

dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants and my blessing on your offspring, (4) and they shall spring up among the grass like willows by streams of water. (5) One will say, I am the LORD's, and another will call himself by the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, Belonging to the LORD, and will surname himself by the name of Israel.

As so many times before, assurance of blessing is followed by declaration of God's power, in this case stressing His eternity and the fact that He is the only God.

(6) Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last, and apart from me there is no God. (7) Who is like me; let him proclaim and declare it. Let him lay it out in order for me since I appointed the ancient people. Let them declare the things that are coming and the events that are ahead.

Again opponents are challenged to give evidence against God's claims. The LORD's ability to predict the future is implied by the declaration that no false god can tell what is ahead.

(8) Do not fear or be afraid. Have I not long since proclaimed it to you and declared it? And you are my witnesses. Is there any God apart from me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none.

Once more the thought is stressed that the Israelites need not fear, as they are God's witnesses. It is their duty to declare that He is the only God.

This declaration is immediately followed by the longest condemnation of idolatry to be found anywhere in this section.

(9) All those who make a graven image are nothing. The things they delight in give them no advantage. Their own witnesses can neither see nor know, so they will be put to shame. (10) Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol, that is profitable for nothing? (11) See, all his associates will be put to shame; his craftsmen are only men. Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up, let them tremble, for they will be put to shame together. (12) The smith shapes iron and works it over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working