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The Cone of Isaiah

41: 8-10

The cone of Isaiah DIG: What terms does God use to address the exiles in these verses? What do they reveal about God's relationship with them? How would these terms calm their fears?

REFLECT: Why is the fact that God has not rejected Israel because of her sin, good news for you?

In contrast to the frightened pagan nations, **the Israelites** are under special protection of **ADONAI** because **they** are **His servant**. **Isra'el** does not need to create false gods to protect **her (41:6-7)**, for **she** has the protection of the true **God Himself**. **But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham My friend (41:8)**. For the first time in **Isaiah** we are presented with the concept of the **servant**. From now on, whenever **Isaiah** uses the term **servant**, it will be used in one of three senses. First, when **he** uses the term **servant**, **he** is talking about **the nation of Isra'el**, and **he** uses it three times in **41:8-16, 42:18-22, and 43:10**. Secondly, when **he** uses the term **servant**, **he** is dealing with **the faithful remnant**, and **he** uses it three times in **44:1-5, 44:21, and 65:8-16**. Thirdly, when **he** uses the term **Servant**, it is in reference to **the Messiah**, and we find it in **42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-9, and 52:13 to 53:12**. *Only the context will tell us which way he is using it.*

The Israelites should have been encouraged by the fact that, like **Abraham**, **Moses** and **David**, they had been especially **chosen** to serve **the LORD**. **O descendants of Israel His servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones (First Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 105:6)**. Their relationship to **their Redeemer, the Holy One of Isra'el (41:14b)**, was not merely a judicial act. No, **their** bond was based on friendship because their **ancestor**, father **Abraham**, was **His friend**. **Their** relationship was rooted in a common love, both the love of **ADONAI** for **His chosen** ones, and the love of the **chosen** for **their God**. Consequently, as those chosen to serve **the LORD**, **descendants of His unique friend (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23)**, **they** had nothing to fear (**John 15:14-15**).

ADONAI had already taken **the ancestors** of **Abraham, the Israelites**, from all over the world. **He** said: **I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you**, saying: **You are My servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you (41:9)**. He could do it again and indeed **He** purposed to regather **them** after seventy years of Babylonian Captivity (see my commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click [Gu](#) - [Seventy Years of Babylonian Rule](#)**). Discipline was necessary but the exile would change **their** relationship. **They** would not be forsaken.

*We must also experience the wonder that once saved (**John 3:16; First Corinthians 15:3b-4**), our sin cannot change **the LORD's** love for us. Once we realize that we are children of **God** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**), we have nothing to fear.*

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I Am your God (41:10a). Here **ADONAI** addresses **His** chosen ones. Because of their relationship with **Him** they **do not** need to **fear**. This is **not** some positive thinking mumbo-jumbo. Nor will it be a yoga or philosophy class. They could not humanly will themselves to contentment with "good thoughts." No, they could take courage because their **God** was **with** them.

But who was **He**? One more of the helpless gods? No, He is the great **I Am** (see my commentary on **Exodus [At](#) - [I Am Has Sent Me to You](#)**). Every other being in the universe is dependent; **He** alone is self-existent, complete in **Himself**. **He** had given **Himself** to **them** to be **their God**. There was no new message. It was the same word **Isaiah** had given **Ahaz: Don't be afraid (7:14b)**, and that **Moses** had declared to **the Israelites** at the Red Sea: **Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance that ADONAI will bring you today. . . the LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still (Exodus 14:13-14)**, and to Joshua on the plains of Mo'ab: **The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged (Deuteronomy 31:8)**. It was the key to Joseph's success: **ADONAI was with Joseph (Genesis 39:2, 21, 23)**, and also to Isaac's: **I will be with you and bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham (Genesis 26:3)**. But sitting on the bank of the Euphrates in Babylon, **they** would think to **themselves**, "How could we be **chosen** of **the LORD** when we have been forcibly taken from our Temple and the Land?" They needed to hear in clear terms that **ADONAI** was still with them and that **He** was still willing to be called their **God**.

