

**Isaiah 41: Yahweh,
Powerful and Merciful**

Exploits and Lessons of Mullah Nasrudin



'I can tell you one thing,' said Nasrudin, 'and that is that fear is multidirectional.'

'It certainly seems to be stronger than thirst, or sanity, or other people's property,' said the dervish.

'And you don't have to have it yourself in order to suffer from it!' said Nasrudin.



FEAR

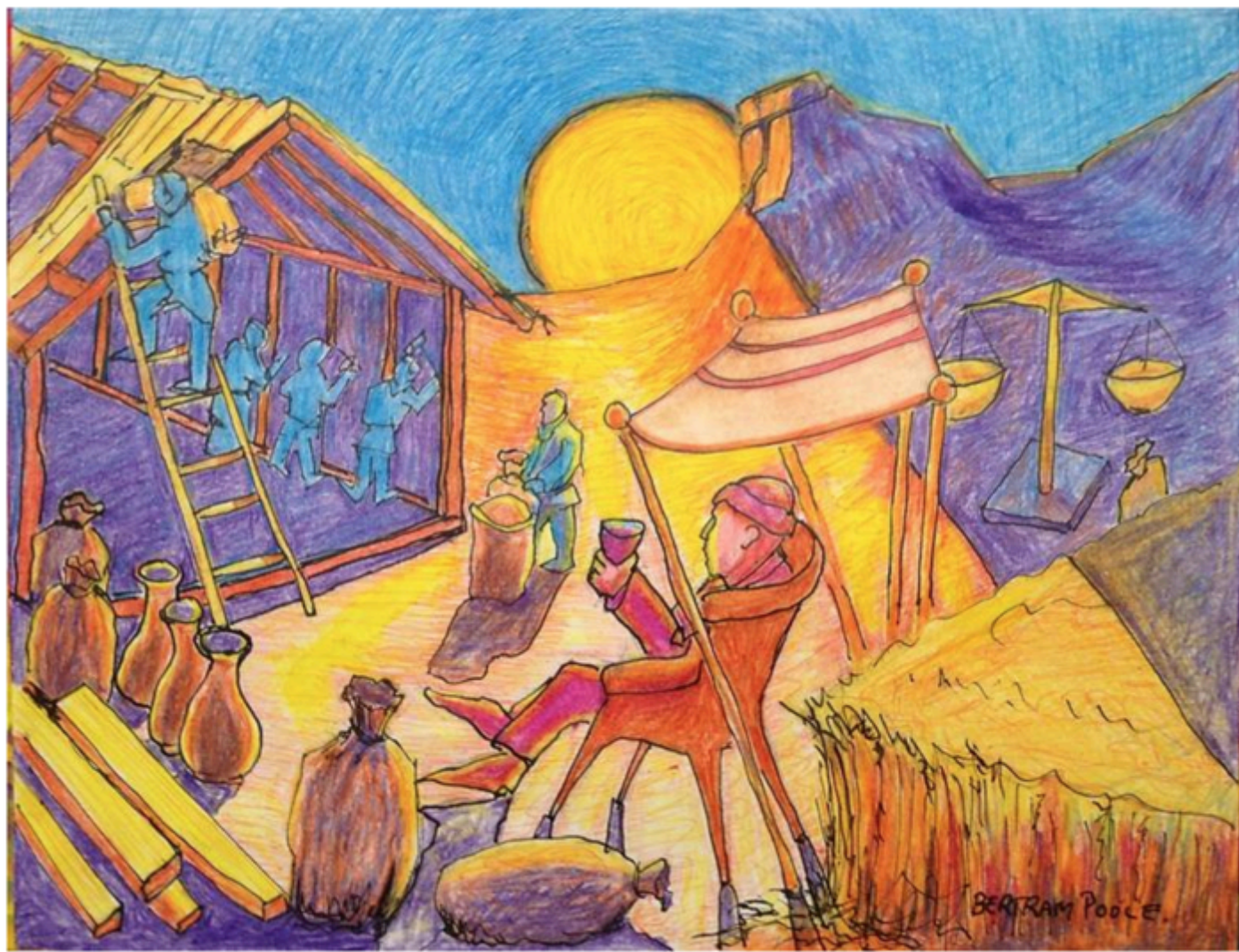
40 ²⁷ Why do you say, “My *troubled* path is hidden from the Eternal; God has lost all interest in My cause”?

(see Lam. 5:20 – 22)

41 ⁵The lands along the seacoast have seen and are scared. The ends of earth take to shaking and yet still they draw near. ⁶They try to bolster each other up saying, “Have courage, brother, *have courage!*”

⁷ *Recognizing their mutual dependence*, the artisan encourages the goldsmith; the one who hammers the metal emboldens the one who welds, saying, “Looks good! *Fine job!*” and fastens the idols together with nails, making it stand firm and stable.

