



Isaiah's New Heavens and New Earth (Part 2): Old Names and New Names

By [Robert Cruickshank Jr.](#) with Dan Harden

“You will leave your name as a curse to My chosen ones, And the Lord God will put you to death. But My servants will be called by another name” (Isaiah 65:15)

In the previous article, we followed Isaiah as he contrasted *“the former things”* with the *“new heavens and new earth”* (Isaiah 65:17). We noted that the prophet was utilizing re-creation language to describe the return from exile, just as the prophets used de-creation language to describe the exile (e.g., Jeremiah 4:23-26; Zephaniah 1:2-3). The striking difference between famine and feast is another thread that weaves its way into Isaiah's narrative, as he compares the old with the new.

According to Isaiah, the apostate Israelites would be sent into exile for their festal celebrations to pagan gods (Isaiah 65:3-4, 11). These were the former works (Isaiah 65:7), the former troubles (Isaiah 65:16), and former things for which they would *“bow down to the slaughter”* (Isaiah 65:12). They would be *“hungry”* and *“thirsty,”* and *“put to shame”* (Isaiah 65:13). They would *“cry with a heavy heart”* and “wail with a broken spirit” (Isaiah 65:14). And their name would be *“left for a curse”* to God's *“chosen ones”* (Isaiah 65:16) – at the time when the *“former troubles are forgotten,”* in the *“new heavens and new earth”* (Isaiah 65:17).

Those “*chosen ones*” would be the new generation of returnees, also called His “*servants*” (Isaiah 65:13,14,15). In stark contrast to those being exiled, the chosen ones of the future would eat and drink (Isaiah 65:13), rejoice and shout (Isaiah 65:14), and be blessed by the Lord (Isaiah 65:16). And they’d be given “*another name*” (Isaiah 65:13) while the apostasies of the cursed generations would fade from memory (Isaiah 65:15).

This article will focus on the significance of the new name of the feasting generation and how this comports with Isaiah’s overall imagery of casting the return from exile as a new creation.^[1]

What’s in a Name?

Isaiah is reiterating a theme that he had introduced earlier when he says that His people would be given “*another name*” (Isaiah 65:15). “*God had promised in Isaiah 1:26 that one day he would give Jerusalem a new name,*”^[2] and Isaiah 62:2 says that God’s people themselves would be “*called (qa’ra) by a new name.*”^[3] The concept of the new name in Isaiah 65:15 previews the “*new heavens and new earth*” in Isaiah 65:17 and echoes the earlier verses where it was introduced (i.e., Isaiah 1:26, 62:2). Assigning names to created things was an intrinsic part of the original creation story. As such, assigning a new name to God’s people would only be natural in the re-creation motif that Isaiah employs. It would likewise only be natural for Isaiah to expect his readers to recall what he previously said about the new name as he introduces the concept of the new creation.

As noted in the preceding article,^[4] the de-creation and re-creation language used by the prophets, to frame their narrative about exile and restoration, utilizes the original creation narrative – order out of chaos – as its template:^[5]

A return to sin = a return to chaos. Hence, the resulting exile is spoken of in terms of de-creation.

A return to the Lord = a return to order. Hence, the resulting restoration is spoken of in terms of re-creation.

With this in mind, let’s take a quick look at the key step of naming the elements of creation in the original process of establishing order from chaos. From there, we can see how it fits into Isaiah’s re-creation narrative.

On day one, God called (*qa’ra*) the light day and the darkness night (Genesis 1:5). On day two, God called (*qa’ra*) the expanse heaven (Genesis 1:8). On day three, God called (*qa’ra*) the dry land earth and the waters seas (Genesis 1:9-10). Once God placed the man in the garden, He brought him every living creature “to see what he would call (*qa’ra*) them”

(Genesis 2:19a), and *“whatever the man called (qa’ra) every living creature, that was its name”* (Genesis 2:19b).^[6]

Assigning names to the features of creation signaled that they were now part of an orderly world and no longer in a chaotic state. God’s creation (Genesis 1:1), which was “formless and void” (Genesis 1:2) now had meaning, function, and purpose. This then shows the importance of God’s people being *“called (qa’ra) by a new name”* (Isaiah 62:2) in the new creation after the return from exile. They would no longer be in a chaotic state (exile), but their lives would now have meaning, function, and purpose (restoration).

