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The God of Hope

40: 12-31

The first eleven verses in this chapter answer the question: **Does God want to deliver Israel (and us)?** And that has been answered in the affirmative. **But that gives rise to another question. Can ADONAI deliver us?** It is one thing to want to act, but it is quite another to have the ability to act. **Although God had once dramatically delivered His city from the Assyrians (37:36-37), would not its fall to the Babylonians, as predicted by Isaiah's own words (39:6), mean that the LORD was merely one more local god who would be swallowed up by the relentless march of world empires and their more powerful gods?**¹⁵⁵ **Isaiah** answers all of these questions with an emphatic *no*.

Because the exile would give **ADONAI** an opportunity to show **His** trustworthiness and **His** sovereignty, **Chapter 40** makes two points: **God** can be trusted to deliver **Isra'el (40:1-11)**, and **the LORD** is sovereign over all nations in the world **(40:12-31)**. The series of questions asked by **God** and **His prophet** remind us of the long list of difficult questions directed to **Job** by **ADONAI** in **Job 38-41**. Like **Job**, **God's** people in exile needed to learn that **the LORD** is worthy of praise because **His** majesty and power **(40:12-26)** guarantee **His** goodness and mercy **(40:27-31)**.¹⁵⁶



It is into a setting just like ours that **Isaiah** speaks. **He** speaks to people who have lost hope. The impossible has happened. The Jews were sure that their nation could

not fall, that their Temple could not be destroyed, and that their **God** would not let them down. Yet, all that happened. They were full of regret. Yes, **ADONAI** may have acted in the past for other people (don't we always say that), but to **the Jews** sitting in Babylon, it seemed like **their** situation was beyond **Him**. It seemed like it was beyond **His** compassion and beyond **His** power. And to us it sometimes feels like **He** has forgotten us, and we are hidden from **His** sight. Well, it wasn't true for **the Jews** in **Babylon** then, and it's not true for us today. What *is* true is **God's** promise: **Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you** (see the commentary on **Hebrews**, **to see link click De - Believer's Behavior in Relation to Ourselves**).

Yeshua says to us as **he** said to **them**, "No! There is nothing beyond **My** compassion or **My** power." We are persons of worth to **Him**. Are there chains of doubt about **God** that are just as real as **the Judeans** endured? Of course there are. But **the LORD** can break those chains. To be sure, the way **He** does it is **His** business. One of the recurring themes in the following chapters is the discomfort the people have with the way **ADONAI** chooses to act on **their** behalf. We cannot dictate the terms or the means, but we can hold on to **Him** with confident hope because **He** is the **God** of **hope**.

In the same way, we can believe that **the LORD** can change our circumstances. There can be real change for the better. That is, there *can* be if we believe in a **God** who is both outside and inside of history. **ADONAI** *can* intervene in our lives and change it for the better. But so much depends on our faith. I am not talking about getting some idea in our heads and then doing a mental number on ourselves until we really believe it is going to happen. I am talking about a life of faith in **God**, a life where we truly release ourselves into **His hands without any reservation**.

This is clearly what the **Jewish** exiles were going to have difficulty doing in the crisis of the exile, and **Isaiah** knew it. In a real sense the problem **he** addresses in **his** own day and the problem we face today is the same. In **his** own day, **the people** did not believe **they** could trust **the LORD** to deliver **them**, so **they** trusted in other nations. **They** needed to hear **God's** Word in ways that changed how they thought. That is what we need to do also. We need lives of faith that are shaped by **God's** Word and **His** view of reality. If I cannot *believe* **ADONAI** and *hope* in **Him** in the sense of surrendering my life to **Him** in a kind of life that I know pleases **Him**, then **His** power cannot transform me. But if I will actively believe in **His** Word, there really are no limits to what **He** can do for me. There is **hope**.¹⁵⁷