

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 54:4-8, FEAR NOT!

Last week we talked about the metaphor of a barren wife. I found what I think is a very good explanation of that metaphor. "Isaiah began by declaring that the restored wife will now begin to bear legitimate (vv. 1-3) children. Israel had produced a lot more children in desolation than she produced when she was previously married to Jehovah (v. 1). In fact, Israel produced many illegitimate children and very few legitimate ones, and those who were legitimate were often sacrificed to the foreign gods. However, now all this is to change. Isaiah tells Israel to enlarge her house (vv. 2-3) in order to accommodate the many legitimate children about to come. The reason for this new activity and the coming legitimate children is because of the reunion of the marriage (vv. 4-8). Israel's former adulteries will all be forgotten (v. 4), and Jehovah will once again be her Husband (v. 5). God will again court His wife as He courted her when she was a youth (v. 6), and all past forsakings will now be substituted by renewed blessings (vv. 7-8)" [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 835].

This section of the chapter should serve as consolation to the barren one, fearful Israel. Despite their rebellion and the disciplinary action imposed for it, they will be restored as though nothing had happened. These verses compare Israel's plight to the life of a woman who is a widow (v. 4) or rejected (v. 6), which only serves to compound the issue of being barren that has already existed. The problem for Israel is that the nation did not have to live this way; their plight is solely the result of their rejection of the nation's husband, Yahweh. These verses flow from the plight of a fearful widow, to the identity of the nation's husband who is none other than "the Holy One of Israel" who wants His wife back, to living not in widowhood and not in rejection, but in light of the everlasting lovingkindness He has for the nation.

Isaiah 54:4 4" Fear [יִרָא] not, for you will not be put to shame [בוֹשׁ]; And do not feel humiliated [כָּלַם], for you will not be disgraced [הִקְפֹּר]; But you will forget [שָׁכַח] the shame of your youth, And the reproach [הִקְרָפָה] of your widowhood you will remember [זָכַר] no more.

The barren one is commanded to "fear not." Fear, יִרָא, means to fear, to be frightened, and to be afraid referring to being in a state of feeling great distress and deep concern of pain or unfavorable circumstance. This verb is in the form of a request or a command. Israel has been frightened for much of her existence, and that is not going to change until the nation is saved at the Second Coming. The Israelites have experienced a great deal of fear throughout history, but what has happened in the past is not nearly as fear inducing as that which lays before them during the Tribulation. Israel as a nation obviously has a history of unbelief; commanding them not to fear does not seem to have had much of an impact on them. Being frightened was one of the curses imposed on the nation as divine temporal discipline for their disobedience and rebellion.

Leviticus 26:16 16, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror ...

Leviticus 26:36–37 ³⁶As for those of you who may be left, I will also bring weakness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. And the sound of a driven leaf will chase them, and even when no one is pursuing they will flee as though from the sword, and they will fall. ³⁷They will therefore stumble over each other as if *running* from the sword, although no one is pursuing; and you will have *no strength* to stand up before your enemies.

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.

The solution, of course, is turn to God and the divine, temporal disciplinary action they have earned will no longer be necessary and their fear will disappear, but we know that won't happen until the nation is rescued and saved from destruction at the hands of the antichrist and his army at the end of the Tribulation.

We can safely say that the state of rejection and widowhood the nation has experienced was first initiated with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, and completed, in terms of a separation from Yahweh, the nation's husband, with the destruction of the Southern Kingdom including the Temple and the Babylonian captivity. However, that is too limited and that state of affairs did not end with the restoration back into the land 70 years later; in fact, it has yet to end. Israel has never been an independent nation with a Davidic king ruling from the Davidic throne since the Babylonian conquest of the nation. Even though the nation exists today as an independent entity, there continues to be no Temple, no Davidic king on the throne, and no faith in Yahweh as the people of the nation primarily live in unbelief. The promise here is being made that the marriage to Yahweh will be restored; it has just not happened yet. Many theologians restrict the meaning of these promises to the end of the Babylonian captivity, but it is much more than that. It relates to the history of Israel up to the end of the Tribulation. “Although it might be thought that this was fulfilled at the return from Babylon, the full restoration of Israel did not occur then. Therefore, this certainly points to the restoration of Israel in the messianic kingdom” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1091].