In simple terms, the act of naming was an integral part of the original creation of the world – when God brought order out of chaos. In the *new creation*, consequently, the *new name* is part and parcel with God bringing His people out of the chaos of the exile and into the new order of the restoration period.

Isaiah is recapping a theme that he introduced earlier, noting that by renaming His chosen people (His new creation), He is effectively distancing them from the apostasy and idolatry that had overshadowed their forefathers and caused their exile. By indicating a new name, the old, with all its implications and baggage, is set aside and put out of mind. Chaos dismissed, order achieved. This name-change concept^[7] bookends Isaiah’s prophecy. The restoration period, after the return from exile, is strategically positioned as the bookend edges that hold the entire prophecy in place (i.e., Isaiah 1:26; 65:15).

More Than the Names Will Change

In the opening chapter (the first bookend), Isaiah says that Jerusalem would be *“called (qa’ra) the city of Righteousness”* and the *“faithful city”* after God *“restores their judges”* and *“counselors”* (Isaiah 1:26). This would come at a time when Zion is *“redeemed with justice and her returnees^[8] with righteousness”* (Isaiah 1:27). The future returnees (coming back from exile) are contrasted with Isaiah’s present generation who forsook the Lord and who would *“come to an end”* (Isaiah 1:28). Their specific actions, by which they forsook the Lord, are described as desiring the pagan rituals which took place among the *“oaks”* in the *“gardens”* (Isaiah 1:29).

As discussed in the previous article, these practices were among the *“influences”* that *“came from the east”* (Isaiah 2:6)^[9], and these are the practices which sent them into exile (Isaiah 65:3-12).^[10] Once the exile is over and the restoration begins, and Jerusalem is purged of these idolatrous practices, the name change would go into effect. Jerusalem would then be *“called”* (qa’ra) the *“righteous”* and *“faithful”* city (Isaiah 1:26).

Between the name change bookends of Isaiah 1:26 and 65:13, Isaiah also makes this prophecy in chapter 62:

*“The nations will see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory;
And you will be **called (qa’ra) by a new name [LXX: by your new name]**
Which the mouth of the Lord will designate” (Isaiah 62:2).*

Dovetailing with chapter 1, Isaiah actually gives the city two new yet related names here in chapter 62, and the contrast of the new names with the old names again points to the restoration in the land after the exile in foreign lands:

*“It will no longer be said to you, ‘**Forsaken,**’
Nor to your land will it any longer be said, ‘**Desolate**’;
But you will be **called (qa’ra)**, ‘My delight is in her,’ [LXX: ‘My Will’]
And **your land**, ‘Married’; [LXX: ‘Inhabited’]
For the Lord delights in you,
And to Him **your land** will be married” (Isaiah 62:4).*

The new names, *“my delight”* (LXX: “My will”) and *“married,”* (LXX: “Inhabited”) are contrasted with the old names, *“forsaken”* and *“desolate,”* and everything here is in the context of the Israelites’ *“land.”* Fittingly, in the context of everything that happened to their land (during the Assyrian and Babylonian incursions), there could not be a more apt description of their land than *“desolate”* and *“forsaken.”* This is almost too obvious to require proof.^[11]

Speaking of the third and final Babylonian incursion, Jeremiah echoes Isaiah’s concepts of becoming forsaken and desolate:

*“Behold, I am going to give a command,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will bring them back to this city, and they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of **Judah a desolation without inhabitant**”’ (Jeremiah 34:22).*

