

# ISAIAH LESSON 41

He Ain't Heavy, He's the Lord<sup>a</sup>  
(Isaiah 46:1-13)

## Isaiah 46:1-13 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

### Idols Cannot Save Babylon<sup>b</sup>

**46** Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,  
their idols are on beasts and cattle;  
these things you carry are loaded  
as burdens on weary beasts.<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> They stoop, they bow down together,  
they cannot save the burden,  
but themselves go into captivity.<sup>d</sup>  
<sup>3</sup> "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob,  
all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
who have been borne by me from your birth,  
carried from the womb;<sup>e</sup>  
<sup>4</sup> even to your old age I am He,  
and to gray hairs I will carry you.  
I have made, and I will bear;  
I will carry and will save.<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>5</sup> "To whom will you liken me and make me equal,  
and compare me, that we may be alike?<sup>g</sup>  
<sup>6</sup> Those who lavish gold from the purse,  
and weigh out silver in the scales<sup>h</sup>,  
hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god;  
then they fall down and worship!<sup>i</sup>  
<sup>7</sup> They lift it upon their shoulders, they carry it,  
they set it in its place, and its stands there;  
it cannot move from its place.  
If one cries to it, it does not answer  
or save him from his trouble.<sup>j</sup>

### The Lord Alone Is God<sup>k</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Remember this and consider,  
recall it to mind, you transgressors,<sup>l</sup>  
<sup>9</sup> remember the former things of old;  
for I am God<sup>m</sup>, and there is no other;  
I am God<sup>n</sup>, and there is none like me,<sup>o</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'<sup>p</sup>  
<sup>11</sup> calling a bird of prey from the east,  
the man of my counsel from a far country.

I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;  
I have purposed, and I will do it.<sup>9</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> “Hearken to me, you stubborn of heart,  
you who are far from deliverance:<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>13</sup> I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off,  
and my salvation will not tarry;  
I will put salvation in Zion,  
for Israel my glory.”<sup>s</sup>

**Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

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<sup>a</sup> **He Ain’t Heavy, He’s the Lord** – After Isaiah, Judah would have 100 years of ill-rule and trouble before finally falling to Babylon in 586 B.C. After that, there would be 70 years of exile until Babylon itself fell in 539 B.C. and its new Persian ruler permitted the Exiles to return to the Land in 538 B.C. The second half of Isaiah would include many words of comfort and hope for the Jewish people in their Exile. Chapters 40–55 are viewed by some scholars as having been written by Second Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah), an anonymous prophet living the end of the Babylonian Exile. Isaiah, who is named frequently in Chapters 1–39, does not appear in these chapters by name. The Assyrians, the great threat during the eighth century, hardly appear at all. The Jews are in Babylon, having been taken there by the victorious Babylonians. Cyrus II, the Persian king, is named. He will defeat Babylon and release the Exiles. The Prophet, who sees this not as a happy circumstance but as part of God’s age-old plan, exhorts the Jews to resist the Babylonian religion and provides hope of an imminent return to the Land, where the Lord will again be acknowledged as King (Is 52:7). Because the Prophet proclaimed the triumph of Persia over Babylon, his message would have been considered seditious if written during the Exile. If it were composed during the Exile, it would likely explain why the collection would have circulated anonymously. Under this theory, these chapters were later appended to Isaiah 1–39 and considered the work of Isaiah or perhaps his disciples. However, if these chapters were first written and circulated during the later years of Exile, and if they contain the name of Babylon’s conqueror before the conquest, there would be no reason that the original Isaiah, author of Chapters 1-39, could not have predicted what would happen during the Exile as well. Indeed, since all of Isaiah, and particularly the second half, are considered to be a primary prophecy regarding the coming Messiah, there would be no reason to exclude the Isaiah of Chapters 1-39 as the author of the remainder of the Book merely because it speaks of events that were not known to Isaiah’s contemporaries. Nor does the mere fact that Isaiah himself, or Assyria, are not mentioned in these chapters dispositive since they were written about a later time period in which neither of these were actors. Whether written by Isaiah, Isaiah’s disciples or Second Isaiah, the author of these chapters works within the tradition of Isaiah and develops themes found in the earlier chapters, such as the holiness of the Lord (Is 6:1-8) and his lordship of history (Is 7:14, 14:24-27, 26:4). These chapters also develop other themes common in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the Lord as Israel’s redeemer or deliverer (Ex 3:8, 6:6, 15:13, 18:8). Chapters 40-55 are frequently referred to as the Book of the Consolation of Israel and contain the so-called “Servant Songs” which Christians interpret as speaking of the coming Messiah. The initial chapters of this section also contain predictions concerning the role of Cyrus II, the Great (559-530 B.C.), the founder of the Persian Empire, in the return of the Exiles to the Land who is referred to in Chapter 41 as “**one from the East**” and mentioned by name later (Is 44:28). God was thus able to use a pagan ruler to protect and care for His people, just as He had used the Assyrians to punish Judah for its sins. In Chapter 40 the power of God to save His people is demonstrated. Continuing the same theme, Chapter 41 paints a picture of a courtroom in which God challenges first the nations, and then the gods of the nations, to prove their power. In opening of Chapter 42 we are introduced to the Servant in the first of the Servant Songs which promises that the salvation which is available to the Jewish people will also be available to the gentiles through the actions of the Servant in carrying out God’s plan, which leads to a song of joy song by the gentiles now included in God’s