The LORD was not a passive companion. Since **ADONAI**, their **God**, was with them, they could expect certain things from **Him**. **His** presence brought them active strength, expressed as a mountain tsunami of assistance: **I will strengthen you and help you; moreover I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (41:10b)**. Not only has **He** strengthened **them**, but **He** has helped **them**, and not only has **He** strengthened and helped **them**, but **He** has also upheld **them**. That help was symbolized by **the LORD's righteous right hand**. Therefore, **God's** great and powerful **right hand** will do the right thing for **His** suffering people and deliver **them**.

Oh, how blessed it is to know that when the times of pain come and when our hearts become broken, we have Someone to whom we can turn that will give us Strength and that will keep us Safe. Only Jesus does that! A little girl and her father were returning from the funeral of their dearly loved mother and wife. Some kind neighbors invited them to spend a few days with them so they wouldn't be alone in the house with all its sad memories. However, the father decided it would be better to go home. That night the father placed the little girl's bed next to his, but neither could fall asleep. Finally the child said, "Daddy, it's dark, I can't see you. But you're there, aren't you?" "Yes, dear, Daddy's here right next to you. Go to sleep." The little girl finally dropped off to sleep. In the darkness and the depth of sorrow, the father in tears said aloud, "O Heavenly Father, it's so dark, and my heart is overflowing with sorrow. But You are there, aren't You?" And immediately there came to him a passage from the prophet: **Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.**

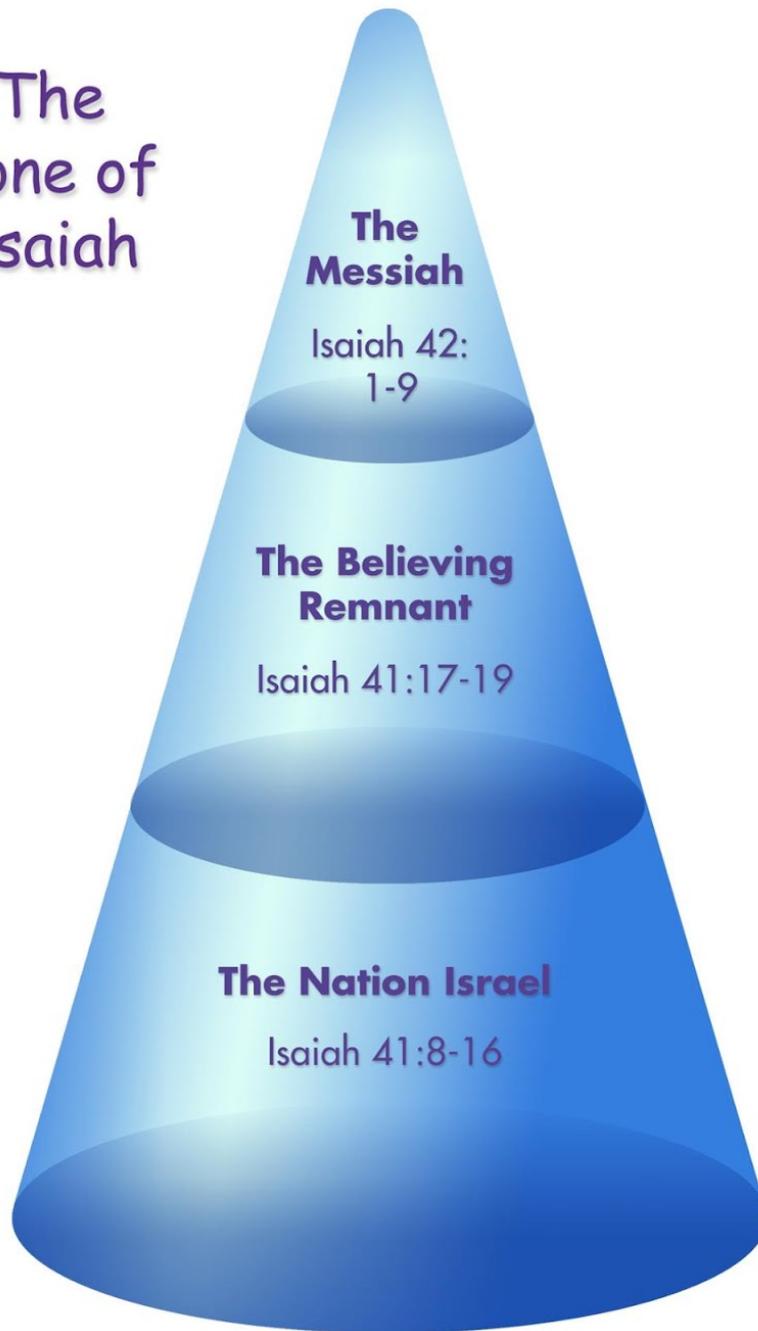
Here the prophet introduces a concept known as the Cone of Isaiah. The nation of Israel is pictured as the Servant in verses 8 to 16, the believing remnant is seen as the Servant in verses 17 to 29, and then the Messiah is portrayed as the Servant in Chapter 42:1-9. Like a cone, it gets more and more narrow. It starts at the base as the nation of Israel, and then progresses to the faithful remnant and finally to the point, which could only be the Messiah.

