diviners.

41 In 42:19, "messenger" מַלְאֲךְ again is parallel to "servant," but in the singular.

26b, Ultimate Objective: Populating Jerusalem

that saith to of Jerusalem, ~~Thou shalt~~ She shall⁴² be inhabited;--Compare the lament over the fall of Jerusalem:

Lam 1:1, 3, 4, 5 How doth the city sit **solitary**, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a **widow!** ... 3 Judah is gone into captivity ... 4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because **none come to the solemn feasts**: all her gates are desolate: ... 5 her children are gone into captivity ...

The city is forsaken of her people. To see the significance of this judgment, recall that God's purpose from the first was to dwell among his people:

Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

As he led the people into the land, he told them that he would place his name in a specific place where they were to meet with him. Deut 12, for example, is full of these promises:

5 But unto **the place which the LORD your God shall choose** out of all your tribes **to put his name there**, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek,

11 there shall be **a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there**;

13-14 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:
14 But in **the place which the LORD shall choose** in one of thy tribes,

18 thou must eat them before the LORD thy God **in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose**,

21 **the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name**

26 thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto **the place which the LORD shall choose**:

In time, God designated Jerusalem as that special place, as Ahijah the prophet declared to Jeroboam,

1Ki 11:36 Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

When the Lord shows John the eternal state, when this earth has passed away, he uses Jerusalem language to describe God's abiding presence with his people:

Rev 21:2-3 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

This is what made the captivity so solemn. It was not just the social pain of being removed from one's familiar surroundings, but the spiritual separation from God, being cast out of his presence, away from the place that he had chosen.

⁴² The second person is no doubt suggested by the indirect object, but the verb form can be read as second person only if it is masculine, while Jerusalem personified is feminine (cf. 40:2; "daughter Jerusalem"; 52:2). The indirect object must have the sense "concerning," as in Gen 20:13.

Now, when God decrees what is to come, the first thing he declares, the high-level end for which everything else is the means, is that Jerusalem will once again be inhabited. Her people will return, and have access once more to the sanctuary, and to fellowship with God.

and to of the cities of Judah, ~~Ye~~ They shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:--For this return to take place, the people need somewhere to live. So the Lord next decrees the rebuilding of the ruins.

v. 27 will be clearer if we first consider v. 28, the initial step towards God's goal of restoring the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

28, Initial Means: Cyrus' Decree

28 That saith of Cyrus,--Just as Babylon was named for the first time in the first panel of this section, so now Cyrus is named for the first time.

He is my shepherd,--"Shepherd" is a popular title for a civil ruler. Asaph, David's seer, uses this metaphor when describing how the Lord commissioned David:

Psa 78:70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

God designates Cyrus as his shepherd, one whom he will appoint to care for his people.

and shall perform all my pleasure:--Though Cyrus is a pagan, the Lord is able to control him and turn him to serve the divine will. Solomon realized this:

Pro 21:1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

When we are dismayed over the course that our national leaders sometimes take, we should remember this principle. God is in control even of magistrates who do not acknowledge him.

even saying to of Jerusalem, ~~Thou shalt~~ She shall be built; and to the temple, ~~Thy foundation shall be laid~~ she shall be founded with a temple.⁴³--In the providence of God, Cyrus will command the restoration of Jerusalem, and in particular the temple.

Note the altered translation. Cyrus commanded the rebuilding of the temple:

Ezr 1:1-4 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia,

43 The usual rendering faces four embarrassments:

1. The preposition "to" is not repeated, though it is in v. 26.
2. There is no way to make the verbs parallel in person, as we can in v. 26. Jerusalem is feminine, so its verb must be 3fs, but "temple" is masculine, so its verb must be 2ms.
3. Almost without exception, when הֵיכַל refers to the Lord's temple in Jerusalem, it is definite (whether by article, suffix, or genitive). (The only possible exceptions I've found are Isa 66:6 and Amos 8:3, and they admit other interpretations.)
4. In fact, Cyrus did *not* command the rebuilding of Jerusalem, but only of the temple. Instead, read תוֹסֵד as 3fs, in parallel with תִּבְנֶה and sharing Jerusalem as the subject, and take הֵיכַל as adverbial accusative.

that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me **to build him an house at Jerusalem**, which *is* in Judah. 3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and **build the house of the LORD God of Israel**, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering **for the house of God that is in Jerusalem**.

