

**Note: In Chapter 41, Isaiah prophesies about the Persian King Cyrus, the future liberator of the captive Israelites. In about 100 years, Persia will become a superpower “from the east,” and will capture Babylon. For the Jewish people, Cyrus’ victory over Babylon and liberation of the Hebrew captives would be seen as restoring the world order established by God. St. Jerome metaphorically applied verses 1 through 8 to the Messiah who would bring deliverance for all humanity.**

1. How does Isaiah picture God calling this king “from the east” to be of service to the captive Israelites? (Is 41:2)
2. How does Isaiah express this king’s unstoppable power? (Is 41:2-3)
3. How do we know it is God who is managing all this? (Is 41:4-5)
4. God has always been the helper of Israel. (Is 41:8-16)
  - a. With whom did God begin being Israel’s helper? (Is 41:8-9)
  - b. Who does God say are the “chosen”? (Is 41:8-9)
  - c. What does God promise to do for the “chosen”? (Is 41:10)
5. Several times in the first ten verses God tells his people not to fear.
  - a. Why should they not be afraid? (Is 41:8-9)
  - b. What will God do to protect them from their enemies? (Is 41:11-12)
6. The return of the Israelites from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem will be like a new Exodus.
  - a. When the Hebrews fleeing from Egypt were wandering in the desert, they lacked water and God performed a miracle. Will God do the same for the Israelites in their long journey from Babylon? (Is 41:17-18)
  - b. When the fleeing Hebrews needed trees to build an ark or to find shade, God provided trees for them. Will God do the same for the returning Israelites? (Is 41:19-20)
  - c. When fleeing Hebrews confronted other nations and their gods, Yahweh dismissed those other gods. Will God do the same for the returning Israelites? (Is 41:21-23)
7. Isaiah again describes the king who will come “from the rising sun” to save his people. (Is 41:25)
  - a. How do we know that King Cyrus will respect the Israelites and their God? (Is 41:25)
  - b. What two images does Isaiah use to describe King Cyrus’ power? (Is 41:25)
8. How does Isaiah ensure that, in the distant future, it was God who had revealed all this to him even more than a century before these events happened? (Is 41:26-27)
9. How does Isaiah assert that no other nations’ gods knew about or predicted the appearance of this king from the east that would set the Israelite captives free? (Is 41:28-29)
10. *Challenge:* Isaiah 41 has been an important chapter of Isaiah to Jewish people in ancient times and even today. Can you attempt to explain why?