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people. In verse 18 of Chapter 42 the scene shifts back to the courtroom and the subject to the Jewish people. They are rebuked for not following God and His Law. But they are also called as witnesses to God's unique nature and power. And finally they are assured that God has not forgotten them, or their election, and that He will save them and bring them back from Exile. In Chapter 43, the Lord bears witness in a metaphorical courtroom that He is the only true God or source of salvation, but temporal and eternal. It rejects the notion that anything else, be it false god, idol or human action, can contribute to salvation, a theme fully in line with the theme of Chapters 1-39.

<sup>b</sup> Idols cannot Save Babylon; Wis 15-16

<sup>c</sup> (1) **Bel** was a title given to a god (with a meaning similar to Lord), the Mesopotamian equivalent of Baal, and originally associated with Enlil, a god worshipped primarily in the city of Nippur. Later, as Babylon rose in power, Marduk, the patron god of that city, was referred to as Bel. Marduk was also associated astrologically with the planet Jupiter and is often pictured with a dragon god companion. The so-called Marduk Prophecy, dating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., describes the travels of the Marduk idol from Babylon. The idol was first carried to the land of Hatti, likely after the statue's seizure when Babylon was sacked by the Hittite King Mursilis I of Assyria in 1531 B.C. It was taken to Assur and Elam in 1225 B.C. after Tukulti-Ninurta I of Assyria overthrew Kashtiliash IV, King of Babylon, in 1225 BC. The idol was carried from the city a third time by Kudur-nahhunte, King of the Elamites, when he ransacked the city c. 1160 BC. In the Prophecy, the first two trips are described as voluntary excursions by Marduk and good for Babylon. The third trip, however, is described as a disaster because the other gods followed Marduk leaving Babylon open to famine and disease. Marduk prophesies that he will return again to Babylon with a new king, likely Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 B.C.) who defeated Elam, located just east and south of Mesopotamia, and returned Marduk's idol to Babylon. Although in the form of a prophecy, it dates from after the events described, and was likely written during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I as a propaganda piece. We know that it was in existence during the time of Isaiah, and possibly known to him. **Nebo** is likely the Babylonian god of wisdom, Nabu who is closely associated with Marduk (Nm 32:38). The "Cyrus Cylinder" states in part, "May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask daily Bel and Nebo for a long life for me" indicating that Cyrus returned all the captured idols in Babylon to their respective cities. The Persians themselves were Zoroastrians but did not impose this religion on the conquered peoples. This verse describes the idols (עֲצָב, *atsab*) of Marduk and Nebo being carried on the backs of the living (חַי, *chay*) and the mute (בְּהֵמָה, *behemah*). These words are usually translated as beasts of burden and cattle, respectively, though, particularly with *chay*, they might also refer to living human servants and silent porters. The idols are described as a heavy **burden** (עָמָס, *amas*) (Is 30:6) for the weary (עֵיֶף, *ayeph*). The verse may describe the travels of Marduk's idol as described in the Prophecy mentioned above, or of the Babylonians carrying the idols with them into exile when Cyrus II arrives. It might also describe the idols being carried in festival processions. In all events it describes these gods as being carried around because they cannot move by themselves. Rather than saving the Babylonians during invasions, they become a burden (Jr 10:5), appearing to stoop (קָרַס, *qaras*) or bow (כָּרַע, *kar*) in disgrace (Jr 50:2), rather than being bowed down to, as they are being carried. This is an image of their submission and perhaps of a weak Babylon which is about to fall to the Persians (Is 21:9; Jr 50:2-4). These idols, in which the Babylonians falsely trusted (Is 41:6-7; Rm 1:18), are completely helpless and will not be able to save their city (Is 45:20) but will be vanquished by God (Ex 12:12; Jr 51:44-52). These physical idols are perhaps symbolic of the idols that we make for ourselves such as wealth, power or fame, or of the idols and burdens we lay upon others in the name of religion (Mt 23:4). The LXX reads, "Bel has fallen, [Dagon] is broken to pieces, their graven images have gone to the wild beasts and the cattle; you take them packed up as a burden to the weary, exhausted, hungry, and at the same time helpless man . . ." The LXX translator may not have known who Nebo (Nabu) was and substituted "Dagon," the name of a Philistine deity more familiar to him (1Sm 5:2-3). The *Targum of Isaiah* describes Bel and Nebo as idols made in the likeness of animals (Rm 1:22-23), and Nebo as "broken off." The LXX version of Daniel (Bel 1:1-22 or Dan 14:1-22) contains a narrative not found in the MT in which Cyrus II asks Daniel why he did not worship Bel. Daniel responds that he worships the living God and not a man-made idol, and that he can prove that Bel is not a living thing. Each night the people leave food and drink offerings to Bell in his temple. The offerings had disappeared by the morning when the temple was opened. Daniel asks the King to seal the temple so that none can enter or leave after the food offerings have been given. After Bel's priests had gone, but before the temple is sealed, Daniel spreads ashes on the floor. In the morning the food is gone from the sealed temple! But Daniel shows that there are footprints leading from a trap door to the food, demonstrating that it is the priests and their families who have been eating the food offerings all along. Daniel is then allowed to destroy the idol of Bel (Is 21:9; Jr 50:2). Isaiah has prophesied of a time to come when these idols will pass away and people will recognize and worship the one true God only (Is 2:18-20).

