Cyrus, king of Persia. This chapter makes the tremendous claim that God is the One who brought Cyrus into existence and gave him the power to perform his great conquests.

Since Cyrus is not named until 44:28, a reader approaching 41:2-3 for the first time would have no clear indication of the identity of the person described if he did not read further. Recalling how Abraham rescued his nephew from the kings of the east (Gen 14), early Jewish interpreters suggested that Abraham is the conqueror mentioned here, and this opinion has been repeated by some later interpreters, including John Calvin and Matthew Henry. Yet as one reads further in the chapter, two facts become evident. (1) The coming of this conqueror causes many nations, including the distant "coastlands," to be filled with terror. This hardly fits the story of Abraham. (2) In verses 8-10 God exhorts the Israelites, whom He calls "the seed of Abraham," not to be similarly terrified. Such an exhortation would hardly fit with the idea that the conqueror just mentioned was Abraham himself, for a nation composed of his descendants could not exist until a much later time. It is interesting to note that even commentators who consider the person descried in 41:2-3 to be Abraham interpret the later passages, including 41:25, as referring to Cyrus.

The idea that 41:2-3 refers to Abraham rather than to Cyrus may have been in part a result of a difficulty in the translation of the first clause of verse 2, which literally reads, "Who has raised up from the east righteousness?" The very early translation into Greek, called the Septuagint (translated about 200 B.C.), rendered the first part literally: "Who has raised up righteousness from the east?" As the following clauses obviously refer to a man, this clause has often been translated, "Who raised up the righteous man from the east?" This is the translation found in the King James Version, where "man" is printed in italics to show that it is an insertion. Since the original contains the noun *righteousness* (*tsedheq*) rather than the adjective *righteous* (*tsaddiq*), this is a rather free translation. If the word *man* is to be inserted it would be more logical to place it before