Cyrus did not command the rebuilding of Jerusalem *per se*. That command awaited Artaxerxes, at the request of Nehemiah:

Neh 2:5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto **the city** of my fathers' sepulchres, **that I may build it**. ... 8 ... And the king granted me, ...

Recall that the resettlement of Jerusalem is motivated by God's enduring desire to dwell among his people. With this function of Jerusalem in view, its foundation, indeed its cornerstone, is the temple. By sponsoring the rebuilding of the temple Cyrus is commencing the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

27, Intermediate Step: Removing Obstacles

27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:--Now we return to the step between Cyrus' command and the resettling of the city. We have no record of any rivers or seas drying up when the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. But Isaiah loves to compare this return with the exodus out of Egypt, when the Red Sea was dried up, and the Jordan opened before the children of Israel. Those bodies of water appeared to be insuperable obstacles, yet the Lord removed them. Recall in the corresponding element of the first panel, how the Lord put promises of the defeat of Babylon on either side of a recollection of the triumph at the Red Sea in 43:16-17.

The same God who cleared the way before Israel under Moses also intervened when Zerubbabel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah led the people back from Babylon. He moved the hearts of successive rulers (Cyrus [Ezra 1], Darius [Ezra 6], and Artaxerxes [Ezra 7:12ff; Neh 1]) to support first the rebuilding of the temple, then of the city walls. Note also Ezra's anticipation of the challenges of returning:

Ezr 8:21-23 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

The promise to dry up the rivers is probably to be understood as a metaphor, recalling the past deliverance at the Exodus as a model for how God will bring the people once again back from captivity to their land and city.

Notes

Structured Text

Servant, Condemned	<p>42:18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.</p>	
	<p>19 Who <i>is</i> blind, but my <u>servant</u>? or deaf, as my messenger <i>that</i> I sent? who <i>is</i> blind as <i>he that is</i> perfect, and blind as the LORD'S <u>servant</u>? 20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.</p> <p>21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law⁴⁴, and make it honourable.</p> <p>22 But this <i>is</i> a people robbed and spoiled; <i>they are</i> all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.</p>	<p>43:22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23 Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. 24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.</p>
	<p>23 Who among you will give ear to this? <i>who</i> will hearken and hear for the time to come? 24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.</p> <p>25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid <i>it</i> not to heart.</p>	<p>26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. 27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. 28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.</p>

44 cf. 42:4, the law given to the Gentiles

<p>Servant, Redeemed</p>	<p>43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called <i>thee</i> by thy name; thou <i>art</i> mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I <i>will be</i> with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5 Fear not: for I <i>am</i> with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.</p>	<p>25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression^s⁴⁵ for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.</p>	<p>44:1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my <u>servant</u>; and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, <i>which</i> will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my <u>servant</u>; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. 5 One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.</p>	<p>44:21 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my <u>servant</u>: I have formed thee; thou <i>art</i> my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins⁴⁶: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done <i>it</i>: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.</p>
--------------------------	---	---	---	---

45 44:22

46 43:25

Witnesses to God's Uniqueness	<p>43:8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, <i>It is truth</i>. 10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. 12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when <i>there was no strange god among you</i>: therefore ye <i>are</i> my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. 13 Yea, before the day <i>was</i> I am he; and <i>there is</i> none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?</p>	<p>44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, <i>there is no God</i>; I know not <i>any</i>. 9 They that make a graven image <i>are</i> all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they <i>are</i> their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image <i>that is</i> profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they <i>are</i> of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; <i>yet</i> they shall fear, <i>and</i> they shall be ashamed together. <<idol parody>> 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; <i>and</i> their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither <i>is there</i> knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten <i>it</i>: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, <i>Is there</i> not a lie in my right hand?</p>
-------------------------------	---	--

Note the alternations in the second round of witness sections:

44:6... I am the first , and I am the last ;	7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people ? and the things that are coming, and shall come , let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared <i>it</i> ? <i>ye are</i> even my witnesses.
and beside me there is no God.	Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God ; I know not <i>any</i> .

