

Isaiah 41:19-27 + 42:21

The Torah readings in **Exodus 37-38** describe in detail the items made with shittim wood for the tabernacle. This passage points out the "shittah tree" or the acacia, as one evidence of God's restoration of Israel in the Land after the exile.

The Tabernacle's shittim wood represented Christ in his humanity. This passage ultimately points to the Messiah, who brings his people into the New Jerusalem.

Isaiah 41:19-20 - "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

Isaiah 41:21-24 - a condemnation of idolatry, showing their powerlessness

Isaiah 41:25 - "I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay."

This refers to Cyrus, who made a decree to send the Jews back to their land and rebuild the temple:

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 - "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia-- in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah-- the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!'"

Ezra gives a slightly different version:

Ezra 1:2-4 - "'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 'Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"

Cyrus was an unusual pagan. He was a Zoroastrian, which has many similarities to Judaism, but was willing to accept the chief god of any nation as identical with his own god Ormuzd. The Cyrus Scroll - a cuneiform text considered the first document incorporating human rights guarantees, is in the name of Marduk, the god of Babylon.

He even guaranteed religious freedom within his Empire:

"I announce that I will respect the traditions, customs and religions of the nations of my empire and never let any of my governors and subordinates look down on or insult them while I am alive. From now on..., I never let anyone oppress any others, and if it occurs, I will take his or her right back and penalize the oppressor." - *Cyrus Cylinder*

In this instance, Cyrus is actually a type of Messiah, as some of the Jewish sages interpreted it (Vajikra Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 153. 1. Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 13. fol. 208. 1. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 19. 2.).

Isaiah 41:27 - "The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings."

"I who am the first and the last" (**Isaiah 41:4**) which some ancient Jewish writers (T. Bab. Pesach. fol. 5. 1. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 63. fol. 55. 3. and Vajikra Rabba, sect. 30. fol. 171. 2.) observe is the name of the Messiah, and apply the passage to him.

The Targum is, "the words of consolation which the prophets prophesied from the beginning concerning Sion, behold they come;"

"Behold" - this is repeated in the next chapter about Messiah:

Isaiah 42:1 - "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. "

"one that bringeth good tidings" - John the Baptist? Or Jesus Himself.

Isaiah 42:21 - "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable."

Jewish rabbis said that in the days of the Messiah, these blind shall see, and deaf shall hear (mentioned earlier in the chapter), not for their sakes, but for his righteousness sake; when he will magnify his law and make it honorable.

The Lord is well pleased with his Son, and with him as his servant, as Mediator, for his righteousness sake, as in Isaiah 42:1 above.

Christ magnified the Law by personifying and fulfilling it.