This is the only time in history when it could be said that Jerusalem was completely and totally abandoned and forsaken. We learn from Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar chose to leave a remnant (the poorest of the land) behind in Judah (Jeremiah 39:10), and Jeremiah subsequently chose to remain behind with them (Jeremiah 40:1-5). Then, in Jeremiah chapters 42-44, Jeremiah relates how even that remnant didn’t want to stay in the land but flee to Egypt – against Jeremiah’s advice (Jeremiah 44:11-14). The remnant tells Jeremiah pointblank:

*“Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women who were standing by, as a large assembly, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, responded to Jeremiah, saying, ‘As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, **we are***

*not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; **for then we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no misfortune***” (Jeremiah 44:15-17).

So, even the remnant left behind by Nebuchadnezzar didn’t want to stay behind. Their fellow citizens were taken to Babylon, and they left for Egypt. They left, specifically, to worship false gods and avoid further misfortune. The reference to “*misfortune*” is the Hebrew word *ra’* and literally means “*trouble*”. The idea that they “saw no trouble” is reminiscent of the false gods of Gad (“*fortune*”) and Meni (“*destiny*”), with whom the apostates were aligning themselves. Along with “*the queen of heaven*,” God’s people were turning to other gods in hopes of good fortune and having “*plenty of food*” (Jeremiah 44:17).

As pointed out in the opening of this article, however, Isaiah prophesies against that rebellious generation, stating that they would instead be hungry, thirsty, and put to shame (Isaiah 65:13). Their gods can’t help them, and the feasting and fortune they hoped to achieve by worshipping those gods would turn to famine and misfortune. [12]

In stark contrast, it was the generation of the restoration who would eat, drink, rejoice, and feast in the blessings of God’s presence (Isaiah 65:13,14,16). Everything would change with the name change. The things that the apostate Israelites sought and hoped for when they turned to false gods would only be found by those who turned their hearts to the One True God, who would bring them back, restore their fortunes, and bestow them with blessings reflected in a changed name. They would be “*called (qa’ra) by another name*” (Isaiah 65:15b). They will be called (*qa’ra*) “*My delight is in her*” (Isaiah 62:4). They would be called (*qa’ra*) “*married*” (Isaiah 62:4). Jeremiah echoes this, but even more simply, stating that “*at that time, Jerusalem shall be called (qa’ra) the throne of the Lord*” (Jeremiah 3:17). The new name signaled a new day. Old things would pass away, behold, all things would become new (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Cursed Memories and Forgotten Troubles

As for the previous rebellious generations, Isaiah says they would be a “curse” to God’s new generation of “chosen ones” (Isaiah 65:15a) when the “former troubles are forgotten” (Isaiah 65:16). Similarly, Jeremiah tells the apostate generation of his time:

*“...they will fall by the sword and meet their end by famine. Both small and great will die by the sword and famine; and they will become a **curse**, an object of horror, an imprecation and a reproach*” (Jeremiah 44:12). [13]

The contrasts couldn't be greater, and the context couldn't be clearer. The grim future that Isaiah foresaw in his day became the harsh reality of Jeremiah's day. The bright future of a new day that both prophets envisioned became a reality in the restoration.

The hunger of the cursed generations is replaced with the feasting of the new generation. A vivid picture of this can be seen in the reinstitution of the Passover (Ezra 6:19-12) and the new institution of Purim (Esther 9:25-29). The rebellion of the cursed generations is replaced by the righteousness of the new generation. This is likewise pictured in the contrite prayers of confession in Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9. The names of the false gods of the cursed generations are replaced with the name of the one, true God when the Generation of the Restoration is given its *"new name."*

Summation and Application

The contrasts between famine and feast, old name and new name, desolation and delight, all anchor this prophecy to the events leading up to and including the exile – and the restoration after the return from exile.