There are four synonyms in this verse that reflect the state of the nation's rebellious mind and the disgrace Israel has suffered under since the nation's separation from Yahweh began. These words are all negated meaning their situation will eventually be restored and not only restored, but forgotten as though it never happened.

Shame, בּוֹשׁ, means to be ashamed, that is, to have a painful feeling and emotional distress (sometimes to the point of despair) by having done something wrong with an associative meaning of having the disapproval of those around them. This wrong may refer to something relatively innocuous such as a social mistake up to the commission of a serious sin. It is both an external and a subjective experience ranging from disgrace to guilt. “The primary meaning of the root is ‘to fall into disgrace, normally through failure,

either of self or of an object of trust.'... [T]he force of *bosh* is somewhat in contrast to the primary meaning in English 'to be ashamed,' in that the English stresses the inner attitude, the state of mind, while the Hebrew means 'to come to shame' and stresses the sense of public disgrace, a physical state" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "בוש," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 97].

For Israel, shame is the product of disobedience and rebellion, but it is likely that shame is part of the process God is using to restore the nation. "[Stiebert] views shame not in a legal context but 'as a consequence of relational breakdown between humans and God because of a breakdown in moral conduct.' He is not convinced that an anthropological model of defining shame is adequate because God is the one who gives honor or shame in order to bring about an examination of a person's life and encourage restoration and the removal of shame" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 480, n. 479 citing J. Stiebert, "Shame and Isaiah," in *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup, 87-109]. The problem for Israel is that all the shame they have experienced for so very long has yet to convince them to develop the desire for reconciliation.

Humiliation, קָלַם, means to be disgraced, to be ashamed, to blush. It refers to an act that humiliates a person, but it also allows for the character and/or the behavior of a person to cause themselves shame. It relates to being of low status and little honor or respect and so have words or actions of shame thrust upon oneself. "*kalam* denotes the sense of disgrace which attends public humiliation.... *kalam* seems to refer to 1) wounding of the body, 2) wounding of the spirit through public humiliation, and 3) wounding of the spirit because of defeat and captivity" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "קָלַם," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 442-443]. It is often used in parallel with *bosh*.

Disgrace, הִפְרָה, means to have dismay, to be in confusion, to be abashed referring to the presence of feelings of anxiety and distress. This verb form is causative; some outside influence is causing the disgraceful condition. The sense of the word refers to feeling ashamed because of feeling dishonor or guilt. "The basic idea concerns the loss of self-possession through humiliation, embarrassment, or confusion. It is close in meaning to the root *bosh*" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "הִפְרָה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 311].

Reproach, הִרְפָּה, means reproach, scorn, disgrace, or contempt referring to the state of dishonor and low status.

There are a number of reasons for the nation to experience shame, humiliation, disgrace, and reproach. First, Israel was barren. She did not produce "offspring" for Yahweh, and failed in her responsibility to be to Him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). This was the failure to perform the spiritual responsibilities they were assigned. Secondly, their rebellion led Yahweh to impose the divine, temporal discipline on the nation for disobedience and rebellion which caused the nation to experience some very shameful and humiliating trials leading to disgrace. This was spiritual and physical: spiritual because the nation committed adultery with idols, and physical because the morality of the nation was exceedingly sinful. The results flowing from the nation's behavior have happened over and over again over the course of history.

The good news is that those things can and will be put behind them one day when restoration and reconciliation with Yahweh finally takes place. The Israelites will forget the shame of their youth and the reproach of widowhood.

Forget, *שָׁכַח*, means to forget, to fall into oblivion referring to not remembering information and so lose sight of its significance. The sense is to suppress by dismissing it from the mind, to stop remembering. "The general meaning of *shakah* 'to forget' without a specific theological nuance, is the exception for this verb" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "שָׁכַח," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 922].

