

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 41:14-20, ISRAEL MY SERVANT, PART 2

In the last lesson, we learned that Yahweh referred to national Israel as “My servant,” the nation He created and appointed to His service as His representative before the world (Ex. 19:5-6). This is a nation composed of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who will be gathered from the ends of the earth into the land of Israel where they will enjoy safety and security when Yahweh divinely protects them and ensures peace for them. No one will be allowed to harm them, and they will not even be able to find an enemy who threatens them. This has to be, must be, an eschatological promise because complete safety and security for Israel has never happened to this point in the nation's history.

Isaiah 41:14 ¹⁴“Do not fear [יָרֵא], you worm [תּוֹלְעָה] Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,” declares the LORD, “and your Redeemer [גֹּאֲלֵךְ] is the Holy One of Israel.

Using the name of Jacob, or Israel, adds a personal relationship element to this verse. Remember, Yahweh specifically created Israel to be His people and nation, and He did it through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We will see that the concept of Redeemer also furthers the personal relationship element of this verse.

Yahweh continued to encourage the people with words that declared He was with them and He would help them.

Worm, תּוֹלְעָה, means a worm referring to any of numerous, relatively small, elongated, soft-bodied animals generally living in the earth or in water. This also includes many insect larvae, including parasites and maggots. The reference to a worm is a metaphor representing the fact that Israel as a national entity is weak, hated, of no account, and very insignificant in comparison to the other nations in the world. It is used to represent people of low character and/or low estate. As it is used here, the word is not as negative as it sounds to us. This designation is a reference to the state of Israel as a nation in rebellion and under divine discipline, and who is despised by the nations of the world. “The designation itself, however, is not used in a disrespectful sense [by God], but rather calls attention to the sad plight and distressful condition into which the nation had fallen and from which only the power of God could bring help” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:88].

Some translators believe that “men of Israel” must correspond to “worm” and therefore change the word “men” into something like “insects of Israel,” (ISV) or “maggots of Israel,” but the word does mean “men” which is the correct translation. Unger believes the power of God to change the Israelites into men from their insignificant worm-like state is in view. “In the light of Him they are to recognize themselves as but a worm in their devious role as Jacob, who by divine grace can be transformed into men, the men of Israel” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1253].

Even in their weakened, endangered state, they should not fear because they will be helped by Yahweh Himself. Fear, *יָרָא*, simply means to fear or to be afraid. The word may refer to the awesome respect one accords Yahweh, but in this context, it refers to being afraid in terms of the circumstances in which the people find themselves. This should not have been unexpected; they were warned these things would happen to them when they rebelled against the God who had delivered them from Egypt.

Deuteronomy 28:65–67 ⁶⁵“Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. ⁶⁶“So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷“In the morning you shall say, ‘Would that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Would that it were morning!’ because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see.

At the end of this, however, Yahweh promised that He would restore them and that is what this chapter of Isaiah is referencing. It is a declaration of the Lord that He will help them. “I will help you” is a promise, and Yahweh can do nothing other than honor His promises. The promises of the Land Covenant express this well.

Deuteronomy 30:1–5 ¹“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, ³then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴“If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵“The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

There was no need for Israel to fear because the God of Israel was working on their behalf. Isaiah just indicated that the people who hate Israel would be shamed and dishonored, and they would become as nothing and perish, but this too was promised the children of Jacob, or Israel, long before Isaiah penned his prophetic work.

Deuteronomy 30:7 ⁷“The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

Doing these things is part of what Yahweh promised them when He said through Isaiah that He would uphold them and help them. Ultimately, He would save them from their enemies, restore them to the land, fulfill the unconditional promises He made to them through the covenants, prosper them in the land, and provide them complete safety and security.

The concept of Redeemer as the Holy One of Israel also represents the personal relationship element between Yahweh and the nation of Israel. To redeem, *גָּאַל*, means to redeem someone or something in the sense of buying back or reclaiming as one's own.