While this prophecy was fulfilled in the past, it is filled full of implications that last. God's Word isn't dead and stagnant, it's *"living and active"* (Hebrews 4:12). As such, it comes to life and speaks to every new generation and every new situation. If we want to be called delightful by the Lord, we must delight ourselves in the Lord (Psalms 37:4; Isaiah 65:12). We must strive to emulate the behavior of the returning generation, not the exiled generation.

We might not worship Gad (*"fortune"*) and Meni (*"destiny"*) anymore, but our destiny is exile when we seek our fortunes apart from the Lord. We destine ourselves to spiritual exile, away from His presence and blessing in our lives, when we walk in the way of those who went astray rather than focusing on the Lord.

Like the new beginning for those who returned from captivity, a return to the Lord is a new beginning for everyone in all ages (2 Corinthians 5:17). And like the returnees who were given a *"new name"* (Isaiah 1:26; 62:2; 65:15), we will be given *"new name"* as well when we overcome through His grace and mercy (Revelation 2:17).^[14]

[1] Many thanks to Dr. Jordan Grant for his invaluable input on the early draft of this article.

[2] George A.F. Knight, *The New Israel: Isaiah 56-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publ. Co. [1985]):62.

[3] On Isaiah 1:26 and 62:2 as the backdrop for Isaiah 65:13, see: Halpern, Baruch. “The New Names of Isaiah 62: 4: Jeremiah’s Reception in the Restoration and the Politics of Third Isaiah” (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.4 [1998]): 627.

[4] Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr. with Daniel E. Harden, *Isaiah’s New Heavens and New Earth* (Part 1): Former Things and New Things – The Burros of Berea <https://bit.ly/3XZP9tQ>

[5] See also: Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., *A Walk Through Psalm 102 – The Burros of Berea* <https://bit.ly/42DMtVf>

Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., *Zephaniah at World’s End: A Modern Misunderstanding of an Ancient Motif – The Burros of Berea* <https://bit.ly/3Ethj9Q>

[6] This is reiterated elsewhere in Hebrew literature. For example, in the book of Jubilees: “And on the six days of the second week we [the angels] brought, according to the word of God, unto Adam all the beasts, and all the cattle, and all the birds, and everything that moveth on the earth, and everything that moveth in the water, according to their kind, and according to their types: the beasts on the first day, the cattle on the second day, the birds on the third day, and all that moveth on the earth the fourth day, and that which moveth in the water on the fifth day. And Adam named them all by their respective names, and as he called them, so was their name.”

[7] George Knight comments: “In OT times ‘a new name’ was given to a person to explain and to declare his new status (cf. Genesis 32:28), as it is today in many countries of the Third World. God had promised Isaiah

(Isaiah I :26) that one day he would give Jerusalem a new name” (George A.F. Knight, *The New Israel: Isaiah 56-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmann’s Publ. Co. [1985]):62-63.

[8] The Hebrew word here is *shuv*, which the ESV translates as “those in her who repent,” and the NASB translates as “repentant ones” with a marginal note clarification, “returnees.” While there was obviously repentance on the part of the returnees during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the primary meaning of *shuv* is to “return, recue, restore” (Step Bible [Tyndale House] word analysis). Of it’s over 1000 usages in the OT, it is most often used “to describe physical returning, such as returning to a place or person” (<https://bit.ly/4jvamnA>).

The New English Translation has an extensive editorial comment noting the LXX rendering, “captives,” and adds that “...it makes best sense in this context to regard this as a reference to repentant Israelites returning to the land of promise. This understanding provides a better contrast with the rebels and sinners in 1:28” (NET Bible, Isaiah 1:27, note O). In short, while the returning exiles did in fact repent, we should not lose focus of the fact that this verse highlights the returning exiles as the ones repenting. A broad reference to

repentance, per se, loses that focus and does not anchor to the text to the specific time in view considering Isaiah's context. If general repentance alone was the thrust of Isaiah's meaning, we would have used a word like *na'cham* (repent, relent, regret, to be sorry) rather than *shuv*.