What the Israelites will forget is the shame of their youth. Many people believe this relates to the Israelites' slavery in Egypt (cf. Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah- Daniel*, 158; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:526, and others). I disagree with that premise. Israel was not a nation in Egypt. They were formed into a somewhat cohesive tribal people group in Egypt, but the nation was formed right after they left Egypt, received the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai, and moved into the Promised Land. The shame of their youth is properly considered to be their nearly constant grumbling, disobedience, idolatry, failure to carry out their assigned spiritual responsibilities (cf. Ex. 19:5-6), and other rebellious practices that started even before they crossed the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh and his army (cf. Ex. 14:11-12). "He bids them not to fear being put to shame anymore for the shame of their youth (Israel's unbelief in the desert and infidelity in the land) ..." [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1302]. "They could forget the shame of their sins as a young nation, as recorded in Judges and 1 Samuel ..." [Warren W. Wiersbe, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament; The Prophets*, 63]. Jeremiah 2:3 compares the wilderness sojourn with the nation's youth. Other theologians believe the concept of Israel's youth might refer to the shame of the monarchy or worship of Baal, but I think it refers to more than those things, and it also encompasses a broad range of prohibited behavior across a span of time. The Israelites' have much to be ashamed about, but it will all be forgotten.

This is not the first time that God, through the prophet Isaiah, has revealed to the Israelites that they will have their shame removed when God is in their midst, which will be a Messianic Kingdom event, and it will not be the last time Isaiah reveals this truth.

Isaiah 29:22–23 ²²Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale; ²³But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, They will sanctify My name; Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

Isaiah 61:7 ⁷Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, Everlasting joy will be theirs.

Remember, *זָכַר*, means to remember referring to recalling information or events. It denotes remembering or paying attention to. This is in the imperfect verb form which is a reference to incomplete action indicating this has not happened yet and will not happen

until the Messianic Kingdom begins. The word is negated meaning that they will not remember.

What they will not remember is their widowhood. Of course, God, their Husband, did not die, but He sent Israel away which left them in a state resembling widowhood. Most theologians consider this to be a reference to the Babylonian captivity, but, as I explained above, that is much too restrictive. The nation is still in a state of widowhood; it began with the Babylonian captivity, but it continues on and will not cease until the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated.

The next verse indicates that the Husband of Israel, the Holy One of Israel, is going to redeem His wife. If God is for them, they have no reason to fear. They should have no problem following the command to “fear not.”

Isaiah 54:5 ⁵“For your husband [בַּעַל] is your Maker [עֹשֶׂה], Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer [גֹּאֲלֶךָ] is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

Yahweh is identified here as Israel's Maker. As you know, I believe it is correct to think of Israel as a supernaturally created people and nation rather than as a chosen people and nation. Maker, עֹשֶׂה, means to do, to make, to fashion, or to accomplish. The concept refers to making something by fashioning it or creating it and usually implying the use of existing materials. It is used in Genesis 1:26: “Let Us make man in Our image ...” It has the sense of performing an activity with a distinct purpose, a moral obligation, or a goal. The word often highlights God's acts in time and space. “Jehovah is their Maker and would not destroy the people he created for His glory” [Warren W. Wiersbe, “Isaiah” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament; The Prophets*, 63]. “[T]he relationship between God and Israel is depicted in terms of a marital relationship, with God, Israel's creator, as Israel's husband” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1091].

Some theologians believe that “Maker” is simply a reference to God as the creator of the creation, but that is not a tenable position to hold. The most obvious reason is because Israel was not part of the original created order and did not exist until long after the Tower of Babel when the first nations were created which itself was an event long after the original creation week. No nations were formed in the creation week. The other reason is that all of the supernatural activity that resulted in the creation of the nation also happened long after the creation event of Genesis 1 and after the Tower of Babel. Finally, the context in Isaiah 54:5, in terms of the relationship between God and Israel, involves Israel and not any other nation. Only one nation in the history of the world has had God declare Himself to be the husband of that nation. “Who is this *husband* of hers? He is no ordinary person. He is the *Maker* of the whole earth. Having made her, he knows her intimately and has the affection that only a Creator could have for his creation. Beyond that, he who made the world has the power to remake it” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 419]. This is actually a little confusing. Oswalt seems to mix up Israel as a nation with the other nations of the world. Is He acknowledging that God specifically created Israel to be a people and a nation, or is he saying that Israel was created a nation alongside every other nation in the world?

Husband, *בָּעַל*, means to marry, to have dominion, to rule over. In terms of marriage, it refers to marrying a woman or to a woman who is to be married. This is the word used to define God's relationship to/with Israel as the nation's Husband. This verse should assure Israel that He who is their Maker and their Husband is quite capable of ensuring their survival and continued viability as a nation. The marriage relationship implies a loving, intimate relationship of mutual trust, but the sad fact is that Israel never trusted Him to bless them and therefore decided to go her own way which resulted in the imposition of divine temporal discipline. That will change once Israel is fully and finally redeemed. When that happens, the nation will finally be the spiritually faithful nation it was created to be by fulfilling its original assignment assigned to them in Exodus 19:5-6.