It also may refer to acting as a kinsman redeemer. "To pay a price in order to secure the release of something or someone. It connotes the idea of paying what is required in order to liberate from oppression, enslavement, or another type of binding obligation. The redemptive procedure may be legal, commercial, or religious" [s.v. "redeem, redemption, redeemer," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1339]. The word contains positive and negative senses. It is positive in the sense of delivering people from bondage or of rescuing their property from one who holds their debt. Negatively, it refers to the family member who avenges the death of a near kinsman by killing the one who himself took that relative's life. This word is used in Isaiah, as it is here, in connection with titles that emphasize the holiness, majesty, and creative power of the God of Israel. The concept of redemption or of Redeemer, as it is used in the book of Isaiah and particularly in this last half of the book, is related to Israel and to the holiness of God.

Yahweh established the Kinsman Redeemer relationship between Himself and Israel when He brought them out of Egypt during the Exodus.

Exodus 6:6 ⁶"Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

The Kinsman Redeemer relationship, the personal, familial relationship, between Israel and Yahweh can never be broken.

Jeremiah 31:35–37 ³⁵Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: ³⁶"If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever." ³⁷Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

God will also fulfill His promise that Israel will finally be the powerful nation He created it to be. The only reason the nation had become helpless and insignificant was due to their rebellion and the subsequent divine discipline to which the nation subjected itself at the hand of God. One of the blessings for obedience was the power to defeat their enemies.

Leviticus 26:6–8 ⁶... and no sword will pass through your land. ⁷But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; ⁸five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword.

Deuteronomy 28:7 ⁷"The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.

Isaiah goes on to reveal that Israel will one day become that mighty nation that Yahweh originally designed them to be.

Isaiah 41:15–16 ¹⁵“Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge [מוֹרֵג] with double edges; You will thresh the mountains and pulverize [דָּקַק] them, And will make the hills like chaff. ¹⁶“You will winnow them [זָרָה], and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them; But you will rejoice in the LORD, You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The picture presented here by the concept of the threshing sledge is one of invincible power that is destructive in nature. The threshing sledge, מוֹרֵג, was an agricultural implement used to separate grain from the stalk on the threshing floor so the grain could be separated from the chaff, collected, and sold or stored. “Sledges were built of heavy wood, studded underneath with sharp stones, potsherds, or iron spikes. The cart was built with studded rollers. Benches with backrests were built on top for drivers. Sledges were drawn by teams of oxen, donkeys, or horses, and encircled the pile of grain heaped in the center of the threshing floor. Women and men drove the teams while others with forks raked loose sheaves into the sledge path and raked away the sledged straw” [G. B. Funderburk, “Threshing,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, 5:738].

The sledge is an instrument of force. It is built to violently separate the grain from the stalk. Yahweh will one day turn Israel into such a powerful nation that it will be specially equipped to destroy their enemies which is pictured as ripping the mountains apart to the point of destroying them. Pulverize, דָּקַק, means to crush, to beat small, to break in pieces especially by threshing. It refers to becoming fine through grinding such that a powder results by means of breaking up or causing to become dust. While Israel will be this powerful in the future, it is power that the nation will seemingly not have to actually exercise. Israel will have no enemies at that time in the nation's history; Isaiah just predicted that their enemies “will be as nothing and non-existent” (v. 12). Most translations use the word “crush” to translate this word in this verse. The TANAKH translates it, “You shall thresh mountains to dust” which preserves the threshing aspect of the word and comports with the threshing metaphor. This metaphor may be related to the eschatological deliverance of Israel at the end of the Tribulation as depicted in Isaiah 40:1-11 where the mountains and hills will be made low (v. 4) in preparation for the appearance of Messiah (vv. 3, 5).

The threshing metaphor continues with the winnowing of the nations who will be blown away like chaff. Winnow, זָרָה, means to scatter, to disperse referring to the removal of something undesirable. The primary reference is to the process of separating the chaff from the grain by throwing it against the wind. The nations will be removed like chaff which is blown away by the wind, but Israel will remain like the grain that is left on the threshing floor.

The use of this metaphor seems to be set in contrast to the worm metaphor used in the previous verse. Worms thresh the soil in a minimal way that is not so apparent to the eye, but threshing is a visible display of power which, in this case, is used to portray the power to turn mountains into dust. The lowly worm will become a mighty instrument of power and strength that other nations will fear.

Some theologians believe this is a reference to Israel's strength at some point in time in temporal history. Since shortly after the conquest of the land immediately after the

Exodus and the reign of Solomon, the power possessed by Israel as described here has not happened. Even during the Tribulation, it will take the powerful intervention of the Lord to prevent the annihilation of the Jews. Only then, after reconciliation with God and the restoration of the nation, will they be granted this power.