Hans Wildberger notes that "returnees" is the proper translation, but it "has caused much discussion" because Isaiah did not write in the "post exilic era" (Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press [1991]: 60-61). Indeed, even textual critics, who divide Isaiah into three parts, place the opening chapter in the so-called "earlier" section in the 8th century BC. Wildberger feels that the LXX's rendering "captives" is merely do to the fact that LXX translators wrote during that period and thus after the fact. But all of this overlooks the fact that Isaiah was a prophet of God, and, as such, he is prophetically looking ahead to the restoration period after the return from exile.

[9] There is some speculation about what Isaiah 2:6 is referring to. Many commentaries point to Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, or even Babylon. Most follow the idea that there was much sorcery in those lands. But there may be another meaning as well. Barnes' Notes on the Bible commentary recognizes that the word for 'east' can refer to 'antiquity' or 'of old'. Several versions, such as the Wycliffe Bible, have followed that line of thought and translated the phrase as "filled as of old" or "filled as sometime before". Barnes notes that even the LXX falls in line here, giving the translation as "their land is, as of old, filled", or as other versions of LXX have rendered it, the house of Israel "was filled with divinations as it had been at the beginning." Barnes does note, however, that Arabia, Persia, and Chaldea were rife with astrology, soothsaying, and divination. Whether this verse is referring to eastern influence or merely to Israel falling back on the same sins as their ancestors is uncertain.

[10] Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr. with Daniel E. Harden, *Isaiah's New Heavens and New Earth* (Part 1): Former Things and New Things – The Burros of Berea

[11] There are many places in the OT where the prophets prophesy about the coming exile, and how it would result in desolation for Israel and Judah. For example, Isaiah does this elsewhere, such as in Isaiah 24:12: "Desolation is left in the city; the gates are battered into ruins." This is true in other prophets as well. Jeremiah refers to desolation extensively. See, for example, Jeremiah 4:19-31, especially verses 27 and 30. Jeremiah repeats the theme of coming desolation in Jeremiah 10:22; 12:10-11; etc. But in contrast, he also states that those who were the implementors of this desolation would themselves become desolate – e.g. Jeremiah 51:29. Other prophets also echo the desolation that would befall Israel and Judah. See, for example, Amos 7:9.

[12] As Joseph Blenkinsopp comments: “...the Servants of the Lord are promised a blessed future (65.8-10); their opponents, who neglect the sanctuary of Zion and follow Gad and Meni, gods of good luck rather than the God of Israel to whom they are unresponsive, are destined for the sword, namely, destruction” (Blenkinsopp, Joseph. “Trito-Isaiah (Isaiah 56-66) and the gôlāh group of Ezra, Shecaniah, and Nehemiah (Ezra 7-Nehemiah 13): Is there a connection?” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43.4 [2019]: 673).

[13] The word that Isaiah uses for “curse” is *she’vu’ah* while Jeremiah uses *qe’la’lah*, but this is simply two different ways of saying the same thing – as both words carry the basic meaning of “curse” and are interchangeable in similar contexts.

[14] Commentaries are generally all over the map on Revelation 2:17 and highly speculative in trying to decipher the meaning of the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name in this verse. Some say that the NT believer’s new name is his/her association with the name of Christ. This seems unlikely since His name is obviously very well-known. Instead, this can better be understood in terms of speaking to the believer’s afterlife rewards since the language is very personalized and individualized. To try and figure out the “new name” in this verse, in fact, runs counter to the whole warp and woof of what is being said: “no one knows but he who receives it.” When we get to Heaven, God will give us our heavenly name – and it’s between us and God! This life is very much an exile, as our true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). That’s where our treasure is stored (Matt. 6:19-21), and it’s where we’ll receive our reward (1 Pt. 1:4). It is our responsibility to be sure our new name aligns with eternal blessings rather than spiritual desolation. This can only be done by maintaining focus on God and following His Son.

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