<sup>d</sup> (2) This verse is largely a repetition of the concepts expressed in the first verse. The idols again **stoop** down, and are again **burdens**. It is emphasized that they had no power to save (Is 36:18-19, 37:12, 37:19, 44:17, 45:20) and either they or those who serve them, or both, are taken into **captivity** (Jdg 18:24; 2Sm 5:21) or exile (שָׁבִי, *shabi*) after Babylon falls (Jr 43:12-13, 48:7, 51:47; Dn 11:8; Hos 10:5-6). The Hebrew translated as **themselves** (נַפְשָׁם, *nefesh*) has the connotation of soul or life, neither of which are characteristics of idols. The LXX reads, ". . . who will not be able to save themselves from war, but they themselves are led away captive." According to the *Targum of Isaiah*, those serving the idols are the ones taken into captivity.

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<sup>c</sup> (3) In contrast to the gentiles who make their own gods, and must carry them around, **God bore** (עָמַס, *amas*) **the Jewish people** (Ex 19:4) **from their very beginning** (Is 44:1-2, 44:21), i.e. from the belly (בֶּטֶן, *beten*) and carried (נָשָׂא, *nasa*) (Is 63:9; Dt 1:31, 32:11-12; Ezk 16:6-16) them from the womb (רַחֵם, *racham*) (Is 49:1-2, 49:15, 66:13; Ps 22:9-10, 28:9, 71:6, 139:13). *Racham* can, as here, mean womb (perhaps as a commentary on the character of women), but more often means compassion or mercy. It is the Hebrew word from which the Yiddish term *rachmonis* meaning mercy is derived (asking for a *writ of rachmones* colloquially means throwing yourself on the mercy of the court). The choice of words here emphasizes God's intimate care and mercy for His people. This verse is directed to the **remnant** (שְׂאֵרִית, *sheerith*) of the Jewish people who had survived invasion, war and exile at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians (Is 1:9, 4:3, 10:20-22, 11:11, 37:4) and asks them to **listen** (Is 46:12, 48:17-18) and remember all that God has done for them throughout history, although some commentators have suggested, in what is likely an anachronism that does not fit within the context, that the remnant here refers to the believing remnant (Is 48:1, 51:1, 51:7; Ps 81:8-13). Some commentators have also suggested that the remnant here is only of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom carried off by Assyria. But this seems unlikely as the text was addressed to the Exiles in Babylon which came primarily from Judah and Jerusalem. The LXX reads, "Hear Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of Israel, who are borne by Me from the womb, and taught by Me from infancy, even to old age." The *Targum of Isaiah* says the remnant of Israel is "more beloved than all the nations" and "dearer" to God than "all the kingdoms."

