

Kedar

The Prince of Ishmael

Muslims say that Muhammad's coming is prophesied by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 42, in particular, verse 11, in which Kedar is mentioned. In order to get the true meaning or idea of a verse, you must study what it says before and after the verse, as well as understand the history behind it. While this specific verse would be easy to explain in a couple of lines, it would be far more beneficial to the reader to explain the main theme of chapter 42. Before we delve into that chapter to explain the meaning behind the verses that Muslims claim to reveal the coming of Muhammad, let's first glimpse into the history of the family Muhammad hails from.

It is correct that Abram bore Ishmael before Isaac. Sarai, his wife, was unable to have children, even though God had made them both the promise that Abraham would have an heir, stating that *"one who will come from your own body shall be your heir"* (Genesis 15:4-5). God continued on in verse 5-6, saying to Abram, *'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.'* *'So shall your descendants be.'* *And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

At that time, Sarai's faith was wavering. She believed in God's promise to Abram, yet did not believe that promise included her. Sarai, because of her barrenness allowed Hagar, her Egyptian handmaiden, to bear children for her with Abram. Once Hagar was pregnant, Sarai was very rude toward her, probably feeling a bit jealous that she was not the one to bear her own husband's children. Hagar ran away, but the Angel of the Lord found her, told her to return to Sarai, and gave her a promise, saying,

"I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." *And the Angel of the Lord said to her: "Behold, you are with child, and you shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."* Genesis 16: 10-12

God used the term "wild man", as his descendants would be nomads, ever on the move, roaming freely in the deserts of Arabia. He would have so many descendants that no one can count them.

After Isaac is born, God said to Abraham (his name has been changed at this point, as well as Sarah's), *"Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year."* Genesis 17:19-22.

So we see here clearly that while Ishmael was the older son of Abraham, it was Isaac whom God made His covenant with. It is Isaac's bloodline that would receive this covenant. However, Ishmael's bloodline would not be forgotten.

Ishmael went on to have twelve sons, called princes in Genesis 25:16, according to their nations. The second son, or prince to Ishmael, was Kedar. See Genesis 25:12-18 and 1 Chronicles 1:29-31. Ishmael and his nation occupied the area south of Palestine and east of Egypt, living as nomads in tents in that region, raising sheep, goats, and camels. (Genesis 25:18, Ezekiel 27:21) They were also famous for their warriors and particularly for their archers (Isaiah 21:16).

David mentioned them in his Psalm 120, which displays his feelings regarding dwelling among the “tents of Kedar”. This Psalm is a hymn possibly used by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. David explains in this Psalm regarding the residents of Kedar, “My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.”

There was not much mention of the Ishmaelites or the Kedarites in the Bible. Archeologists have not found any sites called Kedar. One extrabiblical resource to Kedar was found on a silver bowl offered to an Arabian goddess named Hanilat in the Egyptian Delta. It’s inscription reads, translated, “Cain, son of Gesham, King of Kedar,” and was dated to the fifth century B.C.

In Nehemiah 2:11-19, God had put it on Nehemiah’s heart to return to Judah from Babylon, and rebuild Jerusalem. Because of the continual horrific sin of his people, the Israelites, God allowed them to be taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Nehemiah prayed to God, asked for their forgiveness, and asked that favor be restored to them and they be allowed back to their promised homeland, Judah. His prayer was answered when the king of the Persian Empire, King Artaxerxes, allowed him to return with safety to Judah. Nehemiah was given military protection through the land to Judah. However, there were certain governors who opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Geshem, the Arab and descendant of Kedar, ridiculed and opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and plotted against Nehemiah. Nehemiah 6:1-6

The region of Kedar was no doubt one of the most important Arab tribal groups at that time. The Kedarites were apparently of some importance during the time of Isaiah, as he mentioned them in Isaiah 21:16, when he prophesied,

“For thus the Lord has said to me: ‘Within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fail; and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty men of the people of Kedar, will be diminished; for the Lord God of Israel has spoken it.’”

Read the verses prior, where a proclamation against the entirety of Arabia was prophesied – Isaiah 22:13-15.

The prophet Jeremiah also mentioned them in prophecy in Jeremiah 49:28-33.

So now that we have a little history of who Kedar is, let’s go to Isaiah 42, where Muslims believe Muhammad’s coming is mentioned.

Even Muslims believe this chapter speaks of the coming of Jesus. Let’s break down this chapter verse by verse.

Verse 1: The Lord God is speaking. My Servant and My Elect One is referring to Jesus. God says, "I have put My Spirit upon Him." This line clearly shows God, Spirit, and His Servant Jesus = The Trinity. Even if you still don't believe this reveals the Trinity, you can clearly see the two parts of God – God Himself, and His Spirit. Then there is Jesus.

The next line states, "**He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.**" God is still speaking and the He referred to is still Jesus. Remember, this is a prophecy. It has not happened yet, but Isaiah is foretelling what will take place in the future. Muslims have always believed that Jesus came only for the Israelites. This line clearly reveals that Jesus would indeed come for the Gentiles.

