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I Have Swept Away Your Sins Like the Morning Mist, Return to Me for I Have Redeemed You 44: 21-23

I have swept away your sins like the morning mist, return to Me for I have redeemed you DIG: In contrast to the idols that can do nothing, what things has God done for Isra'el? In turn, what does He call upon the people to do? What does He mean by it? The LORD has redeemed Isra'el before they returned to Him. What does that say about His nature? Who has to take the first step in the salvation process? Why?

REFLECT: Is your worship life more characterized by singing and joy, or ritual and dullness? Why? What helps you move toward joyful worship? Our faith is based on the faithfulness of Yeshua Messiah and not some here-today-and-gone-tomorrow theological fad. Can you remember the times that God has proved Himself faithful to you? When? Or is it difficult to think of anything? Why?

Here **Isaiah** repeats one of the great themes of the fifth book of Moshe, to **remember: You are to remember everything of the way in which ADONAI led you these forty years in the desert, humbling and testing you in order to know what was in your heart - whether you would obey his commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2, also see 8:11 and 18, 9:7).** At the foot of Mount Sinai, **the Israelites** were to **remember** as a means of motivation to obedient living. **God** asked **them** to **remember** what **He** had faithfully done for **them** in the past. Here in **Isaiah**, it is not so much the specific acts of **the LORD** that are to be remembered, but **His** very nature. Nevertheless, the meaning is the same. **They** were to **remember** the character of **ADONAI** as **He** had revealed **Himself** to **them** in the past, and **they** were not to chase after every current theological fad blowing in the wind, but **remember His** faithfulness.

Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel

(44:21a). Then **ADONAI** asks the people to **remember** what **God** had done for **them**, with the intent of motivating **them** to obedient living. **He** uses the name **Jacob** because **he** had twelve sons that became the twelve tribes of the nation; **his** name is representative of all the tribes. But after **Jacob** wrestled all night with **the LORD** and **his** name was changed to **Isra'el** (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click [Hw - Jacob Wrestles with God](#)**) **ADONAI** said: **Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Isra'el because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome (Genesis 32:28)**.

Therefore, **ADONAI** spoke of **the nation** as being **His faithful servant**, depending on **Him**. **He** declared: **I have made you, you are My servant (44:21b)**. This is no ordinary **servant** but a **bondservant**. *Doulos* is a Greek word that means **bondservant**. In the New Covenant times it was not uncommon for a freed slave to voluntarily re-enter servitude to a master whom he loved. This servitude was called bond-service. Only a freed slave could be a **bondservant**, and once he (she) had chosen to become one, he (she) could never be freed again. Neither could he (she) be bought or sold, and he (she) served his (her) chosen master until death. When a freed slave chose bond-service, he (she) was taken to the front entrance of the house, and his (her) right ear was laid against the door post. A nail was driven through his (her) ear, and an earring was placed in it. That earring was a symbol to all of the **servant's** choice and of his (her) immunity to being sold. **ADONAI** wanted **Isra'el** to willingly choose to be **His bondservant**.

Furthermore, **He** declared **His** unwavering devotion to **her** when **He** said: **O Isra'el, I will not forget you (44:21c)**. In the worship of dead idols everything depended on the devotee, but here, everything depends on the living **God**. But even if **Isra'el** would **forget**, **the LORD** declares for all the ages: **I will never forget you** (see [lp - Zion Not Rejected](#)). This verse refutes the belief by some today that the Church has replaced **Isra'el** (replacement theology), and all the promises given to **Isra'el** are now transferred to the Church.

Paul and **Peter** spoke of **themselves** as being **bondservants** to **Messiah** (**Romans 1:1** and **Second Peter 1:1**). And a **servant** to **Christ** does not seek to be served, but rather has a focus of serving others (**Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45**). And as believers, we need to **be conformed**, literally *pressed or molded*, **into the likeness of Yeshua** (see the commentary on [Romans Cl - Our Bodies and Redemption](#)).



Here it is not so much specific acts of **God** that are to be remembered, as are certain concepts about **Him**. Yet, the sense is the same. Life is to be lived on the basis of reflection on the character of **ADONAI**, not human psychology. So, when **the LORD** says **remember these things**, **He** is saying, “**Remember** all the evidence that you have witnessed – **I am** superior to idols.” No idol could possibly save **them**. **God**, not the idols, would redeem **His** people, for **He** had redeemed **her** for a special purpose (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz - Redemption**); to declare to the world that **the LORD** was the one and only **ADONAI**. Therefore, **she** must not interpret the Babylonian exile to mean that **Ha’Shem** had forgotten **her**. But physical deliverance was not **her** greatest need. The real cause of the exile was sin. And until that sin was addressed, not only forgiven but corrected, the real significance of the exile would not be realized. Then, and only then, could **He** **sweep away** their **offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist (44:22a)**.