<sup>f</sup> (4) Is 41:4, 43:13, 43:25, 48:12; Dt 32:39; Ps 18:35, 48:14, 71:18, 92:14, 102:26-27, 119:117; Mal 2:16, 3:6; Rm 11:29; Heb 1:12, 13:8; Jas 1:17 == Heb "until old age, **I am he**" (NRSV similar); NLT "I will be your God throughout your lifetime." 2 sn Unlike the weary idol gods, whose images must be carried by animals, the Lord carries his weary people. / Masoretic Text: And to [your] old age, I [am] he, and to gray hair, I will carry you. I have made and I will bear and I will carry and will save. Septuagint: Until [your] old age, I am, and until whenever you have grown old, I am. I put up with you. I have made and I will release. I will accept and save you. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah does not include the conjunction "and" at the beginning of this verse. The Targum of Isaiah identifies YHWH as the Creator of "all men." Though he had scattered his people among the nations, he would "pardon their transgressions and forgive them." Commentary There would never be a time when YHWH would not look after those whom he considered to be his people. As he had cared for them from the start of their history so he would continue to do so until the end, represented by old age when the hair turns gray. The declaration "I [am] he" or "I am" (LXX) emphasizes that YHWH is the unchangeable God who does not alter his purpose. He is the same one at all times, always trustworthy. As the One who made it possible for his people to come into existence, he would not fail to bear or support them, to carry or look after them, and to save or deliver them from harm or peril. According to the Septuagint, he would put up with the people, suggesting that he would be patient with them, putting up with their wayward ways and using his prophets to appeal to them to return to him. His releasing or loosing could refer to his forgiving their sins. He would accept them as his own, not rejecting them, and deliver them from distress when they returned to him. / Just as a child receives life from his parents, Israel just receives salvation from her gracious savior/redeemer. / Through his prophet, he admonished them to listen, reminding them of what he had done for them. The nonexistent deities could not carry anyone, and their images had to be transported on animals or by people. YHWH, however, had carried the Israelites from "birth," from the time of their coming from the womb, or from the very time they became a people. He did so by supporting and looking after them like a loving parent does a child. According to the Septuagint rendering, he had disciplined or trained them as a father would his offspring. / Three exodus images are used in verses 3-13: a father carrying his son (Hos 11:1-4); a shepherd carrying his sheep (Ps 28:9); and an eagle carrying its young (Ex 19:4). /

<sup>g</sup> (5) Is 40:18-20, 40:25, 41:21-29, 42:8, 43:8-13, 44:7-9; Ex 15:11; Ps 86:8, 89:6-8, 113:5; Jb 41:10; Jr 10:6-7, 10:16, 49:19; Php 2:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3 == God asks the rhetorical question challenging the nations to name a god who has done what God has done, to which there can be no response. The LXX, indicating that the question was addressed to those "going astray" or idolaters, reads, "To whom have you compared Me? See and consider, you that go astray." The nations' gods could do nothing for their worshipers, their idols being nothing but lifeless representations.

<sup>h</sup> Scales – literally reed, the arm of a balance. Heb "the reed," probably referring to the beam of a scales.

<sup>i</sup> (6) Is 2:8, 40:18-20, 41:6-7, 44:10-19, 45:20; Ex 20:5, 32:2-4; Jdg 17:3-5; 1Ki 12:28; Jr 10:3-4, 10:9, 10:14; Dn 3:5-15; Hos 8:4-6, 13:2; Hab 2:18-20; Ac 17:29 == The process of having an idol made of gold or silver is described. The purchaser of the idol then bows down and worships the idol. The LXX reads as follows, "They that

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furnish gold out of a purse, and silver by weight, will weigh it in a scale, and they hire a goldsmith and make idols, and bow down, and worship them.” God mocks the worship of idols saying that they are made by men. There are people trusting in idols all around the region, but God is telling them not to be stupid.

<sup>j</sup> (7) Is 37:38, 40:20, 41:7, 41:28, 44:17, 45:20, 46:1, 47:13; Jdg 10:12-14; 1Sm 5:3; 1Ki 18:26, 18:40; Ps 115:7; Jr 2:28, 10:5; Dn 3:1; Jn 1:5, 1:14-16 == The idol that was just made is then carried upon the shoulders of their worshippers. It is put in its place and can do nothing and say nothing. It certainly cannot save their worshippers in a time of distress.

