

Isaiah 42:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Analysis

This inaugurates the first of four Servant Songs (42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12), revealing the Messiah's character and mission. 'Behold my servant' uses the Hebrew 'ebed (עֶבֶד), signifying both submission and intimate relationship—the same word describing Moses, David, and the prophets. Yet this Servant is unique: 'mine elect' (bachir, בָּחִיר) means chosen, selected by divine purpose before time. God's soul 'delighteth' (ratsah, רָצָה) in Him—expressing pleasure, favor, and complete satisfaction. This finds fulfillment at Jesus's baptism when the Father declares, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:17), echoing Isaiah's language precisely. The promise 'I have put my spirit upon him' describes the Spirit's anointing without measure (John 3:34), equipping Him for mission. 'He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles' (mishpat la-goyim) reveals the Servant's global scope—not merely Israel but all nations. Mishpat encompasses justice, righteousness, and God's revealed will. Christ came to establish God's kingdom of righteousness for all peoples.

Historical Context

Written around 700 BC during Isaiah's ministry to Judah under kings Uzziah through Hezekiah. The 'Servant Songs' puzzled Jewish interpreters—was the Servant Israel collectively, a remnant, or an individual? The suffering described seemed incompatible with messianic expectations of a conquering king. The Septuagint (Greek translation, 250 BC) rendered this passage carefully, preserving

its messianic potential. Jesus explicitly applied the Servant identity to Himself (Luke 22:37). The early church saw unmistakable fulfillment: Matthew quotes verse 1 regarding Jesus's ministry (Matthew 12:18-21), identifying Him as the prophesied Servant who would proclaim justice to Gentiles.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the Father's delight in His Servant Jesus challenge you to seek God's approval over human recognition?
2. What does it mean that the Messiah would bring 'judgment to the Gentiles'—how does this reveal God's inclusive salvation plan from the beginning?

Interlinear Text

הֵן	עַבְדִּי	אֶתְמַךְ	בִּי	בְּחִירִי	רָצָה ה'
H2005	Behold my servant	whom I uphold	H0	mine elect	delighteth
	H5650	H8551		H972	H7521
בְּכִשְׁלִי	נָתַתִּי	רוּחִי	עַל יוֹ	מִשְׁפַּט	לְגוֹיִם
in whom my soul	I have put	my spirit	H5921	judgment	to the Gentiles
H5315	H5414	H7307		H4941	H1471
יּוֹצִיא:					
upon him he shall bring forth					
H3318					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 3:22 (Spirit): And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Isaiah 61:1 (Spirit): The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Isaiah 52:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Philippians 2:7 (Parallel theme): But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Isaiah 43:10 (Parallel theme): Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Matthew 17:5 (Parallel theme): While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Isaiah 53:11 (Parallel theme): He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 41:8 (Parallel theme): But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

Ephesians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

John 3:34 (Spirit): For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.