

Isaiah: The Fifth Gospel — Week 4: “Second” Isaiah (40–55)

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Summary/Overview

- Isaiah 1–35 Warnings and promises of restoration
- Isaiah 36–39: Hezekiah: Salvation AND exile
- (exile happens)
- Isaiah 40–55 (links to 35 and 39) End of exile is coming soon! New Exodus! YHWH will do what he promised! Hopeful conclusion
- Isaiah 56–66 If the “New Exodus” meant only return from exile, it was disappointing. Thus, future deliverance is necessary (fully “eschatologized”). “Universalizing”: deliverance is for all nations!

Isaiah 40–55

- Despite the exile, YHWH is still God (not Marduk)! He is returning to save his people! 40:9–11; 52:7, “good-news-messenger” (LXX: *euangelizomenos*)
- YHWH is the one who creates (*bārā*) and forms/fashions (*yāṣar*):
 - The heavens and earth and everything in them
 - Human beings, his images (cf. Gen 1, Gen 2), for flourishing as they give glory to Him
 - Events, i.e., the course of history
 - His particular people (Israel/Jacob, The Servant) for roles
 - Creates “new thing”: New Exodus, water and smooth way in the wilderness for the people to return
- Idol polemics — 40:18–20; 41:6–7; 41:21–29; 42:17; 44:9–20; 46:1–7
 - YHWH is superior to other gods and their idols, who cannot “help” (41:6–7) or “save” (43:11–13; 44:17, 20; 45:20; 46:4, 7)
 - YHWH contrasted with idol-makers, also. YHWH gives breath and spirit to people (42:5); people have become unresponsive like the images they fabricate/worship (42:16–20; 43:8–9), who know nothing (44:18–20)
- Feminine personification: Daughter Zion, wife of YHWH, mother of the people. The poets of Lamentations repeatedly ask of Daughter Zion, “Who can console (*niḥam*) you?” (Lam 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; 2:13; cf. Isa 51:19). Isaiah 40–55 insists that God is the consoler (*m^enaḥēm*) of Israel (Isa 40:1, 49:13, 51:3, 12; 52:9; 54:11).
- Masculine personification: The Servant
 - Auditioning for the role: Israel/Jacob, the nations, the prophet—or someone else?
 - Israel/Jacob? 41:8–10; 42:19–20 (rebellious, deaf and blind!); 43:8–10; 48:20; 49:1–7;
 - Cyrus! 45:4
 - Prophet? 50:4–11
 - Future someone else? 42:1–4; 44:1–2; 44:21–26;
 - Suffering Servant! 52:13–53:12

Marriage Metaphor and the Rhetoric of Secure (Re)attachment

- Relationship of YHWH and Zion figured as a marriage: Isaiah 49:14–26; 50:1–3; 51:17–52:3; 54. Parallel in Lam
- Negotiation, game theory, BATNAs, sunk costs, doubling-down
- Isaiah 40–48, particularly 40–41, acknowledges the need for YHWH to “speak to the heart of Jerusalem” (40:2).¹
 - YHWH takes first step toward reestablishment of trust. Admission of some fault on the part of the more-aggrieved party (YHWH), in order to allow the more-guilty party “permission” to own up to their faults (40:2; 42:22–25; 52:7–8; 54:7–10).
 - Despite what Zion has believed, YHWH is in control and doesn’t think their relationship is over.
 - YHWH will redeem Zion (43:3–6; 45:13; 52:3); those who abused Zion will be reckoned with (45:14; 47:1–15).
- The prophet: mediator between YHWH and Zion
 - To Daughter Zion: don’t foreclose the possibility of reattachment (40:27; 49:14)
 - It might seem easier to Daughter Zion to accept the end of her relationship with YHWH, cut her losses, attribute her exile to YHWH’s rejection, impotence or non-existence, and accept the worship of Marduk.
 - In the face of this temptation, the prophet urges Zion instead to double-down on her relationship to YHWH, in response to YHWH’s *rapprochement*.
- Isaiah 40–55 begins and concludes with *hesed*: more than simple faithfulness to an obligation; includes attachment. Human *hesed* is not reliable (40:6); YHWH’s *hesed* in 54:8, 10 and 55:3 is abiding

¹ Often of a man speaking to the heart of a woman: Gen. 34:3; 50:21; Judg. 19:3; 1 Sam. 1:13; Is. 40:2; Hos. 2:16; Ruth 2:13; but in 2 Sam. 19:8, to servants

Lamentations	Isaiah 40-55
2:10 The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth ; the young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground .	47:1 Come down and sit in the dust , virgin daughter Babylon! Sit on the ground without a throne, daughter Chaldea! For you shall no more be called tender and delicate. 47:5 Sit in silence, and go into darkness, daughter Chaldea! For you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms.
1:8b All who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness .	47:2 Take the millstones and grind meal, remove your veil , strip off your robe , uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. 47:3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.
5:20 Why have you forgotten (<i>shakhach</i>) us completely? Why have you forsaken (<i>'azav</i>) us these many days?	49:14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken (<i>'azav</i>) me, my Lord has forgotten (<i>shakhach</i>) me."
2:20b Should women eat their offspring, the children they have borne?	49:15 Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.
1:1ab How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!	49:21 Then you will say in your heart, "Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away-- so who has reared these? I was left all alone-- where then have these come from?"
3:25 The LORD is good to those who wait (<i>qawah</i>) for him, to the soul that seeks him	49:23b Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait (<i>qawah</i>) for me shall not be put to shame.
3:58 You have taken up my cause (<i>riv</i>) O Lord, you have redeemed (<i>ga'al</i>) my life.	49:25b For I will contend (<i>riv</i>) with those who contend (<i>riv</i>) with you, and I will save your children. 49:26b Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer (<i>ga'al</i>), the Mighty One of Jacob.
4:10 The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food in the destruction of my people.	49:26a I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine.
1:8b All who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness . 1:9a Her uncleanness was in her skirts ; she took no thought of her future;	52:1a Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion! Put on your beautiful garments , O Jerusalem, the holy (<i>qodesh</i>) city.
1:10 Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things; she has even seen the nations invade (<i>bo'</i>) her sanctuary (<i>miqdash</i>), those whom you forbade to enter (<i>bo'</i>) your congregation.	52:1b For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall enter (<i>bo'</i>) you no more.
2:10 The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground . 3:28-29 [It is good] to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope),	52:2a Shake yourself from the dust , rise up, O captive Jerusalem.
1:14 My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; they weigh on my neck , sapping my strength; the Lord handed me over to those whom I cannot withstand.	52:2b Loose the bonds from your neck , O captive daughter Zion!

cf. [Willey 1997](#); [Giffone 2012](#)