
ISAIAH 43: 1 But now thus says the LORD who created you, Jacob, and he who formed you, Israel: "Don't be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine."

Prediction of that blessed period when God should gather the posterity of Abraham, with tender care, from their several dispersions in every quarter under heaven, and bring them safely to their own land, Isa 43:1-7. Struck with astonishment at so clear a display of an event so very remote, the prophet again challenges all the blended nations and their idols to produce an instance of such foreknowledge, Isa 43:8, Isa 43:9; and intimates that the Jews should remain (as at this day), a singular monument to witness the truth of the prediction, till it should at length be fulfilled by the irresistible power of God, Isa 43:10-13. He then returns to the nearer deliverance - that from the captivity of Babylon, Isa 43:14, Isa 43:15; with which, however, he immediately connects another deliverance described by allusions to that from Egypt, but represented as much more wonderful than that; a character which will not at all apply to the deliverance from Babylon, and must therefore be understood of the restoration from the mystical Babylon, Isa 43:16-18. On this occasion the prophet, with peculiar elegance, and by a very strong poetic figure, represents the tender care of God in comforting and refreshing his people on their way through the desert, to be so great as to make even the wild beasts haunting those parched places so sensible of the blessing of those copious streams then provided by him, as to join their hissing and howling notes with one consent to praise God, Isa 43:19-21. This leads to a beautiful contrast of the ingratitude of the Jews, and a vindication of God's dealings with regard to them, Isa 43:22-28.

Verse 1

I have called thee by thy name - "קראתי בשמך karathi beshimcha. So all the versions. But it seems from the seventh verse, and from the thing itself, that we should read קראתיך בשמי karathicha bishmi, 'I have called thee by my name;' for this form of speech often occurs - the other never. For Isa 45:24, concerning Cyrus, is another matter; but when God calls Jacob Israel, he calls him by the name of God. See Exo 31:2." - Secker.

ISAIAH 43: 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and flame will not scorch you.

ISAIAH 43: 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I have given Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

Verse 3

I gave Egypt for thy ransom - This is commonly supposed to refer to the time of Sennacherib's invasion; who, when he was just ready to fall upon Jerusalem, soon after his entering Judea, was providentially diverted from that design, and turned his arms against the Egyptians, and their allies the Cushean Arabians, with their neighbors the Sabeans, probably joined with them under Tirhakah. See Isa 20:1-6 and Isa 37:9. Or as there are some reasonable objections to this opinion, perhaps it may mean more generally that God has often saved his people at the expense of other nations, whom he had, as it were in their stead, given up to destruction. Vitrina explains this of

Shalmaneser's designs upon the kingdom of Judea after he had destroyed that of Samaria, from which he was diverted by carrying the war against the Egyptians, Cusheans, and Sabeans; but of this I think he has no clear proof in history. It is not to be wondered at that many things of this kind should remain very obscure for the want of the light of history, which in regard to these times is extremely deficient. "Did not Cyrus overcome these nations? and might they not be given for releasing the Jews? It seems to have been so from Isa 45:14." - Secker.

Kimchi refers all this to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion of Sennacherib. Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, had come out to war against the king of Assyria, who was there-upon obliged to raise the siege of Jerusalem. Thus the Ethiopians, Egyptians, and Sabeans were delivered into the hands of the Assyrians as a ransom for Israel. - Kimchi. I cannot help thinking this to be a very rational solution of the text.

ISAIAH 43: 4 Since you have been precious and honoured in my sight, and I have loved you; therefore I will give people in your place, and nations instead of your life.

ISAIAH 43: 5 Don't be afraid; for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west.

ISAIAH 43: 6 I will tell the north, 'Give them up!' and tell the south, 'Don't hold them back! Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth—

ISAIAH 43: 7 everyone who is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yes, whom I have made.'"

Verse 7

Every one that is called by my name - All who worship the true God, and are obedient to his laws.

I have created him - בראתי berathiv. I have produced him out of nothing.

For my glory - Ten MSS., three ancient, and the Syriac and Vulgate, read לכבודי licabodi, without the conjunction I vau, and.

I have formed him - יצרתיו yetsartiv. I have given him that particular form and shape which are best suited to his station in life.

I have made him - עשיתיו asithiv. I have adapted him to the accomplishment of my counsels and designs.

ISAIAH 43: 8 Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears.