9 They that make a graven image <i>are</i> all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit ;	10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image <i>that is</i> profitable for nothing?	<<12-17 sarcastic review of idol manufacture>>
and they <i>are</i> their own witnesses; they see not, nor know ; that they may be ashamed .	11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed : and the workmen, they <i>are</i> of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; <i>yet</i> they shall fear, <i>and</i> they shall be ashamed together.	18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see ; <i>and</i> their hearts, that they cannot understand . 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither <i>is there</i> knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten <i>it</i> : and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, <i>Is there</i> not a lie in my right hand?

Fall of Babylon	<p>14 Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry <i>is</i> in the ships. 15 <i>I am</i> the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.</p> <p>16 Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; 17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.</p> <p>18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, <i>and</i> rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.</p>	<p>24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all <i>things</i>; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise <i>men</i> backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; 26 That confirmeth the word of his <u>servant</u>, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28 That saith of Cyrus, <i>He is</i> my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.</p>
-----------------	--	---

The Argument of 40-44

Try to tie together the chunks we have seen so far.

40:1-11 God is coming

40:12-45:7 He is **incomparable**, based on three lines of evidence:

- 40:12-31 He can **create**. The nations are as nothing before him.
- 41:1-42:17 He, not the idols, can **predict**. He cares for his Servant and his people
- 42:18-44:28 His people **bear witness** to him, after he redeems them from their sinful condition

Naming God's People

Background

Isa 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only **let us be called by thy name**, to take away our reproach.

God's Name on God's People

Num 6:27 And they shall **put my name upon the children of Israel**; and I will bless them.

Deut 28:10 And all people of the earth shall see that **thou art called by the name of the LORD**; and they shall be afraid of thee.

2Chr 7:14 If **my people, which are called by my name**, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Isa 43:7 *Even every one that is called by my name*: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Isa 63:19 We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; **they were not called by thy name**.

Isa 65:1 I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me*; I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto **a nation that was not called by my name**.

Jer 14:9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man *that* cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us, and **we are called by thy name**; leave us not.

Jer 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for **I am called by thy name**, O LORD God of hosts.

Dan 9:19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: **for thy city and thy people are called by thy name**.

Amos 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of **all the heathen, which are called by my name**, saith the LORD that doeth this.

Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And **the disciples were called Christians** first in Antioch.

Jas 2:7 Do not they blaspheme **that worthy name by the which ye are called?**

Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and **I will write upon him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* **my new name**.

Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, **having his Father's name written in their foreheads**.

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and **his name shall be in their foreheads**.

Another Name on God's People

Isa 62:2-5 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and **thou shalt be called by a new name**, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but **thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah**: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that

overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a **new name written**, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

God's Name on God's Place

Deut 12:5 But unto **the place** which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes **to put his name there**, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

1Kgs 8:43-44 43 Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as *do* thy people Israel; and that they may know that **this house**, which I have builded, **is called by thy name**. 44 If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and *toward* the house that I have built for thy name:

Jer 7:10 And come and stand before me in **this house, which is called by my name**, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

Jer 7:30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in **the house which is called by my name**, to pollute it.

Jer 25:29 For, lo, I begin to bring evil on **the city which is called by my name**, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Jer 32:34 But they set their abominations in **the house, which is called by my name**, to defile it.

Jer 33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and **Jerusalem** shall dwell safely: and **this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness**.

Dan 9:18-19 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and **the city which is called by thy name**: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: **for thy city and thy people are called by thy name**.

Multiple Divine Titles

Note how the title “the Holy One of Israel” often appears associated with “YHWH,” “maker,” or “redeemer/savior.” Double titles appear in the first half of the book, but triple titles only in the second half. The titles “Saviour” and “redeemer” are distinctive to the second half of the book.