Others interpret this verse to mean that anything that stands in Israel's way will be removed from them by God Himself. While it is true that God's hand is always at work in the life of the nation to keep them and preserve them and empower them to survive divine discipline to the extent He desires to do so, these verses are referring to Israel's God granted strength at some point in time, and I believe this is an eschatological verse. Oswalt related these verses to the Persian conquest of Babylon which led to the return of the Jews to Israel from Babylon. "Just as the defeated would know that God had been the cause of their defeat, so the Jews would know that he was the cause of their victory. There would be no reason to rejoice in their own strength or to boast of their accomplishments. In that day, it would be apparent that whatever the involvement of the people as instruments, it was he, the One who is unlike any other—the Holy One who has committed himself to a people—who had done it" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 94]. This does not seem to be a viable interpretation of the text which is talking about the God granted strength of Israel.

In contrast, Unger has at least what I think is a more appropriate eschatological view of this revelation. "When they are redeemed by faith in their Messiah at His second advent, they will become strong and formidable to their enemies, their Redeemer making them a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges ... Redeemed Israel will then thresh the mountains (the Gentile nations) and beat them small (pulverize them), and will make the hills (the kingdoms hostile to Israel) like chaff, which the whirlwind of divine judgment shall carry away" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah," in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1253].

The verbs used in these verses are imperfect meaning they refer to incomplete action which reinforces the eschatological sense being portrayed by the prophet. In these two verses, the verbs are all translated with the word "will" which is a reference to the future: "will thresh and pulverize," "will make," "will winnow," "will carry," "will scatter," "will rejoice," and "will glory." The earlier verses were eschatological in nature referring to the time when Israel will be gathered from around the world (Is. 41:9) after their enemies are destroyed (Is. 41:12). There is no reason to believe these two verses are anything less than eschatological.

At the end of all this, national Israel will rejoice in Yahweh and glory in the Holy One of Israel. Being the Holy One of Israel, Yahweh is the only true God who can justly and righteously do for Israel all that He promised by means of the unconditional covenants. Yahweh has a special relationship with Israel such that He has with no other nation on earth. This situation is also something that has not happened in the history of Israel with the possible exception of Solomon's reign, and even that did not end well when Solomon fell into pagan worship practices which are certainly something less than glorifying the Holy One of Israel. This period of rejoicing is something that will only be completely true when the King and His Kingdom are finally present on earth. The nation as a whole

certainly cannot be characterized as rejoicing and glorifying in Yahweh today; they are generally in rebellion against Him with many of them living life as atheists.

In verses 17-20, the prophet describes the plight of Israel as it has been, and continues to be, throughout much of the history of the nation, and it describes the restoration of the physical world at the end of the Tribulation. This cannot be something that happened at the end of the Babylonian captivity when Israel returned back to the land. It characterizes the state of the nation as it has been living in rebellion against God and therefore subject to His divine disciplinary program which subjects them to difficult and dangerous circumstances. That has obviously been very true during the current *diaspora*.

“It is better to fit this passage in with numerous other proclamations of salvation that describe God’s marvelous eschatological recreation of nature. These future promises should prove to everyone that God would not forsake or ever forget his promises to his people. Present circumstances may not be the best, and it may seem like God will not establish his glorious newly created kingdom for his chosen people, but it is absolutely certain that it will happen someday. In faith, his people can confidently act now, based on divine assurances about what God will do in the future” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 139].

Isaiah 41:17–19 ¹⁷“The afflicted [עֲנִי] and needy [אֶבְיֹֹן] are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them. ¹⁸“I will open rivers on the bare heights [שָׁפֵי] And springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness [מִדְבָּר] a pool of water And the dry land [צִיָּה אֲרָזִין] fountains of water. ¹⁹“I will put the cedar [אַרְזֵי] in the wilderness, The acacia [שִׁטָּה] and the myrtle [הֶדְס] and the olive tree [עֵץ שֶׁמֶן]; I will place the juniper [בְּרוֹשׁ] in the desert Together with the box tree [תְּדֵהָר] and the cypress [תַּאֲשׁוּרִי],

This restoration of the world revealed here is not something that has happened in the past; it is a revelation of Kingdom conditions in the future. It represents prosperity and plenty. Those who do not believe this is a literal restoration truth, must turn this into a totally figurative Scripture. I hold that it is referring to both physical and spiritual matters and that it is eschatological in nature.