The final phrase starts with, **return to Me**. The Hebrew word **return**, *shuv*, is the key word in **Jeremiah** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Ac - The Book of Jeremiah From a Jewish Perspective: Key Word**). It has two forms. The first form means *to turn away from, backslide or apostatize*. But the second form means *to repent, to return or turn back*. Here, **ADONAI** is telling **Isaiah’s** spiritually wicked generation to *turn around* and go in a different direction. Why? Because **their** redemption had already taken place, opening the door for a **return**, making **Isra’el’s** redemption both possible and effective.

For I have redeemed you (44:22b), underlines the importance of the human response to **God's** plan. **Isra'el** is captive, both to Babylon and to **her** sins. **She** can do nothing to deliver **herself**. The first step is up to **God**. If **she** is to be bought back, **redeemed**, **God** alone must do that. But how will **Isra'el** respond to **the LORD's** first step? **His** making the first step does not in itself produce a response. **Isra'el** must be willing to act in faith (**Genesis 15**). As long as **Isra'el** lies down in hopelessness and despair, the coming of Cyrus, or even the coming of **the Messiah**, will be in vain. This is why **God** says not to fear and not to believe that **they** are forgotten. **He** said: **See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands (49:16)**. This is a figurative way of expressing that **ADONAI** will never forget **Isra'el**. The greatest danger of the exile would not be that **God** would be unable to act on **their** behalf, but that **Isra'el herself** would fail to respond in faith to **His** first step. Like a man wooing or courting his bride, **God** is always the initiator and we are always the responders.

*We can say no to **God** and make it stick. **The LORD** can open the door for us, but we have to walk through it. As much as **He** loves us, **He** will not violate our free will. The unique thing about love is that it cannot be forced. You cannot make someone love you. The exciting thing about love, however, is that when someone loves you, they choose to love you. That's what **ADONAI** wants, **He** wants us to choose **Him** over the Adversary and this world. But **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** is a **Gentleman**; **He** will not kick down the door to your heart. **He** can only be invited in. What's your choice?*

In **the far eschatological future** **God's** redemption of **Isra'el** will cause all of creation to rejoice. All idolatry will ultimately cease because it will be shown to be what it is – folly and futility. But **the One God**, who works in history, who is eternal, will prove **Himself** to be all that **He** has claimed when the restoration of **Isra'el** comes. Why? **For ADONAI has redeemed Jacob (44:23b)**. The Hebrew verb **has redeemed** is a prophetic perfect, meaning *an action still in the future but as certain as if it had already happened*. **He displays His glory in Isra'el (44:23c)**. At that time, all of creation will rejoice along with **Him**. The Hebrew verb **displays** is an imperfect, indicating a continuing statement of fact. It is with **Isra'el** that **the LORD** chooses to adorn **Himself**.

This section ends with the hymn of praise. **ADONAI** wanted **Isra'el** to focus on **their** hopeful future to motive **them** to turn from **their** idol worship. **He** tells **them** to **sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your**



trees (44:23a). When **ADONAI** accomplishes redemption for **Jacob**, the curse will be lifted from the whole of creation (**Romans 8:19-21**). The idolater cut down **trees** to make an idol, but redemption frees them to **burst into song** for the true **God**. **The prophet calls for all nature to join in song in celebration of the marvelous redemption of God's people, a redemption that is fraught with the greatest consequences in the religious history of the world.** The **heavens** and **earth** are invited to **sing for joy**.

The emphasis on **ADONAI's** redemption of His people is completely appropriate to precede the Cyrus oracle that follows (see [la](#) - **The Deliverance by Cyrus the Great**). The cycle will be complete when heaven and earth themselves participate in the redemption (**65:17-25, 66:22-23**). It is clear that this blueprint of redemption is progressively revealed in **Isaiah** and includes a lot more than merely the Babylonian Exile and return. Though it does provide the background for the larger picture of **Israel's** ultimate redemption (**Psalms 96:11-13**).

We can't imagine what our **Redeemer** has in store for us. **The Spirit of God** gives us a few clues, but it is like a person blind from birth trying to comprehend color. Imagine if you lived in a world of darkness - then could suddenly see. Imagine if you lived in a world without taste - and suddenly could taste a wonderful holiday buffet with all the trimmings. Imagine if you lived in a world without sound - then could hear beautiful music. How awesome is THAT! That is a little bit of what it will be for those who have been redeemed by **the Lamb**. That is a little bit of what it will be for those who are children of **God**.