

OT751 Isaiah
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Lesson 9: What is one new thing you learned or idea to which you were exposed?

One new thing that I learnt in this week's study is the concept of "listening" in Isaiah. This is especially prominent in Chapter 48, where the word "listen" (שמע) appeared eleven times (Isa 48:1, 3, 5, 6(twice), 7, 8, 12,14, 16, 20) in 22 verses. The Israelites in the Babylonian exile were dealing with two major questions: why did God allow their captivity and what should they do now. The concept of "listening" provides an answer to both questions. It was because they did not listen to God that their nation fell, and now if they would truly listen to God they would rise again. (Oswalt, 535)

Oswalt points out that the Hebrew word "שמע" (listen) denotes both perception and action. It includes the entire process of hearing, believing, and acting. (Oswalt, 536) God had spoken in the past (Isa 48: 5), if the Israelites had really listened, they would have known that God could act in surprising ways and would therefore trust in Him. (Constable, 330) Out of the eleven times that the word "listen" appeared, four times it was in the imperative form (שמע, שמעו) (16, 14, 12, 48:1) where God urges the Israelites to "listen!". Another three times it appeared as the *hiphil* verb (שמיעם, השמעתיך) (6, 5, 48:3) where God proclaims that He will make His people listen. God is a God that speaks. In the midst of suffering, He is still speaking, and He desires us to listen to Him with open ears and open hearts. If our ears are closed, we would not hear and we would not understand God's heart (48:8); but if we truly listen, God's peace and righteousness would be with us even in the most challenging of times (48:18). Here in verse 18, the word "קשב" instead of "שמע" is used, which means paying close attention (BDB904A). Listening to God attentively and acting accordingly will bring us into the peace and righteousness of God. This is an important idea that I learned in this week's study of Isaiah.