

## Thought for the week from Roots on the Web

If you were an advertiser working on a campaign focused on the word 'refreshed', what image or images would you use? A drink? A deodorant or soap? Running water? Or something else?

Now, for a possibly harder challenge, what image would you use for the word 'hope'?

Today's theme is 'hope refreshed'. On the surface this theme sounds lovely – positive, uplifting and encouraging – but when we look at the theme through the times and lens of the exiled Israelites, we may approach this theme in a slightly different way.

Imagine working for an advertising agency back in the time of the exiled Israelites. Your brief is to come up with a campaign to bring the theme 'hope refreshed' to the Israelites.

Who is the audience? The Israelites. They have been living in exile, in Babylon, for decades – a time that would have been physically, emotionally and spiritually difficult. They are a defeated and disillusioned group, far from home, and lacking in hope.

What is the aim of campaign? To bring hope and encouragement to the Israelites, and to instil confidence in them, so that they will be the people God wants them to be.

What is the brief? The campaign can't be too upbeat because there's lots of trauma and suffering. And it can't be too gentle or informal because the Israelites need a push towards action.

This 'hope refreshed' campaign seems almost impossible. Thankfully, God can do the impossible!

In Isaiah 42, God speaks to the Israelites with the perfect blend of hope, care, encouragement and action. God brings the theme 'hope refreshed' to life.

How does God do this? God names them. God reminds the Israelites of who they are – God's chosen, in whom God delights. The people whom God has taken by the hand and kept close. They are also named God's servant – a gentle reminder about who God wants them to be.

God reminds them of who God is – the One who created the heavens and the earth, the One who gives breath and spirit to everyone. The Lord.

God calls them. He calls the Israelites to bring forth justice to the nations, to be a covenant to the people, and to be a light to the nations.

And God gives a vision for what is to come. Verse 9 says, 'See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.'

Hope refreshed for a disillusioned people.

Hope refreshed not just for the exiled Israelites but for all people, as we know that these words are supremely fulfilled in Jesus.

What images now spring to mind when you think of the words 'hope' and 'refreshed'?

Let's continue reflecting on how God brought 'hope refreshed' to the Israelites, and how God continues to bring hope for all people.