Jesus'
Parable of
the Rich
Man
(Luke
12:15-21)



²¹ **Eternal One:** Present your case. Lay out your arguments
and call your witnesses to appear before the King of Jacob.

Come on and bring your idols. Now tell us what is to come, and *while you're at it*, tell us what happened before. Can you explain to us so that we, too, may understand? Go ahead, tell us what the future holds. Surely you can, if you are truly gods. Do good, or do bad. Just do something—*anything*—to amaze or frighten us. ²⁴ Sure enough, *you are not gods; you are nothing at all. You have nothing to show for your work or yourselves.* **Fools! Only fools would choose you to be their god.** Detestable.

²⁹ See here, all of these *so-called gods* are false; their works are nothing; These cast-metal images are like wind, *sheer* emptiness.



'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Theologizing – Yahweh Powerful

Past:

40: ¹“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God.
² “With gentle words, *tender and kind*, Assure Jerusalem, *this chosen city from long ago*, that her battles are over. *The terror, the bloodshed, the horror of **My punishing work is done***. This place has paid for its guilt; iniquity is pardoned; its term of incarceration is complete. It has endured double the punishment it was due.”

Future:

41: ²Who brought up this eastern hero? **Who called up his justice service?**

It is I, the Eternal One *your God*. I am the first. And to the very last, I am the One.

²⁵ **Eternal One:** *I, the Lord*, I have called up for service one from the north, and he comes from the rising sun and he will invoke My name.

He will render rulers like mud *under his shoes*, trampling them down like so much clay.

First charter of human rights?... Or propaganda at its best?

- Cyrus restored gods to their temples, reconstructed neglected temples, returned exiles to their homes.
- Or... A policy to have as little trouble as possible in new empire? Tolerance in minor points only: Jewish temple built of wood only, still evidence of slavery, etc.



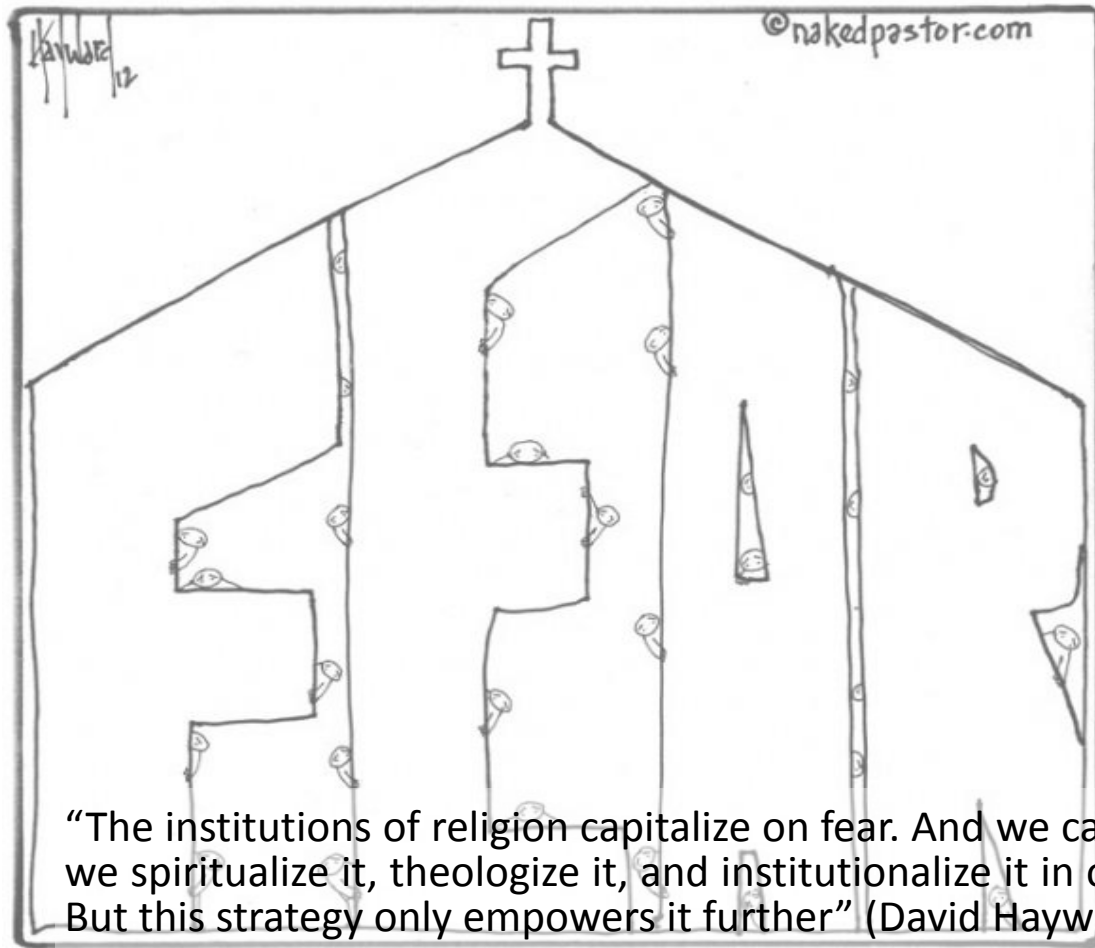
Cyrus the Great
(559 – 529 BCE)