<sup>k</sup> The Lord Alone is God.

<sup>l</sup> (8) Is 1:2, 43:25, 44:18-21, 47:7, 50:1, 50:11; Dt 32:29; Ps 115:8, 135:18; Jr 10:8; Ezk 18:28; Hag 1:5,7; Lk 15:17; 1Co 14:20; Eph 5:14 == The Jews had repeatedly engaged in idol worship and turned away from the Lord. The Jews needed to remember that the idols were nothing but inanimate objects. It would not be until the return from Babylon that the Jews would finally be free of idol worship. The meaning of the verb *וַיִּשָׁן* is uncertain but perhaps relates to an Arabic root meaning found or establish giving the meaning “pluck up courage.” According to the LXX, the people would “groan” when they recall their previous idol worship and lament.

<sup>m</sup> **God - El (אל)**, the singular form of **Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)** most often used of gods other than the One True God but here referring to the latter. See Note on the Names of God in the Introduction to this Study.

<sup>n</sup> **God - Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)**, the plural form of the generic **el (אל)**. See Note in the Introduction to this Study.

<sup>o</sup> (9) Is 41:22, 41:26-27, 42:9, 45:5-22, 46:5, 65:17; Ex 8:10; Dt 32:7, 33:26; Neh 9:7-37; Ps 78:1-72; Ps 105:1-106:48; Ps 111:4; Jer 23:7,8; Da 9:6-15; Mk 12:32 == The first or former things are directly related to God’s statement that He alone was God, and that He had protected and looked after His people throughout history. God’s people are asked to remember the former things as an incentive to remain faithful.

<sup>p</sup> (10) Is 5:19, 7:7-9, 14:24, 25:1, 40:8, 41:2-5, 41:22-23, 41:26-27, 42:9, 43:13, 44:7, 44:26-28, 45:13, 45:21, 46:11; Gn 3:15, 12:2-3, 49:10, 49:22-26; Nm 24:17-24; Dt 4:24-31, 28:15-68; Ps 33:11, 135:6; Pr 19:21, 21:30; Dn 4:35; Ac 3:23, 4:27-28, 5:39, 15:18; Rm 11:33-34; Eph 1:9-11; Heb 6:17 == God “declared the end from the beginning” meaning that He stated His plan clearly and would carry it out in the future. His purpose will stand no matter what.

<sup>q</sup> (11) Is 8:8, 13:2-4, 14:24-27, 18:6, 21:7-9, 25:1, 37:26, 38:15, 41:2-5, 41:25, 44:28-45:6, 45:13, 48:14-15; Gn 41:25; Nm 23:19; Jdg 4:10; Ezr 1:2; Jb 23:13; Ps 76:10, 119:24; Jr 44:28, 50:29, 50:45, 51:20-29; Ezk 39:4; Ac 4:28, 5:39; Eph 1:11, 3:11 == Or, more generally, “a bird of prey” (so NAB, NASB, NIV, NRSV; see 18:6). 2 tn Heb “spoken”; KJV “I have spoken it.” / From the east a bird of prey: Cyrus; cf. 41:2-4. / Masoretic Text: calling from the east a bird of prey, the man of my counsel from a distant land. I have spoken, and I will cause it to happen. I have purposed; yes, I will do it. Septuagint: calling a bird from the east and from a distant land [those] concerning whom I have counseled. I have spoken and led; I created and I made. I led him and prospered his way. In the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah (the Great Isaiah Scroll), the last verb is third person singular (“he will do”). According to the Targum of Isaiah, YHWH promised to gather the Israelite exiles from the east, bringing the “sons of Abraham” from a distant land and doing so quickly like a swift bird. Commentary YHWH’s “calling” the “bird” refers to his bringing about the development involving the “bird.” In this context, the “bird of prey” probably designates Cyrus, who with his military force moved speedily against Babylon from the east, from Persia. He would also be the man of YHWH’s “counsel,” or the man destined to accomplish what YHWH had purposed respecting Babylon and the liberation of his people Israel from exile. Cyrus did come from a distant country, hundreds of miles from the kingdom of Judah, where YHWH announced his purpose through his prophet. Having spoken through his prophet, YHWH would see to the unerring fulfillment of the message. He would unfailingly have his purpose accomplished. The Septuagint rendering preserves the basic thought, but presents certain details in a manner that differs from the extant Hebrew text. Those concerning whom God had counseled or respecting whom he had a purpose could be the warriors under the command of Cyrus, the one represented as a bird. In the first occurrence of the verb rendered “led,” the meaning may be that God brought about what he had declared through his prophet. The second occurrence