NB: This list records only instances of the nouns, not of related verbs; see “God’s Self-Introduction” later in notes.

Ref	YHWH	Holy One	Maker	Redeemer	Saviour
1:4	X	X			
5:19		X			
5:24	X	X			

Isaiah 42:18-44:28

Ref	YHWH	Holy One	Maker	Redeemer	Saviour
10:20	X	X			
12:4-6	X	X			
17:7		X	X		
29:19	X	X			
30:11		X			
30:12		X			
30:15	X	X			
31:1	X	X			
37:23		X			
41:14	X	X		X	
41:16	X	X			
41:20	X	X			
43:3	X	X			X
43:14	X	X		X	
43:15	X	X	X		
45:11	X	X	X		
47:4	X	X		X	
48:17	X	X		X	
49:7	X	X		X	
54:5	X	X	X	X	
55:5	X	X			
60:9	X	X			
60:14	X	X			

Double title “Jacob and Israel”

The epithet appears 4x in 1-39 (9:8; 10:20; 14:1; 27:6; 29:23 is in a divine name), but 17x in 40-49. In the latter group, note singular/plural associations⁴⁷, and explicit references to the servant.

Ref	Singular	Plural	Servant
40:27	x		
41:8	x		x
41:14	x ⁴⁸		
42:24	x (v. 25)		
43:1	x		
43:22	x		
43:28	x (v. 27)		
44:1	x		x
44:5	x		

Ref	Singular	Plural	Servant
44:21	x		x
44:23	x (v. 24)		
45:4	x		x
46:3		x	
48:1		x	
48:12	x		
49:5			x ⁴⁹
49:6		x	x

Now consider the distribution of the dual name compared with the single names alone.

	ch. 1-39	ch. 40-48	ch. 49-57	ch. 58-66
Jacob and Israel	5 (23%)	15 (68%)	2 (9%)	0
Jacob alone	8 (44%)	4 (22%)	1 (6%)	5 (28%)
Israel alone	38 (58%)	16 (25%)	6 (9%)	5 (8%)

We see two important things here:

1. The single names do appear, and they appear throughout the book. So Isaiah is making a choice to use the double name.
2. The double name is dominant in the servant sections (77% in ch. 40-57), while the single names are relatively rare there (28% for Jacob, 34% for Israel)

What I have not done is survey the singular vs. plural references and see how many of them are in reference to single titles.

⁴⁷ See also notes on ch. 40 for more detailed analysis of number with the double name

⁴⁸ Consistently so if we accept my vocalization for מְתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל

⁴⁹ Here and in the next verse, Jacob/Israel is the object of the servant's action.

What Leads to Shame?

Idols or idol sanctuaries

1:29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

42:17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye *are* our gods.

44:9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

44:11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together.

45:16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols.

Helpers other than the Lord

20:5 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

30:3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.

30:5 They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

Promise of no shame to the Lord's people

29:22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.

45:17 *But* Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

49:23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

50:7 For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

No object, result of Lord's judgment

19:9 Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded.

23:4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

24:23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

26:11 LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: *but* they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

37:27 Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green herb, *as* the grass on the housetops, and *as* corn blasted before it be grown up.

41:11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

45:24 Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

61:7 For your shame *ye shall have* double; and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

65:13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

Syntax of *המה* in 49:11

Study examples when *הם* or *המה* is joined to a preceding noun by a conjunctive accent and separated by a disjunctive from a following prepositional phrase: Lev. 8:28; 11:10; Num. 3:9; Jos. 22:14; 2 Sam. 17:8; Est. 9:1; Prov. 4:22; Eccl. 3:18; Isa. 44:11; Hos. 2:14. Invariably, N + Pronoun has the sense “these are N,” and the prepositional phrase modifies N. So we should render 49:11, “these are workmen from man,” that is, “These are human workmen.”

God as Creator and Redeemer

Note combinations of creator and redeemer,

Isa 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

Isa 44:21-22 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou

Isaiah 42:18-44:28

art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Isa 44:24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Isa 54:5 For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.