



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

Cross-Examining the “Action figures” of the Nations.

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): *Is 41:21-29; Isaiah 40:31; 41:1-20; 1 Kings 18:27; Psalm 95:3*

Isaiah 41 has us in a courtroom. The Judge is not nervous, not reacting, not scrambling—He’s summoning the nations to step forward and listen. And what I love is that the invitation is still gracious: the One True God calls “the coastlands” to draw near, be quiet, and **renew their strength**—the same kind of exchange He offers to anyone who will wait on Him. *“But those who wait for Adonai will renew their strength. They will soar up with wings as eagles...”* (Is. 40:31). He’s saying, “Come close. Let’s look at the evidence. Let’s do *mishpat*—let’s set this in the light and see what’s real.”

But here’s the tragedy Isaiah exposes: when people feel threatened, they often don’t draw near to God—they grab for something they can control. They reach for “action figures”—stuffed animals of the soul—things they prop up so they won’t totter, and then they call that “faith.” So the Lord says, in effect, “Bring your gods. Set them on the table. Let’s cross-examine them.” And the whole point is not just to mock idols for sport—it’s to rescue people from trusting what cannot carry them, and to call them back to the One who actually speaks, acts, and keeps His word.

1. PUT YOUR GODS ON THE TABLE (Isa 41:21–23)

The Lord opens the cross-examination with a direct challenge: *“Present your case,” says Adonai. “Bring forth your reasons,” says the King of Jacob.* (Isa 41:21). That title—“King of Jacob”—is so striking. It’s like God, for the sake of the moment, steps into the “identity parade” the nations love: “Your king is your god, your god is your king.” And the Lord says, “Fine. Line them up. I’ll stand here as Jacob’s King. Now bring your strongest argument. Bring your biggest stuffed animal first.” Not because God is unsure—but because He intends to isolate the true from the counterfeit right in front of everyone.

And then comes the test. Not, “Can your gods make you feel spiritual?” Not, “Can your gods give you a vibe?” But: *“Let them bring forth and tell us what will happen... Tell us the former things... Or announce to us things to come... Declare the things coming afterward, so we may know that you are gods! Indeed, do good or do evil, so we may all see and be awestruck.”* (Isa 41:22–23). The Lord is saying: “Explain the flow of history. Show discernment about what has been. Announce what is coming. Do **anything** that proves you are real.” And it’s the same edge Elijah used on Mount Carmel—because when lies have held people captive long enough, sometimes mercy sounds like holy sarcasm: *“Shout louder! After all, he is a god! Maybe he’s deep in thought... or perhaps he’s asleep and must wake up!”* (1 Kgs 18:27).

2. THE SILENCE OF THE COUNTERFEIT (Isa 41:24)

Isaiah wants you to feel the moment after the challenge—like a long, awkward pause. God says, “Speak. Do something.” And there’s nothing. That’s the point. Then the verdict drops: *“Behold, you are nothing, and your work is null. Whoever chooses you is loathsome.”* (Isa 41:24). The issue is not that these “gods” are powerful—Isaiah says they are less than nothing. Their “works” are emptiness, fraud, worthlessness. And that word—**chooses**—is where the heat really is. The Lord’s disgust is not aimed at plastic toys on the table. You can’t be angry at nothing. The offense is that human hearts—staring straight at the evidence—still reach for the counterfeit.

Because idols always offer the same temptation: control. “I can control Mario. I can position Woody. I can prop them up so they don’t totter. I can make my god do what I want—so I get to feel like I’m my own.” And that’s why it’s so offensive: it’s not a simple mistake; it’s a refusal to submit our way to the One True God. We keep choosing what we can manage over the One we must trust. And Isaiah is trying to rescue us from that insanity. The Lord is above all so-called gods—without admitting their reality for

a moment: *“For Adonai is a great God, a great King above all gods.”* (Ps 95:3). He alone is worthy of worship because He alone is God.

3. ONLY THE LORD CAN SPEAK THE FUTURE (ISA 41:25–29)

After the silence, God doesn’t just win an argument—He reveals a plan. He says, *“I have stirred up one from the north, and he has come... He will call upon My Name... He will trample rulers as on mortar, like a potter treading clay.”* (Isa 41:25). The Lord is not trapped in endless repetition. He is free. He can do a new thing, a radical break, because He rules history instead of being pushed around by it. And then He drives the point home: *“Who told this from the beginning, so that we may know? ... In fact, no one foretold it... In fact, no one announced it... In fact, no one heard your words.”* (Isa 41:26). The nations had “messages” everywhere—but when the moment of truth comes, there’s no voice to hear, no counsel, no reliable word—because the idols are mute.

Then the contrast turns beautiful. God says, *“First it was to Zion: ‘Behold, here they are!’ And to Jerusalem: ‘I will give a herald of good news.’”* (Isa 41:27). The false gods can’t proclaim; the Lord sends a messenger. The false gods can’t counsel; the Lord speaks clearly. And Isaiah closes the case: *“But when I look, there is no one... no counselor... they have no response... Indeed, they are all a delusion... Their molten images are wind and waste.”* (Isa 41:28–29). And this is where it lands for us today: beware of “words in the name of the Lord” that are not **from** the Lord. God’s word is reliable, testable, and true. He doesn’t lie, and He doesn’t need re-definitions after the fact. He’s not an idol we craft with our imaginations—He is the living God who speaks, acts, and keeps covenant.

CONCLUSION:

So here’s the question Isaiah forces on us: **What are you trusting that has to be propped up?** What “action figure” have you placed on the table of your life—something you lean on because it feels manageable, something that gives you a sense of control, but can’t actually speak truth, guide your steps, or carry your soul? God is not merely trying to win a debate. He’s calling you out of a life built on wind and waste and into a life built on His word. He’s saying, “Come near. Be still. Look at the evidence. Listen to My voice. Let Me be your strength.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Isaiah’s courtroom scene, what stands out most to you about the Lord’s challenge: “Tell us what will happen” (Isa 41:22–23)?
2. What are some modern “action figures” people prop up for security—things that can’t actually carry them?
3. Isaiah says the offensive part is the **choosing** of idols. What makes “control” so spiritually tempting?
4. How does God’s ability to speak accurately about what is coming strengthen your trust in Him when life feels uncertain?
5. What’s one practical way you can “set your heart” to listen for the word **from** the Lord this week?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, Our King, we come near in the quiet, because we want the truth more than we want the comfort of our own control. Expose the “action figures” we’ve trusted—the things we’ve propped up, defended, and chosen—though they cannot speak and cannot save. Forgive us for reaching for what we can manage instead of resting in You. Teach us to wait for You, to renew our strength in You, and to trust Your word as sure and faithful. Adonai, You are the King of Jacob, the One who was and is and will be. You alone can declare the end from the beginning; You alone can send true good news. Anchor our hearts in Your voice, guard us from counterfeit messages, and lead us in humble obedience. We choose You again today—the Living God—above every substitute.

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