Verse 17 describes the condition of the nation for much of the past and the present.

Afflicted, עֲנִי, means poor, afflicted, wretched, being without sufficient property. It refers to those who are suffering, in a state of poverty, oppression, or misery from various causes. This word characterizes those who are down-trodden and crushed under the burdens of life. This word certainly describes the life of the Jew for a significant portion of the *diaspora*, sometimes better and sometimes worse depending on time and place.

Needy, אֶבְיֹֹן, means to be in want, to be needy, and to be poor referring to a person with few or no possessions (but not yet reduced to begging).

While the background for this verse may be the provision of water in the wilderness for the Israelites during the earliest days of the Exodus (Ex. 15:22-25, 17:1-7), this is speaking to

a chronic condition of thirst that can only be remedied by the Lord Himself. This represents more than physical thirst; this is a characterization of the spiritual and physical drought-like condition of Israelite life in rebellion against God. We all know how desperate a human being's condition can get when water is lacking. People slowly starve to death, but dying of thirst is a much quicker death.

In terms of Israel's Kingdom restoration, the restoration of the geophysical characteristics of the planet are used to represent the transformation of Israelite life, physical and spiritual, and the prosperity they will experience in the Kingdom.

The Israelites are not only estranged from God in a spiritual sense, but they have physically suffered much during the years they have experienced divine discipline. The restoration of the earth is a representation of remedying their physical suffering as well as their spiritual restoration.

One day, this rebellion will end and restoration will take place. The restoration is characterized as the restoration of water and forests, not only in the places one would expect, but in the places where one would not expect to find them.

Bare heights, נֶשֶׁפִי, means bareness, smooth or bare, baldness or nakedness referring to heights that are notable for being barren. The word is used to refer to normally dry places where God will miraculously provide water.

Both wilderness, מִדְבָּר, and dry land, צִיָּה אֲרָץ, refer to desert land.

While we would expect to find springs in the midst of valleys, it is completely unexpected to find plentiful, life-sustaining water on bare heights and in desert areas. Mentioning the springs suggests that an even more plentiful supply of water than normal will be found in the valleys. Constable described the situation this way: "He would provide by innovation (water where it did not usually appear, on hilltops), multiplication (more water where there was some, in valleys), and transformation (water where it had never existed, in deserts)" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume IV, Isaiah-Daniel,4:115*].

There will be trees growing in unexpected places as well. Seven different trees are identified here that will be growing in desert areas. The only food bearing tree is the olive tree; all the rest of them are apparently for shelter in those hot areas. However, as just noted, water will not be a problem in those same hot areas. Water and shade make those places more hospitable than they are as they exist now and in the past.

The cedar tree, אֲרָז, is a large Middle East tree that produces lumber fit for building construction. The meaning of the word means "strong and firmly-rooted tree." These are the same trees the Bible calls the "cedars of Lebanon." These trees may grow to 120 ft. in height and be 30-40 ft. in girth. Branches begin about 9-10 ft. above the ground and grow horizontally away from the tree trunk. They have a very large canopy radiating out and away from the trunk, and they also have a large root system. The wood is fragrant and insects do not attack it. It has a red color and does not have knots in the lumber. This is obviously not describing the scrub trees we have here in the Central Texas Hill Country

that we call “cedars!” The characteristics of these trees are used as metaphors for people and things. Hosea described Israel as a nation taking root like the cedar tree and being as fragrant as cedar (Hos. 14:5-6). The righteous man was described as growing like a cedar (Ps. 92:12). Balaam described Israel as a nation “like cedars beside the waters” (Num. 24:6). Cedar trees of this variety do not normally grow in desert areas. The provision of water and the growth of this tree on a large scale in what was once a desert are miraculous works of God.

The acacia tree, אַשְׁטָה, was a tree that produced what the Bible called Shittim wood. The wood was very hard, brown-orange in color, and used for cabinet making. It produces a high grade of charcoal. These trees grew in the desert, but generally in valleys that carried large amounts of water when it did rain. During this future period of time, when water is abundant, this tree will apparently be more widespread across areas in which it could not have previously survived. Acacia wood was extensively used in the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex. 25-27, 30, 35-38, used 26x).