Separation and adultery within the marriage relationship have taken place, but now the Husband is calling His wife back in order to restore the marriage relationship. "The relation is often stated negatively in the context of divorce and unfaithfulness, but ultimately suggests the permanence of Israel's relationship to God and implies the protection and security that was available to God's spouse. The restoration of the relationship will occur when God's call for Israel to come from dispersion will resemble a husband calling his wife back to him after she was rejected" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1091].

The Husband's name is Yahweh of the armies which is the title of the commander of the armies of heaven. As such, He is certainly capable of defending the nation when the timing calls for it in terms of His plan for history as it involves Israel and the nations. He is also capable of using pagan nations to carry out His disciplinary measures against Israel, but they can only do so to the extent that He allows. He will not allow the nation and the people to be completely destroyed.

In fact, not only will He refuse to allow the nation and the people to be destroyed, He will redeem them Himself. Redeem, *גָּאַל*, means to redeem, to act as kinsman, to buy back in order to deliver or save, but formally to redeem by removing an object from a dangerous situation as an extension of being redeemed from indenture or slavery. In terms of Israel, the concept of kinsman-redeemer is particularly important. It signifies that He is willing to purchase a relative out of a bad situation and restore him. Israel has a host of problems from which the nation needs rescue whether it is rebellion, dispersion as a divine temporal disciplinary action, sin, and/or paganism, but whatever it is, they will be redeemed by God their Redeemer.

This is the fourth time in the book of Isaiah that Yahweh, Redeemer, and Holy One of Israel are used together (see also Is. 43:14, 48:17, 49:7). "This name [Holy One of Israel] emphasizes God's total otherness, his unapproachable glory, and his separation from sin. This God is totally different from all the man-made pagan gods, and he acts on behalf of his people Israel" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 481].

As if all that was not enough, He is called "the God of all the earth." He is that now, of course, but not all the world recognizes Him as such at this time—but they will! Israel will too. Some theologians believe this word is a reference to the land of Israel, but it probably

refers to the world, although either one can fit the context. This chapter is about Israel, while the next one is applicable to the world. Perhaps there is a statement being made here that He is not only the Holy One of Israel, but He is also the God of the world. "He is distinctively Israel's Holy One, and the God of the whole earth, as He will be in the Kingdom when He manifests Himself to the nations in that capacity in and through the restored nation" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1302].

Isaiah 54:6 "For the LORD has called [קָרָא] you, Like a wife forsaken [עָזַב] and grieved [עָבַ] in spirit [רוּחַ], Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected [מָאָסָ], " Says your God.

This prophecy is talking about a period in time when Israel—forsaken, grieved, and rejected—is being called back to Yahweh, her Husband. We now know that this state of affairs has continued for 2,500 years and Israel still has not returned to Him, but she will.

Called, קָרָא, means to call or to summon referring to calling a person to come into one's presence or to give a task. It may relate to calling one to a specific task. When Israel is finally restored, they will finally and faithfully enter into the responsibilities assigned them so long ago to be to Yahweh "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5). Furthermore, God has covenant promises that He is obligated to keep with the nation and which He cannot fail to fulfill. The ultimate call will take place during the Tribulation, and the Tribulation is what it will finally take for Yahweh to get Israel to answer His call to them.

The words used to describe Israel's condition are forlorn and sad. Israel's existence separated from God is not a pleasant one. It is particularly sad because it did not have to happen this way. Forsaken and grieved are passive participles which means this state is the result of their position resulting from rebelling against Him. They have now been forsaken by Him which leaves them in a painful, pitiful condition that will not stop. Rejected is also a passive verb denoting incomplete action; the nation's state of rejection is ongoing.

Forsake, עָזַב, means to be abandoned, deserted, and forsaken. The sense is to be abandoned, forsaken, or left behind. There are two sides to the concept of forsaken. Israel had forsaken God and committed spiritual adultery with pagan gods. Conversely, because Israel had forsaken God, He had forsaken them. This truth is applicable to individuals in their relationship with God, and it was true of both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom in their relationship with God.