Verse 8

Bring forth the blind people that have eyes "Bring forth the people, blind, although they have eyes" - I understand this of the Gentiles, as the verse following, not of the Jews. Their natural faculties, if they had made a proper use of them, must have led them to the knowledge of the being and attributes of the one true God; "for his eternal power and Godhead," if well attended to, are clearly

seen in his works, (Rom 1:20), and would have preserved them from running into the folly and absurdity of worshipping idols. They are here challenged to produce the evidence of the power and foreknowledge of their idol gods; and the Jews are just afterwards, Isa 43:10, appealed to as witnesses for God in this cause, therefore these latter cannot here be meant by the people blind with eyes and deaf with ears.

ISAIAH 43: 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, "That is true."

Verse 9

Who among them - Seven MSS., three ancient, and the first edition, 1486, with the Syriac and Vulgate, read **בְּכֶמ** bechem, who among you, the present reading is preferable.

ISAIAH 43: 10 "You are my witnesses," says the LORD, "With my servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he. Before me there was no God formed, neither will there be after me.

Verse 10

Ye (the Israelites) are my witnesses, and my servant (the prophet) whom I have chosen - That whatever has been said before concerning Sennacherib has been literally fulfilled. The prophet had predicted it; the Israelites saw it accomplished.

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me - This is a most difficult place. Was there a time when God was not? No! Yet he says, before me. Will there be a time in which God will not exist? No! Yet he says, after me. Are not all these words to be referred to his creation? Before me, no god created any thing, nor was there any thing pre-existent but myself. And after me, i.e., after my creation, such as now exists, there shall be no other class of beings formed. This mode of interpretation frees the passage from all embarrassment, and the context perfectly agrees with it. The words my servant, in this verse, the Targum understands of the Messiah.

ISAIAH 43: 11 I myself am the LORD; and besides me there is no saviour.

ISAIAH 43: 12 I have declared, I have saved, and I have shown; and there was no strange god among you. Therefore you are my witnesses", says the LORD, "and I am God.

Verse 12

I have declared, and have saved - My prophets have always predicted your deliverances before they took place; and I have fulfilled their words to the uttermost.

ISAIAH 43: 13 Yes, since the day was I am he; and there is no one who can deliver out of my hand. I will work, and who can hinder it?"

ISAIAH 43: 14 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake, I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring all of them down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing.

Verse 14

The Chaldeans, whose cry is on the ships "The Chaldeans exulting in their ships" - Babylon was very advantageously situated both in respect to commerce, and as a naval power. It was open to the Persian Gulf by the Euphrates, which was navigable by large vessels; and being joined to the Tigris above Babylon by the canal called Naharmalca or the Royal River, supplied the city with the produce of the whole country to the north of it, as far as the Euxine and Caspian seas, Herod. 1:194. Semiramis was the foundress of this part also of the Babylonian greatness. She improved the navigation of the Euphrates, Herod. 1:184; Strabo, lib. xvi.; and is said to have had a fleet of three thousand galleys, Huet, Hist. du Commerce, chap. 11. We are not to wonder that in later times we hear little of the commerce and naval power of Babylon; for, after the taking of the city by Cyrus, the Euphrates was not only rendered less fit for navigation by being on that occasion diverted from its course and left to spread over the whole country; but the Persian monarchs, residing in their own country, to prevent any invasion by sea on that part of their empire, purposely obstructed the navigation of both the rivers by making cataracts in them, Strabo, ib., that is, by raising dams across the channel, and making artificial falls in them, that no vessel of any size or force could possibly come up. Alexander began to restore the navigation of the rivers by demolishing the cataracts upon the Tigris as far up as Seleucia, Arrian, lib. vii., but he did not live to finish his great designs; those upon the Euphrates still continued. Ammianus, 24:1, mentions them as subsisting in his time.

The prophet therefore might very justly speak of the Chaldeans as glorying in their naval power in his time; though afterwards they had no foundation for making any such boast.

ISAIAH 43: 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King."

Verse 15

The Creator - For בּוֹרֵא bore, "Creator," six MSS. (two ancient) have אֱלֹהֵי Elohey, "God."

ISAIAH 43: 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

ISAIAH 43: 17 who brings out the chariot and horse, the army and the mighty man (they lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinct, they are quenched like a wick):

ISAIAH 43: 18 "Don't remember the former things, and don't consider the things of old.

