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Listen to Me, O Jacob, Isra'el Whom I Have Called, the Sovereign LORD Has Sent Me with His Spirit 48: 12-22

Listen to Me, O Jacob, Isra'el whom I have called, the sovereign LORD has sent Me with His Spirit DIG: Who are the two people God has specifically called in 48:12 and in 48:14b-15? What has each been given to do? What message has YHVH been communicating to the exiles? In what way is Cyrus the LORD's chosen ally? What has their history of rebellion and ignoring Ha'Shem cost the people? Chapters 40-48 reach their climax here. If you were reading these words to the people, would you sob with tears of joy? Shout in victory? Or whisper? Why? What about ADONAI will this deliverance communicate to all the nations? What was motivating God's compassion in these chapters? How does His compassion toward the Church made up of Jews and Gentiles differ from this?

REFLECT? In what way is Cyrus' deliverance of the Jews from Babylon like the deliverance from sin that Messiah has won for His people? How did you *first* respond to the news that you were free from the enslavement of sin (Romans 8:1-3)? Has there been disobedience in your life that has cost you? How so? Do you feel like you have been forgiven? What have you learned from all of this? Have you ever been at odds with the Lord and felt like there was no peace for you? What did you do? What is the answer? What did you feel like, what did you act like when that time in your life had ended? From the time Isra'el returned to the land, idolatry has never been an issue with them again. Has the issue that resulted in no peace in your life resurfaced? What did you learn from it? What are you still in the process of learning?



This section opens with a call to **listen**, but then follows a description of **a nation** that, in fact, had not heard. In a sense, therefore, it is a reprise of **48:1** and signals the beginning of the second half of the poem. **ADONAI** had declared to **them** what would happen in the future, but **they** had credited the fulfilled prophecies to idols. Now **God** was telling **His people** the good news of **their** return from exile. Once again **they** are called to **listen**. Not only to **listen** but to believe and act, even though **their** deliverance would come through the pagan emperor Cyrus. **The inspired prophet offers five reasons why the Israelites should listen:**

First, He is the God of eternity. Listen to Me, O Jacob, Isra'el, whom I have called; I Am He; I am He, I am the first and the last (Isa 48:12; Rev 1:17, 2:8, 22:13). This verse, along with the following, is a summary of **ADONAI's** claim to be able to deliver **the Israelites** from **Babylon**, and to be able to use whoever **He** wanted to make it happen. **The LORD** had called **Isra'el** because **she** was part of a larger plan that included the coming **Messiah** and the redemption of the world. **She** was not subject to the whims of some god of wood or stone. **He** was the only **God**. The phrase: **I Am He** is **Isaiah's** equivalent of God's declaration: **I Am Who I Am (Exodus 3:14)**. It is the claim of **the LORD of heaven's armies**, and **He** can use someone like **Cyrus** because nothing is outside **His** control. He had no limitations. Should **Jacob** and **Isra'el** not **listen to Him**? Shouldn't we?

Secondly, He is the God of creation. Moreover, My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together (48:13). **Moreover** shows how **ADONAI's** creation flows from **His** being. The entire universe is the servant of **God**, and when **He** commands, the entire universe responds. The idea is described beautifully by the Psalmist: **Your faithfulness continues through all generations; You established the earth, and it endures. Your rulings endure to this day, for all things serve You (Ps 119:90-91)**. The earth and the heavens are used as polar opposites to express the whole: **God** created **the earth** and everything below, **the heavens** and everything in between. **His right hand spread out**

the heavens. Everything in the universe, including the stars (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see link click [Lw](#) - **The Witness of the Stars**), appear and disappear at **His** command.

Thirdly, He is the God of human affairs. The focus moves from creation to history. **ADONAI** said: **Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD's chosen ally will carry out His purpose against Babylon (49:14a).** When **God's people** would read this prophecy about 200 years from then, it would reassure **them** that this really was **His** plan. Yes, **Cyrus** was a pagan king. Yes, **they** had misgivings (**45:9-10, 46:8** and **12**). But **ADONAI** was, and is, the **God** of human affairs. **They** needed to trust **Him**. **God Himself** was behind it, and as such, **they** must be for it. **Cyrus** was, after all, **His chosen ally**.

