> But the LORD will go before you
> And the God of Israel will be your rearguard.

The similarities of the first part of this poem to chapter 40 are very striking. As far as the deliverance of Israel is concerned what was predicted there is now described as fulfilled. God announces that He has delivered His people and that they are to return safely to Jerusalem. In addition, the necessity of holiness is stressed. They must cleanse themselves from all iniquity as they leave the heartland of idolatry.

The statement in verse 11, "you who carry the vessels of the LORD," implies that the returning exiles will be able to take with them the precious articles that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from the Jerusalem Temple. Since this could not be done if they were to escape through stealth or sudden violence, it is clearly implied that they will depart with full permission from the new authorities. God revealed in previous chapters that through His sovereign will a complete change of control would be brought about. Now that the returning exiles will be free to make the long journey homeward, partly through hostile territory and partly through long stretches of desert, God promises that He will go before them and will also protect them from attack from the rear.

The first and third lines of verse 12 begin with the preposition *ki*, which is translated into English in a variety of ways. It is frequently rendered as "for," often as "that," and sometimes as "but." There is generally some sort of causal relationship involved. The words "you will not go out... as fugitives" are not given as a reason to purify themselves but as an explanation of the fact that they will be able to take with them the vessels of the LORD that had been locked up in the treasure house of the Babylonian king.

Here the many promises of deliverance and return from Babylon reach their climax. This note does not occur again in our present section. A chapter division should have been placed after verse 12, instead of three verses further on.