

ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"Now THAT is Glory! (And It's Not What You'd Expect)"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Is 40:3-8; Isaiah 39:5-8; Is. 40:1-2; Is. 35:8-10; Jn 1:22-23; Lk. 3:4-16; Ex. 33:18-19; Ex. 34:6-7; Matt. 24.35

Isaiah 39 ends with a hard word. Isaiah tells Hezekiah that Babylon is coming—that everything stored up will be carried away, and even some of his descendants will be taken into the palace of the king of Babylon. And then Hezekiah responds in a way that exposes the problem: he calls the word "good," because he's thinking, "At least there will be shalom and security in *my* days." That's how chapter 39 closes—discipline is announced, disaster is on the horizon, and the heart of the king is revealed.

And then—almost shockingly—Isaiah 40 opens on the far side of exile. Nothing is said about the century and a half in between. It's like we "wake up" in captivity, impatient for the end of the hard service, desperate for hope. And the first word we hear is not condemnation—it's comfort: "*Comfort, comfort My people, says your God.*" (Isa 40:1) That's covenant language—**My people / your God**—and it's spoken like a refrain God *keeps saying*. Even after discipline, He reaffirms identity and relationship. And then He says: "*Speak kindly to the heart of Jerusalem... proclaim to her that her warfare has ended... that her iniquity has been removed.*" (Isa 40:2) Comfort is not offered because Israel saved herself. Comfort is offered because God is acting—because the Lord is coming.

1. PREPARE THE WAY—COMFORT BEGINS WITH THE LORD COMING TOWARD YOU

Isaiah declares, "*A voice cries out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of Adonai. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'*" (Isa 40:3) At first, this sounds like Isaiah 35—the highway God prepares for His people to walk home on. But Isaiah 40 shifts the picture. This is not first about the people moving toward God; it's about **God moving toward His people**. Like envoys preparing the road for a conquering king, the call is to remove obstacles because the King Himself is coming.

The road is leveled—valleys lifted, mountains brought low, rough places smoothed. (Isa 40:4) That's not about topography; it's spiritual reality. The Lord lifts the lowly and humbles the proud. He clears what would delay His arrival. John the Immerser later recognizes this as his calling: "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of Adonai.'*" (John 1:23) Preparing the way means repentance that produces fruit—realignment of the heart for the Lord who is already near. (Luke 3:7-16)

2. WHAT GLORY REALLY IS: GOD'S LOVE; HIS CHARACTER

Isaiah promises: "*The glory of Adonai will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together—for the mouth of Adonai has spoken.*" (Isa 40:5) So here's the question: what is that glory? When we hear "glory," we often think spectacle—bright light, overwhelming power, unstoppable force. And yes, God's glory includes His weightiness, His presence, His majesty. But Scripture teaches us that at the center of His glory is something even deeper: **His character**. When Moses asked the Lord, "*Please, show me Your glory,*" God answered in a

surprising way: “*I will cause all My goodness to pass before you... I will be gracious... I will show compassion...*” (Ex 33:18–19) And then the Lord proclaimed His own Name and heart: “*Adonai, Adonai, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness (Chesed, תּוֹן) and truth, showing mercy... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...*” (Ex 34:6–7)

That means if we’re going to interpret anything God says or does, we have to filter it through who He is. Like a child who knows their father’s heart and doesn’t judge him by a single overheard sentence, we don’t take “snippets” of God and build a distorted picture. We interpret the hard words through the faithful character of the One who spoke them. Isaiah 40 is doing exactly that: yes, exile is real; discipline is real; consequences are real. But the comfort is also real—and it comes from the Lord’s own hand. His glory is not merely that He can crush; His glory is that He is compassionate, gracious, faithful, and redemptive. And because “*the mouth of Adonai has spoken,*” this comfort isn’t wishful thinking—it’s the steady promise of God Himself. (Isa 40:5)

3. WHAT FADES AND WHAT STANDS

Isaiah is then told to cry out a message about humanity: “*All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness (chesed, תּוֹן) is like the flower of the field.*” (Isa 40:6) Grass looks strong—until it withers. Flowers look glorious—until they fade. Isaiah says, “*The grass withers, the flower fades, for the breath of Adonai blows on it.*” (Isa 40:7) The things we’re tempted to trust—nations, empires, markets, influence, strength, alliances, reputations, crowds—can look unstoppable in the moment. But the breath of the Lord exposes what they really are: temporary. You lean on human *chesed*—human love loyalty, human reliability—and then one day you look around and realize where it brought you. Judah leaned on the “glory” of nations, and it landed them in exile.

Then comes the anchor: “*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*” (Isa 40:8) Empires rise and fall. What feels permanent today will one day be gone. But God’s Word remains. Yeshua echoes this truth: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*” (Matt 24:35) This is the message to exiles coming out of discipline: stop building on what fades. Build on what lasts.

CONCLUSION

So “Now THAT is glory”—and it’s not what we’d expect. Glory is not just power on display; it’s the King coming near. Glory is God leveling what’s crooked and lifting what’s low so He can arrive without hindrance. Glory is His goodness, His compassion, His *chesed*—His covenant love that doesn’t quit on His people. And glory is the steadfastness of His Word when everything else that looks strong starts to crumble.

And the LORD is calling to us: stop trusting what fades. Stop building your hope on what can be taken, shaken, outspent, outlived, voted out, bought out, broken down, or replaced. Let the Lord show you His glory—His character—and let Him prepare the way in you. Let Him straighten what’s crooked. Let Him level what pride has built up and lift what discouragement has pressed down. Because comfort isn’t an idea—it’s the LORD coming toward you. And His Word still stands.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you most feel the tension between “what I can see” and “what God has spoken”?
2. In your own words, what does Isaiah mean by “prepare the way of Adonai”? What would that look like in your week?
3. When you hear “the glory of the Lord,” what do you normally picture—and how does Exodus 33–34 reshape that picture?
4. What are some “unstoppable” things you’ve been tempted to trust (security, money, reputation, a system, a relationship)? How have you seen them “fade”?
5. John the Immerser connected preparing the way with repentance that bears fruit (Luke 3). What “fruit” would repentance produce in your relationships and generosity right now?

CLOSING PRAYER:

ADONAI, our God, we thank You that You keep saying, *“Comfort, comfort My people.”* Thank You for covenant faithfulness—You are still our God, and we are still Your people. Forgive us for trusting what fades, for leaning on the chesed of all flesh as though it could hold us. We confess how quickly our hearts run to what looks strong, what looks secure, what looks unstoppable.

Prepare Your way in us. Level the proud places in us, and lift up what’s been crushed in us. Make the crooked places straight and the rough places smooth. Show us Your glory—not just power, but Your goodness, Your compassion, Your grace, and Your truth. Teach us to build our lives on Your Word that stands forever. And where we need to repent, give us courage to turn—fully, honestly, and with fruit that shows a changed heart

B’Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.