Verse 2: "**He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.**" Jesus was treated very badly in his last days on earth. He was rejected, betrayed, arrested, beaten, had his beard ripped from his face, humiliated, spat upon, nailed to a cross, and stabbed in his side. Muslims deny nothing except his death on the cross, believing instead that someone took his place on the cross. Yet all the while, he never complained, but prayed to His Father in Heaven, saying in Luke 23:34,

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Also, he did not brag and say, Look here what I did or look what I can do. He was humbled. The only crown he wore was the twisted thorns of a crown that was humiliatingly thrust upon His bleeding head.

Verse 3: "**A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench: He will bring forth justice for truth.**" He is gentle, and will not break the weak in spirit and poor in faith. He would come as an encourager to the weak and pour in spirit and in body. For those who are losing faith, as a wicker loses its flame, he will ignite with a passion and desire for the will of God. He will uphold what is good, right, moral and truthful.

Verse 4: **He will not fail nor be discouraged, til He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.**" While we are weak and pour in spirit and at risk for losing faith, He will come for a purpose. He will not grow faint in fulfilling that purpose or be discouraged in the face of adversity. The entire universe longs for a Savior who will bring the Law – hope and salvation - in His coming!

Verse 5: "**Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it.**" This verse gives glory to God, the creator of the heavens and earth, and giver of breath to the people on it, and spirit to the people on it. The difference between the breath and the spirit is this:

The original Hebrew word for breath in the above verse is neshamah. It is the subconscious or spirit part of a human; whereas the Hebrew word for spirit in the verse above is ruach, which is the actual air we breathe. Therefore, verse 5 tells us that God gives all humans and beasts air which enables us to live, and He also gives to the human race a spiritual essence as well, for which we are able to worship and praise Him.

Verse 6: **I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep you and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles.**" Contrary to the belief of Muslims that Jesus

came “only for the lost sheep of the Israelites”, Jesus indeed came for the Gentiles. Here in verse 6, the Lord God is again speaking to Jesus, calling Him to righteousness. He assures Jesus that He will not leave Him or forsake Him, but will hold His hand along this journey that He will be taking. He assures Jesus that He will be given as a covenant to the people - A promise with a purpose. Up until now, the Israelites were the only ones on the earth who were not worshipping idols, and who had the favor of God. Now God’s plan would also include the Gentiles (non-Jews) in a new covenant in the name of Jesus, the Savior of the world. He would be a light to the world.

Verse 7: *To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.* When Jesus, the light of the world, was to come, He would open the eyes of the blind. That doesn’t just mean physically blind, but also and especially the spiritually blind. He would bring out prisoners from the prison does not mean he would open the jailhouses and let all the murderers out, but he would set free those who are in spiritual bondage to sin of all kinds. Darkness refers to all manners of sin. When the light enters, darkness flees! When Jesus comes into the heart of a repentant sinner, the darkness flees, and the person then exudes the light of Jesus Christ, with all His goodness and love.

Verse 8: *I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.* The Lord God made it clear to us from the beginning of time that we are not to worship carved idols. He is the Lord (Jehovah in Hebrew), the Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, all powerful, the jealous God who will not tolerate praise going to carved images.

Verse 9: *Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.* The Lord God is still speaking here. He is saying that the old way of doing things has passed and a new way is coming. He will tell about it before it comes to pass so that when it does, you, the reader, will understand. The old covenant (Abrahamic) would no longer be in effect because a new covenant, the one God spoke of earlier in verse 6 was coming. Jesus, the new covenant was coming soon, and God wanted people to know about it before it happened. God didn’t just change His mind, but this was the plan from the beginning of time in Genesis. God knew that the ritualistic way of doing things would not work for mankind. We, the people, needed a way and a savior. God promised a new covenant specifically for the Gentiles in the way and salvation of Jesus.

Verse 10: *Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all this is in it, you coastlands and you inhabitants of them!* God has just promised a new covenant. Jesus would be given to the Gentiles as a new covenant. A promise with hope! God is now saying to sing and shout for joy. Your salvation is at hand! Sing to the Lord a new song – the new song is about a new covenant. He is telling all his people and every creation to praise the Lord.

Verse 11: *Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains.* God continues to spread the cheer about the new covenant in the coming of Jesus by telling everyone everywhere to lift up their voices and sing praises to the Lord for what He is about to do. Our redemption is drawing near. There is

finally hope. A savior of the world is coming. He is saying that even people in the deepest parts of the desert, like Kedar, should praise the Lord for this new covenant, for this new hope is for all peoples.

Verse 12: *Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare His praise in the coastlands.* God continues to encourage the praise and glory that only He deserves for the new promise to come.

Verse 13: *The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.* God is not mocked. He will not tolerate the worship of other idols.

Verse 14-25 – The Lord continues on with a promise of help in verses 14-20, stating in verse 16 that He will lead the blind (spiritually) by a way they did not know before, and will lead them in paths they have not known. He says what He will do for them (the believers), but He also warns what will happen to the blind and spiritually deaf.

I hope this explains the true meaning behind Isaiah 42, and denounces any ideas that this is speaking of a prophecy of the coming of Muhammad, as it clearly does not. I encourage the reader, and especially my Muslim friends, to study in depth, the Word of God, for your fate is in your knowledge. Where there is knowledge, there is truth, and where there is truth, there is salvation. The truth shall set you free!

I encourage the reader to continue reading further chapters of Isaiah to get a glimpse of the hope that was to come, and now has indeed come, with even more promises in the future. To God be the glory! Great things He has done!