The myrtle tree, הַדָּס, is also a tree that is not normally found growing in a desert location and climate. Its native range is around the Sea of Galilee down to Jerusalem. It is an evergreen type of tree with small, shiny, faintly scented, leathery leaves. It has white or pink fragrant flowers and produces a blue-black berry that can be used in a perfume. The boughs were used to cover huts during the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15), and they still are.

The olive part of olive tree, [עֵץ זַיְתוֹן], actually means fat or oil. Olive trees grow in shallow, rocky soil such as that found on hillsides. While olive trees can thrive in dry areas, they cannot grow in a desert climate, so the olive tree growing in the wilderness will be something previously unknown. Obviously, olive oil is an extremely important crop; it was used for cooking, fuel, medicine, and for manufacturing purposes such as tanning and making soap. Olive wood was used for furniture and construction purposes. It was used for religious purposes as an anointing oil and as a libation offering. The Bible has numerous references to olive trees, olive oil, etc. The reference to the olive tree may be a reference to the wild olive rather than to the productive domesticated agricultural variety.

Juniper, בְּרוֹשׁ, is also translated variously as cypress, fir, pine, or broom. Some believe this word refers to a shrub that grows in the desert, but that does not seem to fit the context. The context involves trees that apparently do not ordinarily grow and thrive in deserts but will, in the future, be growing and thriving in what were once deserts but what will then be well-watered areas that are able to support the growth of trees. It does not seem that desert shrubs fit the context. The Juniper is well-known in Lebanon so it seems likely that is the tree that is in view in this verse.

The box tree, תִּדְהָר, is thought to be an elm although that identity is uncertain. Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (s.v. “תִּדְהָר”) calls it an oak. “I prefer the oak, the *ilex*, as the word properly denotes a firm enduring tree.” Various translations and Bible dictionaries identify this tree as fir, cypress, plane, or pine. Other dictionaries are more definitive concerning the identity of this tree. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (s.v. “plants of the Bible”) identifies this tree as about 20 ft. in height and a native plant of northern Canaan and the mountains of Lebanon and as being a tree of very hard wood

and glossy leaves. Whatever its identity, this tree was not a tree that ordinarily thrived in desert areas; therefore, it will be significant that it will thrive in the well-watered formerly desert areas of the world during the Kingdom.

Cypress, תַּאֲשׁוּר, is a tall evergreen tree with hard, durable wood suitable for construction purposes. Idols were made of it. Coffins were made of cypress and some Egyptian mummies have been discovered in cypress coffins which is a testimony to the durability of the wood. The wood identified as "gopherwood," the wood used in the ark's construction, and which, in some translations, is thought to be cypress, is also possibly identified as an evergreen oak, camel-thorn or ilex. The BDB lexicon identifies it as the box tree. Cypress trees are well-known so the understanding we have today of the identity of this tree is probably what is known as the Cypress.

The point to all this is not necessarily the specific identity of these trees; the point is that these trees, all of which are not suitable for growth in arid deserts, will, in the future, be growing and thriving in well-watered areas that were formerly deserts. This will be a miraculous situation that only Yahweh can bring about. Miracles are wrought for the purpose of authenticating the message and the messenger, who, in this case, is Yahweh Himself. He is going to do this and the Israelites—not to mention the world—are to take notice and acknowledge Him as the one true Creator God.

Isaiah 41:20 ²⁰That they may see [רָאָה] and recognize [יָדַעַ], And consider [שׁוּם] and gain insight [שָׁכַל] as well, That the hand of the LORD has done [עָשָׂה] this, And the Holy One of Israel has created [בָּרָא] it.

The Israelites are to learn some things from this miraculous restoration of the earth at this future point in time. They are to see, to recognize, to consider, and gain insight.

See, רָאָה, means to see something with the physical organs we call the eyes, but in this context, it relates to perceiving, to knowing, and to understanding. This is not an uncommon use of the word. When we reach an understanding of some issue or concept, we might say, "I see" or, "I see what you mean" which is a symbolical use of the word "see" to refer to mentally understanding something.