2 Chronicles 12:1, 5 ¹When the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong, he and all Israel with him forsook [עָזַב] the law of the LORD.... ⁵Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, 'You have forsaken [עָזַב] Me, so I also have forsaken [עָזַב] you to Shishak.'"

2 Chronicles 15:2 ²and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake [עָזַב] Him, He will forsake [עָזַב] you.

Grieve, **עָצַב**, means to hurt, to pain, to grieve referring to physical pain, emotional pain and sorrow, or possibly a combination of both.

The people are grieved in spirit. Spirit, **רוּחַ**, in this context, is a reference to the human spirit which refers to the spirit, mind, and heart, that is, the psychological faculty which can respond to God. The sense is that of the spirit as the animating force or life force of a person. "The human spirit and the Spirit of God are closely linked with moral character and moral attributes.... The human spirit is sometimes depicted as the seat of emotion.... The spirit is pictured as giving animation, agitation, or livelihood" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "רוּחַ," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1040-1041].

"*rûah* is the principle of man's rational and immortal life, and possesses reason, will, and conscience. It imparts the divine image to man, and constitutes the animating dynamic which results in man's *nepesh* [soul] as the subject of personal life. The distinctive personality of the individual inheres in his *nepesh*, the seat of his emotions and desires. *rûah* is life-power, having the ground of its vitality in itself; the *nepesh* has a more subjective and conditioned life. The NT seems to make a clear and substantive distinction between *pneuma* (*rûah*) and *psyche* (*nepesh*)" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "רוּחַ," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 836-837].

When man is separated from God, his spirit cannot operate as God intended it to operate, whether man is aware of that fact or not. To a spiritually dead person, the things of God are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14) and a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23). That is because our human spirit is intimately related to God who animated us with the breath of life (Gen. 2:7) in His image (Gen. 1:27). I view man as a triune being: body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). Our body is the container of flesh for the soul and the spirit. Our soul is our personality; it identifies each one of us as a unique person. Our spirit is what I call our "God channel" which allows us to know Him and to communicate with Him. That is why a man who cuts himself off from God is grieved in spirit.

Reject, **קָצַע**, means to reject, to despise, and to abhor referring to being despised, rejected which pertains to limiting or avoiding association. The sense is that of being rejected with contempt, that is, to reject or treat as loathsome. This word also represents the fact that the Israelites rejected God and He therefore rejected them.

Numbers 11:20 ²⁰... because you have rejected [**קָצַעַם**] the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"

Hosea 4:6 ⁶My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected [**קָצַעַם**] knowledge, I also will reject [**קָצַעַם**] you from being My priest ...

Rejection is set in the context of a broken marriage where the wife, the wife of one's youth, is despised and rejected. That is a description of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The good news for Israel is that God would not forsake them because He had covenant promises to keep. That is the point of what Isaiah is predicting here. There will come a time when Israel will be reconciled with Yahweh and restored as His wife, but until that finally happens, the nation will be forsaken and grieved.

Leviticus 26:44 ⁴⁴“Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject [מָצַט] them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.

Isaiah makes it very clear this message is from God; the verse ends with “says your God.”

The mercy, the love, and the kindness of God are on full display in this call from Yahweh to Israel to come back to Him.

Isaiah 54:7 ⁷“For a brief [קָטָן] moment [רִגְעָה] I forsook [עָזַב] you, But with great compassion [רַחֲמִים] I will gather [קָבַץ] you.

Once again, we can note that the imposition of divine temporal discipline is characterized by God as the forsaking of His people. It is noteworthy that the time involved is only but a “brief moment” to God. Yet, it is over 2,500 years since the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by Assyria and the Southern Kingdom by Babylon. God obviously reckons time just a bit differently than we count time (2 Pet. 3:8).

Brief, קָטָן, means brief as it pertains to a very small unit of time, a brief, definite moment in time. The sense of the word relates to something of short duration or distance. It also means something small, little, or insignificant which are also appropriate nuances of the word in this context.

Moment, רִגְעָה, means a moment, an instant referring to a very brief period of time. The sense is that of an indefinitely short time. In Psalm 50:5, David described God's anger as lasting but a moment.

In God's sight, what has been happening to Israel has been going on for only an instant in terms of God's reckoning of time. This viewpoint from God's perspective also suggests that the time when Israel will be finally redeemed and reconciled to her Husband will occur very soon.