'I am Cyrus, king of the universe, great king, powerful king, ...'

“For community leaders of every age who bear a sense of responsibility for their people, the task of seeking meaning during times of fundamental change is a demanding one... In religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam... faithfulness elicits a more mundane response as well, that of relating divine will to the everyday realities with which human beings must cope. **It is a responsibility fraught with danger.**

What political regime has lacked its ‘prophet’ to declare that its acts of aggression and brutality are an expression of ultimate purpose? Yet for the community of faith and its prophets to withdraw from the realm of politics and international affairs is to abdicate the world to ruthless and ungodly devices of tyrants.” (Paul Hansen)



Theologizing - Trump

“The institutions of religion capitalize on fear. And we capitulate. To justify and tame our fear we spiritualize it, theologize it, and institutionalize it in order for us to feel protected from it. But this strategy only empowers it further” (David Hayward)

...What is God trying to say? When I use that phrase, I'm not saying that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, I can't think of a better way.

...Globally, we're in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, always leads to great love.

But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us... Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That's the real meaning of the word "suffer" – to allow someone else's pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole... We're not pushing the panic button; we are the panic button. And we have to allow these feelings, and invite God's presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament.

I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness... We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it's love. This is what we call the subject-subject relationship. **Love alone overcomes fear** and is the true foundation that lasts (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Theologizing - Covid



Yahweh- Merciful

8 Eternal One: But you, **My servant**, Israel, Jacob **whom I have chosen** and descendant of **My friend**, Abraham,

9 I have reached to wherever you are in the farthest corners of earth, and the most hidden places therein.

I have called to you and said, “You are my servant.
I have chosen you, not thrown you away!”

10 So don't be afraid. I am here, with you;
don't be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, help you.

I am here with My right hand to make right and to hold you up.

11 Look, everyone who hated you and sought to do you wrong will be embarrassed and confused.

Whoever challenged you *with* hot-headed bluster will become as if they never were, and nevermore will be.

12 You may go looking for them, but you won't find them; because those who tried to fight with you will become as if they never were.

13 After all, it is I, the Eternal One your God,
who has hold of your right hand,
Who whispers in your ear, “Don't be afraid. I will help you.”



14 So don't be afraid, Jacob, though you are nothing but a worm. People of Israel, you little bug, you have nothing to fear.



Do not fear!

- **Messenger: Don't be afraid!** Listen! I bring good news, news of great joy, *news that will affect all people everywhere.*

(Luke 2:10 – Jesus' birth)



- **Messenger of the Lord: Don't be afraid.** I know you are here keeping watch for Jesus who was crucified.

(Matthew 28:5 – Jesus' resurrection)



