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Cyrus is My Shepherd and Will Accomplish All that I Please 44: 24-28

Cyrus is My shepherd and will accomplish all that I please DIG: What truth about God is stressed here? How do these truths confirm the promises given? As an exile who had no freedom to leave Babylon, much less consider rebuilding Jerusalem, would you have responded to these promises with hope or with cynicism? In light of this, how might the exiles feel as they heard rumors of Cyrus' conquests and approach to Babylon? What does that imply about the relationship between God's actions and Cyrus' plans?

REFLECT: Here the LORD is emphasizing the faithfulness, the surety, the reliability and the promises of His written Word through the prophets, His messengers. If you are a believer, His Word contains promises to you about your future with Him. What do you believe about these promises? Some have said, "The Bible says it, I believe it, and that does it!" Does that characterize you? Or do you have doubts? As you read about God's promise of deliverance to the Israelites from the Babylon Captivity, and His faithfulness to them, how does that make you feel about His faithfulness to you?



The second half of the book of **Isaiah** is a message of **comfort**. Here **God** announces through **His prophet** the deliverance of **the Jews** by a Persian emperor named **Cyrus** (see

the commentary on [Dani'el, to see link click Ag - Cyrus and Darius](#)). In the Hebrew text this is all one sentence. It is one of the longest sentences in the Hebrew text. First, **he** describes **the LORD's** authority by saying: **This is what ADONAI says (44:24a)**. We see that phrase again in **45:1, 11, 14** and **18**. It is usually used to bring about confidence in the promises of **God** to redeem and deliver. This phrase underscores that these are the very words of **God**.

Then **the LORD** asserts: **I am your Redeemer (44:24b, also see 43:14)**. **He** is **Isra'el's go'el, the Next-of-Kin**, pledged to take and bear **her** every burden as **His** own (see the commentary on [Ruth Ax - Ruth and Boaz on the Threshing Floor](#)). **She** is **His** family by **His** will. **James**, **Yeshua's** half-brother, wrote **to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations** saying: **He chose to give us birth through the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all He created (James 1:18)**. **Isaiah** then describes **Isra'el's** special relationship with **the LORD** ten times by starting each sentence with the word **who**.

(1) **Who formed you in the womb (44:24d)**. In the abortion debate people often argue about exactly when life begins. The Bible is very clear that life begins **in the womb (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 43:1, 7 and 21, 44:2 and 24; Jer 1:5 and 20:17)**. David would say: **From my mother's womb you have been my God (Psalm 22:10b)**.



In a **mother's womb** were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk

with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is She now?"

The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist."

Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist."

To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

If you are a believer in the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**, I would caution you to believe in, and follow, **the LORD's** Word to you rather than the lies of our current generation.

(2) **Who had made all things (44:24c)**. Not only has **the LORD** made **Isra'el**, but **He** has also **made all things** without any assistance or advice (**40:12-14** and **21-22**). The fact that **ADONAI** is **Isra'el's Maker** suggests that **He** would protect **her** and not see **her** destroyed. All creation has a relationship with **God**, but **the people of Isra'el** have a *special* relationship with **Him**. **She** is, after all, **the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10c)**.

(3) **Who alone stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth**

(44:24d and 51:13). Regarding stretching **out the heavens** (see the commentary on [Genesis Ak](#) - **So God Made the Expanse Between the Waters**), and for laying **the foundations of the earth** (see the commentary on [Genesis Al](#) - **God Called the Dry Ground Land and Gathered the Waters He Called Seas**). In other words, **His** continuing work as **the Creator** guarantees that **He** is in sole charge of everything (40:26), and there is no other **God** (Ps 96:5).

(4) **Who spread out the earth by Myself (44:24e). And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done** (see my commentary on [Genesis Aq](#) - **By the Seventh Day God Had Finished His Work**). The point is that **ADONAI** is responsible for the existence of **the world** as we know it.

(5) **Who foils the signs of false prophets (44:25a).** The Hebrew word for **false prophets** here means *babblers*. It is used in **Isaiah 16:6**, **Job 11:3** and **Jeremiah 48:30** in the sense of *idle talk*. But here and in **Jeremiah 50:36** it is used of exaggerated claims of fortunetellers. **They** made **false** prophecies by **their** relationship with the demonic world **and makes fools of diviners**, or those who try to figure out the future by asking **their** gods of wood and stone. In both cases **Ha'Shem** is the frustrater of the occult. **The false prophets** are exposed because, like **Hananiah** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Et](#) - **The False Prophet Hananiah**), what **they** prophesy does not come to pass.