Compassion, רַחֲמִים, in this context, means compassion, mercy, pity, favor referring to the state or condition of receiving favor and so, in some contexts, not be in judgment or deserved punishment implying relationship. It has the sense of having a deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering. It may also mean to love deeply. “This root refers to a deep love (usually of a ‘superior’ for an ‘inferior’) rooted in some ‘natural’ bond.... There are several ideas attached to God's deep, tender love: ... his mercy and forgiveness toward his people in the face of deserved judgment ... also, God's continuing mercy and grace in preserving his unrepentant people from judgment. Thus this attribute becomes the basis in part of an eschatological hope [as seen here] ... [T]he prophet's message regarding the return from the exile [diaspora] opens onto a permanent state where the father-son [husband-wife] relationship will never be broken” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “רָחַם,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 841-842].

The purpose to all this is the regathering of Israel back to the land. Gather, קָבַץ, means to gather, to collect, and to assemble. The sense of the word refers to assembling or

collecting in one place. In this case, that one place is in the land of Israel. There are a number of Scriptures that reveal this truth. The gathering referred to here is the second and final worldwide regathering of the Jewish people, which will be followed by the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom.

Isaiah 11:11 ¹¹Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea.

Jeremiah 29:14 ¹⁴'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'

This is not just revelation from the Old Testament prophets either; Christ Jesus also revealed this truth in the Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24:29–31 ²⁹"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

God's anger—His justified, godly anger—led to the separation that is now taking place, but His compassion for His people will result in the bestowal of His eternal love on them.

Isaiah 54:8 ⁸"In an outburst [שָׁטַף] of anger I hid [סָתַר] My face from you for a moment, But with everlasting lovingkindness [רַחֵם] I will have compassion on you," Says the LORD your Redeemer.

Outburst, שָׁטַף, means a flood or a downpour; it is frequently translated to overflow or to engulf. It is often used as a figure of speech describing an overflowing torrent, which represents God's judgment on the Israelites for their disobedience and rebellion. When we consider the curses that God promised the nation for rebellion (Lv. 26; Dt. 28), we might think that this word is a bit of an understatement! We also find in those blessings and curses chapters of the Pentateuch the reasons for God's anger with the nation. The nation did not do what it needed to do in order to experience the blessings, and it did what it was not supposed to do which merited the curses for disobedience.

We also note again in this verse that God's anger is being expressed for only a moment, which, as already noted, is an instant, a very brief moment in time. His estrangement from the nation is characterized in terms of hiding His face, but only for a moment. Hid, סָתַר, means to hide or to conceal referring to preventing something, including oneself, from being seen or discovered. This verb is in a causative form meaning it is God that has removed Himself from being an overt presence in the life of the nation. This does not mean that God has completely abandoned the nation. He continued, and continues to this day, to ensure that the nation survives. He may be working somewhat behind the

scenes to do it, but He is doing it. The book of Esther is the preeminent Scriptural example of this truth. I believe the survival of the fledgling nation as it has been regathered back into the land in unbelief at this time is a current example of His fidelity to His promise to preserve the nation for His purposes (cf. Jer. 31:35-37). Several times since the nation's founding, the new nation has miraculously survived several armed Islamic attempts to destroy it, and these victories can be viewed as nothing short of God's miraculous, behind the scenes, intervention in the nation's affairs to ensure its survival. Hiding His face from them means He has given them over to His divine temporal disciplinary program for the duration of time it is going to take for them to return to God and be regathered back into the land for the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom and the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3 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.

These verses are the prelude to the land covenant which are a clear indication that God still has a plan for Israel, and His plan will come to fruition.

God's lovingkindness is characterized as everlasting or eternal; it is one of His attributes and therefore cannot change. Lovingkindness, *חַסְדִּים*, means kindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, love and loyal love, and lovingkindness. Psalm 136:1-26 is an exposition of the lovingkindness of God. Each verse ends with "For His lovingkindness is everlasting." "Divine *hesed* counter acts God's wrath. At times the biblical text suggests that God's own response to human sin runs in opposite directions. At such moments, Gods *hesed* exercises an ameliorating or limiting role upon his wrath" [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "חסד," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 2:214].

This verse is also directly from God to the people through the prophet: "Says the LORD your Redeemer." As the nation's Redeemer, it is God Himself, the Suffering Servant, who will pay the price for the redemption of the nation.