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Hear, You Deaf; Look, You Blind, and See!
42: 18-25

Hear, you deaf; look , you blind, and see DIG: What things have the exiles seen and heard but failed to notice? What was the result? What was God's original plan for the northern kingdom of Isra'el? For the southern kingdom of Judah? How have they failed to live up to it? What have they become instead? If you were in exile, what comfort would you find in this passage?

REFLECT: Are there times in your past when you were deaf or blind to the obvious will of the LORD? How was it obvious, now that you look back on it? Did ADONAI give up on you? If God needed to gain your attention today, where would you place yourself on the scale of 1 (deaf) to 10 (all ears)? Are there areas of your life where you might still be turning a deaf ear or a blind eye to the LORD? What lesson for the future could you learn here?

After stating that **God** would deliver **His people** in **42:10-17**, **ADONAI** now addresses **the people's** present condition. The dispute was not between **God** and idols as in **41:21-29**, or between **the LORD** and idol worshipers as in **41:1-7**, but between **ADONAI** and **His** own **people**. Why has **God** been so **blind** to the sufferings of **His people**? Why has **He** been so **deaf** to **their** cries? In **His** grace **He** had given them the Torah, but **they** had refused to believe it, **they** were not willing to walk along the path laid out for **them**. Then when the punishment came for **their** rebellion, **they** refused to learn the lessons that **the LORD** was trying to teach **them**. To all this, it was as if **Isaiah** was saying, "It is not **God** who is **blind and deaf**, look in the mirror, it is you!"

ADONAI called attention to **Judah's** condition by saying: **Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see (42:18)! Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to Me (42:19)?** In **verse 18 blind** and **deaf** are plural, but in **verse 19 blind** is singular. The plural looks back to **42:7** and **16**, where the **blind** are the lost Gentile nations. Since **verse 19** is singular, this points to nation of **Judah**, **God's servant.** It was as if **the LORD** was asking them, "Can the **blind** lead the **blind**?" How could **Judah** lead the pagan Gentile nations into the truth if **she** was blind **herself**? Later, when **the Israelites** sat on the banks of the Euphrates River in Babylon **they** probably wondered what had happened to **them**. Why were **they** exiled from the Land and their Temple? **Isaiah** would answer **their** question by saying that they were spiritually **deaf and blind** to the Torah. When **Ezra** would finally lead the people back to the Promised Land, this question would ultimately lead to the formation of **the Oral Law** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**), by building a fence around the Torah.

But as an encouragement, **God** points out that her spiritual blindness will be healed in the future. **Her** future spiritual health would be in sharp contrast to the state of **Judah** in **Isaiah's** day. Theirs was not the total darkness of the Gentile world. **ADONAI** would say to them: **You have seen many things. Isra'el** had been given the Torah; **but** unfortunately, **she paid no attention** to it. **Judah** had been given the prophets; **but** even though **her ears** were **open, she** heard **nothing (42:20).** And because of that, there were two results.

First, came the necessity of punishment. Why? Because **for God's** own **sake, His righteousness** demanded punishment for sin **(42:21a)**. **The meaning here is steadfastness and purpose. God acts in accordance with His predetermined plan.** Secondly, the **Torah** had to be upheld. **It** specified that if **the Israelites** lived according to **God's** righteous commandments **He** would bless **them**. In that sense the **Torah** would be **great and glorious** because **it** would

reveal **His righteousness** to the Gentile nations **(42:21b)**. Therefore, if the **Torah** had to be upheld it demanded punishment because it clearly stated chastisement was the result of disobedience. What was their punishment? They would be driven out of the Land **(Deuteronomy 28:49-53).**

The Israelites where in an utterly helpless position. **But this is a people** whose cities would be **plundered and looted** (also see **Ezeki'el 7:21, 26:12, 29:19**)**, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons. They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them; they have been made loot, with no one to say, "Send them back" (42:22).** In the future **they** would be **plundered** and **looted** by the Babylonians. **They** will be **hidden away in pits or hidden away in prisons with no one to rescue them** except for **the LORD.** And just as sure as night follows the day, judgment follows spiritual blindness. Far from influencing the Gentile world, the Gentile world ended up influencing **her**! Through **her** failure of making the Torah great, **Judah** had lost **her** status in the world and **her** protection of **ADONAI**. That was the truth taught in the Song of the Vineyard **(5:1-7)**: no fruit equaled no protection! Far from being **the ones** who could assist in the deliverance of the lost through the Torah, **they themselves** needed deliverance.

Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in the time to come (42:23)? The judgment of Judah and **Isra'el** in this section is in light of **her** state of deafness. **Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not** choose to listen to you any more **(59:1-2).** Who was really **deaf** here? A man told his doctor that he thought his wife was going **deaf**. The doctor told him to conduct a simple test. When the man reached the front door of his home, he called out, "Honey, is dinner ready?" Hearing no response, he walked inside and repeated himself. Still no reply. On the third try, when he was immediately behind her, he finally heard her say, "For the third time, yes!" **ADONAI** had sent **Isaiah** to prophesy to Judah about her impending judgment, but the message had fallen on **deaf** ears.

Was it that **the LORD** could not protect **them**? No, **the LORD** demanded judgment, and here the judgment is described. **Isaiah** points out that **the Israelites** must indeed learn **their** lesson. What exactly was the lesson? Who was the cause of **their** suffering? Perhaps the immediate cause was the Gentile nations. Assyria. Babylonia. Medo-Persia. Greece. Rome. The Arabs. Nazi Germany. Soviet Russia today. But Who is the ultimate cause? The answer is that **God** is the ultimate cause

of **their** suffering. **He** is the one **who handed Jacob** (or Judah) **over to become loot and Isra'el to the plunderers** because of her sins **(42:24a)**. The means of judging **Judah** or **Isra'el** has always been to turn them over to the Gentiles. Now these Gentile nations are sinful, wicked nations, and because **God** punishes sin, **He** eventually ends up punishing those Gentile nations also. But **God** uses **their** wickedness to discipline **Judah** and **Isra'el**.

Why did **God** judge and discipline **them**? **Was it not ADONAI they sinned against (42:24b)?** Grammatically, the only answer was, "Yes." **They would not follow His ways; they did not obey His commandments. They** had an unsubmitted, rebellious will. Why the dispersion after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD? They were still **blind** to **their** sin and **His** ways. That is why **God** would send **His Servant** to open **their** eyes.

So, on account of their sins and disobedience to **the Torah**, **God's anger** was against them. **So He poured out on them His burning anger, the violence of war (42:25a).** The theme of **Chapters 40-48** is **that her hard service had been completed.** Here **the prophet** brings out the fact that for centuries **God** has been disciplining **Judah** and **Isra'el**. When **Israel** was assimilated by Assyria, or when **Judah** was sent into exile in Babylon, **they** thought **ADONAI** was **deaf** when **they** cried out to **Him**. **They** were actually the problem.

But **Isra'el's** response was that even though **God enveloped them in flames, they did not understand. Isra'el** did not know who was disciplining **her** because of **her** deafness. Even though **God consumed them, they did not take it to heart (24:25). You can talk to rabbis today, and this is still very true. If you ask them why the Jews were dispersed, the answer that you get is that God dispersed them for the purpose of spreading Judaism throughout the world.** The discipline of **ADONAI** did not cause the nation to repent and return to **Him**. **They** still would be **blind** to **their** sin and **His** ways. We know this because of the reaction of the religious leaders of the nation when **Messiah** presented **Himself** (see **GI – The Three Messianic Miracles**). But did that thwart the purposes of **the LORD**? Never. It did not frustrate the purposes of **God** for **Judah. She** would be regathered into the Land as seen in the coming deliverance from Babylon from **43:1** to **44:5**.

Could it be that **the LORD** is trying to tell you something but you aren't listening? Let's examine ourselves carefully. **ADONAI** speaks to us through **His gentile whisper (1 Kgs 19:11-12)**, and **His** Word: **All Scripture is God-breathed and**

is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16). His voice isn't audible, but if you are paying attention, it is unmistakable. We need to listen with both our hearts and our brains to hear **Him**.