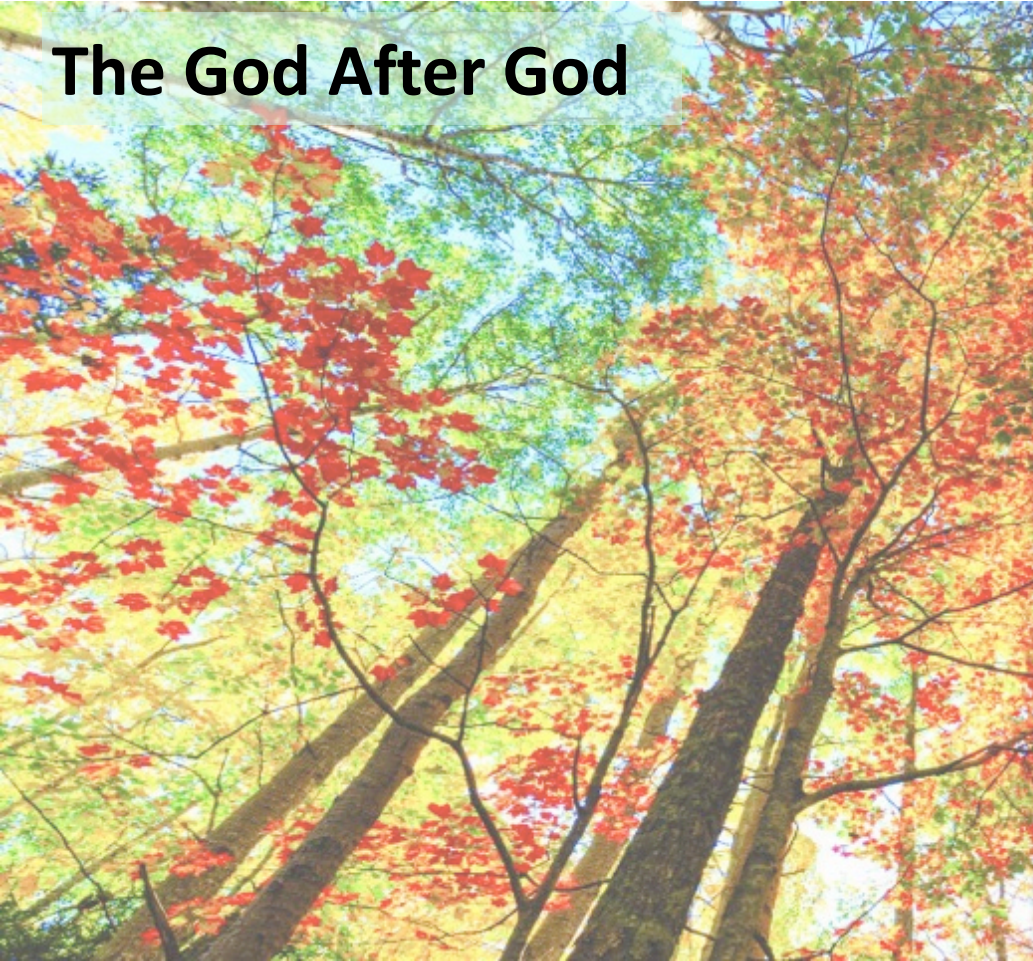
Embrace Lack

“The possibility of deep joy requires a commitment to the density of life (rather than experiencing it as shallow and insubstantial). This however necessitates an openness to the possibility of deep pain.”

“The death of God allows us to mature... We need to experience a type of crucifixion which is a type of loss of all identity, a loss of all meaning. Instead of trying to run from it, we need to run to it... Only through death will you find life. Resurrection is the experience of life within the death, not the rejection of it.”

(Peter Rollins)

The God After God



14 Eternal One: I will help you. I am One who saves you, the Holy One of Israel.

16 You will separate *value from waste*, and a great wind and a strong storm will take away what is *useless and unimportant*.

You will take joy in the Eternal. You will glow with pride in the Holy One of Israel.

17 And when people thirst, when those poor souls with parched tongues look in vain for something to drink, I, the Eternal, the God of Israel, won't leave them *to suffer*. I will respond... I will see that *gentle* pools wait on the desert floor *for the weary traveler*, and *great* fountains bubble up from dry ground;

19 In the desert, I will plant cedars, *woody* acacias, myrtles, and olive trees.

20 They'll see *all this* and understand. They'll ponder together and come to know that it is the power of the Eternal One that produced this. *They will know* that the Holy One of Israel created it.

“Second Isaiah measured the success of Cyrus against a very stringent set of criteria, against concepts such as God’s universal justice, divine compassion, and culmination of creation in doxology. **We draw from Second Isaiah an enrichment for our own understanding of the relation of faith to politics, not by joining the parade of those who are quick to fit an international event or natural disaster into an eschatological timetable, but by seeking to understand the vision of Second Isaiah held for the healing of creation, from the haunts of the wilderness beasts to the family of human beings to the movements of the stars. For only a vision of creation’s restoration that is graciously infused with a divine love that is lavish enough for the healing of all creatures is equal to the precarious task of interpreting historical events in relation to divine intention**” (Paul Hansen).



The Art of Ravelling

“Second Isaiah has an uncanny way of getting to the heart of the matter. What is the object of the human heart’s yearning, whether in the Persian period or in modern times? Is it not the desire for a sense that purpose underlies the sweep of history, purpose stemming from one who cares about me and about my family, my people, and finally the whole threatened, divided family of the nations living on this beautiful but endangered planet? To contribute generously to life, to live courageously in situations of crisis, to defend the rights of others even at the risk of hardship, **these sterling human qualities usually can be traced to the quiet trust that the seeming fragmentation and turmoil of life are ultimately drawn together into a purposeful unity characterized by infinite love and justice”**

(Paul Hansen).



The image features a stylized, colorful brain scan, possibly an MRI or PET scan, rendered in a vibrant, multi-colored palette. The brain is shown in a cross-sectional view, with various regions highlighted in shades of blue, green, yellow, and orange. The background is a dark, textured blue. The text "Good News" is overlaid in the center of the brain in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Good News