Recognize, יָדַעַ, means to know, to find out, to be aware, to learn, to discern, to perceive referring to being cognizant or aware of a fact or a specific piece of information; to possess knowledge or information about. The exhortation here refers to understanding and learning from the miraculous restoration of the earth the Lord Himself is going to cause to take place.

Consider, שׁוּם, in this context, means to confirm, to consider, or to determine referring to considering or weighing by carefully thinking about or weighing a matter in the mind. The primary meaning of the word means to put, place, or set. In Exodus 15:25, the word is used to emphasize "God's sovereignty, His ability to establish the order of things, and His ability to control the elements of nature and disease" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "וּ," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1112]. In this situation, they are to recognize God's miraculous, sovereign work in restoring His creation, and they are to get that set into their minds and arrange their thinking in accordance with this revelation.

Gain insight, שָׁכַל, means to act with insight, to consider, to comprehend, to ponder, to understand referring to mentally perceiving an idea or a situation. The primary meaning is to be prudent. In this case, Yahweh expects Israel to consider and understand that the hand of the Lord had acted and done this miraculous work in their presence. The form of this verb indicates that if they will see, recognize, and consider, they will then be caused, due to the truth they have seen and considered, to gain the insight into the work and character of Yahweh that He has revealed to them and that He desires for them to develop.

This work of restoration will be accomplished by Yahweh exercising the creative power He alone possesses.

Done, עָשָׂה, means to do, to labor, to make or manufacture, or to accomplish. It refers to work performed with a distinct purpose or a goal. Yahweh's purpose was not only to restore nature to some degree, but also to bring the Israelites to a more complete understanding of Yahweh as the Creator God and the God of Israel.

Created, בָּרָא, means to shape, to create, to bring into existence. The primary meaning is to create.

This is the same word used in Genesis 1:1 to refer to creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. This situation is probably not identifying creation out of nothing. Yahweh is going to arrange for the provision of water by means of springs flowing with water already in the ground and apparently by means of climate change in terms of the earth's weather patterns. Whether Yahweh will create the trees and plant them in these former desert areas as He created plant life on day 3 of the creation week, or the Israelites and the Gentile believers will plant these trees in those areas upon the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom is not stated. These Scriptures may be a hint that the earth is going to once again be like the Garden of Eden as it is described in Genesis 2:8-14 where the plants, trees, and abundant water are revealed to be characteristics of the pre-Fall, original creation. This is not a complete revelation of restoring the earth to an Edenic state because no fruit trees are present, but this doctrine is fully revealed in Isaiah 51:3.

"In the usage of the verbs Isaiah introduces a certain gradation, proceeding from *ʿāsâ* to *bārā*'. This latter verb, employed in Genesis 1:1, points to the utterly new and marvelous character of the work God will accomplish. It is a work so radical and all-changing that it may be described with the very verb that depicted God's first work of creation. This work is fundamentally new and marvelous, a new creation" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:94-95].

Returning to the servant theme of this pericope, God's work in restoring Israel is a work of revelation to mankind just as He originally intended when He created Israel to be a nation belonging to Him (Ex. 19:5-6). The final phase of this work culminates in the Tribulation and Israel will indeed be God's witness to the world during that time through the two Jewish witnesses in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:1-10) and the Jewish evangelists from the twelve tribes (Rev. 7:4-8). "Here God's purpose in electing [creating the nation and appointing it to His

service] and delivering his people is stated as directly as it is anywhere in the book. It is in order that people may recognize who God is reflecting on his creative, miracle-working power in Israel. Finally, this is what Israel's servanthood is all about. Just as Isaiah himself was, the nation is called, and cleansed, and empowered, not for its own enjoyment but as a vehicle of God's revelation.... It is as Israel becomes the living evidence of God's unique deity that the world will recognize him" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 96].

This situation also represents a reversal of the spiritually blind condition under which the Israelites have been living for nearly 3,000 years. Israel's blindness was revealed to Isaiah and the nation in Isaiah 6:9-10. When Isaiah asked Yahweh how long this condition would persist, the answer suggested until the end of the Tribulation (Is. 6:11-13). By the end of the Tribulation, the nation will finally see—through the agency of His signs, wonders, and miracles—their God for who He really is, place their faith in Messiah, and be saved.