(6) **Who overthrows the learning of the wise.** Regardless of what age **they** live in, **the wise** think **they** are hot stuff. I don't know where you live, but there's plenty of that going around in my neck-of-the-woods. But the Bible says: **Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Proverbs 26:12).** **Isaiah** had warned against this earlier (see [Bi](#) - **Woe To Those Who Are Wise In Their Own Eyes**). **The LORD** always **turns man's wisdom into nonsense (44:25b)**. The counselors of the king of **Babylon** who said **God** could not release **His people** would be proven foolish when **God's predictions** were fulfilled. **For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (First Corinthians 1:18-25).**

Adoniram Judson graduated at the top of his class in college, and then he headed to New York City to seek fame and fortune as an actor and/or writer. He had left the **God** of his father, thinking he was beyond such "primitive notions." But such a life was empty for him. He was disillusioned, so he headed back to his home in Plymouth, Massachusetts, stopping for a night at a wayside inn. Adoniram had trouble sleeping that night, because a man in the

next room was critically ill and moaning and groaning in pain. Obviously, his neighbor in the next room was dying. In the darkness of his room, Adoniram thought about the possibility of his own death and whether he was prepared for it. At times during the long hours he thought about returning to the Christian beliefs of his father, but then he imagined what his college friend Jacob Eames would say about his father's faith. How he ridiculed **God** and anyone who would believe in such **nonsense**. He waited for morning to come so that the terrors of the night would be forgotten. Early the next morning, Adoniram went to the innkeeper. "That poor old man in the next room. How is he?" he asked. He passed away early this morning," came the reply. "And he wasn't old at all. He was a young man, about your age." For some reason, Adoniram asked, "What was his name?" It was a rather stupid question, because Adoniram certainly didn't know anyone in that section of the country. The innkeeper replied, "His name was Jacob Eames." It was Adoniram's college friend whose skepticism had turned Adoniram against the faith of his father. Dazed, Adoniram Judson returned to Massachusetts and to his father where after three months of a mental and spiritual battle, he "made a solemn dedication of himself to **God**."

(7) **Who carries out the counsel of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers (44:26a)**. So, while the prophets of the **Babylonian** deities were frustrated because **their** predictions did not come true, **ADONAI** was able to confirm **the words of His** prophets, or **His messengers**. **Isaiah** insists that **the LORD** forms **His** own **counsel** and communicates **His** plans and desires through **His prophets**. **God's** plans, unlike the king's advisors, are not determined by stars or shapes of animal intestines, but by **His** holy character. **His** ultimate purposes are always **good** because **God alone is good** (**Mark 10:17-18**). Meditate on **Psalm 34:8; 119:68; 2 Thessalonians 1:11** and **James 1:17**).

(8) **Who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited' of towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them' (44:26b)**. **ADONAI** is the **One** who prophesies the return from **Babylon**. Through **the prophets**, **His messengers**, **He** said **Jerusalem** would again have people living in it, and indeed it would! The true prophet of **God** always conveys the certainty of **His** divine will (**Deuteronomy 18:20-22**).

(9) **Who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams' (44:27)**. This **watery deep** is an allusion to the crossing of the Sea of Reeds (see my commentary on **Exodus Ci - The Waters Were Divided and the Israelites Went Through the Sea on Dry Land**). Can **the LORD** really restore **Jerusalem**, as **He** had said? It was as if **ADONAI** was saying, "Consider the exodus. If I can **dry up the** great **watery deep**, is there anything I can't do?" **God** removed all Pharaoh's obstacles, and in the same way all obstacles for **the Israelites** to return to **Jerusalem** would be removed.

(10) **Who says of Cyrus, He is My shepherd (44:28a).** This verse now clears up the hints that first appeared in **41:23** and **41:25**. Who was it that **the LORD** called from the north and the east to subdue the Gentile nations and to set **His** heavyhearted **people** free? It was the Persian emperor **Cyrus**. **In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (538 BC), in order to fulfill the word of YHVH spoken by Jeremiah, God moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:**

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ADONAI, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed me to build a Temple for Him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of His people among you - may his God be with him, and let him go to Jerusalem in Judah (Ezra 1:2-3a). As a result, the first return of 49,897 exiles under Zerubbabel (with the intention of rebuilding **the Temple**) took place that same year (**Ezra 2**). Two years later in 536 BC, the bronze altar and **Temple** foundations were built (**Ezra 3:1 to 4:5**).

