



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

“Are You Really Looking for Security from Your Stuffed Animals?”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): *Is 41:1-7; Isaiah 40:31; 19:24-25; 27:12-13; 1:18; Acts 10-11; Acts 2; Gen. 14; Josh 5:1; 10:1; 11:1; 2 Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2, 7-8; 5:13; 6:3*

You ever remember being a kid and thinking, “If I just surround myself with enough stuffed animals, I’ll be okay”? It’s funny now, but in the moment it felt real. You’re lying there in the dark, a little afraid, and you build your little wall of comfort—your bear with the missing eye, the one with the music box, the ones you’ve had forever—and somehow it gives you a sense of safety. As if a burglar or the boogeyman is going to see your stuffed-animal security system and just turn around in terror.

But the truth is: it was never the stuffed animals that kept you safe. If anything kept you safe, it was your parents. It was someone bigger than you—someone real—someone who could actually protect you. And that’s exactly what the Lord is exposing in Isaiah 41. He’s offering the nations—and by implication, all of us—an invitation to **exchange** false strength for real strength. The question is simple: **are we still trying to feel secure the childish way—clutching what we can control**—when God is offering us something far stronger and far more trustworthy?

1. COME CLOSE BEFORE YOU SPEAK

The passage opens with the Lord calling the ends of the earth into a courtroom scene: “*Be silent before Me, O islands! Let the peoples renew their strength. Let them draw near, then let them speak. Let us come together for judgment.*” (Is. 41:1). Notice the order: silence, drawing near, then speaking. God is saying, “Before you start talking, before you start presenting your case, before you start trying to manage your fear—come close enough to recognize who you’re dealing with.” There’s something about stillness that forces us to face reality. You can’t hide behind noise when God says, “Be silent.”

And what makes this moment so striking is that ADONAI isn’t only confronting—He’s inviting. This courtroom isn’t mainly a threat; at its heart, it’s a mercy. It’s more invitation than confrontation. He’s saying, “Come—let’s settle what needs to be settled. Let’s come together for *mishpat*—authoritative decision, right governance, justice set in order.” It’s like that earlier invitation: “*Come now, let us reason together*” (Is. 1:18). God humbles Himself to draw people near—because real security begins when you stop posturing and start approaching.

2. THE LORD RULES THE STORY

Then the Lord asks a question that’s meant to shake the nations awake: “*Who has stirred up one from the east...?*” (Is. 41:2). There’s an unnamed conqueror on the move—aroused from the “sunrise,” from the east—and the emphasis is not “Who is he?” but “Who **sent** him?” Who initiated his career? Who determines what he does, how he does it, and why he succeeds? The Lord is pulling back the curtain on history and saying, “You think the empires are writing the story? You think kings are running the world? Watch this.”

And then comes the answer—God summons all generations as witnesses and declares the only possible conclusion: *“Who has performed and done it, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, ADONAI, am the first and the last—I am He!”* (Is. 41:4). That is meant to land like a pillow under an aching head. HE is the Lord of the beginning—and HE is the Lord of every ending you can imagine. HE is the Lord of every age, every generation, every rising, every falling, every shaking, every shifting. And if He is truly Lord over history, then your security can’t ultimately be found in what *you* can build, predict, or control. Your security is found in HIM ALONE – in the One who calls history forward like witnesses to **His** courtroom.

3. STUFFED ANIMALS DON’T HOLD UP UNDER PRESSURE

Here’s where it gets painfully honest. The nations draw near, they come—just like God summoned them. *“The coastlands have seen and fear. The ends of the earth tremble. They draw near and come.”* (Is. 41:5). You would think trembling people would finally humble themselves and call on the Lord. You would think silence would lead to surrender. But it doesn’t. Instead, what happens? *“Each one helps his neighbor and says to his brother, ‘Be strong!’”* (Is. 41:6). In the presence of the God who calls the generations from the beginning, they look at each other and say to each other, “Come on—you’ve got this. Be strong.” It’s human encouragement replacing divine dependence.

And then it gets worse: they start building. They turn fear into craftsmanship. *“The craftsman encourages the smith... saying of the soldering, ‘It’s good!’ as he fastens it with nails so that it will not totter.”* (Is. 41:7). Do you hear the irony? They have to **strengthen** their god so it won’t wobble. The things they’re depending on for security are actually depending on *them* for security! They literally nail down their “security” so it doesn’t fall over. That’s what idols are: man-made safety plans. Defensive arrangements against life. They’re stuffed animals lined up around the bed—cute, familiar, comforting—but powerless when the real threat shows up. And all the while, the Lord is offering an exchange: “Stop chanting ‘Be strong’ to each other and start receiving strength from Me.”

CONCLUSION

From the first verse, this is what the Lord is doing: He’s offering renewal—exchange—**real strength instead of pretend strength**. The same language used for Israel’s hope in Isaiah 40 is being extended to the nations here: the peoples can “renew/exchange” strength too. The heart of God has always been bigger than a small circle. Israel was never chosen from a place of favoritism—it was chosen for purpose. God’s love for Israel was always meant to overflow into love for the nations, because God so loved the world. And the Lord is calling the ends of the earth—coastlands, islands, remotest places—into stillness before Him.

But here’s the question that turns the message toward us: when fear rises, what do you reach for? Do you reach for the “stuffed animals” of this world—what’s familiar, what you can control, what you can build, what you can nail down so it won’t totter? Or do you actually draw near to the Lord in stillness and let Him be who He says He is: the First and the Last, the One who rules the story, the One who offers real strength to the weary?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What “stuffed animals” (false securities) do you tend to reach for when you feel afraid or out of control?
2. Why do you think the Lord commands silence and drawing near *before* speaking (Is. 41:1)? What changes when you do that?
3. How does the truth “*I, ADONAI, am the first and the last—I am He*” (Is. 41:4) confront the way you think about world events and personal pressures?
4. In what ways do people today still say “Be strong” to each other as a substitute for trusting God (Is. 41:6)?
5. What would it look like this week to intentionally “exchange strength” by waiting on the Lord instead of leaning on your own arrangements (Is. 40:31; 41:1)?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, Our King, we come to You in stillness. You told the coastlands, the ends of the earth, the nations—You told all of us—“Be silent before Me... let them draw near, then let them speak.” So we draw near right now. Forgive us for reaching for stuffed animals—for trusting what we can build, what we can control, what we can nail down so it won’t totter. Forgive us for telling ourselves and each other “be strong” while ignoring the One who actually gives strength to the weary.

You are the First and the Last. You call the generations from the beginning. You rule the story, and nothing is outside Your authority. Teach us to wait on You with expectation. Teach us to exchange our strength for Yours. Make us a people who trust You deeply—so our lives become a witness to the nations that You are faithful, You are righteous, and You are near.

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