In several places where **Isaiah** draws a contrast between **Isra'el the servant** and **Messiah the Servant** to show that where **Isra'el the servant** failed, **Messiah the Servant** will succeed. Then the success of **Messiah the Servant** will be applied to the nation of **Isra'el**. All the promises **ADONAI** has made to **Isra'el** are eternal and binding. **The LORD** does not and will not reject **Isra'el** because of her



sins. **He** is **the Promise Keeper**. If **He** says **He** is going to do something, **He** will accomplish what **He** has set out to do. **Israel's** sin (or our sin) doesn't surprise **Him**. This is Good News for you and me. Because **God** will not reject **Isra'el** because of **their** sin, **He** will not reject us because of our sin.

The Cone of Isaiah



In this passage we have the nation of **Isra'el** referred to as **my servant**. **ADONAI** says that the nation is descended from **Abraham, My friend**. There are three different places in Scripture where **Abraham** is called the **friend** of **God**: here in **Isaiah 41:8-10; Second Chronicles 20:7**, and **James 2:23**. The main residence of **Abraham** was in Hebron, where **he** lived and was buried. The name Hebron in Hebrew means *friend*.

The LORD had already taken the **descendants of Abraham, the Israelites, from the ends of the earth to their** new home in Canaan. **He** could do it again, and after seventy years of captivity He would do it again. The exile would not change their relationship to **Him**. So even though **Isra'el** might be languishing in the Babylonian captivity before the coming of Cyrus, **God** made it clear to **Isra'el** (even before **she** went into the Babylonian captivity) that **He** had **not rejected her**. **ADONAI** says this in eight different ways: First, **But you, O Israel, are my servant**; secondly, **Jacob, whom I have chosen**; thirdly, **You descendants of Abraham, my friend**; fourthly, **I took you from the ends of the earth**; fifthly, **From the farthest corners I called you**; sixthly, **I said: You are my servant**; seventh, **I have chosen you** and eighth, **I have not rejected you**.

Then, **Isaiah** gives the application. In light of the fact that **God** has chosen **Isra'el**, and that **Isra'el** has a very unique position as **His ancestors, they are not to fear or be dismayed**. Why? Because **He** is with **them**, and **He** is, after all, **their God**. And **ADONAI** promises to **strengthen**, or empower, **them**; **The LORD** will **help**, or assist, them and **uphold**, or support, **them**. All of these three blessings of empowerment, assistance, and support will come with the righteousness of **God's right hand**.