It is important to understand that **Cyrus** was not a true believer in the **God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. **ADONAI** accepted and understood this fact when **He** declared: **You do not acknowledge Me (45:4b)**. The concern of **the Persian king** was to establish strong buffer states around **his** empire that would be loyal to **him**. Also, by having **his** subjects resettled in their own countries **he** hoped to have the gods in various parts of **his** empire praying for **him** to **his** gods Bel and Nebo. The famous **Cyrus Cylinder** (538 BC), which records his capture of **Babylon** and **his** program for repatriating **his** subjects in their homelands, includes this damning statement, "May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities daily ask Bel and Nebo for a long life for me." Therefore, we can see that the fulfillment of **Jeremiah's** words: **When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill My gracious promise to bring you back to this place (Jeremiah 29:10)**, were totally **God's** doing.

The title that **Isaiah** gives **him** here is **My shepherd**. **Cyrus will look after the interests of Isra'el as a shepherd looks after his flocks**. By calling him **My Shepherd**, the **Spirit of God** indicates that **Cyrus** is going to perform shepherd duties for **Isra'el**. **ADONAI** will not only give **them** the right to go back to **Jerusalem**, but actually provide for **them** to do so. The whole argument against the idols is that they cannot tell the future. Nothing they supposedly said in the past can remotely explain the present, and nothing they could possibly say today is more than a mere rehash of the past.

And He will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the Temple, 'Let its foundations be laid' (44:28b). In addition, **God** says that

Cyrus will accomplish all that I please. That which **Cyrus** has ordained and decreed, **Cyrus** will carry out. What has **the LORD** decreed? Concerning **Jerusalem**, **let it be rebuilt**; concerning **the Temple**, **let its foundations be laid**. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, who wrote about 75AD to 80AD, said that it was this passage that **Dani'el the prophet** showed to **Cyrus** the Great. When **Cyrus** read the prophecy and understood that **his** name was prophesied about 200 years earlier, **ADONAI moved his heart** and **Cyrus** issued the decree for **the Israelites** to go back to **the city of Jerusalem**.

God, through **Isaiah**, gives **a near historical prophecy** that clarified the allusions that first appeared in **41:2-3** and again in **41:25**. Who was it that **the LORD** called from the north and the east to terrify the nations and return **His** people to **the Land**? It was **Cyrus** the Persian emperor. Remember that **Cyrus** was named and identified almost two hundred years before this prophecy was made. Yet, **God** was so specific that **He** was able to name the very Persian monarch that would bring an end to the **Babylonian** empire, and give **the Jews** the right to return to **Judah**. The contrast to the idols is stark. They could do no such thing.

One can only imagine what **the Israelites** thought when **ADONAI** called that pagan **king**, **My shepherd**. **They** believed that only **David** could **shepherd God's people** (**2 Samuel 5:2; Ezekiel 34:23**). How could this be? The next three files tell the story. In **Ic - This is What the LORD says to Cyrus His Anointed**; **Id - I Will Rise Up Cyrus in My Righteousness, I Will Make All His Ways Straight**; and **Ie - Turn to Me and Be Saved, For I Am God and there is No Other**. **God** will give both **a near historical prophecy** concerning the coming of **Cyrus**, and, to reassure **Isra'el** of **His** ultimate plan for **them**, **a far eschatological prophecy** about **her** place in the Messianic Kingdom. **They** could rest assured; the calling of **Cyrus** was all part of **their** ultimate redemption.

Even if the house of **David** had fractured **their** relationship with **the LORD** (**7:13, 39:7**), **He** would find *a new way* to keep **His** Covenant with **them** (**Deuteronomy 29**). In an ironic twist that only **the LORD** could orchestrate, just as a foreigner, **Ruth**, became an ancestress of **David** (**Ruth 4:13-22**), the foreigner **Cyrus** was a snap-shot of the Davidic Messiah who would say: **I am the good Shepherd** (**John 10:11**).