ISAIAH 43: 19 Behold, I will do a new thing. It springs out now. Don't you know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Verse 19

Behold, I will do a new thing - At Isa 43:16, the prophet had referred to the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea; here he promises that the same power shall be employed in their redemption and return from the Babylonish captivity. This was to be a new prodigy.

ISAIAH 43: 20 The animals of the field shall honour me, the jackals and the ostriches; because I give water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen,

Verse 20

The beast of the field shall honor me "The wild beast of the field shall glorify me" - The image is elegant and highly poetical. God will give such an abundant miraculous supply of water to his people traversing the dry desert in their return to their country, that even the wild beasts, the serpents, the ostriches, and other animals that haunt those arid regions, shall be sensible of the blessing, and shall break forth into thanksgiving and praises to him for the unusual refreshment which they receive from his so plentifully watering the sandy wastes of Arabia Deserta, for the benefit of his people passing through them.

ISAIAH 43: 21 the people which I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

ISAIAH 43: 22 Yet you have not called on me, Jacob; but you have been weary of me, Israel.

Verse 22

But thou hast not called upon me - The connection is: But thou, Israel, whom I have chosen, whom I have formed for myself to be my witness against the false gods of the nations; even thou hast revolted from me, hast neglected my worship, and hast been perpetually running after strange gods. The emphasis of this and the following parts of the sentence, on which the sense depends, is laid on the words Me, on My Account, etc. The Jews were diligent in performing the external services of religion; in offering prayers, incense, sacrifices, oblations; but their prayers were not offered with faith; and their oblations were made more frequently to their idols than to the God of their fathers. The Hebrew idiom excludes with a general negative, in a comparative sense, one of two objects opposed to one another: thus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," Hos 6:6. "For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice," Jer 7:22, Jer 7:23. And the meaning of this place of Isaiah seems to be much the same with that of Amos; who however has explained at large both parts of the comparison, and specified the false service opposed to the true: - "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings,

In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Nay, but you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch,

And Chiun, your images;

The star of your god, which you made to yourselves." Amo 5:25, Amo 5:26.

But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel "Neither on my account hast thou lahoured, O Israel" - For תַּיָּגַעְתָּ *ki yagata*, the Septuagint and Vulgate read וַיָּגַעְתָּ *veyagata*. - Houbigant. The negative is repeated or referred to by the conjunction ו *vau*, as in many other places. See note on Isa 23:4.

ISAIAH 43: 23 You have not brought me of your sheep for burnt offerings; neither have you honoured me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, nor wearied you with frankincense.

ISAIAH 43: 24 You have bought me no sweet cane with money, nor have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened me with your sins. You have wearied me with your iniquities.

ISAIAH 43: 25 I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

Verse 25

I, even I, am he - The original is extremely abrupt: אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא *anochi anochi hu*, "I, I, He." Is there any mystery in this form? Does it refer to a plurality of persons in the Godhead?

For mine own sake - In the pardon of sin God can draw no reason but from his own infinite goodness.

ISAIAH 43: 26 Put me in remembrance. Let us plead together. Declare your case, that you may be justified.

ISAIAH 43: 27 Your first father sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against me.

Verse 27

Thy first father hath sinned - On this Kimchi speaks well: "How can ye say that ye have not sinned, seeing your first father, Adam, sinned; and man hath sin impressed on him through natural generation?"

ISAIAH 43: 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel an insult."

Verse 28

I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary "Thy princes have profaned my sanctuary" - Instead of וְאֶחָלֵל שָׂרֵי *vaachallel sarey*, read וַיַּחְלִלוּ שָׂרֵיךָ *vayechalelu sareycha*. So the Syriac and Septuagint, καὶ ἐμίαναν οἱ ἀρχόντες τὰ ἁγία σου, "the rulers have defiled my holy things." קֹדְשֵׁי *kodshi*, Houbigant. Οἱ ἀρχόντες σου, "thy rulers," MSS. Pachom. and 1. D. 2 and Marchal.

To reproaches "To reproach" - לִגְדוּפָה *ligedupah*, in the singular number; so an ancient MS. and the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate. And, alas! what a curse do they still bear, and what reproach do they

still suffer! No national crimes have ever equalled those of the Jewish nation, for no nation ever had such privileges to neglect, despise, sin against. When shall this severity of God towards this people have an end? Answ. Whenever, with one heart, they turn to him, and receive the doctrine of the Lord Jesus; and not till then.