When **ADONAI** says: **I, even I, have spoken: yes, I have called him.** The emphasis in the Hebrew is cannot be missed. Literally, *I, I, I have spoken; moreover, I have called him.* When **God** spoke through **His prophet** saying, **"I will bring him and he will succeed in his mission, and his arm will be against the Babylonians,"** **He** was talking about **Cyrus (48:14b-15)**. The phrase **his arm** here symbolizes the strength and power of **Cyrus** and **his** army. **God** was declaring to the disbelieving people of **Isra'el** in the strongest possible terms that **the mission** of **Cyrus** will only succeed as a result of **God** working in human history. These two verses summarize everything said about **Cyrus** in **Chapters 40** to **47**. **God** said five things: **Cyrus** will capture **Babylon**, it was **the LORD** who **called** and brought **him**, **ADONAI** will help **him succeed in his mission**, and all of this brings out the truthfulness of **God's** claims.

Fourth, He is the God of prophecy. This verse sums up the appeal of the four previous verses. Once again the call to **hear** is repeated. **ADONAI** commanded, **Come near Me and listen, "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I Am there" (48:16a).** **From the beginning, God has not spoken in secret (45:19).** **His** promises have not been mystical or mysterious. **His** words to Abraham, and before him, to Adam and Eve, were in plain language. As a result, the truth of **His** promises is easily verified. This also means that **the LORD** has been intimately involved in the affairs of humanity. **He** has made **Himself** accessible as **He** revealed **His** will and made it happen.

This is the basis of the incarnation. When **Yeshua Messiah became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14a)**, it was not some new manner of revelation; it was the logical result of all that **God** had been doing in and through **Isra'el** up to that point. **They** needed to **listen** up because two things should have been abundantly clear: **ADONAI**

could be understood and what **He** said was going to happen. This is no less of a lesson for us today, is it not?

Fifthly, he is also the God of the Trinity. And now Adonai ELOHIM has sent Me with His Spirit (48:16b). This is the second, and by far the clearest, of four examples of the Trinity in the TaNaKh. We see the Trinity in 42:1, here, in 61:1 and 63:7-14. And now Adonai ELOHIM (God the Father) has sent Me (God the Son), with His Spirit (God the Ruach ha-Kodesh). Once again there are only three Persons that are ever called God in the TaNaKh. The context began in 48:12 where One Person was speaking. The personal pronoun I has been used from 48:12 where He says I am the God of eternity, the God of creation, the God of human affairs, and the God of prophecy. This divine personality, the Me of 48:16b, is God the Son. At this point the Second Person is being introduced because the main topic of the second section of the rest of the book, that her sin has been pardoned in Chapters 49 to 57, will no longer be Cyrus but Messiah the Servant. However, the rabbis teach that to believe in the Trinity is blasphemy and they bend over backwards to prove it is not so. Therefore, we see a transition from Cyrus in Chapter 48 to the Messiah in Chapter 49.

These verses serve as a conclusion, summarizing Chapter 48. They remind the reader of what might have been if Isra'el had listened and obeyed God (48:17-19). How bright and prosperous would her condition have been if she had followed the guidance of the LORD, her helpful teacher and trustworthy guide. The political solution of returning home from Babylon did not recover the peace that might have been. It was the sin of disobedience that needed to be dealt with, and until that wickedness had been confronted, their peace would remain an illusion.

Therefore, there was a call to obedience. The LORD is our Redeemer, our Next-of-Kin, the Holy One of Isra'el. He is the One who teaches Isra'el to do what is best for them and teaches them the way they should go (48:17). God did not reveal Himself to them in order to dominate them, nor for them to master Him. Rather, He has shown Himself to have a relationship with us. However, Isra'el's rejection and disobedience produced four results.

First, if only she had paid attention to the LORD's mitzvoth, or commands, her peace would have been like a river (48:18a). Their Redeemer had constantly been teaching and guiding Isra'el by means of the Torah, but she didn't listen. This prepared them to hear again the wonderful promise of redemption. Her future obedience would then promise peace (9:6, 26:3, and 12, 32:17) like a river. And that river would be a constant

flooding stream, not a seasonal trickle. **This is what God says: I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem** (see [Kv - I Will Extend Peace to Her Like a River, and the Wealth of the Nations Like a Flooding Stream](#)).

Secondly, **if only she had paid attention to ADONAI their righteousness would have been like the waves of the sea (48:18b). Righteousness** is seen to be the characteristic of the reign of **God** and **waves** often picture overwhelming power (**Psalm 42:7, 65:7, 107:25**). Those who stand on the beach are surely impressed by the constant march of **waves** onto the shore. There is no stopping **them**. The implication is that if **she** would trust in **the LORD her righteousness** would give **her** overwhelming power once again.

Thirdly, **if only she had paid attention to God, her descendants would have been like the sand, her children like its numberless grains (48:19a)**. But because **she** did not, there would be no increase in Jewish population. To this day, **Jews** only number about fifteen million. **Jews** have been around long enough to number in the hundreds of millions. But the **Jewish** population has been kept small because of constant disobedience. However, **her name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before ADONAI (48:19b)**, because **she** is, and will always be, **His Covenant people** and as the writer to the **Hebrews** would later write: **Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you (Hebrews 13:5b)**.

The fourth result was **the Babylonian captivity itself**. Four results, because of **Isra'el's** refusal to obey. No peace, no righteousness, no increase in population, only captivity.

Even though they had not done so in the past, **the Israelites** were challenged to start believing in **ADONAI** and return home to **Judah (48:20-21)**. But the captivity was over with. Remember, that **Chapter 48** is written for **the Jewish** generation at the end of the captivity. And fulfilled prophecy carries with it specific obligations. What prophecies were fulfilled? Namely two. First, **Cyrus** has taken over **the Babylonian** empire and second, **Cyrus** has issued a decree for **the Jews** to leave **Babylon** and return to **the Land**. But this was a daunting task. By the end of the sixth century BC it was little more than a forsaken ruin, its walls broken down, its temple destroyed, and most of its **citizens** in exile. But for all that, it would continue to be the place **God** had chosen as the center of **His** Kingdom on earth. It would once again be **the holy city**, not just in the sense that no evil will be found in it (**1:21-26; 52:1**), but that **God Himself** would return to it and rule from it (**2:1-4**).¹⁸⁴

With **Cyrus' edict (Second Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4)**, **the Jews** were urged to leave **Babylon** and return home. **Isaiah** said: **Leave Babylon, flee from the**

Babylonians! They were to **leave Babylon with shouts of joy** (in other words not turning back) and to declare to the whole Gentile world that **the LORD** had **redeemed His servant Jacob (48:20)**. Because being **redeemed**, was like being bought out of slavery. This would remind the exiles of the exodus from Egypt.

After the Egyptian **Exodus God** provided **water in the deserts from the rock** (see my commentary on **Exodus Cu - Strike the Rock and Water Will Come Out of It**): **They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He made water flow for them from the rock. He split the rock and water gushed out (48:21)**. Here too, it is implied that **ADONAI** would miraculously provide for **them** in their second Exodus.

This section ends with this warning: **There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked (48:22)**. To understand what this is referring to, go back to **48:18** where it reads: **If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river**. But because **Isra'el** disobeyed the earlier prophecies, there was no **peace like a river**. However, for those **Jews** who *do* return in **48:21** will receive **peace like a river on their journey home**. But for those who stayed behind in **Babylon**, those who reject the obligation of fulfilled prophecy, **there will be no peace**. We know that this was true from historical records. **The Jews** who remained in **Babylon** had continuous strife as anti-Semitism **there** grew.

This verse ends the first of the three-fold message in the second half of the book of **Isaiah**, **that her warfare had been completed**. It was completed with the **Babylonian** captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). Now **Babylon** will be conquered and **the Jews** will be permitted to go back. Thus, the basic content of **Chapters 40 to 48** has been completed. **God** has showing **His** absolute superiority over **the idols** by doing something never before done in human history: causing a conquered people, **His people**, to return from exile to their native land (**41:1 to 44:22**). **He** will do this by destroying proud **Babylon** through **Cyrus**. Not surprisingly then, the primary person **Isaiah** talked about in this section was **Cyrus**. But not exclusively, **he** has mentioned **Messiah** twice. Each of these three-fold messages ends with this phrase: **there is no peace for the wicked**. We will see it again at the end of **Chapter 57**.