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of the verb rendered “led” appears to relate to his use of Cyrus for his purpose and granting him success (prospering “his way”). /

<sup>r</sup> (12) Is 9:9, 28:23, 45:20, 46:3, 48:1, 48:4; Ex 32:9; Ps 49:1, 76:5, 119:150-155, 131:1; Pr 1:22-23, 8:1-5; Jr 2:5; Zec 7:11-12; Mal 3:13-15; Ac 7:51; Eph 2:13, 5:14; Rv 3:17-18 == Heb “strong of heart [or, mind]”; KJV “stouthearted”; NAB “fainthearted”; NIV “stubborn-hearted.” 2 tn Heb “who are far from righteousness [or perhaps, deliverance].” / Masoretic Text: Listen to me, stubborn ones of heart, the ones far from righteousness. Septuagint: Listen to me, those ruining the heart, those far from righteousness. Commentary Prior to the judgment to befall his wayward people, YHWH, through his prophet, appealed to them to listen to him, apparently with a view to changing their ways. In their “heart,” or their inmost selves, they were stubborn, unwilling to obey his commands. Instead of conducting themselves in an upright manner, they acted in a way that was far removed from righteousness or from whatever was right and just. According to the Septuagint rendering, they had ruined or destroyed the heart. In their inmost selves, they were not responsive to what was right and noble. / Woe is pronounced on those who think they can dictate to God how He is to let righteousness prevail. /

<sup>s</sup> (13) Is 1:26, 12:2, 28:16, 43:7, 44:23, 45:8, 51:5, 56:1, 60:21, 61:3, 61:11, 62:11; Ps 14:7, 46:1-5, 74:2, 85:9; Jr 33:9; Jl 2:32, 3:17; Hab 2:3; Hag 1:8; Lk 2:30; Jn 17:10; Rm 1:17, 3:21-26, 10:3-15; Eph 1:6; 2Th 1:10-12; Heb 10:37, 12:22-24; 1Pt 2:6 == Heb “my salvation.” The verb “I am bringing near” is understood by ellipsis (note the previous line). 2 tn Heb “I will place in Zion salvation”; NASB “I will grant salvation in Zion.” 3 tn Heb “to Israel my splendor”; KJV, ASV “for Israel my glory.” / Masoretic Text: I have brought my righteousness near; it is not far off. And my deliverance will not delay. And I will give deliverance in Zion, for Israel my glory. Septuagint: I have brought my righteousness near and the deliverance, the one from me. I will not delay. I have given deliverance in Zion for glory to Israel. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah (the Great Isaiah Scroll) starts with the words, “My righteousness is brought near, and ...” Additionally, this scroll includes the conjunction “and” before “will not delay” but omits the conjunction before the phrase about giving deliverance. The scroll concludes with the words, “and for Israel my glory.” Commentary “Righteousness” may here refer to the execution of judgment. The hateful manner in which the Babylonians treated the Israelites deserved punishment. Therefore, when using Cyrus as his instrument to bring about the downfall of Babylon, YHWH would have brought his “righteousness” near. As YHWH cared for his people despite their wayward course, his “righteousness” had never been far off. It was the unfaithfulness of the people that had prevented their experiencing it in the form of liberation from distress. The deliverance he had promised would not come too late. The time for acting for the sake of his people would not be delayed to the point where it would prove to be ineffectual. The deliverance for Zion would relate to the time when it would again become an inhabited city, ceasing to lie in ruins. Upon being delivered, Israel would appear glorious or illustrious to the people of other nations. This glory or splendor did not originate with Israel but had its source in what YHWH did for them. For this reason, YHWH is represented as referring to “my glory.” According to the Septuagint rendering, the deliverance or restoration of Zion would result in glory for Israel. The splendor of Zion, the capital city, would reflect favorably on the entire land and its inhabitants. / Righteousness is fulfilled in the return to Zion in the near term, but ultimately in the coming of Messiah. Zion will be the place in which God’s righteousness and salvation will be displayed, by Jesus coming there and by ultimately, the peoples of the earth coming there to worship the Lord. / Some commentators refer to my glory here as Israel, the chosen people, though we think the glory is really God’s mercy. / This verse speaks both of an immediate return to the Land, and to the ultimate Messianic Kingdom.