

Isaiah 52:5-12 + 54:7-8

This reading, occurring in the Passover season, contrasts the cursed generation of the wilderness wanderings (**Numbers 14**), with the exiles in Babylon who are being comforted with a prophecy of their redemption.

Key verse: **Isaiah 52:10** - "The Lord has revealed His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

The section from **Isaiah 52:13** through **Isaiah 53** is left out, since the rabbis knew Christians held this passage up as a prophecy of Christ as Messiah.

Not in this reading, but setting the stage, is **verse 4**:

Isaiah 52:4 - "For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause."

Rashi - The Egyptians had somewhat of a debt upon them, for they served for them as their hosts and sustained them, but Assyria oppressed them for nothing and without cause.

Tying together the exodus from Egypt with the return from Exile, the passage assures Israel that they will realize that "God reigns" in a vision of the future redemption in the days of Messiah.

Isaiah 52:5 - "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed."

"blasphemed" = *na'ats* - slandered (the very thing that the cursed generation in the wilderness was guilty of (in **Numbers 14:11** and **23** - "provoke" is *na'ats*).

Here, God is "slandered" because the Babylonian exile of Israel causes the Babylonian rulers and people to boast and exalt their false gods.

"what have I here" - expresses a strong sense of incongruity between what is and what ought to be. i.e. "What do I find in this situation?"

"make them to howl" = *yalaal* - if understood as causative: to cry out in lamentation or wailing for grief. But Jewish interpreters had it as the Babylonian rulers "boast." However, Aben Ezra interprets it not of heathen rulers, but that "the great men of Israel howl."

"my name continually every day is blasphemed" - Why? Because of Israel's sin, the Babylonians ascribe their victory to the idols.

See **Revelation 13:5** - "And there was given unto him [the Beast] a mouth speaking

great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months."

Isaiah 52:6 - "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I."

Babylon is destroyed by the glad tidings of the Gospel:

Isaiah 52:7 - "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Paul ties it again to fulfillment and redemption in Christ:

- **Romans 10:14-15** - "How then can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, fulfills this, but all who announce the good news are included. The gospel "upon the mountains" - it invades the high places in our mind where we worship idols, and reveals their vanity. Of course, "mountains" could just mean that the message of the gospel will traverse the whole earth.

"Thy God reigneth" - Targum: "the kingdom of thy God is revealed"

This passage is interpreted as being about the Messiah by many Jewish sources (Vajikra Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 153. 2. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 11. 4. Yalkut Simeoni in Psal. xxix. 11. Menasseh Ben Israel, Nishmat Chayim, fol. 41. 2.).

Isaiah 52:8 - "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."

The "watchmen, " usually referring to those stationed in the city towers watching to warn of the enemy, here are those who bring the good tidings of the gospel.

"they shall see eye to eye" - Targum: "for with their eyes they shall see the great things which the Lord will do"

But also, there will be no difference nor dissension among them, only agreement on the fact of redemption.

"when the LORD shall bring again Zion" - Targum: "when he shall return his Shechinah or divine Majesty to Zion."

This text is too applied by the Jews to the times of the Messiah (Pesikta in Kettoreth Hassammim in Targ. in Numb. fol. 25. 4.), and to the resurrection of the dead

(Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin. fol. 91. 2.).

Isaiah 52:9-10 - "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

"arm" = *zərowa`* - simultaneously indicating the strength and the "seed" of the Lord.

Called out

Isaiah 52:11 - "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD."

Targum: "be ye separated, be ye separated"

- from the world system, and from spiritual Babylon that boasts of human works and self-realization.

- **Revelation 18:4** - "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

- **2 Corinthians 6:16-18** - "What agreement can exist between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.' Therefore 'come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' And: 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'"

The Greek word for church is "*ecclesia*" - the "called out ones." We are called out of the world system, out of Babylon. The Bride is called out of the Great Whore. We are to be in the world, but not "of" it. (John 15:19, Romans 12:2) Our way of life is not governed by survival or gain, but simple faith.

"that bear the vessels of the LORD" - The Levites carried these in their service in the Temple. Some rabbis saw the vessels as representing the mercies and kindness of the Lord. In the Zohar (Exod. fol. 87. 4.), these vessels are interpreted of the righteous, brought as a gift to the King Messiah.

Isaiah 52:12 - "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward." (or "rear guard")

At the Exodus, they celebrated the Passover with loins girded and sandals on, forced to make unleavened bread because of their haste.

Here it is different: you will go out openly, boldly, quietly, and safely, and without fear of enemies. God will be in the lead, as well as protecting as a rear guard, which waits for

stragglers

Ending With A Promise

Isaiah 54:7-8 - "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer."